

Where the Boys Aren't:
The Chilling of the Educational System

Susan Nicoriuk

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in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

Where the Boys Aren't: A Chilling of the Educational System

Susan Nicoriuk

This thesis investigates the wide gender gap in education. In Canada in 2000, only 40% of those graduating with undergraduate degrees are male, and 48% of those graduating with Master's degrees are male. And the gap is still widening. Only at the Doctorate level do males outnumber females: 59% to 41%: but this gap has closed from 64% males to 36% females in the two year period from 1998 to 2000. This situation is similar in the United States. This seems to be a massive failure in equity.

I interviewed six teachers at the kindergarten, primary and high school levels. The primary level is where the problem begins. Teachers reported that boys learn differently from girls in various ways, and the education system privileges girls; that male teachers are needed as role models; that more activities are necessary for boys; that gender separated classes sometimes work for boys, without jeopardizing female accomplishments; and more.

Finally, I offered ten recommendations to reform this inequitable education system.

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To my mother, Jessie Siedlak Nicoriuk and to the memory of my father, George Nicoriuk

I dedicate this dissertation.

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WHERE THE BOYS AREN'T: THE CHILLING OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Introduction

In Canada, the ratio of females to males graduating from university at the undergraduate level, in 2000, was 60% females to 40% males, up from 39.7% females to 60.3% males in 1972. The gender distribution has reversed over the last 27 years. In the late 1980s, the gender distribution was almost equal at approximately 50% each. (Statistics Canada, 81-229 XIB). After so many years of focusing on the plight of women in our education system, attention is now focussing more on the plight of men.

The thesis argues that there is a chilling of boys in the educational system. I argue this from Canadian and some U.S. statistics, interviews with teachers and from the literature, comparing the feminist and the masculinist literature within a humanist paradigm. We will explore the factors that account for the high male dropout rate, and other recommendations. These trends in lower male population in institutions of higher learning, are not a cause for concern in Canada only, the United States is experiencing similar results. In the U.S., the ratio of females to males attending university is 57% to 43% in favor of females. According to research and projected figures, estimates show that if this trend continues, the last male to receive a BA in the United States would be in the year 2068 (60 Minutes, CBS, October 20, 2002).

In chapter 1, I plan to present statistics on education and gender from Statistics Canada and the U.S. Department of Education, with some of the relevant literature that confirms the statistics, regarding men and women in the university system both in Canada and the U.S.A. Chapter 2, will contain a description of my methodology, which is a combination of statistics, information from journals, books, newspapers, and interviews

with teachers and vice-principals. My perspectives on education, entitled *The Politics of Education* will be in Chapter 3. This review will compare the feminist view of the gender gap in education, as opposed to the masculinist view. My review will look at perspectives on men's increasingly poor performance, and women's outstanding performance. The review will include articles from journals, newspapers and magazines as well as television newsmagazine programs. Other information, coming from professional associations will also be analyzed and included. For purposes of the study, the term masculinist will mean presenting male viewpoints.

Chapter 4, *In the Classroom*, is a discussion of the teaching methods, student teacher dynamics and course materials currently being employed within the education system, that may have different effects on girls as opposed to boys. This chapter compares the opinions of the "education experts" through the use of magazine articles, television news programs, and library resources to the comments and replies of the education professionals whom I interviewed. In Chapter 5, I present some of the possible solutions to the achieving gender equality within education, as well as some of the problem that may contribute to the gender gap in educational achievement. Much of my findings from interviews will be included in this section. I have interviewed educational professionals such as teachers and vice-principals, and principals, from pre-school to secondary levels of education, with the largest amount of interviewees from the secondary or high school level. In Chapter 6, I will analyze the recommendations, given by the interviewees as well as the literature and will present my findings.

I have entitled this paper “Where the Boys Aren’t” – because while they may be in the workforce, (perhaps in a dead end job), or the military, they are increasingly NOT in university. Why not? What is to be done?

The purpose of this thesis is to ask the question of where are the boys? Have they been chilled out of the educational system? What are the reasons for these rates showing a 60%-40% gap between females and males graduating from university? Is there a crisis in the education system for boys? If the boys are not in school, I want to research why they are not. I will attempt to find the answers to these questions in the course of my research.

The gender gap in educational achievement is an important issue, now and for the future. If boys are not doing well in school, if they are falling behind, if they are not continuing on to a post secondary education, what does the future hold for these young males?

CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION AND GENDER

Introduction

In this first chapter, I have presented statistics from Statistics Canada, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the United States government and other reliable sources, regarding graduation rates by gender and by major, for those graduating from university with Bachelor degrees, Master degrees, and Doctorate degrees. I have also included statistics which I obtained from the Canadian Association of Medical Colleges in Ottawa. The information they provided me with includes the graduation rate by gender for each of the sixteen medical colleges in Canada. I have obtained from McGill's Faculty of Law, enrollment statistics, again divided by gender. Concordia University's Registrar's Office provided me with graduation statistics by gender and by major for 1992-93 and 2002-03. These figures shed some light on what appears to be a significant problem within the Canadian and American education systems. I have focused primarily on Canadian statistics since I was able to get more detailed in-depth information about that education system. The American information is quite similar to that of Canada, confirming that more girls than boys are succeeding in school. This is the beginning of my search, to find out why there is a gender gap in school. Along with the relevant statistics and statistical tables, I have included an in-depth analysis of each of these tables.

Bachelor's Degrees

While I was aware of the gender gap in education, I thought perhaps it was limited to the Social Sciences, which have in the recent past, appealed more to females than males. However, while conducting my research, I noticed more and more females in other programs as well as within the general university population. My research includes data from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). The Statistics that were compiled (from Statistics Canada), reflected the year 2000, which was the most recent year available of graduation rates by gender. The statistics showed that 59.6% of students who earned a Bachelor's degree were women, 40.4% were male. The 2001 U.S. statistics are similar to Canadian statistics. They demonstrate that earning a Bachelor's degree, 57.3% were females compared to 42.7% males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003:192. Knapp et al. 2003). The Statistics Canada tables of graduations rates by gender, for the years 1994 through 1998, indicate that the female graduation rate increased by an average of 0.5% per year, over that of males (Statistics Canada, Cat. No.81-229 XIB). The gap at the Bachelor's level was 20.0% in 1998, widening at 0.5% per annum. If this continues, what does this mean for the future of men?

The breakdown of graduation rates by discipline and gender is presented in Table 1. Two thousand is the latest year available – which suggests that the gender gap in education is a low priority for government in general and Statistics Canada in particular. This may be identified as the first explanation for the widening gender gap.

Of all eight disciplines outlined by CAUT, females outnumber graduating males in six: 74% in the Health Professions, 72% in Education, 67% in Fine and Applied Arts, 64% in the Humanities and Agricultural and Biology Sciences and 60% in Social

Sciences. In only two disciplines do males outnumber females: Engineering and Applied Sciences 76% and Mathematics and Physical Sciences 68%.

Women lead, in all fields of study in university, with the exception of Engineering, and Mathematics. However figures made public by Statistics Canada show that in 1994, 18% of the students studying engineering were female. By 1998, that figure rose to 21%, (See Table 1). If this pattern of increase in the percentage of female students continues, by 2005, approximately 25% of engineering students will be female (Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 81-229 XIB).

Below are several tables which indicate that there is a problem within the educational system, that of boys trailing girls in academic achievement. A brief description ensues of what areas of study each discipline contains. Agriculture and Biological sciences includes animal, plant, and soil sciences, biochemistry, biology, biophysics, household science, veterinary and zoology. The field of Education includes teaching on all levels, from kindergarten to post secondary, school administration, guidance counseling and educational psychologists. Engineering includes all the various types of engineering, as well as architecture and forestry. Fine and applied arts consists of music, art, drama and industrial designs, graphic arts and graphic design. The Health profession field encompasses, at the undergraduate level, nurses, dental hygienists and medical technicians. Humanities consists of the classics, languages, current and ancient languages, English literature, French literature, history, journalism, philosophy and theology.

Mathematics and physical sciences includes computer science, mathematics, chemistry, geology, meteorology, oceanography and physics. The Social Sciences are

comprised of anthropology, archaeology, commerce, business administration, economics, geography, political science, psychology and sociology (Applied Research Bulletin, 2001:4).

TABLE 1**BACHELOR'S DEGREES AWARDED BY MAJOR AND GENDER 2000**

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
Agriculture and Bio Sciences	3,712 (36.1%)	6,571 (63.9%)	10,283
Education	5,797 (27.9%)	14,982 (72.1%)	20,779
Engineering and App. Sciences	7,491 (76.2%)	2,340 (23.8%)	9,831
Fine and Applied Arts	1,393 (31.9%)	2,974 (66.8%)	4,367
Health Professions	2,243 (26.3%)	6,284 (73.7%)	8,527
Humanities	5,091 (35.8%)	9,130 (64.2%)	14,221
Mathematics and Phys. Sciences	5,671 (67.9%)	2,681 (32.1%)	8,352
Social Sciences	18,893 (39.8%)	28,578 (60.2%)	47,471
<hr/>			
Totals	50,291 (40.6%)	73,540 (59.4%)	123,831

(Adapted from the Canadian Association of University Teachers. The Almanach. Ottawa, March 2004. See Appendix C).
(Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 81-229 XIB).

These statistics do not include doctors since Medical school is not included in the undergraduate categories mentioned above. A possible reason for the high rate of women in the Health Professions category, may be that it includes nursing, which again is historically a female profession. Also included in this category are medical technicians, such as those who draw blood, those who operate medical equipment used for tests, etc., who have traditionally been women.

Education is another area where the statistics show that women greatly outnumber men (72.1), however this is not as dramatic as it seems. Traditionally teaching has been more of a female career path, particularly in the primary grades. In high school, the majority, are also female. In the 1998-1999 school year, female teachers, at the elementary and high school levels, accounted for 64% compared to 36% for males (Statistics Canada. Cat No. 81-229 XIB). The significance of the teacher's gender will be discussed below. One line of thinking believes that young boys lose interest in school because the learning materials and activities are more girl oriented most of the teachers in grade schools are female.

Fine and Applied Arts are also heavily (66.8%) dominated by females. Perhaps this is because women may be considered more creative than men, therefore some may choose to study fine arts, music and/or other performing arts. They may enjoy their creative work, but not expect to earn a living from it. A degree in this major might not easily lead to employment. It's often difficult to "break into" those fields. This may be why there is such a difference in the male to female ratio of Fine Arts graduates. Males who would attend university would most likely be looking at a major, which could possibly lead to a very well paying job. Another possibility is that Fine Arts does not

measure up in males' point of view as being masculine. This might be another reason for a low percentage of males graduating from this department.

Women are the majority, (64.2%) in Humanities. Humanities contains many language related topics, such as classical and dead languages, English language and literature, French language and literature, linguistics and translation (Applied Research, 2001:4). These are areas that females have traditionally excelled at. From elementary school to high school, girls' skills in these subjects have always been strong. On the other hand, Humanities also includes history, and mass media studies, these may be the particular areas in which males would be interested. History may be appealing to males since it is all about action, i.e., wars, from world wars to tribal wars, the evolution of countries, the constant shifting of borders, it's about facts, (from the historian's perspective), and actions, not about emotion and creativity. Mass media studies might appeal to male students because of the high paying jobs within the various fields of mass media, such as television anchor, reporter, radio announcer or host.

Agriculture and Biology is another section in which females outperform males, at 63.9%. This section contains a large proportion of science and nature courses, which traditionally have been male oriented. However, students who want to pursue nursing, need courses such as biochemistry and biology. Since most nurses are female, this may account for a strong showing for females. Also included in this category are food and household science, which would lean towards having a majority of female students. These courses lead to jobs in the home economics field, such as testing and developing recipes for large circulation magazines, and home economics teachers. Males in this category would be interested in the science courses, since those are the subjects in which

they have traditionally done well at in both elementary and high schools. Another section of humanities that would have a significant number of male students would be fisheries and wildlife management, because this would lead to jobs that involve the outdoors and require physical activity. These are activities males enjoy. In the social sciences, again females at 60.2% outperform males. This category includes Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work and Social Welfare. Social Work and Social Welfare have been traditionally female oriented careers. More females take sociology majors which can lead to studies in law and social work. Other sections in social studies have been traditionally male oriented. These include Geography, Political Science, Demography and Economics and may account for a significant 39.8% male representation within the Social Sciences.

Out of the 8 scholastic categories only 2 are predominately male. Engineering at (76.2%), for many of the same reasons that females become teachers and nurses. Engineering has been traditionally the male domain, possibly because in the past, males have scored well in mathematics and science, and it is a field where the opportunities for finding well paying jobs are more likely than in other areas.

“Around junior year of high school, boys begin to repress their interest in foreign languages, literature, art history sociology, and anthropology, because they know an art history major will make less than an engineer will. Partially as a result of his different spending expectations, (the possibility that he might have to support a women, but cannot expect a women to support him), more than 85%* of students who take engineering as a college major are men; more than 80% of the art history majors are women”. (Farrell, 1993:34).

Writing in 1993, Warren Farrell has agreed that educational choices are motivated by different factors for men and women: income for men, creativity and expression and maybe nurturing for women.

For the last several years, the proportion of female enrollment in Engineering has increased gradually, but consistently. Perhaps the increase in females in Engineering may be due, in part, to their parents being more educated than previous generations, and therefore encouraging their daughters to pursue male dominated areas. Female teachers may also be encouraging girls to look beyond the typical female career route. Engineering departments have also made the effort to increase the number.

The second field that has a majority of male student graduates, (67.9%), is Mathematics and Physical Sciences. This field has a high male graduation rate, twice as many males as females. Since these categories consist of careers that are for the most part, performed in the outdoors, such as geologists and oceanographers, these traditionally are more attractive to males as opposed to females. However, another possible career path, within Math and Physical Sciences is in computer science, which has become a popular choice for both males and females equally. This, therefore causes the rate of females in these disciplines to rise, otherwise there would be an even larger gap between males and females.

Master's Degrees

The gender gap within the graduation rate of people earning a Master's degree narrows from 40.6% for males and 59.4% for females, for bachelor's degrees to 48% for males and 52 for females, for Master's degrees.

TABLE 2**MASTER'S DEGREES AWARDED BY MAJOR DISCIPLINE AND GENDER 2000**

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
Agriculture/Biology	487 (44.7%)	602 (55.3%)	1,089
Education	1,000 (27.6%)	2,624 (72.4%)	3,624
Engineering & Applied Sciences	1,731 (76.0%)	546 (24.0%)	2,277
Fine & Applied Arts	207 (40.2%)	308 (59.8%)	515
Health Professional	442 (28.2%)	1,125 (71.8%)	1,567
Humanities	1,124 (40.8%)	1,631 (59.2%)	2,755
Maths & Physical Sciences	948 (64.9%)	512 (35.1%)	1,460
Social Sciences	5,504 (52.0%)	5,081 (48.0%)	10,585
TOTALS	11,443 (48.0%)	12,429 (52.0%)	23,872

(Adapted from the Canadian Association of University Teachers, The Almanach. Ottawa. March 2004. See Appendix C).

(Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 81-229 XIB).

In Canada in 2000 (latest available data), 52% of those graduating with a Master's degree were females. The gender gap within the graduation rate of people earning a Master's degree narrows significantly from 40.4% for males and 59.6% for females, for Bachelor's degrees to 47.3% for males and 52.3% for females, for Master's degrees.

The highest percentage of females graduating with a Master's degree is 72.4% in the field of Education. This rate is also high at the Bachelor's level. This suggests the increasing feminization of education in the future, with women likely to dominate the senior levels of primary and secondary education. The data indicates that women are earning Master's degrees in Education, to perhaps become vice-principals and principals, since to teach, they would need only a Bachelor degree in Education. This seems to be a category of fairly weak interest to males. Although, like females, as mentioned above, those who pursue Master's degrees may be looking for positions in the education field, that may not involve teaching. These positions may be administrative, either in the school, such as a principal or at the school board level. Also, within the elementary and secondary school systems, the more education a teacher has the higher up the pay scale he or she moves.

The Health Professionals have a high rate of female students (71.8%). However, they decrease slightly from the Bachelor's level. As mentioned above, this category includes nurses, and technicians. These career choices traditionally have been highly female oriented. A more recent trend is for males to also go into the nursing and medical technician fields. This may account for the slight rise in the percentage of male students at the Master's level in health.

At the Master's level, in Fine and Applied Arts, 60% of the graduates are female. However, this is a decrease of approximately 8% from the undergraduate level. Males increased by approximately 8% to 40.2%, over the amount of males graduating from the undergraduate level. Perhaps the reason for this, is that a male who has gained his Bachelor's Degree in Fine and Applied Arts and continues to pursue a Master's degree in this same field, does so because he feels he is quite talented in his particular area, (which could be music, drama, painting, etc.) that he feels confident enough to be able to find a good paying job in his chosen area. This would lead me to argue that males who do go into Fine and Applied Arts would be quite talented. Females who earn a Master's Degree may also feel they have the talent in their chosen area, to land a good paying job. On the other hand, because there is a decrease of approximately 7% in females continuing on to earn a Master's Degree, some females may find that their talent in this area may not be outstanding, and would opt to pursue a Master's degrees in other areas of study, or may end their studies with a bachelor's degree.

In Humanities, the majority of Master's graduates are female at 59.8%, a 5% drop from the undergraduate level. Perhaps females studying the classics or classical or dead languages, may think that these fields of study would not lead to a particularly attractive career path. Also included in this category is history, which would appeal to males, as well as mass media studies, which could lead to well paying jobs, and perhaps that is why the male graduate percentage increased by 5% to 40.2%.

Females graduating at the Master's level in Agriculture and Biology drops by about 8% to 55.3%, but still remains higher than male graduates. Perhaps the female rate drops, since majors in this field of study are physics, fisheries and wildlife, biochemistry

and biophysics which traditionally have been more appealing to males and can lead to particular careers. It also included veterinary science, which appeals to both males and females and this also leads to good paying careers, and therefore would be an interesting choice to both males as well as females.

There are three fields, where the majority of students graduating with Master's degrees were males. In Engineering, the majority of graduates were male, 76%. Surprisingly in Engineering, female graduates at the Master's level have increased by a few percentage points, over the Bachelor's rate, to 24%. Perhaps women who completed their undergraduate degrees in Engineering think they need a Master's degree to be more competitive in pursuing a career in Engineering, or maybe it is a part of the general trend of more women earning Master's degrees, than are men.

In Mathematics and Physical Sciences, male representation was 64.9% Females graduates at the Master's level increased slightly to 35.1%, but still slanted heavily towards males . Perhaps the reason for this increase is that computer science falls into this field of study. Since we live in such a technological society, many people of both genders have gone into computer science, because of the abundance of career opportunities offered here.

In Social Sciences, there is a drop in female Master's graduates, down by approximately 12%, to 48% as opposed to the male increase to 52%. Since Commerce and Business Administration, Political Science, Economics and Geography programs, are included under Social Sciences, and these particular areas are usually male dominated, this may be the reason for the large increase in males graduating with Master's degrees. However, even though there is a considerable shifting of numbers, females still make up

almost half of the students graduating at the Master's level. Other programs in Social Sciences include Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work and Psychology, which are often considered female areas of study, and where perhaps a good portion of the female graduates are. With the exception of Fine and Applied Arts and Humanities, where female graduates figures remained the same, for the other remaining six categories, female graduate percentages rose. In the Engineering and Applied Sciences category, the female increase was 2.6%. In education, the female increase was 1.5%, Health professions, 1.3%, Agriculture and Biological sciences, and Mathematics and Physical Sciences were each 0.8%, and Social Sciences showed a 0.6% increase in female graduation rates.

