

A Special Section on Gender Equity

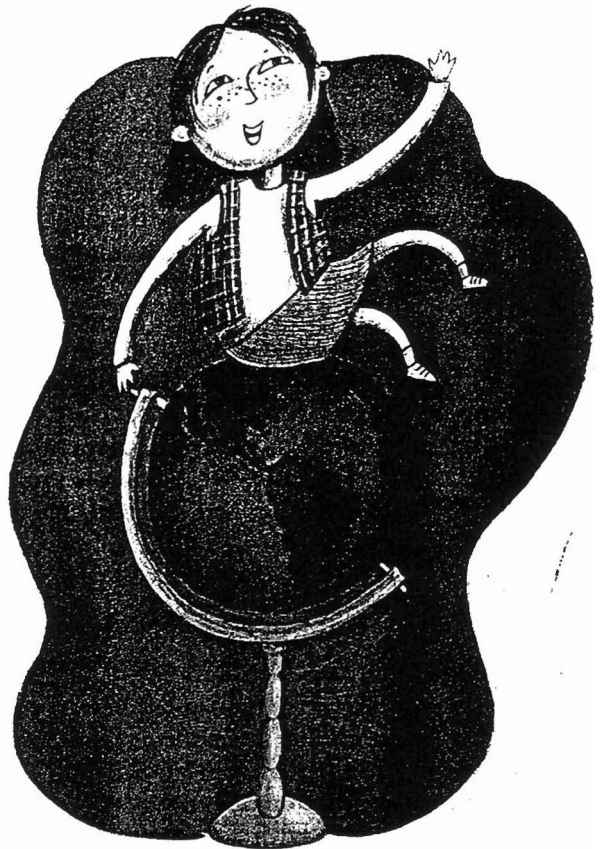
An Educator's Primer On the Gender War

In the latest twist on the gender war, school is portrayed as a place in which boys are victims and "girls rule." Mr. Sadker presents evidence that such a world exists only in fantasy.

BY DAVID SADKER

SEVERAL recent books, a seemingly endless series of television and radio talk shows, and a number of newspaper columns have painted a disturbing picture of schools mired in a surreptitious war on boys. In such books as *The War Against Boys* and *Ceasefire!*,¹ readers are introduced to education using war metaphors and are informed that boys are daily casualties of zealous efforts to help girls. These "schools-at-war" authors also call for more "boy-friendly" education, including increased testing, frequent classroom competitions, and the inclusion of war poetry in the curriculum — all measures intended to counter feminist influences. They also argue that sections of Title IX, the law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, be rescinded. Teachers are informed that giving extra attention to boys in classrooms and building up school libraries that are dominated by books about male characters are useful strategies to improve boys' academic per-

formance. As one book warns, "It's a bad time to be a boy in America."



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After over a quarter century of researching life in schools, I must admit that at first I thought this "gender war" was a satire, a creative way to alert people to the difficulties of creating fair schools that work for all children. Certainly boys (like girls) confront gender stereotypes and challenges, and teachers and parents must work hard every day to make schools work for all children. But these recent books and talk shows were not intended as satire; they purported to present a serious picture of schools in which girls ruled and boys were their victims.

The irony of girls waging a war on boys reminded me of a "Seinfeld" episode that featured "Bizarro World." For those of you not versed in the culture of Bizarro World, it is a Superman comics theme in which everything is opposite: up is down, in is out, and good is bad. When the popular sitcom featured an episode on Bizarro World, Kramer became polite and discovered that doors were to be knocked on, not stormed through. George went from nerdiness to cool, from dysfunctional to popular; he was rewarded with two well-adjusted parents. Elaine's self-absorption was transformed into compassion, a change that would probably lead to a hitch in the Peace Corps and stardom in her own Seinfeld spin-off, "Elaine in Africa." In this topsy-turvy transformation, the entire Seinfeld gang became well adjusted, with their ethical compasses recalibrated to do the right thing. What would schools be like, I thought, if such Bizarro World changes came to pass? What would school look like if "misguided feminists" were actually engaged in a "war against boys"? And then I thought, what if girls really did rule?

* * *

(Camera fade-in)

The statue of the great woman dominates the front lawn of suburban Alice Paul High School. (Alice Paul, of course, led the courageous fight for women to be recognized as citizens, and her efforts contributed to passage of the 19th Amendment.) By 2003, Alice Paul, Susan B. Anthony, and Hillary Rodham Clinton have become the most common names for America's schools.

