ITS05 – Social inequality (2): Gender, Race and Intersectionality

1. Processes of inequality

- **Tilly (1998)** : exploitation and opportunity hoarding
- **Ridgeway** on the role of status inequality (2014):
    - Multilevel analysis
    - Importance of status biases in the microsociological processes that contribute to reproducing inequality:
        - Status biases in judgement and behavior
        - Associational preference bias
        - Reactions to status challenge

2. Gender

A. Definition: gender as a social system

Gender as a social system that establishes a distinction and a hierarchy between the sexes and between the practices, values and representations associated to them (definition adapted from Bereni et al., 2012)
- A social system rather than an individual characteristic
- A system which establishes a fixed distinction between 2 sexes and assigns each individual to one of the 2 sex categories (a very strong social norm: cf sex reassignment surgery at birth for intersex babies (Fausto-Sterling, 2000))
- Based on their assignment to one or another of these categories, individuals are expected and trained to adopt different behaviors, representations, tastes, etc.: they are socialized differently, and often in different places. They are all socialized to heterosexuality.
- Form difference to inequality: the gender system establishes a hierarchy between the sexes and between the practices, values and representations associated to them.

B. Example 1: the gendered division of labor

The tasks women have traditionnally been assigned to (reproductive and domestic labor within the household) are unpaid/undervalued vs the tasks traditionnally assigned to men (productive labor/ working on the labor market) are paid/more valued.

This situation is a source of economic dependence for women within the heterosexual couple / exploitation on the part of men (Delphy, 1970)

Changing patterns in contemporary societies (women's increased participation in the labor market, men's involvement in housework): to what extent?

a) The division of household labor

Division of household labor by sex in 5 European countries (Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain) (in % of time)

	Men	Women
Housework	23.5	76.5
Cleaning	13.5	86.5
Cooking	16.5	83.5
Shopping	33	67
Occasional	53.5	46.5
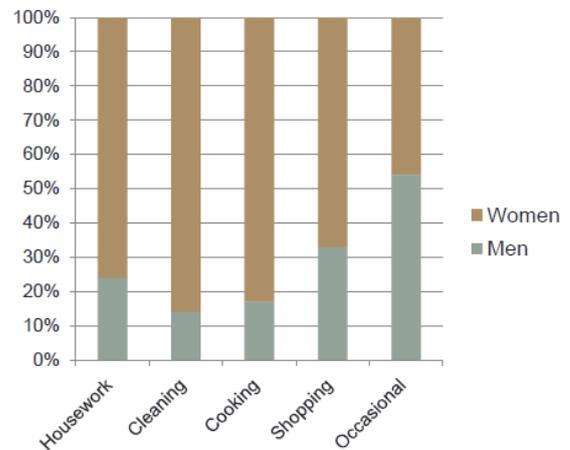
Ex. Women perform 76.5% of the total amount of housework (measured in time)
Source: adapted from table 2 (excerpt, rounded figures), Dominguez-Folgueras, Marta. 2012. "Is Cohabitation More Egalitarian? The Division of Household Labor in Five European Countries." *Journal of Family Issues*, p.13

