

# PIONEER



## The Female Experience



## OPINION | UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FEMALE



**KaraLee  
Langford**

# Want to Understand Women? Then Read These Stories

Some say men have underlying psychological fears of women in places of power. Tell me this, are you afraid to walk to your car at night? Do you force your friends to go to the bathroom together in case some guy gets the wrong idea? Are you the one pretending to talk on the phone because someone makes you uncomfortable? Do you plan your outfit in a strategic ways so you don't get nasty looks? Are you being used as a punching bag for degrading and derogatory phrases? Are you the one afraid to stand up for yourself because you don't think people will listen?

Men will never experience the same as female, so it's time we show you firsthand.



# How Do We View Ourselves?

BY VENAE ROAN  
Staff Writer

**B**ody image is the way a person feels about and sees their own body. If you ask most women about the first time they ever felt insecure and ashamed about their body, they could probably describe that moment in great detail.

Hannah Kahler, a 20-year old, experienced these feelings of body insecurity in waves. “It was like a wave crashing, it came on slowly, inching and inching and then flooding over you until you go under.”

Kahler said the first time she ever felt shame about how she looked was in third grade.

“This boy James said I had the body of a teletubbie and all of our friends laughed, I laughed, and then I went home, cried and went to bed without dinner,” she said.

Heather Gallivan, a psychologist, said 80 percent of women don’t like their body and have more than likely taken some measure to correct what was “wrong” about their body. Some women could even recall the feeling of looking in the mirror and seeing a prison cell they’re forced to serve a life sentence in. Some women feel concerned about their body image as early as the age of ten.

Kahler knew these feelings all too well.

Many women, like Kahler, soon find themselves drowning in a sea of insecurities, self-loathing, and all the depression and anxiety that it comes with.

“I feel like a common misconception about self-hatred and hating your body is that it’s innate, and something you’re born with,” Kahler said. “No child comes out just automatically hating their body and for me, it was something that happened as a result of others comments and my own growing insecurities.”

Kahler recalled the first time she was criticized for her weight -- it started in second grade. Her classmates begun making little comments about her appearance.

“Once I got to about second grade, other kids would make little comments about my weight. Whether it be flat out calling me big, or insinuating that I was unhealthy, the comments came more and more and escalated throughout elementary school,” she said.

The comments didn’t stop. They only got worse as time went on.

“By the time I was in fifth grade I was carefully calculating which clothes would hide my rolls the best and trying to decide which pants gave me the least muffin top,” she said.

The most important part of the day wasn’t seeing her friends at school anymore, it was getting dressed in the morning and making sure any opportunity for hurtful comments was eliminated. “I was ten, but the most important part of my day was ensuring that I didn’t look as big as I was and making sure that people didn’t have the opportunity to point out any flaws or miscalculations in the way I looked,” Kahler said. “Any shred of self-love or confidence I had was stripped away.”

By the age of thirteen, Gallivan said, 53 percent of young girls are dissatisfied with their body. That percentage grows to 78 percent by the time they reach age seventeen.

Kahler said the year 2013 was the most memorable for her.

“2013 was sort of the year that everything fell apart for me,” she said. “It was the first time I’d ever broken up from a semi-serious relationship, the first time I tried to kill myself, and the summer in which I gained 25 pounds. It was by far the worst year of my life, and being in the hospital three weeks out of July didn’t help at all.”

The summer of 2013, barely out of her childhood, she was sexually assaulted. It was a family member and a year would pass before she could build up the courage to tell anyone.

“I was sexually assaulted when I was eleven and my relationship with my body completely changed,” she said. “If I had to pinpoint an exact ‘moment’ where today, I feel like I had an eating disorder, it would be seventh grade. We moved, my mom remarried and I was sexually assaulted. I don’t like to blame my eating disorder on ‘one thing’ in



Photo illustration  
by Venae Roan

**BODY IMAGE**

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# Many Women Defined by Body Image

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particular, but if I really had to, it would probably be the summer of 2013.”

Kelsey Rusk, who graduated with a degree in psychology, said a lot of different things can go into someone having a negative idea of their body. Any past trauma, social anxiety, perfectionism, critical parents growing up, failure or rejection experienced, scrutiny from a partner. All can contribute to the way you perceive yourself.

“Notice that they are all emotional factors, none actually being vanity,” Rusk said.

After moving, Kahler said her mom’s second marriage and the trauma of a sexual assault, her body was a constant reminder of what was going wrong in her life.

“When you’re young you don’t know the signs and symptoms of an eating disorder, you don’t think about that type of behavior as being bad,” she said. “It [her body] started to feel like a prison, I felt trapped in a place I didn’t want to be. I wanted my body to be as physically different as possible.”

By the time Kahler opened up about the incident, some of her family members refused to believe her.

“Someone in my family touched me and I didn’t get the courage to tell my friends and mom until a year later. When my family found out, my dad and step-mom were furious and my mom and step-dad didn’t really believe me. They made me feel like it never happened and like I was crazy, and they made me stay in the house with my abuser for years and years which lead to years of trauma and emotional abuse,” she said.

Rusk said the cause of eating disorders is hard to pinpoint. “An eating disorder occurs because of a disturbance in one’s eating pattern that has gone out of control,” she said. “More often than not, they coincide with another issue rather than it being the cause from food or vanity. They are real life, encompassing illnesses that are treatable but usually have underlying issues.”

The Body Image Center estimates about 1,000 women die each year from eating disorders due to malnutrition, heart attack, and suicide. Various factors can contribute to disorders, they can be social, intrapersonal, or psychological. Intrapersonal would be troubled relationships, sexual and physical abuse, and backlash from expressing one’s emotions.

Social issues are one of the more well-known problems, such as fitting into the “cultural norm” and striving to achieve the same body type shown in the entertainment industry.

“Entertainment industries only show men and women of certain sizes in movies, TV, or ads, and the idea that someone’s worth is only skin deep,” Rusk said.

Many symptoms of eating disorders can look like self-scrutinizing and self-deprecating comments about an individual’s body.

“Half my family contributed negatively, and the other half positively. My father would always tell me that I looked like I’ve lost weight, even when I’d known I hadn’t,” Kahler said. “But on the contrary, my mother pointed out just about

every pound I gain. Just a few weeks ago she told me I look like I’ve gained 40 pounds since I graduated high school.”

Gallivan said that, by the age of ten to fourteen, 30 percent of girls have attempted dieting. This also includes various methods of weight loss such as fasting, smoking, vomiting, and laxatives.

The Body Image Center says along with family, dieting, traumatic events, social difficulties, and major life transitions also contribute to eating disorders. Social media can also have varying effects on body image.

For Kahler, social media has overall brought her self-love and confidence up. Media as a whole though has done damage. For heavier women, there’s more representation in the media. Despite this, self-objectification still occurs.

The objectification theory supports this by saying in a society where women are viewed and evaluated based on physical appearance, they foster negative body image.

“Nowadays there’s a lot more representation but when I was growing up there wasn’t an ounce of fat girl representation and most of the world was fatphobic,” Kahler said. “But, being an active member of Twitter and Instagram boosted my self-esteem in ways I couldn’t have ever imagined. People seem to be much more accepted there, I felt like it was okay not to be thin, and I actively posted provocative photos of myself. I have a supper not a correctly proportioned body, but people still embraced it and made me feel loved.”

Self-presentations in an online world impact users self-concepts in the offline world. Getting positive affirmations online can help alter one’s view of themselves in reality. In the last few years, a wave of body positivity has flooded both social and mass media. Different body types are being seen in movies, TV, and even music. However just because there is representation doesn’t mean it’s always good or effective.