The statue of Alice Paul at the entrance of the school has become a student *talis-woman*. Students rub Alice's big toe before taking the SAT or on the eve of a critical soccer match with their cross-town rivals, the Stanton Suffragettes. Although Alice Paul died in 1977, she remains a real presence on campus.

Once inside Alice Paul High School, images of fa-

mous women are everywhere. Pictures of Jeannette Rankin, Mary MacLeod Bethune, Margaret Sanger, Carry Nation, and Mia Hamm gaze down on students as they go to their classes, constant reminders of the power and accomplishments of women. There are few if any pictures of men, as if in confirmation of the old adage "It's a woman's world." Trophy cases overflow with artifacts trumpeting women's role in ending child labor, reforming schools, eliminating domestic violence, confronting alcoholism, and battling for health care reform. It is the same story in the technology and math wing of Alice Paul High, where the influence of such computer pioneers as Ada Loveless and Grace Hopper can be seen everywhere.

Few images of males can be found anywhere in the hallways — or in the textbooks. The typical history text devotes less than 5% of its content to the contributions of men, a percentage that actually shrinks in math and science texts. Other than the one or two "unusual men" who find their way into the curriculum, students learn that their world was constructed almost exclusively by and for women.

Not everyone is happy with female-dominated bulletin boards and textbooks, as school principal Anna Feminie knows all too well. (Most school principals are, of course, female, since they seem better equipped to manage demanding parents and a predominantly male faculty.) From time to time, a few vociferous parents of boys complain about the lack of male images. But Anna has been in her job for five years now, and she knows just how to handle angry parents. She makes a big show of Men's History Month. Almost magically, every March, a new crop of male figures materializes. Anna understands that Men's History Month is nothing more than a nod to political correctness. Luckily, most parents and faculty agree with Anna and feel more comfortable with the well-known female names and images from their own student days. But all that may be changing with the increased emphasis on standardized state tests. New history standards put the traditional female front and center once again, and perhaps the end of Men's History Month is in sight. And if that should come to pass, it would be just fine with principal Anna Feminie.

By 8 a.m., hallway noise is at a peak as students exchange last-minute comments before the late bell sounds. Crowds of girls rule the school's "prime real estate": main stairwells, cafeteria entrance, and the senior locker bay. In groups, the girls can be even more intimidating. Individual boys carefully weave their way around

these "girl areas," looking down to avoid unwanted stares and snares. The strategy is less than effective. Sometimes the boys are forced to pretend that they do not hear those louder-than-a-whisper offensive comments. At other times, the boys rapidly sidestep the outstretched arms of some of the more aggressive girls who are trying to impress their friends. Boys at Alice Paul travel in bands

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for safety, like convoys at sea. They smile a lot and speak a little. Although they do not quite understand it all, they know that they are at some risk, even in their own school, and taking precautions has become second nature.

Girls dominate in classrooms as well. They shout out answers, and teachers accept their behavior as "natural," part of their more aggressive biological makeup. Not true for the boys. When boys call out, they are likely to be reminded to "raise your hand." Even when girls do not shout out, teachers call on them more often than on boys, reward them more, help them more, and criticize them more. With girls as the center of classroom attention, boys seem content to sit quietly on the sidelines: low profiles are safe profiles.

Most boys take to their quiet, second-class role with incredible grace. They enroll in the programs more suitable for their nature: the humanities and social sciences courses, as well as the typical and predictable vocational programs. Few boys are assigned to costly special education programs. While educating boys is relatively inexpensive, there are rewards associated with lower career goals, docility, and conformity. Every quarter, boys are rewarded with higher grades on report cards. Boys are also more likely to be listed on the honor roll and chosen to be the school valedictorian. Teachers appreciate boys who do their work on time, cause few disruptions, demand less in class, rarely complain,

and do not need special education.

While these higher report card grades are comforting, low test scores are disturbing. When the SAT and other competitive tests roll around, boys' scores lag behind girls on both math and verbal tests. On virtually every high-stakes test that matters, including the Advanced Placement tests and later the Graduate Record Exam, girls outscore boys. Few adults wonder why boys' high report card grades are not reflected in these very important test scores.

