

Gender & Education

Explaining the differences

Changes in achievement

- 1970s & 80s – focus on girls' underachievement
- 1980s & 90s – focus on boys' underachievement
- Changes in focus of concern & research

Mitsos & Browne (1998)

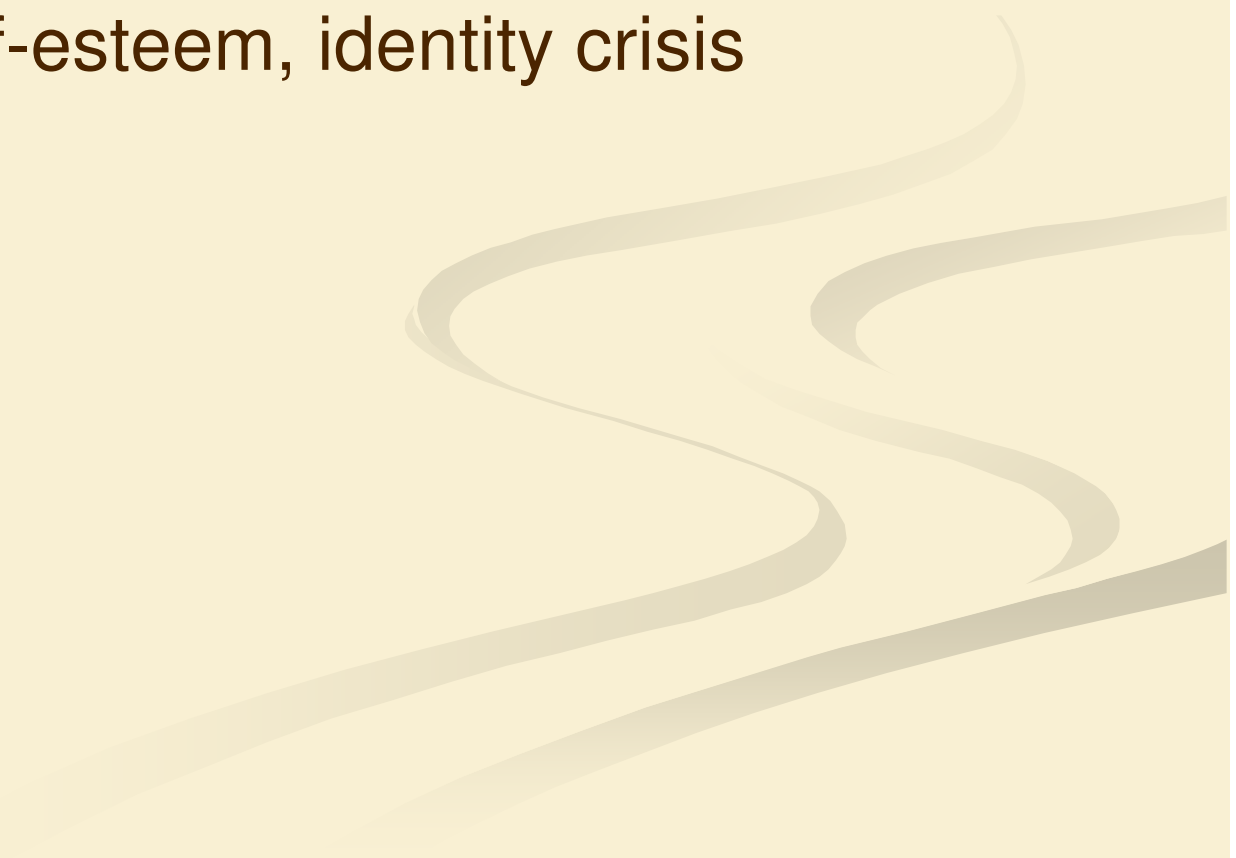
Girls' achievement

- Feminism & women's movement
 - Challenged stereotypes
 - Improved rights
 - Raising expectations
 - Sue Sharpe (1976, 1994)
- Highlighting of inequalities – led to emphasis on equal opportunities
 - Girls' needs better met than previously

- Decline in “male” jobs, increase in “feminine” service-sector jobs
 - Incentive to gain qualifications
- Evidence that girls are:
 - Better motivated
 - Harder working
 - More conscientious
 - Better organisedThan boys
- Girls tend to be more mature than boys at age 16

Boys' underachievement

- Evidence that staff are not as strict with boys
 - Lower expectations – Licht & Dweck (1987)
- Boys are more disruptive
 - More likely to be excluded (80%)
- Male anti-education sub-cultures
 - Search for status – Paul Willis (1977)

- Decline in traditional male jobs
 - Limited prospects – lack of motivation
 - Lowered self-esteem, identity crisis
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Feelings

- Girls tend to underestimate their ability & feel undervalued
 - Licht & Dweck (1987) – no excuse for failure
 - Teachers pay more attention to boys, replicate boys' & girls' self-estimation- Stanworth (1983)
- Boys tend to overestimate their ability
 - Barber (1996)
- Girls feel that boys get more attention from teachers

Behaviour

- Girls and boys spend their leisure time differently
 - Girls relate by talking
 - Development of linguistic skills & reasoning skills
 - Read for leisure
 - Boys relate by doing
 - View of talking & reading as “sissy”
 - Read for information

Fiction predominant at primary – girls at an advantage

Explaining subject choices

- Gender socialisation
 - Boys & girls encouraged to play differently – Norman et al. (1988)
 - Parents as gender role- models – Sharpe (1976)
 - Stereotyping in children's books – Lobban (1974), Best (1993)
 - Teacher expectations
- Subjects seen as masculine or feminine
 - Kelly (1987) – boys in science classrooms
 - Gender stereotypes in textbooks – Abraham (1995), Kelly (1987)
 - Colley (1998) – gender perceptions affect choices

Girls' Underachievement?

- Teachers spend more time with boys & mark girls' work more harshly
 - Mixed schools as male schools which girls have entered – Spender (1982)
 - Girls have to tolerate boys' disruptive behaviour – French (1986)
 - Girls' lower self-esteem
 - Society still largely run by men
 - Roles within the family are still gendered
- Are girls underachieving in relation to their ability?

Further Reading

- Introducing Sociology for AS Level, pp.230-238
- Sociology for AS Level, pp.82-85
- Sociology Themes & Perspectives 5th Ed, pp. 850-868
- Sociology in Focus, pp.301-308