“My body type is absolutely not recognized or represented at all, period. There is fat girl recognition, but only if the fat is accompanied with big boobs and wide hips,” Kahler says. “If you’re like me, fat, small boobed, and straight like a board, no one really pays you any mind. It’s stupid, there shouldn’t be any ideal body, but there is, and it certainly isn’t mine.”

Social media can also have very negative effects as well. Seeing high-profile people online with a “picture perfect”



Photo illustration  
by Venae Roan

BODY IMAGE

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# Eating Disorders Affect Many Women

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life and/or body can deepen insecurities. What it does to the masses is create deprecating self worth because they themselves don't look like that when they roll out of bed. It creates anxiety because it makes people think they'll never look like that," Rusk said.

"It creates depression because it makes people think they won't be loved unless they look a certain way. What you see is not actually what you're getting and I think that is the most critical thing about social media and what it conveys to the masses," she said.

Gullivan said in the media young impressionable girls see "ideal" body images that are highly edited or have had hours of hair and makeup. Most images these young girls will see are highly fabricated.

"In the last five years really has there been a surge of "Body Positive" campaigns from brands on social media to illustrate that everyone is beautiful. Which gives the idea that the industry is changing- but is it? That's why it's so important to be critical of social/mass media. Do these brands really want to be body positive? Or do they want to because it's trendy?" Rusk said..

Gullivan said many magazines and online publications have content relating to weight loss and dieting, however, magazines aimed toward women have ten times the content than men.

Project EAT found that girls who read these articles on dieting or weight loss were six times more likely to engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors. Similar damaging content can be found on the internet known as thinspiration. It can be photos, text, and video to inspire and or motivate individuals to be thin. Posts geared toward thinspiration also support "pro-ana" diets. Pro-ana diets consist of starvation, little to no food, and various methods of curbing hunger. Google searches of pro-ana have nineteen million hits and thinspiration with two million hits.

Media as a whole contributes to negative body image daily. Representation for heavier women in social media doesn't always resonate for girls like Kahler.

"The problem with celebrities is that they feel the need to put down another body type to raise up another, such as Nicki Minaj saying, "f\*\*\* the skinny bitches" or Meghan Trainor saying, "tell them skinny bitches that." Some celebrities feel the perpetual need to put down skinny girls to make bigger girls feel better, Kahler said.

"I appreciate the attempts they try to make, in a way, but overall no one has really gotten the body-positive idea down," she said.

According to Gillivan, over 50 percent of girls use unhealthy weight control methods, while only 30 percent of boys use unhealthy weight control. "I don't think it's fair to compare the struggles of each gender, simply because there's an "ideal" body style throughout." Kahler said. "Guys are supposed to have lean muscle, girls are supposed to be thick but only in the right places. I feel like girls are more sensitive to it than boys, but I think body hatred and negativity knows no gender. I don't think it's fair to compare it because men have unrealistic body images to aspire to as well, but women are definitely put on the line more than men. In my own experience, women are much more accepting of different bodies than men are."

The Body Image Center estimates thirty million people will suffer from an eating disorder. With 15 percent of young women living with disordered eating. While treatment for eating disorders is available, many forego treatment.

"People forego treatment for a variety of reasons. Mostly surrounding the idea that they don't want to talk to a stranger about their problems. Many people tend to talk to their family or friends about things, and although the sheer fact of talking about their issues to anyone is key, sometimes a person too close to them won't give the 'outside the situation' advice and counseling that a person actually needs," Rusk said.

Many people are also concerned about the cost of treatment. "A lot of times people suffering think that it's too expensive to find help but it's very far from the case! Many universities, companies, and local community centers offer free counseling services to anyone in need," Rusk said.

"Today, there are applications you can download that link you with real people to just talk through your problems any time you need them," Rusk said.

Sadly, another reason people forgo treatment is because they think they can handle it on their own. "They think they can take care of it on their own or that people won't understand what they're going through," Rusk said.

It's always easier to start this development in kids. By letting children express how they feel and taking them seriously, instead of writing off their feelings because they're a child, there would be fewer issues.

"A child's emotions and feelings are just as valid as an adult," she said. "They may not be able to express themselves as coherent as an adult, but that's why it is so much more important to listen and help."

Practicing why you're upset and identifying what or who caused it can help eliminate influences for negative body image.

"I personally tell everyone that everybody is beautiful. I don't care what somebody's body looks like, it's beautiful," Kahler said. "It's going to be a constant struggle, you won't just wake up one day and decide you love yourself, but you have to remind yourself that no matter what, your body is beautiful. Surround yourself with positive people. It's little things like that that will make it a hell of a lot easier."

Rusk said other ways to help would be to create a positive relationship with food, be a critical consumer of the media, seek healthy relationships, and explore who you are as a person.

"Remember that your body is a tool for success, not an ornament on a tree," she said.

For Kahler, the ongoing debate with her body continues.

"I would love to say that I have a wonderful relationship with my body now, but it's a daily struggle," she said. "One day I wake up feeling like the baddest bitch, and other days I want to starve myself."

BODY IMAGE





Rachel Jones's daughter Jayden and son Kasen hold their baby brother Easton. Photo courtesy Rachel Jones

BY JEREMY MORGAN  
Special to the Pioneer

**M**ost children in the United States are still raised in two parent homes. But the scale has started to tip exponentially over the last few decades. More American children are being raised by single parents than ever before.

Single mothers, which use to be rare, are becoming increasingly ordinary.

One of these women is Rachel Jones, a mother of three. Jones has a 13-year-old daughter, an 8-year-old son, and a 2-year-old boy.

"I was young when I had my first and [the father] didn't want to be involved so I took care of her on my own," Jones said. This began an unfortunate pattern for her. "I met my husband when she was one and we had [my first son]. After about five years he cheated on me and knocked her up and left me for her. I became a single mom again."

Jones spent the next four and a half years raising her two children on her own. She worked any job she could find, from serving jobs to cleaning houses to support her children. Then, she met the father of her third child.

That relationship, she said, was abusive.

"He beat me in front of my children, so he's been out of the picture since March," she said. Today Jones is back to single motherhood and working multiple jobs to stay afloat financially.

Jones's situation is not as unique as it may seem. More than 8 percent of children in Oklahoma are being raised in a single parent home says a 2018 report by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Census also reported nationwide 69 percent of children were being raised in a two-parent home in 2016. That number is down by almost 20 percent from 1960, when 88 percent of children were in the same situation.

Today a total of over 17-million children are being raised without a father, according to a Census report in 2017.

Data from the Pew Research Center indicates an upsurge in the number of children raised by single fathers as well. "In 1960, about 14 percent of single parent households were headed by fathers, today about 24 percent are," the center reported.

There is a difference between a single mother's and father's income. The average of single fathers living below the poverty line is 24 percent while the average for mothers is 43 percent, according to Pew's 2013 study.

Justin Whitehead has been a single father for three years after his daughter's mother lost her life in a car accident.

"I haven't struggled a whole lot financially," he said. Whitehead works 40-50 hours a week on salary. "Learning how to do everything myself was pretty much my only struggle." Though he did have to battle his late girlfriend's family for custody that cost him more than \$10,000.

In contrast Jones said she works ten-hour days at Sonic. "Some evenings I have houses that I clean for extra money," she said.

As far as assistance, Jones said she doesn't get much help. "I receive food stamps and help with daycare while I work," Jones said. Her parents help her when she needs it but, she pays them back with her taxes.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is an assistance program designed to help people in need afford food and household essentials. SNAP is a federal program run by the United States Department

of Agriculture.

