Outside School Factors: Patriarchy, Socialisation and Other Agencies.

What is considered inherently interesting is knowledge about men. Because men control the records, and the value system, it is generally believed that is men who have done all the exciting things, it is men who have made (his) tory, made discoveries, made inventions and performed feats of skill and courage – according to men. These are the important activities and only men can engage in them, so we are led to believe. And so it is that the activities of men become the curriculum.   **Dale Spender, 1982**

Introduction:

Radical Feminists

Many feminists have argued that the **ideology of patriarchy** in sociology at large is a **major cause of inequality in schools**. The ideology of patriarchy suggests that the **dominant ideas in society tend to favour men** and operate to keep women in subordinate positions, such as home and in part-time low paid jobs. For example, **Arnot**, 1991 argues that the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative, **TVEI**, with its emphasis on gender inequality through **increasing female** choices, actually did very little to achieve gender equality as she put it…

Providing equal freedoms within unequal social relations had little chance of creating equal opportunities.

What Should Happen According to Feminists….

What she is suggesting is that given a free choice, girls and boys tend to respond according to **society's view of what is proper for each gender**, so that girls tend to avoid choosing science and technology subjects. Therefore, there should be a great **compulsion in schools to ensure that there are common experiences** for girls and boys, which in turn will ensure that equality comes about.

Dale Spender has analysed the cultural reproduction of patriarchy in several publications the most relevant to education is *Invisible women: The Schooling Scandal.* In this book she found that both the **formal and hidden curriculum** makes assumption from a **patriarchal point of view**.

Radical Feminists seek to raise girls' awareness of the **structure of patriarchy** in schools and in the workplace and family. One strategy for doing this is to establish female discussion and support groups, in which patriarchy can be examined, and the confidence and skills of females to combat it are developed.

The New Right

During the 1990's the rise of **new right** ideologies tended to **reinforce patriarchal relations** in society as a whole and this impacted on education. However, the effects of New Right ideas were not always as **straightforward as might be expected**. Certainly, new right writers were **hostile to the notion of equality for women**, seeing it as an 'ideological extravagance' and remained convinced of the need to have women within the household. The assumption made by New Right thinkers was that **men** could **specialise** in **work** in the market place and **women** in **household w**ork. This had implications for the type of education that each gender was to receive. New Right ideas reflected traditional roles, with boys being prepared in schools to be the main breadwinners and girls to be homemakers and childbearers. This in turn has implication for the types of subject girls were encouraged to choose in school.

However, the impact of these ideologies has been **blunted by several factors**. Arnot argues that Feminism has developed to the extent that women have been able to resist the back to basics movement, with which women are supposed to be responsible for home and men for work, so the experiences of women after the First World War in being returned to domesticity have not been repeated. (Thank God). Campbell, 1987, found that changes in occupational structures ensured that the 1980's had many career women some of whom became Conservative Party members. As a result, women did not mainly return to domesticity despite the better wishes of those from the New Right.

Psychological and Socialisation Explanations

Researchers have focused upon a number of alternative sites as a source of gender related differences in educational achievement…these are…

The Home

The site of **primary socialisation**, where self-concepts and gender roles become firmly established and where girls may be **materially deprived compared to boys**. For many writers the foundation of later educational outcomes is laid before boys and girls set foot though the school gates. A popular theory in the 1970's was that young girls 'fear successes, that is are socialised against being achievement orientated.

Exercise Two

A famous study conducted by Horner in which college students were asked to complete the following sentence…

After the first terms examinations, Anne/John find her/himself top of her/his school class.

Lower Self Esteem

Another suggested explanation for achievement differences between gender is that women have lower self-esteem that males do. Psychologist **David Fontana**, for example is quite categorical..

Turning now to the position of girls, we find that generally…. Girls have lower levels of self-esteem to boys.

This is widely held and has led to educational programmes designed to improve girls' self-esteem, notably in **Australia**. However, like the **fear of success theory** evidence seems **shaky**. **Jane Kenway and Sue Willis** have edited a collection of studies that question the factual and ideological foundation of this theory. They note that despite Australia funding their policy aimed at this problem and teachers 'support for improving girls' self-esteem, some hesitation (about the idea) seemed long overdue. In a useful summary of research evidence of differences between esteem of males and females….

Psychologist John **Nicolson** says….

Individual women do not seem to value themselves less highly than men, whatever they may think about their own and other sexes generally. In childhood, any differences between the sexes in self-esteem tend to be weighed towards the girls; a few studies have found that they value themselves more highly than boys do, despite the fact that they are more willing to admit to their own failings. Later in life, it is no easier to show that man and women differ in self-esteem.

Despite this, there is considerable evidence that women are **less confident** than men in their own ability to **achieve particular things**. So though women value themselves as highly as men, are equally motivated to succeed and have the same capabilities as men, **they are less confident**.

