ASA Resource Ideas for Domain 4

Stratification and Inequality

"Do you ever worry you've had to sacrifice your femininity to succeed in the male business world."

NCSS Conference – New Orleans, Louisiana
American Sociological Association Symposium
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Presenter – Hayley Lotspeich, Wheaton North High School, Wheaton, IL
Gender Identification Exercise

Abstract:
Download this resource to see full details
Students must guess the gender of several people, basing their judgment purely on information supplied: occupation, relationship status, hobbies, tastes, and interests.

Details:
Resource Type(s): Class Activity
Author(s): Jeffery P. Dennis, SUNY Oneonta
Date Published: 4/26/2010
Subject Area: Sex and Gender

Files for Download:
Sociological Concepts and Gender - Module 7.doc
citation.docx
Gender Identification Exercise

Jeffery P. Dennis

Concept Area
Gender as a social construction,
Presumptions about gender polarized traits and activities.

Type of Exercise
In Class Exercise

Brief Description
Students must guess the gender of several people, basing their judgment purely on information supplied: occupation, relationship status, hobbies, tastes, and interests.

Explanation
One of the most important tasks in a sociology of gender course is dismantling the misconceptions that men and women are polar opposites, with instantly recognizable differences in personality traits, interests, and activities. This exercise asks students to guess the gender of unspecified people, based solely personal characteristics. Each person has a mix of masculine-coded, feminine-coded, and neutral characteristics, so students must decide which to emphasize and which to ignore.

The assignment works best early in the semester, when students are just getting to know each other. Pass out copies to students in small groups, and give them about ten minutes to discuss the people on the list and make their decisions.

After they have made their decisions, bring the class together again for ten-fifteen minutes of discussion. Determine if there is a class consensus for any of the individuals. Which individual is easiest to identify, and which hardest? Which clues are most salient?

Where there is no consensus, ask which clues could be changed to make the person easier to identify. Would additional clues help?

When I use this exercise, consensus is often reached on #2 and #8, not because of a heterosexist presumption that all gay people are male, but because the activities (working out/hunting) are coded as masculine. Changing “working out” to “aerobics” increases the likelihood of identifying #2 as female.

#3 is usually coded female because of the “elementary school.” Changing it to “high school” increases the likelihood of identifying #3 as male.

#7 and #9 are always identified as female; the “feminine” leisure interests evidently outweigh the “masculine” occupational choices.

#10 is often identified as female because students find it difficult to believe that there are any men who are not sexually active.

The others are less amenable to consensus. #1 is sometimes coded male because of the occupation, and because the students identify UFO interest with masculine-coded science.

Changing just a few words in #4, from “goes to the Caribbean” to “takes a cruise in the Caribbean,” creates a “female” identification.
Most students will not identify #5 as “male” unless the interests in painting and piano are removed; “female” requires the subject to be unmarried, based on the stereotype that female athletes are too “masculine” to acquire heterosexual romantic partners. #6 cannot be identified without “favorite toys.”

At the end of the exercise, inform the students that there is no correct answer; both men and women can and do exhibit these characteristics. There are some percentage differences, but none significant enough to allow a general rule that “men like sports” or “women like gardening,” or anything else. Then move into a presentation on the social construction of gender.

**Assigned Readings and Necessary Materials**

There are no required readings prior to the exercise. The only necessary material is a printed list of the individuals for each student:


2. College student, a twenty-three year old senior majoring in philosophy and planning to go to law school. Gay, involved in an ongoing relationship. Is on the college debate team, likes dancing and old movies, works out at the gym.

3. Sixty-eight year old elementary school English teacher, retired, married with three children and five grandchildren. Likes gardening, Shakespeare, and Broadway musicals. Favorite musical is *Rent*.

4. Fifty-one year old real estate agent, divorced with one child. Heterosexual, actively dating but no steady relationship. Likes to travel; goes to Mexico or the Caribbean every year. Favorite TV show is *CSI: Miami*.

5. High school basketball coach, age twenty-six. Married, no children. Played basketball in high school and college, majored in physical education. Also likes to play the piano and paint.

6. Eight years old and in the third grade. Wants to be an archaeologist. Takes Spanish lessons on weekends. Favorite TV show is *Fairly Oddparents*.

7. College student, age twenty, majoring in chemistry. Plans to become a doctor. Heterosexual, involved in an ongoing relationship. Favorite movie is *The Wedding Date*.