About 55 percent of people receiving SNAP are made up of single parent households, according to the USDA's 2010 survey. And of those, 47 percent are single mothers.

**It's not easy  
to be a  
Single Mother  
in America**

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# For Women, Modern Gender Roles Continue to Evolve



Photo illustration  
by Venae Roan

BY KARALEE LANGFORD  
Senior Staff Writer

**F**emale gender issues have surfaced in the past several years. They mingle with the role females play in everyday society. It might even be safe to say feminism is becoming an ascendant force in America. Even with the view of female gender roles constantly evolving, there is still a struggle for power.

Shelley Carroll is a wife and mother of two daughters who are now both in college. She grew up in what could be defined as a strict religious household.

"I was raised in a religion that believed women were to be at home as a wife and mother. I desperately didn't want that for myself but eventually gave myself over to what I knew was expected of me."

Often the Christian faith follows along a path of partnership in marriages and relationships. Instead, Carroll was subject to degrading stereotypes and wasn't allowed to dream.

"As a young girl I silently dreamed of being a trader in the New York Stock Exchange. I was a good student in school and dreamed of a corporate career and business leader. Of course, I wasn't aware that the stock exchange is male dominated and only this year did they hire their first female floor trader and named a female president!" Carroll said. "I never voiced my dream because I knew it would be met with laughter and scorn."

Bible verses, such as first Timothy, told Carroll the only reason she is on this earth was to serve males: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet."

An article posted by the U.S. National Library of Medicine asks, "when do children develop a sense of male privileged status and when do they form negative attitudes about the other sex?" The article notes that even before a child is born, the process of gender socialization begins. This process of learning how to interact and treat different genders will continue to develop throughout childhood

and into adulthood.

"I was raised with a different set of standards than my brothers that bred contempt for women. My brothers were taught that women were there to serve and not have an opinion," Carroll said. "They were also taught that when a woman showed emotion she was just trying to manipulate a situation."

This constant continuation of female gender scrutiny causes ruthless anxiety and rises stress levels. "These ideas that women were below men didn't teach me and my brothers to love each other. They disregarded me because I was a female, and in return I felt anger toward them for disregarding me. It wasn't healthy," she said. "There was a large chasm in our home between the genders. Unfortunately it carried over into our adult lives and we have had to work hard to respect and love each other."

A report from Universities of Hertfordshire and Sheffield said ideas about gender difference were derived from classical thought, Christian ideology, and contemporary science and medicine.

During the eighteenth century, men were thought to be stronger, wiser, and more courageous. Women in the eighteenth century were looked at as being the weaker sex because our actions are driven by emotion. This ideology has been carried over from centuries of outdated thinking into current day living.

By the time the nineteenth century rolled around, female roles changed drastically. All aspects of public life now belonged to men. Females were strictly the homemaker and breed for motherhood. Ideas about the female gender changed, as women were no longer perceived as emotionally driven but rather virtuous. If women did not live up to the expectation of virtuousness, they were labeled as 'prostitutes' and told they were acting on uncontrollable sexual desires.

As history repeats itself, women have primarily been to blame for accusations of sexual assault. We've witnessed the history book of innocent women being to blame. The law did little to protect because it was the woman's fault

GENDER ROLES

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# Just Who Dictates How A Woman Should Act?



Photo illustration  
by Venae Roan

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for being too promiscuous. Not until 1980 did the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission finalize guidelines regarding sexual harassment as a form of discrimination.

"My father was an angry man who was emotionally, verbally, and physically abusive. As an adult I realized that he fit the definition of a narcissist," Carroll said. "He was an extreme chauvinist and raised his five sons with a different set of standards than he raised his only daughter with."

Around age 15, she was molested by her father. "Touching that was against my wishes," she said. "It makes me physically sick to think about it. He tried to control me and would guilt me into showing I cared about him by saying he was going to kill himself to see how I would react."

Carroll said she hates everything about her father. "He made my life a living hell in so many ways. I knew I was trapped under his control and in desperation I planned an escape one night. I crawled out of my window with my clothes in trash bags at the age of 18 when I should've had the freedom to come and go as I pleased."

She said her father found her the next day and bribed her to get in the car under the assumption the two would just talk. Instead, he had different motives. "He took me home and informed me I would never leave the house again and he would have my brothers guard the doors and windows so I couldn't escape. Again, I was a legal adult at this age!"

Data shows that sexual assault may trigger severe depression and even suicidality. Survivors may suffer from rape trauma syndrome, which presents with a pattern of symptoms that are similar to posttraumatic stress disorder.

Carroll said she felt trapped and even still often has nightmares about being trapped with her father. She said it has taken years to let go of the hate she has for him. Yet sometimes she is reminded of how miserable he made her and has to fight the anger all over again.

"I wasn't heard or believed what my father had done to me because I was the only girl in a family of boys being conditioned by a chauvinist. Any emotion I showed was me being a girl. I was labeled 'hysterical,' 'dramatic,' 'overly sensitive,' 'manipulative,' and the best one that they always threw my way was 'oh that's just Shelley being a girl.'"

Carroll said she developed extreme anxiety and depression from the traumatic interaction with her father. "I began to have what I would call panic attacks. I would feel like I couldn't breathe which would cause me to hyperventilate and then cause my body to go into spasms that resembled a seizure," she said. "These episodes made me feel even worse about myself. It made me feel weak and I knew that behind my back people were saying I was only having these attacks to garner attention."

Carroll said she didn't know how to handle the situation. She was confused and didn't know how to deal with the stress. "Almost like my body and mind were saying I can't deal with this anymore, I'm shutting down for a while."

Carroll said she often had episodes of panic when she would be interacting with large groups of people. She felt judged and condemned because she knew people were labeling her as an attention seeker when instead they should be asking what is causing her to have this reaction to stress.

"To say I didn't feel loved and felt alone was an understatement. Not only was my home life toxic, but so was my church life. I didn't feel safe in either," she said.

Through her early teenage years, Carroll constantly battled with herself over what had actually happened that night when she was 15 years old. In large part, she blames the church she grew up in for how the incident was handled, or lack thereof.

"I battled my memory of the situation for years thinking I had embellished or imagined what happened. There was times I was convinced I was crazy," Carroll said. "I battled with my memories and whether God would hold me accountable if they were not accurate. It made me crazy."

In part, Carroll blames the church she grew up in for their distorted version of how a woman should represent herself. "It's just all so messed up because of our church background," she said. "I remember being at a church camp during the winter time. I went to pieces. I couldn't stop crying. I would say it was close to a nervous breakdown. I was so unhappy. I felt so alone while my friends carried on with their lives."

Carroll said her parents pulled her aside from the camp

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GENDER ROLES



# What Lessons Should Women Teach Their Daughters in Modern America?

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and demanded to tell them what was wrong with her.

"Of course my father knew. I finally told him to tell my mom what he had done," she said.

Her mother reacted the way a mother should. She took Carroll home to rest and told her if her father ever did anything like that again to tell her. "That one morning when she told me to tell her if he ever did anything again I felt her support. But then later she changed her tune. She told me it was something I had imagined due to things I had read in the newspaper," Carroll said. "It killed me, if my own mother didn't believe me, maybe I had imagined it. It made me feel shame and guilt."

She said she was angry with her mom for years. That anger lasted up until a few years ago. "I couldn't imagine how a mother wouldn't protect her child from an abusive father. She had to choose her marriage or my story," she said.

Now, Carroll knows her mother is not to blame. "To better understand my mom you need to know that she has suffered through multiple infidelities and didn't have the option but to stay in the marriage because our religion did not support divorce," she said. "I think she had to choose to believe this to be able to continue in her sham of a marriage."