Doctorate Degrees

This Table has a category that has not shown up in the first two tables, this is General/interdisciplinary, which includes General Arts, General Science and Interdisciplinary Studies.

TABLE 3**DOCTORATE DEGREES AWARDED BY MAJOR DISCIPLINE AND GENDER**

	<u>2000</u>		
	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Agriculture & Biology	279 (58.5%)	198 (41.5%)	477
Education	106 (31.5%)	230 (68.5%)	336
Engineering & Applied Sciences	486 (85.4%)	83 (14.6%)	569
Fine & Applied Arts	19 (50.0%)	19 (50.0%)	38
General/interdisciplinary	22 (43.1%)	29 (56.9%)	51
Health Professionals	231 (54.4%)	194 (45.6%)	425
Humanities	220 (49.5%)	224 (50.5%)	444
Math & Physical Sciences	438 (77.2%)	129 (22.8%)	567
Social Sciences	396 (49.5%)	404 (50.5%)	800
TOTALS	2,197 (59.0%)	1,510 (41.0%)	3,707

(Adapted from the Canadian Association of University Teachers. The Almanach, Ottawa. March 2004. See Appendix C).
 (Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 81-229 XIB).

The significant feature of the Doctoral graduation rates, (Table 3), is the reversal of the gender gap from the Master's level (Table 2) from 52% females and 48% males to 41% females and 59% males, respectively. Presumably this is the time when men and women tend to decide about marriage, children and career distribution – with men going one way and women the other, yet this overstates the differences, 41% of the doctorate degrees awarded in 2000 were to women. There were only two fields of study where the number of females was greater than that of males. Education, even at the Doctorate level, remains strongly female populated at 68.5%. However, the portion of female Bachelor and Master's graduates, 72.1% and 72.4% respectively, varied less than 2%. The percentage of males graduating with a doctorate in education, increased to 31.5%. A possible reason for the increase in males, may be due to their wanting to be in education, but not necessarily as teachers, but as principals, school board officials, or teaching at post-secondary levels. This could also account for the decrease in female doctoral graduates, who may be more interested in teaching elementary or high school (63.9%), and therefore do not need a doctoral degree. (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

General/Interdisciplinary at 56.9% female. Males perhaps pursue the more specialized degrees, by almost 7%, females the more general degrees.

In the Humanities programs, there is a sharp drop from the Master's level, for females at 50.5% compared to 59.2%. There are more women graduating at the Doctoral level, in areas such as Mass Media Studies (68.7%), English Literature (63.8%), French Language and Literature (62.8%), and Linguistics (62.5%). Males, on the other hand, make up the majority of Doctoral graduates in Theological Studies (92.3%), Library

Science (85.7%), Philosophy (70.9%), Religious Studies (53.7%). (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

Social Sciences, lists females at 50.5%, higher (2.5%), than at the Master's level. At this level, males and females are almost even. Sociology is also almost evenly split at 49.3% for females and 50.7% for males, and is almost identical to the Social Science totals. As mentioned above, there are programs in Social Sciences where females form the majority, such as Social Work (73.7%), Psychology (71.2%) Anthropology (63%). In 1998, males were the majority in Criminology at 83.3%, however, just two years later, in the year 2000, they accounted for 33.3%. Males still did well in 2000, in Economics (77.6), Political Science (69.6%), Commerce/Business Administration (67.5%) and Demography at (66.7%). (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

Fine and Applied Arts consisted of 50%-50%. Ten percent over the Master's rate. However, there was a very small amount (38) of total doctorate graduates, a very small sample. Females were the majority in Other Performing Arts, at 60%. Males were the majority in music (60.9%), and also 30% in Fine Arts, (painting, drawing, and sketching) down from 60% in 1998.(CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

The greatest gap between males and females occurs in Engineering. In all fourteen programs in Engineering, males greatly outnumber females at 85.4% versus 14.6% respectively. Males, in this category, may have continued on to earn their doctorate, because as was mentioned, males who do well in school will sometime continue their work towards higher degrees and may go on to teach Engineering.

In Mathematics and Physical Sciences Programs, males made up 77.2% of graduates. Males were well represented in Physics (84.7%), Computer Sciences (83.9%)

Oceanography (73.9%), and Geology (72.2%). Males were well above 50% in all other categories, which would explain the enormous gap between males and females in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. This high male representation may be due to males traditionally always doing better in mathematics and sciences in the elementary and high school levels, and are therefore encouraged to pursue their education in these areas. (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

In the general fields of Agriculture and Biology, with each level of educational achievement, the percentage of females dropped, from 63.9%, to 55.3%, to 41.5%, for BA, MA and Ph.D. graduates respectively. Their strongest representation within these fields were Veterinary Sciences at 63.2%, Household Science (61.9%), Botany (57.1%). This high rate on the males' side is due to programs such as Biochemistry (62.5%), Biology (62%), Zoology (61.8%), and Agriculture (58.4%). (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

Another field of study where a major shift occurs is in the Health Professionals. Males represent 54.4% of graduates in this field. At the BA and MA levels, females strongly outnumbered males, however at the Ph.D. level, the results are reversed, 15% more males than females. The argument here is that at the BA and MA levels, there is a high percentage of females, who are pursuing careers in nursing and medical technician fields that have been traditionally populated by females and that do not require a Ph.D. At this level, males outnumber females in programs such as Dental Specialists (80%), Paraclinical Sciences (64.3%), Medical Specialization (56.9%), Basic Sciences and Medicine (56.1%). Females seem to be exceptionally well represented in Nursing at 100%, however, in 1998, in the previous CAUT Almanach (2003) report, out of 12

graduates, 2 (16.7%), were male, and the other 10 (83.3%), were female. (CAUT, The Almanach, 2004:33).

Both males and females, no doubt, intend to use their degrees to advance their careers, but in the absence of further research it is hard to account for the variation of, or a combination of the nine categories in Table 3.

Getting up-to-date statistics for Bachelor's Master's and Doctorate degrees proved impossible. The latest National Canadian statistics that were available from Statistics Canada were for the year 2000.

In Table 3 above, included in the health professionals category were nurses, pharmacists and physical therapists, however, I was interested in looking at the statistics for medical students. I contacted The Association of Canadian Medical Colleges, (ACMC), which has statistics on all sixteen medical schools in Canada.

Faculties of Medicine

Table 5, contains the graduation rates, by gender, for all 16 medical schools in Canada, for the year 2002.

TABLE 4

MEDICAL DEGREES AWARDED IN CANADIAN COLLEGES
OF MEDICINE BY SEX, 2002

<u>Medical Schools</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Memorial University, Nfld.	117 (48%)	129 (52%)	246
Dalhousie University, NS	165 (47%)	183 (53%)	348
Université de Montréal	232 (30%)	532 (70%)	764
Université de Laval	215 (34%)	419 (66%)	634
Université de Sherbrooke	145 (34%)	287 (66%)	432
McGill University	281 (56%)	224 (44%)	505
Ottawa, University of	181 (46%)	215 (54%)	396
Queen's University	181 (56%)	141 (44%)	322
Toronto, University of	387 (53%)	346 (47%)	733
McMaster University	121 (35%)	223 (65%)	344
Western Ontario, University of	228 (54%)	125 (46%)	423
Manitoba, University of	179 (58%)	132 (42%)	311
Saskatchewan, University of	112 (50%)	110 (50%)	222
Alberta, University of	260 (55%)	210 (45%)	470
Calgary, University of	138 (46%)	160 (54%)	298
<u>British Columbia, Univ. of BC</u>	<u>211 (43%)</u>	<u>278 (57%)</u>	<u>489</u>
TOTALS	3,153 (45%)	3,784 (55%)	6,937

(Canadian Association of Medical Colleges, Ottawa, 2004).

Of the Medical school graduates in Canada, in 2002, the gender divide was approximately equal, the exceptions being the French speaking universities in Quebec, L'Université de Montréal, Université de Laval and L'Université de Sherbrooke, which show graduation rates for females at 68%, 61%, and 60%, respectively, and McMaster University at 59% and Dalhousie University at 53%. There was a steady rise in female graduation figures from 1940 when the rate was 4.1% to the present where it hovers at around 50%.

At the Université de Montréal in 2002, “.....the latest figures show that 81% of the school's newly enrolled students are female” (Gagnon, 2002). These figures are significantly higher than those obtained from the administrative officer of the faculty of Medicine at McGill University. According to Dr. Beck of the McGill Medical School, for the year 2004, 66% of the applicants were female. This disparity may be explained by Gagnon in the Globe and Mail, who states that the trend of women going into medical school is much stronger, “where the ‘feminization’ of the profession started earlier”(Ibid.). This may be the case with French speaking medical schools in Quebec. McGill, the only English medical school in Quebec is almost equal in gender distribution in the faculty of medicine. He also stated that acceptance rates are usually the same ratio as the applicant rates, i.e., if two thirds of the applicants are women, then approximately two thirds of students accepted into the medical school will be females.

“Men are no longer interested in embracing a career in medicine”(Ibid.). They believe the profession is no longer held in high esteem. Doctors don't earn as much as lawyers, businessmen or engineers. Another possible reason for the low male rate of

doctors in Quebec, is that doctors are penalized financially, if they decide to work in large cities. Also, doctors in Quebec are among the lowest paid in the country.

In Medicine, for the academic year, 2001/02, total enrollment for all the sixteen medical schools in Canada indicated, that female enrollment totaled 50.2%. Females tend not to specialize, but go into general or family practitioner, A consequence of this may create a lack of specialists in the future.

Other statistics from the ACMC, indicate that female enrollment in medical school has grown steadily from 14.3% in 1968/1969 to 54.5% in 2001/2002. The rate of increase of female medical students is 1.21% per year. If this rate continues, then by the academic year 2037/2038 all the medical students in Canada will be female.

In the United States, the situation is slightly different. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, “More people are applying to medical schools in the United States, and women outnumber men for the first time” (The Sun Sentinel), for the 2003-2004 school year. The number of women applicants increased by almost 7%, from the previous year.

While it may be unlikely that all medical students will eventually be female, there are concerns about the future. Female physicians in general work 20 hours less per week than their male counterparts. They may take maternity leaves, they are more likely to prefer pediatrics, gynecology and family medicine to surgery, and they tend to avoid further studies and advanced research. All this indicates a problematic future.

Faculty of Law

The Faculty of Law, Admissions Office, McGill University, wrote “In September 2000, 59% of the class of 153 students were female. On a period of ten years, the

average gender distribution is 54% females” (Faculty of Law, 2002). The increase averages out to 1% per annum, so in 1990 the female ratio was 49%. Similar to Medicine, the disadvantage is that females tend to go into family law, since it involves more reasonable hours, than trial and criminal law practice.

The following statistics, containing details about law graduates, were obtained from the Association for Canadian Studies, a Montreal think-tank. “In 2001, women graduating university with a law degree in Canada outnumbered men 17,875 to 14,415. The number of women graduating with Commerce, Management and Business Administration degrees jumped by about a third between 1991-2001. During the same period, the number of men holding similar degrees increased by 2%.” (Paraskevas, 2003:B7).

Concordia University

The statistics for graduation rates at the Bachelor’s level, for 1993 and 2003, for Concordia were obtained from the Office of the Registrar. There are some categories in the Concordia table that were not in the Bachelor’s Master’s or Doctorate tables above. Commerce or The John Molson School of Business included courses such as Economics, Accounting and Management, that in the previous tables were included with Social Sciences. Miscellaneous, another category not mentioned previously was for General Bachelor of Arts, which had only one graduate in 1993 and three graduates in 2003. Colleges, a category in the table below includes The Liberal Arts College, Simone de Beauvoir Institute and the School of Community and Public Affaires.

TABLE 5
BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED BY MAJOR DISCIPLINE AND GENDER
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
2002-2003

	<u>MALES</u>	<u>FEMALES</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Commerce – John Molson	707 (50%)	716 (50%)	1423
Education	41 (17%)	192 (83%)	233
Engineering	460 (82%)	104 (18%)	564
Fine Arts	225 (36%)	398 (64%)	623
Health	46 (17%)	216 (83%)	262
Humanities	195 (37%)	334 (63%)	529
Mathematics & Physics	360 (57%)	268 (43%)	628
Miscellaneous	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	3
Social Sciences	252 (36%)	443 (64%)	695
Colleges	11 (24%)	34 (76%)	45
TOTALS	2,299 (46%)	2,706 (54%)	5,005

(Concordia University, Office of the Registrar. Montreal. March 2004)

TABLE 6**BACHELORS DEGREES AWARDED BY MAJOR DISCIPLINE AND GENDER****CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY****1992- 1993**

	<u>MALES</u>	<u>FEMALES</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Commerce - John Molson	731 (57%)	551 (43%)	1,282
Education	65 (20%)	255 (80%)	320
Engineering	288 (88%)	40 (12%)	328
Fine Arts	187 (40%)	278 (60%)	465
Health	31 (19%)	134 (81%)	165
Humanities	198 (36%)	347 (64%)	545
Mathematics & Physics	263 (57%)	196 (43%)	459
Miscellaneous	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1
Social Sciences	301 (43%)	391 (57%)	692
Colleges	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	25
TOTALS	2,069 (48%)	2,213 (52%)	4,282

(Concordia University, Office of the Registrar. Montreal. March 2004).

I have provided two tables for Concordia, one from 1993 and the other from 2003, with graduation rates by gender and majors. My reason for doing this is to see if there is a trend or pattern that can be detected. In 2000, 54% of the graduating student at the Bachelor level were female, somewhat below the national statistic which shows females in the same category at 60%.

In the faculty of Commerce or as it now is known as the John Molson School of Business, over a ten-year period, females moved up 7% to an even split of 50-50 between females and males. Education increased by 3%, and females achieved 83% of the education graduates. Females have been moving up slowly and steadily in the Faculty of Engineering. In 2000, 18% of the graduates were female, up 6% over a ten-year period. Health, had a 2% increase, over a ten year period, which is not really surprising, because it is a field that has been traditionally been and continues to be females oriented.

Humanities remained almost the same, with a large majority, (63%) being female. Mathematics and Physics remained unchanged in percentage. Miscellaneous was 100% female in 1992-93, and dropped to 33% in 2002-03. This however, is misleading, since there was only one graduate in this category in 1992-93 and only three in 2002-03. Females also increased in the Social Sciences to 64%, a 7% increase over the previous period of 1992-93. In Colleges, there was a slight drop of 4%, but even with the decrease women formed 76% of students graduating from Colleges. Overall, the percentage of girls increased in six of the nine categories, and remained constant in one.

Some statistics regarding enrollment in other universities in the Montreal area were published in the April 11, 2002 edition of The Gazette:

McGill	59% female students	41% male students
U de Montreal	56% female students	44% male students
UQAM	64% female students	36% male students
Laval	59% female students	41% male students
Bishop's	56% female students	44% male students

Conclusion

It would appear, according to the statistics above, that females have not only caught up with males, but are leaving them behind in the dust. This is the starting point of my research and accounts for one of the many reasons that I choose this topic.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I began the research for this thesis by collecting statistics on graduation rates of the most recent years as well as previous years, to see if there was a pattern occurring. I reviewed and gathered from sociological and educational journals, current editions of books from university libraries in Montreal, as well as the various venues of mass media, such as Television news programs, Canadian and American news magazines, i.e., Macleans, Time, US News and World Report and Newsweek, topical literary works, as well as tracing source materials from newspaper articles. I also realized that it would be very important to obtain accurate and current statistics for graduation rates by gender of the most recent years, as well as previous years, to see if there was a chronological/gender relationship.

My second method was to interview six educational professionals, from teachers in various levels of education, from pre-school, to elementary, to high school I formulated a questionnaire of 13 questions, which were used in all of my interviews. I had set up appointments with each of my six respondents, which entailed my travelling to different areas of the city, from St. Leonard to NDG, from Outremont to St. Henri, from fairly affluent areas, to blue collar areas. I thought this would give a more representative view of what was occurring in schools, rather than concentrating in a particular area. Some of these interviews occurred in school offices, others in coffee shops during off-peak hours and two actually took place in the homes of the respondents.

I will go through the limitations and problems that arose with both of these methods in greater detail, below.

Literature

The task of gathering literature consisted of combing through professional journals, in several libraries, looking for books that explained gender differences in education, i.e., how are males and females succeeding or failing within the educational systems, in both Canada and the U.S. I also spent hours watching nightly news programs that might direct me to information sources. I observed other weekly television news programs, such as “60 Minutes”, on CBS, and “Dateline”, on ABC.

Statistics gathering on graduation rates by gender and field of study presented somewhat of a challenge. This included visits to the Statistics Canada office in Montreal, with little cooperation, I might add, except to tell me I could access the reports through the Concordia library for free, rather than paying Statistics Canada. After numerous visits to the library, going through government documents, I was able to obtain directions from the librarian, on how to access on-line catalogues from Statistics Canada. “The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Almanac for March 2004, provided me with detailed tables, including a breakdown of the number of graduates in Canada, for the year 2000, divided by gender and major area of study. The figures in these tables corresponded to those I found in Statistics Canada 81-229 XIB, however, because these tables were commissioned by CAUT, they were divided into Tables that were suitable for my purposes, this is also why I referenced all my tables to both CAUT and Statistics Canada. Included in the Tables are the statistics for graduates earning

Bachelor's, Master's degree and Doctorate degrees, as well as medical school and law school graduates statistics. Wherever I did refer to CAUT, I specified that the statistics were adapted from CAUT, since the totals on their report did not match mine. I contacted them about this matter and the reply they sent me is included in Appendix C.

Getting more detailed statistics, regarding Medical and Law Schools involved several phone calls and E-mails. I contacted the McGill Faculty of Medicine, Admissions Office, and was directed to call The Canadian Association of Medical Colleges, in Ottawa. They faxed me the required data within minutes!! They were extremely helpful, providing me with statistics on graduation by gender from the sixteen medical schools in Canada, from 1940 to 2003. They also provided me with details of students who graduated from these medical schools, by year, and by gender.

The Faculty of Law at McGill was not as forthcoming, saying that they were very busy and often get bothered by journalists for this information. Surely it would be a good idea to have these statistics readily available, and perhaps they could improve their attitude about being "bothered" by taxpayers who fund them. They suggested I call the Canadian Bar Association, who directed me to the Quebec Bar Association, who referred me back to the Canadian Bar Association, who finally told me that complete statistics were unavailable, because not all lawyers were members of Bar Associations, which is not what I wanted in the first place. What I finally did manage to get from McGill's Faculty of Law, was the registration, by gender for the year 2000, and the average gender distribution of a 10-year period, ending with 2000.

However, I have met with the most difficulty trying to get graduation rates from Concordia University. After repeated E-mails, phone calls and visits to the Registrar's

office, I had not been able to get the required statistics. I was told that whenever a university official needs statistics, they take priority over students, and therefore students' requests get put aside. The reply to my last request, sent by E-mail, was that I would receive these statistics within a period of 1 to 2 weeks, I finally received the statistics two months after initially requesting them.