b) Gender inequalities on the labor market in France

80% of part-time workers are women
Women's full-time monthly wages are 20% inferior to men's on average
Women's pensions are 31% lower than men's on average
Occupational segregation:
    - Male-dominated vs female-dominated economic sectors and occupations (ex. construction vs childcare)
    - Women tend to be more concentrated in a smaller number of occupations/sectors (administrative work, teaching, health and social welfare = 64% of women)
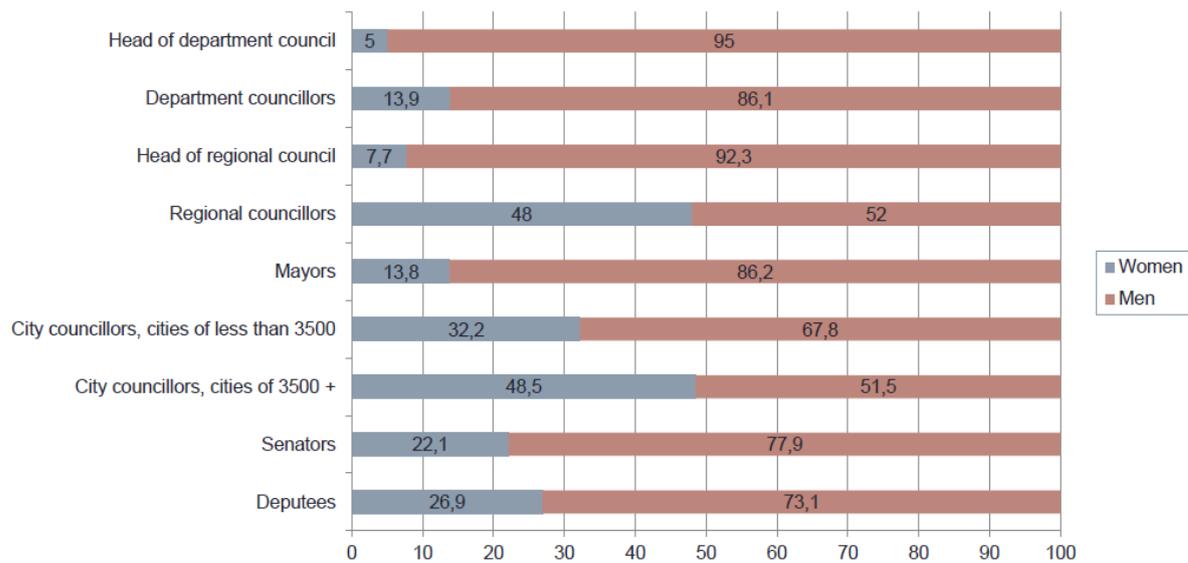
c) Gender inequalities in professional careers: the « glass ceiling »

Example: the glass ceiling in academia:
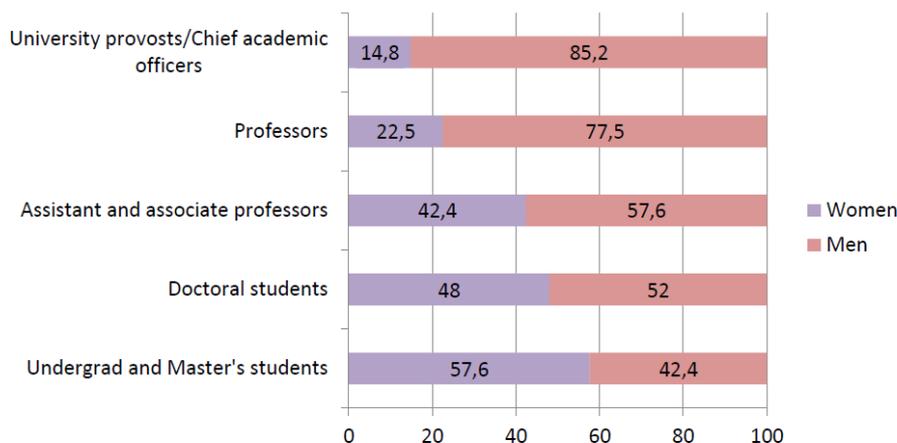
Based upon 2011 MESR data: Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (2013), *Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes : chiffres clés de la parité dans l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche.*

C. Example 2: Gender in the political sphere

Updated February 2016, based on data by Haut conseil à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes

3. Racial domination

A. What is race?

Race = "a symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category"
- A **symbolic category**: race is a "social fabrication", belonging to the realm of meaning-making, that aims at marking differences between groups of people or things
- Based on **phenotype** (physical appearance and constitution) and **ancestry** (family lineage) → potentially conflictive criteria: cf "one-drop rule" and Phipps case (1982)
- Racial taxonomies are **place- and time-specific**: ex. South Africa and Brazil
- Yet they are naturalized: **naturalization** = "a metamorphosis of sorts, where something created by humans is mistaken as something dictated by nature"

Desmond, Matthew and Mustafa Emirbayer. 2009. "What is racial domination?" *Du Bois Review* 6/2:335-355

B. Institutional and interpersonal racism

Institutional racism : « systemic White domination of people of color, embedded and operating in corporations, universities, legal systems, political bodies, cultural life, and other social collectives »

Domination : symbolic, political, social and economic power

Interpersonal racism: « racial domination manifest in everyday interactions and practices. […] Since we are disposed to a world structured by racial domination, we develop racialized dispositions – some conscious, many more unconscious and somatic – that guide our thoughts and behaviors.

