CHAPTER 10: INEQUALITIES OF GENDER AND AGE

Video Activity  (Premium Resource CD Rom)  

Women in the Workplace

Annotation: Women in the Workplace shows women at work and describes the increasing number of women doing work that was traditionally dominated by men, graduating from college, and starting their own businesses. It also reports that many women live in poverty, that women still earn less than men do, and that earning differential is greater in the South than the West. Two questions are asked about the wage gap.

Learning Objective: To test a hypothesis about the regional pay gap between men and women with authoritative data.

Faculty Note: This exercise will confront students with the real, current pay gap between men and women workers, as well as the regional variations in this gap. Although the census statistics used are slightly outdated, they are used to correspond to the time the video clip was produced.

Activity: The video clip, Women in the Workplace implies that women workers are better compensated, relative to men workers, in the West than in the South. Ask students to test this hypothesis with authoritative data by going to the U.S. Census publication, "Money Income in the United States, 1998" found on pages 30 to 33 of the report found at http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/p60-206.pdf. In Table #8 of this publication they will find the mean and median personal income for men and women in each of the four regions of the U.S. Ask students to both prepare a data table summarizing these data and write a brief statement of the implications of these data for women seeking employment.

Additional Resources: The National Partnership for Women and Families http://www.nationalpartnership.org offers a number of links to sites addressing work and family and workplace fairness.

World Wide Web Link  

Feminist Majority Foundation

Annotation: The “Feminist Majority Foundation” homepage is found at http://feminist.org Although political in nature, the site transcends politics and offers a number of links to information and resources that women will find important.

Learning Objective: To develop an awareness of the resources available to the feminist and to encourage women students to develop their own network of resources.

Faculty Note: The Feminist Movement is international in scope. The homepage of the Feminist Majority Foundation is a woman’s survival kit for the aspiring feminist.

Activity: Assign students to develop a list of agencies, including their web addresses and geographic locations that can serve as the beginning of a network of resources for women. Assign a minimum number of entries and perhaps, a narrowing of the topic (women’s health issues, domestic abuse, careers, and so on). Make the same assignment for all members of the class, regardless of sex.

Additional Resources: Using a search engine of choice is a good start in developing the network. This assignment requires students to peruse the addresses they select to ensure they conform to the assignment.
Video Activity (Interactive Video for Introductory Sociology)

Annotation: These two video clips address different ways that members of society who oppose the gay lifestyle deal with it. The first focuses on how gays are not only singled out by many for unequal treatment, but also marked for violence and even death. The second video clip also denounces being gay, but does so in a more subtle manner.

Learning Objective: To understand some of the difficulty gays suffer in society. One video clip illustrates the bias and criminal behavior exhibited towards gays from those with highly volatile emotions. The other clip encourages gays to abandon their alternative life style in a less violent, more persuasive manner.

Faculty Note: Many campuses have a gay or lesbian organization. In some cases, these organizations provide guest presentations to classes. If your campus has such a program, consider using the organization and a speaker from it for a class presentation as a part of the exercise.

Activity: After the students view the video clips, instruct them to answer the following questions:
1. Why are hate crimes against homosexuals more in the public eye than ever before?
2. Do you favor more severe punishments for perpetrators of hate crimes than the law currently provides? Why or why not?
3. Why is the concept of gay conversion so controversial? What is at stake? How do you feel gay men and women would respond to the efforts of others to convert them to a heterosexual lifestyle?
4. According to your text, how can sexual orientation be understood from a sociological perspective?

Additional Resources: The Citizens for Community Values homepage, found at http://www.ccv.org/ sets the tone for what can be considered as an anti-gay organization that considers a gay sexual orientation a threat to communities. Compare this organization’s efforts to that of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays found at http://www.pflag.org/.

The Video Professor A League of Their Own

Annotation: Penny Marshall directed this comedy about a women’s baseball league formed during World War II. Although fiction, the story sheds light on a neglected chapter of real life sports history.

Learning Objective: To understand and visualize how women have been used by the power elite of society during the absence of men to provide services and entertainment needed by the general public and in the national interest.

Faculty Note: During both world wars, but especially during World War II, women provided a wide range of work and service needed by the nation. This film shows the impact women made in sports. This film should be available as a low cost rental in a movie house, the university library, or a local public library.

Activity: After viewing the film, lead the students in a discussion on the importance the women’s league played in the overall national interest. Also address how the plight of women athletes in the 1940’s has remained the same and how has it changed over 50 years later. Make a list of the other jobs and duties women did during World War II and the effect these special programs had on the war effort. If women did as well as they did during the War as athletes, factory workers, pilots, and in other jobs, why did they return “to the kitchen” following the war? Wouldn’t this have been an ideal time for women to “break out” and demand equality as they did in the 60’s and 70’s?
Annotation: There are many myths about the elderly and what they can and can’t do. There is even a great deal of controversy over what age qualifies an individual as being “old”. The AARP sets age 50 as its qualification to join. Some agencies consider 60 the appropriate age for retirement. The Social Security Administration keeps changing the age to collect benefits.

Learning Objective: To make students aware of what may be a serious social problem in their lifetime, how to support the elderly. The objective of this exercise is to also eliminate some of the stereotypes that are directed towards the elderly.

