

Abstract Template

TITLE: Gender and the Doctoral Experience: A Critique of Alterity

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Women's increasing participation in doctoral education – in numbers that approach (and in some areas exceed) those of men – has led to a corresponding turn in the international research literature on the doctoral experience. There is a move away from simplistic analyses of gender and relative participation rates, which have tended to construct traditional rhetorics of male and female doctoral students as binarised 'opposites'. Instead, there is increasing acknowledgement that while participation remains an important indicator of institutional and social practices, it is alone insufficient for understanding the complex relationship between gender and the doctorate in the new millennium.

This paper critically reviews the research literature on the doctoral experience and identifies three emerging strands, each of which offers an important way of thinking about gender and the contemporary doctorate. One strand identifies the doctorate itself, the pedagogies that underpin it and the academic context more broadly as gendered in particular ways. A second strand explores students' increasingly diverse experiences throughout the stages of doctoral candidacy and the ways in which these are influenced by issues of gender. A final strand examines the effect of gender on outcomes from the doctoral experience, that is, completion times, employment, tenure, promotion and salaries. Together, these strands broaden the discussion on the student experience of the doctorate to incorporate not only gender, but also its intersection with 'race' and ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic location, sexuality and (dis)ability.

The paper uses particular interventions in feminist literature, gender studies, the sociology of education and cultural studies that help to disaggregate gendered hierarchies and binaries, and open sociological analyses of doctoral education to a more nuanced investigation of the power and complexities of gender.