## Chapter 15: Postgender

Abi Bechtel, a teaching assistant at the University of Akron and mother of three, was fed up. It was 3:36pm on the first of June, 2015. She was standing in front of aisle E11 in the toy department, phone raised, taking a picture of the sign: “Building Sets,” and… “Girls’ Building Sets.” Abi’s tweeted the photo alongside four words: “Don’t do this, @Target.”[[1]](#footnote-21) It worked. A couple of months and many retweets later, Target responded by announcing they’d be phasing out unnecessary gendered signage. In the following years, they built on this policy by introducing gender-neutral bathrooms, children’s bedding, and clothes.[[2]](#footnote-23)

Toca Boca, the clothing company Target partnered with to do this, was making its first foray into bricks-and-mortar retail. Originally a casual game company, it was known for its popular gender stereotype-defying apps, Toca Boca Hair Salon and Toca Robot Lab. Much of the colorful imagery featured on the kids’ clothes— from a “a coral-colored T-shirt of a mean-mugging sloth donning a baseball cap, with the word ‘Fast’ printed underneath” to “a purple pile of poop”— were “characters ripped straight from the apps of Toca Life, […] digital games that emphasize role playing and are set in common locales such as farms or city streets.”

The hyper-gendered world of children’s clothing had long been dominated by franchised media relentlessly flogging a pink/blue, unicorn/rocket ship binary. Many of these brands used to be anchored in TV shows targeting either girls or boys. The media landscape had been changing, though, fragmenting into a fractal landscape. Among a generation growing up “digitally native,” as the marketers put it, something new seemed to be afoot, a gender-neutral aesthetic spreading from the online to the offline world. Of course parents are the ones who actually need to open their wallets to buy this stuff for their kids, so mounting frustration from the likes of Abi Bechtel doubtless played a role. However, Toca Boca wasn’t just following an ideological premise, or responding to the demands of parents. They were, per their digital roots, data-driven, using observational testing to understand “what characters users most like and identify with, as well as the most appealing colors, what kids think is funny, and what scenarios skew too heavily toward a certain gender or seem to exclude some players.” The more inclusive a design, the more universal its appeal; online, “scale the user base” has always been the mantra.

Predictably, Target’s new policies stoked controversy on the right. Writing for conservative media outlet *TheBlaze*, Matt Walsh lamented,[[3]](#footnote-28)

Progressives see the toy industry like they see everything: an ideological battleground, another politicized arena to defeat traditional concepts of gender and usher in this new ambiguous dystopia where kids can live as amorphous, genderless, pansexual blobs of nondescript matter. […] I won’t attempt to defend every gender stereotype or “gender norm,” but I do subscribe to the radical theory that boys and girls are different and distinct from one another in complex, concrete, and important ways, and many of the dreaded “norms” are, well, normal and biological. It is precisely our role as parents to help our kids “conform” to their gender, to their identity, and grow from boys and girls into well adjusted, confident masculine men and feminine women.

Curiously, the implication that children *need* to be socialized or taught to be masculine or feminine— that “nature” needs to be propped up and reinforced by culture— is reminiscent of John Money’s discredited (and at the time, progressive) idea of gender as a social construct.

As we’ve seen in our exploration of intersexuality, the biology of sex is more complex than a binary either/or, but it’s still the case that most of our bodies can be meaningfully classified along this axis. The big question is whether the same applies to the brain. Is there, in any sense that can be quantified or tested medically, such a thing as a “female brain” or “male brain,” independent of learning and socialization?

This remains hotly contested. There’s a whole scientific literature showing that both the absolute and relative sizes of various brain regions do vary, on average, by sex.[[4]](#footnote-30) Some studies have attempted to relate these differences to cognitive skills, but here the results are murky, generally showing weak or inconclusive effects, relying on small numbers of subjects, and using highly artificial tasks. It’s also nearly impossible to draw firm conclusions because in the real world, we can’t separate the effects of nature and nurture.

In her 2019 book *Gender Mosaic: Beyond the Myth of the Male and Female Brain*,[^5] Israeli neuroscientist Daphna Joel points out that individual variability in both skills and brain structures is actually far larger than the average difference between the sexes, with a majority of people exhibiting what she calls a “mosaic” of more typically “male” or “female” brain regions and cognitive traits. In other words, at least on the basis of today’s coarse physical and functional measurements, you could say that most of us have an “intersex brain.”

