CHAPTER 10

Gender Inequality

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Define sexism, explain the intersections between gender and other discrimination, and distinguish between the concepts of sex and gender.
2. Describe global variations in gender inequality, including how gender inequality in the U.S. compares with gender inequality in other nations and how both males and females are victims.
3. From the functionalist perspective, explain the reasons for gender inequality in early societies and how and why industrialization changed gender roles within the family.
4. Explain historical reasons for gender inequality from the conflict perspective and contemporary beliefs that maintain gender inequalities.
5. Explain gender socialization and gender roles from the symbolic interactionist perspective and feminist theory.
6. Explain structural sexism in education, including illiteracy in the world and higher education in the United States.
7. Describe women’s participation in the work force throughout the world and structural sexism in the work force, including the devaluation of women’s jobs, occupational segregation, differential opportunity structures for men and women, and the effects of family responsibilities on work choices.
8. Describe legal acts and rulings regarding gender-related civil rights and how illegal gender discrimination continues to exist at both the institutional and individual levels.
9. Explain cultural sexism in the American family, schools, media, language, and religion.
10. Explain how traditional gender role socialization creates social problems, including the feminization of poverty, social-psychological and other health costs, and conflict in relationships.
11. Describe how grassroots movements, including the feminist movement and the Men’s Movement have responded to gender inequality.
12. Explain public policy efforts to address gender inequality in the U.S. and around the world.

KEY TERMS

affirmative action 338
androgyyn 340
boy code 331
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LECTURE OUTLINE

I. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN

A. Defining sexism and gender
   1. Sexism: the belief that innate psychological, behavioral, and/or intellectual differences exist between women and men and that these differences connote the superiority of one group and the inferiority of the other.
   2. Discerning the basis for discrimination is often difficult because the different types of minority status may intersect.
      a. Double or triple (multiple) jeopardy occurs when a person is a member of 2 or more minority groups.
   3. Gender, the social definitions and expectations associated with being female or male, should be distinguished from sex, one’s biological identity.
      a. Most Western cultures take for granted that there are two categories of gender.
      b. In many other societies, three and four genders have been recognized.
      c. Recognition that gender is not binary is increasing, as evidenced by Obama’s proposal to bar discrimination against federal transgender—individuals whose sense of gender identity is inconsistent with their birth sex—employees.

B. The Global Context: The Status of Women and Men
   1. There is no country in the world in which women and men have equal status.
   2. The World Economic Forum assessed the gender gap in 134 countries by measuring the extent to which women have achieved equality within four areas: economic participation and opportunity, health and survival, and political empowerment.
      a. The U.S. ranked 19 out of the 128 countries studied.
   3. Gender inequality varies across cultures in extent, degree and form.
   4. A global perspective on gender inequality must take into account the different ways in which such inequality is viewed (e.g., practices of Muslim women wearing a headscarf in public and female genital cutting are viewed differently to different people).

C. Inequality in the United States
   1. In the U.S., women have had to fight for equality: the right to vote, equal pay for comparable work, quality education, entrance into male-dominated occupations, and legal equality.
      a. The World Economic Forum ranks the U.S. 19th in the world in gender equality.
      b. Most citizens agree that U.S. society does not treat women and men equally: Women have lower incomes, fewer prestigious jobs, fewer academic degrees, and are more likely to live in poverty.
   2. Men are also victims of gender inequality.
      a. In 1963, sociologist Erving Goffman observed that any male who failed to qualify as young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, college educated, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports is likely to view himself as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior.
      b. Masculinity is still based on “success”—at work, on the athletic field, on the streets, and at home—which must be maintained and proven, placing pressure on boys and men.
II. SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

A. Structural-Functionalist Perspective
1. Pre-industrial society required a division of labor based on gender.
   a. Women, out of biological necessity, remained at home performing such functions as bearing, nursing, and caring for children.
   b. Men, who were physically stronger and could be away from home for long periods of time, were responsible for providing food, clothing, and shelter.
   c. This division of labor was functional and came to be defined as normal and natural.
2. Industrialized society rendered the traditional division of labor less functional.
   a. Today, because of daycare facilities, lower fertility rates, and the less physically demanding and dangerous nature of jobs, the traditional division of labor is no longer as functional.
   b. Families have evolved from extended to nuclear, authority is more egalitarian, more women work outside the home, and greater role variation exists in the division of labor.