9. Auto mechanic, age twenty-two. Heterosexual, no steady relationship. Was on the track team in high school. Favorite movie is *Gone with the Wind*.

10. Eighteen year old college student, psychology major, plans to become a psychologist. Gay, not sexually active. Doesn’t smoke or drink. Favorite TV show is *The Real World*. 


Intersectionality in the Toy Store

Abstract: Introduction to Sociology courses often include the triumvirate of inequalities of race/ethnicity, social class, and gender in them. In working through these sections of the course, many instructors emphasize the intersectionalities of these three dimensions of inequality. The following exercise prompts students to analyze 1) the significance of race, class, and gender in toy culture, and 2) the multidimensionality of inequality and the extent to which one dimension influences the others. For this assignment, I have students listen to Elna Baker’s “Babies Buying Babies” segment on This American Life (episode 347: Matchmakers, originally aired January 18, 2008) and analyze the podcast in terms of the intersections of race, class, and gender. They are then asked to analyze the story more deeply to come to a sociological understanding of how the events in the story illustrate not only race, class, and gender, but also their intersections.

Details:
Resource Type(s): Class Activity
Author(s): Michael Ramirez
Date Published: 5/20/2013

Usage Notes:
For this assignment, I have students listen to Elna Baker’s “Babies Buying Babies” segment on This American Life (episode 347: Matchmakers, originally aired January 18, 2008) and analyze the episode in terms of race, class, and gender, and their intersections. The podcast is streaming for free at: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/347/matchmakers?act=3

Learning Goals and Assessments:
Goal 1:
To learn and successfully analyze toy culture in terms of the course concepts of race, class, and gender.

Assessment 1:
Students will demonstrate learning by assessing and analyzing the extent to which race, class, and gender emerged in and are of sociological significance in the podcast.

Goal 2:
To examine intersectionalities of race, class, and gender.

Assessment 2:
Students will demonstrate learning by mapping the intersections of race, class, and gender in their written and oral responses.
Go to the following website and listen to Elna Baker’s 16-minute segment of the *This American Life* podcast entitled, “Babies Selling Babies.” The podcast is streaming for free and is available at:


As you listen to the podcast, jot down specific elements of the story that address issues of social class, race, and gender, as well as other topics we’ve covered in class.

**Social Class:**

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**Race:**

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**Gender:**

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**Other Sociological Topics/Concepts:**
Once the podcast ends, analyze the podcast using material we’ve been learning about and reading in the past several class periods. Your primary attention should be on social class, race, and gender, but consider how other sociological concepts are relevant as well.

Part 1:
Consider how race, class, and gender emerged in the toy store. How does each dimension of stratification emerge in the story? Begin by discussing and analyzing each dimension in relative isolation. Also consider the role of the employees, the customers, and the structure and culture of the toy industry itself.

Part 2:
Next, tie all three strands together to discuss how race, class, and gender do not work in isolation, but instead intersect in powerful and meaningful ways. Draw specific links as to how they work in tandem with one another in the real world. One way to successfully do this is by using specific material from lecture and readings.

Part 3:
You should then bring previous issues and topics we’ve discussed in class into your analysis. Consider other sociological issues that are illustrated in the podcast.

Part 4:
Finally, think about the significance of the story. What does it tell you about sociological understandings of race, class, and gender? How does intersectionality lead to a fuller, more nuanced analysis of the power each dimension has in the real world?
Alternative Assignment:

In a three-page paper, analyze the podcast using material we’ve been learning about and reading in the past several class periods. Your primary attention should be on social class, race, and gender, but consider how other sociological concepts are relevant as well.

First, consider how race, class, and gender emerged in the toy store. How does each dimension of stratification emerge in the story? Begin by discussing and analyzing each dimension in relative isolation. Also consider the role of the employees, the customers, and the structure and culture of the toy industry itself.

In the second half of your paper, tie all three strands together to discuss how race, class, and gender do not work in isolation, but instead intersect in powerful and meaningful ways. In this section of your paper, draw specific links as to how they work in tandem with one another in the real world. One way to successfully do this is by using specific material from lecture and readings.

The next section of your paper should then bring previous issues and topics we’ve discussed in class into your analysis. Look back through your syllabus, class notes, and readings to begin thinking about the ways in which other sociological issues are illustrated in the podcast. Describe those links in this section.

In your conclusion, think about the significance of the story. What does it tell you about sociological understandings of race, class, and gender? How does intersectionality lead to a fuller, more nuanced analysis of the power each dimension has in the real world?