Using these findings as a springboard, Joel makes the radical-sounding case for gender abolition in most areas of life. She doesn’t deny that our bodies (and, to a lesser extent, our brains) vary by sex, but she believes we attribute far too much importance to this particular axis of variation— and that there are real negative consequences.

For instance, she finds it frustrating— as do many, myself included— that a phrase like “woman scientist” can be used to describe *her*, while “man scientist” sounds redundant in describing *me*; I enjoy the privilege of simply being a “scientist.” The situation is a grown-up analogue to “Building Sets” versus “Girls’ Building Sets.” When I type “woman scientist” into Google, I get 10.2 million hits, but only 2.4% as many— 247 thousand— for “man scientist.” “Man scientist” is just not a thing. Of course this isn’t because 97% of scientists are women; quite the opposite (though in most scientific fields this is, finally, changing). It’s about the way qualifiers in language always attach to minorities, as described with regard to handedness back in Chapter 2.[[5]](#footnote-31) The issue here goes deeper than mere numbers. It would sound odd to describe an acquaintance as a “blue-eyed scientist,” for instance, although blue eyes are also a minority, because eye color just isn’t relevant to being a scientist. Every time we use the phrase “woman scientist,” we’re admitting that, in our minds, being a woman *is* somehow relevant to being a scientist.

For some, the underlying bias is explicit. Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, argued at a 2005 conference hosted by the National Bureau of Economic Research that female scientists were underrepresented due to biological factors— meaning, women simply aren’t as interested in or as good as men at doing science.[[6]](#footnote-32) Software engineer James Damore made a similar claim about the underrepresentation of women in engineering in a widely circulated memo at Google in 2017.[[7]](#footnote-34)

These are old claims. They used to take more extreme forms; in the 19th century, women were commonly held to be essentially incapable of abstract or creative thought. This was used as a rationale for barring them from higher education in fields like mathematics— for what would the point be? Consider the intellectual partnership between Charles Babbage (1791-1871), inventor of the Analytical Engine, a steampunk precursor to the modern computer, and Ada Byron King, Countess of Lovelace (1815-1852), who wrote the first ever computer program (though neither lived to see such a machine built, let alone a program run). As a woman, Lovelace’s only route to higher math was private tutoring— being a countess has its benefits. Yet even her relatively progressive math tutor, Augustus De Morgan, expressed his skepticism that she could ever make a real contribution in a cautionary letter to Lady Byron, Ada’s mother, in 1844: “[T]he very great tension of mind which [wrestling with mathematical difficulties requires] is beyond the strength of a woman’s physical power of application.”[^9] Astonishingly, this letter was written soon *after* Lovelace’s seminal publication describing how to program the Analytical Engine, a masterwork of mathematical creativity and arguably the founding document of the entire field of computer science!

So, between low expectations and lack of access to higher education, it was exceedingly difficult for Victorian women to contribute to science, technology, engineering, or math; yet the near-absence of women in these fields was the very evidence that they weren’t capable. When, against all odds, women still managed to excel, as Lovelace and a few others did, their successes went unacknowledged, or were regarded as freakish.

These attitudes were put on a “scientific” footing by Cesare Lombroso in his 1893 followup to *The criminal man*, entitled *The criminal woman, the prostitute, and the normal woman*.[[8]](#footnote-36) Echoing commonly held beliefs, he asserted not only that “Compared to male intelligence, female intelligence is deficient,”[[9]](#footnote-37) but also that “woman is always fundamentally immoral.” Further,

Normal woman has many characteristics that bring her close to the level of the savage, the child, and therefore the criminal (anger, revenge, jealousy, and vanity) and others, diametrically opposed, which neutralize the former. Yet her positive traits hinder her from rising to the level of man, whose behavior balances rights and duties, egotism and altruism, and represents the peak of moral evolution.”

