




SOCIAL INEQUALITY (2): GENDER, RACE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Introduction to sociology – session 10
Anne Revillard



Social inequality (2): gender, race and intersectionality

1. Gender

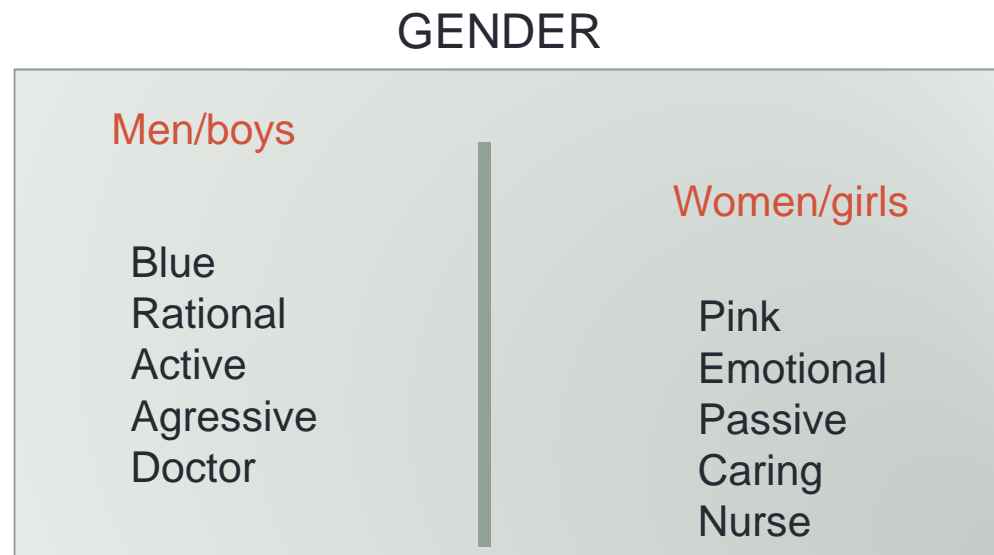
2. Racial domination

3. 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 that produces inequalities in various areas of social life:
2 example here: employment and the political sphere

