

Comments on Test 1 – Essay Answers

The main problem in the essays was that questions were not always answered. Aside from that, see what follows to better understand how these essays were graded.

Q 26. The question asks you to develop 2 arguments. An ‘argument’ involves making a claim and then supporting that claim with a series of explanatory statements that build upon each other to make clear what your argument is AND a description of research findings as evidence supporting the argument. You were to develop 2 arguments and use 2 different studies (or readings), one for each argument.

The question asks about negative consequences of gender norms and beliefs about gender. The most obvious answer would involve using Pascoe’s findings and argument about why high-school boys use the word ‘fag’ to describe other boys – that is, to bully them. This practice is about **expectations about masculinity**, and boys who are seen to deviate from them – and as a result are bullied. Example of a beginning: Pascoe found that high school boys experience bullying if they appear to violate **expectations** about normative masculinity. [this is the claim] Pascoe argues that boys use “fag” as a label to discipline or patrol other boys because they appear or act in ways that seem to be insufficiently masculine. [this is the beginning of an argument]

Note: You need to summarize the main argument a researcher makes, based on what they have found. And sociologists never make general arguments based on one example (or case); our findings are based on patterns in behaviour we see in a sample of people. So, describing Ricky is not enough, in this case, to make clear what Pascoe’s main argument was; Pascoe describes him to give the reader both a real example of a boy being bullied and to make a point (as she later compares Ricky to another gay boy who is not bullied).

The other obvious example of “negative consequences’ found by researchers was Hamilton and Armstrong’s findings on how popular **beliefs** about what young women want in terms of sexuality (ie. sex only in the context of a relationship, and a desire for a relationship) hurts them – causing ‘double binds’ if they have casual sex *and* if they form relationships.

As well, Gagne et.at. and also Namaste described very negative consequences of living outside gender norms – specifically, outside the sex/gender binary. In the former, the researchers describe the pain of growing up in a male body but feeling like masculinity doesn’t ‘fit’, and of transitioning to life as a woman; in the latter, Namaste discusses the violence transgenderists risk experiencing in public

(Note: Baby X is a fictional story, and the Agnes discussed in West and Zimmerman is not experiencing negative consequences; she is described by them to make several other points, which support the argument about how we so often do gender.)

Q 27 This question gives you the opportunity to discuss both socialization and ‘doing gender’. If you are still unclear on these arguments, please talk to either of us. Both socialization and ‘doing gender’ are important concepts and approaches in sociology of gender. (Also, in lecture, I

discussed how gender itself, and especially gender identity issues, could be a factor in a choice about a university ‘major’ – and you could have argued this.)

Note: If you cannot think of course material that you can use to answer a question, it is best to answer another question.

Q 28. This asks the question I addressed (for two hours) in the second lecture, and is an important question. You had two readings, one by C. Fine who thoroughly reviewed the evidence by biologists and other scientists on whether there are two types of brains (male and female) and whether brain differences between men and women cause differences in behaviour. The answer is NO to both. As well, R. Sapolsky reviews some evidence that directly asks whether testosterone (the so-called male hormone) causes aggression in men. Again, the evidence is NO. You could also have written about what we learn from the evidence on feral children.

Arguing that sociologists see gender as socially caused or created is not very persuasive on this issue. Anyone can hear this arguments and still reply that they think biology ‘has effects.’ You need to cite some facts to disprove that argument often made about biology and gender. (Note Sapolsky on this claim: biology never has any effect on its own since it is always acting in a context, or environment.)

Q 29. The question asks about both practices that produce the IDEA of two different gendered bodies & practices that produce two gendered bodies. Ideas and material reality are not the same.

On the **idea** of two different bodies: J. Lorber describes the way commercial media present competitive sports (eg the Olympics) in a way that highlights men’s speed and strength and women’s grace and sexiness.

A Fausto-Sterling (discussed in lecture) describes the way medical writers have told the story of the development of a male fetus – as an “achievement” over a foundation that is female. A male body is then seen as superior, and something accomplished through force.

E. Martin also describes stories by scientists that reinforce ideas about gender in bodies: she describes the tale of the active sperm and the passive egg, in stories about how reproduction occurs. That is, in telling a story about how reproduction occurs, these science writers are perpetuating stereotypes about gender as difference.

On real **bodies** becoming gendered: A good answer would describe K. Martin’s findings on how girls’ and boys’ behaviour in preschool is responded to differently – in a way that pushes and teaches girls to manage and control and restrain their bodies, but is not so good at teaching boys to do that.

The way surgeons have operated on, and interfered with, intersex bodies is also a good example of humans creating two differently sexed bodies. (not really about gender, but the two are seen as linked). An ok example.

You could also argue that in competitive sports boys' bodies are firmed up, strengthened, etc.—and that boys are more likely to do those kinds of sports than girls are. Lorber argues that sports have developed in ways that 'play to' the abilities that boys' bodies are more likely to have.

Q 30. Notice you were to do one OR the other. And you needed to answer all 3 questions – how, why and what was accomplished. Be sure to answer the questions!

Cooper: How gender is done: These men display their very long hours of work and their ability to 'get the job done' or the problem solved by talking about how long they worked, how tired they are, etc. Why: to do well in the company; keep their job; get a promotion or higher salary. What is accomplished: Their masculine identity is sustained; and if they are seen as doing good work their success as income-earners is guaranteed.

Pascoe: How: Boys labeling other boys "fag" and thus suggesting that they are insufficiently masculine in looks or behaviour. Why: To discipline/sanction/punish the other boys, and do it publicly. Also, to proclaim that they themselves are 'real' men – to reinforce (or "accomplish") their own masculine identity. This is done implicitly, in calling attention to their own (superior) masculinity. What is accomplished: their own masculinity is 'achieved' (but also their dominance over the other boys).

Q 31. Notice that there were two key problems – a sexual double bind and also a relational double bind (as relationships interfered with students' time for themselves and for studying)

Beliefs: girls only want sex in the context of a relationship, and generally they are looking for a relationship, while boys want sex whatever the context, and want to avoid commitment.

Problems: a sexual double bind such that 'privileged' girls might prefer hooking up because it leaves the rest of the time free for studying and using this period in life for 'self-development, BUT there is the risk of being labeled and also of being treated badly. As well, there is a relational double bind for these girls because relationships take time (often lots of time and energy), and they take time away from studying and other kinds of self-development.