While the athletic field offers a change of venue, it is basically the same story. At Alice Paul, boys' football, baseball, and basketball do not hold a candle to girls' field hockey and soccer. The student newspaper is filled with the exploits of the Alice Paul Amazons, as the female athletes are called. The Gentlemen Amazons draw smaller crowds and less coverage in the school paper. Funding for just one of the girls' teams can equal the entire male athletic budget. Although some parents have tried to bolster male sports, coaches, parents, and the influential state athletic association have thwarted their efforts.

Female domination of athletics is accompanied by the ringing of a cash register. A few female athletes not only have won college scholarships but also have moved into the multimillion-dollar ranks of the professionals. Amazon booster clubs have been generous to Alice Paul, funding the new athletic field, the state-of-the-art girls' training facility, and a number of athletic scholarships. The Alice Paul Amazons ignite school spirit and have won several state championships. No one was surprised five years ago when the former girls' field hockey coach, Anna Feminie, was chosen as the new principal.

If Alice Paul were alive today, she would be proud of her Amazons. Alice Paul women dominate corporate boardrooms and government offices, and many are leaders promoting social reform around the globe. And Alice herself would be no less proud of the men who graduate from her school, true partners with women at work and at home.

(Camera fade-out)

The description of the fictional Alice Paul High School is a true reflection of hundreds of studies of school life, with one obvious modification (after all,

it is Bizarro World): the genders have been reversed. The idea that "girls rule" in school is not only silly, it is intentionally deceptive. So why all the recent commotion about "a war on boys"?

Certainly boys do not always fit comfortably into the school culture, but this has little to do with girls — and a lot to do with how we conduct school. In fact, both girls and boys confront different school challenges, and they respond in different ways. Girls are more likely to react to problems in a quieter and less disruptive fashion, while boys are more likely to act out — or drop out. Males of color in particular drop out of high school more often and enroll in college less frequently than either minority females or white males. Decades of studies, books, and reports have documented the school difficulties of boys generally and of boys of color in particular.

The new twist in the current debate is the scapegoating of the feminist movement. And for those who were never very comfortable with the feminist movement, these new books and their ultraconservative spokespeople have an allure. Many mainstream media fixate on the audience appeal of a "Mars versus Venus" scenario, portraying boys as hapless victims of "male-hating feminists." Even educators and parents who do not blame females for the problems boys experience still buy into the argument that girls are "ahead" in school.

But for people to believe that "girls are responsible for boys' problems," they must repress historical realities: these problems predated the women's movement. Boys' reading difficulties, for example, existed long before modern feminism was even a twinkle in Betty Friedan's eye, and the dropout rate has actually decreased since the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*. Ironically, it was female teachers who fought hard to remove corporal punishment, while promoting new instructional strategies that moved teachers beyond lecture and recitation. Women educators led the movement for more humane classrooms, and the current attack on feminism has the potential of hurting boys as well as girls.

The truth is that *both* boys and girls exhibit different strengths and have different needs, and gender stereotypes shortchange all of us. So where are we in terms of the progress made for both girls and boys in school today? And what challenges still remain? The following "Report Card" takes us beyond the phony gender war and offers a succinct update of salient research findings.

A REPORT CARD ON THE COSTS OF GENDER BIAS

GRADES AND TESTS

Females. Females receive better grades from elementary school through college, but not everyone sees this as good news. Some believe that this may be one of the "rewards" girls receive for more quiet and conforming classroom behavior.²

Female test scores in several areas have improved dramatically in recent years. The performance of females on science and math achievement tests has improved, and girls now take more Advanced Placement tests than boys. Yet they lag behind males on a number of important tests, scoring lower on both the verbal and mathematics sections of the SAT, the Advanced Placement exams, and the Graduate Record Exam.³

Males. Males (and students from low-income families) not only receive lower grades, but they are also more likely to be grade repeaters. Many believe that school norms and culture conflict with many male behavior patterns.⁴ The National Assessment of Educational Progress and many other exams indicate that males perform significantly below females in writing and reading achievement.⁵

ACADEMIC ENROLLMENT

Females. Female enrollment in science and mathematics courses has increased dramatically in recent years. Girls are more likely to take biology and chemistry as well as trigonometry and algebra II. However, boys still dominate physics, calculus, and more advanced courses, and boys are more likely to take all three core science courses — biology, chemistry, and physics.⁶

College programs are highly segregated, with women earning between 75% and 90% of the degrees in education, nursing, home economics, library science, psychology, and social work. Women trail men in Ph.D.s (just 40% are awarded to women) and in professional degrees (42% to women). And women are in the minority at seven of eight Ivy League schools.⁷

