Gender Problems

1. People constantly are "doing gender" whether they realize it or not.

Q: What are some ways that we are "doing gender" right now, in this classroom?

For example, we do gender through dress codes; fashion sense (hairstyles, clothing styles); through behavior (flirting, aggressiveness, compassion).

Gender Problems

1. Doing Gender
a. Video: "Killing Us Softly" III, Jean Kilbourne, PhD.

Premise: Advertising comprises a major source of the reproduction of values, beliefs and attitudes in contemporary culture. Advertising budgets have gone from $20 billion in 1979 to $180 billion in 1999, and we view/hear on the average 3000 ads per day! It is estimated that 3 years of our lives are spent watching ads.
Gender Problems
1. Doing Gender
b. Ads not only sell products, but they sell Normalcy (or social norms, a consensus for thought and behavior).

Kilbourne asks the question, How is gender “done” in advertisements? What social norms regarding the performance of gender roles are being replicated in ads? Do people appropriate these ideas in real life?

Gender Problems
Assignment

Find three examples of current advertisements which may have an effect on gender role socialization and discuss the effect. Do people appropriate these gender norms in everyday life?

Due Monday, April 22

Gender Problems
1. Doing Gender
c. According to Kilbourne, today’s ads represent women as an objectified ideal: we see only what is the ideal woman in ads, yet women cannot meet this ideal, partially due to the fact that computers can now digitally edit images to make them appear “perfect.” Nevertheless, there is a deep belief in our society that women can and should look like this ideal if only they try hard enough.
Gender Problems
1. Doing Gender
d. Why do advertisers continue to portray women in such submissive, powerless roles in their ads?

Because SEX SELLS. There is an intimate relationship between capitalism, markets and the particular portrayal of femininity in ads which reproduces the problems of female powerlessness that plague our society. This powerlessness is represented in the following ways in advertising:

- **Objectification:** turning women into everyday objects
- **Body Cropping:** eliminating the "unimportant" parts of women (typically the head) from the ad
- **Animalism:** turning women into animals
- **Powerless Poses:** keeping women down
- **Infantalism:** Creating childlike images
- **Pornographication:** selling sex outright
- **Violence and Degradation:** some advertisers seem to pride themselves on portraying dead/beat-up women

For more info see: [www.about-face.org](http://www.about-face.org)

Objectification
1. Doing Gender

e. What about men? What is the media culture telling us about men’s roles?

Men are told to put on a “tough guise”: to conform to the “toughness norm” when in social situations.

Men are thought to be “strong,” “physical,” independent, “respected,” “tough.” If they do not come off this way, they are labeled as a “wimp,” “pussy,” “bitch,” “queer,” “sissy,” or “fag.”

Violence is not a deviation, but an accepted norm of masculinity.

Gender Problems
1. Doing Gender

f. Gender and Violence Statistics

Men commit:

- 85% of murders
- 90% of assaults
- 95% of domestic violence
- 95% of date violence
- 95% child abuse
- 99.9% of rapes
- 81% of men who were battered as a child grow up to be batterers themselves.
- 75% of the victims of male homicide are men.
Gender Problems
1. Doing Gender

g. These facts are taken for granted by our society. Violence by and dominance of men in our society continues by being invisible in this sense. There is always a focus on the subordinated group.

For example:
- RACE focuses on Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans (as if whites have no racial category)
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION focuses on gays, lesbians, transgenders (as if heterosexuals have no orientation)
- GENDER focuses on women (as if men have no gender category)

h. As women have made political and economic gains toward equality in the past forty years, a "hyper-masculinity" seems to have been the backlash in media portrayals of men over the same period.

Examples Katz gives are:
Children’s toys: the physical forms of boy’s dolls (G.I Joe, Star Wars figures) have "bulked up" significantly.

Popular comedians: (Andrew Dice Clay), radio celebrities (Howard Stern) and political pundits (Rush Limbaugh) would not have found an audience if there was not a sentiment of "backlash" present in the dominant culture.

e. examples, cont:

The image of the “macho man”: as seen in movies (Rambo) and TV (WWF) is far more prevalent today. The macho role crosses all races, yet varies by race: Blacks are often portrayed as "gangstas," Hispanics as boxers, and Asians as martial artists.

In politics: former President Ronald Reagan represented the "return to the golden days" of the male warrior (symbolized by John Wayne of this movies) and the submissive feminine role that existed prior to the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. George Bush symbolizes the rugged cowboy, Rumsfeld the cunning warrior.
Gender Problems

1. Doing Gender

Discussion Question:
Does the media have an effect on our culture and how we perceive ourselves? If so, how does this perception shape our behavior and effect the way we act?

