



## Summary of Gender Norms in 1990s-2000s

In the 1990s the struggle for equality began to diversify. In the wake of many legal victories, some women began to see the 'Second Wave' of feminism as too militant. 'Post-feminists' like Camille Paglia argued that sexuality was empowering for women, and that male desire actually 'weakened' men. Music artists like Madonna, Britney Spears and the Spice Girls played with femininity and sexuality, appropriating eroticised images and using them as symbols of power. Meanwhile, the 'Riot Grrrr!' movement in America combined 'Third Wave' feminism and punk rock. In 1992, Rebecca Walker wrote a reaction to 'post-feminism', criticising the implication that women had 'won' and that feminism was now 'over'. Walker declared 'Third Wave' feminism as an ongoing fight, both personal and political for "the right to control our bodies and our lives". It also aimed to address the white, middle class agenda of the Second Wave. The experiences, challenges and needs of other minority groups within feminism began to show how class, race and sexuality impact on gender issues.

In the 1990s, a number of critics declared that masculinity was "in crisis" - that due to economic and social changes men were becoming redundant in modern society. Others countered that men still held most positions of power in business, media and politics. This did raise issues about 'hegemonic masculinity' (that revolved around machismo and patriarchal power) as opposed to 'new men' who had more progressive approaches to their own emotions. An off-shoot of this was the 'new lad', who ironically appropriated traditional forms of masculinity (such as heavy drinking and football) whilst accepting gender equality. Though 'new lad' culture often sexually objectified women, it attempted to do so in a non-aggressive and 'harmless' way (e.g. Lynx deodorant ads); and a lot of media were also objectifying male bodies, too.

Critics like Gauntlett said this reflected the social acceptance of a range of gender identities that could be 'mixed and matched' by the individual. Butler said something similar, that gender was a 'performance' rather than something biologically or socially determined. The anonymity of the rising internet also encouraged people to experiment with gender identities.



As gay culture began to move into the mainstream, LGBTQ people became more prevalent in politics, the workplace, and wider society. Parades like Pride became a fixture of many Western cities' calendars, attended by gay and straight people alike. Friendships between gay men and straight women also became more common: women enjoyed the company of men with whom they could openly discuss their feelings and sex lives, without the pressure of 'sexual tension' that often exists in heterosexual male-female friendships. TV shows like *Sex and the City* and *Will and Grace* reflected this in the 90s; whilst Channel 4 show *Queer As Folk* broke taboos in its depiction of young gay men's lifestyles.

Left-leaning governments in the US and UK were elected into power and initiated changes to education and workplace that encouraged equality, as well as funding for women's and LGBT groups that had been limited or removed by the previous right-wing governments.



## Key dates:

**1990** - World Health Organisation declares homosexuality no longer an illness

**1990** - Justin Fashanu becomes first professional footballer to come out as gay

**1990** - Naomi Wolf publishes *The Beauty Myth*

**1991** - First lesbian kiss on TV in *LA Law*

**1994** - Employment Rights Act guarantees every working woman maternity leave

**1994** - Gazebo Chat Room, the first online forum for transgender people is started

**1994** - First issue of "new lad's" magazine *Loaded* published

**1996** - The *Vagina Monologues* premieres in New York (and becomes one of the most performed plays in the world)

**1998** - Dana International becomes first trans-sexual to win the Eurovision Song Contest

**1998** - Google founded; Apple launch the first iMac

**1999** - First Transgender Day of Remembrance to honour victims of transphobia

**2000** - End of ban on gay people in UK military

**2003** - Male employees given paid paternity leave (in 2010 awarded 6 months paid paternity leave, if partner returns to work)

**2004** - Condoleeza Rice becomes first female National Security Advisor in US

**2004** - *Feministing* - the first feminist blog - is started

**2005** - Same sex Civil Partnership law comes into effect in UK

**2007** - The Gender Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2006 comes into effect in the UK. It requires public authorities "to promote equality of opportunity between women and men"

**2009** - Iceland elects world's first openly gay national leader



## Can you think of any other key events that affected gender norms:

### 5 Minute Task (with 5-7 min extrapolation) - Quickfire Historical Research

*Note: this could be a starter activity that is repeated over a number of lessons, each time students sharing their findings to build a 'bigger picture'.*

Divide the following keywords and find out what they mean then fill in the chart below.

World Wide Web   New Labour   Clinton   Tsunami   9/11   'War on Terror'   Hurricane Katrina  
Wikipedia   Financial Crash   Facebook   Obama

Would you classify these as historical (h), social and cultural (sc), economic (e) or political (p) events?

Event / Keyword	Date	How might this affect audiences' values and beliefs?



## 10 Minute Task (plus 5-7 mins plenary/extrapolation) - Cultural Contexts

*Note: this would be good for a series of home or independent learning tasks*

Look at some of these other media products from the time. What audience pleasures do they offer? Why do you think they were popular at this time? What values about gender do they share with your set products?

Advertising:

'Chance Encounter' Impulse advert (1990) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iznhO18DKh0>

'Diet Coke Break' (1995) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdrE1VMxzoE>

'I'm Normal' M&S advert (2000) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqwUOedlo0Y>

Audience pleasures?

Why was this popular at the time (link to historical context)?

How is gender being represented?



Film:

*Thelma And Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iBFmKlO4BY>

*Priscilla - Queen Of The Desert* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgFDlinCeYI>

*The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) trailer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6bjW9OwSQc>

*Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) clip - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi9ivZL7vmA&t=2s>

Audience pleasures?

Why was this popular at the time (link to historical context)?

How is gender being represented?

Pop music

'Justify My Love' by Madonna (1990) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Np\\_Y740aReI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Np_Y740aReI)

'Rock DJ' by Robbie Williams (2000) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnO3nijfYmU>

'Androgyny' by Garbage (2001) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVs6Fekh0RY>

'Alejandro' by Lady Gaga (2009) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niqrrmev4mA>

Audience pleasures?

Why was this popular at the time (link to historical context)?

How is gender being represented?



Television:

*Queer As Folk - UK* (1999) clip: 'Babylon' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULZOnBgXq0Q>

*Sex and the City* (2000) clip: 'Samantha is thrown out the spa' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOHBpF0MTY0>

*Friends* (1999) clip: 'Joey has a bag' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tqQj4loAgg>

Audience pleasures?

Why was this popular at the time (link to historical context)?

How is gender being represented?

### Comparison to Set Products

In what ways are the representations of men and women similar to those in your set products?

In what ways are they different?

How might the contexts have influenced these representations?