Social inequality (2): gender, race and intersectionality

1. Processes of inequality

2. Gender

3. Racial domination

4. Intersectionality
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
Gender, race and intersectionality

1. Processes of inequality
2. Gender
3. Racial domination
4. Intersectionality
Gender

• 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

(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.
Gender

- 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

(adapted from Bereni et al., 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>Men/boys</th>
<th>Women/girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A social system that produces **inequalities**: 2 examples here: economic/status inequalities (linked to the gender-based division of labor and inequalities on the labor market) and political power.
Gender

- Gender as a system of inequality establishing a hierarchy between the sexes and between the practices, values and representations associated to them.

- Ex. economic inequality linked to the gender-based division of labor:

  - The tasks women have traditionally been assigned to (reproductive and domestic labor within the household) are unpaid/undervalued vs the tasks traditionally 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?
Gender

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. Women perform 76.5% of the total amount of housework (measured in time)

Gender

• Examples of gender inequalities in 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)
• Gender inequalities in careers: the « glass ceiling »
  • Ex: in the academic world (next slide)
The « glass ceiling » in the academic world

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.*
Gender in the political sphere

Social inequality (2): gender, race and intersectionality

1. Gender

2. Racial domination

3. Intersectionality
What is racial domination?

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”

What is racial domination?

**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."
Understanding racial domination sociologically

“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))
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)
Social inequality (2): gender, race and intersectionality

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Class, race, gender… : interwoven systems of inequality

« 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)

- How to represent intersectionality? Addition, intersection, « complex configurations » (Choo and Ferree, 2009)
Mapping intersectionality

Fig. 1: Oppressed people

1 «Those oppressed by gender»
2 «Those oppressed by race»
3 «Those oppressed by class»

Fig. 2: Experience

Gender
Race
Class
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

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)

• Race, class and gender as mutually constitutive: ex. of M. Lamont’s 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)
References


References


Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith. 1982. *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women’s studies*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press.


