

Lecture Notes:

- ① Components of **sexual identity**:
- **sex** (as a noun): biological distinction between females and males based on sex organs and reproductive functions
 - **sexual orientation**: pattern of sexual attraction exhibited by an individual
(heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, abstinent — probably a matter of continuum, not sharp categories)
 - **gender**: culturally and historically conditioned categories of identity, usually including concepts of the body, ideas of sexuality, procreation and reproduction, and general social behaviors
 - **gender identity**: culturally conditioned sense of self associated with biological sex differences
(we have words for two, maybe three, options in most languages, but some allow for up to seven)
 - **gender label**: externally imposed sex-based identity conditioned by culture, history, and experience
 - **sexuality** (as a verb): sexual acts, erotic desires, and their expressions or attendant feelings
- Why are genders unequal in society?
- **sexism**: the ideology that men and women are fundamentally different and that these differences are accurately reflected in the status quo
 - differences in social roles and **functions**: pregnant women in agrarian societies did domestic and care-giving work and foraged rather than hunted; these differences have persisted as women are more involved in caring professions
 - **conflict**: gender inequality is the result of a power differential, like any other form; this especially arises from the fact that men control the production and distribution of most resources
 - **biological** differences: since women are encumbered for long periods of time with children, they have assumed other roles related to domestic duties (similar to above) while men developed knowledge, technology, and weaponry that fostered power, resources, and prestige
 - similarly, as humans have a strong sex drive and men are usually bigger and stronger than women, they can more easily coerce them into submission; this fact has shaped all gender role development
- ③ Ways in which the gender hierarchy is overtly and subtly reinforced and perpetuated, including:
- occupational and professional structures
 - restricted access to important core occupations (professions, upper management, “male” professions)
 - concentration in less prestigious and “female” occupations
(high interpersonal skills; low physical activity; service oriented; requiring empathy, compassion, and nurturing)
 - the glass ceiling, glass walls, “second shift” work, and unequal pay for equal or comparable work
(taking into account all of the above factors, women average about 75% of the take home pay of men)
 - social prestige structures
 - women are still often considered “extensions” of their husbands and looked at askance when single
 - stereotypically female activities and interests are downgraded in importance
 - even when women participate in historically male pursuits, it is often as second-class citizens
 - political power structures
 - women only began to achieve suffrage only in the 1890s through the aftermath of WWII, and onward...
 - however, women vote in higher proportions in the US
 - there are still few women in the highest elected and appointed positions, although they have made great strides in (some) local, (some) state, and (most) intermediate federal positions
- ④ The role of language and culture in perpetuating gender hierarchies
- stereotypes and socially sanctioned roles
 - sex-linked linguistic descriptors
 - gender socialized communication styles
 - differential socialization in talking and thinking
 - men in terms of status, challenge, and independence
(men see hierarchies and playing on connections as dishonest, like pretending there is no such thing)
 - women in terms of connection, intimacy, and interdependence
(women see networks and interpret use of status differences as manipulative and unfair)
 - early childhood socialization and experiences

- ⑤ The several faces of feminism as ideology and practice
- you don't have to be a female to be a feminist and all progressive women are not feminists, either
 - fundamental shared principles:
 - women are a special and unique category of person based on shared biology, history, experience, and culture
 - recognition of and dissatisfaction with the condition that men are dominant in the status hierarchies and have disproportionate access to opportunity, resources, and benefit from creating existing social rules and norms
 - belief that changing the subordinate status of women is possible and essential
 - only women should define the feminine
 - however, it is more accurate to speak of "feminisms" as there are many factions and camps within the movement
 - **gender reform feminism:** focuses on the formal attainment of equal rights and opportunities socially, politically, legally, and economically
 - **marxist feminism:** as men control the means of production and distribution and maintain an ideological hegemony, women must recognize their shared exploitation, band together, and work to rectify these enforced inequalities
 - **gender rebellion feminism:** emphasizes connections between various major forms of stratification, the importance of the body in conditioning understanding and life chances, and the postmodernist concern for understanding cultural text and subtext — especially as it is gendered
 - **gender feminism:** since patriarchal control and male domination is so ubiquitous, gender neutrality is not a meaningful goal; therefore, women should develop their own systems of support and institutions as well as legal protections
 - **radical feminism:** men are naturally and unavoidably oppressors, exploiters, and abusers

Key Ideas:

Gender, sex, sexual identity, feminism.



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