Because of Carroll's experience, she now says she will always campaign for girls to be independent before getting into serious relationships. "She [Carroll's mother] couldn't have left my father with six kids to feed and take care of. She had to accept his abuse and infidelities because she knew she couldn't take care of us without him there to provide financially."

Carroll said it wasn't until she had children of her own she was able to let go and realize she was the victim and should harbor zero shame or guilt over what happened. "Growing up with the female gender role that was placed on me made me angry, but because of our religion that taught women were to be subservient to men, I felt guilty for my anger," she said. "After I got married I realized it was a male character flaw to demand authority and control over women and it didn't have anything to do with me."

A study done by Amy Blackstone at the University of Maine indicates that gender is a concept humans create socially, through their interactions with one another and their environments, yet it relies heavily upon biological differences between males and females.

"The social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups, and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex," the study said.

Many would argue that men have historically been the

leaders of society, feminism is making a gigantic leap. "I'm really glad that female gender roles have evolved into a more equal role," Carroll said.

Even more traditional roles between male and female appear to be changing. Data from the Pew Research Center shows the number of stay at home dads has risen to two million since 2012.

Carroll said, "I don't believe that men should be exempt from helping with household chores such as doing laundry, cooking, cleaning up, and helping clean the house."

She believes this role goes both ways. "I also believe that women should be adept at yard work and maintaining their vehicles even if that means just taking it to the mechanic," she said. "I'm a proponent of whatever role a man and woman want to take in their relationship as long as it's been discussed and agreed upon by both parties. I think the younger generation is modeling the idea of both partners being equal whereas the older generation is still very much stuck in gender specific roles."

Gender roles evolve from cultural and social traditions. Today there is a much more relaxed version of gender roles in society largely due to media influences. Although males in media are still predominantly portrayed as the strong, and brave hero. Women are beginning to see a larger increase of strong, independent female movie and television leads.

"I want my daughters to be happy with themselves and not attach their happiness to whether they have a man in their lives or not," Carroll said. "I want them to be independent of needing a man to pay the bills and support her financially. I want them to be empowered to be able to stand on their own whether it's emotionally or financially. I want them to know that they're okay by themselves."

Carroll tells her daughters all she wishes from them is they rely on themselves before they depend on anyone else.

"They can bring a confident, strong, and independent woman into a relationship with a man who respects who and what she is. There should never be a relationship that is one sided. It should be equal in what both parties bring to the table. I want my girls to be so confident in themselves that they would rather stay single than to be with the wrong guy," she said. "There's way too much power wrapped up in a man when he is the one to provide your physical needs."

The position women play in society has come a long way from stereotypical gender roles. Society is constantly evolving, but it still has a long way to go.

GENDER ROLES

# Despite A Federal Law, the Pay Gap Con

BY MARCUS ROBERTSON  
Pioneer Senior Writer

In 1963, then-President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law. The law's goal was to eliminate the wage discrepancy between men and women. In that year, women averaged 61 percent of what men made, nationally; today, the number is 80.5 percent.

Women from Oklahoma have it slightly worse, but it's not all bad news: only 42 states have a better rate. Oklahoma's women earn 77 percent—nearly three points worse than the national average.

"I think the wage gap is super unfair," said Sarah Alvarez, a student at Oklahoma City Community College. Sarah has hiked the Appalachian Trail, catered to eleven NBA teams, and is training to become a realtor. She's also seen the wage gap firsthand.

While working an extra job to save up for the Appalachian Trail, Sarah learned a male co-worker with less time on the job was making more than her.

"I had worked there twice as long as he had, and I was pretty high up. But he was making at least \$2.50 more than me," Alvarez said. "It infuriated me, but of course I couldn't ask him. And I didn't bring it up to management, because I was planning on leaving for the Trail."

Overt discrimination contributes to the pay gap, but only minimally. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in 2017 only 5.1 percent of wage discrimination suits were found to have "reasonable cause to believe that discrimination occurred."

When broken down farther, the main source of the modern pay gap begins to reveal itself. Today, women without children earn 96 percent what men earn, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Mothers, on the other hand, only make 76 percent.

Caitlin Kraft, executive general manager at Redrock Canyon Grill, thinks she avoided the motherhood penalty in part by returning to work soon after childbirth.

"I don't think [the pay gap]'s affected me at all," Kraft said. "I was offered GM when I was nine months pregnant with my first child. I was kind of surprised because I wondered if they wouldn't offer it to me since I was pregnant," Kraft said. "And I still only took the minimum amount of weeks off with both my children."

She acknowledges her story could be the exception, though.

"I think there's some women that probably don't get the benefit of the doubt like I got," Kraft said.

A 2015 Pew Research survey found that 31 percent of participants

believe mothers are responsible for the majority of household responsibilities, compared to 9 percent for fathers. This suggests a cultural vestige: working mothers are still expected to spend more time than fathers on child-rearing and housework.

This unequal expectation is reflected in the pay gap, as well. Per the BLS, pay increases by an average of 6 percent when a man becomes a father. Mothers, however, see their pay decrease by 4 percent—per child.

Internationally, inequality in parental leave likely plays a big part in



both the "fatherhood bonus" and the "motherhood penalty." In 2000, Iceland passed an act giving fathers a three month "use it or lose it" paternity leave to match their three month maternity leave. Iceland also gives both parents an additional three months to be split up how they choose.

From 2004 to now, Iceland's pay gap went from 81 cents on the dollar to 90, per the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

America, take notice.

"I think there are companies out there that don't move women up because they are the ones who could get pregnant and have to take time off," said Kraft, the restaurant manager. "And I do think that sometimes it's frowned-upon even for people to take off the full amount that [the Family and Medical Leave Act] allows."

Taking minimal time off suits her just fine, though. "I couldn't be that mom that stays at home and cooks. I like my job, I like to work," Kraft said. And that commitment has paid off for her professionally. "I feel



# Continues for America's Working Mothers

extremely competent at my job,” Kraft said.

“But when it comes to motherhood, I don’t feel as successful as I am in business. I do my best to make sure I do well at both, but for me, sometimes my home life falls before my job does. That’s just how my mind works, it’s always been ‘Succeed at your job, succeed at your job,’ so I think sometimes mommyming goes on the backburner.”

She likely isn’t alone in that feeling, according to the Department of Labor. Kraft’s household is one of the record-high 40 percent with

“I do have a lot of friends that, since they started having babies as soon as we graduated, they didn’t go to college and they’re not in high paying jobs,” Alvarez said. And she sees a connection between those examples and the motherhood penalty.

“I’m not saying it’s because they had children, but obviously it makes it harder. And if women are getting paid less just because they do have children, I’m kind of slowly starting to understand why more single moms go towards welfare,” Alvarez said.

Alvarez subscribes to a long-term vision for her life, when it comes to motherhood versus professional endeavors. “I base a lot of my decisions off of my unborn children that I don’t plan on having anytime soon,” she said.

Alvarez’s feelings about waiting to have children reflect a growing trend: more of America’s women are now waiting until their 30s to finally don the mantle of motherhood, according to data from the Center for Disease Control.

“I feel like especially now that women are trying more and more to have those high-paying positions and be leaders, I feel like a lot of women now are waiting to have children. Or they’re not having children so that they can have the same opportunities as men,” Alvarez said. And she’ll know when the time is right; she already has a timetable in mind.

“I want to be financially stable before I have children,” she said. Finishing her time at OCCC en route to a four-year degree is a

mothers as the primary breadwinner.