Computer science and technology reflect increasing gender disparities. Boys not only enroll in more such courses, but they also enroll in the more advanced courses. Girls are more likely to be found in word-processing classes and clerical support programs. Girls are

also less likely to use computers outside school, and girls from all ethnic groups rate themselves considerably lower than boys on technological ability. Current software products are more likely to reinforce these gender stereotypes than to reduce them.⁸

Males. Males have a higher high school dropout rate than females (13% to 10%), and they trail females in extracurricular participation, including school government, literary activities, and the performing arts.⁹

Men are the minority (44%) of students enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate institutions, and they lag behind women in degree attainment at the associate (39%), bachelor's (44%), and master's (44%) levels. Although white males and females attend college in fairly equal proportions, African American and Hispanic males are particularly underrepresented at all levels of education.¹⁰

Gender segregation continues to limit the academic and careers majors of all students. Male college students account for only 12% of elementary education majors, 11% of special education majors, 12% of library science majors, and 14% of those majoring in social work.¹¹

ACADEMIC INTERACTIONS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Females. Females have fewer academic contacts with instructors in class. They are less likely to be called on by name, are asked fewer complex and abstract questions, receive less praise or constructive feedback, and are given less direction on how to do things for themselves. In short, girls are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms.¹²

In elementary school, girls are identified for gifted programs more often than boys; however, by high school fewer girls remain in gifted programs, particularly fewer African American and Hispanic girls. Gender segregation is also evident in the low number of gifted girls found in math and science programs.¹³

Males. Boys receive more teacher attention than females, including more negative attention. They are disciplined more harshly, more publicly, and more frequently than girls, even when they violate the same rules. Parents of male elementary school students (24%) are contacted more frequently about their child's behavior or schoolwork than parents of female students (12%), and boys constitute 71% of school suspensions.¹⁴

Males account for two-thirds of all students served in special education. The disproportionate represen-

tation of males in special education is highest in the categories of emotional disturbance (78% male), learning disability (68% male), and mental retardation (58% male).¹⁵

HEALTH AND ATHLETICS

Females. About one million U.S. teenagers get pregnant each year, a higher percentage than in other Western nations. Fifty percent of adolescent girls believe that they are overweight, and 13% are diagnosed with anorexia, bulimia, or binge-eating disorder.¹⁶

Girls who play sports enjoy a variety of health benefits, including lower rates of pregnancy, drug use, and depression. But despite these benefits, only 50% of girls are enrolled in high school physical education classes. Women today coach only 44% of women's college teams and only 2% of men's teams, while men serve as athletic directors for over 80% of women's programs.¹⁷

Males. Males are more likely than females to succumb to serious disease and be victims of accidents or violence. The average life expectancy of men is approximately six years shorter than that of women.¹⁸

Boys are the majority (60%) of high school athletes. Male athletes in NCAA Division I programs graduate at a lower rate than female athletes (52% versus 68%).¹⁹

CAREER PREPARATION, FAMILY, AND PARENTING

Females. Women dominate lower-paying careers. Over 90% of secretaries, receptionists, bookkeepers, registered nurses, and hairdressers/cosmetologists are female, and, on average, a female college graduate earns \$4,000 less annually than a male college graduate. Nearly two out of three working women today do not have a pension plan.²⁰

More than 45% of families headed by women live in poverty. For African American women, that figure rises to 55%, and it goes to 60% for Hispanic women. Even when both parents are present, women are still expected to assume the majority of the household responsibilities.²¹

Males. Men make up 99% of corporate chief executive officers in America's 500 largest companies but account for only 16% of all elementary school teachers and 7% of nurses (although this last figure is an increase from 1% of nurses in 1972).²²

Women and men express different views of fatherhood. Men emphasize the need for the father to earn

a good income and to provide solutions to family problems. Women, on the other hand, stress the need for fathers to assist in caring for children and in responding to the emotional needs of the family. These differing perceptions of fatherhood increase family strain and anxiety.²³

EVEN THIS brief overview of gender differences does little more than confirm common-sense observations: neither boys nor girls “rule in school.” Sometimes, even progress can mask problems. While a great deal has been written about females attending college in greater numbers than males, this fact has at least as much to do with color as with gender. The disparity between males and females in college enrollment is shaped in large part by the serious dearth of males of color in postsecondary programs. Moreover, attendance figures provide only one indicator; enrollments in specific college majors tell a different story.