Ugly as this characterization is, it might seem like it could at least have afforded a gender-nonconforming woman a route up the patriarchal chain by being, as Rex Harrison put it in *My Fair Lady*, “more like a man”;[[10]](#footnote-38) but this wasn’t the case. If a woman failed to be submissive or to conform, then her “masculine” character made her a degenerate, just as “feminine” traits would for a man:

Degeneration induces confusion between the two sexes, as a result of which one finds in male criminals a feminine infantilism that leads to pederasty. To this corresponds masculinity in women criminals, including an atavistic tendency to return to the stage of hermaphroditism. […] To demonstrate the presence of innate virility among female prisoners, it is enough to present a photograph of a couple whom I surprised in a prison. The one dressed as a male is simultaneously so strongly masculine and so criminal that it is difficult to believe she is actually female.

It was a no-win situation.

Things have clearly improved since the 19th century, but by how much? Recall that in intersex medical literature from the 1960s, it was still taken for granted that “Most married [chromosomally male] women […] take part in extra-household activities which they often pursue with great success because of their above average intelligence.”[[11]](#footnote-39)

While the modern literature on sex-based cognitive differences hasn’t reached any clearcut conclusion, the powerful lingering effects of social pressure and discrimination remain obvious. We can see evidence of this in large-scale, real world findings. Perhaps most famously, a shift toward gender equality in orchestras began taking place after “blind” auditions became the norm some decades ago, raising the percentage of women in the United States’s five highest-ranked orchestras from 6% in 1970 to 21% in 1993.[[12]](#footnote-40) Today, women make up half of the New York Philharmonic.[[13]](#footnote-42) Clearly it wasn’t the case that men make better violinists, though that claim might have seemed plausible to some in 1970.

A similar experiment has been conducted in software engineering using GitHub, the world’s largest social coding platform.[[14]](#footnote-44) When an engineer adds code to a project— a process that requires approval from a project owner— their gender may be either visible or invisible, depending on their user profile. A 2016 study of 3 million code contributions from 1.4 million coders found that women’s code was actually accepted more often than men’s… *unless* the contributors were outsiders to a project and their gender was visible. Under those conditions, men’s contributions were accepted more often. A more recent study at Google[[15]](#footnote-45) found that “pushback” on code contributions, meaning requests for additional work before the contribution would be accepted, were more extensive not only for women, but also for older and nonwhite engineers. Unfortunately, in a corporate setting where teammates all know each other, gender-blind contributions are a lot harder to implement than on worldwide social coding projects with many contributors.

As for academia, a sweeping 2021 review identified sources of gender bias in science at every career stage, noting among many other effects that “several studies where the identity of the authors was experimentally manipulated demonstrated that conference abstracts, papers, and fellowship applications were rated as having higher merit when they were supposedly written by men.” So, women (and other historically underrepresented minorities) still struggle against powerful bias in fields like science and engineering. And when we’re able to measure their real-world contributions on a level playing field, under gender-blind conditions, we don’t see evidence of the inferiority Summers, Damore, and others insinuate. This is why the insistence that such insinuations are harmless questions or mere “food for thought” angers so many advocates for gender equality in science and engineering: these insinuations reinforce the very biases that pose the greatest obstacles to equality.

What fields like musical performance, science, and engineering have in common nowadays is an increasing degree of disembodiment relative to the more physical presence, and the more physical labor, that predominated in centuries past. Many humans in the developed world today are information workers, and many of our relationships with each other are pure information relationships; our genitals, and more broadly, the sexual differences between our bodies, just aren’t relevant anymore to these forms of work or relationships. I’m not denying the physicality of live music. (No music lover could, after two years without concerts during COVID.) In the end, though, if you’re a violinist, what really matters is what comes out of the violin— not what’s in your underwear. In evaluating code or a scientific paper, this is even more obvious. The strength of the engineer or researcher’s biceps, the size of their breasts, or their ability to get pregnant simply don’t matter.

In fairness, our narratives about the genderedness of physical labor in humanity’s past have often been overstated or misrepresented. For instance, when prominent anthropologists (at the time, overwhelmingly male) convened at the University of Chicago in 1966 for a symposium called “Man the Hunter,” their “synthesis” of a range of biased ethnographic studies led them to conclude that intelligence itself was, literally, a product of men’s work.[^18] In most traditional cultures, it’s parties of men who go out on big hunting expeditions, presumably because of their greater average size and strength. The theory then went that increasingly sophisticated and cooperative hunting lay at the heart of advances in technology and culture, which in turn produced an increasing surplus of high quality protein from big game, giving us more energy to grow bigger brains and more leisure to develop better technology: a virtuous cycle.