Some of my data was taken from the Editorial pages of the Gazette and The National Post. Often these articles did not have the name of the writer. I contacted Brian Kapler, a senior editor at the Gazette who explained that every morning the six editors of the board meet and discuss various issues of current interest, with input from all six editors, and one person went off to write the article, which contained the views of all the editors and that was why there weren't any names on the Editorial articles.

Interviews

I interviewed six people, (6 formal, 1 informal by telephone), all of whom worked in education.

TABLE 7
THE SAMPLE

	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Years Teaching</u>
Allanna	Female	Secondary	15
Aylene	Female	Secondary	22
Catharine	Female	Elementary	5
Marietta	Female	Kindergarten	6
Oksana	Female	Elementary & Secondary	20
Rebecca	Female	Elementary	5

Unfortunately, there were no male interviewees. It would have been interesting to get their perspective. There are fewer males teaching in elementary and secondary education than females, which is one of the problems in getting an even split between male and female respondents. More serious, however, was that when I talked to three male educators on the phone, they were very enthusiastic about the topic, and immediately made very pertinent comments, but they said they were “too busy” to sit down for a formal interview. None of the female teachers refused to be interviewed.

However, I did take notes on what we spoke about on the phone and I will include them in Chapter 5, along with the answers from the respondents who were formally interviewed. Part of the problem of boys in primary and secondary school is precisely this refusal of the male teachers to realize this or to address the issue. They therefore by their refusal compound the problems. Some possible reasons for male educators’ resistance to being interviewed, might be that they are worried about being perceived as anti-feminist, or perhaps moral cowardice or are they lazy. Don’t they worry about their sons, as well as others’ sons, since they are in the education profession?

The irony here is striking. While critics of the education system have complained about the feminization of the primary and secondary schools, yet it is precisely the *female* teachers who are most concerned about their male students, and consented to be interviewed *not the male teachers*.

Conclusion

In the literature, I found opinions varied greatly and while there was an abundance of books, journals and articles supportive of females achieving academic success, I found

that there was a dearth of information regarding boys and academic success. To obtain statistics, one needed to be patient and persistent. The major difficulty with the interviews was trying to find education professionals who would agree to give me an hour to an hour and a half.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

Introduction

In the past, the tertiary education system in particular was, in the phrasing of the sixties, “a bastion of male patriarchal privilege”. In Canada, the first degree granting university was officially recognized in 1802. The first women to receive a degree was “Grace Annie Lockhart in 1875. The 1881-82 registered enrollment in universities show 42 women and 2,555 men” (Curtis et al., 1993:216). Because it was argued that historically women have been discriminated against in university education, feminists initiated policies of affirmative action in an effort to level the playing field. This has been extremely successful for women but, the pendulum has swung from the “war on girls” to the “war on boys” (Sommers, 2000).

This chapter deals with the different perspectives on the education system, as “girls in crisis” versus “boys in crisis”. I will present both views, of the feminists, who see the issue as a crisis for girls, and the masculinists who see the issue as a crisis for boys. I will present the arguments put forward by those who see girls as disadvantaged, I have chosen the works of Mary Pipher, Carol Gilligan, *The American Association of University Women and Social Success by Gender: A Catalyst for Masculinist Discourse*, by Pierrette Bouchard, Isabelle Boily, and Marie-Claude Proulx. The most well known defender of the interests of boys in the education system is Christina Hoff Sommers – who has attacked what she calls “misguided feminism”. Equally interesting is the almost complete failure of masculinists like Connell and Kimmel to deal seriously with the wide and widening gender gap in education.

GIRLS IN CRISIS

Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (1982)

Carol Gilligan, professor of Gender Studies at Harvard University, conducted three experiments, The College Student Study, The Abortion Decision Study and The Rights and Responsibilities Study. The Abortion Study had female interviewees only, the other two studies had both male and female interviewees. These studies were conducted to analyze the psychological development of women and men. She concluded that males and females grow up speaking in different voices (Gilligan, 1982:2-3). Gilligan argues that through the social sciences, she has observed that while the battle for equality between the sexes was occurring, social theories having in the past, considered to be neutral, were actually biased. "Implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, they have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth"(Gilligan, 1982:7). So the different voice that Gilligan is writing about, is that theories should reflect women's voices.

In most cases, the primary care giver in the early years of a child's life is a female, and gender identity formation is different for boys than for girls. Girls identify with their mothers and take on the role of the caring individual. Boys "in defining themselves as masculine separate their mothers from themselves..... For boys separation and individualization are critically tied to gender identification. For girls and women issues of feminine identity does not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation"(Gilligan, 1982:8). According to Gilligan men think in terms of rules and justice and women are more inclined to think terms of caring and relationships. Women take on the role of the helpmate, nurturer and caregiver,

but that care is devalued in theories of psychological development. What women have known from an early age, i.e., the importance of intimacy, relationship and care, men are only discovering in mid-life.

Women's knowledge of caring and intimacy was devalued because it was considered to be women's intuition or instinctive, so little attention to the theoretical development of these qualities was given. Gilligan also states that disregard for these qualities has left people separated from each other and devoted to work, rather than to "toward the interdependence of love and care" (Gilligan, 1982:17). Gilligan claims that men and women work out situations differently, because of their gender, women use caring and understanding, men use logic and reasoning. Gilligan states that by the time men reach their forties, they begin to realize the importance of relationships, intimacy and caring, "something that women have known from the beginning"(Gilligan, 1982:17). Because these traits were always regarded as feminine attributes, there were never any studies done by psychologists on women's moral development (Ibid. p. 17).

"The very traits that traditionally have defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development"(Gilligan, 1982:18). Gilligan argues that this is because maturity is theorized from the male perspective which emphasized the importance of individuation (Ibid.).

Gilligan argues that women suffer from a lack of choice, they see themselves as subject to the male authority on whom they are dependent. "To the extent that women perceive themselves as having no choice, they correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails"(Gilligan, 1982:67). Gilligan argues that because

of their naiveté, dependence and fear of abandonment, they seek only to please, in return for being taken care of. While officially within Western society, women have the right to make their own choices, when she actually makes choices she feels “the exercise of such choice brings her privately into conflict with the conventions of goodness with self-sacrifice” (Gilligan 1982:70)

The author, in her book *In a Different Voice*, claims that women and men speak differently. The meaning being that all theories of human development were written by men and for men. In the past, women were regarded as caregivers. Women and men see danger in different things or events, men see danger in relationships. Men fear “danger of entrapment or betrayal, being caught in a smothering relationship or humiliated by rejection and deceit”. Women fear danger, according to Gilligan from achievement. They fear if they are successful, they will stand out or be set apart. Women fear isolation, men fear intimacy in relationships. Carol Gilligan, announced in 1990, “As the river of a girl’s life flows into the sea of Western culture, she is in danger of drowning or disappearing” (Gilligan et al. 1990:4).

She argued that women were not being heard, and academically were being shortchanged. Since she saw all women as having little or no choice, and not having the self-confidence in themselves. This she believed was due to androcentric writings and behaviors, which made females reluctant to speak up and partake fully of the educational experience and therefore were being silenced and shortchanged (Gilligan, 1982:42).

Gilligan states that, as in the past, right back to Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, those who fight for equal rights for women, are seen as selfish. The fear is that “freedom

for women will lead to an abandonment of responsibilities in relationships”(Gilligan, 1982:129-130).

In the conclusion of her book, Gilligan states that we have always listened to the voices of men, their experiences and their theories, and now we are aware of the silence of women, but, “the difficulty in hearing what they say when they do speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between the relationship and communication”(Gilligan, 1982:173). Gilligan argues that women’s experiences and growth have never been theorized, because women were seen as the caretakers of the family, and not considered important enough for their contributions to be valued. She ends her argument by stating that if there were two “disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected.Would provide a better understanding of the relationship between the sexes” (Gilligan 1982:173).

Gilligan had an enormous effect on educators in America. “Gilligan’s psychological girl crisis”, which was one of the main themes of her book “In A Different Voice” became a civil rights issue”, arguing for the rights of girls in the nation’s schools. “The implications are clear said the AAUW, the system must change” It was argued that girls lose their voice in adolescence and go underground. They do not flourish at school because the female teachers “are ‘absent’ having been ‘silenced’ within the ‘patriarchal structure’ that governs our schools (Sommers, 2000:21,36).

The American Association of University Women, 1992

The American Association of University Women, (AAUW), taking up Gilligan's argument, conducted their own self-esteem survey in 1991, which Gilligan helped to design. Clearly Gilligan's belief that girls were silenced by society was greeted with acclaim from some feminists and confirmed by The AAUW Report, "How Schools Shortchange Girls". This is the title of their 1992 report. The silencing and lack of attention by the educational system, is their primary theme throughout the text. The AAUW Report states that girls are shortchanged in a number of ways:

- 1) "Girls were not receiving the same quality or even quantity of education, as their brothers do" (AAUW, p. V).
- 2) "Girls are systematically discouraged from courses of study essential to their future employment" (AAUW, p. V).
- 3) In educational debates, there is a lack of attention to girls, reports refer to "students", "eighth graders", etc., "This lack of specificity perpetuates the invisibility of girls" (AAUW REPORT, 1992:2). It also perpetuates the invisibility of boys.
- 4) Female students are "systematically discouraged from courses of study essential to their future employability and economic well-being" (Ibid.).
- 5) "Families headed by women are most at risk of living in poverty" (AAUW, p. 5).
- 6) "Inadequate education not only lowers opportunities for women, but endangers their children as well" (Ibid.).

These points, among others, will be discussed below in greater detail. The AAUW report “challenged the common assumption that girls and boys are treated equally in our public schools”; and described the purpose of the report as presenting a “base for a new and enlightened education policy- a policy that will ensure that this nation will provide the best possible education for all its children”. It supposedly provided policymakers with impartial data on the ways in which our school system is failing to meet the needs of girls and with specific strategies that can be used to effect change” (AAUW Report, 1992:V).

This report compiling all the available research on girls and education found that girls were not receiving the same quality or quantity of education as their male counterparts were. It also indicated that girls were not encouraged to follow courses of study which would lead to gainful employment. This report stated that jobs at the turn of the century (i.e. 2000) would require workers who were skilled in mathematics science and technology. These subjects were exactly the ones girls were being steered away from. Therefore when they would enter the work force, they would be unskilled, and therefore ineligible for decent paying, or well paying jobs (Ibid.).

It was found that what students learn has lasting effects, if girls are discouraged from taking math classes in high school, even if they do go on to university, they are not likely to take math classes at that level, thereby restricting their entry into career paths that would lead to high paying jobs. The AAUW believes and is concerned that, by women not pursuing the same type of courses and programs that males do, it will eventually lead to poverty for women, particularly when the women are the heads of single parent families. “Inadequate education not only lowers opportunities for women,

but jeopardizes the children as well” The numbers of single female parents are growing therefore the “growing importance of women’s wages to total family income, the education of women is important not only for women as individuals, but also for women as mothers, as family members, and as effective and creative citizens of larger communities” (AAUW Report, 1992:5).

Women who do pursue post secondary education, tend to enter the traditionally female careers of nursing and teaching. Although “72% of all elementary and high school teachers are female – women hold few of the upper management positions in our public schools. In 1990, the gender breakdown of principals, for all states that report data by sex,was 27.7% female and 72.3% males ”(AAUW, p.7).

It is still believed by some that early educational environments favor girls, there is an explanation offered in this report. Children who enter kindergarten or pre-school, come with a set of experiences and skills and therefore different educational requirements. Girls are often engaged in activities in which they are already proficient. At this level of education, one of the goals is develop language skills. Many of the girls have achieved the required level of language competency before they begin school, whereas boys usually have not, therefore, more attention is given to boys. The activities boys succeed at, “such as large-motor activities, investigative and experimental activities, are considered free-play”. Pre-school boys are more physically active than are preschool girls. They develop motor skills by constructing Lego buildings, throwing and catching balls, etc. Girls, unless they are specifically encouraged to participate in these boy activities, “do not receive a full and balanced set of educational experiences” (AAUW Report, 1992:18).

In elementary school, according to the AAUW, both genders are found to suffer from feelings of sadness and self-derogation, however boys reveal that they have more problems with behavior and getting along with other children, as well as feelings of hostility and anger. Girls seem to fare better in elementary school, however, as girls move into their adolescent years, they begin to experience higher rates of depression. It is suggested in the AAUW Report that “further study of the strengths of elementary school girls is needed”, since they seem to lose these strengths as they move out of elementary school (AAUW Report, 1992:11).

Moving into adolescence is considered difficult for both boys and girls, but studies have shown that this period is particularly more difficult for girls. This period of evolving from young girl to young woman, involves dealing with the demands of the culture we live in, such as the emphasis on appearance. Girls as young as 16 years of age are having cosmetic surgery, with their parents consent, to improve their bust size, nose size, etc., to look more like Madison Avenue’s idea of beauty. Our culture “both idealizes and exploits the sexuality of young women”. However, girls continue to be assigned roles that are less valued than male roles.

The timing and transition of moving from one school to another is particularly trying for young girls. “Research reveals that girls’ self-esteem benefits if there is only one transition at the end of the eighth grade, rather than two changes: first, from elementary school to middle or junior high school and second, from there to high school” (AAUW Report, 1992:13).

“In terms of self-esteem the girls never recover from the seventh grade drop in self-esteem ...they respond more, not less, negatively to the transition into senior high school than does the cohort who has to make only one transition at a more mature age” (Simmons & Blyth, 1987:227)

The AAUW reports confirms what Simmons & Blyth found, which is that feelings of depression, negative self-image and declining self- esteem linger on. Girls in twelfth grade continue to deal with these emotions that began in early adolescence. Also, in looking ahead, teenage girls see marriage and employment outside the home as being unequal “for men and women in our society”(AAUW 1992:13).

There are three variables that account for 87% of the variance in achievement scores of boys and girls in math, these are “age of the sample, how academically selective it is, and which cognitive level the test is taping”. Contrary to the gender-narrowing gap in verbal skills, the findings for math show that the reverse is true. Until about the age of nine, math abilities for boys and girls show no gender differences. At age thirteen, there are minimal differences, at age seventeen, there are larger differences in favor of males (AAUW Report, 1991:24).

The studies and surveys mentioned above also look at science achievements. Once again, similar to Math, as age increased, the gender gap widened in favor of males. Findings also indicate that this gap may be increasing rather than decreasing, “due to the combination of a lag in performance for females and significant increases in the performance of males”(Ibid. p. 26).

The AAUW’s findings show that attention must be paid to both male and female students. Boys are not in need of any special attention in verbal and/or reading skills. Three nationally representative surveys, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS), and The High School and Beyond (HBS), show very little differences in reading and vocabulary skills

between male and female students (AAUW Report, 1002:25). The gender gap in math is decreasing, but not in science. Males' test scores in science are climbing while females' test scores are not. "We need to ask why reforms in science education are apparently working for males and not for females"(Ibid. p. 31). Although both males and females express interest in science and science projects in elementary schools, boys tend to do more projects than girls do. Boys are more likely to receive more encouragement to actively participate and have used more science instruments in the classroom than girls have (Ibid. p. 30).

Mary Pipher, Reviving Ophelia, 1994

Dr. Pipher argues that girls are falling behind in school and boys are moving forward. She sees the gender gap as that girls are lost and underachieving, and that boys are succeeding, but she ignored the statistics and only considered psychology.

Mary Pipher wrote *Reviving Ophelia*, which was #1 on the New York Times Bestseller List. The author is a clinical psychologist "who has treated girls for more than twenty years" (Pipher, 1994). She uses case studies in her book to describe the difficulties teenage girls are experiencing. In her practice, she treats teenage girls as well as adult women, with a variety of problems, stemming primarily from the loss of self-esteem and alienation from family and peers, experienced from their adolescent years.

One of the main points of this book is Pipher's argument that something negative happens to girls once they reach adolescence. Girls in preadolescence appear to be outgoing, energetic, and enthusiastic about life. They have confidence in themselves and

their abilities and are not afraid to take on challenges. Girls in this age group are interested in a multitude of topics and activities, “sports, nature, music, and books”. It is an age where “they have not yet completely taken on the feminine role. They can be tomboys, without any negative reactions from others since this role is usually taken on by girls who are confident and courageous and free-spirited, in the sense that they do not feel limited in their activities, by their gender” (Pipher, 1994:17-19). This is when Pipher believes, girls lose their self-assurance and become moody and distant. Pipher paints a picture of a very vibrant personality that disappears and is replaced by a repressed individual.

Girls in early adolescence, she says, may become self destructive, inflicting injuries on themselves, to the point of bleeding. They have enormous mood swings within the space of a day. In the morning, they may be fine and on good terms with their families and friends, by afternoon, this changes completely. They don’t want to talk to anyone, they don’t trust anyone and become remote from others. They are sensitive one moment and hard or mean in the next. Apparently there are no psychological explanations for these changes. However, a possible explanation, from Simone de Beauvoir, “Adolescence is when girls realize that men have the power and that their only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects” (Pipher, 1994:21). It seems difficult to believe that at this point in time, (1994), girls felt they had to become “submissive adored objects”.

Pipher asserts that “Girls in adolescence are not encouraged by society to be themselves and/or to develop their gifts and talents. They are going through physical changes, “body shape, hormones, skin and hair”. They question who they are. In North

American culture, girls in adolescence are moving into a time where they are judged on their appearance. Some struggle with eating disorders, many never feel they look good enough, they always feel lacking, they see themselves as unattractive and undesirable. They become anxious and depressed. “The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta reported that between 1979 and 1988, the suicide rate for children,” (boys and girls) “aged 10 to 14 increased by 75 per cent (Pipher, 1994:27).

According to Pipher, girls feel they are losing themselves during adolescence. “Everything good in me died in junior high”(Ibid. p.20). Pipher attributes this statement to one of her adolescent patients. (It is important to remember Pipher is a therapist treating troubled or disturbed girls).

Pipher likens young adolescent girls to “saplings in a hurricane”. She cites “three factors make young women vulnerable to the hurricane”. The first is that girls are going through physiological changes. Their bodies change, there are hormonal changes and they become anxious. Second, North American adolescents move into the broader society, where they feel the pressure to be physically beautiful, perhaps even perfect. They are living in a culture that judges females on looks alone, she says. Third, when these girls are most vulnerable and most in need of comfort and protection from their parents is when they distance themselves from their parents. They give up the closeness they enjoyed in their younger years, and turn to their peers for support (Pipher, 1994:23). Fortunately, adolescence does not last forever. By the time girls finish high school, they are stronger. “Some of the worst problems – cliques, a total focus on looks and struggles with parents - are on the wane”. Some girls, however, depending on how they manage the turbulence of the teenage years, can have a negative impact on their adult lives. “The

loss of wholeness, self-confidence, and self-direction can last well into adulthood” Many of Pipher’s adult clients “struggle with the same issues that overwhelmed them as adolescent girls”. These adult clients have succeeded in establishing professional careers as accountants, nurses, realtors and teachers (Pipher, 1994:25). Is it possible that females who have established themselves in successful careers could still be carrying all the apparent negative feelings of adolescence into their adult lives?

Pipher, besides running a practice, also teaches at a small college. She states that “my clients are not different from girls who are not seen in therapy” (Pipher, 1994:21). It seems apparent that Pipher feels most adolescent girls should be getting therapy, otherwise they will never develop into happy, productive people. Pipher is sounding the alarm, something has to be done to save these girls, because if they can’t get through the ordeal of adolescence, they carry the memories and pain within them into their adult lives, thereby wasting years of their lives.

