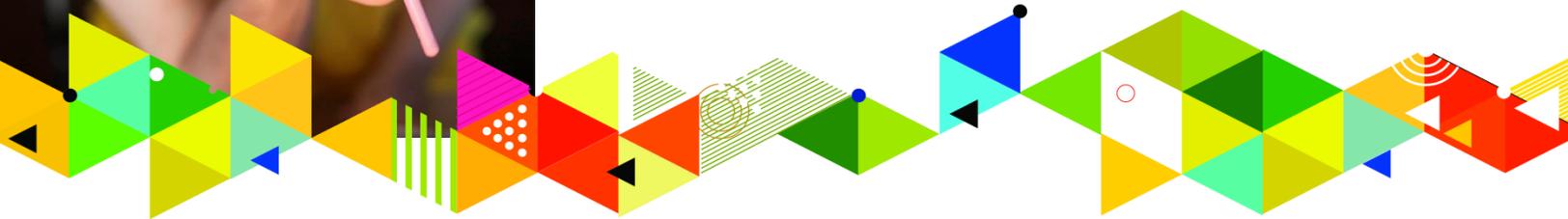




Gender and Sexuality



Lecture Outline

After having read chapter 9, you will be able to

- explain the difference between sex and gender.
- summarize biological and sociological approaches to gender.
- distinguish between the Connell's four types of masculinity using examples.
- describe four main strands of feminism.
- critically discuss the consequences of the intersection of gender with other dimensions of inequality.

Chapter Summary

Gender is a highly contested area within sociology, especially regarding the degree to which gender is either the consequence of socialization or the product of innate biological predispositions. Most of the critical work on gender has been carried out by feminist scholars, particularly since the women's rights movement of the 1960s. The terms *gender* and *sex* are not synonymous. **Sex** refers to the different anatomical or biological characteristics of women and men. However, some individuals are born **intersex**, meaning they have both male and female sex characteristics. **Gender** is a sociological term that refers to the roles and characteristics society assigns to women and men. A **gender role** is a set of expectations and attitudes concerning behaviour that relate to being male or female. Gender roles vary across culture both in the expectations for each gender and in how strictly they are enforced. **Cisgender** means one strongly identifies with the gender roles associated with one's biological sex. **Transgender** individuals' identity and behaviour do not conform to the gender role associated with their biological sex. Similarly, **transsexual** individuals feel a persistent desire to belong to the other sex. **Sexuality** refers to the spectrum of feelings and expressions of sexual desire and attraction. **Heterosexual** individuals are usually attracted to opposite sex, while **homosexual** individuals are attracted to the same sex and **bisexual** individuals are attracted to either sex. **Asexual** individuals, on the other hand, feel no sexual attraction at all. **LGBTQI2S** (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, two-spirit) is an all-encompassing term for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.

Feminist scholars have carried out much of the critical work on gender. Beatrice Kachuck (2003 [1995]) distinguished four major strands of feminist theory: liberal feminism, essentialist feminism, socialist feminism, and postmodernist feminism. **Liberal feminism** argues that women, as a group, deserve the same rights as men in all domains of public life, such as education and work. It is concerned with **pay equity**, which means equal pay for comparable work. Criticisms of feminist liberalism centre around the fact that the main beneficiaries of liberal feminist gains are white, Western, middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual, educated Western women, and that it fails to address the concerns of marginalized women.

Essentialist feminism accepts that men and women are essentially different, but problematizes that patriarchal society devalues femininity. Essentialist feminists argue that women's innate characteristics (e.g., maternal thinking) should be positively valued and in some cases advocate the superiority of feminine traits. One major criticism of essentialist feminism is that it falls into the trap of generalizing about all women and from a Western lens, without looking at the variations that exist among women in different cultural contexts.

Socialist feminism looks at the intersections of oppression between class and gender. Feminist socialists focus on the different struggles and resources available to women of different classes. The main criticism of feminist socialism is that the focus on class as the motor of inequality ignores other important factors such as sexual orientation, "race," and ethnicity.

Postmodernist feminism takes a social constructionist position—a position almost diametrically opposed to essentialist feminism—by arguing that there is no natural basis for social identities, such as gender. Postmodernist feminists view women as subjects, rather than objects, of sociological study and allow the perspectives of the women studied to guide their research, similar to standpoint theory discussed in previous chapters. An important methodology within postmodernist feminism is queer theory. First articulated by philosopher Judith Butler, **queer theory** rejects the idea that gender is connected to a biological essence; it rejects the idea that male and female are natural binary opposites and instead views gender as a continuum. The main criticism of postmodernist feminism is that it problematizes other people's conclusions, but does not provide any of its own.

Some post-secondary programs and their related occupations are **gendered**, or heavily dominated by one sex. These occupations are defined in gendered terms. For example, descriptions of nursing generally refer to concepts like "caring" and "nurturing" which are traits typically associated with women, while descriptions of policing make use of concept of "toughness" and "fraternity," characteristics associated with men. There still appear to be separate spheres for men and women in post-secondary education (more men in engineering and applied sciences and more women in education and social sciences), leading to different employment opportunities.

