



CRASH COURSE **SOCIOLOGY**

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

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Paper 1: Education

Explaining Gender Differences in Educational Achievement

LO's:

- You can describe patterns of gender differences in educational achievement.
- You can explain patterns of gender differences in educational achievement.

Starter: Patterns of gender differences in educational achievement?

- ▶ Create a mind map with 'headlines' describing the major differences in educational achievement between girls and boys.
- ▶ You should include differences at different stages of education where possible.
- ▶ You should describe any trends (patterns over time) that you can identify in the text or the graphs.

Patterns of Educational
Achievement by Gender

How can the gender gap be explained?

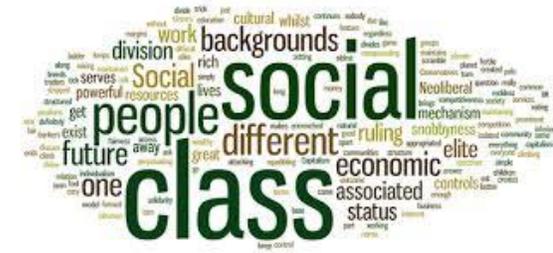
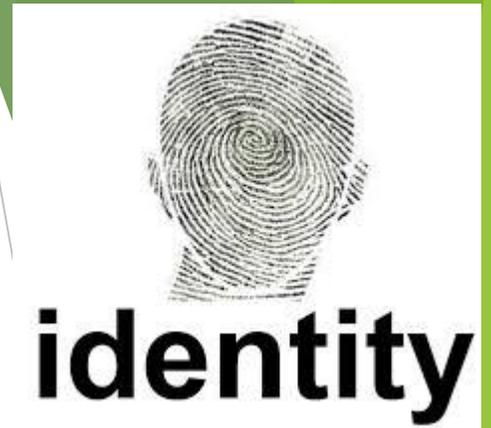
- ▶ Work in pairs or small groups (max 4) to complete these tasks:
 1. In terms of internal and external factors, how would you begin to explain differences in achievement by gender? What do you think has changed inside and outside of schools that might explain why girls now outperform boys?
 2. *Consider why boys haven't kept pace with girls more rapid improvement.*
 3. *In discussion try to create a 'chain of reasoning', starting by explaining the factor and ending by explaining its effect on attainment. (Use a different pen colour)*
 4. Be ready to feedback after around 10 minutes.
 5. Use the resource to complete rest of the worksheet, remember to include:
 - An explanation of the factor with examples where possible. *Knowledge skill (AO1 Skill).*
 - Summaries of named studies (what they did and what they found) where possible for use as *applied evidence (AO2 skill).*
 - An explanation of the factors impact on the gender attainment gap.

Identity, Class and Girls Achievement

- ▶ While girls now achieve more highly than in the past, there are significant social class differences within girls achievement:

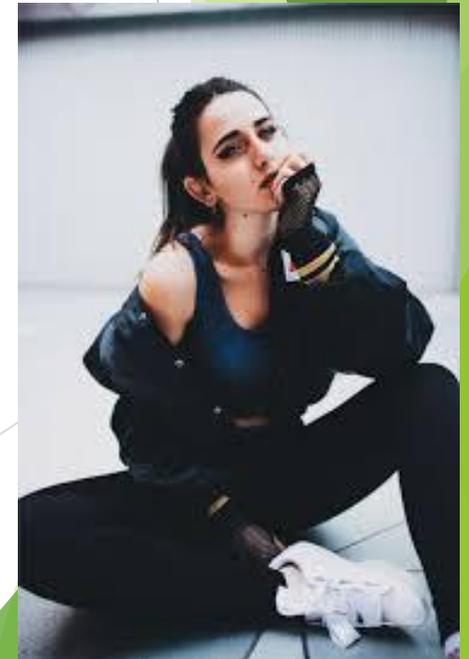
In 2013 40.6% of girls eligible for free school meals (one measure of wealth) achieved 5 A - C GCSE's compared to 67.5% of those not eligible for FSM's.*

- ▶ To attempt to explain this, Louise Archer et al (2010) investigated the conflict between **working class girls feminine identities** and the values and ethos (culture) of the school.
- ▶ Archer uses the concept of 'symbolic capital' to understand this conflict. Symbolic capital refers to the status, recognition and sense of self-worth we are able to obtain from others.
- ▶ **Archer found that girls gained symbolic capital (self-worth) from their peers by expressing or 'performing' their working class feminine identities. However, in doing so they came into conflict with the culture of the school preventing them from acquiring both educational capital (qualifications) and economic capital (middle-class careers).**
- ▶ Archer identified three strategies that the working class girls employed to create a valued sense of self but which made educational success harder to achieve:
 1. Hyper-heterosexual feminine identity.
 2. Having a boyfriend.
 3. Being 'loud'.



Hyper-heterosexual feminine identities.

- ▶ This simply means extreme 'straight' femininity. Looking (what they perceived as...) attractive to men by spending lots of time and money on constructing 'desirable' and 'glamorous' feminine identities.
- ▶ One girl spent all of her £40 a week babysitting money on her appearance. The girls valued black American urban styles with unisex sportswear and 'sexy' clothes, make-up and hairstyles.
- ▶ This look brought status from their female peer group and avoided them being ridiculed or called a 'tramp' for wearing the wrong brand.
- ▶ However, it also brought them into conflict with the school. They were often punished for their make-up, jewellery, wrong uniform and so on. Teachers perceived their interest in their appearance as a distraction from school that prevented engagement.
- ▶ As a result the school tended to 'other' these girls, defining them as 'not one of us'. Incapable of educational success and less worthy of respect.
- ▶ According to Archer the girls suffered symbolic violence at the hands of a school that defined their culture as worthless. The ideal female pupil was desexualised and middle-class. An identity which excluded many working-class girls.



Having a boyfriend. *(Is a bad idea?)*



Justin Bieber - Boyfriend (Official Video) - YouTube

- ▶ The girls gained symbolic capital from their peers by having a boyfriend, this was an important part of their working class femininity. Having a boyfriend was one way that these girls gained self-worth and were able to feel validated.

- ▶ However, compared to many middle-class girls who may have put off such relationships to focus on school and whose decision suited the middle class culture of the school, the emphasis on having a boyfriend had two negative effects on attainment:
 1. It got in the way of school work.
 2. It lowered the girls aspirations.

- ▶ Many of the girls with boyfriends lost any interest they'd previously had in going to university. It inhibited their desire to study 'masculine' subjects such as science and in gaining a professional career.

- ▶ Instead many of these girls aspired to 'settle down', have children and work locally in working-class feminine jobs such as childcare.

Being 'loud'.

- ▶ Some working-class girls adopted 'loud' feminine identities that often led them to be outspoken, independent and assertive, for example questioning a teachers authority.
- ▶ This identity failed to conform to the school's stereotype of the ideal female pupil. That is, passive, submissive, quiet. As a result they frequently experienced conflict with teachers who felt they were aggressive rather than assertive.

The working class girls dilemma

- ▶ Archer claims that working-class girls are faced with a dilemma, either they gain symbolic capital from their peers by conforming to a hyper-heterosexual feminine identity or...
- ▶ They gain educational and later economic capital by rejecting their working-class identity and conforming to the schools notions of a respectable, ideal female pupil.

Some tried to cope with this by defining themselves as 'good underneath', this reflects their struggle to achieve self-worth within an education system that devalues their identity.

For Archer, working-class girls investment in their identities are a major cause of their underachievement.