Your paper must be typed, double spaced, using a 12-point font with one-inch margins all around.

Your handwritten notes taken while listening to the podcast must be submitted with your three-page paper. (Your notes can of course be informal. I realize you are likely scribbling notes while listening to the podcast, so while it is not necessary for you to expand or clarify your notes on the sheet, I do want to see them nonetheless.)
Intersectionality in the Toy Store

In-class Activity and Guided Discussion

Michael Ramirez

Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

As is similar to a number of Introduction to Sociology courses, the inequality section of my course includes the triumvirate of race/ethnicity, social class, and gender—presented back-to-back in class. I typically order my course so that our major unit on the inequalities (3 or 4 weeks in length) begins with social class, then race/ethnicity, and finally gender. While I address intersectionality within each section, most of the intense and extended discussions of intersectionality do not emerge until we are in the third section of the unit. By that point, we have discussed class, race, and gender in sufficient detail and in a stand-alone fashion that we can begin discussing how it is difficult to discuss one dimension of inequality without addressing its intersection with others.

For this assignment, I have students listen to Elna Baker’s “Babies Buying Babies” segment on This American Life (episode 347: Matchmakers, originally aired January 18, 2008) and analyze the episode in terms of race, class, and gender, and their intersections. The podcast is streaming for free and is available at: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/347/matchmakers?act=3

I provide students with the following assignment sheet on which they take notes while listening to the podcast. I then have them analyze the story more deeply to come to a sociological understanding of how the events in the story illustrate not only race, class, and gender, but also the intersections of them.

I distribute the assignment sheets and then start the podcast. Students take notes while listening to the episode. At the conclusion of the podcast, give students time to collect their thoughts and to extend their off-the-cuff analyses. I typically give students about 10 minutes to more fully develop their thoughts and respond to the questions on the second page of the assignment. I then lead discussion on the main issues on which students analyzed. The activity works well in this format, though students (due to time constraints) often make deeper connections to previous material when assigned the more formal alternative assignment.

I have found this assignment intersects quite well with West and Zimmerman’s “Doing Gender,” as well as chapters from Williams’ Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality.

Additional Information:

While students are listening to the podcast, I often pull up the Lee Middleton Doll website and browse through images to allow students to see images of the dolls featured in the podcast. Images of the dolls are available at: http://www.leemiddleton.com/

In their written and oral responses, students emphasize a range of issues in their analyses each time I assign this activity. However, the more recurring themes tend to focus on the following:
*Class
The clearest social class issues center on the expense of dolls and the social class backgrounds of the customers who enter the toy store. Other students have discussed the social class dimensions of the podcast involving the reality show *Rich Girls*.

*Race
One of the most overt racial issues in the story concerns the hierarchy of dolls by race and ethnicity, as well as the Nubbins bet. Others emphasize the overwhelmingly white clientele and the racially-coded language some customers used with store employees.

*Gender
In terms of gender, only girls venture into the doll section. Mostly women work in that section of the store. The adoption interviews with girls are gendered.

*Socialization
Students may address issues of socialization that are implicit in the story. It is only little girls who enter this section of the toy store (and only with their mothers, never with their fathers or any other man, for that matter). The “adoption” interviews and motherly treatment of the dolls illustrate the socialization of mothering behaviors. A few students have addressed beauty norms—even internalized racism—in the preference of white dolls, both of which they link to socialization.

*Media
Early in the podcast, Ms. Baker mentions the filming of the reality show *Rich Girls* as the catalyst that sparked the intense interest in and buying of the dolls in the weeks before Christmas, setting the stage for the main conflict in the story.

*Work
Other students have analyzed the work site itself as a further dimension of inequality. The women are in the gendered work positions in the doll section and as the nurses. Others may see links to Hochschild’s concept of “emotional labor”—in interactions with the mothers and daughters alike.

Time:
- Podcast 16 min
- Writing 10 min
- Discussion 15-20 minutes

This assignment can easily be adapted into a more formal homework assignment. In this variation, I require students to listen to the podcast and take notes on their own time. They are then required to write a more formal response paper. The activity works well in this alternative format, and may even allow students more time to more deeply analyze the story and link it to more elaborately to lecture and reading material.