The many problems with this gendered narrative have been dissected in detail elsewhere;[^19] I’ll just mention a few here. In nearly all traditional societies we’ve studied, gathering, scavenging, gardening, and small animal hunting— all of which are more typically “women’s work”— provide more calories, and more consistently, than big game hunting. Also, inventories of technological development tend to skew toward weaponry (which often features hard stone or metal points) at the expense of wooden tools, basketry, and early farming technologies, which tend to leave less physical evidence but are just as important. Although cooperation was clearly central to the development of humanity as a social species, the idea that this was a male innovation is dubious, given the sophistication of cooperative practices among women in traditional societies— likely beginning with cooperative child rearing. Clearly, women have played a central role in human development, and historical biases in academia tended to marginalize their role prior to a more balanced assessment of the evidence in recent decades.[^20]

We do need to acknowledge, though, that when it comes to physical labor, women and men have meaningfully different capabilities, and this has been reflected in strongly gendered divisions of labor in nearly all traditional societies— whether or not this has been accompanied by patriarchy. In traditional, gender-binary terms: women have babies and nurse; men don’t. Men are usually more muscular than women, giving them an edge when it comes to heavy lifting. Warfare, too, is nearly always associated with men, perhaps not just because of physical differences, but due to testosterone-fueled aggression, a sex-linked trait we find in many other animals too.[^21] On the other hand, women are better equipped than men for endurance running, which has played a role in some traditional societies;[^22] they also tend to be healthier and, as we’ve seen, live longer.[^23]

These differences are real. However, in a corporate environment or on Zoom, they’re irrelevant. Desk work involves little physical exertion. While this has its downsides (such as epidemic obesity and diabetes), it also means that physical prowess no longer confers any advantage. Today, it’s either impossible or unacceptable to resolve disputes or establish hierarchies through physical combat. Sexual aggression and rape, too, are unacceptable. Especially in the wake of #MeToo, bringing any kind of sexual behavior into the workplace has become unacceptable. The COVID era has played a role in accelerating this shift, not just by eliminating physical contact, but in subtler ways too— for instance, by making it impossible to tell how tall anyone is on a Zoom call.[[16]](#footnote-47)

Compared to our 100,000+ year history as a species, all of these changes are very recent, and many are technologically enabled. Charles Babbage, who was not only the inventor of the computer but was obsessed with automation in all its forms, described its effect on laborers in the textile industry in his 1832 book *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*:[^25]

[From 1822 to 1832], the number of hand-looms in employment has diminished to less than one-third, whilst that of power-looms has increased to more than five times its former amount. The total number of workmen has increased about one-third; but the amount of manufactured goods (supposing each power-loom to do only the work of three hand-looms) is three and a half times as large as it was before.

In considering this increase of employment, it must be admitted, that the two thousand persons thrown out of work are not exactly of the same class as those called into employment by the power-looms. A hand-weaver must possess bodily strength, which is not essential for a person attending a power-loom; consequently, women and young persons of both sexes, from fifteen to seventeen years of age, find employment in power-loom factories.

In other words, industrialization— in this case, adding steam power to traditional weaving looms— turned what had been men’s work into anyone’s work. And in an era when women and children were paid far less,[[17]](#footnote-48) and workers had become interchangeable, this meant women’s work and children’s work.

Nowadays, a wide array of technologies similarly decouple labor from bodies, with all their here-and-now limitations and particularities, age and sex included. Cars and trucks, motorized wheelchairs, power saws, forklifts, tractors, and many other machines extend the effect Babbage described into all areas of farming, industry, and life in general. The increasing role of military drones may even do the same for warfare.[^27]

While this makes many historically “male” forms of labor more accessible to women (and children, if allowed), technofeminist writers in the 1980s also wrote about many other modern developments that break the mold of traditionally “female” labor too, like washing machines, showers, kitchen appliances, and vacuum cleaners. In accounts of labor-saving or -democratizing technologies we tend to forget about essential labor in the household, because the subjugated status of women in history has meant that such labor has been considered a wifely duty, unpaid and taken for granted. This motivated the International Wages for Housework Campaign, launched in 1972 by activists Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, Brigitte Galtier, and Selma James— part of the larger struggle for women’s agency and economic independence we touched on in Chapter 4. Although domestic “caring and caretaking” remain uncompensated today, they’ve been slowly becoming less gendered, due both to changing attitudes and evolving technologies.