Faculty Note: People are living longer and healthier lives. For the first time in history, the number of Americans over 60 outnumbers the teenagers. This growing number of older Americans is going to have a major influence on all aspects of society as it continues to grow.

Activity: After viewing the videos, have the students discuss the following questions:
1. What social factors are contributing to a greater interest in aging today? Why are age and inequalities of age a concern?
2. According to your text, how are elders treated in some subcultures and other societies?
3. What alternative social constructions of old age do Glenn fans and the “sizzling” seniors represent?
4. What values about life and beliefs about old age do the elders in the video express? Do you agree?
5. How has the dependency ratio to balance programs for the elderly such as Social Security and Medicare change over the past several decades and how will it change even more in the future?
6. What are some of the social institutions that will be affected by an aging America? What questions does society need to answer with the graying of America?

Test Question: (Short answer) List five issues that are of particular concern to older people, as indicated by the Administration on Aging list of pamphlets that provide information for older persons and their families.

Answers might include: Health, elder abuse, nutrition, disabilities, long-term care, transportation, volunteer activities, housing options, raising grandchildren, pension benefits, and employment.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom)  
Myths and Realities of Aging

Annotation: Older people, interviewed in this video, were inspired to view themselves as capable of doing many things by the space shuttle flight of 77-year-old John Glenn in 1998.

Learning Objective: To identify personal attitudes toward the process of aging.

Faculty Note: Students of traditional undergraduate age (18-22) typically do not think about growing older. The exercise below encourages them to think about the process of aging and to identify their hopes and concerns. This video clip is a part of the “Premium Resource CD Rom” provided to instructors upon request.

Activity: Have students view the video "Myths and Realities of Aging." Lead a discussion with them about what they think their life will be like when they are over 65. Ask them what they hope for and what they fear about old age. Have them talk about the older people in their families, and the kinds of role models these people provide for them.


Test Question: (Essay) Why was the 1998 space shuttle flight of John Glenn particularly important for older Americans?

Answers might include: John Glenn's space shuttle flight was inspiring for older people because it showed that an older person could do something that was very physically demanding, and widely thought to be beyond the capacity of an older person.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom)  
Marriage and Health

Annotation: This video depicts older people dancing and talking about keeping active and healthy. Married people are less likely to drink and engage in risky behavior. People who remain married live longer than those whose marriages end in divorce or death of a spouse. Length of marriage is unrelated to longevity; remaining married is the key factor. People who never marry are also likely to live longer.

Learning Objective: To identify the likely causal relationships between marriage and longevity.

Faculty Note: People who remain married throughout adulthood and those who never marry live longer. The exercise below will engage students in developing hypotheses about the causal relationships that favor these two groups.

Activity: Have students watch the video "Marriage and Health." Lead a discussion about the advantages, for longevity, of remaining married and never marrying. Work with students to develop hypotheses about the behavioral and psychological processes that favor these two groups over those that marry, but whose marriages end in divorce and widowhood. This exercise builds on the text's discussion of activity theory.

Additional Resources: In 1973 Dr. Grossarth-Maticzek gave a brief test measuring habitual feelings of pleasure and well-being to thousands of elderly residents of Heidelberg, Germany. Twenty-one years later, he compared the test scores with health status. The 300 people who had scored highest were asserted to be thirty times more likely to be
alive and well twenty-one years later than the 200 lowest. A report of these findings and a link to the test itself can be found at the web site "Attitudes: Key to Health, Happiness, and Longevity" http://www.attitudefactor.com. Students could take the test and have it evaluated on-line, but would have to submit personally identifying information.

The Video Professor     Space Cowboys or The Crew

Annotation: Space Cowboys is film released on the heels of John Glenn’s successful flight on the Space Shuttle as the oldest human in space. Four retired test pilots from the pre-NASA days are recruited to fix a damaged satellite because they are the only living engineers who know the outdated system. In The Crew, four wise guys from the 1960’s are now retired senior citizens living in Miami. They miss the activities of a fast paced life as mobsters such as hijacking, kidnapping, fast women, and living on the edge. In both films, the same issues of ageism are addressed.

Learning Objective: To recognize the impact ageism has on the elderly both as a group impact and the personal distress it creates.

Faculty Note: Both movies are set in present day and both refer back to the late 50s and 60s as the baseline the characters remember as being their prime. Both movies are well done and have excellent casts. They are available for rental at movie houses, or may be available in the university library or a local public library.

Activity: Have the students make a list of all the comments made by others to the aging quartet of characters that show disrespect or a failure to be sensitive to their unique situation created by age. In each situation, have the student document the reaction of the senior characters and how the senior character dealt with the remark. Also include in the assignment the issues each character was most concerned about and why. What unique qualities did the senior actors demonstrate that were a result of their age?

Additional Resources: The Crew has two sites that will add to the discussion. They are http://www.upcomingmovies.com/crew.html and http://www.rottentomatoes.com/movie-1099659/reviews.php. Space Cowboys has several more sites. They include http://www2.warnerbros.com/spacecowboys, http://www.rottentomatoes.com/movie-1099038 and http://www.movies.go.com/movies/S/spacecowboys_2000. The reviews of each film make reference to the “age” of the actors as well as statements that equate the film’s interest to particular age groups.