

Changing Gender Identities

Different views, theories and ideas

Behaving badly

- lads & ladettes – Whelehan (2001),
 - There has been the emergence of a ladette culture – women behaving badly, emulating aggressive male behaviour
- Nixon (1996) – men are reasserting more traditional masculine identities – the creation of the “new lad”

Fashion

Abbott (2000)

- Men are increasingly concerned with appearance, hair and dress – there is a growing market for male clothes & grooming products
 - BUT – what about the mods in the 1960s? They were very concerned about appearance – is this new?
 - Often products are promoted by “tough” male celebrities

Bocock (1993) –

- Importance of consumption in today's society
 - consumption has become an important part of gender identities

Nixon (1996) –

- Creation of the “new man” – 1985
“laundrette” advert for Levis
 - Emergence of sexualisation of male bodies & provision of alternative identities

Crisis of masculinity

Mac an Ghail (1994)

- Loss of traditional male jobs
- Growth in “female” jobs
- Girls’ better achievement in education
- These mean that traditional masculine identities are no longer relevant but men are not comfortable with alternative identities = Crisis
 - Male responses to the change may be fatalistic, turn to crime, adoption of new identity

Death of feminism?

Faludi (1992) Backlash – there has been an antifeminist backlash

- People feel there has been a threatening of masculine identities
- Gender differences are still an important source of identity

Hakim (1995) – “postfeminist” ideas

- There has been significant improvement in women’s lives – we no longer need feminism
- Women are now free to make choices
- Women choose low status jobs & part time work, they are not forced into it

Stuart (1990)

- Feminism still arouses strong feelings
- Women still have sense of inequality
- Gender still important part of identity
- BUT – academic feminism has become irrelevant, the “popular feminism” of the media meets needs more closely –
 - There has been the production of a plurality of identities

“Freedom’s Children”

Wilkinson (1997)

- Looked at the shifting values of younger generations (18-34 yr olds)
- They had expectations of choice & control in their lives
- Found increased risk-taking among younger people
- Traditional gender roles has been discarded –
 - They grew up with assumptions of equality & carried these into adult life
- “Masculine” & “feminine” values have converged (become more similar)

Beck (1992)

- There has been a movement away from holistic political parties & movements and a rise of “new social movements” - focussing on single issues
 - breaking down class barriers
 - change in cultural identities
 - freedom of individuals to create identities

Identities as political acts

Segal (1997)

- There is evidence of the postmodernisation of society
- People are redefining & playing with traditional identities
 - changing boundaries of norms & concepts of deviance
 - eg gay & lesbian identities

Conclusion

- There is evidence that gender identities are changing
- Some evidence that they are staying the same
- Little/no evidence that they are disappearing