I remember, as a young father, changing a lot of diapers and spending many, many hours walking with a baby strapped to my chest in a BabyBjörn carrier. Back in 2002, this still attracted stares and double takes sometimes; usually delighted ones from women, occasionally uncomfortable ones from men. There’s deep muscle memory connected with this time; as I type, I find my hands, arms, and shoulders contorting to rehearse those old familiar tucking, buckling, and strap-testing gestures. Twenty years later, things have apparently gotten a bit more ergonomic. There are hundreds of baby carriers on the market now; Swedish BabyBjörn competitor Najell, under a photo of a hipster couple with “his and hers” twins in carriers, advertises that they’re “Designing baby carriers that fit both parents!,” adding,

Fathers are increasingly taking an equal part and responsibility in parenting and raising their children. A very positive development that we love and want to encourage. In Sweden, it’s common to share the paternity leave, often both parents take at least a few months off work to stay at home with the newest family member. […] We have designed the Najell Original Baby Carrier so there are no buckles in the back that are hard to reach. Of course, some men can be flexible, just as women can be stiff. But the fact is that most women are used to buckling bras in the back and are in general more flexible. Buckling in the back can be close to impossible for men, and there is no need for extra trouble when putting on a baby carrier. It should be easy, simple and comfortable.

Carriers are only the tip of an unacknowledged technological iceberg. Baby bottles, breast pumping, and refrigeration allowed my wife to leave me equipped to “nurse” our baby when she traveled for international conferences. We could supplant breast milk with formula when we needed to. Umbrella strollers let us get around the city easily, and a clever portable folding playpen let us instantly create a safe, toy-filled environment anywhere.

The radical sex abolition politics envisioned by Shulamith Firestone in 1970 called for artificial wombs, and in the coming decades we may indeed get there.[^28] There’s a recent resurgence of interest in male breastfeeding, which is likely possible for some men— breasts turn out not to be nearly as sexually differentiated as genitals.[^29] But it’s easy to forget how far we’ve come with far simpler social and material technologies like strollers, bottles, formula, breast pumping, unisex carriers, perinatal care, and universal parental leave. Such low tech tricks can already bring us some way toward gender equality in the reproductive realm. Of course, with biological reproduction in such sharp decline anyway, this kind of equality is relevant to fewer and fewer of us.

In many ways, our move online, in which computers increasingly mediate our every interaction with the world and with each other through bits and bytes, finishes the job of making gender irrelevant, or turning it into an opt-in identity decoupled from the form of one’s genitals. We can see powerful evidence of this when we look at responses to the questions “Are you female?,” “Are you male?,” “Do you have a vagina?,” and “Do you have a penis?” Even when we limit ourselves to respondents who answer “yes” to only one of the first two questions, an increasing number of young people don’t answer the other two questions in the “expected” way. That is, there are an increasing number of women with penises and/or without vaginas, and men with vaginas and/or without penises; these numbers follow the same pattern as “Are you trans?,” but are even higher across all ages, peaking at 4.5% among 20-23 year olds.

Romantic and sexual relationships are increasingly happening online, too, potentially beginning to decouple even this aspect of life from physical bodies. While our noses and mouths have disappeared behind protective masks when we need to venture out into the “real world,” our digital faces have been undergoing a virtual makeover. Avatars, digital makeup, and neural nets can re-render us completely— our gender, voice, age, race, and virtually anything else.

This split sense of self— in your own head one way, and in your presentation another— brings with it a risk of misalignment. The phenomenon was first described by Italian psychiatrist Enrico Morselli (1852-1929) as *dysmorphophobia* in an 1891 paper: “the sudden onset and subsequent persistence of an idea of deformity: the individual fears he has become or may become deformed (δύσμορφος) and feels tremendous anxiety (φόβος, fear) of such an awareness.”[[18]](#footnote-49) Morselli believed this to be a common problem; he documented 78 cases. It may not be coincidental that mirrors had only become affordable enough for the general public in the 19th century, thanks to a glass silvering process invented by a German chemist in 1835. As people— especially girls and young women— were confronted with an onslaught of idealized female bodies in mass media throughout the 20th century, the inevitable comparison of images in the mirror with photoshopped models in print and on TV led to a rise in what the DSM-III-R renamed *body dysmorphia*, and associated behaviors like anorexia.