As a result of striking gender segregation in college programs, women and men follow very different career paths, with very different economic consequences. Although the majority of students are female, the college culture is still strongly influenced by male leaders. Four out of five full professors are males, more male professors (72%) are awarded tenure than female professors (52%), and, for the last 30 years, full-time male professors have consistently earned more than their female peers.²⁴ Even at the elementary and secondary levels, schools continue to be managed by male principals and superintendents. If feminists are waging a “war on boys,” as some proclaim, they are being led by male generals.

It is not surprising that many educators are confused about gender issues. Both information and misinformation abound. There is little doubt that boys and school are not now — nor have they ever been — a match made in heaven. But this is a far cry from concluding that a gender war is being waged against them or that girls now “rule” in school, as one recent magazine cover proclaimed.

In the midst of the adult controversy, we can easily overlook the obvious, like asking children how they see the issue. Students consistently report that girls get easier treatment in school, are the better students, and are less likely to get into trouble. Yet school lessons are not always life lessons. When researcher Cynthia Mee asked middle school students about boys and girls, both had more positive things to say about being a boy than

being a girl. When, in another study, more than a thousand Michigan elementary school students were asked to describe what life would be like if they were born a member of the opposite sex, over 40% of the girls saw advantages to being a boy, ranging from better jobs to more respect. Ninety-five percent of the boys saw no advantage to being female, and a number of boys in this 1991 study indicated they would consider suicide rather than live life as a female. While some adults may choose to argue that females are the advantaged gender, girls and boys often see the world before them quite differently.²⁵

The success of the backlash movement has taught us a great many lessons. It has reminded us of the slow pace of social change and of the power of political ideologies to set the agenda for education. How ironic that the gender debate, once thought to be synonymous with females, now hinges on how well boys are doing in school. And in the end, reframing gender equity to include boys may prove to be a very positive development. For now, it is up to America’s educators to duck the barrage from the gender-war crowd and to continue their efforts to make schools fairer and more humane environments for all our students.

1. See Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); and Cathy Young, *Ceasefire: Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equity* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

2. Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How American Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Touchstone Press, 1995).

3. National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1999* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2000), p. 149; Richard T. Coley, *Differences in the Gender Gap: Comparisons Across Racial/Ethnic Groups in Education and Work* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, 2001); *National Score Report* (Iowa City: ACT, 1999); *Sex, Race, Ethnicity, and Performance on the GRE General Test, 1999-2000* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, 2000), p. 8; and National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education, 1999* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education, 1999).

4. David Sadker and Myra Sadker, “Gender Bias: From Colonial America to Today’s Classrooms,” in James Banks and Cherry McGee Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (New York: Wiley, 2001), p. 130.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 136.

6. *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women, 1998).

7. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, p. 290; and 1999 data gathered from university admissions offices of Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale.

8. *Gender Gaps*, pp. 54-55.

9. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, p. 127.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

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A Special Section on Gender Equity

Something Is Missing from Teacher Education: Attention To Two Genders

Assumptions about gender roles continue to limit children's aspirations and achievements. If we are to overcome those limitations, Ms. Sanders argues, gender equity must become a standard part of the curriculum of preservice teacher education.

BY JO SANDERS

E DUCATORS may have noticed the recent disputes between Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *The War Against Boys*, and such advocates of gender equity as David Sadker and Carol Gilligan about whether boys or girls are being more shortchanged in the classroom. If it achieves nothing else, the debate should remind us that we need to talk about the educational well-being of *both* sexes, not either one separately.

For example, here is a sampling of what's going on in our schools today that affects both girls and boys:

- There were more than nine boys for every girl who took the highest-level Advanced Placement test in computer science last year.¹
- Eighty-five percent of eighth- through 11th-grade girls report having been sexually harassed at school; for boys, the figure was 76%.²

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• All but one of the fatal school shootings reported in recent years were committed by boys — in fact, by white boys.³

• The average 11th-grade boy writes at the same level as the average eighth-grade girl, and boys read worse than girls at all grade levels. Moreover, these data have been unchanged for the past 30 years.⁴

In addition, there are still plenty of gross imbalances among adult men and women:

• Women make up 18% of the U.S. Senate and 13% of the U.S. House of Representatives.

