

# Sociology: discrimination term paper examples

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



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## **Part 1- Gender discrimination**

### Introduction

Evidences of gender discrimination are obvious in many societies. Social structure has encouraged discrimination among women. It would appear to be a man's world in many instances. Politics is a male dominated institution. In some societies women could not vote. Many industries did not accept women employees claiming they could not function as efficiently as men due to lack of education. However, society has converged into male dominated occupations as well as female ones too. Therefore, it can be argued that from an employment perspective gender discrimination affects men just as women to some degree.

### **Theoretical applications**

Symbolic interactionists theory describes human behavior and conduct as based on meanings given to symbols. Symbols could be artifacts, belief systems or merely attitudes. Therefore, reality for people is perceived from the premise of understanding how to communicate with these symbols. Gender is a symbol that relates specific behavior or indulgences society defines acceptable for the symbol male or female. Two specific assumptions relevant to gender issues are that meanings emerge from social interactions one has with others and the society. Secondly, meanings are articulated, modified through an interpretive process. Decisions made during this process are influenced by additional meanings communicated during one's social encounters (Blumer, 1999).

Gender theories support functionalism because the argument is that no one

is born a woman neither a man in reality. Gender is a socially imposed identity under the guise of society functioning as social order. As such, there are exclusively male and female bathrooms. Importantly, female bathrooms are built differently from male for accommodating the necessity of segregation. There are clothes and designs exclusively male or female. Precisely, this is the way society functions for social order to prevail. Functionalists' theorists contend that every part of society operates to sustain the other. Therefore, with the ascription gender being male or female, boy or girl supporting structures develop to perpetuate the gender culture, which ultimately converges into discrimination. Insidiously, segregation promotes forms of discrimination because embedded in its structure are inclusive and exclusive criteria (Parsons, 2000). Ultimately again people will become deviant. Discrimination theories posit that maintaining the acceptable structure satisfies just a few who have designed it for their benefit. The majority are expected to conform to this socially imposed structure of order designed by the few. However, Karl Marx (1998) and others have contended that when the oppressed can no longer tolerate actions of oppressors a revolution occurs (Marx & Engels, 1998). Thereby gender is viewed from the perspective of conflict. Conflict demonstrated by the emergence of feminist groups speaking out about discrimination against women in the work place; domestic violence against women, gay and transgender rights.

## **Conclusion**

In summarizing these thoughts regarding gender discrimination as it relates to symbolic interactionism, functionalism and the conflict theoretical

perspectives it is obvious that gender has been fully exploited. Society symbolizes gender as male/female placing the functions of one above the other where applicable. The only biological discriminated gender function lies in the reproductive process. Hence, gender discriminated activities present in our societies have no biological foundation, but are all fallacies of our social structure.

## **Part 11**

### Introduction

Race has always been defined by sociologist as merely a social identify incorporating biological characteristics. As in any other social construct once race is defined within a contextual framework the proposition is that discrimination will surface. Importantly, the reason for defining structures and concepts is for discrimination purposes.

### **Theoretical application**

Symbolic interactionists contend that people react to each other based on the meaning they incur from symbols. Most of these meanings have been transferred from society through culture and learnt behavior. When a child is born into the world he/she knows nothing about race, prejudice and discrimination. However, as that child begins to interact with siblings, attend daycare, school, church and places where social groups interact, race becomes a symbol of either status or remorse depending on how it is communicated.

Further, the child will begin to learn that due to race there are certain services that are inaccessible. During John Crow era in United States of

America and apartheid in South Africa black people were treated as inferior just because of race. Here is where structural functionalism took precedence and initiated as well as perpetuated racism within those two cultures.

Structural inequality through laws segregated these two races whereby white superiority was functional in keeping blacks or people of African descent subservient.

This irony lay in the assumption that developed nations perceived apartheid in South African as inhuman. In the same analysis it was existent in United States of America as segregation laws enforced racism. Structured inequity imposed discriminatory strategies were used to enforce social order.

However, there is evidence of inequality surface in any society social order would continue to prevail within the confines of ' business as usual.'

Disenfranchised groups will struggle to level the social order playing field through revolution. Karl Marx (1998) and many conflict theorists argue that discrimination is the foundation of conflict. It could be obvious in work environments, social gatherings, churches, schools, and almost anywhere in the society. Marx (1998) limited his conflict assumptions to economics.

Ultimately, the goal is to maintain a widening gap between the rich and poor people through racial discrimination applying many intervening structures within society to ensure that the psychology of rich and poor is perpetuated through social interventions. Essentially, functionalists see conflict as wrong because social order must prevail to benefit a few who oppress through racial discrimination.

## **Conclusion**

Many laws have been designed to narrow racial gaps, which have developed over the years as a consequence of apartheid and Jim Crow segregation.

However, insidious in those legislations are functional discrepancies, which still keep one race dominant and the other subservient.

For example, even though Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 28 years to become the first black president in South Africa degrees of racial discrimination still exist in the society. Similarly, president Obama became the first African American yet still racism is obvious with many social structures in America under the guise of market policies.

It is my opinion that a culture of racism cannot be eradicated overnight because it is functional. Centuries of work was done to keep segregated groups disenfranchised. From a functional perspective this is social order.

Advocating for change in interactive perceptions with the symbol race creates conflict.

The conflict is necessary and inevitable. Once people still live in segregated neighborhoods, churches continue to encourage congregation exclusivity, educational institutions do likewise racism is functional in the society.

Therefore, discrimination practices continue.

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