B. Conflict Perspective
1. Male dominance and female subordination are shaped by the relationship men and women have to production process.
   a. Hunting and gathering societies: women and men were economic equals, each controlling their own labor and producing needed subsistence.
   b. As society evolved to agricultural and industrial modes of production, private property developed and men gained control of production while women remained in home to bear and care for children.
      i. Male domination was furthered by inheritance laws that ensured that ownership would remain in their hands and laws that regarded women as property.
   c. As industrialization continued and the production of goods and services moved away from the home, the male-female gaps continued to grow.
2. Continued domination by males requires a belief system that supports gender inequality.
   a. Two such beliefs are that women are inferior outside the home and more valuable in the home.
   b. The subordinate position of women in society is a consequence of social inducement rather than biological differences that led to the traditional division of labor.

C. Symbolic Interactionist Perspective
1. Through the lifelong socialization process, females and males are taught meanings associated with being feminine and masculine.
2. Gender roles are taught by the family, school, peer groups, and media.
3. Feminist theory
   a. Conceptions of gender are socially constructed as societal expectations dictate what it means to be female or what it means to be male.
      i. Women are socialized into expressive roles (nurturing and emotionally supportive roles); men are socialized into instrumental (task-oriented) roles.
      ii. These roles are then acted out in daily interactions as boss and secretary, doctor and nurse, football player and cheerleader “do gender.”
   b. Gender is a central organizing factor in the social world and so must be included as a fundamental category of analysis in sociological research.
      i. The impact of the structure and culture of society is not the same for different groups of women and men.
      ii. Research should thus take into consideration the differential effects of age, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
III. GENDER STRATIFICATION: STRUCTURAL SEXISM

A. Structural sexism, or institutional sexism: the ways the organization of society and its institutions subordinate individuals and groups based on sex classification.

B. Education and Structural Sexism
1. Worldwide, women are less likely than men to be literate (read and write) due to millions of women being denied access to even the most basic education.
   a. 87 females attend elementary school for every 100 boys.
2. In 2009, few differences existed between American men and women in their completion rates of high school and college degrees.
3. Men are more likely to complete a graduate or professional degree than are women, and differences exist in the types of advanced degrees earned.
4. Women may earn fewer advanced degrees than men due to socialization that encourages them to choose marriage and motherhood over long-term career preparation and structural limitations that discourage women from advancing in education.

C. Work and Structural Sexism
1. In 2008, women made up 40.4% of the world’s total labor force.
2. Women are disproportionately employed in agricultural and service sectors, more likely to be unemployed.
3. Worldwide, women tend to work in jobs with little prestige, low or no pay, where no product is produced, and in roles where they are facilitators for others.
4. No matter what the job, if a woman does it, it is likely to be valued less than if a man does it. (e.g., clerks in the 1800s were 90% men and being a clerk was a prestigious position).
5. Occupational sex segregation: the concentration of women in certain occupations and men in other occupations.
   a. Women are overrepresented in semiskilled and unskilled occupations.
   b. Men are disproportionately concentrated in professional, administrative, and managerial positions.
   c. Men in traditionally held female jobs have an advantage in hiring, promotion, and salaries, called the glass escalator effect.
   d. Women are still heavily represented in low-prestige, low-wage, pink-collar jobs that offer few benefits.
6. Reasons for occupational sex segregation:
   a. Cultural beliefs about what is an “appropriate” job for a woman or man.
   b. Opportunity structures differ by gender.
      i. Women and men are often channeled by employers into gender-specific jobs that carry different wages and promotion opportunities.
      ii. Women in higher paying jobs may be victimized by a “glass ceiling”—an often invisible barrier that prevents women and other minorities from moving into top corporate positions.
      iii. Working mothers experience a “motherhood penalty” in which they are evaluated as less competent and committed to work than non-mothers and feel pressured to choose professions that permit flexible hours and career paths.
      iv. Although the type of career pursued may be a woman’s choice, it is a structured choice—a choice among limited options as a result of the structure of society.