Those who tell stories hold the power in society. Today television tells most of the stories to most of the people, most of the time. —George Gerbner

(Do you agree with Gerbner?)

2. Sex vs Gender:

a. Sex:

– The biological distinctions between females and males

i. Primary sexual traits

– Genitals
– Organs used for reproduction (internal and external)

ii. Secondary sexual traits

– Muscle mass; skeletal structure (pelvis, feet)
– Amount of body hair (facial);
– Tonality of voice (vocal cords)

b. Gender:

– The cultural distinctions between women and men:

i. Being cultural phenomenon, gender traits may take on:

1. Material form: tangible aspects of gender

   For example: fashion—dress, hair, and jewelry

2. Non-material form: learned characteristics and ideas

   – like “feminine” traits (such as emotionality or powerlessness) and “masculine” traits (such as toughness),
   – Repercussions (cf. the Thomas Theorem, Chp 4), in US society, women tend to be hypercritical of themselves (because they tend to be held to a higher standard than men).
3. A Brief History of Sex Norms in America

Sexual norms govern social conduct.
Gender Norms Today:
- Toughness (masculine)
- Emotionality or Subservience; Body Image (feminine)

Over history, norms have changed dramatically regarding our gender roles, but some still haunt us.

a. Puritan Sex Norms (1700s, early 1800s)
Defined marriage as a covenant with God and thus the only legitimate means for sex and procreation (see The Scarlet Letter by N. Hawthorne, and the witch trials of the period).

b. Victorian Sexuality (mid/late 1800s–1900)
- Sexual taboos were common
  It was widely believed that sexual stimulation sapped a person’s “vital energies.” Masturbation was particularly demonized and forbidden in “decent” Victorian society.

  Men: naturally sexual and animalistic
  Women (and children): idealized as pure and virtuous—it was believed that women did not experience sexual desire

Because of these perceptions, premarital and extra-marital sexual relations for men were accepted, but not for women: this set up a sexual double standard.

For example: Up until 1884, a woman could be sent to prison for denying a husband sex, but no laws existed to prohibit male adultery.
Sex and Culture
3. A Brief History of Sex in America
c. Sexuality in the 1900s – 4 Main Eras
i. 1900-1945: small increases in the number of singles having sex before marriage (particularly in the “Roaring 20s”). However, the sexual double standard continued;

ii. 1945-1967 (the summer of love): greater sexual “permissiveness with affection”, sexual relations were seen as OK outside of marriage if the couples were in love and devoted; but sex norms were still restrictive.

iii. 1967-1981: increasing view that sexuality is natural and expected from both men and women – a period of sexual revolution.

WHY did norms change so dramatically in the 1970s? What other cultural changes affected sex norms?

Social factors affecting attitude change during the sexual revolution:
- Advances in birth control technology (the Pill);
- The contemporary women’s movement;
- 1973 Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade (legalizing abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy);
- Innovative living on college campuses (coed dorms);
- The delay in marriage and childbirth.

The sexual revolution was particularly important to women because it broke down the sexual double standard.
Sex and Culture

3. A Brief History of Sex Norms in America
   iv. 1981-now: the sexual counterrevolution
   1981: AIDS is discovered and named by the CDC
   Other examples of changing norms of sexuality:
   - The “Porn Wars” of the late 1980s: Frank Zappa’s fight;
   - The Internet and “Cyberporn”;
   - Non-traditional groups such as the elderly expressing their sexuality;
   - The conservative backlash against the sexual revolution has clashed with the increasing normalization of sexuality in U.S. society.
   Sex and gender are much more openly discussed than 50 years ago, largely because of the influence of the mass media; however, religiously conservative “family values” clearly conflict with this normalization; this leads to cultural schizophrenia.

Gender and Labor

4. Women In The Workplace
   a. Economic Inequality By Gender
      - Discrimination
      - Lack Of Opportunity
      - High Status Jobs That Are Still Predominately Held By Men
      - There Are Job Roles That Lead Others To Promotion Which Are Not Open To Woman
      - Examples: Leadership In Combat
      - Wage Gaps: Females still make on average 78 cents to every “Male” dollar
      - The “Glass Ceiling”: Regardless of education and experience, the “Old Boys” network makes it hard for women to enter the top ranks of business (only 2 Fortune 500 CEO’s are women)

Gender/Labor Statistics

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