Lecture Notes

# Chapter 9: Gender Stratification: She/He—Who Goes First?

## Learning Objectives

1. Describe the difference between sex and gender.
2. Identify agents of gender socialization.
3. Give examples of meso- and macro-level gender stratification.
4. Illustrate the relationship between minority status and gender and sexual orientation.
5. Discuss costs and consequences of gender stratification.
6. Predict social policies that could decrease gender stratification.

## Chapter Overview

Chapter nine addresses gender stratification, both locally and globally. The chapter begins by differentiating between sex, gender, and sexuality and discussing each at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Gender socialization is explained with socialization in infancy and childhood particularly stressed (through corporations, mass media, the educational system, and religion). Macro-level processes, including institutionalized discrimination are clarified. Theories of sex stratification are explained including symbolic interactionist, structural-functionalist, and conflict theories. Finally, the costs and consequences of women and homosexual men and women being defined and treated as minorities are addressed and possible solutions are provided.

## Lecture Outline

I. Introduction

A. Gender roles are socially constructed

B. Gender roles are created by humans to meet the needs of their societies

C. Life chances in the stratification system depend upon the combination of age and sex

II. Sex, Gender, and the Stratification System

A. Gender identities and roles change over time because of the influence of economic, political, and social systems as well as other societies

B. Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Roles, and Sexuality

i. *Sex* – Usually thought of as a biological term referring to ascribed genetic, anatomical, and hormonal differences between males and females, but it is determined by socially accepted biological criteria

1. *Intersexed* – persons with ambiguous genitalia, 1.7% of babies born

2. In some societies, there is a strong push to assign a specific binary sex to intersexed persons

3. Sex is used to assign roles to individuals in every society around the globe.

ii. *Gender identity* – society’s notion of masculinity and femininity; the socially constructed meanings associated with male or female and how individuals construct their gender identity within these constraints

1. Determines proper behaviors within the stratification system

2. *Gender roles* – Commonly assigned tasks or expected behaviors of individuals because of their sex category

3. Gender identities vary based upon cultural and individual circumstances

iii. *Sexuality* – culturally shaped meanings both of sexual acts and how we experience our own bodies and our bodies in relation to others

iv. A sex act is a “social enterprise,” with cultural norms defining what is normal and acceptable in each society, including hidden assumptions about what particular acts mean

1. Even what we find attractive is defined by society.

v. The struggles that individuals have with their sexual identity are reflected in the studies of *transgender* when intersexed individuals do not fit clearly into female or male sex classifications

vi. The three terms are frequently used interchangeably, but are all distinct

C. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The Micro-Level

i. Agents of socialization teach us from birth how to display proper gendered behaviors

1. Failure to comply often results in informal sanctions

ii. In childhood, boys and girls are often separated, resulting in “us versus them” thinking

iii. In adulthood, women are sometimes privileged in micro-interactions (e.g., being served first at a meal, having doors held open)—however, they are often at a disadvantage at meso- and macro-levels

iv. Difference between men and women in language

1. Men prefer to discuss objects and impersonal topics

2. Women use more words related to psychological and social processes

3. There are different connotations in word usage such as spinster compared to bachelor.

D. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The Meso-Level

i. Adults are expected to assume responsibility for maintaining societal institutions, but our roles and responsibilities often differ based on sex

ii. Sex and age determine institutionalized rites of passage

iii. Women’s reduced power in micro-level settings is often related to a lack of power in meso-level organizations and institutions

E. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The Macro-Level

i. Inequality at the national or global level is independent of any individual/personal prejudice

1. *Institutionalized discrimination* – patterns of social action that are imbedded in the entire social system may influence women and men, providing unrecognized privileges or disadvantages

ii. In many parts of the world, women are gaining greater political representation

1. The United States is far behind other countries in the world in political gender equality

2. In Africa, more women are in parliament because of the matriarchal culture, political systems that stress proportional representation, and the adoption of “gender quotas”

III. Gender Socialization: Micro- and Meso-Level Analyses

A. *Gender socialization* is the process by which people learn the cultural norms, attitudes, and behaviors appropriate to their gender through sanctions

i. Punishment of “incorrect” behaviors and reward of “correct” ones reinforces gender stereotypes

B. Stages in Gender Socialization

i. Infancy – parents treat newborns differently from birth, from how they handle them and speak to them to the clothes, nursery décor, and toys they choose

ii. Childhood

1. Boys are encouraged to be more independent and girls are more protected from “danger”

2. A stronger focus on achievement and autonomy for boys

3. Even children’s names reflect the stereotypes of “gentle” girls and “hard” boys

4. Early childhood – children become aware of their own gender identity

5. School age – learn that sex is permanent and begin to categorize behaviors that are sex-appropriate

C. Meso-Level Agents of Gender Socialization

i. Corporations

1. Produce materials that help socialize children

a. For example, The language and pictures in children’s books reflect societal gendered expectations with males appearing more often, activities of boys and girls differing with girls being passive and helping men, adult women are portrayed as passive and rarely work outside the home, and males are shown as holding a range of jobs

b. More recent Caldecott winners have reversed the roles of women and men contrary to older books

c. For example, Toys given to boys and girls differ, with most boys’ toys being active or work-related and girls’ toys being more domestic or physical-appearance-related

i. Anticipatory socialization – preparation for the assumption of future roles, including gender roles

ii. Mass Media

1. Women in video games are often stereotyped, objectified, and dehumanized

2. Steroid use is often shown as desirable to stimulate muscle growth

3. Recent women in action films have been shown as more competent and adventurous, but most are also incredibly thin and beautiful

