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

Summary
This chapter has:

• Discussed how a range of human variation is socially constructed into two, binary gender categories;
• Identified key trends and assumptions in contemporary scholarship and activism related to gender;
• Described trends and debates characterizing today’s research and advocacy related to gendered childhoods;
• Explored how children’s sexuality is also increasingly an area of interest for childhood studies practitioners and academics.
Chapter 3 The Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality in Childhood, Key Research Issues and Findings

Summary

This chapter has:

- Introduced the specific topics covered in subsequent chapters: family, education, mass media and children’s peer cultures;
- Highlighted the importance of the state in shaping gender and sexuality in childhood, both as a force that can constrain but also help shift traditional patterns and inequalities;
- Presented a series of examples of research, one from each of the topics addressed in Chapters 4–7, as a preview of the kinds of research findings explored in detail throughout the remainder of the book;
- Emphasized social change as a key theme through a chapter activity focused on formal organizing to address gender inequalities affecting children and youth.
Chapter 4 Gender, Sexuality and the Family

Summary

This chapter has:

- Documented the wide range of ways in which parental treatment of sons and daughters contributes to the social construction of children’s gender and sexuality, and shapes children’s opportunities and experiences;
- Identified a variety of forces that surround parents and in turn shape the way they treat their sons and daughters, including everyday accountability to others, medical and religious authorities, state and public policy and expert advice in parenting books;
- Explored other aspects of families that impact children’s gender and sexuality, such as household structure, parental role modelling, exposure to gendered violence and sibling influences;
- Reiterated the importance of children’s autonomy and agency, emphasizing the need not to focus only on the one-way influence of parents and other adults on children’s gender and sexuality within families.
Chapter 5  Gender, Sexuality and Education

Summary

This chapter has:

- Discussed the complexity of defining gender inequality in education, and how perspectives on its extent and origins vary;
- Examined key issues, debates and trends related to gender and sexuality in education;
- Explored the role of teachers, curriculum, textbooks, national- and school-level policies and peer cultures within schools in shaping, reinforcing, refining and resisting gender and sexual identities;
- Highlighted examples of gender and sexuality-related activism in education at the grassroots, national and international levels.
Chapter 6  Gender, Sexuality and Media

Summary

This chapter has:

- Detailed the range of messages about gender and sexuality in childhood evident in media such as books, television, films, music, magazines, video games and internet content;
- Explored the impact of media messages on children, including their potential to reinforce and disrupt traditional approaches to gender and sexuality, as well as the possibilities for differential impacts based on intersecting inequalities;
- Highlighted the way children interpret, refine and resist media messages, including research on audience reception of media texts and the active formation of youth subcultures that are developed in opposition to dominant media and marketing discourses;
- Spotlighted examples of gender and sexuality-related media activism, with organized groups advocating for greater media literacy among youth, strategic use of existing media to help youth communicate their perspectives and resources to help youth produce their own alternative media content.
Chapter 7  Gender and Sexuality in Children’s Peer Cultures

Summary

This chapter has:

- Reviewed a range of research studies documenting the importance of peer cultures in the social construction of gender and sexuality in childhood, at sites from schools to families to camps, neighbourhoods, parks and street cultures;
- Explored the agency of children and youth as social actors, as they reproduce gendered outcomes through routine everyday interactions as well as more dramatic instances of harassment and violence, but also as they refine and resist traditional gender expectations;
- Considered the balance between children’s autonomy within their peer cultures and the constraints created by adult-led social institutions/public policy and individual adults such as parents, teachers and human services professionals, all in the context of the constraints children face from intersecting inequalities;
- Presented brief summaries of youth participation in more formal organizations, initiatives and movements seeking to loosen the constraints of gender and sexuality-based social expectations around the world.
Chapter 8  Conclusion

Summary

This chapter has:

- Revisited selected examples of scholarship and activism from previous chapters in order to highlight key themes of the book;
- Emphasized the importance of research and children’s voices in informing advocacy and social change in relation to gender and sexuality-based limitations affecting children and youth;
- Underscored the wide range of advocacy initiatives from around the world that seek to broaden and rethink those limitations.