

Sociological Theory Of Feminism

In the sociological theories developed in the nineteenth century men's masculinity strategies are seen as those of investment, as the game of honour does have economic and political effects. Excluded from the 'games' of the men, women are in a critical position; they both recognise the 'silliness' of the games and provide the 'flattering mirror' to them.

Femininity, no less than masculinity, may be considered an asset, dependant on context. Indeed, the strategies of middle class feminists that led to increased education for women and second wave feminism may in part be responsible for the reconstitution of the mental/ manual divide which restricts working class women to employment centred on their 'traditional' skills. No capital has a 'pure' field, as there is always resistance; the family may be said to be dominated by the gender sufficiently to constitute its primary field. The family has long been studied within feminism as the primary site of gender domination and social reproduction.

It is not enough to view the gendering of levels of capital as limiting life-opportunities; gender itself must be viewed as a capital and a strategy, with the power to cross fields. A child is gendered before it learns to speak. The gender capital gained as a child has repercussions throughout life; an infant that learns to be a woman will find that her femininity is both a constraint and an enabler; her habitus is gendered, as is her future.

By learning to be a woman, she unwittingly reproduces the system that subordinates the feminine; by choosing the forms of education and employment that she does; by adopting the behaviour considered suitable for her sex and teaching this to her daughter, a woman plays an important role in the continuation of the existing social hierarchy.