D. Income and Structural Sexism
1. Worldwide, on average, women earn half of what men earn.
   a. In 2010, full-time working women in the U.S. earned an average of 81% of what men earned.
   b. The gender pay gap varies over time, by state and by race.
2. Arguments for why the income gender gap exists:
   a. Human capital hypothesis: pay differences result from differences in women’s and men’s education, skills, training, and work experience.
      i. The life-cycle human capital hypothesis argues that women have less incentive to invest in education and marketable skills because they know their careers will be interrupted by family responsibilities.
      ii. Human capital differences are a result of structural constraints and expectations that women should remain in the home.
   b. Devaluation hypothesis: women are paid less because the work they do is socially defined as less valuable than the work performed by men.
      i. These jobs are undervalued in part because they include a significant amount of emotion work—work that involves caring, negotiating, and empathizing with people.
      ii. Emotion work is rarely specified in job descriptions or performance evaluations.
   c. Women also earn less than men as a result of discrimination in education, hiring, promotions, and salaries.
3. Comparable worth refers to the belief that individuals in occupations should be paid equally if the job requires “comparable” levels of education, training and responsibility.

E. Politics and Structural Sexism
1. U.S. women received right to vote in 1920 with passage of Nineteenth Amendment, but women still play a rather minor role in the political arena.
2. In general, the more important the political office, the lower the probability a woman will hold it.
3. Some countries have electoral quotas to increase the number of women in politics.
4. The relative absence of women in politics is a consequence of structural limitations.
   a. Running for office requires large sums of money, political backing of powerful individuals and interest groups, and a willingness of the voting public to elect women.
   b. Minority women have even greater structural barriers to election and represent an even smaller percentage of elected officials.
5. There is also evidence of gender discrimination against female candidates.
6. Gender bias and sexist commentaries dominated the most recent presidential election.

F. Civil Rights, the Law, and Structural Sexism
1. 1963 Equal Pay Act and Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act made it illegal for employers to discriminate on basis of sex; but sex discrimination still occurs.
   a. Thousands of grievances are filed each year with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—29,029 grievances in 2010.
   b. Employers use various techniques to justify their employment practices.
      i. Wal-Mart, for example, stated that the stores were independently owned, thus supporting their contention that there was no companywide policy or practice of discrimination in place
      ii. Another technique used to justify differences in pay is the use of different job titles for same work.
      iii. Repeatedly, the courts have ruled that jobs that are “substantially equal,” regardless of title, must have equal pay.
   c. Women are discriminated against in employment on individual and institutional levels.
      i. Institutional discrimination includes screening devices designed for men, hiring preferences for veterans, practice of promoting from within based on seniority, and male-dominated recruiting networks.
      ii. One of the most blatant forms of individual discrimination is sexual harassment.
2. Other forms of discrimination take place in housing, the military, and in sexual and
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4 reproductive rights.

IV. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER ROLES: CULTURAL SEXISM

A. Cultural sexism: the ways the culture of society (norms, values, beliefs, symbols) perpetuates the subordination of an individual or group based on sex.

1. The belief that females are less valuable than males has serious consequences, such as gender-based abortions in India.

B. Family Relations and Cultural Sexism

1. From birth, males and females are treated differently.
2. The toys that male and female children receive convey different messages about gender.
3. Household Division of Labor
   a. Globally, women and girls continue to be responsible for household maintenance, and women are responsible for the majority of hours of unpaid labor.
   b. Boys and girls work within the home in approximately equal amounts until the age of 18, when the sex-ratio begins to change.
   c. The fact that women, even when working full-time, contribute significantly more hours to home care than men is known as the “second shift.”
   d. Three explanations for continued traditional division of labor (not mutually exclusive):
      i. “Time-availability approach,” consistent with structural-functionalism, claims that role performance is a function of who has time to complete the task.
      ii. “Relative resources approach,” consistent with conflict theory, argues the spouse with the least power is relegated the most unrewarding tasks.
      iii. “Gender role ideology,” consistent with symbolic interactionism, argues that the division of labor results from traditional socialization and accompanying attitudes and beliefs.

