

Sociology 265H1F

Gender and Society

Bonnie Fox

Office Hour: Tuesday, 3:00-4:00

725 Spadina, Room 382

Spencer's Office Hr.: Tues., 11:00-11:45, room 225

TEST next week & Essays due today

[Alternative address for website: tinyurl.com/soc265]

Week 5: Heterosexuality & Gender

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I. More on Conceptualizing Gender

A. The Differences and Similarities of Socialization and 'Doing Gender' Approaches

- (1) Gender as a personal identity and set of characteristics vs. gender as something we do and, in doing, achieve (as a status category)
- (2) Both explain how individuals' behaviour supports conventional gender relations and arrangements.
- (3) Missing in both analyses: an examination of the organization of society and its institutions.

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B. Research on How Women & Men Make the Life Choices They Often Do

- (1) Kathleen Gerson, *Hard Choices* (1985): Why women's priorities – family or job/career -- changed between their 20s & 30s
- (2) Kathleen Gerson, *No Man's Land* : Why men's priorities – independence, family, job/career -- changed between their 20s & 30s
- (3) Gerson's finding: the importance of adults' experiences, in the workplace and in personal life,

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given the way society is organized; & resulting "paths of least resistance"

- (4) Thus, the need to examine how society and its institutions (e.g. the labour market, workplaces, families) are organized.

C. The Complexities of Identity, including the Need to Consider Race and Social Class

Gillian Creese, 'Gendered Diasporas Across Generations: The New African Diaspora in Vancouver'

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II. Sexuality is Socially Constructed: Heterosexuality is assumed to be Natural and the Norm

A. Socially constructed: Individual Identity and Ideas about Sexuality

(1) Individuals' sexual identity is constructed (Seidman)

Sigmund Freud on the social creation of a person's sexuality, and of them as heterosexual or homosexual persons

(2) A brief social history of ideas about sexuality: from reproduction to pleasure. How the ideas were constructed:

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(a) The historical creation of "the heterosexual" and "the homosexual" as types of people: sexual behaviour as indicator of identity (replacing the earlier idea that sexuality was a basic drive to procreate)

(b) Heterosexual identity as a response to early 20th century panics about the prospect of gender equality and fears about stability of "the family"

(c) Early 20th cen., professionals create an ideal of heterosexual romance (and marriage), and the idea that sex was the 'glue' of a happy marriage (and women's responsibility)

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B. Socially constructed: Actions taken to Promote Sexual Behaviour Supporting Conventional Gender Roles and Family

- (1) Governments promoted procreation: 19th century laws against contraception and abortion, to promote childbearing by white middle-class women.
- (2) Government persecution of gays and lesbians into the latter decades of the 20th century
- (3) 1950s (Cold War) concerns about threats to “the family” and social stability: a focus on the threat of teens’ sexuality to the goal of the “normal”; directives to teens about gender behaviour (Mary Louise Adams)

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- (4) Sex researchers in the 20th century: men’s sexuality assumed; women assumed to have problems (But Shere Hite’s findings)

C. How Individuals’ Sexuality is Socially Constructed

- (a) Karin Martin’s research on American mothers and their messages to their young kids
- (b) C.J. Pascoe on the “informal sexuality curriculum” in an Amn. high school, and the disciplinary practices in peer culture

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D. Experiences today

Today's casual sex:

“Hooking Up”, E. Armstrong, L. Hamilton and P. England's research findings

“Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood: Double Binds and Flawed Options”, L. Hamilton & E. Armstrong: a ‘sexual double bind’ and a ‘relational double bind’ for ‘privileged’ women university students. The problem: beliefs in gender differences.

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TEST – next week, 12:10-2:00

MC example question –

In ‘Dude, You’re a Fag,’ Pascoe argues that the use of the epithet ‘fag’ was common in the high school she studied for ALL of the following reasons EXCEPT:

- (a) Masculine identity is not stable in high school boys.
- (b) Calling another boy ‘fag’ disciplines him for acting insufficiently masculine.
- (c) Masculinity takes its meaning in opposition to femininity; being call ‘fag’ meant acting insufficiently masculine.
- (d) Hatred of boys who practiced same-sex sex was common in these boys.

Essay Questions: Always use course material to answer these questions!

These will be posted on the website, by the week's end.

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