• According to a recent study by *Catalyst*, women fill just 11% of the seats on the boards of Fortune 500 companies. Fourteen percent of the companies have no female board members at all.⁵

• More than 93% of inmates in our prisons and jails are men.⁶

• The life expectancy of men is 73 years, as opposed to 79 years for women.⁷

Where do these peculiar imbalances come from? Let me answer with a few more questions. Why is it considered masculine to be violent and aggressive? Why is it considered feminine to be nurturant and intuitive? Why are art, languages, and music considered feminine subjects in school, while math, science, and technology are considered masculine subjects? How many of our assumptions about gender are truly essential?

All these imbalances — dilemmas, problems, tragedies, limitations, injustices — have a developmental history that starts with notions of femininity and masculinity learned by everyone, beginning with the pink and blue receiving blankets still used in hospitals today. In other words, these assumptions concern *gender* (what we learn about the proper ways for the sexes to behave) not *sex* (what we're born with). So, for example, it is correct to speak of gender roles and of single-sex education. Moreover, it is increasingly apparent that our traditional gender roles have not served us all that well. While it is obvious that men and women and boys and girls have gender roles, properly understood, gender equity is a *human* issue, not a women's issue.

Given the reality evident in the facts I've cited above, we might assume that teacher educators would be preparing their preservice education students to teach equitably in their classrooms. Certainly, we would reason,

because awareness of gender issues has been on a front burner in society for three decades, gender equity must be a hot topic in the preparation of teachers. But if we made these assumptions, we would be wrong.

In response to several decades of societal concern about inequities facing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic

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ic groups, multicultural education has become a thriving component of teacher education nationwide. Gender equity, however, is in the earliest stages of consideration.

Several studies carried out in the 1990s confirm that gender equity is in its infancy in teacher education. In a Michigan survey of 30 administrators and 247 faculty members from 30 preservice teacher education programs statewide, Cynthia Mader found that, while faculty members thought that gender equity was important, only 11% of them reported extensive coverage, while 38% reported minimal to no coverage.⁸

Patricia Campbell and I conducted a nationwide survey of a randomly selected national sample of 353 methods instructors in mathematics, science, and technology. We found that, while three-fourths of the respondents said they considered gender equity important, most taught it less than two hours a semester. What's more, they focused almost exclusively on such problems as biased classroom interactions and spent very little time on exploring such solutions as gender-fair pedagogical techniques.⁹

Taking another angle, Karen Zittleman and David Sadker analyzed recent textbooks used in educational foundations courses and found that they did not include significant material on gender equity.¹⁰ And a recent survey of preservice students and faculty members found that faculty members thought that gender eq-

uity was important but taught it relatively little, while students said that, if they did learn about gender equity at all, they did so in their teacher education courses.¹¹ So if students don't learn about gender equity in teacher education, they probably won't learn about it at all.

The scarcity of attention paid to gender equity is particularly surprising in view of the opportunity provided by several reports on reform in teacher education issued recently by major organizations. The Association of American Universities passed a resolution on teacher education that did not address gender equity. The American Council on Education published *To Touch the Future: Transforming the Way Teachers Are Taught* and did not address gender equity. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities published its *Call for Teacher Education Reform* and passed up an opportunity to address the issue when it referred to "the challenges presented by the full range of ethnic, economic, and intellectual diversity." Indeed, the title of a new publication by Peggy Blackwell and her colleagues says it all: *Education Reform and Teacher Education: The Missing Discourse of Gender*.¹²

Leaving the issue of gender equity in teacher education up to committed individual faculty members is not an adequate professional response to the need to prepare students. Leaving students' learning about gender equity up to their assorted gleanings from television or the newspaper is even worse.

Just about the only help in this area has come from the Program for Gender Equity of the National Science Foundation (NSF), which has supported several projects dealing with gender equity in teacher education, including three of mine since 1993. Because gender equity involves far more than mathematics, science, and technology (NSF's key areas), I have urged the people I've worked with to take advantage of the opportunity to extend the reach of their projects to literacy, history, the arts, and other areas. And often they have done so.

Many valuable lessons for the profession have emerged from these projects, but all of them rest on a single fundamental decision. Colleges, schools, and departments of education must decide whether they believe that gender equity has a legitimate place in the curriculum of preservice teacher education. In other words, do they believe that preparing future teachers with an understanding of gender roles will result in better academic and social learning for girls and boys and better equip them for life in the 21st century? If so, then several points follow.