With selfie filters on social media today, we’ve managed to create something that combines the mirror, the idealized (often hypersexualized) bodies of mass media, and an increasing dissociation from “meatspace.” British science communicator Liv Boeree has vividly described the ensuing phenomenon of “Snapchat dysmorphia,”[[19]](#footnote-50) in which young people increasingly identify with their filtered selfies and feel unhappy with or dissociated from what they see in the mirror. It’s increasingly common for young women to seek cosmetic surgery to bring their physical selves into closer alignment with their social media.[^32]

While accounts of “Snapchat dysmorphia” tend to emphasize hyper-feminization in young women, many other virtual body modifications are possible too. People may alter themselves to appear more masculine online, or younger. Even without explicit digital alteration, an androgynous, hoodie-wearing young person may look gender-neutral or boyish within the tightly cropped frame of a Zoom call, but less so in person. Maybe the rise in gender dysmorphia is the tip of a larger iceberg: “online versus offline dysmorphia.” We need a proper Greek name for it.

We shouldn’t think of this phenomenon only in the negative terms of dysmorphia, though. For many young people, an embrace of fluidity and rejection of either/or categories can be liberatory. Wherever older respondents might harbor assumptions about mutually exclusive answers on the survey, we find that growing numbers of younger respondents violate those assumptions. For instance, nearly 3% of of 19 year olds identify as both or neither male and female, and more than 8% answer “yes” to more than one of the questions “Are you heterosexual?,” “Are you homosexual, gay or lesbian?” and “Are you bisexual?” When these are just profile settings that can be toggled on a dating or social media app, there’s no need to box yourself in.

How far will this go? At this point, it’s unclear. Neural nets can transform our digital selves in any conceivable way— far beyond anything surgery can approximate. These new Deepfake-like techniques aren’t limited, the way Photoshop was in the old days, to smoothing a bit here or slimming a bit there. The language we’re speaking can be altered, we can become skilled singers, we can be rendered as cartoons, we can look like elves or pixies. Or nonhuman entities. The old adage, “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog”[[20]](#footnote-52) was coined by New Yorker cartoonist Peter Steiner in 1993, in an era when social interaction online consisted of a handful of nerds at universities typing text into chat windows. Things have come a long way in the three decades since. While the actual “internet of animals”[^34] still hasn’t taken off, it’s now commonplace for humans to present as other species online— though cats are more popular than dogs. Online, Daphna Joel’s vision of “gender abolition” seems almost quaint.

In Chapter 4, I cited science fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson’s visionary novel *2312*, which describes a distant future in which we acquire a degree of control over our bodies that renders us posthuman. I added that even this was conservative compared to the “uploading” scenario, in which we become virtual beings unconstrained by bodies altogether. Yet this is exactly what’s already happening digitally, without any of the fuss, commitment, risk, and expense of surgery, hormones, or gene splicing.

Is this just a superficial fad, or is it something more profound? It really depends on which we think of as the real world— the flesh and blood one, or the one we’re creating for ourselves online. Of course the virtual world depends on the physical world to exist, but where do *we* live? That is, who are we now? The answer varies— partly, by age. Some of us are in constant contact with the physical, still making a living by pushing brooms, pulling shots of espresso, picking fruit or painting houses, still spending our time with coworkers, friends, and lovers in the flesh. For others, reality is online. Most of us are dual citizens. But if we’re honest with ourselves, especially in the wake of the COVID lockdowns, most of us have been online more than not.

Does this mean we’ve already been uploaded?

