This differs to the 1970s where women did not have any educational aspirations and were reliant on their husbands to bring an income for the family.

However, these external factors can be criticized as they do not apply to all women. Reay found that women’s class background also affects their educational achievement as many of them still hold low aspirations and give themselves limited goals to becoming a housewife or having low valued jobs. Likewise, Biggart found that working class girls see being a housewife as their only option for their future and do not wish to gain educational success and therefore receive lower grades which cause them to have low level jobs in the future as Fuller’s study shows.

There are also many internal factors that influence the division such as equal opportunity policies. Feminists have caused society to see men and women as equal and policies such as GIST (girls into science and technology) and WISE (women into science and engineering) encourage girls to pursue education into these non-traditional options. Also, the National Curriculum has adapted to allow women and men to study the same subjects whereas in the past this was less common. Boaler sees this impact as a huge influence on women’s educational achievement. She believes that many of the barriers stopping women succeeding have been removed since the education system is now based on a meritocracy system and women can achieve good grades through working hard, just like men can.

Moreover, as female head teachers are more common, they act as role models for women to look at and motivate them to work hard to gain a high position which are now awarded to women more than ever. Furthermore, as the GCSE came about, and was mainly coursework based, it was found by Mitsos and Browne that girls were more successful with their results as they are more organised and spent more time on work and putting effort into its presentation. They believe that these factors have helped girls perform better in the education system than boys. Some sociologists believe that this is because as children, girls were taught to be nice, patient and tidy and therefore, they use these skills in their work.

Sociologists found that teacher attention has changed over time and Francis found that boys got more attention but were disciplined more harshly. Swann saw that boys dominate the classroom discussions, while girls prefer pair work and are better at listening. This may explain why teachers react to girls’ behaviour more positive and see girls as more disciplined and cooperative. This could result in girls having higher self esteem and working harder to do well. Moreover, some sociologists argue that the removal of sexist topics in the National Curriculum has caused a decline in the negative position of women in society. This is also due to the removal of stereotypes and people feeling pushed by society to their path. Selection and league tables also play a part in the change. Marketization policies have allowed girls to become desirable recruits in the workforce because of their high grades. Jackson says that this has created more opportunities and a self fulfilling prophecy of going to a good school occurs, which causes girls to do better. Slee says schools don’t want to recruit boys because they often misbehave and cause trouble – they are also four times more likely to be excluded.

Liberal feminists believe that there has been clear progress in educational achievement. They believe that it can be brought further by creating more equal opportunities policies. Functionalists agree with this view and believe that individuals, despite their gender, should