First, gender equity must be systemic. It doesn't work to rely on the efforts of a personally committed faculty member. If that person leaves the university, no knowledge is left behind. Even if the faculty member remains, unless the department is very small, only a fraction of the students will have the opportunity to learn about gender equity. Making gender equity a required course is also problematic. It achieves coverage, but there is so little available course time in most programs that it's usually out of the question. Moreover, when gender equity (or multicultural education for that matter) is delivered in the form of a required course it becomes balkanized — a sidebar for students to the "real" work of education — and leaves other faculty members ignorant of important gender equity dimensions in educational foundations, methods courses, and field experience.

Second, while teacher educators very much want to learn about gender equity so they can teach it to their students, they understandably aren't about to embark on time-consuming self-education on top of their other work. Teacher educators need a concise program of instruction and materials to jumpstart their new expertise, and a way must be found to give it to them. This is called "education," and it should not be beyond the capabilities of educational institutions to provide it.

And the third point is that for the first two conditions to be met, gender equity needs to be on the agenda of the teacher education profession. Professional associations need to issue position papers and commission reports on the topic. Professional meetings need to feature well-known speakers addressing the importance of gender equity in teacher education. Academic journals and presses need to solicit manuscripts and publish on the issue of gender equity in teacher education. Accrediting organizations need to make gender equity an explicit standard for review. The silence on the topic must not continue.

In my three projects, I've worked with teacher educators in 45 colleges and universities. They have received intensive high-quality instruction, voluminous amounts of background and teaching materials, and as much supportive follow-up as possible. Beyond enabling their students to encourage girls and boys to follow their talents without the arbitrary barriers of narrow gender roles and to treat one another with respect, many of the teacher educators I have worked with have in turn spread the word among their colleagues. All over the country, "my" teacher educators have joined others who have arrived at a teaching knowledge of

gender equity independently. But they are still far too few to make a substantial impact.

So find out for yourself. Survey your teacher education faculty members and students on the extent of their teaching and learning in the area of gender equity.¹³ You will probably find out that not much is happening. If so, welcome to the ranks of those who recognize that the world will surely demand more of women and men in the future than the last generation's gender roles permitted. After 30 years of research and programs, we know about the subtle influences in classrooms that limit children's aspirations and achievements, and we know how to eliminate them. Let's get to it.

1. *Advanced Placement Program: Washington and National Summary Reports* (New York: College Board, 1999).
2. *Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women, 1993).
3. Theodore Roszak, "The Missing Element: Are Gender Politics Affecting Our Coverage of the Recent Rash of School Shootings?," *San Francisco Examiner*, 13 June 1999.
4. National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in Educational Equity for Girls and Women* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2000), pp. 18-19.
5. Adam Bryant, "Few Signs of Advances for Women on Boards," *New York Times*, 18 October 1998, p. 6.
6. *Corrections Populations in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1996), Tables 5.1 and 5.2.
7. *Deaths: Final Data for 1997* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 2000).
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The Difficulty With Difference in Teacher Education: Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion

In this article we consider possibilities for addressing the dilemmas and difficulties that often arise in preparing beginning teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. Based on our research and personal experiences in teacher education classes and informed by psychoanalytic theory, we discuss student teachers' possible resistance to the "difficult knowledge" of racism and oppression. We suggest that a pedagogy of compassion may offer potential for opening productive conversations with our students on questions of cultural difference and teaching.

Dans cet article, les auteurs étudient diverses stratégies pour faire face aux dilemmes et aux difficultés qui se posent souvent alors que l'on prépare les nouveaux enseignants à travailler dans des salles de classe où il y existe une diversité culturelle parmi les apprenants. En puisant tant dans leurs recherches que leurs vécu, et s'appuyant sur la théorie psychoanalytique, les auteurs discutent de la résistance que les stagiaires pourraient manifester face à "l'apprentissage difficile" du racisme et de l'oppression. Ils terminent en proposant qu'une pédagogie de la compassion pourrait s'avérer utile pour entamer avec les étudiants des conversations productives au sujet des différences culturelles et de l'enseignement.

Experience is initially always the experience of negation: something is not what we supposed it to be. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 354)

Engaging the Question of Difference

Globalization moves in two directions. Not only has there been unprecedented internationalization of economies, trade, and communications, but there has also been a growing internationalization in communities. