Identity Markers: Race, Ethnicity & Gender

First discuss Identity Markers and Master Status, and Dominant and Minority Groups from a Sociological perspective

Issues of Gender

Social processes revolve primarily around fact that there are distinct cultural advantages and disadvantages to being either male or female. These are outlined in great detail in figures 8.3 and 8.4 and table 8.1 on pages 190-193 of the text. Overall, though, in America, there tend to be more positive aspects to being male and more negative aspects to being female; most of these issues involving economics, independence vs. dependence, authority vs. subjugation, and freedom and flexibility in career choices and potential for advancement within many careers.

1) Women traditionally considered subordinate to men: Eve and apple story, Freud, Mohammed, Martin Luther and protestantism; evidenced in WW II labor history

2) Definitely are biological differences:
males - physically stronger, shorter lived
females - greater endurance, longer lived

3) Common conceptions without biological or scientific basis:
   - female dependency
   - females > nurturant than males
   - greater male orientation toward achievement
   - males IQ scores higher

Ask for and discuss + and - points from class; make chart on board

Suggestions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Die younger</td>
<td>+ can show emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues of harrassment</td>
<td>+ use feminine charm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testosterone stupid</td>
<td>- dating; risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combat service / draft</td>
<td>+ mature faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread winner burden</td>
<td>+ spend fewer $ in courtship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial thoughts typically are that males have advantage; do they really?

Issues of limitations on emotional ranges have particular consequences for males.

Stereotypical Gender Roles -
- women: wife, mother
- men: bread winner, leader

Sex Inequality -

- education: women catching up; BA and MA from 1/5 at turn of century to roughly equal now; PhD from 1/20 to 1/3
- work force: WW II blip, but now up to 55%

Sexism has roots in myth (and religion - Koran and Biblical references)

Theoretical Views:

- **Functionalism**: role arrangements based on early human history which then became entrenched without basis. Division over whether roles are outdated - i.e. belief in importance of strong nuclear family unit w/ mom, dad, kids in functional roles;

- **Conflict theory**: no use for gender roles in today’s world, have outlived usefulness;

- **Interactionist theory**: roles linked to terms that are entrenched and with symbolic importance; if terms persist so will sexism.

**Race and Ethnicity**
Emery Bogardus (USC; d. 1973) lead the study of race and ethnicity in the
United States, writing prolifically on the subject and tracking issues
on both subjects.

Race and ethnicity are commonly used terms, but while they seem simple
they are, in reality, very complicated issues. Simple definitions are as
follows:

Race: human group that defines itself and/or is defined by others as
being distinct by virtue of perceived and assumed immutable
biological differences.

Ethnic group: human group that defines itself and/or is defined by
others as being distinct by virtue of perceived and assumed cultural
differences.

For example: (examples given by students in class)

Race: black, white, American Indian, Hispanic*

Ethnic group: Asians, American Indian, Jewish*, Irish
these don't really fit where the students suggested they should fit. Think about why. Think critically about the definitions of race and ethnicity.

Race as a defining and controlling characteristic has been used extensively for purposes of codified discrimination in various parts of the world throughout history. Laws sometimes support (segregation and apartheid laws) and sometimes attack racism (civil rights legislation). Perhaps the most glaring example of codified discriminatory practice can be found in South Africa's Registration Act of 1948 which assigned all persons to 4 distinct racial groups:

Black African, White European, Asian-Indian, Cape Colored:

Membership in one of the four groups specifically included, or excluded, privilege and opportunity.

In the United States the two largest racially defined groups are blacks and whites. But, race is difficult to define. When pressed we tend to rely on skin color, facial features, hair and build as defining racial
characteristics. Do they work? Not very well. For example, some people with white facial features (bone structure) have black skin (Ethiopeans). The issue is very complex. In the United States the process is extremely subjective, based mostly on visual perception of skin color.

Racial and ethnic boundaries are broken through two primary processes:

Assimilation (cultural in nature) and amalgamation (biological in nature). Through the sharing of ethnicity, particularly in popular culture, the boundaries gradually and slowly fall. (jelly beans in a bowl

Amalgamation. Physical and biological mixing through processes like inter-racial marriage that results in the gradual blurring of difference color and physical characteristics

Also, through pluralism or multiculturalism - are these more likely in America today?
Racial and cultural prejudice (opinions or attitudes one group holds of another which may be both positive and negative) persists despite empirical evidence that there is no justification for such prejudice. The current trend (beginning in the last half of the 20th century) is away from prejudice. Norms change, publicity over racial and ethnic issues changes, and most importantly popular culture changes. For example in the 1930s and 1940s, minorities were rarely present in the media and almost all racial depictions in film and entertainment were extremely stereotypic and prejudicial, providing near caricatures of blacks and depicting minorities as stupid, lazy, comical, untrustworthy, etc. By the late 1950s and 1960s that had begun to change and representation of race in the media became much more positive. The nature of the social constructions changed.

Discuss History of Immigration - Sequence of immigrant groups, economic processes involved in upward mobility; problems for new immigrants

Discuss unique position of black Africans in America; double dilemma issue of color and historic economic basis for presence.

1) prejudice based on perceived identity of parents and other ancestors (octaroons / legalized labeling)
2) easy scapegoating

Why does prejudice persist? What are the functions of prejudice?

1) Scapegoating - the transfer of feelings of futility, aggression, and blame to another group; blaming the faults of yourself, or your group, on the "scapegoat;" results in an irrational transfer of blame to others.

2) relative deprivation - in other words, this allows you to say, and view others from the perspective of: "I'm OK, but you're not!" Raises individual self esteem whether or not it is justifiable.

3) provision of cheap labor -- if you oppress other groups, and "keep them down" they provide a plentiful cheap labor pool.

In addition to prejudicial processes related to racial or ethnic identity, the processes are directed against people based on physical difference (handicapped) and the sick and ill (HIV/AIDS sufferers)
Prejudicial process can be devastating to a large number of the members of a society through processes that include:

- Genocide
- Forced Expulsion

Overall, in America:

1) Americans today profess overwhelmingly to not be prejudiced
2) Few people openly endorse prejudice
3) Overt and open processes of prejudice or not widely tolerated
4) De jure and de facto segregation have disappeared or on the decline