C. The School Experience and Cultural Sexism

1. Textbooks and other instructional materials portray males and females stereotypically.
2. Differing expectations and encouragement that females and males receive contribute to their varying abilities, as measured by standardized tests, in disciplines such as reading, math, and science.
   a. A study found female students who were exposed to female-stereotyped advertisements scored lower on a math test than those who had seen gender-neutral advertisements.
   b. Research also shows that gender stereotypes impact science achievement.
3. Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments Act prohibits sex discrimination, however an evaluation suggests that sex discrimination continues at many levels, including women’s underrepresentation in administrative positions; less participation and resources in athletic programs; lower performance in science and math; and sex segregated career and technical education.
4. Sexism is also reflected in the way teachers treat students.
   a. Millions of young girls are subjected to sexual harassment by male teachers.
   b. Elementary and secondary school teachers pay more attention to boys than girls.
   c. A study on the gender of teachers concludes that girls have better educational outcomes when taught by women, and boys are better off when taught by men.

D. Media, Language, and Cultural Sexism

1. Media portray females and males in a limited and stereotypical fashion.
   a. The documentary So Sexy So Soon documents the sexualizing of young girls and boys.
   b. Advertising, books, cartoons, songs, toys and television shows create a narrow definition of femininity and sexuality that encourages girls to focus on appearance and sex appeal.
   c. Men are victimized by media images.
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i. A recent study of 1,000 adults found that two-thirds of the respondents thought that women in television advertisements were pictured as intelligent, assertive and caring, whereas men were portrayed as pathetic and silly.

ii. A study shows present-day beer ads portray young men as bumbling and losers and women as hotties and bitches.

iii. One of the largest studies is the Global Media Monitoring Project that examines gender representation in news in 108 countries.
   i. Women are dramatically underrepresented as news subjects and, when they are the subject of news, they are most often “stars” or ordinary women rather than figures of authority or experts.
   ii. Although the number of female reporters has increased in recent years, female reporters are still a minority (37%).
   iii. Older women have achieved gender parity with their male counterparts.
   iv. Male journalists are more likely to work on the “hard” news (e.g. politics) while women are more often assigned “soft stories” (e.g. social issues).
   v. Just 13% of all news stories focus specifically on women; news on gender equality/inequality is almost non-existent.

2. Words and the way we use them reflect gender inequality.
   i. The term nurse carries the meaning of “a woman who…” and the term engineer carries the meaning of “a man who.”
   ii. Terms like “broad,” “old maid,” and “spinsta” have no male counterpart.
   iii. Sexually active teenage females are described by terms carrying negative connotations, whereas terms for equally sexually active male teenagers are considered complimentary among today’s youth.
   iv. Language is so gender stereotyped that the placement of sex before titles is sometimes necessary (e.g., “female police officer” and “male prostitute”).

E. Religion and Cultural Sexism
   1. Research indicates that women attend religious services more often, rate religion as more important to their lives, and are more likely to believe in an afterlife than are men.
   2. In general, religious teachings have tended to promote traditional conceptions of gender.
      a. For example, Evangelicals continue to believe that the male is the head of the household, and Orthodox Jewish women are not counted as part of the minyan, or quorum, required at prayer services, are not allowed to read from the Torah, and are required to sit separately from men at religious services.
      b. Women cannot serve as ordained religious leaders in the Catholic Church, in Orthodox Jewish synagogues, or in Islamic temples across the nation.
      c. Even among mainline religious denominations that allow for the ordination of women, these female clergy often do not hold the same status as their male counterparts and are often limited in their duties.
   3. Religious teachings are not all traditional in their beliefs about women and men.
      a. Quaker women have been referred to as the “mothers of feminism” because of their active role in the early feminist movement.

V. SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION
A. Despite the recent trend toward “gender tourism,” to a large extent what it means to be a man or a woman has changed little over the decades.

B. The Feminization of Poverty
   1. Today women and girls comprise 70% of the poorest people in the world.
   2. Women (6.5%) are more likely to be unemployed than men (6%) and are disproportionately
affected by the global economic crisis.

3. Women in the U.S. make up the majority of minimum wage workers and are significantly more likely to live in poverty than men.
   a. The 2 groups most likely to be poor are female heads of households with dependent children and women over age 65 who have outlived their spouses.
   b. Hispanic and black female-headed households are the poorest of all families headed by a single woman.