But even with her maternal drive being overtaken at times by her professional drive, foregoing one for the other was never an option. Kraft knew from a young age she wanted it all.

“Yeah, I think I had that growing up, the sense that I want children,” Kraft said. “But I didn’t want mommy to be my only job; I didn’t grow up with a mom like that. She went back to med school when I was in middle school, and graduated when I was in high school,” Kraft said. “So to me, that was what I should do.”

Alvarez has also felt strong professional and maternal drives for much of her life. She said she “absolutely” wants to start a family eventually. But she said the path many of her peers have taken doesn’t jive with her own plans.

major milestone in her plan.

“I remember my mom always saying, ‘When I was your age, I wish I did what you were doing.’ I don’t ever want to tell my kids that. I want to tell my kids that you can do anything you want to do,” Alvarez said. “I just wanna be able to say that I got a degree, like ‘I can do it—you can do it.’”

She wants to be an example and a role model for her future children, but she’s also hopeful that barriers like the motherhood penalty won’t be there to hold back the next generation of women.

“Issues like this are huge, and I think people need to start talking about them,” she said.



# Understanding the Life of A Single Mom

Continued from PAGE 6

Even though Jones makes ends meet financially with her busy schedule, she thinks the government is lacking. She believes that back child support is to blame for part of her strife. “No child support from the first dad, my ex-husband is \$11,000 behind on child support and [the other] is \$3,000 behind,” she said.

“The government could do so much better. If they went after these men then maybe I could get off of assistance,” Jones said, “And I could spend more time with my kids instead of working two jobs.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Services reported in 2017 that only 65 percent of total child support due was collected.

Aside from financial struggles, Jones has trouble accommodating for her own personal and mental health.

“I don't get everything I need because my kids come first. My health is bad because I can't afford to go to the doctor,” she said. She does get counseling through Northwest Domestic Crisis Center Incorporated to address her emotional well-being. “I take parenting classes through them too, so I can learn how domestic abuse affects my kids and what I can do about it.”

Her children aren't free from being affected by their lifestyle. “They have become angry and emotionally reserved. My son bawls every time they have to leave me,” Jones said.

Paul Amato's research in *The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation* sug-

gests children growing up with two parents are less likely to experience a problematic existence, not only during childhood but also in adulthood.

With a silver lining, Amato's research also shows that children of a single parent home will grow more quickly into self-sufficiency and independence.

In addition to her struggles with finances and the health of herself and her children, Jones also struggles trying to balance any kind of social life with her motherhood.

“I never get me time. I don't really have many friends anymore because I can't go out and do things. And the friends I do still have, I never really see,” Jones said.

Some single parents catch a break by living close to family and having a support system. As far as Jones' scenario goes though, she is alone.

“My parents help me financially when needed. But they aren't here to physically help me. They live in New Mexico, my sister is in prison, and my brother lives in Norman,” Jones said. “It's a tough life.”

Apart from all the trouble single motherhood brings Jones, she says, “I'm grateful for my kids. They drive me insane but, somehow keep me sane and in line all in one.”

For Rachel Jones being a loving mother means doing everything she can to provide the necessary care and resources for her and her children. She echoes the voices of millions of women sharing a similar strife.

“I do what I have to do to survive,” she said.

## Women and Technology Don't Always Mix

BY AYSIA JOHNSON  
Pioneer Staff Writer

**W**e are a mediated culture where mass media and technology have a direct effect on our actions, thoughts, and values. Technology plays a large role in creating social norms because forms of media such as advertisements, television, and film are present almost everywhere in our culture.

Common Sense Media reported that a lifetime of viewing stereotypical media can become so ingrained it can in time affect kids' career, self-esteem, and relationships. In a separate study by Common Sense Media, 75 percent of parents reported they felt TV shows and movies influenced how young girls should look, and 56 percent reported they influenced them on how to act in romantic relationships.

Social media has become a toxic mirror for adolescents with links to its use causing body image concerns, dieting issues, and self-objectification.

Haleigh Still, a former strip club worker, said “Social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are all visual platforms that give teenagers the perfect tools to be critiqued and compared to others.” Still said. “I post my body frequently, so I receive awful messages every day calling me a slut, a whore, or saying I'm worthless. I was told that I'm going to die being known as a whore and that I'm asking to be raped because of what I post.”

Along with social media, came a new form of harassment called cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is any form of harassment that happens through the internet or electronically.

“I've been bullied most of my life, but it got worse when I started using Instagram more often” Still said. “I posted my body a lot, I get negative awful

messages every day.”

The internet gives the gift of anonymity to anyone who asks for it and it can be both a gift and a curse. Social media comes with the likeness of a bathroom wall, allowing people to carelessly sling insults at another. A Norton study showed that 72 percent of women under the age of 30 have experienced some form of online harassment.

Amey Wise, a mother and business owner, said women can be very ugly to each other on social media.

“It's a lot easier since you're talking behind a keyboard and not face-to-face,” she said.

However, technology and social media give women globally easier access to connect, share information, and to give voices to those who are voiceless. This covers issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Hashtag activism is a term created by the media that refers to the use of hashtags for internet activism. It has become an increasingly popular form of protesting on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

“Social media can be positive though, like the #MeToo movement, which I'm sure changed how a lot of people view women,” said Amey Wise.

Still believes hashtags should just be the first step to creating a better awareness of issues. “I don't think hashtags do much aside from spreading the word. It would help a lot more if you took action,” said Still.

Social media can help remove the barriers of distance and location. Access to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram have made activism easier than ever, starting important conversations and creating a platform for awareness and change.



# Opinion

## An Open Letter To My Rapist

### A NOTE FROM THE ADVISOR:

This letter is real. It was written by Amber Jones, an OCCC student who was raped. Because most newspapers don't identify the victim of a sex crime, we have changed the author's name. The crime did not take place on campus, but did happen this year at an apartment many miles away from OCCC. Amber is safe and has access to resources. At this time she has not filed a police report but did tell a handful of people about the incident. We're publishing Amber's letter because we believe it adds a powerful voice to the female experience.

Dear Rapist,

I can't make you feel the fear I felt, my current pain, or the impact you made through simple words but I want you to know what you did to me.

The night you raped me was the most frightening moment of my life. The things you said, the things you did still haunt me to this day. No matter how many times that night plays in my head over and over, I still don't understand why you thought it was okay to take advantage of me. Why did you suspect that me being drunk was an invitation for you to do whatever you wish and why did you assume my silent stiff body underneath you was consent?

I didn't long for your touch. I never asked for your lips. I didn't wish to hear your excuses filled with lies. I never wanted for your body to be on mine. When you entered my body without permission, you took a piece of me. The piece you stole has left me disconnected from life and now the little that used to be me is not me anymore.

I want you to understand, I am not in control of my own life now.

My emotions, my thoughts are not mine, they belong to you. You are in charge of my choices. You decide what kind of day I will have. You decide when I have flashbacks. Ever since that night, every day revolves around you. Wherever I go, whatever I do you are there. You are running through my mind from the morning I wake up until the night I fall asleep. Sometimes you even appear in my dreams.

I try so hard to keep my mind constantly busy, some days being easier than others. But somehow you always find your way back king it so exhausting to get out of bed every morning, and making me go through each day pretending like everything is okay.

But I am very far from okay.

The current pain you have caused has shut me out from the rest of the world. I don't want to talk to anyone, I don't want to look in the eyes of anyone, I don't even want to be in the presence of anyone. I only long to stay locked in my room so no one can hurt me again.

