

# Chapter Activities

## Chapter 2 Children’s Gender and Sexuality: Issues and Debates Defined

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Social construction of gender at various levels

This chapter discussed the notion that gender is socially constructed at the institutional, interactional and individual levels. Review the four examples of research spotlighted in this chapter and jot a few notes about the levels at which gender is reinforced, resisted or constrained in each. Remember that multiple levels can be at play in a given example.

	Individual	Interactional	Institutional
Kosminsky and Daniel			
Ali and colleagues			
Hunt			
Riggs			

#### Activity 2: Children’s autonomy and gender identity

This chapter highlighted debates and research on ‘intersex’ children and childhood gender atypicality. Giordano (2007) emphasizes the ethical importance of a child’s autonomy in decisions regarding treatment for gender atypicality. Should there be, as Giordano suggests, ‘agreed on international guidelines on the treatment of children and adolescents with atypical gender identity organization’ (366)? Choose a side on this debate and outline how you would support your argument. Make sure to incorporate the themes of this chapter, considering both childhood studies and gender studies approaches.

# Chapter 3 The Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality in Childhood, Key Research Issues and Findings

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Connections across various influences

Though the remainder of this book is organized into chapters focused on family, education, media and children's peer cultures, you will notice frequent overlaps between these various sites. Families and schools intersect, children's peer cultures play out in households and schoolyards, and so on. Looking back over the various research findings previewed in this chapter, pick out at least one example of children's gender and sexuality being shaped by not just one of these influences but by two or more at once.

#### Activity 2: Organized movements for social change

When we view gender and childhood as social constructs, variable across geographic locations, diverse subgroups and historical periods, the potential for social change is immediately apparent. Organized movements for social change are emphasized throughout this book. As a starting point for thinking about social change in relation to gender and sexuality, select any one of the following websites and explore it briefly. Take some notes on the issues and initiatives addressed by the organization you selected, and think about those in relation to the topics explored in this book. Do you see evidence of some of the themes and debates highlighted so far?

- **Gender Identity Research and Education Society** ([gires.org.uk](http://gires.org.uk)): UK-based organization advocating for transgender individuals and their families, including focus on youth issues.
- **Groundspark** ([groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/straightlaced](http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/straightlaced)): US-based organization that promotes social change through film; one of their featured projects is the film *Straightlaced: How gender's got us all tied up*, which addresses how youth are affected by gender expectations.
- **UNICEF** ([unicef.org/gender](http://unicef.org/gender)): International United Nations Children's Fund, whose programs and initiatives include many focused on gender.

## Chapter 4 Gender, Sexuality and the Family

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Social forces surrounding parents

The section answering the question 'Who influences parents and families as they think about childhood gender and sexuality' begins by noting that many 'social, cultural, and political forces' influence parents. List the forces you notice from throughout that section, indicating which particular research studies are relevant to each force you listed. Some studies will be relevant to multiple categories.

#### Activity 2: Social policy and social change

This chapter has highlighted the wide range of forms that change can take. Examples of research detailed throughout the chapter indicate the need for state- and policy-level change. Baptiste and colleagues offer an example of how research can provide the basis for recommendations for change, such as workshop interventions to increase parental involvement in youth HIV prevention. Choose an example of research that underscores unequal parental treatment and, based on the findings of the research you select, outline a recommendation that could be made to policymakers.

# Chapter 5 Gender, Sexuality and Education

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Examining intersectionality in schooling experiences

Throughout this chapter, examples of research, such as Bettie (2002) and Dagkas and Benn (2006), illustrate how intersectionality can shape students' experiences in schools. Look back through the other studies highlighted in examples of research, charts and lists throughout this chapter. How does intersectionality impact children in these other studies?

#### Activity 2: Acting on inequality

Throughout this chapter, schools are addressed not only as sites of gender refinement, reinforcement and reproduction, but also as sites for action and activism in the face of unequal educational experiences. Consider the research presented throughout the chapter. Select a piece of research you found interesting and think of ways in which one might act on the inequalities revealed. Briefly outline a campaign, student group or some form of action that might be able to address the gender inequalities in education revealed in the study you selected.

## Chapter 6 Gender, Sexuality and Media

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Intersectionality and media content

The diversity of children's gendered experiences by race/ethnicity, social class, nation, ability and other intersecting dimensions of inequality is a key theme of this book. Review the material included under the first key question of this chapter and list examples of variations in gender and sexuality-related media content by other dimensions of inequality. Then make another list of possible variations you think might merit consideration for those studies whose descriptions did not include specific mention of intersecting inequalities.

#### Activity 2: Media impact, resistance and agency

Agency and autonomy are key themes in childhood studies today, and this chapter has documented some of the ways these themes are evident in research and activism related to media. At the same time, many media researchers focus on media impact in a manner that implies children are shaped by media content in a relatively straightforward manner. Thinking about this tension between media as a powerful social force that shapes children's thinking 'from above' and children as active agents who interpret and even resist media content, consider which side of the tension you find more interesting and important for childhood studies.

# Chapter 7 Gender and Sexuality in Children's Peer Cultures

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Individual level and interactional level influences

Chapter 2 included a discussion of the idea that gender is socially constructed at the individual, interactional and institutional levels. While some people might assume that children's gender-typical behaviour is a reflection of their individual-level preferences, attention to peer cultures reveals that sometimes interactions with peers pushes children to fulfil gender expectations even if they do not personally prefer to do so. Pick an example of such an influence from this chapter, and think about how you might design an intervention to reduce peer pressure at the interactional level in relation to this particular example while still respecting children's agency.

#### Activity 2: Youth autonomy and adult support

Several examples in this chapter raised the question of how much power and autonomy youth have to organize in resistance to gender and sexuality-related constraints. Visit the Taking it Global website and go to their tool for searching organizations, at [www.tigweb.org/resources/orgs/index.html](http://www.tigweb.org/resources/orgs/index.html). Search for groups addressing topics related to gender (there is a keyword search available on the page). For the organizations that come up, select a couple in regions of the world of particular interest to you, and review their overviews (or visit their home sites) to determine how you think youth and adults share leadership of the organizations. To what extent do you think youth autonomy is reflected in the organizations' mission, leadership and approach?

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

### Chapter activities

#### Activity 1: Diversity in childhood gender and sexuality

An important theme throughout this book has been the diversity of experiences and tensions that characterize childhood gender and sexuality when we attend to variations by economic class, race/ethnicity, ability/disability, nation, religion and other dimensions of variation in childhood. Pick a region of the world, and review the preceding chapters looking for examples of research from that region. How many of these appear to attend to diversity within the region/nation on which they focus?

#### Activity 2: Children's voices and social change

From among Chapters 4–7, which address family, education, media and peer cultures respectively, select one of particular interest to you. Reviewing that chapter, list at least six research studies mentioned and note for each to what extent it seems to include children's voices in the research design. Then, for each, jot down a few notes on how the author(s) might further incorporate children's voices and acknowledge their agency/autonomy. Finally, after re-reading this chapter's author interview quotes about children's voice in research and social change, consider what implications you think the presence or absence of children's voices in these studies has for the ability of the research to effectively inform social change initiatives related to gender or sexuality in childhood.