4. It is often assumed that anti-poverty programs designed to address overall economic inequality will reduce the feminization of poverty, however an analysis of poverty in 18 affluent countries shows feminization of poverty is both universal and unique in its origins (tied to the percent of single mother families and the female/male ratio among the elderly).

C. The Social-Psychological Costs of Gender Socialization
1. A study of 10-17 year olds found higher levels of depression, stress and rumination (worrying) among girls than boys.
2. Transgender individuals also suffer from self-esteem issues and depression.
   i. 41% reported attempted suicide.
3. Adolescent girls compared to adolescent boys are also more likely to be dissatisfied with their looks, including physical attractiveness, appearance, and body weight.
   i. 25% of college-aged women have tried to lose weight using unhealthy means (vomiting, fasting, laxatives).
   ii. Women’s magazines promote weight loss and messages about women changing their appearance.
   iii. According to Mnet, media messages perpetuate women’s insecurities for economic purposes.
4. Boys are also concerned about body image and as adults their self-esteem is linked to body shape and weight.
   a. Men also experience pressure to be successful in work and earn high income.
   b. Males are discouraged from expressing emotion—part of the “boy code.”

D. The Impact of Gender Socialization on Death and Illness
1. Men are less likely to go to a doctor, have poorer health, and a higher risk of mortality than females at every stage of life.
   a. Men in the U.S. die about 3 years earlier than women.
   b. Traditionally defined gender roles for men are linked to high rates of cirrhosis of the liver, many cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and self-destructive behaviors.
2. HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects women in many areas of the world, even though men have higher rates of the disease.
   a. Women’s inequality contributes to the spread of the disease.
      i. In many countries, women lack the power in relationships to refuse sex or negotiate protected sex.
      ii. Women are often the victims of rape and sexual assault with little social or legal recourse.
      iii. Gender norms often dictate that men have more sexual partners than women, putting women at greater risk.
   b. Women and girls are also impacted by deaths from preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth, exposure to pollutants while cooking, lung cancer and tobacco-related illnesses resulting from being targeted in developing nations, and illnesses related to being poor, being viewed as less worthy of care, and being forbidden to travel unaccompanied by a male.

E. Gender Based Violence
1. Men are more likely to be involved in violence – to kill or be killed; to wage war; to take
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their own lives; to engage in violent crimes of all types; to bully, harass, and abuse.

2. Women and girls are often the victims of male violence.
a. Worldwide, as many as 71% of women will be physically or sexually abused in their lifetime.
b. Over 5,000 women and girls are killed each year in honor killings—murders, often public, as a result of a female dishonoring, or perceived to have dishonored, her family or community.

VI. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY
A. Grassroots Movements
   1. Feminism and the Women’s Movement
      a. Feminism: the belief that women and men should have equal rights and responsibilities
      b. The U.S. feminist movement began in Seneca, Falls, NY, in 1848 when a group of women wrote and adopted a women’s rights manifesto modeled after the Declaration of Independence.
         i. Although many early feminists were primarily concerned with suffrage, feminism has its political origins in the abolitionist movement of the 1830s when women learned to question the assumption of “natural superiority.”
         ii. Their greatest success was the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which recognized women’s right to vote.
      c. The rebirth of feminism almost 50 years later was facilitated by: An increase in the number of women in the labor force; Publication of Betty Friedan’s book The Feminine Mystique; An escalating divorce rate; The socially and politically liberal climate of the 1960s; Student activism; The establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women by John F. Kennedy.
         i. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was established in 1966 and remains the largest feminist organization in U.S., with more than 500,000 members in 550 chapters.
         ii. One of NOW’s hardest-fought battles is to win ratification of Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, which states that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S., or by any state, on account of sex;” Although the bill passed in the House and the Senate, it has yet to be ratified by the required 38 states.
      d. Today, a new wave of feminism is being led by young women and men who grew up with the benefits won by their mothers but who are shocked by the current conditions of women in the U.S. and worldwide.
         i. Young feminists also grapple with many of the issues their mothers faced, in particular, how to balance work and family life.
         ii. Today, young feminists are more inclusive than their predecessors, welcoming all who champion the cause of global equality.
   2. The Men’s Movement
      a. As a consequence of the women’s right movement, men began to reevaluate their own gender status.
      b. The men’s movement has a variety of factions.
         i. The mythopoetic men’s movement, is one of the early branches of the movement, which began after the publication of Robert Bly’s Iron John—a fairy tale about men’s wounded masculinity that was on the New York Times bestseller list for more than 60 weeks.
         ii. Some men’s organizations advocate gender equality and work to make men
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more accountable for sexism, violence, and homophobia (e.g., The National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) and the national network of Men’s Resource Centers).