You and your violations caused everything in my life to change. You are the reason the slightest glimpse from someone ignites me with panic. You are the reason I get uncomfortable being in the same room with people who are drinking, especially girls. You are the reason I feel unsafe alone in public. You cause the random panic attacks at night on my bathroom floor. You are the reason why I don't want to be in a dark room with someone else. You are the reason I cannot trust anyone because all they want to do is use me. You are the one who has painted my once colorful filled world to gray.

I should hate you for all the damage you have created but all the hatred inside me is directed towards myself. I believe it is my fault, I should have done something to make you stop. I should have screamed, I should have fought back but I didn't, I couldn't. I despise myself for becoming paralyzed with fear.

Somewhere deep down inside myself I know what you did to me was not my fault, I didn't have to do anything I didn't want to, and the whole time you knew exactly what you were doing.

Someday I will be able to accept the fact that someone could be so cruel. And that same day I will not let what you did to me define me or take control over my life anymore.

Sincerely,

Your victim

# Lindsey Busby

## Combined Medicine, Science for her Career

BY SEAN STANLEY  
Pioneer Editor

Lindsey Busby is a graduate student at a private college working on completing her masters degree in science to become a Nurse Practitioner. This title puts her scope of practice at the same level as a general physician. The choice Busby made between going to medical school, or her current graduate program relied largely on things most college students worry about.

"Mainly, since I was already a nurse, all of that time I spent doing work towards my BSN would have been wasted. The cost was a factor too, medical school is insanely expensive. Graduate programs are definitely expensive too don't get me wrong, but med school is another level of pricey. You can't work in medical school. Some of them literally make you sign a contract that says you won't. And I have bills to pay so that isn't really an option," she said.

Women pursuing scientific careers and higher education opportunity can face challenges male students may not have to deal with. Women seem to be less visible in these career fields which leads to the question; who are the modern women driving science today?

Lise Meitner worked with Hahn researching fission up until 1938 when Meitner had to flee Austria after it was annexed by Germany before the start of World War II. Her research continued despite diminished resources.

Following the second World War, Meitner was referred to as "the mother of the atomic bomb" ironic considering how opposed she was to the development of atomic weapons.

With people such as Neil DeGrasse Tyson working to excite and educate people about the field of modern science, many wonder does the world have a female DeGrasse Tyson?

Nina Tandon holds a PhD in biomedical engineering and is the founder and CEO of a company called EpiBone. Her company grows human bones in a lab that can be used for skeletal reconstruction.

"Tandon has done some absolutely amazing things. She created precise and "personalized" bones from stem cells and she's working on heart tissues as well. I think it's awesome," Busby said.

Tandon's research into tissue growth could mean one day someone needing an organ transplant to live, may be able to have it grown rather than waiting for a donor organ to become available.

During a Ted Talk, Tandon said, "Let's take the example of the heart, the topic of a lot of my research. What makes the heart unique? Well, the heart beats, rhythmically, tirelessly, faithfully. We copy this in the lab by outfitting cell culture



systems with electrodes. These electrodes act like mini pace-makers to get the cells to contract in the lab."

According to data collected in 2015, women make up less than 24 percent of the of the workforce of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in the U.S.A study published the following year from the National Girls Collaborative Project shows in 2016 women made up 29 percent of the science and engineering workforce, suggesting a five percent increase.

However, most of the science-based careers women work in are primarily biological sciences and social sciences, with women only making up about 11 percent of physicists and seven percent of mechanical engineers.

Phoebe Sulzen has a degree in engineering and has also spent time interning with NASA. "I think it is much easier for a man with any personality type to succeed and be recognized in STEM. With women, it is much trickier. Speaking in generalities here and not saying this is always the case. Too outspoken and people may not respect you. Not outspoken enough, and you won't get listened to." She said. "If you have just the right amount of assertiveness, confidence, and so many other factors (and yes, one of these is not letting family get in the way of your career), and if you do something really big, then you can be recognized for your accomplishments."

Many experts point to long-held biases against women

WOMEN IN STEM

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# For Lindsey Busby Meidcine is a Calling and a Career

Continued from PAGE 14

in the fields of science for such low numbers in these career fields. While the culture is changing, implicit bias and stereotypes still impact women pursuing a career in STEM.

“Sometimes it sucks being the only girl on the team and sometimes there are unintentional sexist undercurrents that come into play, but in general all the coworkers and managers I have worked with actively work to educate themselves on unconscious bias and embrace the diversity provided by having a female on the team,” Sulzen said. “I truly wish that everyone wanting to learn could be given this opportunity. To not be judged off how much they know but how much they want to learn and to be treated as valuable and worthy.”

The American Association of University Women is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization using fact-based research to drive equality for women in STEM related fields. Catherine Hill, a PhD, is the former vice president for research at AAUW. Her report, published with AAUW, explained how the threat of stereotypes affect female performance.

“A female student taking a math test experiences an extra cognitive and emotional burden of worry related to the stereotype that women are not good at math. A reference to this stereotype, even one as subtle as taking the test in a room of mostly men, can adversely affect her test performance,” the report said.

Organizations like AAUW are actively conducting research into what policies can be enacted to not only lessen but

eventually remove inequality in STEM fields. Some solutions include encouraging high school girls to take calculus, physics, chemistry, computer science, and engineering classes when available. This encouragement promotes the idea that intelligence can be developed, meaning our intellect can grow and people can becoming better at learning.

“I think when younger girls are really interested in science, they’ll find what motivates them, internal motivation is generally stronger than external motivation,” Busby said.

Tandon was taking college-level calculus class at the age of 14 and credits her father with motivating her to pursue math and science.

“I remember my dad telling me that I was good at math and science and if I didn’t study them it would be a disservice to women because everything in society is telling girls not to,” Tandon said in an interview with Vogue Magazine.

People are driven to succeed at things they are passionate about and will overcome great adversity to reach their goals. As more women become leading experts in their fields, they influence and encourage the next generation to push that much further.

Busby said “I think that if more young girls were exposed to women in science and the awesome things they’re doing, especially if that was on the same stage as Neil Degrasse Tyson.”

## About This Issue of the Pioneer

The assignment was simple.

Take one issue of the Pioneer and do a deep dive on a subject. Of course, in journalism nothing is ever simple.

Instead of a subject like the budget or politics. The staff chose The Female Experience. Eight students looked at topics ranging from gender identity to working in the sex trade.

Their stories are powerful, important and well worth the time invested to read them.

The project was headed by KaraLee Langford, who will serve as the Pioneer’s editor next semester.

Because there was so much to tell and so many stories, we eliminated the advertising from this issue and expanded the number of pages.

To symbolize the stories, we asked a diverse group of women to pose for our cover. They ranged in age from 11 to over 56. We also asked each woman to bring an object to symbolize just what it means to be a woman in today’s society. The women’s photos are on the front. Their objects cover the back page.

We hope that each of our readers draws something important for this edition.

**Cover photos: Top row from left to right: Chaya Chandrasekhar, Kenzie Langford, Elexis Jackson, Paula Vallera, Valeria Shepvalova. Middle row from left to right: Hattie Kennedy, Kat Adams, Emily Carter, Courtney Yeingst, Brenlen Baus. Bottom row from left to right: Zoey Workman, Kathi Lowrance, Jessica Stephens, Kristin Messick, Chiaki Troutman. Cover and back photo and design by Jenna Lowrance**

WOMEN IN STEM



The Women's March of 2017. Pioneer File Photo by Cici Simon

# WOMEN IN POLITICS

## Women Still Fighting For Equality In America's Political Systems

BY IDA STALLVIK  
Special to the Pioneer

**W**omen are still a minority. In 2018, 107 women -- 78 Democrats, 29 Republicans -- held seats in the United States House and Senate, comprising only about 20 percent of the 535 members.