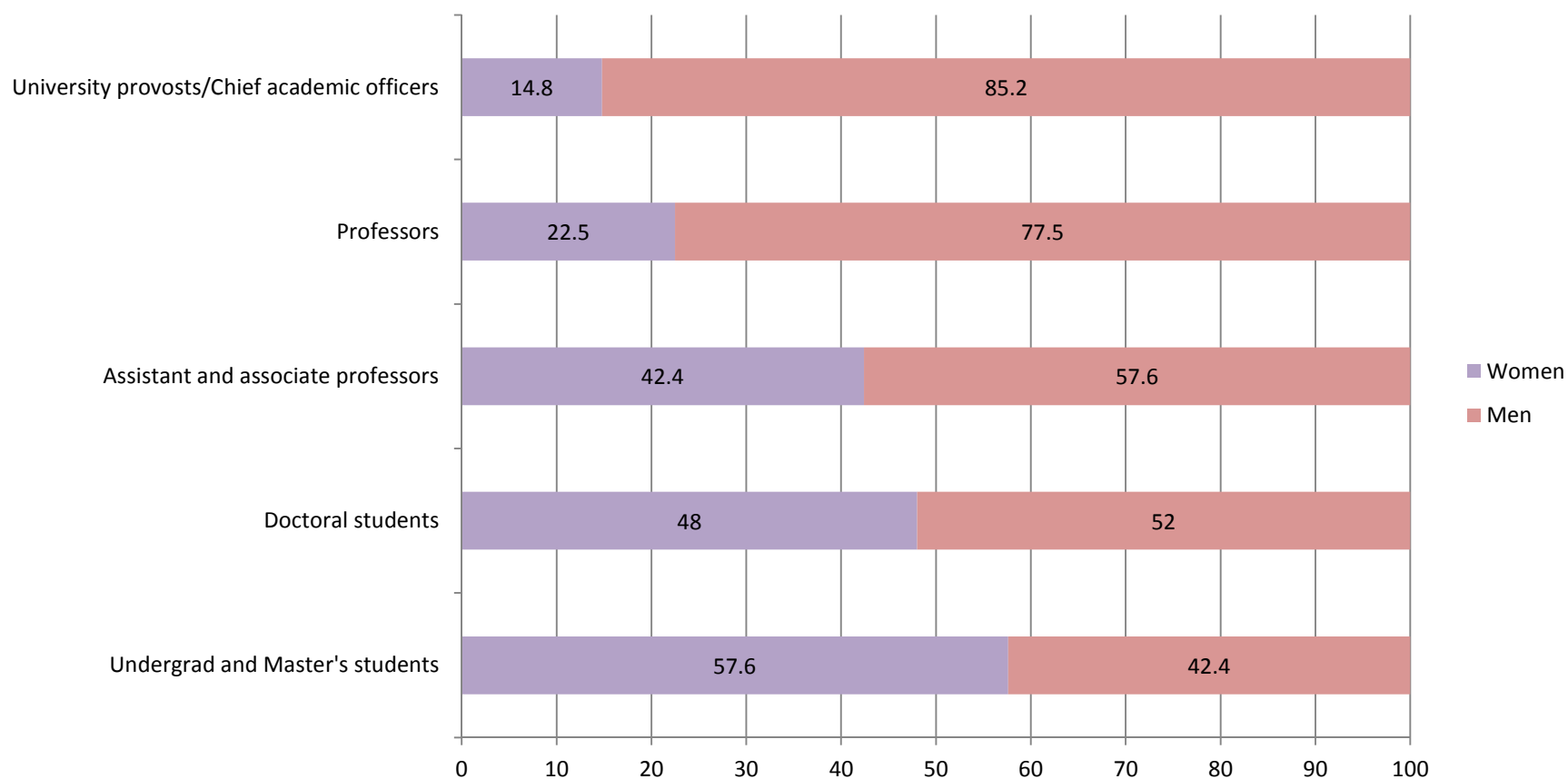
Gender

- How gender is produced and produces inequality:
 - Effects of gendered socialization
 - Gendered division of labor
 - Violence against women
 - Gendered organizations/masculine bias in organizational norms and practices...

Gender

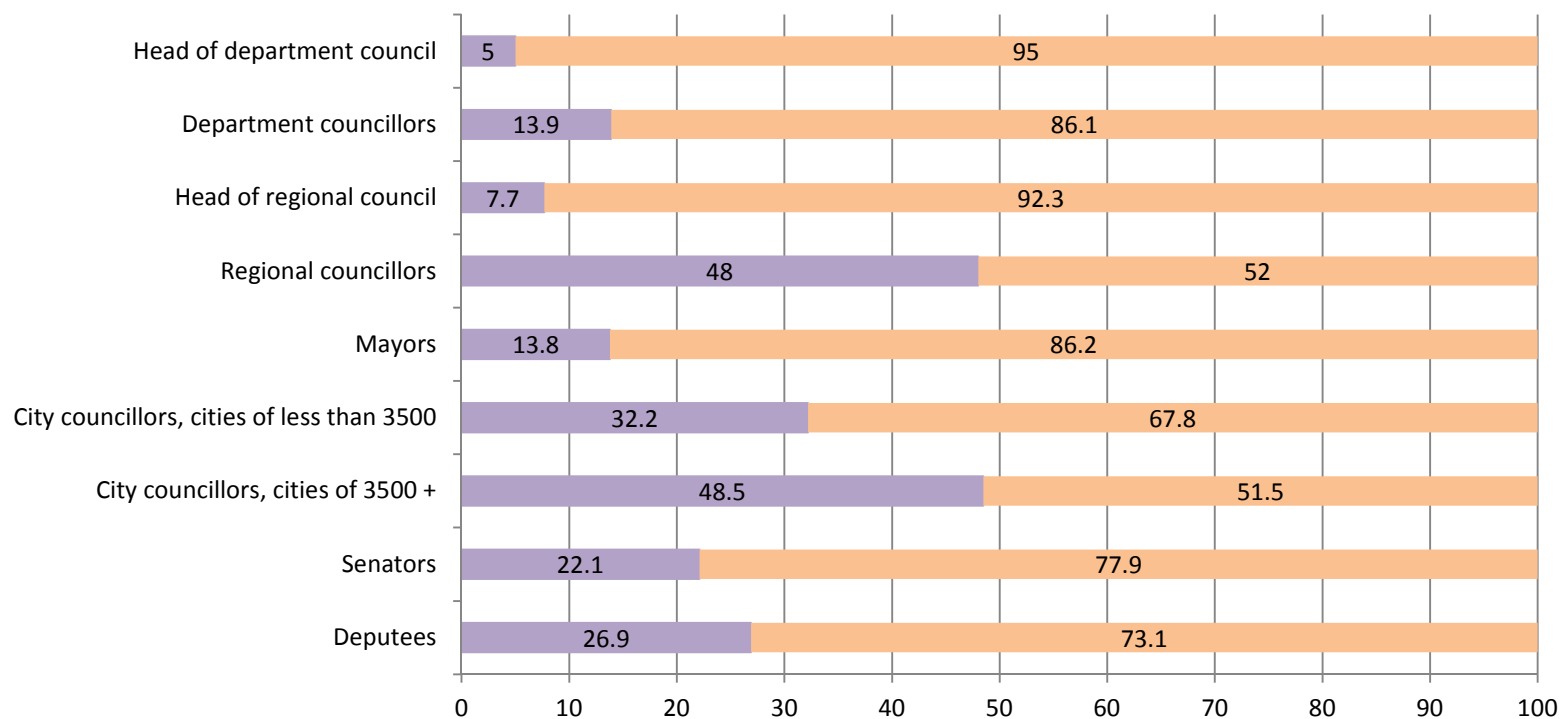
- Examples of gender inequalities in the labor market in France:
 - 80% of part-time workers are women
 - Women's full-time monthly wages are 20% inferior to men's on average
 - Women's pensions are 31% lower than men's on average
 - Occupational segregation:
 - Male-dominated vs female-dominated economic 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



Based upon 2012 data by Observatoire de la parité, <http://www.observatoire-parite.gouv.fr/parite-politique/reperes-statistiques-47/>

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”

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

What is racial domination?