iii. Other men’s groups oppose feminism and view the feminist agenda as an organized form of male-bashing (e.g., The Promise Keepers, part of a Christian men’s movement, and Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, have often been criticized as patriarchal and antifeminist).

iv. Some men’s groups focus on issues concerning children and fathers’ rights.
v. Other concerns on the agenda of some men’s rights groups include the domestic violence committed against men by women, false allegations of child sexual abuse, wrongful paternity suits, and the oppressive nature of restrictive masculine gender norms.

B. U.S. National Policy

2. In 2009, Obama signed the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act which reversed the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision that gave victims of pay discrimination only 180 days to file a grievance; the Act now defines each paycheck as a separate act of discrimination.

3. The Paycheck Fairness Act, designed to close loopholes in the Equal Pay Act of 1963, awaits legislative approval.

4. Sexual Harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act.
   a. The U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when this conduct affects an individual’s employment, interferes with an individual’s work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.”
   b. Sexual harassment can be of 2 types:
      i. Quid pro quo, in which an employer requires sexual favors in exchange for a promotion, salary increase, or other employee benefit.
      ii. The existence of a hostile environment that unreasonably interferes with job performance, as in the case of sexually explicit comments or insults made to an employee.
   c. The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man although adult women are the most frequent targets of sexual harassment.
      i. Women who work in male-dominated occupations and blue-collar jobs are more likely to experience sexual harassment.

5. Affirmative Action refers to a broad range of policies and practices in the workplace and educational institutions to promote equal opportunity as well as diversity.
   a. Affirmative action policies developed in the 1960s from federal legislation that requires any employer that receives contracts from the federal government must make “good faith efforts” to increase the number of female and other minority applicants.
   b. The largest category of affirmative action beneficiaries is women.

C. International Efforts
1. International efforts to address problems of gender date back to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), often referred to as the International Women’s Bill of Rights, was adopted by United Nations in 1979.
a. 185 countries have ratified the treaty, including every country in Europe and South and Central America.

b. The U.S. is the only industrialized country that has not ratified the document.

   a. The platform reflects an international commitment to the goals of equality, development, and peace for women everywhere.
   b. The platform identifies strategies to address critical areas of concern related to women and girls, including poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, and human rights.

3. In 2000, all members of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, that defines one of its goals as the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment by 2015.

4. In 2010 the EC adopted a strategy for equality between men and women.

5. However, inequality does still exist especially with China’s gendercide policy of aborting female fetuses.

VII. UNDERSTANDING GENDER INEQUALITY

A. Gender Roles and Inequality are Ingrained
   1. Traditional gender roles are weakening
   2. Eliminating stereotypes liberates men as well as women
   3. People are increasingly embracing androgyny - the blending of traditionally defined masculine and feminine characteristics.
   4. Gender mainstreaming is becoming increasingly popular.

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

STUDENT PROJECTS

Gender Images in the Media and Advertising

Arrange for a viewing of Jean Kilborne’s Killing Us Softly documentary or have students check out clips online. Have them write an essay where they respond to the following questions:

1) What role does the media play in our understandings of gender expectations?
2) How do you think your own attitudes or understandings of appropriate gender behavior have been influenced by the media?
3) What do you think can be done to avoid or resist these messages?

Finally, they should illustrate their essay with examples from mass media.

Are College Students Majoring in Sex-Stereotyped Majors?