Pipher gives us a look at her case studies, some of the adolescent girls who have been to her for therapy. Mostly, these girls are brought to therapy by concerned parents. One of the common threads running through the cases, is a concern about appearance. “She hated her looks. She thought her hair was too bright, her hips and thighs too flabby.She felt almost every girl was prettier”. This girl, before adolescence was a happy child, had a close, warm relationship with her parents. She got very good grades in school, loved science projects, played soccer and was confident and willing to take chances at trying new things. It seems like she made a 180-degree about face. She disliked science because it was too difficult, her grades dropped in school, she became distant from her parents. Feeling lonely, she began running with a fast crowd, had her

first sexual experience at age 13, at 14 she was diagnosed with herpes. Her family doctor urged her parents to take her for therapy. Although this seems to be a dramatic case, according to Pipher, this girl is typical of her adolescent clients”(Pipher, 1994:32)

Pipher argues the “culture is splitting adolescent girls into true and false selves” (Pipher, 1994:37). What Pipher means by false selves, refers to girls who are willing to do almost anything to please a boyfriend or be accepted by her peers. “Girls who operate from a false self are more likely to break emotionally from the family” (Pipher, 1994:67). With this distancing from the family, the acceptance of peers becomes monumentally important to teenage girls. This need for acceptance by her can have disastrous results according to Pipher. She calls it an “American phenomenon – the scapegoating of girls by one another, for failing to achieve impossible goals,for not wearing designer jeans.The message is that “not pleasing others is social suicide”(Pipher, 1994:68). this seems to be the female version of bullying.

In each of the case studies that Pipher presents, there are some startling similarities. Whether the adolescent teenage girl comes from a well-adjusted two-parent family, or single parent family, highly educated, or blue-collar family, the parents are worried about their daughters. The daughters feel inadequate about their looks. “It’s my looks, I’m a pimply whale” (Pipher, 1994:146). In an effort to be as thin as our culture demands, many suffer from eating disorders. “Bulimia is the most common eating disorder in young women. It starts as a strategy to lose weight, but soon it develops a life of its own” (Pipher, 1994:169). Anorexia is also a big problem that affects the health of girls. In one of her clients, Pipher claims “She did what many girls with anorexia do: She reduced her complicated life to one simple issue-weight”(Pipher, 1994:177).

“On any given day in America, 480 women and children will be forcibly raped, 5,760 women will be assaulted by a male intimate partner, and four women and three children will be murdered by a family member” (Pipher, 1994:219). Pipher contends that female adolescents in the 1990’s have more violence to cope with than adolescents in the 1960’s and 1970’s had to contend with. Self-defense classes are filled with women, men do not need any training in protecting themselves, since according to Pipher, they are the predators.

Pipher believes that our culture, in a large part, is to blame for the unhappiness and depression adolescent girls are experiencing. She makes no mention of boys experiencing unhappiness and/or depression in adolescence (although boys commit suicide at a much higher rate) (Sommers, 2000:20). “We need to change society if we are to produce healthy, young women”. Pipher argues that our culture place a great deal of value on how pretty a women is. Adolescent girls struggle with themselves because they believe they are not beautiful enough or thin enough. The other detrimental effect of our culture on adolescent girls, according to Pipher is that they are encouraged to be pleasing to other, at the cost of being themselves. “They must become adults in a culture in which the feminine is defined as docile, weak and other-oriented”(Pipher, 1994: 253, 258).

P. Bouchard, I. Boily, M-C Proulx, School Success by Gender, 2003

This Status of Women, Canada, sponsored report, deals with education and gender. The authors argue that it is girls who are at a disadvantage in education. This report claims that the gap in schools is not related to gender, but to adverse socio-economic

situations, education level of parents, and attitude of students. In relation to attitudes, “successful or struggling students of both sexes are much more similar in their attitudes and behavior at school than they are different”. In other words, according to the authors, the gap in educational achievement is not due to gender, but in part to the attitude of the individual student who maybe receiving outside encouragement either to do well in school, or that school is not so important. The authors present and dismiss the “Three Arguments in the Masculinist Discourse on Education”. The first, “The Victimization Argument or the ‘Poor Boys Discourse’”. This line of thinking stresses “that the only way to achieve equality is to focus on boys: boys are ‘in distress, in crisis, fragile, unfathered’”. They claim that boys are not in crisis, and that this is just another anti-feminist ploy, for boys to get more attention in school, at the expense of girls. “If there is a war against boys, who has declared it” they ask (Bouchard et al. 2003:54-5).

“The Argument that Points the Finger at Schools, or the ‘Failing School Discourse’”. This argument claims that schools are more focused on girls, and it makes it difficult for boys to adjust and do well, since the school system is so feminized. This argument is also dismissed as “also laying the blame on feminism”. It is also suggested by the writers that it is boys who should commit to school regulations and requirements by adjusting to the existing environment, rather than schools making allowances for boys, because it would disadvantage the girls (Bouchard et al., 2003:55).

The third point is “The Essentialist Argument, or the ‘Boys-Will-Be-Boys Discourse’”. This argument claims that nature can’t be changed. Certain types of actions and behaviors are an innate part of males’ behavior, including aggression and the need to move around. “There is a natural difference between the sexes”. They counter the

argument that gender is innate, opting instead for the idea that socialization accounts for these types of traits, which are possible in either gender. Again this argument is dismissed for the same reason as were the other two arguments. “This approach, which tries to lump men into a homogeneous gender grouping, works better as a means of challenging feminism than it does as a real way to find solutions, especially for struggling students of both sexes (Bouchard et al, 2003:55).

The authors argue that in this debate, by stating that boys are underachieving, this implies that it is all boys who are not successful in school, however, they argue, “for the most part, boys are doing well in school”. They also reveal that some girls are having serious problems. Socio-economic levels and parents’ educational achievement are the “most reliable predictors of a child’s success in school examinations”(Bouchard et al, 2003:56).

BOYS IN CRISIS

Christina Hoff Sommers, The War Against Boys, 2000

“In the war against boys, as in all wars, the first casualty is truth. In the United States the truth about boys has been both distorted and buried” (Sommers, 2000:16). Christina Hoff Sommers presents the argument that boys are being shortchanged by the public school system and by and by “misguided feminism”. Her book, *The War Against Boys* is a “story of how we are turning against boys and forgetting a simple truth that the energy, competitiveness, and corporal daring of normal, decent males is responsible for much of what is right in the world (Sommers, 2000:14). She insists that despite the assertions of the AAUW and Dr. Pipher that “boys, not girls are on the weak side of an educational gender gap. Boys, on average, are a year and a half behind girls in reading and writing; they are less committed to school and less likely to go to college” (Sommers, 2000:14).

Carol Gilligan, Mary Pipher, the AAUW all describe teenaged girls as “silenced, tortured, voiceless and personally diminished. ...but there is surprisingly little evidence to support it” (Sommers, 2000:19). Sommers argues that if this is the case with teenage girls, it “has escaped the notice of conventional psychiatry” (Ibid.). The symptoms that Gilligan and the others listed under *Girls in Crisis* resemble a “mood disorder called *Dysthemia*”. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, “it occurs equally in both sexes among children, and while it is more common in adult women than men, it is still relatively rare. No more than 3 or 4 percent of the population suffers from it” (Ibid.).

Education Week (Sept, 1994:17) reported that the AAUW spent \$100,000 on this study and \$150,000 to promote it. Their campaign was successful, and contributed to the

U.S. Congress passing the Gender Equity in Education Act. Millions of dollars in grants were awarded to study the plight of girls and learn how to cope with gender bias. Unfortunately the AAUW report came out at a time when “There were all these special programs put in place for girls, and no one paid any attention to boys”. The more that girls are portrayed as not doing well in school, being shortchanged, and lacking self-esteem, the more boys are “regarded as needing to be taken down a notch”. Far from being demoralized, girls get better grades than boys, they outperform males on tests of artistic and musical ability. More girls study abroad, they are more involved in school activities, they organize student newspapers, are on student council committees and they continue to get good grades (Sommers, 2002 21-5).

According to Sommers, boys have a tougher time of it in school. “more boys than girls are suspended from school. More are held back and more drop out. Boys are three times as likely as girls to be enrolled in special education programs and four times as likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder” (Sommers, 2000:25)

Mary Pipher reported in *Reviving Ophelia*, that the suicide rate among 10 to 14 year olds rose 75 percent between 1979 and 1988. Sommers presents statistics from the Center for Disease Control which contests Pipher’s, “for males aged ten to fourteen, the suicide rate increased 71 percent between 1979 and 1988; for girls the increase was 27%” (Sommers, 2000:20). “It is adolescence during which boys’ suicide rate goes from slightly less than girls’ to four times as great as girls’ “(Farrell, 1994:165). “Girls attempt suicide more than boys, but it is boys who actually kill themselves more often. In a typical year (1997), there were 4,493 suicides of young people between the ages of five and twenty four: 701 females, 3,792 males” (Sommers, 2000:26). The implication is of

course that Pipher's scholarship is seriously flawed, and possibly deliberately flawed for ideological reasons.

The process of gender inequality in university also exists at the high school level, as indicated by the following statistics from the U.S. Department of Education regarding gender breakdown of high school students taking placement exams in their final year of high school. These figures are reflective of the entire country and not just a particular area. In 1984, the split was even between males and females. From 1985 to 1990, there were slightly more male students than female. From 1991 to 1996, consistently, there were more females than males writing advanced placement exams (Sommers, 2000:24). These exams are written as part of the process of being accepted at universities. If more girls are writing these placement exams and therefore more girls applying or planning to go onto university, then wouldn't it be likely that more females than males would likely continue onto university.

Studies throughout North America and internationally have consistently showned that boys are being outperformed by girls across all grade levels.

Girls are more involved in school and according to Sommers and in opposition to the Girls in crisis group, who report girls' grades dropping dramatically in adolescence, they don't drop dramatically, but leap ahead of boys. "A 1999 *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* article", in analyzing parents remarks, girls take greater care and spend more time on homework, they try to do it as neatly as possible, boys get homework done as quickly as possible so they can go out and play. They are not concerned with neatness or what the teacher might think

It is the boys who are falling behind academically. Female teachers, who are the majority in elementary school, give more positive attention to female students. Table 7 reflects teachers' attitudes towards males and females.

TABLE 8

Unpublished AAUW Data from the 1999 Self-Esteem Survey

Responses by Sex (%)

<u>Perception</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Girls' Perception</u>	<u>Boys'</u>
Who do teachers think are smarter?			
Boys	16	13	26
Girls	79	81	69
Other Responses	5	5	5
Who do teachers punish more often?			
Boys	91	92	90
Girls	6	5	8
Other Responses	3	3	2
Who do teachers compliment more often?			
Boys	8	7	15
Girls	87	89	81
Other Responses	4	5	4
Who do teachers like to be around			
Boys	14	12	21
Girls	78	80	73
Other Responses	8	8	6
Who do teachers pay more attention to?			
Boys	32	33	29
Girls	59	57	64
Other Responses	9	10	7
Who do teachers call on more often?			
Boys	35	35	36
Girls	57	57	59
Other Responses	7	8	5

(Sommers, 2000:42).

The answers from boys and girls were amazingly similar. A high rate, 81% girls and 69% believe that teachers think girls are smarter. Girls at 92% and boys at 90% think teachers punish boys more often. As for getting complimented by the teacher, 89% of girls and 81% of boys think girls get compliments from the teacher. 80% of girls and 73% of boys think teachers prefer to be around girls. 57% of girls and 64% of boys believe that teachers pay more attention to girls. 57% of girls and 59% of boys think the teacher call on girls more often. For all the positive qualities, like being smart, getting attention and compliments, both boys and girls see girls as doing better. For the boys, the only category they scored high in, again, according to both boys and girls was for being punished. One of the compelling features of these answer is that both genders answered very similarly, which would seem to indicate that it wasn't a case of boys feeling sorry for themselves and rating themselves low on the positive categories, nor was it a case of girls bragging about scoring high in positive categories. What does this say about teachers and boys? Do teachers think boys are slow, not worthy of encouragement, compliments or attention? Then it is no wonder that boys are not school engaged. If the teachers expect so little from boys, that is what they will deliver, if the teachers expect a great deal from girls, that is what they will deliver. And if they continually punish boys, and reward girls, boys will feel alienated. School will become an unwelcome environment for boys while remaining a welcoming environment for girls.

Sommers interviewed the president of the Board of Education in Atlanta. When asked "Who was faring better, boys or girls? He replied 'Girls in just about any area you can mention.' "(Ibid26). A principal from Pennsylvania told the author, "Students who dominate the drop-out list, the suspension list, the failure list and other

negative indices of non-achievement in school are males at a wide ratio". Further support comes from Peter Badalment, a principal at Hanover High School in Massachusetts, who, during an interview On CBS' 60 Minutes (October 27, 2002), stated "Girls tend to dominate the landscape academically right now,even in Math and Science. According to Badalament, three out of four of the class leadership positions, including the class presidents are girls." (CBS, 60 Minutes, 2002:1).

According to Sommers, boys are often labeled as batterers, harassers, potential rapists, by the girls in crisis crowd. "Boys feel blamed for history, and a school culture has grown up which is suspicious and frightened of boys: (Sommers, 2000:57). At conferences held by gender equity groups such as The National Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (NCSEE), the AAUW, The Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, "male violence was a major topic of concern"(Sommers, 2000:61). Unfortunately, many teachers have come to believe that violence is associated with masculinity. "By this logic, every little boy is a potential harasser and batterer" (Sommers, 2000:63). Columbine etc. has reinforced this viewpoint rather than the view that schools discriminate against boys-some of whom are likely to violently resist. "If being a boy were a defect like being nearsighted, we could conceivably accept the need to correct it (perhaps with treatments controlling young males "excessive" exposure to testosterone). But being a boy is not a condition or defect in need of a cure" (Sommers, 2000:93)

My research has consistently shown that boys love to run, jump, roughhouse, chase each other, kick or pitch balls. One has only to observe a schoolyard at recess or lunchtime to witness this. However, "this kind of play is often mistakenly regarded as

aggression, but is the opposite. Children who engage in rough and tumble play, typically boys, also tended to be liked and to be good social problem solvers” (Sommers, 2000:94). However, some schools have gone overboard, and punished boys for running during recess, since running and jumping were against the rules. Boys who are playing active games during recess ”are not only having a good time, they are forging friendships and bonding with other males in ways that are critical to their healthy development” (Sommers, 2000:96). To ban what they enjoy is again to shortchange boys, or to wage “war” against boys.

Sommers argues that part of the reason for boys not doing well in school is the shift in the last twenty years in particular to non-structured education. In Britain, which had the same gender gap as America, educators have been making progress in helping boys to bridge the gender gap. Some of the techniques they found helpful were a structured environment, high expectations, strict homework checks, frequent testing, and one-sex classes (Sommers, 2000:161). This is a return to a traditional way of teaching, which is proving to be helpful to boys. “Child centered education has been prevalent in American schools of education,the knowledge-based approach currently employed in the most advanced nations (has been) eschewed in our own schools” (Sommers, 2000:160).

This trend of boys not doing well in school exists in Canada, Great Britain and Australia, as well as in the U.S. (Ibid., p. 15). According to Ms. Sommers, Great Britain is 10 years ahead of the U.S. and Canada, (Note: Ms. Sommers does not mention Canada, however since the educational statistics are very similar, I have included Canada in the discussion). The matter of schoolboys in Great Britain was so important that it was an election issue in 1997(Ibid. p. 16). However, Ms Sommers poses the question of

“So who in the United States is working to improve boys’ achievements? No one. No national organizations alert the public to boys’ academic shortcomings, no politically powerful groups lobby Congress to help boys. The climate for American boys is unfriendly” (Ibid., p.16). This issue has been covered in the British media since the early nineties. On this side of the Atlantic, it’s just beginning to be noticed.

It is therefore unsurprising the plain truth about male under performance has been reaching an informed and concerned public. For almost a decade, British newspapers and journals have been reporting on the distressing scholastic deficits of British schoolboys. The *Times* of London warned the prospect of ‘an underclass of permanently unemployed, unskilled men’. ‘What’s Wrong with Boys?’ asked the *Glasgow Herald*. The *Economist* referred to boys as ‘tomorrow’s second class’. “They have a name for them, the ‘- sink group-’ and they call what ails them ‘laddism’ (Sommers, 2000:38). In Britain, the public, the government and the educational establishment are well aware of the increasing numbers of underachieving young males and they are looking for ways to help. They have introduced programs into the curriculum that help boys catch up to girls. They are allowing gender stereotypes in educational materials. They have come to realize that boys enjoy adventures/ heroes and are more likely to read books about those topics. According to Sommers, the reason Great Britain is ahead of the U.S, is because “Britain has no Carol Gilligan, no Mary Pipher, no AAUW (Sommers, 2000:17, 38).

In the U.S. however, Gloria Allred, feminist lawyer, takes the opposite tack, and believes that boys should be more like girls. “Resocializing boys in the direction of femininity is now high on the educational agenda of many educators, women’s institutes and government officials. Active in this undeclared war on boys are the Harvard

Graduate School, the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, and the U.S. Department of Education”(Sommers, 2000:74). At an educational seminar given at Wellesley College, led by Dr. Nancy Marshall, and her associates who maintained that a child is taught gender roles and appropriate gender by the socialization process. The idea proposed to over 200 teachers, at this seminar, was that teachers should “help children feel as comfortable as possible participating in activities traditionally associated with the other gender”. Teachers were advised to force “boy/girl mixed pairs”, i.e., boys should play with dolls, play dress-up wearing skirts and high heeled shoes. What Dr. Marshall and the other feminists at the U.S. Department of Education, Wellesley College and Harvard Graduate School, want to implement, is not plausible nor is it feasible.

By the early 1990’s, “Girls were flourishing in unprecedented ways.Girls were moving ahead of boys academically in the primary and secondary grades and applying to colleges in record numbers”(Sommers, 2000:20).

Sommers seriously criticizes the conventional wisdom of feminist scholarship, especially Dr. Pipher, where in *Reviving Ophelia*, by far the most successful of the girl-crisis books, girls undergo a fiery demise. She writes succinctly, “Something dramatic happens to girls in early adolescence. Just as planes and ships disappear mysteriously into the Bermuda Triangle, so do the selves of girls go down in droves. They crash and burn” (Sommers, 2000:20).

According to Pipher, “a girl-poisoning and girl-destroying culture”. She informs readers that her clinic is filled with girls who have tried to commit suicide. She cites “The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta reports that the suicide rate among children ten to fourteen rose 75% between 1979 and 1988”. But Pipher’s numbers are misleading.

“A look at the sex breakdown of the CDC’s suicide statistics reveals that for males aged ten to fourteen, the suicide rate increased 71 percent between 1979 and 1988; for girls the increase was 27 percent” (Sommers, 2000:20).

Pipher is going from minority caseload to majority-illegitimately. Within this girl-poisoning and girl-destroying society, “girls outnumber boys in student government, in honor societies, on school newspapers, and even in debating clubs. Only in sports are the boys still ahead, and women’s groups are targeting the sports gap with a vengeance. Girls read more books. They outperform males on tests of artistic and musical ability. More girls than boys study abroad. More join the Peace Corps” (Sommers, 2000:25). These were the findings of the U S Department of Education. These findings portray quite successful young females. Hardly the image of girls who are timorous and lacking in self-confidence.