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)

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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 essentialism in analyses of gender inequality (Crenshaw, 1989, Collins, 1990)
- How to represent intersectionality? Addition, intersection, « complex configurations » (Choo and Ferree, 2009)

Mapping intersectionality

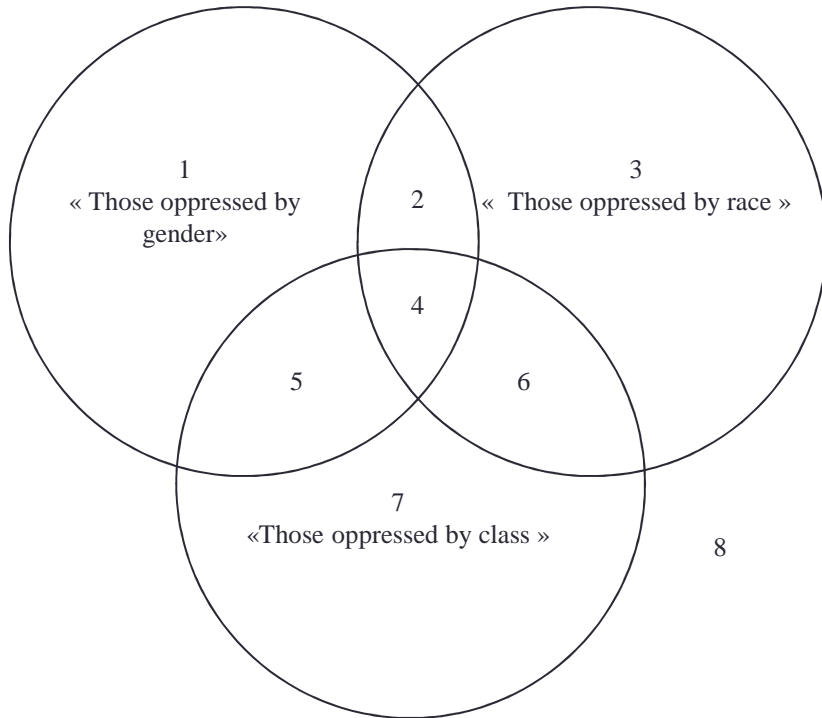


Fig. 1 : Oppressed people

VS

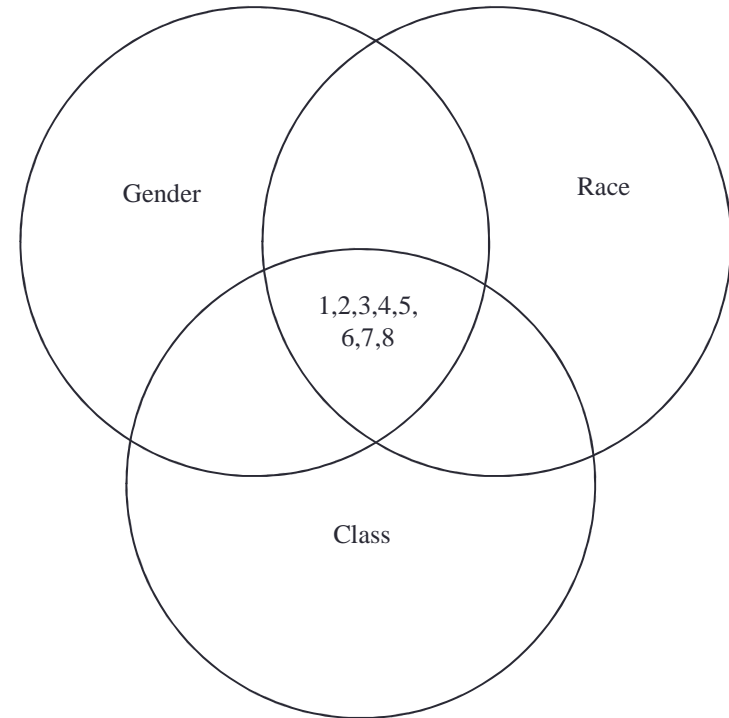


Fig. 2 : Experience

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

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)
- Pointing to the way power relations within a group affect our common conception of the group’s interests → plurality of interests and definitions of the “valued goods”
 - Ex. Gender inequality and early motherhood (Edin and Kefalas, 2005)
- Race, class and gender as mutually constitutive: ex. of M. Lamont’s Dignity of working men (2000)

L. 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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