Request the students to obtain data from their college or university regarding the proportion of men and women in each of the majors offered. Instruct the students to examine the percentage of male students in their institution who are majoring in areas that are traditionally dominated by men and the percentage majoring in more gender neutral or predominantly female fields. Have the students do the same for the female students. If the students can obtain data from earlier years, have them compare the data across time periods. Then instruct the students to state why they think the patterns of gender differences exist and, if evidence of change, why the patterns are changing. Have the students report their findings to the class and engage the class in a discussion of causes of gender differences and possible change.
Another classroom activity version of this exercise involves asking students in your class to indicate on a piece of paper their major (or intended major) and their sex (female or male). On the board, list the various majors and the numbers (or percentages) of women and men in each major. Ask students to note and explain any associations between specific majors and gender.

**Gender Roles in Other Societies**

Request the students to interview a person from another culture about the gender roles in that person’s society. Instruct the students to report the interviewees’ answers to the following questions: How do gender roles in that country differ from those in the U.S.? Why? How does this person feel about the differences? Have the students report their findings to the class and discuss the causes and desirability of the cross-cultural differences.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Assuming Sex Based on Gender**

Instruct each student to select one person in the room. Without identifying the person they selected, write on a piece of paper whether they think the individual is male or female. Then instruct the students to make a list of the reasons why they think that person is male or female. When students are finished, ask those who identified their person as male what characteristics made them think that. Then ask what characteristics made students think their person was female. Students will rely mostly on gender characteristics (clothing, hair, makeup, etc.) and secondary sex characteristics (breasts, Adam’s apple, etc.), but will not have access to primary sex characteristics (genitals, chromosomes, etc.). Follow this activity with an explanation of the distinction between sex and gender, and a discussion of the use of gender to determine sex in everyday life.

**Gender Coaching**

Divide the classroom up by gender, with men on one side of the room and women on the other side. Select one volunteer from each gender and have them switch sides. Instruct the class to “coach” their volunteer to act like their opposite gender for a series of three interactions (you can make up the scenarios). Afterward, process the activity by asking students what kinds of things they told their volunteer to do in order to pass and what kinds of signals were given that let the rest of the class know that the volunteer was occupying a different gender. Don’t forget to ask the volunteers how they felt while doing the exercise.

**How Has Your Gender Role Socialization Influenced Your Life?**

Divide the class into small groups, mixing males and females. Have the students discuss how their gender role socialization has influence important aspects of their lives, such as their self-concept, occupational or educational goals, health, or social relationships. Ask a representative of each group to report experiences within their group to the class.

**Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

Ask students to list five characteristics associated with “femininity” and five characteristics associated
with “masculinity.” Ask for volunteers to read their lists to the class and write the responses on the board under the headings “Masculine Characteristics” and “Feminine Characteristics.”

Engage the class in a discussion around the following questions:

1) Why is there social disapproval for men to have “feminine” traits and characteristics? Is there similar disapproval for women who have “masculine” traits and characteristics? Why not? Are men more restricted by their gender role than women are?

2) Read the list of “feminine” traits and characteristics and ask, “Why does U.S. society tend to discourage men from having these traits?”

3) How many heterosexual women would like their male partners to have more of these characteristics and traits that we associate with femininity?

4) If men in our society, and throughout the world, had more traits and characteristics traditionally defined as “feminine,” what would the effects be on the following social problems?
   a) war and global conflict
   b) crime and violence
   c) domestic violence and abuse
   d) divorce
   e) teenage and unmarried childbearing
   f) physical and mental health
   g) homophobia, discrimination against gays, and anti-gay violence
   h) gender inequality

**Toys and Gender Socialization**

Bring to class two traditionally “boy” toys (e.g., trucks, race cars, superheroes, toy guns), two traditionally “girl” toys (e.g., dolls, tea sets, etc.), and two “gender neutral” toys (e.g., blocks, toy animals, etc.). Wrap each toy individually in a plastic grocery bag and place all of the bags in a single larger bag. Select six student volunteers to come to the front of the class. Request each volunteer to select one of the bags (without seeing what they are selecting) and demonstrate to the class how they would play with the toy inside the bag they selected. Then analyze the kind of skills that are taught by each of the toys and the messages they promote to their target gender.