“Conversely, more boys than girls are suspended from school. More are held back, more drop out. Boys are three times as likely as girls to be enrolled in special education programs and four times as likely to be diagnosed with attention/hyperactivity disorder. More boys than girls are involved in crime, alcohol and drugs” (Ibid., 25-26).

At the same time, “a University of Michigan /U.S. Department of Health and Human Services study asked a scientifically selected sample of three thousand high school seniors the question ‘Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days?’Nearly 86% of girls and 88% of boys responded that they were ‘pretty happy’ or ‘very happy’. If the girls polled were caught in ‘an accelerated downward spiral’, they were unaware of it”(Sommers, 2000:19).

In the U.S., The Women's Educational Equity Act, (WEEA), received a contract from the Department of Education, "to become a more comprehensive national resource center for gender equity" Their report consisted in some extent, to a discussion of male violence and how changes needed to be implemented in the class room to prevent boys becoming rapists and abusers. According to Katherine Hanson, of the WEEA, "violence is the leading cause of death among women". It was stated that four million women a year, are beaten to death by men (Ibid. p.47-48). This is a gross fabrication, misrepresentation and elaboration as well as a huge injustice to men. "According to the FBI, the total number of women who died by murder in 1996, was 3,631"(Sommers. 2000:49).

Conclusion

The AAUW, Carol Gilligan and Mary Pipher have taken on the roles of Defenders of Girls. There are some valid points to be considered. Today, as much as ever, some girls in their adolescent years suffer from feelings of inferiority in relation to their appearance. The pressure is on, to be perfect. To a great extent, the pressure comes from the media. The pencil thin models and actresses and Pop stars who strut their stuff on stage, are the role models for young girls, (as young as six). Somehow though, the adolescent girls get by this and do set their sights on post secondary education and high paying careers in previously traditionally male oriented positions.

Boys on the other hand seem to also have problems coping, in their adolescent years. Males are often shown in a negative light, they are portrayed as tough, aggressive and bullying. This is a generalization. Boys feel very pressured to be accepted by their peers, they fear being ostracized if they don't conform to the "unofficial" dress code of

the other males. Their behavior is also under scrutiny. If they appear overly interested in scholastic activities, instead of sports, or girls, labeled as “sissies”. They feel that school is geared more toward the acquiescence and demeanor of girls. Consequently, teachers give more attention and time to girls. The gap keeps widening between male and female graduates, as each year goes by, that ratio is approximately 60:40 in favor of females. This gap has now reached the Master’s level, where approximately 52% are females and 48% are males.

“According to feminist essayist Barbara Ehrenreich, ‘One of the reasons why fewer men are going to college may be because they suspect that they can make a living just as well without a college education; in other words, they still have such an advantage over women in the non-professional workforce that they don’t require an education’. However, with more and more manufacturing jobs disappearing and more out sourcing of job overseas, what kind of adequate paying jobs are left for males with only a high school education. In response to this, Sommers states that “for the vast majority of boys a college education allows entrance into the middle class - to say nothing of the personal benefits of a liberal arts education” Earnings are linked to education. “By 1995, wages were more than 50% higher for a college-educated worker” (Sommers, 2000:31).

While boys perform better than do girls, (54% to 46%) on Scholastic Aptitude Assessment Tests (SAT), Sommers points out these statistics as being misleading. “First of all, a greater percentage of girls than boys take the SAT.Many more girls from ‘at-risk’ categories take the test than do ‘at-risk’ boys. Specifically, more girls from lower-income homes or with parents who never graduated from high school or

never attended college attempt the SAT than boys from the same background. ‘These characteristics’are associated with lower than average SAT scores” (Sommers, 2000:33).

Findings of a study done by “The National Assessment of Educational Progress, (NAEP) a research council mandated by the U. S. Congress, were released in 1996. “(The NAEP scale scores range from 0 to 500). Seventeen-year- old boys outperformed girls by 5 points in math and 8 points in science, while the girls outperformed boys by 14 points in reading and 17 points in writing. Throughout the past two decades, girls have been catching up in math and science, while boys continue to lag far behind in reading and writing, a gap that is not narrowing.Girls and young women are thriving, while boys and young men are languishing.It seems likely that individuals with such poor literacy skills will have difficulty finding employment in an increasingly information-driven economy. Thus, some intervention may be required to enable them to participate constructively”(Ibid., 33-34). This could be considered a response to Barbara Ehrenreich’s argument above, stating that males have more opportunities than females to find well paying jobs, with just a high school education.

At this point, the question appears to be not if boys are lagging behind, but what can we do to stop from becoming a nation of white collar female executives and blue collar male workers. What can be done to help create a more equitable culture within our schools and our society? How can we stop chilling the boys out of the education process?

CHAPTER 4

The Classroom: Issues and Teachers

Introduction

The daily classroom dynamics are examined through existing literature and the commentary of education professionals. What affects gender in the classroom? How teachers and teaching methods influence and are influenced by the challenge of effectively teaching both genders. The pertinent literature on issues in the classroom is complemented by information volunteered by the respondents.

Issues

As most parents already know, boys and girls *are* different. In the summer of 1997, feminist lawyer, Gloria Allred was taking part in a television debate, over the matter of girls not being accepted in the Boy Scouts of America. She was representing a fourteen-year old girl, who was suing the Boys Scouts for excluding girls. During the debate, it was pointed out that younger girls and boys might have different interests and preferences. Christina Hoff Sommers, who was also taking part in the debate, cited the example of Hasbro Toys, who were testing a playhouse that they planned to market to both boys and girls. The test results showed that “girls dressed the dolls, kissed them, and played house; the boys catapulted the baby carriage from the roof” (Sommers, 2000:73). A Hasbro general manager came up with an explanation: boys and girls are different (Davis, 1995:1).

Allred denied that there were any differences (except the obvious biological ones), between boys and girls. She saw the boys throwing the doll carriage off the roof as being a sign of the probability of the male child being violent. This could hardly be an

indication of a male child being violent, but more likely a boy being a boy. Many feminists are in favor of trying to get boys to act more like girls. "Studies of classroom interaction show that teachers pay much more attention to boys in class, even though they are unaware of doing so" (Curtis et al, 1993:236). If teachers do call on boys more often, might it not be to reprimand them for what the teachers consider as mis-behaving? Boys have difficulty sitting and listening quietly to a teacher, girls on the other hand have no difficulty with this method of teaching. Boys respond well to being challenged, girls don't particularly like being challenged in the classroom. In an aggressive and challenging classroom environment, girls tend to withdraw and boys tend to become more engaged. Where experiments have been done with segregated classrooms and boys' classes were more action oriented, boys did well and were not constantly reprimanded for any minor reason. Since most classrooms are coed, and most teachers and their teaching methods are female, girls remain engaged and boys become alienated. This process which begins in grade school, or earlier, continues on to effect the length of stay in high school and also attendance and graduation of university.

"Elementary school teachers and administrators who once understood that boys will be boys, now act, at least, as though they expect boys to be more like girls. Their hostility to the male character – intentional or not – is turning boys off learning. The behaviors that earn reward and reinforcement – co-operation, communal achievement and non-assertiveness in class - are feminine behaviors"
(The National Post, March 4, 2003).

An American Educational Psychologist advised teachers to challenge boys, have them compete with each other. They thrive in this kind of environment. Currently for a boy to do well in school, he has to adopt "geeky" behavior, to be considered a good student, in a

class that has a female teacher, and a school which has female administrators. “Most boys’ brains are ‘hard-wired’, to respond to such ‘confrontation’ with elevated heart rate, increased adrenaline and enhanced alertness, whereas girls react to the same stressors with nausea, dizziness and withdrawal.” (Ibid.). More and more studies are indicating that boys and girls need different methods of teaching to achieve success in school.

Parents, for the most part are unaware of the re-socialization that is taking place in schools across America. Boys often resent their teachers trying to reshape them into being feminine and nurturing. As one father, a Boston University Professor asked, “what is wrong with wanting your boy not to play with a doll, but to play baseball? Nothing needs to be fixed there”(PBS, April 9, 1999). However, the words of parents, who are concerned about how their sons are being pressured to change, go unheard because of those educational specialists from Ivy League schools who are determined to “release boys from their “straitjacket of masculinity”.They are convinced that breaking down male stereotypes, starting in preschool is good for society”(Sommers 2000:80). The consensus of opinion from both the teachers interviewed and the literature is that boys and girls *are* different. Where they disagree about, is in the implementation. Most of the literature emphasizes using girls as the model and molding boys into their image. The teachers interviewed on the other hand, stressed separate learning methods, and/or separate facilities.

More and more across the U.S., teachers, often in elementary schools are exposed to and encouraged to use gender equity programs in their classes. Unfortunately the result is that females are featured everywhere, from pictures of famous women on the

wall, to biographies about women, women's role in history and about sexual harassment, which is described as a way to keep women oppressed. How can teachers keep boys interested, if they are outside looking in? Men are portrayed in unflattering ways, so much so, that girls sometimes complain and ask what about the boys? (Sommers, 2000:83). In a effort to achieve equality between the sexes, the "experts", (Carol Gilligan, Elizabeth Debold and William Pollack), think feminizing boys is the solution.

At some gender fair schools, boys and girls are encouraged to work on projects together, such as the sewing of a quilt about famous women. There are no male type activities, such as running in a playground, and playing some kind of ball game. In the goal of achieving gender equity, they never question that the behavior of boys and girls might not be solely a result of socialization, but that simply girls and boys are different, and have different interests and preferences. These teachers and administrators in the northeastern part of the U.S. "embrace the belief that gender-fair schools will require a new pedagogy that upsets and neutralizes many behavioral conventions associated with being a boy or girl" (Sommers, 2000:85).

This kind of thinking, i.e., feminizing boys, is popular not only with the feminists, but also within the emerging field of men's studies. Like Gilligan of Harvard University and her followers, William Pollack, director of the Center for Men at Mclean Hospital and author of *Real Boys: Rescuing our Sons From the Myth of Boyhood*, and others of influential positions, argue that boys should be brought up without the pressures of conforming to traditional boyhood interests, ideas and preferences (Sommers, 2000:85). To feminists, gender equity in schools, equates to boys sewing quilts. There is no gender equity in forcing boys to conform to teaching methods and regulations and to partake in

school projects which are beneficial to girls who excel with this type of educating, and which deny boys the methods which are conducive to their learning.

Aylene, a high school teacher said,

“Girls have a longer attention span, they write more notes, in exams they write what they think will please the teachers, boys tend to be brief and to the point. There is still that role being played out of girls being people pleasers. I prefer to teach boys more than girls do, I like the challenge. There are ways to handle boys without alienating them. The girls listen and regurgitate everything you give them. If some males students have done rather poorly in an exam, I will speak to them individually, and instead of scolding them about their poor performance, I say things like ‘I know you can do better, you are much more capable than what this mark shows’. It is important to not put any students down. Because boys may be rowdy sometimes, it doesn’t mean they are not sensitive, or not effected by negative remarks from parents, teachers and principals”.

Recently a number of psychologists, geneticists, and neuroendocrinologists accept that some gender differences are innate and not due entirely to socialization.(Sommers, 2000:86-7). Males on the average, are better at spatial reasoning, which gives them a slight edge when it comes to math, engineering and architecture. Of course there are girls, who are just as competent in these areas. Girls out perform boys in verbal skills. Since girls’ verbal skills develop earlier, “this leads them to be more experienced at articulating their feelings and more skilled than boys at using words to explore and substitute for emotional reactions such as physical fights” (Golman, 1995:131).

Researchers are beginning to confirm what parents have known all along. Boys and Girls show different interests, they prefer different toys, they enjoy different activities. Several studies have been done confirming this, and that the brains of females differ to some extent from those of men. The gender-equity specialists and feminists,

such as Gloria Steinem and Gloria Alldred do not want this to be announced or publicized. They see this information as a threat to their own, their mothers' and their daughters' lives. They fear that if it is accepted that we are innately born with traits, that pertain to a particular gender, women will be returning to a state of suppression and an age of male superiority over females. Researchers who continue to work in this field are being warned not to, because it is too provocative (Sommers,2000:89).

Recess is in danger of becoming a thing of the past. Children, and boys in particular benefit from recess, however their somewhat rowdy behavior is regarded with disapproval by teachers, principals and some moms. Boys tend to prefer outdoor play, games with body contact, in large groups with distinct winners and losers. Girls tend to be in small groups of two or three, engaged in conversation or playing less rowdy games. They are quieter, cleaner, they don't get all messed up at recess while playing. The normal play of little boys, is being regarded with more and more disapproval, by educators. As one primary school principle told The Washington Post, "We do take away a lot of the opportunity to do things boys like to do. That is, to be rowdy, run, jump and roll around. We don't allow that" (Sommers, 2000:95).

In the Boston area, more and more moms and female teachers "believe that the key to producing a non-violent adult is to remove all conflict – toys, weapons, wrestling shoving and imaginary explosions and crashes – from a boy's life" (Sommers, 2000:95).

We can't expect boys to do well in school because schools are not set up to be inviting for boys. "Schools are about all sorts of non-boy things. Is it any wonder that the ideal student has become, by default, female? Any environment that stresses order and quietness and control, as most schools do, is inherently anti-boy.Boys want to be

outside, school keeps kids inside Boys have brief spurts of attention; school requires constant, steady attention.”. Boys make up about three quarters of the enrollment for special education and learning disability programs, are five times more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit difficulties”. Boys are much more likely to drop out of school and less likely to go onto post-secondary education. When boys are asked about what they like about schools, it was always “whenever school was not at all like school for them, moments when they got to leave the classroom, or engage in debates and arguments, or participate in hands on activities” (Owens, 2002).

Boys have not been getting the positive feedback they need to believe in themselves. In an editorial entitled, “Trapped in lower expectations, boys fail”, The Montreal Gazette argued that “Boys continue to be encouraged to meet a narrower set of expectations – but without necessarily even getting the encouragement needed to go into traditionally masculine fields such as vocational training in plumbing, electricity, or carpentry – at a time when jobs in these areas are plentiful” (The Gazette, March 27, 2004). An editorial in a national newspaper stated that, “Society and schools need to embrace and treasure our boys and their masculine energy” (The National Post, March 5, 2003). If we want to ensure that boys are given the correct environment to learn in, we should make sure that men make up half of the elementary school teachers.

At an educators conference that took place at McGill University, in 2002, as stated in The Gazette, was attended by 600 educators from across Canada, it was again noted that boys are at a disadvantage, since most teachers are female. “Female teachers tend to pick books that reflect their interests and have a bias toward narrative, portraying events in a social or moral context,whereas boys prefer non-fiction books that are fast-paced

and action-oriented.” Perhaps that is one of the reasons why 53% of 13-year old girls, as opposed to 30% of boys, achieved mid-level literacy according to the 1998 National Literacy Assessment Survey. It was recommended to teachers to plan read-a-thons and other competitive events. It appears to be that boys respond well to competition. They become engaged in the learning activities. It was also noted that boys respond well by learning through computers and other media (Seidman, 2002).

The Teachers

Catharine, an elementary school teacher stated,

“Boys don’t like to sit in class and just listen, when I assign them a hands on project, they become more interested and animated. The physical and the digital are definitely more appealing to boys. We did a project on environment, and I took the class for a walk around the block, the boys were so keen, they noticed things I didn’t even notice. They were noticing different trees, shrubs, they were picking up rocks, leaves, weeds, bugs, but the girls were more interested in talking to their friends. Basically they did not do any observing, but they chatted the whole way. When we do a hands on project, the boys are eager to participate. Boys in general have to be more stimulated by the teacher”.

The impressions I received from two educators, Catharine and Aylene, are that boys may be a little rowdy, but they should not be criticized for this. Much of how boys act in school depends on how interested they are. These teachers try to introduce assignments and topics that will be appealing to both boys and girls. Boys definitely prefer hands on learning. I think these two teachers, realize that different teaching methods have to be used for each gender. Both stated that girls (of course there are always exceptions) like to please their teachers. This applied at both levels and was emphasized more for high school girls than the elementary school girls. This is in

contrast to Pipher and the AAUW, who state that adolescent girls become distant, depressed and let their grades in school drop.

Aylene goes on to say

“We teachers tend to look at the curriculum and not the people we are dealing with. You need to make them realize this is not a jail or a prison. At the beginning of the school year, some teachers look at their list of students, and ask the opinion of previous teachers, who might point out a couple of names on the list and say things like ‘Oh boy, he is a holy terror’. Teachers should avoid doing this and try to start the school year with a clean slate. We as teachers need to see what we do wrong in class. If you as a teacher, see that a student is upset or not acting in his/her normal manner, we should ask to see them after the class to try to find out what the problem is. Just make them know that you are aware that something is wrong, not with them, but with a situation. We shouldn’t say things like ‘you are behaving badly today’, but instead say ‘Let’s talk about what happened today’”.

Rebecca, an elementary school teacher whom I interviewed had this to say regarding teaching methods and attention spans,

“When I teach in ways that children can participate, I find that boys are really responsive to this. For example, with each month, I ask the class what they notice when they are outside, and what activities they do each season, they become engaged and participate more than if I just read them a story and ask questions about it later, I think that boys participate more at this than girls do. The girls do much better at listening to a story and being able to answer questions about it. So I try to do both types of teaching that will include boys and girls. It also depends on the subject. If we are doing a very simple science project or experiment, this allows for more student participation. When I want them to write a little story, I always give a choice of topics, usually one active, like what activities did you do last weekend, or write about a story that you read. I have noticed that the girls are the readers, they take out more library books, the boys just take books that they are required to read. Girls are always eager to please the teacher. Boys like to be more active”.

In discussing teaching methods and attention span, three out of six have come to the same conclusion, which are that girls are eager to please the teacher and boys enjoy

more active, hands on learning methods. Perhaps if girls are so eager to please the teacher, they may be putting more effort in their work, paying more attention in class, taking more care with their homework, all of which would lead to better grades.

Oksana, a high school teacher had this to say.

“With the equal rights amendment, people started screaming and shouting and females started to get more of the attention in school. Twelve years later, around 1990, we were on an even stance with males. Now, males have lost the effect they used to get when it was the other way around. In the past teachers paid more attention to boys about science and math, so that they were more prepared for higher education. When the focus changed and girls got more of the attention, they started catching up to the boys and past ahead of the boys. Girls always did better at language skills, while they pulled ahead in science and math, they maintained their good grades in language skills. When boys lost the edge they used to have in science, they did not make any gains in language skills. Language skills were not emphasized to the boys to the same extent that they were emphasized to the girls”. (Oksana, 2004).

Oksana’s opinions were in agreement with much of what I read in the literature. Girls, while maintaining their advantage in the language arts have caught up to boys in math and science, while boys have not made any gains in the language arts. Oksana puts forth the question, “Why are so many boys labeled with learning disabilities? Is it because they are not keeping up with the girls? I don’t think that it is a conscious thing that is going on. I just think that teachers are teaching in a way that is not totally suitable for boys, but is more comfortable for girls. The teacher is somewhat responsible because of the consequences resulting from certain types of behavior”.

Could it be that some boys labeled with learning disabilities, are not disabled but just boys being boys? Oksana says that most teachers teach in a style that is comfortable

for girls. Boys easily become bored with this style. Can it be that some boys' rambunctious behavior is misconstrued as a learning disability?

