Responses to in-class questions 2

In the readings for this week there was a brain-teaser about the man and son in the accident and when the son went to the hospital the doctor wouldn’t operate because it was his son. Can we discuss? Is this due to the fact that the doctor was the boy’s biological father but because men are less concerned with family life, he never met his own son?

…………….No, it is because the doctor is a woman, the child’s mother – not a man.

Does the concept that women are more “feely” and “gossipy” and “shrewish” than men while hiding behind their looks not strike you as outdated and misogynistic? Where are the specific studies proving this? Is the idea that women are more feelings based and chattier not constructed as a narrative of blame?

……….First off, I didn’t say anything about women being “shrewish.” Second, I never used the word “gossipy,” but I’ll let that stand. Third, I didn’t say anything about women “hiding behind” or trading on their looks, though I think this is a pretty familiar idea in the sociological literature and elsewhere. My point, however, was that women are trained to excel at “emotion work,” which includes conversational and interpersonal attentiveness. This learned skill stands them in good stead in many lines of sales, service, and professional work, as well as in domestic and social life. I don’t think saying so constitutes a “narrative of blame” – blame for what? If you want to follow this idea up, start with Arlie Hochschild on “emotion work.”

Please explain Durkheim’s reasoning to why industrialization is the source of modern inequalities.

…………. I don't think I highlighted Durkheim’s argument that industrialization is the source of modern inequalities; but if we wanted to do so, we could show that Durkheim views the modern division of labour (including specialization) as the source of social differentiation, hence social inequalities. This could be related to Davis and Moore’s functional theory of stratification, perhaps.

On what basis are you refuting the female wage gap?

…………. Data show that for men and women in the same age group, with the same experience and educational credentials, and working full-time in the same job, the earnings are identical. The reason why we commonly see a female wage gap is because we are not comparing equal-to-equal across men and women: for example, not comparing the same jobs, the same experience levels, or the same educational credentials. Most important, we are often not comparing full-time workers with other full-time workers.

Will this class address gender issues faced by trans or non-binary-conforming people?

…………. No, I am not familiar with good-quality studies on this topic. Perhaps there are such studies, and I will be grateful if you could send them to me, so I could read them.

How does femininity not interact with homophobia? Socially constructed norms of femininity directly contribute to homophobia experienced by lesbian/bisexual women.

………….. I agree that, in principle, socially constructed norms of femininity might just as well lead to homophobia against lesbian/bisexual women as socially constructed norms of masculinity lead to homophobia against gay men. However, I have not seen any studies proving this is the case. Again, perhaps there are such studies, and I will be grateful if you could send them to me, so I could read them.

Can we have a 10-minute break like other classes?

…………… If this is what the class wants, I am happy to comply.

Please define tokenism.

………….. Tokenism is a hiring practice in which small (i.e., token) numbers of minorities or previously excluded people are hired, just to prove there is an absence of discrimination against them. Kanter argues that minorities will not do their best work, nor disprove the prejudices against them, nor provide the greatest benefit to the organization, if they are hired as tokens.

In this class, when we say that 2 people are unequal in some way, does it not imply that they are both striving for the same thing? What are the two people striving for? Is it well-being?

…………… As we have seen repeatedly in the case of gender, we have to compare like-with-like. If different “kinds” of people are routinely pursuing different goals -- therefore getting different types of education and entering different careers -- it is difficult to say they are being treated unequally. It is only when they strive for the same educations, jobs, and incomes that we see clear evidence of prejudice and discrimination taking place.

…………….On your second question, yes, I think ultimately people are striving for well-being, and they may encounter unequal obstacles in pursuing it, whatever their definition of “well- being.” Years ago, I wrote a book about this, titled *Choices and Chances*. You may find it interesting.

Can you explain in a little bit more detail the Marxist approach to feminism when it states that it is caused by capitalism and private ownership?

………… I don’t think the Marxists argue that capitalism causes feminism, as per your question above; however, Marxists may argue that capitalism supports, encourages, or favours gender inequality, because – as we saw with the studies by Luxton (More Than a Labour of Love) and Armstrong/Armstrong (The Double Ghetto) -- traditional patriarchy (i.e., male dominance) obliges women to provide unpaid domestic labour that supports capitalism and benefits the capitalist class by maintaining and reproducing the working class.