About half the American workforce is women, among lawyers they make up 38 percent, one female to every three males, according to the United States Census Bureau.

Jacquelyn L. Ford grew up in south Oklahoma City with a father that encouraged her to value academics and a mother that taught her to never be economically dependent upon anyone.

"Is it harder to be a woman in this business? It's pretty damned hard to be a woman in this business who does what I choose to do," Ford said. "I've had judges, this month, telling me how hot I am while I'm giving legal arguments. Asking me to please not step out of their line of sight, because I'm the most attractive thing they've seen in this courtroom in weeks."

Ford said in the trial room she is surrounded by men. "And every man is looking at me, I can feel it," she said.

Yet no matter the level of harassment she received, not

a single male had the guts to tell the judge his actions were inappropriate.

"Instead, they all laughed, and expected me to laugh," Ford said she would step back and take three deep breaths before smiling and forcing herself to thank the judge for his 'compliment'.

Ford has represented over 3,000 people as a public defender, and received the Clarence Darrow Award for excellence in trial advocacy.

Ford said to stand up to the judge in the middle of a trial would be inconsiderate. "Because to cut off his head in that moment would've been a disservice to my client, and would've been so unbelievably shocking to what happened that we would have not been able to conclude business. As I'm sitting here right now I'm mad at myself for not making a claim against this judge," she said.

Ford is now a criminal defense attorney and founded the Jacqui Ford Law Firm in 2011. As a law student, she worked defending people accused of crimes at the University of Oklahoma Legal Clinic.

Ford pursued a bachelor of arts degree in business administration at Oklahoma State University, taking night classes while working full-time in a sales position. On a cold night close to Christmas, she and a friend were joking about go-

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# "Despite representing half the global population, women comprise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators." - USAID

Continued from PAGE 16

ing to law school, and the thought stayed with her.

"That night we finished class, and I drove to a Borders. I had seven dollars to my name, I went in, spent five of it on an expensive-ass coffee, and sat down with an LSAT (Law School Admission Test) study book on the floor," Ford said. She sat on the floor that night, drinking coffee and decided she was going to take the LSAT--which was only three weeks away.

There has been a steady growth in the amount of women going into the legal field. The United States Census Bureau report shows "At mid-career, when earnings peak, the top 10 percent of female lawyers earn more than \$300,000 a year, while the top 10 percent of male lawyers earn more than \$500,000."

Emily Stacey, who earned a PhD, is a world traveler, author, and a political science professor at Oklahoma City Community College. She has excessive knowledge on the subject of contemporary issues and social movements both national and international, the emergence of technology in politics, and the vast topic of freedom of speech.

Stacey believes the positions in politics and power being predominantly occupied by white males are largely the consequences of the history of development.

"There has really not been a time in modern history where politics of our nation and nations around the world were not dominated by white men," Stacey said. "The result of which has been systemic poverty, the entrenchment of inequalities, and propping up of large corporations."

She did say the tide is changing a little in the U.S. "I am hopeful about the largest population of women being elected to the House of Representatives, but it is 2018, this was long overdue."

Stacey said the reason Oklahoma is at the bottom of the list, when it comes to female representatives, is largely to do with voter turnout.

"It is overwhelmingly white and older folks that religiously vote. That is going to make a vast difference on who gets elected and on what policy agenda," she said. "In terms of lack of females, part of it is gender stereotypes regarding what roles females can feasibly play in modern society."

Vox Magazine said that women in congress pass twice as many bills as their male counterparts during one session of congress. Researchers have found that women bring different backgrounds into congress. They overcome differ-

ent obstacles, and often more of them, in order to succeed. This shapes how women govern in the office and what they choose to bring focus on.

Lydia King is currently a student at Oklahoma City Community College, pursuing a degree in political science and pre-law.

"Women are taught from a young age to avoid causing others inconvenience at all costs. Don't say no, don't disagree, don't speak up for yourself, don't set boundaries," King said. "Unlearning these behaviors is the best thing someone can do when working in a male-dominated field."

King said during her time as a student, working in her classes is one thing she doesn't have to worry about. It is outside the classroom where she receives criticism from people who think her efforts in achieving a degree in politics isn't worthwhile.

"I have been lucky enough to have professors who show no bias for or against either gender, and my education has not suffered in any way as a result of my gender," King said. "The only way in which my experience as a student has differed from my male classmates has been in in-class discussions where it sometimes becomes apparent that we view the world from two very different lenses, and have been influenced by wildly different experiences."

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), women today are still left absent when it comes to national and local decision making. Women struggle to find a voice in peacebuilding transitions and are often excluded from political processes.

From discrimination and violence to a lack of support and resources, women face countless challenges to participation in the civic and political life of their countries." USAID believes the key to improvement lies in knowledge. The organization provides encouragement and support for female empowerment through building exercises, training opportunities, and leadership seminars.

"Adopting behaviors that require a person to make a conscious choice to oppress someone can prevent an issue from occurring in the first place. So say no, set boundaries, and stand up for yourself without apologizing for it because no one's convenience is worth your personal freedom," King said.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

# Understanding the Life of a Woman Who Works as a Sugar Baby

BY THOMAS MASSENAT  
Pioneer Staff Writer

Rain broke on sidewalk. The heat escaping concrete, cast the gentle smell one associates with summer showers, inoffensive, indescribable, and timeless. Sitting inside Elemental Cafe, I watched rain and people pour and flow through the doors from under the awning, steel sheets to keep heads dry and food unsullied.

I received a text, “here. I’m wearing a tan coat & navy beanie.”

“Cool, I’m here too wearing a green and purple striped shirt,” I replied.

“Ok I’m outside smoking a cigarette lol.”

Rising, the metal framed chair screeched against the concrete floor, reminding me auto-repair was this building’s conceptual intended purpose.

I went into the rain.

What follows is my conversation with the sender of the text. Her name, is secret. Her profession, illegal.

She was standing, at the edge of the awning, droplets ricocheting onto her black combat boots, gazing. The rain caught her eye.

**Q. How did you first get involved with being a sugar baby?**

A. “Well, I, uh, started my own massage business with one of my friends a couple years ago, and just through that I found clients who wanted to spend more time with me. My time is valuable, obviously, and that’s basically how it evolved to where I am today.”

**Q. So, have you ever used any of the websites they have available for sugar babies?**

A. “Yeah, so the way that’s how I found my clients originally, is through Backpage. Through my ads for my massage business, which closed down in March, unfortunately. But, I didn’t totally rely on that. Once I established clients there I was like, oh my god, I could use an actual [sugar baby]



website! I’ve used Seeking Arrangements, a couple other ones, but I haven’t like the other ones, so I usually stick with that one. It’s not as successful as actually just coming across clients in person, but I’ve managed to come across like two or three of them. I met one of them about a month ago on there and that’s who I’m meeting today at three for lunch (she laughs).”

**Q. What do you like, what do you dislike about using Seeking Arrangements?**

A. “It’s not necessarily a dislike, it’s annoying that I don’t necessarily know exactly who I’m talking to on there. I think caution in general, when it comes to meeting people online, is probably the biggest one. Being unsure if someone is serious or not. Because if I meet him in real life I already know that they have money and they already know that I’m a real person.”

**Q. So you get a sense of their personality?**

A. “Yeah, I really hate texting in general and I don’t want notifications from those websites popping up on my phone, so I use Safari and won’t know when someone messages me back [until] I get back on there, so the feeling of a conversation is just gone.”