Marietta, a pre-school teacher declared that

“boys are more fidgety, action oriented, it is very hard for them to sit quietly at their desks and listen, whereas girls seem to find sitting quietly is something they have no difficulty with, therefore teachers tend to call on boys more often because of their behavior. On a personal level, girls get more attention, because they want more attention and more affection. For example, they'll ask you if they could have a hug, they'll give you compliments, or they will notice that you are wearing something new. They'll ask you if you like their drawings, or they'll give you their drawings, and bring you flowers from home, or they will ask you if you need their help, and so on. On a personal or social level, girls get more attention, because they tend to cling more to their teachers, and interact more with them”.

Conclusion

The education professionals as well as data from various forms of media acknowledge that males and females are different and make recommendations as to how to improve the status of boys within education. Boys are more active, it is difficult for them to sit still in a class, then perhaps they would learn more by doing hands on projects, where they may become more engaged with school. Boys require a different style of teaching from girls. Girls are better listeners, they have no problem listening to stories that teachers read. Boys become easily bored with this style, they need action, movement, and competition.

CHAPTER 5

The Teachers

Introduction

In this chapter, I will be presenting the views and opinions of education professionals. I used the same questionnaire for all my respondents. However, sometimes, these questions would lead to other issues regarding education. I never asked a question about dress code, but it came up in some of the interviews and provided information that was pertinent to my research. Therefore, in the opinions offered below, due to the open-ended nature of the questionnaire, there will be topics not explored directly by the questions asked, however, this information will be included below. The formal interviews included three female teachers from pre-school to the elementary school level, and three female teachers at the high school level, one of whom one is a vice-principal of a high school. The thesis discusses the following issues:

Gendered Classrooms
Bullies-Violence, Suicides
Male Role Models
Family Involvement - An Innovative approach
Dropouts
Flowers vs Bugs – Curriculum Content
Gender Equitable Teaching Methods
Dress Codes
Ritalin or Boys Will be Boys
The Role of the Media

Gendered Classrooms

One of the changes which met with great success in Britain were same-sex classrooms.

“The teacher finds that the boys in his single-sex class actively support one another with genuine team spirit: ‘When girls are present, boys are loath to express opinions for fear of appearing sissy’. He chooses challenging but male-appropriate readings: ‘Members of my group are

football mad and quite “laddish”. In mixed classes they would be turned off by *Jane Eyre*, whereas I can pick texts such as *Silas Marner* and *The War Poets*’. The initial results have been promising. In 1996, the boys were far behind the girls. By 1997, after only a year in the special class, the boys had nearly closed the gap”.

(Daily Telegraph in Sommers, 2000:162)

Gender segregated classrooms, have been suggested as a way to make school more appealing to boys. One of the suggestions is to have male teachers instructing the boys, “to promote male identification” (Bouchard et al. 2003:59), and having special programs created, or existing programs improved “in order to meet boys needs as they see them” (Ibid.). According to Bouchard et al, this would not be a solution, but would create other problems. Segregated classrooms would “promote a return to traditional male values”, no longitudinal studies done, so “impact is not known”. “The civil rights fight in the United States succeeded in eliminating segregation. It is rather surprising that anyone would want to reinstate segregation based on gender”(Bouchard et al. 2003:59).

Quebec Superior Council on Education released statistics, which showed that for the year 1998 40% of boys compared to 26% of girls, dropped out of high school. The council came to the conclusion that something had to be done. It was suggested that boys and girls be separated for certain subjects (Ably, 2002).

For The Status of Women Commission, a subsidiary of the Canadian Government, gender segregated classrooms were considered to be a return to the old patriarchal model. Bouchard et al. considered segregated classrooms regressive. The Quebec Superior Council on Education on the other hand, speaks to the contrary. They are in favor of gender segregated classrooms as evidenced in the results from one Montreal high school, James Lyng, with such a program and excellent results for both boys and girls.

Girls achieve greater academic success at school than boys do. This knowledge may lead teachers to have higher expectations for girls than for boys. The perception realized by both boys and girls has both positive and negative effects. For girls the realization of the expectation of better performance from them than from boys, manifests itself in better schoolwork, higher grades, and more praise. For boys the same realization results in decreased performance based on lower expectations and lower self-esteem. (Francis, 2000:31-2).

We are just now beginning in scientific research to come to understanding that some gender differences are innate rather than being socially constructed. There are some gender-based natural differences such as the fact that the female sense of smell is 200 to 1000 times better than that of males, their hearing is much more acute and their sense of touch is twice as sensitive.

JoAnn Deak a school psychologist, considered an expert by many exclusive schools in the U.S. speaks up about the differences. Females are programmed to multi-task; they are built to connect and communicate. “Male brains are built to streamline and go right to what they have to do”. Educational Consultants state “There’s not a gender gap, there’s a gender chasm”. Deak and the pediatrician Sax, (both mentioned in Owens’ article), are being held up “as soothsayers” by the gender segregated schools. Because they believe that gender difference in the brain is innate, they advocate separate schools or classrooms for boys and girls, since the boys need a different, more active style of learning than girls do (Owens, 2002). Vice Principle Allanna agrees that “girls get into certain practices around subjects more, they will ask more questions, they will do more discussions and boys seem more goal-oriented, *give me the work, I’ll finish it and give it*

back to you ". (Allanna, 2004). Deak's comments appear to be confirmed by Allanna, regarding girl's communicativeness and boy's directness.

"Scientists are discovering that gender differences have as much to do with the biology of the brain as with the way we are raised." Perhaps nature is as important as nurture. In an experiment that involved children from 2½ to 8 years of age, and included the children's access to a variety of toys, both boys and girls played with all the toys, boys were drawn by "sports cars and fire trucks, girls were drawn by dolls and kitchen toys" (Gorman, 1992:36, 38). Studies have shown that some question the belief that there are no innate differences between men and women, and that the differences that do occur, are caused by socialization.

In schools that offer same-sex environments, children perform better than average in tests. Also boys in same-sex schools demonstrate that they participate more in activities such as theatre than they do in coed schools. This maybe due to embarrassment on the part of boys performing in front of girls, or fear of being called sissies. By the same token, girls might do better by themselves, without the fear of intimidation by boys. In the U.S., the idea of same-sex classrooms or schools is met with opposition by feminists and civil rights lawyers who say separate sex classrooms are unconstitutional and deem anything "separate" as unfair discrimination. The idea of single sex classrooms has also attracted a great deal of support from both left and right wing politicians. Some nay-sayers assert that children don't learn about life in same-sex schools. They need interaction with the opposite sex. (Gurdon, 2002). Two respondents disagreed with the idea of segregated classrooms, Rebecca and Marietta, who made similar observations and stated "I disagree with gendered classrooms because I think that boys and girls could

draw from each others' strengths, and besides, as they grow up they need the social skills to deal with the opposite sex, so they may as well learn that while they are young". If girls learn better without boys and boys learn better without girls, why not let the schools create gender-segregated classrooms? In gendered classrooms, one gender does not succeed at the cost of the other.

"Trying to solve the problem of underperforming boys has turned into a worldwide debate" Schools in Canada and the United States have begun experimenting with same-sex classes with very encouraging results. More students do well in their final exams and more students stay in school and graduate. "They have the advantage now of learning subjects in a different way, they're less shy to express themselves – the boys as much as the girls" (Heinrich, 2002). Students are less distracted by the other sex, when they are in same-sex classrooms. They are less likely to be intimidated as well. They do not feel as embarrassed if they answer incorrectly. As one student said, when being interviewed on television about the same-sex classes he was in, "If I give a wrong answer, I don't have to worry about the girls laughing at me".

Both Rebecca and Marietta had very similar comments about gendered classrooms.

Marietta, a pre-school teacher said,

"Although children usually stick to playing with their own gender, in mixed groups, children learn many things from each other. It seems like there are different perspectives, or different thinking patterns, making these differences, not only interesting, but also educational to the other gender. The way they approach a task is also very different, for example, boys seem to be better at problem solving than girls are, and the way that they may come up with a solution for a problem will usually be different from that of the girls. Also, their life experiences are different, for example, many boys play on team sports, and many girls don't, therefore, listening to them about competition, team work, winning, losing, and sharing are all learning experiences

that children can learn from each other if not experienced hands on. I disagree with gendered classrooms because children learn many things from each other, It seems like there are different perspectives, or different thinking patterns, therefore making these differences not only interesting but also educational to the other gender.”

Allanna disagreed with both Marietta and Rebecca:

“I am in favor of gender segregated classrooms, and I’ll tell you why. We try to have female teachers with female classes, and male teachers with male classes. There is a whole lot of mentoring that happens in a teaching situation. It is more appropriate when it is gender specific, especially in our environment in the inner-city, where there is not a lot of role modeling in the community. I am in favor of it, not because I have any vast amount of research. I don’t think as much harm can be done in a gender specific class as in a mixed class. Boys and girls have different learning needs. We try to accommodate both males and females, as far as required literature to read, boys tend to like more action-oriented, while girls like a variety of topics. Male teachers would rather teach boys. Girls are easier to teach academically, but more difficult to manage socially”.

Oksana said, “I think the solution lies in teachers getting better training, by setting up environments that engage the students, more active roles for students, rather than sitting passively”. She also disagreed with gendered classrooms because she thought to was feasible from a financial point of view. She didn’t think this type of curriculum would get funded by the government.

Of the teachers formally interviewed there was an even split. Three were for gendered separated classrooms and 3 were against them.

Bullies - Violence, Suicides, Homicides

There are coming of age stories that men are eager to tell, and then there are the stories that they don’t want to talk about, “because the emotional pain of the experience

remains as deeply disturbing as on the day it happened. These are stories of boys' cruelty – of domination, humiliation, fear and betrayal – that most women never hear and most men and boys are reluctant or unable to share even with one another" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000:73).

It is important for an adolescent boy to be accepted by his peers, but if he doesn't measure up to the groups' expectations, he is subject to ridicule. These expectations might be the type of clothing he wears, his looks, how rich he is, etc. Often the boy who appears as gentle and mild mannered is the one who is likely to be bullied. Bullies don't pick on people who may fight back, they prey on those they know won't fight back. "*Anything* a boy says or does that's different can and will be used against him.Among themselves boys engage in continuous psychological warfare". Older boys pick on younger boys – the stronger ones against the weaker – the popular against the unpopular, and the conformity driven "boy pack" against the boy who fails in any way to be like the others in the pack (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000:73).

Recently in Ohio, a surveillance camera on a school bus captured a 17 year old student "pummeling a 14 year old student until he ended up slumped over in his seat". The bus driver noticed the incident in his rear view mirror and yelled at the boys to stop, he radioed the principal for help and then got between the boys to break it up. This attack that left a 14 year old with a concussion and fractured eye socket lasted about a minute, and the victim was hit at least 27 times (The Montreal Gazette. April 17, 2004). In this particular case, they have proof of who the bully is and will hold a hearing to decide on discipline.

Most of the victims are reluctant to report to their parents or teachers, about how they were humiliated or bullied. They are afraid that if the perpetrators get punished, they will retaliate and increase their bullying on the victim. For a boy who is not part of the pack, “life can be brutal – physically and psychologically – when the whim of the pack turns against him or, worse, turns a humiliated boy against himself resulting in serious emotional problems, suicide, or violence” (Klindon & Thompson, 2000:75).

It is extremely important for secondary school students to “fit in”. Not fitting in, being labeled a “sissy”, can have devastating consequences for a student's school life with the “possibility of being marginalized, ostracized or bullied. This label is more feared by boys perhaps because the image of the studious bookworm is now seen as a particularly non-masculine one” (Francis, 2000:118).

The Canadian Parents Coalition for the Protection of Children was founded by Elaine Barbeau who had lost her son. “He committed suicide in 1998 at age 23 years. After his death, Barbeau discovered that her son wrote about being bullied at school in his journal entries. Nicknamed Buddy the Boxer her son defended himself but Barbeau said it gave him no satisfaction” (The Gazette, March 28, 2004).

Bullying can have devastating, long lasting effects on boys, as the above case illustrates. They can drop out of school thereby cutting short their education perhaps resulting in a life of menial or minimum wage jobs. They could commit suicide, cutting short their lives. They could retaliate violently not only against those who tormented them but against others as well, such as Columbine High School in Colorado. Any consequences of bullying are serious. School administrators and teachers have to take a

stand on bullying. Schools should adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards bullies and bullying.

Although we often think of boys bullying other boys, this is not always the case. There exists “the potential of some girls, particularly in the early secondary school years when many girls are larger than boys, to physically bully boys” (Francis, 2000:44).

Just about every pathology - including alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide - hits boys harder. Even though the Wellesley Report states that adolescent girls are four to five times more likely than boys to attempt suicide, *five times* as many boys as girls actually succeed in killing themselves. (Sommers, 2000:20). In Canada in 1997, for the ages 15 to 19 category, the number of suicides for males was 207 and for females, there were 54 suicides. This is a rate of 19.9 per 100,000 to 5.5 per 100,000, respectively for the age 20 to 24, the statistics are more dramatic. For the same year, 1997, there were 257 males who committed suicide compared to 36 females who committed suicide, at a rate of 29.0 per 100,000 to 5.0 per 100,000 respectively (Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 82F0075XCB. 2002).

Allanna volunteered information concerning a form of bullying, called outing. “There is an awful lot of ‘outing’ among girls. By this I mean that everybody, (girls) gets together and one person is on the outside. That happens a lot. There is a lot of intervention by social workers and parent-student animators. They do a lot of socializing techniques to try and deal with that”. When asked ‘why would they leave a girl out?’ The answer is:

“Power, because they can and it’s the girl of the week. It is constantly changing, and pretty much everybody has a turn. It can be very damaging for the one left out and it can be very long term. There is a zero tolerance for bullying in this school,

so if there is a case of it, it is dealt with immediately. It is an education process to teach girls that outing is a form of bullying". (Allanna, 2004).

Male Role Models

With the ever-increasing rate of divorce showing no signs of slowing down, there are many boys who are living in single parent led families. Usually the parent heading the family is a woman. At school most of the teachers are female so that the young or adolescent male has no male role models to mentor him. This has become a very serious problem because it is usually these boys who end up getting onto the wrong track.

"Mothers and fathers are not interchangeable" says David Popenoe, a Sociology Professor at Harvard. In almost all their interactions with children, fathers do things differently from mothers, he writes.

"When playing with their children, for instance, fathers emphasize competitive and team-oriented games that test physical and mental skill, while mothers play more at their children's level. Fathers help modify aggressive tendencies in older boys. Dads are instinctively good at channeling this aggression. When they notice their sons stewing about something, they might suggest a game of hockey or a jog around the block". (Popenoe, 2001:189).

"Schools and parents have to do a better job of mentoring good male role models and making sure that doing well in school fits into the definition of what it means to be a boy" (Owens, 2002). It appears that for young males in school, it is important to be "cool" and be part of the accepted group. Boys who study hard or like to read are considered outside of the group and ostracized. Boys need to hear and see that doing well in school is part of what a successful male role model has done.

There is a dearth of male role models both in the home with the demise of the nuclear family, and at school, with the shameful lack of male teachers. Aylene agrees, adding,

“Girls see their mothers working and achieving and it is a good message for them as well. So the motivation is there for the girls to work hard, especially at subjects like math. They believe in themselves and say ‘look at my mom’. Students that come from single parent families, boys especially, suffer from a lack of a male role model. In the younger grades they will act out. In the higher grades, what happens is silence, which is even sadder. Their moms are females their teachers are often female. We definitely need more males in teaching. We need a lot of young male teachers. Schools are trying to build a sense of community, so a lot of the young teachers are organizing basketball games and are going into coaching. The boys really like these activities, it is a way to get them more involved in school life. The teachers also do it to hold their jobs. The more extracurricular activities a teacher is involved in, the more likely they are to be recalled next year. I think if we had more young male teachers, it would be better for the boys. It would provide them with a male role model, the teachers and the male students in the class would have more common interests”.

(Aylene, 2004)

Girls usually have family role models in single as well as 2 parent families as the single parent is usually female. In school until university, there is a plethora of female teacher-role models. Boys, unless living in a nuclear family, lack a male role model at home since single parents are usually female. At school they are also at a role model disadvantage as most of the teachers are female.

Allanna commented regarding male role models:

“I think the lack of male teachers at the elementary and high school level is detrimental. I think it is critically important, especially now. My observation is that there is an enormous number of boys growing up in female led households, that is not a problem in some cases, but I am convinced that girls who grow up with their mothers, see their mothers going to work, going to school, trying to better her family’s situation, girls

make that association. Boys living with their mothers see this as something women do. Boys don't see that men do that. It is critically important that they do get more men into education. Because little boys are growing up without male role models. They need mentoring and leadership, character and caring. They just don't see enough of it around them".
(Allanna, 2004)

Allanna agrees with Rebecca and Aylene, that there is a need for more male teachers as role models. She has very pertinent comments. Boys living with their mothers in single parent family situations, lack the input of male companionship and authority. Allanna is Vice Principle of a high school, which practices gender segregated instruction. The boys are taught by male teachers and the girls are taught by female teachers. Interaction between the sexes is limited to lunch room breaks and a common open area. This type of instruction is most likely the basis for the fact that in the provincial high school classification rating system, this inner-city high school "leaped 156 places in one year".
(Chrétien, 2003)

Rebecca's opinion on male role models,

"I wish our profession would attract more men, with the growing number of single parent families, males are lacking role models. The reason I say males is because most children of divorced parents live with the mother and see the father either on a regular basis, every second weekend, or just occasionally or perhaps never. These kids have a mom, who tell them what to do. Then a female teacher tells them what to do, They *absolutely* need a male role model".
(Rebecca, 2004)

Rebecca along with Aylene and Allanna, feels the need for more male teachers at both the elementary and high school level. The need for same-sex role models has remained constant. What has changed is the lack of availability of males who are role models. Few single parent families are headed by males and few elementary and high school teachers are males.

Catharine makes four important points concerning male role models:

- 1) "I think there is a big difference when a boy has a male role model. There is a different kind of energy and the boy is usually happier".
- 2) "Unfortunately today, a lot of families are headed by single parents, usually female, so there are no role models for the boys in the family, but usually a role model for the girls because the children tend to live with the mothers".
- 3) "Elementary school teachers are female. Teaching is a service job, it is a giving job, and generally men are not as well represented in these types of jobs".
- 4) "Outside of the class, boys need someone, a male, to talk to, either about a problem at school, or about whatever might be on his mind, or just to kick a ball around with".

Oksana agrees with Aylene, Allanna, Catharine and Rebecca, regarding male role models. "Many of the boys need father figures, because their own fathers are not around. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of male teachers in elementary or high school. It seems that every year, there are less and less male teachers. I think male student whose the most due to the lack of male role models, inside or outside the home".

Marietta, puts forth these ideas on male teachers and family involvement:

"Male teachers can bring new ideas and new approaches to a classroom, which is what is needed in today's educational system. With the rise in the percentages of separated and divorced couples, more male teachers can help with the decline with the male role models in a child's life, although I don't believe that a teacher between the times of 8:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. can be a fantastic role model if he is displaying only the role of a teacher, whereas a father plays many roles. Also because public schools are jamming in children in classrooms, it is almost impossible for teachers, male or female, to display anything more than the role of the teacher, because time, space, and the system does not allow for any leeway for anything more. This is why parents are becoming more involved in their children's education, than twenty years ago. If parents want their children to excel, and get good grades, they have to make up for what the teacher does not have time for, and that is giving more attention, more love, and more encouragement to the child".
(Marietta, 2004).