The **feminization** of an occupational sphere occurs when a particular job or industry comes to be predominantly associated with women, as with clerical work and nursing. Feminization is linked to lower salaries, less job protection, and fewer benefits than in male-dominated industries. Individuals working in gendered jobs as the "wrong" sex can experience profound effects on their gender performance. Paul Sargent's (2005) study of men in the field of early childhood education explored the conflict between the nurturing characteristics the work requires and the demands of masculine gender expression. Men working with young children who display affection are viewed with suspicion and are often forced instead into the role of disciplinarian. Sargent's research drew on Connell's (1995) four performances of masculinity. **Hegemonic masculinity** is defined as the practices that

normalize and naturalize men's dominance and women's subordination. **Subordinate masculinity** refers to the practices that could threaten the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity. **Marginalized masculinity** entails adaptation of masculinities to issues such as race and class. Finally, **complicit masculinity** entails the practices that do not embody hegemonic processes, but benefit from them.

“Race” and gender can intersect to amplify oppression, as discussed in Chapter 8. Racial prejudice and discrimination can often reinforce gender bias, and vice versa. Visible minority women are often stereotyped into two extremes. East Asian women may be stereotyped either as subservient and childlike **Lotus Blossom Babies** or as harsh and devious **Dragon Ladies**. Black women are stereotyped either as desexed, servile “mammies” or as exotic, sexual objects. Indigenous women have been subject to the stereotype of the **Indian Princess**, a beautiful, heroic aide to European men, and the stereotype of the **squaw**, which depicts them as savages and thus provides justification for colonial dominance.

Ethnicity and gender can also interact in immigration. While, men of various ethnicities have often arrived in Canada before women, this situation has been reversed in the case of Philippine women. Waves of women came to Canada from the Philippines through programs created to address child-care as more women worked outside the home. Many Filipina had post-secondary education, but immigration policies only allowed them to enter the country as domestic workers. As minority women and as temporary employees in an unregulated industry, these women were particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between sex and gender?
2. How does the existence of intersex individuals challenge the narrative of a biological male/female dichotomy?
3. List Kachuck's (2003[1995]) four feminist theories described in the text. Give a detailed description for each. Which one do you most agree with and why?
4. What does it mean for an occupation to be gendered? Provide two contrasting examples.
5. Name the four performances of masculinity as described by Raewyn Connell. Explain which performance(s) would pertain to a man in the nursing field and why.
6. Discuss the intersection of race and gender in the context of immigration to Canada. Make reference to specific immigration policies that affected male and female immigrants differently.

Exploration and Discussion Exercises

1. Although women have made and are still making gains in the workforce, they continue to be oppressed and exploited in the home. In a *Toronto Star* article entitled “Men Inch Forward in

Housework, Childcare,” Sheryl Ubelacker (2008) writes that women continue to give more time to raising children, doing housework, and caring for aging relatives than men do.

While Canada is perceived as a country that provides its inhabitants with freedom and the right to equality, why does such an imbalance still occur? Using one of the feminist approaches from this chapter, give an outline of how society can work to correct this imbalance.

2. The authors discuss the popular legend surrounding Pocahontas—portrayed as an “Indian princess” and as having played an integral part in the American story of how the country was built. Watch the Disney movie *Pocahontas* and write a gendered and racialized analysis of the characters in the film. Analyze how Pocahontas embodies the Indian princess stereotype. Are there portrayals of the squaw stereotype? Use Raewyn Connell’s four performances of masculinity to examine the male characters in the movie.

Further Readings

Aujla, A. (2000). Others in Their Own Land: Second Generation South Asian Canadian Women, Racism, and the Persistence of Colonial Discourse. *Canadian Woman Studies* 20(2): 41–47.

This article examines how colonial discourses of East Asian women shape their identity and their efforts to assimilate into mainstream society in to “fit in.”

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). The Five Sexes, Revisited. *The Sciences* 40(4): 18–23.

This article revisits Fausto-Sterling’s initial argument that two sexes are not enough to describe the complexities of human sex and that the male/female binary does not adequately represent distinct, natural categories.

Jackson, S. (2014). Globalization, Corporate Nationalism and Masculinity in Canada: Sport, Molson Beer Advertising and Consumer Citizenship. *Sport in Society* 17(7): 901–916.

This article examines representations and constructions of masculinity in media, particularly advertising.

Theberge, N. (1997). “It’s Part of the Game: Physicality and the Production of Gender in Women’s Hockey. *Gender and Society* 11(1): 69–87.

This article uses a qualitative approach to explore how femininity and womanhood are constructed in the context of a male-dominated, male-identified sport: ice hockey.

Government of Canada: Advancing Gender Equality

http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/world-issues-enjeux-mondiaux/advancing_gender-batir_sexes.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=1.181703841.7677959.1480352355

This website provides an overview of specific government initiatives and policies to support global gender equality.

Government of Canada: Status of Women Canada: <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/index-en.html>

This website provides information and resources pertaining to women's equality in Canadian society.

Milestones in Canadian Women's History: <http://www2.unb.ca/parl/milestones.htm>

This website chronicles the women's rights movement from the 1960s. The Resources tab provides further links to other pertinent subject matters, such as women's policies, guides to feminist research, feminist resources, and scholarly journals.

Transforming Gender <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/episodes/transforming-gender>

This CBC documentary tells the story of different trans individuals, discussion experiences of hate and rejection as well as chronicling advocacy efforts for transgender rights.

How We Got Gay <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/episodes/how-we-got-gay>

This documentary provides a historical account of the fight for gay rights.

Mars and Venus Today <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/episodes/mars-venus-today>

This documentary explores whether men and women truly are fundamentally different.