1. [https://twitter.com/abianne/status/605503223575781376](https://twitter.com/abianne/status/605503223575781376?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E605503223575781376%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fabcnews.go.com%2FLifestyle%2Ftarget-moves-gender-neutral-store-signage%2Fstory%3Fid%3D32982682) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
2. [Target Moves Toward Gender-Neutral Store Signage - ABC News](https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/target-moves-gender-neutral-store-signage/story?id=32982682) (2015), [Target experiments with gender neutrality in its stores - CSMonitor.com](https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2016/0209/Target-experiments-with-gender-neutrality-in-its-stores) (2016), [Target to Install Gender-Neutral Bathrooms in All of Its Stores](https://www.advocate.com/transgender/2016/8/18/target-install-gender-neutral-bathrooms-all-its-stores) (2016), [Target Debuts An All-Gender Product Line For Kids](https://www.fastcompany.com/90132191/target-debuts-an-all-gender-kids-product-line) (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
3. [Yes, Target, I Do Want My Daughter To Conform To Her Gender - TheBlaze](https://www.theblaze.com/contributions/yes-i-do-want-my-daughter-to-conform-to-her-gender), 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
4. Among the larger studies with statistically meaningful datasets are Amber NV Ruigrok, Gholamreza Salimi-Khorshidi, Meng-Chuan Lai, Simon Baron-Cohen, Michael V. Lombardo, Roger J. Tait, and John Suckling, *A meta-analysis of sex differences in human brain structure*, Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews 39 (2014): 34-50, and Stuart J. Ritchie, Simon R. Cox, Xueyi Shen, Michael V. Lombardo, Lianne M. Reus, Clara Alloza, Mathew A. Harris et al., *Sex differences in the adult human brain: evidence from 5216 UK biobank participants*, Cerebral cortex 28, no. 8 (2018): 2959-2975. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
5. These numbers are changing. In some scientific fields, women now outnumber men. Language tends to be a lagging indicator, though. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
6. [Why women are poor at science, by Harvard president](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2005/jan/18/educationsgendergap.genderissues), The Guardian, 18 Jan 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
7. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170809021151/https://diversitymemo.com/>. The memo got Damore fired. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
8. Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta, e la donna normale*, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
9. Quotes are from the translation of *The criminal woman* by Nicole Hahn and Mary Gibson, Duke University Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
10. [[REF]] “Why can’t a woman be more like a man?,” My Fair Lady. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
11. See Chapter 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
12. [Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of “Blind” Auditions on Female Musicians | Gender Action Portal](https://gap.hks.harvard.edu/orchestrating-impartiality-impact-%E2%80%9Cblind%E2%80%9D-auditions-female-musicians). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
13. [To Make Orchestras More Diverse, End Blind Auditions - The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/arts/music/blind-auditions-orchestras-race.html), 16 July 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
14. Think of GitHub as a social media platform, except that every post consists of a chunk of code contributed to one of the more than 100 million software projects hosted there, rather than a blurry selfie you’ll regret tomorrow morning. GitHub-hosted projects power much of our digital lives. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
15. Emerson Murphy-Hill, Ciera Jaspan, Carolyn Egelman, and Lan Cheng, [*The pushback effects of race, ethnicity, gender, and age in code review*](https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3474097), Communications of the ACM 65, no. 3 (2022): 52-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
16. I’m about 6’ tall, which, in ordinary life, is on the taller side. When I first attended the TED conference and found myself surrounded by CEOs and other high-status people, I was struck by a sense of suddenly being shorter than everyone (with the exception of Jeff Bezos). A number of studies have confirmed a powerful height bias, especially among men, in the corporate world [[REF]]. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
17. For instance, in writing about pin manufacturing, Babbage writes, “It is usual for a man, his wife, and a child, to join in performing these processes; and they are paid at the rate of five farthings per pound. They can point from thirty-four to thirty-six and a half pounds per day, and gain from 6s. 6d. to 7s., which may be apportioned thus; 5s. 6d. the man. 1s. the woman, 6d. to the boy or girl.” If you’re unfamiliar with old British money, this works out to 66 pence for the man, 12 pence for the woman, and 6 pence for the child for a full day of labor. Child labor nowadays is largely illegal, and this kind of pay discrepancy gives us a sense of what the gender pay gap statistics in Chapter 4 looked like farther back. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
18. Enrico Morselli. *Sulla dismorfofobia e sulla tafefobia*. Boll Reale Accad Med Genova 1891:6:3-14. See also Giovanni A. Fava, *Morselli’s Legacy: Dysmorphophobia*, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics 58, no. 3-4 (1992): 117-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
19. <https://twitter.com/liv_boeree/status/1445868089539588100> [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
20. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Internet,_nobody_knows_you%27re_a_dog> [↑](#footnote-ref-52)