Reasons for This Lack of Confidence

The reasons for this are not hard to find, at least according to Feminists. From a very early age females are **socialised** into lacking control in their lives. The **female characters** in **children's stories** tend to have things happen to them whilst the male characters take an active role, and are the doers. The same is true of TV fiction.

This is likely to lead to females on average to adopt an **external locus of control** (see themselves in the hands of luck or fate) while males adopt an **internal locus of control** (take the credit for their own success). This is the product of both primary and secondary socialisation, processes which begin early and are reinforced as girls grow older.

Educational research shows that **students** are more likely to be **successful learners** if they believe that they **are in control of the learning process**; if they ascribe their successes and failures directly to their own abilities and the effort they put in. Student who take a fatalistic attitude, saying that outcomes will depend upon the 'quality of the lectures' or some other factor not to do with them, tend to be unsuccessful.

It is true that women are more likely to have an **external locus of control,** this could be a very useful piece of evidence in explaining poorer performance amongst females. As we have seen, however, females end to do better than males, at least at school. It could be that this is an achievement they manage in the face of this extra difficulty.

Subject Choice

According to **Thomas**, subjects of study are believed to hold qualities, which have close connections about **masculinity and femininity**. People choose which subjects to do partly on this basis. For women to take a subject like **Physics**, she essentially has to **rebel** against the **widely available ideas of gender**. Despite claims of equality, universities also subscribe to these ideas in their subject offerings, which are usually presented in terms of traditional discipline areas. However, **Thomas** hopes that by **offering interdisciplinary areas for study**, such as Physical Science and Communications, the **new universities** will be able to **break the link between gender and subjects**.

Exercise Five

Quickly write down 5 separate adjectives (describing words) you associate with each of the following subjects.

Subject	Adjectives
Physics	
Sociology	
Psychology	
Engineering	
Maths	
Computing	
Biology	

Gender Roles

Early **sex stereotyping** will affect educational and career aspirations of males and females differently. The idea of **caring roles for girls** will be stimulated and reinforced by giving them **dolls, nurses uniforms and so on.** Similarly, they may come to believe that gaining qualifications through education is <u>secondary to the ideas of love, marriage and having children.</u>

The results of socialisation in the home are seen later in school, as reported by **Measor** who carried out non-participant observation, ethnographic study of females in the classroom. It was done on 11-13 year old's. It found that gender and school subject identities were firmly fixed in pupil's minds and were articulated in the school.

Girls would be slightly late for science lessons, and they would try to edge a little time off the end of them, packing up their things early for example. They would wander around the room and chat to people on the way. If they were challenged they would claim that they were looking for equipment and again avoid trouble. Girls would avoid answering questions and keep out of class discussions if they were asked directly. They displayed a quality of shy quietness during verbal exchanges in interactions between females and male teachers. Girls could answer questions so quietly that they could barely be heard. On such occasions the teacher would usually sigh and pass on, the girls had answered after all…girls repeatedly engaged in acts that were known to be deviant, albeit it subtly and surreptitiously

Pamela: We just suck Polos in science lessons.
Sheila: We do or the ends of our pens….we suck our pens on our table, and don't take no notice. .

Exercise Six

Look at the following books and answer the following questions….

1. Pick out the main characters.
2. Which are male and female?
3. Explain the roles they take.
4. Describe the ways in which they are expected to behave.
5. Compare the books from the past to the present. Are they improving?

Exercise Seven

Are the following strengths or weaknesses of outside school factors…

1. They are an improvement on earlier genetic based explanations as they recognise the importance of social processes.
2. The explanations have served to generate lots of sociological research.
3. They neglect the effects of inside school factors and therefore act as a smokescreen for the failure of the educational system.
4. Aspects of the explanations are dated. Many young females have aspirations outside the home and are now in more powerful occupational positions.
5. They suffer from ideological bias because they are feminists.
6. As a set of explanations, they attempt to link the different parts of society together and show the interdependence of different aspects of society.
7. The process whereby early experiences lead to later effect is never clearly stated. It is often just assumed.
8. They tend to simplify the effects of cultural and social forces.

9. These explanations stress cultural factors as well as social, for example, the importance of media in influencing view on gender.
10. They suggest that early experiences of people are important in affecting their later course in their lives.

Exercise One

Now lets see if Spender is correct…. Complete the following table, naming famous men and women in the professions given…

Females	Occupation	Male	Notes
	Author		
	Scientist		
	Sportsperson		
	Artist		
	TV newsreader		
	Film Star		
	Film Director		
	MP		
	Criminal		
	Business person		
	Judge/Lawyer		
	Classic Musician		
	Doctor		
	Poet		
	Mathematician		
	Weather person		
	Nurse		