4. Television – children spend more time watching television from birth until age five than they do in the classroom for 12 years of school

a. Women on television (Especially working women) are shown as having problems in carrying out their roles

b. Few “averaged sized” women are show, and larger women are almost always comic figures

c. The more television children watch, the more gender stereotypes they hold

5. Electronic devices – the average child spends approximately 10 hours a week using electronic devices

iii. Educational Systems

1. STEM-girls may excel in physics and other STEM courses in communities where traditional gendered status is not the norm

2. Boys are encouraged to join in more active play and sports which help them gain strategic thinking and networking skills. Girls become popular through being pretty or supportive roles (e.g., cheerleader)

3. Boys receive more classroom attention (though some is negative) and do more physical chores while girls are rewarded for being passive and obedient

4. These *separate experiences* lead to the reinforcement of gender boundaries with those going outside the boundaries being ridiculed. Boys are particularly subject to ridicule.

5. *Popularity,* which is usually less to do with being liked and more to do with being visible, making everyone more status conscious

6. *Title IX* – legislated equal opportunity in educational programs, including sports

iv. Religious Beliefs

1. Religious organizations serve as agents of socialization by defining, reinforcing, and perpetuating gender role stereotypes and cultural beliefs.

2. Though feminist scholars are challenging reads of Judeo-Christian works, many still perceive women as sinners and condemned to be second-class citizens because of the Adam and Eve story

3. In traditional Hindu and Islamic religions, female sexuality is seen as a threat to men’s spirituality and must be tightly controlled; today Hinduism comes in many forms most honor the woman’s domestic sphere, and accept women in public roles

4. Western cultures such as France have banned the traditional headscarf that Muslim women wear

5. Most major religious groups now feature traditional, fundamentalist branches and more modern branches

6. Sexual behavior is tightly controlled through laws, taboos, and cultural expectations to protect family lineage

7. Meso-level religious systems influence how different societies interpret proper gender roles, and how sometimes these belief systems change with new interpretations of scriptures

IV. Gender Stratification: Meso- and Macro-Level Processes

A. *Glass ceiling* – social forces that keep women from reaching the highest levels of corporate and public responsibility

B. *Sticky floor* – social forces that keep the vast majority of the world’s women stuck in low-paid jobs

C. *Glass escalator* – even if men do not seek to climb in the organizational hierarchy, occupational social forces push them up the job ladder into higher echelons, especially in female-dominated occupations

D. Women and Men at Work: Gendered Organizations

i. The workplace itself is gendered. Gender pervades our day-to-day work practices and the balance of power at work

ii. Working women often have expectations of them at home that men do not face

iii. Women are not proportionately in power at work, and are paid less for what they do

E. *Institutionalized gender discrimination* – taken-for-granted discrimination that is ingrained in macro-level social structures and invisibly privileges men over women

i. Most macro-gender discrimination is not the result of individual prejudices

ii. Most (Especially those in power) are not even aware of macro-gender stratification

a. Side Effect Discrimination

b. *Past-in-present discrimination* – practices from the past that may no longer be allowed but that continue to affect people today

i. Many men are not behaving in discriminatory ways, but they are still given privileges they did not ask for and may not recognize

F. Gender Differences in Internet Usage

i. There are global and gender differences on who uses the internet and how they use it

ii. The internet is enhancing men’s careers more than women’s; women use the internet primarily to keep in touch with others

V. Gender Stratification: Micro- to Macro-Level Theories

A. Symbolic Interaction Theory: Micro-Level Analysis

i. *Symbolic interactionist perspective* – gender is socially constructed; Physical, biological differences come to be regarded as symbols that differentiate rights and rewards in society

ii. Gender is not intrinsically related to sex

iii. Traditional notions of gender are hard to change because confusion over gender roles creates anxiety and anomie

iv. *Human agency* – humans are influenced by and influence the society they live in

1. Humans do not just passively follow gender roles; the “do” gender (create it as they behave and act with others in ways that “define” what is acceptable gendered conduct)

a. *Doing gender* – routinely interacting with others in ways that reify or recreate gendered norms and define how men or women should behave; this occurs any time a person “chooses” to recognize gender as a critical distinction

b. Begins at the micro-level but has consequences for the global level

c. Cannot avoid doing gender

B. Structural-Functional and Conflict Theories: Meso- and Macro-Level Analyses

i. *Structural-functionalist theory* – each sex has a role to play in the interdependent groups and institutions of society

1. Social practices that ensure survival are likely to continue and become norms

2. As societies industrialize, roles and relationships change

a. *Mechanical solidarity* – common values and emotional ties between members

b. *Organic solidarity* – separate, but interdependent ties between members

3. A gendered division of labor exists because it is efficient, according to early functionalists

4. Two types of complimentary roles are necessary for efficiency in society

a. Expressive (private sphere, female)

b. Instrumental (public sphere, male)

c. These two are seldom totally separate

ii. *Conflict theory* – by keeping women in subordinate roles, men ensure that they control the means of production and protect their privileges

1. Traditionally men hunted, engaged in warfare and protected women. Over time this physical control was transformed into ideological control.