**Q. I think that’s a big issue with sites like tinder, is it a similar vibe?**

“Exactly, but on [Seeking Arrangements] there’s already a notion of there’s going to be an exchange. That’s the compensation for spending time with someone. There’s more pressure there to be like, ‘oh I have to be as likeable as I can.’ Cause on Tinder, I don’t give a f\*\*k. When it comes to money, I’m like s\*\*t. (She laughs). Got to secure the bag!”

**Q. Have you ever felt pressure to do anything you’re uncomfortable with?**

A. “I’m pretty straightforward when it comes to what I want to do in all aspects of life. I do what I want. I’ve always

WOMEN AND SEX

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# Inside the Sugar Baby Lifestyle

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had that type of attitude. Working with my business, has helped me gain the boldness of saying no when I don't want to do something. It's honestly a power trip. It's, I wouldn't say a hobby, but, it's a strange feeling. But no, I've never felt pressure to do anything I don't want to do. I'm very clear about that. I feel like you can get a vibe from someone pretty early on about what their personality is going to be like. If I get a passive aggressiveness which someone the other day on there, that I've blocked on Instagram, somehow, I think it was through one of my homegirls who also is a sugar baby, I blocked him on there, and he actually found me on seeking arrangements, blocked him on there, he made a new account, and the first thing he said was 'come over,' and I said a couple days later 'I'm not keen on meeting strangers on the internet, especially when we don't discuss compensation before,' and he said, 'K? Bye?' and I was like, 'Okayyyy?' He was like, 'you're trying to get me to send money without even meeting you' and I said, 'that's not what I said at all, and I can tell by your demeanor you're not someone I want to be around.' I blocked him after that. I feel like I have a good sense of judgement when it comes to meeting people in general."

## Q. Is that the most valuable skill in this industry?

"Yeah, definitely. I have girls all the time who say they want to do something similar and the biggest thing I try to tell them is that it's not for everyone. You have to have a really strong willpower and be able to say no in situations where you feel uncomfortable. Because you're the boss, they're there for you. It's your time, you're the most valuable asset."

A. Have you ever felt an emotional connection with someone you've met through this process?

"I definitely develop friendships. I put a lot of trust in people when it comes to this, and I do like a lot of them as friends. But, I have to draw a clear line between, this is money, it's not an actual relationship. But if I ever got in trouble I know that they would actually feel that way and have a care about me, and that's the most important thing is to make sure there's mutual respect there."

## Q. That's super sweet. Are you in a relationship aside from your business?

A. "Yes, I have been in a long term relationship for five years. I tend to not disclose much about what I do because I feel like you shouldn't ask questions you don't want the answer to, you know? There has to be a big mutual respect and trust there because it's... It's just important to me. If anybody was trying to pry into my business, regardless of who you are, if you're my family or what, like, I don't owe you anything. I think it's important my boyfriend knows that, and he's always been supportive of that."

## Q. That's great. Tell me more.

A. "I moved down here when I was seventeen, and he and I started dating and I have essentially been independant all of my adult life and he's known that, he respects that as well. So I think that's why our relationship works so well. It really takes a mature person. Good communication for sure, to a certain extent, I'm never going to be rude, like 'none of your f\*\*king business' unless I feel like an accusation vibe toward myself. I really value our relationship."

## Q. Change of subject: Do you get paid per meeting, or is it a monthly thing?

A. "If I'm first meeting someone I will always make sure, 'cause I need to see the money. Like you need to send me a picture of it, and as soon as we meet, regardless of what happens, you're paying me for my time. Not for whatever the h\*\*l you expect, it's about me, and even with my business, it's cash first because you never know. You have to trust someone."

## Q. So, you told me about an unpleasant experience with a man online, have you had an in person encounter which left something to be desired?

A. "Not sugar baby-ing, but at my old job I did. I've had to kick people out. I would hire a new girl, she wouldn't get the money first, and at the end of the appointment they would refuse to pay her, and they would threaten to call the cops on me. And like, you came here. And now you want to call the cops? I've had to freak out on people like that before. Never with sugar baby-ing at all, just because I'm not gonna meet someone that I get a bad vibe from."

## Q. Does your family know what you do?

A. "Oh, no."

## Q. Do you ever plan on telling them?

A. "I feel like it's none of their f\*\*king business. As long as I'm happy and I'm healthy."

## Q. How do you feel this profession affects your self esteem?

A. "It's made me have definitely higher self esteem for sure, because if somebody wants to spend time with you, they think you're beautiful, they think you're [worthy], like I know my own worth, but they agree and they'll go above and beyond to prove they want to be around me and support me, help me. Most people, who are older gentlemen, are successful, say they want to mentor me to help me achieve my own goals, and that's a really nice feeling. Yeah, it's almost like a father figure almost. It's like having multiple in your life that care about you."

WOMEN AND SEX





"I chose my college diploma because learning to read, write, and think for yourself is a superpower! Give a girl an education and she has the power to change the world. Isn't that what a superhero does- make the world a safe, better place?"

**-Chaya Chandrasekhar**

## Quotes & Objects from our models



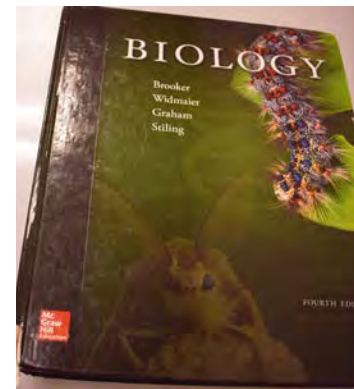
"I chose this because through tough times if I cried I would grab it. My parent would help me, too, but he would help me more."

**-Emily Carter**



"Being a woman in America to me means living in fear. We are fearful of going out at night, fearful of going anywhere alone or unprotected, and even fearful of standing up for ourselves at times."

**-Jessica Stephens**



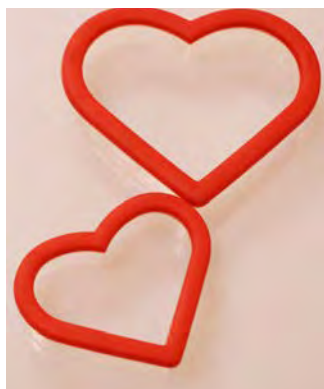
"I brought my biology textbook because it symbolizes the education and the knowledge we have grown to acquire."

**-Valeria Shepvalova**



"To me, being a woman today means you have to be resilient and tough."

**-Hattie Kennedy**



"Being a woman is all about your heart- giving, caring, loving, nurturing. Even if your own heart is feeling empty, you keep on doing for others to your best ability."

**-Kathi Lowrance**



"We are all queens!"

**-Zoey Workman**



"I take pride in that I've been able to make and raise good and decent humans."

**-Paula Vallera**



"Being a woman to me is being the caregiver of our family unit. I take pride in raising my children and leading them on their path to be the best and happiest they can be"

**-Kristin Messick**



"As women, we are expected to be poised and often unemotional because when we do show emotion, we are seen as 'hysterical'. The mask also speaks to the idea in society that women must always look beautiful, from movie stars to the suburbs, women are expected to look camera ready and are shamed when they stray from that idea."

**-Kat Adams**



"Being a woman in today's society is like always being compared to a man."

**-Brenlen Baus**



"Being a woman in the 21st century I see all these different angles in which people view us. But we don't amount to just a single one of those views."

**-Kenzie Langford**

"Being a woman empowers me to fight harder for what I want to be successful in a man's world."

**-Courtney Yeingst**



"Being woman I feel beautiful, inspired and now in a generation where my voice can and shall be heard. I stand for a better future in hopes for all individuals. We are enough!"

**-Elexis Jackson**