"To define racism only through extreme groups and their extreme acts is akin to defining weather only through hurricanes" (Desmond and Emirbayer, 2009).

1. Racism is not just about ideas, prejudice or intentionality; it takes on systematic and structural forms
2. Putting an end to racism in the law doesn't mechanically entail racial inequality (« Laws against theft do not mean that one's car will never be stolen »)
3. The presence of people of color in influential positions is not evidence of the eradication of racial obstacles
4. History matters
5. The forms taken by racism change over time

(Drawing on Desmond and Emirbayer's « 5 fallacies about racism » (2009))

C. Racial inequality in the US:

- Median income for black households = 60% of median income for white households
- Median wealth in black households = 10% of median wealth for white households
- Poverty rates: in the early 2000s, 40% of black children (under 6) lived below the poverty line (16,6% of white children)

(Wright and Rogers, 2010)

4. Intersectionality

A. Where it comes from, what it is about

« All the women are white, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave » (Hull, Bell-Scott and Smith, 1982)

Drawing on feminist theory: from critical voices within the movement (Black feminism) to the questioning of race and class biases in the way we think about gender inequality → need to focus on the intersectionality of race, class and gender (Crenshaw, 1989, Collins, 1990)

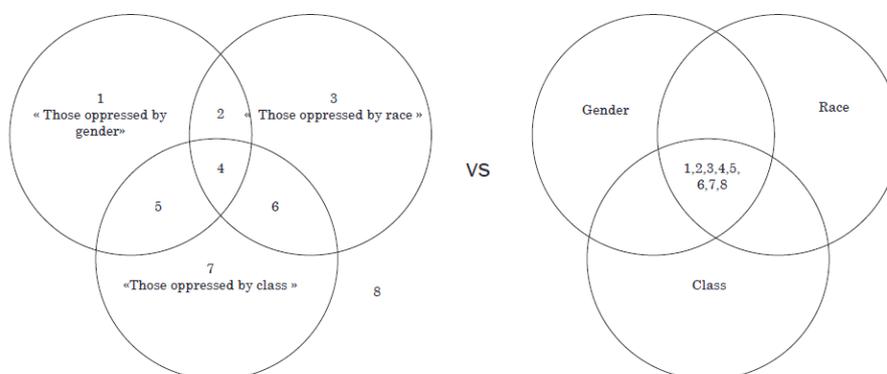### B. Mapping intersectionality

Fig. 1 : Oppressed people   Fig. 2 : Experience

Source : West, Candace and Sarah Fenstermaker. 1995. "Doing difference."
Gender and Society 9, p.14-15

C. How intersectionality affects sociological thinking about inequalities

- Questioning the unity of a given social group (class, sex or racial group)
- A more precise analysis of social mobility: ex. of the study of women who "make it" to male-dominated occupations and/or in spite of the glass ceiling (Marry, 2004); reciprocally, who are the men who benefit from the "glass escalator" (Wingfield, 2009)?
- Race, class and gender as mutually constitutive: ex. of M. Lamont's Dignity of working men (2000)

D. A.Harvey Wingfield (2009) « Racializing the glass escalator »

- The « glass escalator » metaphor (Wiliams, 1992): men in jobs predominantly filled by women (nurses, elementary school teachers, librarians, social workers) experience « hidden advantages » / a career boost (vs « glass ceiling » for women)
- Harvey Wingfield (2009) (fieldwork on nursing) shows this is not the case for Black men
    - Prevalence of gendered racism
    - Discrimination on the part of supervisors
    - Negative reactions on the part of patients
    - Refusal to reject femininity

→ A limit later acknowledged by Williams: « The glass escalator was based on the experience of straight, white, middle-class men » (Williams, 2013, p.610)

E. M. Lamont, The dignity of working men (2000)

- How class, race and gender play in the way working-class men draw moral boundaries against people "above" and "below" in France and the US:
    - Working-class men define themselves as superior to men working in more "feminized" occupations
    - Gendered forms of racialization on the part of white working-class men:
        - "[Blacks] have less family values" (US)
        - "Women in the Muslim world have no place. Whereas here in France, I have washed dishes" (France)

(quoted by Choo and Ferree, 2009)

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