**INTERNET ASSIGNMENTS**

**Guttmacher Institute**

Have students navigate to the Guttmacher Institute’s home page (http://www.guttmacher.org/). Working in small groups have them investigate one of the main issues located on the left hand side of the homepage. Then have students prepare a short presentation for the rest of the class.

**Global Issues Concerning Women’s Rights**

Invite students to find out more about global issues concerning women’s rights by visiting one of the following websites:

   a) Women’s Human Rights Net: www.whrnet.org
   b) Human Rights Watch—Women’s Rights Division: www.hrw.org/hrw/about/projects/women.html

Instruct the students to choose a global issue and report and evaluate the arguments presented regarding the issue.
Media Portrayals of U.S. Women in Politics

Request the students to choose a woman currently in U.S. politics, either as a candidate or in an elected or appointed political position. Instruct them to use an Internet search engine to find articles about the politician they chose and examine the ways the individual is portrayed. In particular, encourage students to look at the way gender shapes the portrayals. Instruct students to report their findings to the class.

Violence Against Women

Request the students to look up information regarding violence against women. In particular, they should look at statistics comparing rates of domestic violence in their current or home state to the rest of the United States. They should also look at current laws in their state of interest to see how they compare to laws in other states (e.g., mandatory arrest laws, etc.), and examine any recent state or federal legislation. Students can report their findings to the class.

Sexual Harassment Laws

Request the students to look up information on sexual harassment laws in different countries. Instruct them to provide a comparison to the type of protections offered in the United States and at least five other countries. Instruct students to report their findings to the class.

The Pay Gap

What message is sent to men and women when women excel in school but men still excel in the workforce? How does that affect workplaces? The clip asserts that the wage gap is partially explained by the actions that men and women make when accepting a job or asking for a raise. Does that make the wage gap okay? Have students watch this video clip about Equal Pay Day and respond to the questions above: [http://college.cengage.com/sociology/shared/videos/template92.html](http://college.cengage.com/sociology/shared/videos/template92.html)

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

North Country

A dramatization based on a true story of sexual harassment that took place in the mining industry. The story is based on the court case *Jensen v. Eveleth Mines*, the first major successful sexual harassment case.

Discussion Questions:

1) What factors do you think contributed to the sexual harassment that took place?
2) What kind of things could be done to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace?

So Sexy So Soon

A documentary that shows the ways young girls and boys are sexualized in the media.

Discussion Questions:

1) In what ways are young girls and boys sexualized in the media?
Gender Inequality

2) What are the consequences of this sexualization?
3) What could be done to reduce or eliminate the sexualization of children in media?

Thin

An HBO documentary that tells the stories of four women who are in treatment for eating disorders.

Discussion Questions:

1) What similarities and differences do you see among the girls whose stories are portrayed in this film?
2) What are some of the causes and consequences of eating disorders?
3) What could be done to reduce eating disorders?

Born into Brothels: Calcutta’s Red Light Kids

This somewhat controversial documentary utilizes first hand accounts of life in India’s brothels as a way to bring awareness to the conditions of women and children forced into prostitution.

Discussion Questions

1) What do you think, if anything, should be done to prevent women from entering into prostitution?
2) Some people have criticized the film for stereotyping the life of prostitutes, do you understand why they might make this criticism? Do you agree with it?

RELATED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Feminism: NOW, the National Organization for Women (www.now.org) works to raise awareness about issues affecting women. Working primarily from local, grassroots sources, it is one of the largest feminist organizations in the country.

Women’s Rights: The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU, has long been active in women’s rights issues and maintains a web-page documenting the history of the women’s rights movement in the U.S. and current efforts: http://www.aclu.org/womens-rights

Gender and Public Policy: The White House under the Obama Administration maintains a blog devoted to updating the public about issues facing women and girls at the national, public policy level. The Council on Women and Girls blog is located here: http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg/blog

SOLVING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

There are a number of ways you can get involved with gender issues. Many campuses have a student organization devoted to women’s rights on campus. Additionally, many of the groups above have local chapters (e.g., NOW, ACLU, etc.). For an explicitly sociological perspective on these issues, the Sociologists for Women in Society maintains a good web presence at www.socwomen.org. They have a variety of resources there for ways to get involved with issues facing women.