

Gender Identities and Education: Serendipity in Social Research

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In 1967 I took up a Lectureship in Social Psychology at the University of Sussex in the School of African and Asian studies. My appointment was most appropriate, as I had spent almost five years in East and West Africa studying child development. A two-year study among the Gusii of southwestern Kenya was part of what came to be known as the Six Culture study led by the American anthropologists, Beatrice and John Whiting (Whiting and Whiting, 1975). In the early 1960's I spent three years at the Institute of Education in the University of Ibadan. I drew two samples of infants; one was based in a traditional quarter in Ibadan, Oje, the other, focused on highly educated Yoruba mothers and their offspring. A paediatrician from the Institute of Child Health studied their physical growth while I investigated their culture and mothering (Lloyd, 1966).

Shortly after arriving at Sussex I was commandeered to teach Piaget to Experimental psychology undergraduates. This assignment was a challenge as my PhD in Social Psychology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois examined the development of conscience from a learning theory perspective. Perhaps proselytising, Professor Kenneth Lovell, a prominent British Piagetian at Leeds University, very generously helped me assimilate the theory. I was able to return to Nigeria and assess both groups of children using psychometric, traditional learning and Piagetian methods (Lloyd, 1971). A quantitative content analysis of the most prominent themes of the four decades of the *Journal of Cross Cultural*

Psychology's papers cited this study as representative of publications in its first decade (Cretchley, Rooney, and Gallois, 2010).

Not often does one remember details of their first encounter with a new student but the circumstances surrounding Gerard's initial visit to the University of Sussex were quite special. From the start issues of gender were in the air. Hans Furth, an eminent Piaget scholar, had only recently taken up the chair of Social Psychology that had fallen vacant on Marie Jahoda's retirement. Gerard was keen to employ a Piagetian perspective in his doctoral research and applied for a studentship. A member of Gerard's interview panel, I was flummoxed when Furth pointed at me saying, "that woman thinks that she is having a boy". It was not a belief, nor a wish; amniocentesis a few months earlier had revealed Y-chromosomes. Son David is now thirty-five years old!

Our initial encounter occurred in the spring of 1974 and Gerard took up an SSRC studentship at Sussex in the autumn. In his doctoral research Gerard sought to describe the development of children's understanding of friendship from a Piagetian structural perspective. Gerard's initial intention had been to employ a social cognition paradigm and to treat friendship as Piaget had employed concepts from the natural sciences in his creation of a genetic epistemology. After carrying out an interview and an experimental study Gerard realised that the results were not interpretable in terms of social cognition. Thus he sought to develop a theory within which to analyse his data on friendship. Furth left Sussex two years after Gerard's arrival and his supervision was bequeathed to me.

And there were other challenges.

Once again my teaching commitments brought new intellectual demands. I organised a first term, first year course, in those days described as a Prelim in the Sussex jargon, around the topic, sex differences. The course, *The Biological and Interpersonal Bases of Sex Differences* drew upon the expertise of Sussex faculty in the three distinct psychology Subject Groups (departments-- Social, Developmental and Experimental). In 1974, John Archer, then a post-doctoral researcher working with Richard Andrews, the Professor of Animal Behaviour, and I published a paper on sex roles in *The New Scientist*.

In addition, in those heady early days at Sussex I was teaching a third-year contextual course in the School of African and Asian Studies, *Comparative Epistemology*, with the Oxford trained Social Anthropologist, David Pocock. Over two terms we examined the writings of classic sociologists, anthropologists and psychoanalytic psychologists. My past was catching up with me; my lecturer in comparative sociology at Boston University, where I had gained a masters degree in Psychology before going to Kenya, had been St Claire Drake. He had been a student of Radcliffe Brown. A close reading of Durkheim and Mauss strengthened my understanding of the structural-functional approach of early 20th century anthropology. My appreciation of the concept of social representations was shaped by my training in structural-functionalism. It is a model of social life that struggles to explain change.

