

Social Inclusion and Equality

GENDER AND INEQUALITY

Question

What are the key issues in today's society related to gender and inequality?

Some news stories

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180103101125.htm>

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/11/dont-back-down-on-lgbt-guidance-faith-leaders-urge-dfe>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/11/access-all-areas-the-tutoring-scheme-for-underprivileged-kids>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jun/22/teenage-boys-wear-skirts-to-school-protest-no-shorts-uniform-policy>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/04/08/boys-allowed-wear-skirts-leading-boarding-school/>

<https://www.studyinternational.com/news/gender-inequality-school/>

Dr Victoria Bateman

What about research?

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0092055X10370120>

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-005-8292-4>

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4>

What do you think of this video?

[Batya Greenwald](#)

What are the key messages coming through in this video?

Discuss

What is the difference between sex and gender?

Gender is a social construct

Sex is a biological classification

Gender roles – cultural norms that create the differential expectations for both sexes

Gender identity – how people perceive themselves based on the culturally-imposed understandings of gender

Oakley (1975) – cultural factors are highly significant and the social constructions of gender and sexuality are most problematic and can be challenged

Biological and social influences are often tangled and the total separation is not always helpful or possible to sustain (Gove and Warr, 2004)

Simone de Beauvoir 'The Second Sex' (1949)

'It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity.'

'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'

De Beauvoir identifies two clear goals for women

1. Women should shape and embrace their own history
2. It was the responsibility of society to change in order for the first goal to be achieved

Some further thoughts

'The distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny... At its limit, then, the sex/gender distinction implies a radical heteronomy of natural bodies and constructed genders with the consequence that 'being' female and 'being' a woman are two very different sort of being.' Butler (1986), pp. 35-49

Although we are subject to social constraints it's our biological make-up that plays the major part in determining who we are and how we behave. Binary view of gender creates a sense of opposite that is unhelpful in forming our identity (Kehilly 2001)

Functionalist perspective – gender division of labour necessary for 'best fit' of society'

Matriarchal and Patriarchal Societies

Patriarchal

- Male led
- Inheritance through the male line

Matriarchal

- Female led
- Inheritance through the female line

Global variations mean there is no 'natural' or 'inevitable' role for men or women (Oakley 1975)

Variations of feminism

Liberal feminism – society is capable of reformation, education and democratic process is key to this. Still see equality as an ongoing issue

Radical feminists – change is not through liberal reform. Separation from the patriarchy is the only answer

Marxist feminists – capitalism is the cause of inequality and oppression. Gender division is part of the social division therefore need to overthrow the capitalist system

Black feminists – unequal relationships and oppression linked to both ethnicity and gender



Gender and Educational Achievement

Question – to what extent does education challenge or reproduce gendered inequality?

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) A Vindication on the Rights of Women

Policy attitudes towards girls and boys within the classroom

Introduction of the National Curriculum and league tables seen as key to assisting gender imbalances within education. Why?

Early 21st century a number of commentators cited scientific reasons behind the development of boys and girls in their education

'The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy, while the male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems' (Baron-Cohen, 2003 p.1)

But what about the boys??

Woodhead (1996) 'the failure of boys was one of the most disturbing problems faced by the education system as a whole' (cited in Foster, et al 2001, p.2)

Great deal of focus in recent years on underachievement of boys

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/nov/19/education-experts-call-for-take-your-son-into-university-day-attainment-gap-england-female-male-students>

<https://www.ft.com/content/3b2509f2-fda2-11e8-aebl-99e208d3e521>

Genetic differences? No neurological evidence for this (argument is still prevalent though)

Changes in society and the masculine image – boys are particularly prone to marginalisation

The effect of school culture?

Welsh schools to offer cheaper uniforms with gender-neutral options

Rules will need to be redrawn to avoid exclusive deals locking parents into a single supplier

Discuss



▲ The new rules mean schools can no longer have separate uniform codes for boys and girls. Photograph: Alamy
School in Wales will be made to offer cheaper, gender-neutral uniform options from September, as the Welsh government seeks to tackle the rising costs of school clothing for families.

References/Further Reading

Bartlett, S. & Burton, D. (2012) *Introduction to Education Studies: Third Edition*. London: Sage

Boronski & Hassan, N. (2015) *Sociology of Education*. London: Sage.

Curtis, W. et al (2014) *Education Studies: An Issues Based Approach: Third Edition*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

DeBeauvoir, S. (1997) *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage

Oakley, A. (1975) *Sex, Gender and Society*. Michigan: Maurice Temple Smith

Steverson, L. & Melvin, J. (2019) *Debating Social Problems*. London: Routledge