Marietta thinks that it is a good idea to have more male teachers, however they cannot fill in for a male role model at home. Contrary to the other teachers, she believes that the pedagogical demands on a teacher does not allow the time to provide sufficient male role modeling.

Family Involvement: An Innovative Approach

Rebecca, an elementary school teacher states,

“Parents and teachers think that boys are tougher than girls, boys are stronger, more resilient. It has been my experience that boys need as much love as girls do, they need as much attention from both parents, and they are sensitive, even if they are told by adults that boys don’t cry, they just build a suit of armor, figuratively speaking, around themselves and begin the process of camouflaging their feelings and the vicious circle begins. Boys do have emotions and they *do* need to cry. In this respect, we as a society are being unfair to boys. I can usually tell which students come from happy homes with both parents, which come from homes with both parents but a lot of conflict and which come from single parent families. The ones who do best tend to be from happy homes with both parents present”.
(Rebecca, 2004).

It is too bad that Rebecca’s voice is not louder than it is. It is too bad that her words are not shouted from the podiums of our learning institutions. Its too bad that all the parents, teachers, psychologists, and anyone else interested in fair and equitable education does not hear and heed her words. Rebecca’s above contradiction of stereotypical antiquated thinking is verified by evidence confirming that boys are just as sensitive as girls, and are not tougher, or more resilient. Boys have just as much trouble dealing with life’s vicissitudes, perhaps more in school. The proof of the pudding may be in the drop out statistics.

Oksana states, “The background and family life of a child determines a great deal about how well they do in school. Today, there are many more children whose parents

have divorced. Some come from very unstable family situations. To be a good teacher today, you have to be a psychologist, a social worker and a mother figure all rolled into one”.

Allanna emphasized the necessity of positive feedback: “If you start out believing that every parent is doing their best and maybe they make mistakes, and maybe it’s not working out, but, nobody sets out to be a bad parent. The school has to support the parents, in the same way the parent has to support the school. If you call the parents and say what is the matter with your kid and what are you going to do about it, that’s not a very nice phone call. If I got a call like that about my own kids, I’d hang up”. This could be a problem however, this school’s administration uses a creative and very workable approach.

“We concentrate on being positive. When it was very, very cold, kids in my daughters’ school, were criticized for being late, they were told this is Canada and you should be used to this weather. At this school, the principal got on the intercom and congratulated the students for making it to school. The power of the positive is just unlimited. They hear enough about what is wrong with them. They need positive reinforcement. I think that this has more impact than the gender classes. I really believe in the gender classes, but I think stressing positive things has a tremendous effect on the students”. It appears that compliments go a long way – they are few and far between, especially for boys.

Allanna also suggested that the market was one explanation for higher male dropout rates: “In our school, a small percentage will go onto university, for a number of reasons. It is probably more likely that our girls will go to CEGEP, because they are more capable

of balancing a part time job with going to school. The boys tend to get that part time job and hear the jingle of money in their pockets and decide the short term goal of earning money now wins over the long-term goal of finding a better job later, with more education on their side”.

“When we started with this project of separating boys and girls in this school, and involving the community, we thought it was very important to get the parents involved. The parents, especially in the inner-city sometimes viewed the schools as the enemy, the only time they got a call, was when their child was in trouble, and then have to hear that they are a rotten parent. So we decided we would have somebody who called the home all the time, with every little bit of good news, and that is what she is known as, ‘Mrs. Goodnews’. If a student was seen picking up a candy wrapper and putting it in the garbage, the parents would get a call saying ‘what a solid citizen your child is’. If a child did better on a current exam, than he/she did on an earlier exam, the parents would get a call saying ‘Wow, your child is really doing a wonderful job. When you need a parent to cooperate, either in discipline or in homework, we are already allies, they don’t see us as the enemy, they know you have the child’s benefit in mind. This has a huge effect. They know we believe they are good parents, struggling like everybody else. Seventy five percent of our parents turned out for first term report cards, and lots of two-parent couples came. Much higher than the usual turnout”.

(Allanna, 2004).

The importance of family involvement in a child’s education cannot be overestimated. This schools approach utilizes this philosophy to the best possible degree. They have motivated the parents to take an interest in their children’s education as indicated by the 75% parent turnout rate. The students receive the benefit of positive reinforcement.

Dropouts

In 1991, the dropout rate across Canada was 18%. By 1999 the dropout rate fell to 12%. In Quebec, in 1999, the dropout rate was 16%, down from 22% in 1991 (CAUT, The Almanac, March 2004). The CAUT statistics, which are based on Statistics Canada information, were not divided by gender. However, according to the Quebec Superior Council on Education, statistics for 1998 show 40% of boys and 26% of girls dropped out of high school (Abley, 2002). There does seem to be an inconsistency between the federal and provincial data.

The dropout rate of a school, is an indicator of the success of that particular school. The definition of the term 'drop-out' is open to conjecture. The normal definition of 'does not graduate from high school', has a few caveats. According to the AAUW, students who drop out for a short period of time and then return to school are still counted as dropouts. Sometimes students who transfer schools, might be considered as dropouts. However, we can look at the other side of the coin. Recently, a Houston, Texas high school was rated as extremely successful, since it had a zero dropout rate, and was therefore entitled to more state funding because of the success. This appeared to be a surprising success story, since the school was located in a low socioeconomic area, where there was a high amount of immigrants, traditionally an area that would have a significantly high drop-out rate. Upon closer scrutiny, it was discovered that they were drops-outs, but they were classified as transfers to other schools, or as returning to their native countries, thereby creating a zero drop-out rate (Bryant, 2003). According to the High School and Beyond study, more girls finished high school than did boys. (AAUW, 1990:48).

“Significantly the dropout takes its negative meaning in relation to its opposites, the successful and competitive student, the lifelong learner, who will, in turn, capably and flexibly adjust to a rapidly changing and increasingly technological future. In contrast to ‘normal’ children, who (presumably) enjoy school and do well, the dropout comes to stand as a pathological marker for school failure, family ignorance, or neglect, family poverty and barriers to opportunity” (Dehli, Kari, 1996:18).

According to the author, school leavers are not totally to blame for dropping out. Many variables contribute to the decision. If parents are not involved in their children’s schooling (like meeting with the teachers), or if education is not held in high regard within a family situation this would contribute to dropping out. Those students who come from an impoverished background are also more likely to quit school. The school system may be partly to blame as well, for not motivating students. In the United States, the quality of the school depends upon the neighborhood. The higher up the socio-economic state of a district, the better the quality of schools in those districts. Hence the student coming from a lower socio-economic district, gets a poorer quality education, expectation for this type of student is lower, and he/she doesn’t disappoint.

One of the main consequences of being a dropout is being trapped in dead-end low-paying jobs. “They will not be able to compete on the job market and contribute to national prosperity” (Dehli, 1996:18). Since well paying manufacturing jobs have been disappearing, no longer can a person make a decent salary with less than a high school education. The Economic Council of Canada promotes more ‘flexible’ apprenticeships, linked to programs in secondary schools as well as in community colleges. Such programs, will not only provide more relevant schooling for disabled youth, they will

also redress the skills gap and boost the country's ability to compete in the new Global economy" (Dehli, 1996:19).

School dropouts have economic implication for the country as well as the individual. "One out of every four Americans doesn't finish high school. By 1999, more than ten million adults will not have finished school. Is this anyway to compete? Second rate skills means a second rate America" (Kelly & Caskell, 1996:3).

In Canada, the federal government has created programs to help students stay in school. "Canada has completed a five-year national initiative to counteract the problem of students dropping out of school before graduation. An assessment of its impact suggests that more students were staying in school for the entire year – 84% in 1992-1993 compared with about 70% in the 1980's – as a result of the initiative. Furthermore, there was wide spread evidence that academic performance and attitudes improved" (The Stay in School Initiative). This program got various members of the general community involved. As well as parents, companies and corporations became active, offering incentives to young people to stay in school.

Flowers vs Bugs – Curriculum Content

In order to maintain the interest and involvement of children in a coed elementary school class, the curriculum should include course material particular to each gender. For instance most girls would not be interested in identifying bugs, and most boys would not be interested in identifying flowers.

Catharine commented,

“The books and the workbooks we use are very recent and I think they are not oriented to one gender, they appeal to both, and these books include different cultures as well. An example of how it would appeal to both males and females, there might be a boy and a girl who are friends, and they go roller skating together anyone as a friend because he is a boy or if she is a girl, or if they look different, or if they are just learning English. There was another story, about babysitting, and the main character was a boy, he was the babysitter. Boys in the class were not interested in that. I try to equal out my choices of reading material for the class. Sometimes, I will assign two books, one more appealing to girls, the other more action packed and appealing to the boys. I tell them they have to read one of the two books, they could choose which one. I don’t restrict the girls to the girl-oriented book, and I don’t restrict boys to the boy-oriented activity”.

Allanna explains that at the school where she works,

“boys particularly love gym classes, God help us if there is an event going on at school and gym class has to be cancelled, whereas the girls are quite happy to miss gym. A lady from the YMCA downtown, has been hired to teach a kick boxing self-esteem program, which involves one hour of kickboxing and a subsequent hour of discussion of girl’s issues. We offer it every year to our senior 3 girls, and they are fine with the discussion part, they love to sit down and do that, but to get them into the physical part is very difficult. We have girls’ teams, and the girls who get involved in sports are great with this, but it is not a generalization. There are not that many girls involved in this activity”

The literature and the other interviewee’s confirm that girls like to ‘discuss’, and boys like to ‘do’.

Allanna discusses eyes-on and hands-on.

“In English, the girls are more avid readers, and we see that more and more, as we try to look for appropriate reading material that meets their life experiences. We have many real readers among the girls, I cannot say that we see real readers among the boys. I don’t think the boys don’t read, I just don’t think they read for pleasure. In general, boys have shorter attention spans, but if it is something the boys are interested in, well then it is a different story. Today is a pedagogical day, there are no classes for students, yet a whole bunch of kids came in because they are building a robot. There is a robot competition

coming up. There are both girls and boys involved, some are building, some are doing a web site, some are keeping journals”

Marietta emphasizes gender differences in school at an early age

“In our school, each teacher sets up her program with weekly themes, and I have noticed that boys are more interested in themes like space, rockets, wildlife, marine life, transportation, volcanoes, earthquakes, experiments, in a nutshell, things that can destroy, are destructive, or dangerous. Girls, on the other hand, are more interested in topics or themes like gardening, baking, special occasions or events like Valentine’s or Easter. In speaking about subjects such as playing or arts and crafts, for children, girls would rather do arts and crafts, and boys prefer playing. Most of the time teachers are able to tell whether a certain picture or collage was done by a girl or boy, because girls tend to take their time, and add details, with color, sparkles, and ribbons boys will tend to put a blob of glue stick, two pieces of paper and say ‘I’m finished’, a minute after they began on their assignment. In playing, boys are more creative and they will be able to create Lego’s and blocks more than girls. Girls will tend to do a puzzle, read a book, or play with dolls or play mommy or teacher. Boys are more interactive with each other, and girls play more independently or they will do more role-playing”.

Aylene, offered these comments.

“Boys need physical activity, that is why at recess or lunch, they are in the school yard, playing football or baseball. Anything where they are moving around. Girls, on the other hand, come from a tradition where physical activity was not encouraged and where they were told to act ladylike. Although there are still remnants of this, it is slowly changing, but I still see a great difference in how girls spend their leisure time and how boys do. Things seem to be moving too fast for boys, somehow they can’t seem to keep up. I think when things lack playfulness, they tend to withdraw a little. Generally the attention span of teenagers is quite short, the girls seem to be more tenacious than the boys. I really feel that we can lose their attention very easily, especially the boys. I think girls tend to put up their hands more than boys, but it depends on the interest in the course and how it is taught. If it’s something that boys are interested in, they will put up their hands more”.

Aylene had comments about math and science classes:

“In a science or math class, even though boys are interested, there will be some determined females who will be actively

involved, because they have been brought up to think, 'I can be anything I want to be'. Girls are doing better and better at math, because they have this attitude of 'I can do it'. They need to show that they understand what is being taught. Girls are very determined. Male math teachers tend to focus on the boys, I see the girls try to get their attention. Girls are catching up to boys very quickly in math and sciences, while the boys are not making such strides in language arts”.

In her classes, Aylene likes to encourage discussions. I will bring up a topic or bring in a short movie or poster to spark the debate. I try to find subjects that will be interesting to the boys. I find this works well, the boys especially seem to enjoy this and many of them are eager to express their opinions”.

Rebecca contributed these comments.

“Girls are easier to teach because they are usually trying to please. They have more of an attention span. Boys can lose interest very quickly. A teacher has to be more creative than just standing in front and talking, she/he has to find ways to engage the children and get them to participate. You have to make learning interesting and fun, as well as educational. Fun doesn't mean party time, it's a way for them to learn through doing”.

Oksana recounted this method of teaching:

“in one class, a teacher had decided to make compost, so she had a wooden box with some earth and the children as well as the staff would throw in their apple cores, fruit peelings, etc., so that this would be turned into compost. The children, especially the boys, loved this idea. I would tell them that they were braver than I, because I was scared of worms. They would say 'That's because you are girl, and girls are always afraid of bugs. I would reply, not all girls, just some of us”.

Gender Equitable Teaching Methods

In this section, teaching methods are discussed that involve engaging both sexes instead of gender separated methods. Under certain circumstances it is possible to

effectively teach both genders together. As a result of an open-ended question, Oksana elaborates on this point.

Oksana's emphasizes the psychological aspects of gender differentiation in the classroom. "I have recently learned about discovery learning. It is where you have students actively involved in learning projects. In this method, you are creating an environment in the classroom for you students. They are actively learning, not sitting there passively. The information is there for them. For example, if the teacher wants to teach them about different animals, she will divide them into small groups of collaborative and cooperative groups, where you have students working together and learning from each other. She/he will have the material available for them, she/he will be facilitators to help them find the information. Let's say one group is interested in finding out about wolves, another about whales. They are both mammals, but live in different environments. The student may look at the ecological aspect of it, how endangered they are, what are their feeding habits and what are their social habits?

Another method is scaffolding, similar to the discovery learning method where the teacher gives them the basic knowledge the students need to begin, such as reading, writing and math. The children start to build on these basic skills, each child working at his/her own pace. This is like the foundation to building a house. Create an atmosphere where children are engaged in learning, get their attention and then get them motivated".

The other way of teaching would be for the teacher to stand there and say, 'this is what a wolf does'. Students have to memorize this and regurgitate it on a quiz. How interesting is that? Whereas in this discovery learning method, the students are asked 'what is it that interests you about wolves? Make a presentation. You have students

working together, they're seeking information from different sources, they become researchers. They become critical thinkers, because they have to decide what is important and what's not. They develop communication skills, they have to discuss things together and come to some kind of consensus of how the presentation is going to look, who is going to do what, what roles they will have within the group. That is the discovery learning of it. It is not like telling go and seek, learn and find out on their own. You lay out an environment that is conducive for learning.

You'll have students that will progress at different paces, some will produce elaborate presentations, some will not have as much information for their presentations. You do not compare these presentations, you are judging them on their own ability, because let's say a month ago, a particular student couldn't read those sorts of things, but now they are starting to improve their reading skills. This is very appealing to male students in particular, because they are allowed to move around, to gather things that are interesting to them. They decide on the topic, rather than being told what they have to do. There is a theme that you are doing social sciences, but you're narrowing it down in one sense, but you're still letting them discover things on their own. You can pose particular questions, as a teacher, to make them think, such as why did you decide on this animal, why did you think it was important to study about this animal. What did you learn about the animal that you did not know before?"

Dress Codes: Peer Pressure, Socio-Economic Status and Discipline

Two of the respondents worked or had worked in schools that had uniform dress codes.

The general consensus among the other four interviewees was favorable to eliminate competition and reinforce minimum dress standards. Allanna and Oxana discussed in detail, the issue of dress codes. Allanna's view on dress codes are:

“We have a dress code, and I find it is very effective, because in our environment, we have a lot of kids who come from a socio-economic disadvantage, and maybe that kid may only have one pair of pants, that is not going to show with a dress code. I think it is a big advantage, because I don't think parents can keep up with the message in clothes as quickly as kids can pick up the message. With a uniform, there is no competition about who has more clothes, or nicer clothes. We keep a lot of extra clothes in a room, but sometimes kids come to school without wearing dress code clothing, because maybe the laundry didn't get done, they just don't have it. So being able to have extra makes it easier”.

Oksana also voiced an opinion about uniforms. “For a few years, I taught at the high school level. The principal of this school would have an orientation session, for parents of children entering high school. He also had a session for the students themselves, he outlined everything, ‘This is how it is. This is how it is going to be’. He was able to win the students’ respect and he never had to yell at them. He was always impeccably dressed, suit and tie. He had a profound effect on the students. He provided the confident male role model for all the boys. Children respond greatly to how teachers and principals dress. If a female teacher wears a power suit to work, she will give an impression that school is serious and she will have the respect of the children. If she comes in a flowery dress, sure, it's more comfortable, but the kids have a completely different impression of school, it's not so serious. The same thing for males, when the principal I mentioned retired, he was replaced by another male, who wore casual clothes to school. He tried to be friends with the students. What happened was that the kids, mostly the boys, started acting out and clowning around, because they knew they could

get away with it. You can't have a principal who wants to be pals, he loses the respect of the students and does not present a strong male role model".

Oxana makes another good point for school dress codes. "I am now involved in introducing computer technologies to schools, therefore in the course of my work, I visit several schools. Recently I went to a school which had a dress code, black pants or skirts with a red or white top. These students looked like part of a team and ready to work. I noticed even the school was neat and clean. It seems that if students have a dress code, they have a better idea of their boundaries".

Ritalin or Boys Will Be Boys

Oksana understands the difference between normal male-child behavior and behavior that warrants sedative medication. "I don't think boys suffer from learning disabilities, such as attention deficit syndrome more than girls do. I think there are as many cases for girls as for boys. However, for a teacher it may be more noticeable in boys, as they would begin to fidget and become restless, etc. It is not always attention deficit in boys, it could be just that they are bored. Unfortunately, when school boards have to do cutbacks, the first thing they cut is special education classes, so the children who really need more attention, are placed in regular classrooms, where teachers don't have the time to give these children the attention they require".

"Ritalin, I believe is prescribed too easily and too often. I think parents who have been told that their child needs medication to calm down, have a responsibility to look into the matter with their pediatrician and to get as much information as possible, to determine whether the child needs Ritalin, or whether it is a convenience for the school.

A couple of years ago, I worked in a rather small school, with a student population of approximately 200 students. Everyday, at lunchtime, there were 15 children, all boys, lined up in the office to get their medication. The secretary would have all these bottles lined up on her desk, to be ready to give these children their lunchtime medication”.

Rebecca shares a similar opinion to Oksana. “Boys like to be more active and I think that sometimes this is diagnosed as ADS (Attention Deficit Syndrome), where Ritalin is the recommended solution. If I had permission from the office, I would let the boy who is quite active, go out and run around the yard until he gets tired and then he can come back in. I have seen cases where the child, and it is almost always boys, are put on Ritalin and the following year the dosage is increased and the issue is not resolved. I am concerned that too many children are being given Ritalin and they should not be. Perhaps it is being used to make the child easier to handle for the parents and the school”

There was not a direct question on the use or effects of Ritalin in the questionnaire. The comments of Oksana and Rebecca were volunteered during our discussions. The other four respondents made no mention of this.