2. Capitalism strengthened male dominance by providing more wealth to men and their sons

3. This forced women to be dependent on men

4. Men will not voluntarily give up their current positions of power as long as they are benefiting from them; by keeping women in traditional gender roles, men maintain control over institutions and resources

iii. *Feminist theory* – agree with Marx that gender stratification is based on power struggles, not biology but they failed to include patriarchy as a key variable in women’s oppression

a. *Patriarchy* – a few men dominate and hold authority over all others, including women, children, and less powerful men

b. Actively advocate for change in the social order

c. Little change will occur until group consciousness is raised so women understand the system and do not blame themselves for it

d. Violence against women perpetuates gender stratification because men, who have more power in society, also often have more power and resources in the home

iv. The Interaction of Class, Race, and Gender

1. Race, class, and gender intersect in a way that privileges some women over others, though most women are still subordinate to most men

2. Sexual orientation, age, nationality, and other factors may have similar effects of diminishing or increasing minority status of specific women, and theorists are paying increasing attention to these intersections

VI. Gender, Homosexuality, and Minority Status

A. Women as a Minority

i. Couples in many countries prefer female child – female infanticide and feticide and the neglect of female babies can result

ii. Women are a minority group even though they are a numerical majority:

1. Distinguished by physical, cultural, or social characteristics

2. Share of desired goods is limited by the dominant group

3. Ideological or other justifications are used to deny them equal treatment

4. They have a collective identity used to help insulate them from unequal treatment

5. Minority group status is generally determined by rules of descent, with members born into a status they cannot change

B. Gender, Homosexuality, and Minority Status

i. Homosexuality has always existed and even been required historically

ii. The government or dominant religious group determines how gay men and lesbians are treated

iii. Since homosexuality is a deviation from societal norms, gay men, and lesbians are treated as a minority group

1. Lesbians are not reliant upon men, so they are sometimes perceived as a dangerous threat to men’s power

2. Heterosexism is strongest in small towns and rural areas where LGBTQ’s experience housing discrimination, property damage, and employment discrimination

iv. *Homophobia* – intense fear and hatred of homosexuality and homosexuals

1. Highly correlated with a belief in traditional gender roles

2. Homosexual slurs are used to reinforce gender conformity

v. *Heterosexism* – society reinforces heterosexuality and marginalizes anyone who does not conform to this norm

1. Social processes define heterosexuality as normative and homosexuality as deviant

2. Operates at meso- and macro-levels by assigning privileges to straight men and women that gay men and lesbian women do not receive

VII. Costs and Consequences of Gender Stratification

A. In rapidly changing societies gender role confusion is common

B. Psychological and Social Consequences of Gender Stratification: Micro-Level Implications

i. Results of Gender Role Expectations

1. For women:

a. Superwoman image – a pattern by which women assume multiple roles and try to do well at all of them; can lead to stress and psychological problems

b. Beauty image – an unattainable standard of attractiveness that can lead to an eating disorder

2. For men:

a. Expectations of high masculinity can lead to guilt, anxiety, and neuroses

b. Environmental, psychological, and social factors can lead to earlier deaths than women experience

C. Societal Costs: Meso- and Macro-Level Implications

i. Can lead to:

1. Poor educational achievement of female children

2. Loss of human talents and resources of half of the population

3. Lack of health care coverage for women, which impacts both those women and their children

4. Social divisiveness leading to alienation, if not hostility.

ii. Has consequences for all social institutions

iii. Men are able to “take gender privilege with them”

1. When they enter female-dominated occupations those occupations become more prestigious and better paid

2. When women enter male-dominated fields the opposite occurs

3. This makes it more difficult for women to improve their place in the stratification system

VIII. Changing Gender Stratification and Social Policy

A. Globally, women face dangerous working conditions and low pay

B. Practices used by other groups to deal with discrimination could be used

i. Holding non-violent protests, sit-down strikes, and walkouts to protest unequal and unfair treatment

ii. Women working together in support groups to help their children and neighborhoods

iii. Using the internet to carry the message to others

iv. Carrying out boycotts against companies that mistreat employees

v. Following traditions that have succeeded in the past such as using the arts, preachers, storytellers, and teachers to express frustration and resistance, educate others, and provide ideas and strategies for resistance

vi. Building on traditions of community and church activism

C. The goals of ending women’s subjugation are very similar, but the means by which it should be done are debated among women’s groups

IX. What Have We learned?

A. Because sex is a primary variable on which societies are structured being born male or female affects our public and private sphere activities, our health, and just about everything we do or belong to

B. It takes place in a social context within our social world: institutions (the stable patterns of roles, statuses, and groups which meet the basic needs of individuals and society in an orderly way)