The issue of gender arose yet again when Caroline Smith, an educational psychologist, with a Cambridge undergraduate training in psychology, arrived a year after Gerard had come to Sussex. She was determined to work on the development of gender. Our initial study, in which first time mothers' were asked to interact with a six month old infant presented as either a girl or a boy, revealed that mothers' behaviour was guided by their understanding of masculinity and femininity (Smith and Lloyd, 1978). Particularly striking was their gender-differentiated response to our "actor" babies' gross motor behaviour. Only when the infant was presented as a boy was such activity met with maternal encouragement. In her doctoral research Caroline observed mothers' play with their own first-borns at six and thirteen months and showed that by thirteen months boys were engaged in more gross motor behaviour while baby girls made more fine motor movements (Smith, 1982).

Caroline and I collaborated throughout the following decade. In 1978 I was awarded an SSRC grant that allowed us to study sex role-play and the understanding of sex differences in children of 19 to 42 months of age. With an additional grant in 1984 Caroline and I investigated sex role-play further.

In 1978 Gerard went to a research position at the Institute of Child Health in London, then taught at South Bank Polytechnic, and later worked with Maureen Shields on children's understanding of persons' roles and activities in the social world (Shields and Duveen, 1986). Gerard maintained his Sussex friendships, was often in Brighton, and, during the academic year 1983-84, was Lecturer in Social Psychology

at Sussex. While Gerard was in London I was training in the Freudian stream of the British Association of Psychotherapists and it was convenient to meet after my weekly supervision in Bloomsbury. We discussed his progress in conceptualising the child's social world and sometimes mine in understanding the inner world. On one occasion Gerard joined me at a BAP evening lecture. The psychoanalyst, Ron Britton spoke on "The Erotic Transference". I suspect that Gerard flirted with the idea of undertaking a psychoanalytic training.

My research with Caroline Smith was drawn together in a chapter entitled "Social representations of gender" in a slim volume called *Making Sense The Child's Construction of the World* (Bruner and Haste, 1987). I sought Moscovici's early papers on social representations to provide a social psychological framework. They offered a model of symbolic functions and the role of social processes in the construction of reality (Moscovici, 1983; Moscovici and Hewston 1983). I analysed the shaping of infants' motor behaviour in the first year of life in terms of mothers' social representations of gender. Caroline and I sought to shed light on children's acquisition of social representations of gender during infancy through the study of very young children's linguistic, cognitive and interpersonal behaviour.

Our work with preschool children filled gaps in existing knowledge and laid the foundations for the later study of primary school children. Until this time studies of the development of children's representational capacities had focused on reflective understanding and relied upon linguistic and cognitive evidence. Our observations of play and interpersonal behaviour derived from the belief that children learn about gender from practical activity and that changes in interpersonal behaviour are related to developments in their construction of social representations (cf. Cahill, 1983).

We found wide differences in the linguistic, cognitive and interpersonal behaviour of children in our youngest group, those approaching two years of age, and those reaching almost four years. Although the youngest children showed that they were beginning to acquire the gender code in their recognition of gender nouns they failed to apply the terms boy and girl to themselves or to use gender pronouns appropriately; these conceptual skills were demonstrated by the oldest children in sorting gender marked images and in labelling themselves. Our fine-grained analyses of practical activity and interpersonal behaviour left many questions unanswered. For example, there were relationships between developmental levels in linguistic and

cognitive responses and with pretend play but not with action play. Mentally embedded social representations of gender appear to regulate pretend play and consequently it develops much later than does action play.

The year that Gerard held a lectureship at Sussex was pivotal in his career. He completed his doctorate (Duveen, 1984). It had been a long and difficult road as Gerard was breaking ground theoretically. He argued that the description of cognitive structures which derived from analyses in terms of Piaget's epistemic subject were not applicable to the cognition of social life. He noted that these purely epistemic structures lacked valorisation and that Moscovici's theory of social representations provided a more complete model of the cognition of social life. He has able to map the development of friendship fruitfully in terms of social representations.

My struggles with officialdom were of a more mundane order. Even in those freer years the SSRC and the university expected post -graduate students to gain their higher degrees within a prescribed time and impassioned pleas to authorities for extensions were necessary to ensure Gerard's continued registration. His dissertation was successfully examined by Professor Anne Nelly Perret-Clermont of Neufchatel University, a leading Piagetian scholar. While holding his lectureship at Sussex Gerard collaborated with Caroline and me and we later published a number of papers together (Lloyd and Duveen 1988; Lloyd, Duveen, and Smith 1988a and b).