References
Abstract:
This assignment is designed to have students analyze the role of poverty in affecting people's life chances, the difficulty of breaking out of poverty, and what obstacles exist when the poor attempt intergenerational mobility. Students will receive brief notes and discuss the effects of poverty. Students will also analyze a song related to life chances. Students will use their learning and the song to prepare for a large group discussion. The lesson can be followed by a suggested reading or video clip.

Details:
Resource Type(s): Class Activity
Author(s): Hayley Lauren Lotspeich
Date Published: 3/21/2011
Subject Area: High School Sociology

Usage Notes:
This activity can be carried out in one or two 50 minute class periods. Students will need access to a computer or an LCD projector to view the video and the PowerPoint.

Learning Goals and Assessments:
Goal 1:
Students will be able to define life chances, poverty level, anomie, functionalist perspective, symbolic interaction, and conflict perspective. 2) Students will analyze the effects of poverty.
Assessment 1:
Students will take notes on a brief PowerPoint to define sociological terms.
Students will list ways that poverty may affect life chances.

Goal 2:
Students will apply their newly acquired vocabulary and concepts to analyze a song.
Students will analyze how poverty affects intergenerational mobility.

Assessment 2:
Students will analyze the song Fast Car by Tracy Chapman and describe how the woman in the song’s life chances were affected by poverty.
Students will identify the obstacles that keep the woman in the song from breaking out of poverty.

Goal 3:
Students will compare and contrast their analysis of the life chances of the woman in the song to the real woman on the video.

Assessment 3:
Students will apply the functionalist, interactionist, and conflict perspective to the woman’s situation in the song.
Students will compare and contrast in discussion the life chances of the woman in the song and the woman in the video.

Files for Download:
Fast Car.doc
Poverty and Life Chances.doc
Tammy's story.doc
Fast Car
By Tracy Chapman

You got a fast car
I want a ticket to anywhere
Maybe we make a deal
Maybe together we can get somewhere

Anyplace is better
Starting from zero got nothing to lose
Maybe we'll make something
But me myself I got nothing to prove

You got a fast car
And I got a plan to get us out of here
I been working at the convenience store
Managed to save just a little bit of money
We won't have to drive too far
Just 'cross the border and into the city
You and I can both get jobs
And finally see what it means to be living

You see my old man's got a problem
He live with the bottle that's the way it is
He says his body's too old for working
I say his body's too young to look like his
My mama went off and left him
She wanted more from life than he could give
I said somebody's got to take care of him
So I quit school and that's what I did

You got a fast car
But is it fast enough so we can fly away
We gotta make a decision
We leave tonight or live and die this way

I remember we were driving driving in your car
The speed so fast I felt like I was drunk
City lights lay out before us
And your arm felt nice wrapped 'round my shoulder
And I had a feeling that I belonged
And I had a feeling I could be someone, be

someone, be someone
You got a fast car
And we go cruising to entertain ourselves
You still ain't got a job
And I work in a market as a checkout girl
I know things will get better
You'll find work and I'll get promoted

We'll move out of the shelter
Buy a big house and live in the suburbs
You got a fast car
And I got a job that pays all our bills
You stay out drinking late at the bar
See more of your friends than you do of your kids
I'd always hoped for better
Thought maybe together you and me would find it
I got no plans I ain't going nowhere
So take your fast car and keep on driving

You got a fast car
But is it fast enough so you can fly away
You gotta make a decision
You leave tonight or live and die this way

CD – Tracy Chapman
Audio CD (October 25, 1990)
Label: Elektra
Music Video -
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl6yilkU1LI&feature=related
Poverty and Life Chances

Answer the following questions with support and elaboration.

1) In Chapman’s song, explain the many obstacles that keep her from breaking out of poverty even though she wishes to “be someone, be someone”

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_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

2) In Fast Car, what values does she have that, regardless of economic security, she will not compromise?

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_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
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3) Does the song favor the functionalist perspective, the interactionist perspective, or the conflict perspective to explain her behaviors?

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4) How does anomie apply to Fast Car?

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5) Compare and contrast the character in Fast Car and Tammy’s Story. Were there other realistic options for these women? Are they doomed to a life of poverty? Explain your answer using support from your learning in Sociology.

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_________________________________________________________________________________________
Tammy’s Story
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8VXrHeLqBA
7 minutes, 50 seconds

Nation of Tribes: How Social Class Divides Us
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU5MtVM_zFs
9 minutes, 28 seconds

Minimum Wage – 30 Days
http://www.teachertube.com/video/30-days-minimum-wage-258174
9 minutes, 39 seconds (four other parts)