The Role of the Media

Allanna had this to offer about the media effects on children. “In the 1960’s all commercials that had to do with cleaning the house, portrayed a dumb women that had MR. Clean, or the Ajax wizard, who was male, and there was always a male voiceover. Now it has gone to the other extreme. The way males are portrayed on television is really destructive. The husband is always portrayed as an idiot, while the whole family is making fun of him behind his back. Boys are much more fragile. There is this belief that

they are macho, but they really need more praise than girls. They need to see what they can accomplish more than girls do. They are brought down by a failure much quicker than girls are. I don't think that violence in video games has an impact on boys, but the length of time they play has a neurological impact, whether they are violent or not. Boys are much more heavily involved in electronic games than girls are".

Rebecca had this to say about media effects on children. "Children tend to watch a great deal of television, even during the school week. Unfortunately, there are very few males who are portrayed in a positive light. The pendulum has swung to the other extreme. Men today are being portrayed as helpless individuals, scared of their wives, unable to make a decision without their wives guiding them, they are portrayed more as children than as an equal to their partners. Other males are portrayed as criminals, it is really difficult to find a positive role model on television, so I think that some of the programming, in general in television has a negative effect on children".

Catharine had this to say about the media's effects on children. "The message that the media gives to girls is that you are only as valuable as how good you look. The message to the boys, these days, is that men are idiots, so boys definitely need a role model to set an example".

Marietta had very different views of the media effects. "I don't think that television sitcoms and commercials have a negative effect on male students because I believe that at about the age of thirteen on, males understand that what is on TV does not give a realistic picture of what goes on in real life. Also, there is a wide variety of television shows on primetime, from shows dealing with crime and justice, to sitcoms such as Friends and Everybody Loves Raymond and especially the richest role model in

the world, Donald Trump in *The Apprentice*. I believe that males students should have positive role models in their lives, whether it be a parent, relative, a friend's parent, or a big brother".

The informal respondent, i.e., the one male that spoke to me for a few minutes on the telephone, who did offer some insight into the gender gap problem in school, posed the question, "how can you expect boys to do well in school, when everywhere they look, men are portrayed as clowns. The sit-coms and commercials that are on television today portray men as being ineffective, in need of their wives' guidance and direction, as if they were little children. One particularly offensive commercial shows a man acting like a dog. He steps out of the shower and shakes himself off like a dog does when he is wet. His wife and kids are tolerant and indulgent of this behavior. What does this say to boys as well as girls?"

This comment was in response to my last question, pertaining to any suggestion on how to improve the gender gap situation. This is what Allanna had to say. She works in an inner city school and the prospects for all or most of her students to go onto university is not very likely. "We need more vocational courses here, it would be great if everyone of them got a Secondary 5 High School Leaving and go onto CEGEP, it's not going to happen, so we really need to get them ready for life after high school". This view is also shared by educational theorists.

"Some theorists say many boys are more at ease doing than theorizing: Making trade training more widely available, rather than forcing every teenage boy to sit in academic classes could be one useful approach to this problem. Boys continue to be encouraged to meet a narrower set of expectations – but without necessarily even getting

the encouragement needed to go into traditionally masculine fields such as vocational training in plumbing, electricity, or carpentry, at a time when jobs in these areas are plentiful” (The Gazette, March 27, 2004).

Findings

The following is a list of my findings:

- 1) Boys require a different style of teaching than girls do. Boys respond better to active engagement in education.
- 2) Gendered classrooms result in gender friendly teaching. Boys do better. Girls also thrive.
- 3) Contrary to Gilligan, Pipher and the AAUW and Bouchar et al., girls are flourishing, boys are floundering. Boys are behind girls in elementary school, high school and post secondary school.
- 4) Bullying is a serious problem in schools. Schools need to adopt zero tolerance for bullying.
- 5) Gender equity schools are really strongly female oriented, according to Sommers.
- 6) Some feminist believe that getting boys to act more like girls would solve any problem in the education system.
- 7) There is an urgent need to get more males to go into teaching. Because of so many one parent families, there is a shortage of male role models.
- 8) Girls enjoy more passive activities such as reading. Boys enjoy more active oriented activities, running, jumping, playing baseball, soccer, and football.

9) Dress Codes can have a very positive effect on students. The students' dress code can decrease peer pressure. The dress code of the staff can create the impression of the seriousness of school.

10) Males suffer much higher rates of suicide, more involved in drugs and alcohol than females are.

11) Genetic research has put forward the argument that the most gendered part of the body is the brain. In other words, some gender differences are innate and not resulting from socialization.

12) Curricula have to be modified to fit the interests of boys as well as girls.

13) The more the family is involved with the child's school, the more likelihood the child will stay in school

Conclusion

Education specialists discuss how the variables regarding gender and education can have a positive effect on schooling, in some cases for all students and in other cases for male students, without being detrimental to female students.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Education is one of the building blocks of our society. To some extent, it determines what kind of work one does and also has an impact on an individual's earnings. In the past, a person was able to find a fairly well paying job with just a high school diploma. With the disappearance of manufacturing jobs, finding a good paying job requires more than a high school diploma. Unfortunately there are many young people who do not realize this, drop out of school, and wind up in low-paying dead-end jobs. The statistics tell us that the majority of dropouts are males. The decision to drop out of school is influenced by their entire school experience and rarely is a spur of the moment decision. A feeling of alienation, of gross disinterest, of not fitting in, of not having a role model in a responsible position to emulate or at least to talk to, would lead to what Merton would call anomie. Applicable in the sense that in order for boys to develop into young men with an understanding and accepting of their particular gender quirkiness, they need role models at home and at school.

Currently in Canada, the population is approximately 49.5% males and 50.5% females. These figures should be replicated in the graduation rate. This however is not the case. In Canada as well as the United States males are losing ground and females steadily moving forward.

One of the differences between males and females that I came across continually in the literature, as well as the interviews, was a very definite need for boys to be active, moving around, using their motor skills. Girls on the other hand were very tolerant and

patient with sitting at their desks and listening to the teacher. A possible reason that boys get called on more often, is to be reprimanded for what the teacher sees as misbehaving because of fidgeting or interrupting the class, to the boys, this is not misbehaving, it is what they do. One has only to observe a school yard at recess time or lunch time, which I have done a number of times, since starting this thesis, under the pretext of walking my dog. Every time, I observed boys running, jumping, roughhousing with other boys, playing ball, or soccer or some other game. Time and again, I observed girls huddled in little groups of 2 or 3 busily chatting away, standing more or less in the same spot. A few other girls are sitting on the steps of the school, alone, reading a book.

It is not only a result of what happens in high school that determines whether a person goes to university. However, I have come to the conclusion that it is what begins as a child enters the school system that has a long reaching effect, and could possibly account for the disparity between males' and females' academic success. "There are so many variables to success in education, and sometimes I think that by the time they reach high school, the chance to intervene is over, maybe the hard wiring that has happened in their early years is insurmountable. Maybe they've already gotten to that place where they can't move" (interviewee Allanna).

From as early as preschool, with four and five year olds, the preschool teacher said that boys get rowdy and they have to stop and address the situation, i.e., reprimanding the male child. The majority of my respondents said girls want to please the teachers, it is very important for girls to be liked by the teachers. This observation came from preschool, elementary school and high school teachers, which would appear to indicate that this a fairly consistent characteristic of female students. Of course, there are

exceptions to this, but for purposes of this research, I am looking at the majority. So if we have females who are anxious to please and rowdy, fidgety males, who may disrupt the class, females are likely to get positive attention from the teacher while males are likely to get negative attention from the teachers.

Before the interviews and the literary research, I consulted Statistics Canada and the U.S Census Bureau, to see if what I noticed at Concordia, (many more female students than male), was true about the rest of Canada and the United States, Canada showed approximately 60%female graduates at the bachelor's level, compared to 40% males. In the United States, the ratio was 57% females to 43% males at the same level.

In an effort to get as balanced and as truthful a picture of the state of education, I researched the feminist perspectives as well as the masculinist ones. In reading Carol Gilligan's "In a Different Voice", Mary Pipher's "Reviving Ophelia" and The American Association of University Women's Report 'How Schools Shortchange Girls', I was left with the impression that girls in America, as well as Canada, were fragile "saplings in the wind" (Pipher). Adolescent girls were moody, distant, changed from a positive lively individual pre-adolescent with many interests to someone who became distant from family and friends, got in with the wrong crowds, got significantly lower grades, lost her self-esteem, worried about her looks, her weight, felt she wasn't attractive enough. Much of what I read were from Pipher's case studies (she is a psychologist), of adolescent girls. These girls in therapy are again the exception. There are many more girls not in therapy than there are in it.

Then as I began to read Christina Hoff Sommers' "The War Against Boys", I got another view of who was succeeding and who was not succeeding at school. According

to her research as well as numerous articles expressing concern about boys' academic achievements, boys were being left behind. Girls were much more engaged in school, they spent more time on their studies, got better grades and were much more involved in extracurricular activities, such as school newspapers and as student council president.

Most adolescent girls and perhaps boys as well, are concerned with their appearance. However, most girls don't become anorexic or go through cosmetic surgery to improve their looks. In the past, I believe the pressure was on females to be very attractive, now it seems males feel the same kind of pressure, but probably not to the same degree.

At the beginning of my research, it didn't seem that boys' underachievement was an important issue as far as the media was concerned. In the course of writing this thesis, the issue has come up in various newspapers, television newsmagazine programs, as well as reputable magazines, and most recently a radio talk show in Montreal. The topic of male education for the talk show was spurned by the release of the latest figures from Statistics Canada, which shows the gap widening, between males and females as far as educational achievement is concerned. It took so long for governments and media to become concerned. Females graduates achieved parity with male graduates in 1989, with females gaining on males every year. Fifteen years later, governments and education officials are trying to find a solution.

I must admit that as I began my research, I didn't give too much importance to the idea of gender segregated classrooms. I have to admit that my position has changed 180°. I really believe that boys would benefit from being in an all-male class. Many of my interviewees believed that boys' educational needs were different from girls. One

male teacher in the U.S., teaching an all boys class stated that “boys need games, and they thrive on competition” (Sommers, 2000:174). Boys’ natural high spiritedness is not discouraged in this type of setting, but channeled into accomplishments. In one year of attending an all-male class, with male teachers, boys make tremendous strides in closing the gender gap.

In the inner-city school that I visited to conduct an interview, my first impression upon entering the school was that I was amazed at how clean the school was, absolutely spotless. I was also impressed by the students’ art that was on display as well as research projects that were intact and had been on display for quite some time. This high school moved up approximately 150 points in the rating of high schools in Quebec, in slightly over a year. This high school has gender-separated classes as well as the teacher being of the same gender as the students. I believe these are astounding results in such a short period of time. For this reason, as well as what I have read, I support gender-segregated classrooms. When one of the male students at this school was asked if he liked being in an all-male class, he answered “Yes, because if I make a mistake, I don’t have to worry about the girls laughing at me”. I don’t believe boys should advance at the cost to girls, however I believe that this method would continue to be encouraging and sustaining to girls, as well as helping boys catch up in their educational achievement as well.

A finding that came up in several of my interviews was unexpected. This was a concern from female teachers about boys’ fragility. These educators agreed that boys need encouragement and positive reinforcement even more than girls do. Some boys have been scarred by negative feedback from insensitive teachers, and they carry these scars around with them for a very long time. The macho attitude that they sometimes

display is just a suit of armor to cover their hurt. Boys are brought down by failure much more easily than girls are. One of the respondents said that positive feedback was the most significant variable in helping boys to succeed.

Another variable that I did expect was the impact of lack of male role models. Almost all of my respondents agreed that it was critical to get more male teachers into the profession. With an ever-growing amount of single parent families, led by females, there were no male role models for young boys to look up to and to try to emulate. Since children usually live with the mother, the daughters have their moms as well as their female teachers as role models. Possibly this is why boys do better with male teachers, they feel more comfortable interacting with a male, as well as looking to a male for guidance and support.

The following are some of the recommendation stemming from my research:

#1 Gendered schools or classrooms. Girls and boys have different learning needs. Girls respond well to sitting in a class, listening to the teacher. Boys find this boring. They need to be active in their learning. Working with teams on a project, boys get very involved and enjoy the learning process, without realizing that they are learning. They enjoy competition and being challenged. Boys are team players. Girls enjoy gentler types of activities. Gender segregated classrooms should be introduced to elementary and high schools.

#2 Male Role Models

Due to the high rate of divorce and separation, there are many one parent families. Invariably the parent who is responsible for raising the children is the mother. With most of the teachers being female, there are many boys who suffer from a lack of a male role

models. They do not have another male to look up to or to try to emulate. We need to get more males to go into teaching. School boards need to brush up the image of teachers, make it as appealing to men as it is to women.

3 Male Role Models

Boys respond better to male teachers, and male teachers are more familiar, because of their own experiences to deal with issues that male students may have. They also provide a positive male role model for the boys.

#4 Flowers vs Bugs – Curriculum Content

In choosing books that students have to read, teachers in coed classrooms should offer a choice of two types of books, and let each child pick one: either action packed, non-emotional, which would likely appeal more to the boys or less action, more emotions, which would likely appeal to girls. Generally girls will read books that are in addition to the required reading for the class. Since boys are less likely to read for pleasure, then it is important that they are assigned or have a choice to read boy oriented literature.

#5 Dress Codes

Dress codes eliminate competition. Students don't feel pressured to have to buy designer clothes to be accepted among their peers. Dress codes also put students into a mind set that school is serious, they are not in their play clothing. Students become part of the establishment by wearing some type of uniform. The dress code extends to the environment. Usually a school that has a dress code will also be kept cleaner by the students. Schools should be encouraged to adopt a dress code.

#6 Bullies

There should be zero tolerance for bullies. Some teachers think this is a normal part of school and turn a blind eye to it. It is a very serious topic, schools in the states are trying out a pilot project, where children who are bullies or display other types of aggressive behavior are sent to alternative schools, with fewer students per teacher. These students are doing much better and will actually graduate from high school this spring.

#7 Ritalin

Although there are children for whom Ritalin is beneficial. Sometimes Ritalin is used to control boys who are rowdy and disruptive. These boys are not in need of Ritalin, they are just boys being boys. Boys should not be made to act like girls, to please the teacher, or to use as an example of a gender-fair school.

#8 Dropouts

Boys who feel alienated from school are less likely to continue. Canada had implemented "A Stay in School Plan", which was somewhat successful at lowering the dropout rate. Sometimes, though, once a student takes a part time job and starts making money, he might opt for short term gratification and low wages in exchange for long term gratification and good wages. If schools were less alienating for boys, perhaps there would be less dropouts. School boards should plan campaigns to make young people aware of the long term effects that dropping out of school has on a person's life.

#9 The Role of the Media

We cannot avoid media in our society. Young people feel the need to keep up with the latest trends. They need designer clothes, a particular brand of running shoes. Physical attractiveness is of the utmost importance. Men are portrayed in a negative light. They are either violent criminals, weak, bumbling husbands, made fun of by the whole family. While we shouldn't return to Father Knows Best, it would be refreshing to see men portrayed in a positive light.

#10 Biology

Researchers are now beginning to put forth the argument that the brain is the most gendered part of the body. Our gender identification is not purely a result of socialization. It appears that from young babies, girls and boys tend to differ. Perhaps these differences should be taken into consideration by schools.

Many of the above points would merit further in-depth studies, especially gendered classrooms, male role models and dress codes. Changes can be made to help boys without harming girls. This is not an anti-feminist work, but a pro-humanist one.

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Appendices

- A Consent Form for Interviews
- B Questionnaire for interviews
- C Correcting a Statistical Source

Appendix A

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Susan Nicoriuk, as part of her Males and Education study under the supervision of Professor Anthony Synnott, Thesis Supervisor in the Master's Degree Program of the Sociology Department at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Purpose:

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to investigate the apparently widening gender gap in educational achievement between male and female students at elementary school, high school and university.

Procedures:

The research interviews will be conducted in school offices, or at other locations, at the convenience to the participants.

The participants will be requested to answer a series of open-ended questions, which means they will be encouraged to elaborate their responses.

The participant has full control of the interview and can stop, cancel, or continue, at their discretion.

The participant has the option of confidentiality, where only the researcher will know his/her identity, and will not divulge it. If the participant chooses the non-confidentiality option, then his/her identity will be revealed in the study and acknowledgements.

Conditions of Participation:

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand that my participation in this study is: (please check one)

☐ CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity).

☐ NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in the study and acknowledgements).

I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed. I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely consent and agree to participate in this study.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

WITNESS SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) Do children of each gender receive the same amount of attention from the teacher? If so, which gender, and why?
- 2) Are boys more interested in certain subjects, than are girls? Which subjects and why?
- 3) Are girls more interested in certain subjects, than are boy? Which subjects and why?
- 4) Are you in favor or against gendered classrooms? Why do you think this is a good idea? Or why do you think it is not a good idea?
- 5) Is the subject course materials, such as books to read, geared more to one gender than the than the other?
- 6) Is one gender easier to teach, than the other? If so, why?
- 7) In general, do members of both genders have the same lengths of attention span?
- 8) During breaks such as recess and lunch, do children of both genders intermingle, or do they play or interact differently? What do boys do during these breaks? What do girls do during these breaks?
- 9) Are girls easier to teach than boys? Why or why not?
- 10) Are boys easier to teach than girls? Why or why not?
- 11) Do you think the lack of male teachers in elementary schools and high schools, is detrimental to young males? Do you think male teachers would inspire male students to achieve academic success?
- 12) With the increasing numbers of single moms being the head of the household, do you think young male students suffer from a lack of a role model?
- 13) Do male students coming from two parent families achieve better grades, than males coming from families headed by females?
- 14) Do you think that the way men are portrayed on television sitcoms and commercials have a negative effect on male students, such as why bother to succeed, look at how successful men are treated?
- 15) Do you have any other suggestions or ideas on why girls seem to do better at school than boys do?

APPENDIX C

CORRECTING A STATISTICAL SOURCE

Hi Susan,

Thank you very much for bringing the discrepancy in Table 5.13 to our attention. We looked at the original data file from Statistics Canada, from which these tables were created, and identified that the reason the column totals do not equal the sum of the rows above is because the degrees awarded for Arts & Science are included in the column totals, but since Statistics Canada does not consider Arts & Science to be a major discipline in their standard reporting format, we did not include that category in the table, although the numbers do show up in the provincial totals. In the next edition of the Almanac in 2005 we will be either revising the structure of the table or adding a note to explain the discrepancy you have identified. In the meantime, if you insert the following row before the totals row for both male/female, summing all rows should equal the totals presented at the bottom of the table. I don't have a breakdown by gender at this point.

Thanks again for pointing this out to us. Have a nice day.

Bachelor and 1st Professional Degrees Awarded in Arts & Science, 2000
NF PE NS NB QC ON MB SK AB BC
CANADA
2 18 246 78 821 1651 229 0 766 358
4169

Regards,
Larry

Larry S. Dufay
Senior Research Officer
Canadian Association of University Teachers