

Questions on Pascoe 1-174

1. Did your high school have anything like the “Mr. Cougar” contest? If so, describe.
2. What do we mean by “masculinity”?
3. “Very few men, if any, are actually hegemonically masculine, but all men do benefit, to different extents...” (p. 7). Discuss. What does “hegemonic” mean? Is the same true for women—very few are hegemonically feminine, but all women do benefit...?
4. “...in the United States, adults interpret adolescent sexuality as problematic and disruptive, as opposed to a normal part of the life course...” (p. 29). What’s your opinion on this?
5. What is “queer theory”? (some info on p. 10)
6. Describe “compulsory heterosexuality.”
7. ““Being a lesbian is accepted because guys think, ‘Oh, that’s cool.’” Assume this is so. Does it surprise you? What are the reasons River High students give? What are the ones Pascoe gives? Any other possible reasons?
8. Why do gay male personal ads ask for ““straight-appearing, straight-acting men”” (p. 59)?
9. “The specter of the fag.” The fag as “abject.” Discuss.
10. Discuss how male sexuality is racialized (“raced” is another way of putting it) at River High. (pp. 71-77)
11. “The theater is a place for all sorts of experimentation, so why not a metaphorical and physical space for gender and sexual experimentation?” (pp. 80-81) Was this the way it was at your high school?
12. Compare MIT to River High with respect to homophobia; enacting masculinity and femininity, or repudiating these identities; and gender maneuvering or bending.
13. “[Adrienne] Rich argues that heterosexuality not only describes sexual desires, practices and orientations but is a ‘political institution’ (23).” (p. 86). Discuss, including a definition of “institution.”
14. “...while heterosexuality may be personally meaningful, it can simultaneously function as an oppressive social institution.” (p. 86). Discuss “oppressive.” Can homosexuality ever be an oppressive institution?
15. What is your understanding of Judith Butler’s notion of “gender performativity”? (p. 86)

16. “In groups boys act as a sort of ‘sexual police’...” (p. 89). What is Pascoe referring to?
17. “Boys still look to ‘score,’ and girls’ bodies still serve as proof of masculinity.” (p. 92). Did this characterize your high school? Does it characterize MIT?
18. Also on p. 92 Pascoe uses the phrase “masculine capital.” What does she mean?
19. “Boys...who can’t ‘get’ a girl often respond with anger or frustration because of their presumed right to girls’ bodies...‘Whore’.” (p 95). Provide two examples from other contexts where a notion of this kind of “right” might be operating—that is, influencing decisions about behavior.
20. Is the female version of the fag the whore? (p. 95)

“But mixed girls are for me.” “...racialized, gendered, and sexual identities intersect.” (p. 96). As a “mixed” guy he “saw his options as somewhat limited...girls and girls’ bodies were constructed as a limited resource...” Discuss.
21. “In general, superiors touch subordinates, invade their space, and interrupt them...” (p. 96). What experiment could you design to test this notion?
22. “While these sorts of touching interactions often began as flirtatious teasing, they usually evolved into a competition that ended with the boy triumphant and the girl yelling out...‘uncle’.” (p. 97). Did this happen in your high school? To you? What were your thoughts? How would you act today in this kind of scenario?
23. What do you think of the notion of “rape paradigm” as described on pp. 99-100?
24. “These stories also highlighted femininity (much like the fag) as an abject identity.” (p. 104). Connect this with Pascoe’s statement that “whore” is the female equivalent of “fag” (see above).
25. “Grown women ‘bargain with patriarchy’ by submitting to sexist social institutions and practices to gain other forms of social power.” (p. 105). Describe an instance you observed or participated in where this was going on.
26. “...as they tread the shifting and blurry boundary between sexy and slutty.” (p. 105). Provide an example from your high school or MIT.
27. “...this giggle and smile response signifies submission and appeasement, usually directed from a lower- to a higher-status person.” (pp. 106-107). Do you agree, or is this an example of “analyze to death”?
28. “...spoke with pride about tomboy childhoods.” (p. 117). List all the reasons you can think of that explain the difference between how tomboy (girl) childhoods are viewed and how sissy (boy) childhoods are viewed.

29. “Rebeca’s ability to remain in gender flux certainly added to her popularity.” (p. 130). How would someone like Rebeca be viewed at your high school? In your MIT living group?
30. Discuss the ways in which, for Basketball Girls, “doing gender” involved racialized meanings (p. 132). Discuss the ways their practices, which Pascoe calls “gender maneuvering” looked like “compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 133).
31. Discuss “deep play” (p. 150) at River High.
32. “Fags, for all that boys defined them as powerless, weak, and unmanly, seemed to wield an immense amount of power.” (p. 157). Describe these “powerful” fags and analyze the power they wield. If you can, provide a similar example from another identity field.
33. “These processes of confirmation and repudiation...are ways of reproducing a gendered racial inequality.” (p. 157). Describe in more detail such processes of reproduction.
34. List at least 3 ways River High teachers and administration treated African American boys differently from white boys (p. 160).
35. What is Pascoe’s sexual orientation? How do you know?
36. “Through this sort of capitulation girls traded their own subjectivity for boys’ point of view.” (p. 162). Does this happen at MIT? Give 2 examples of it happening or 2 pieces of evidence that it does not.
37. Pascoe states that alternative, non-heteronormative interactions, rituals and gendered ways of being occur in political action, parody, and play (p. 163). Provide an example of each at River High. If you can, provide an example of each at MIT.
38. Provide one or more examples of masculinity and femininity not being located at opposite ends of the same axis, but rather occupying different axes (p. 164), either at River High, MIT, or elsewhere.
39. If you can, provide an example of an MIT professor trying to garner masculine favor “by allowing sexism or homophobia to go unchecked.” (p. 172).
40. Pascoe says that negotiating gender identities at high school is hard (p. 173). Give examples from your own or someone else’s experience.

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