

Gender stratification

In sociology, social stratification occurs when differences lead to greater status, power, or privilege for some groups over others. Simply put, it is a system by which society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy. Members of society are socially stratified on many levels, including socio-economic status, race, class, ethnicity, religion, ability status, and gender. Gender stratification occurs when gender differences give men greater privilege and power over women, transgender, and gender-non-conforming people.

Gender stratification refers to the social ranking, where men typically inhabit higher statuses than women. Often, the terms gender inequality and gender stratification are used interchangeably. Broadly defined, most of the research in this area focuses on differences between men's and women's life circumstances.

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality, and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's interests.

“Women! The same rights, the same duties. “.....is almost impossible in practice and across the cultures.

Feminist theory uses the conflict approach to examine the reinforcement of gender roles and inequalities. Conflict theory posits that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful in society, with inequality perpetuated because it benefits the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. Radical feminism, in particular, evaluates the role of the patriarchy in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, the male's perspective and contributions are considered more valuable, resulting in the silencing and marginalization of the woman. Feminism focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion of male supremacy.

The feminist perspective of gender stratification more recently takes into account intersectionality, a feminist sociological theory first highlighted by feminist-sociologist Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality suggests that various biological, social and cultural categories, including gender, race, class and ethnicity, interact and contribute towards systematic social inequality. Therefore, various forms of oppression, such as racism or sexism, do not act independently of one another; instead these forms of oppression are interrelated, forming a system of oppression that reflects the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination. In light of this theory, the oppression and marginalization of women is thus shaped not only by gender, but by other factors such as race and class.

Mary Ann Weathers demonstrates intersectionality in action in “An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force.” In this publication, Weathers reveals that in the twentieth century, working-class women of color embodied the notion of intersectionality. The first and second waves of the feminist movement were primarily driven by white women, who

did not adequately represent the feminist movement as a whole. It was—and continues to be—important to recognize that white women faced a different form of discrimination than working class women of color, who not only had to deal with sexism, but also fought against racism and class oppression.

Throughout most of recorded history and around the globe, women have taken a “back seat” to men. Generally speaking, men have had, and continue to have, more physical and social power and status than women, especially in the public arena. Men tend to be more aggressive and violent than women, so they fight wars. Likewise, boys are often required to attain proof of masculinity through strenuous effort. This leads to males holding public office, creating laws and rules, defining society, and—some feminists might add—controlling women. Male dominance in a society is termed **patriarchy**.

Behind much of the inequalities seen in education, the workplace, and politics is **sexism**, or prejudice and discrimination because of gender. Fundamental to sexism is the assumption that men are superior to women.

Sexism has always had negative consequences for women. It has caused some women to avoid pursuing successful careers typically described as “masculine”—perhaps to avoid the social impression that they are less desirable as spouses or mothers, or even less “feminine.” Sexism has also caused women to feel inferior to men or to rate themselves negatively.

In short, sexism produces inequality between the genders—particularly in the form of discrimination. In comparable positions in the workplace, for example, women generally receive lower wages than men. But sexism can also encourage inequality in more subtle ways. By making women feel inferior to men, society comes to accept this as the truth. When that happens, women enter “the race” with lower self-esteem and fewer expectations, often resulting in lower achievements.

Sexism has brought gender inequalities to women in almost all arenas of life. Differential socialization leads to gender inequality. Through socialization; it has become a part and parcel of social existence. But inequality has been a special problem in the areas of higher education, work, and politics.