With the award of his D.Phil Gerard gained confidence and a new professional identity. Gün Semin, a social psychology colleague at Sussex, became another mentor and friend. He invited us to contribute to his special issue of the *British Journal of Social Psychology* on social identities (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986). Through sustained discussion Gerard and I re-presented the earlier work on social representations of gender in the paper that emerged, as "The significance of social identities".

A research student at Sussex in the early 1980's, Liza Catán, has recently commented on the hours that Gerard and I spent huddled together over a computer screen. We were hammering out the basic theory and then revising the paper in the light of referees' comments. Gerard's thorough understanding of Moscovici's work on social representations brought to the fore the location of psychological activities in social life. His philosophic knowledge and contact with European social psychology enriched both my understanding of the development of social representations of gender and my vocabulary. I used to quip that before it was *genetic* and *cathexis* but

now it was *ontogenesis* and *valorisation*; Gerard never used a three-syllable word when a five-syllable word would do. Most importantly, the social identities paper provided the conceptual focus for our submission to the ESRC that culminated in our grant to study children in reception classes.

As financial analysts of the current recession remind us, the early 1980's were a period of deep recession and extensive unemployment. Caroline's husband, a PhD from Imperial and now a professor in veterinary science at the University of Pennsylvania, was teaching biology in a Brighton comprehensive school. Before taking up his temporary lectureship at Sussex, during, and after, Gerard sought permanent university appointments. In the mid 1980's when these efforts failed he took up a post with the Cobden Trust that was only peripherally related to his core interests in developmental-social psychology.

As Gerard's lectureship at Sussex drew to a close we began to investigate the possibilities of funding that would enable us to explore further young children's developing understanding and representations of gender and which would provide a semi stable university position. The ESRC grant we obtained to study the impact of schooling on social gender identity started in August 1986 and ran for three years. It provided Gerard with a temporary respite from the search for a permanent academic post. Fortunately, I procured additional funding from the Spencer Foundation in Chicago to study socio-linguistics aspects of social gender identities of children in their first year of school. Our association with Jenny Cook-Gumperz, a socio-linguist at that time at the University of California, Berkley, brought our research to a wider audience. Gerard's emerging confidence and networking skills established contacts with scholars who later contributed to our edited volume on the development of social representations (Duveen and Lloyd, 1990).

This is not the place for a detailed review of the journal articles and book chapters that reported the study of gender in reception classes. Instead I will conclude by commenting on the two books that emerged from our shared research. In many ways the order of authorship of these volumes reflects our personalities. *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge* epitomizes both Gerard's wide intellectual interests and his international network of colleagues. Both British and European scholars contributed chapters and our international perspective reached the American Midwest in the chapter by William Corsaro, a sociolinguist at Indiana

University who had worked with Jenny Cook-Gumperz. Our range was also broad conceptually in that we argued that Moscovici's model of social representations, which sought to account both for the realities of social life and an understanding of it, bore similarity to Piaget's theory. Gerard had argued in his doctoral thesis that the well-developed knowledge of logic, mathematics and the natural sciences failed to provide an adequate model when we embark on the study of social life. Employing the conceptual insights Gerard developed in his dissertation we proposed a genetic social psychology, in the spirit of Piaget.

Gender Identities and Education is a summary of our longitudinal research in four primary schools. The four questions, which structured our concluding chapter are:

1. Is there evidence to suggest that differences are emerging among sex-group members in their expression of social gender identities across the school year?
2. Do different organizational settings influence the structure of children's interaction with one another and, in particular, do teachers have an identifiable influence.
3. Can different social gender identities be observed more clearly in practical activity or in intellectual understanding?
4. Is the expression of social gender identities moderated by particular classroom experiences?

The questions reveal my empirical tendencies, Gerard's consistent concerns with social reality and the depth of our collaboration. This research provided the ideal qualification for the post Gerard gained in the Department of Education at the University of Cambridge. He took up his longed for, permanent Lectureship in October 1989.

Postscript: Discussion with the editor, Caroline Howarth, has facilitated my recognition of the differences in Gerard's and my understanding of the concept of social representations. Deriving from a background in structural-functionalism, I tend to view social representations as a resource that enables membership in a cultural group or subgroup. Gerard grasped the possibilities that the theory of social representations provides for resolving tension and in creating new identities.

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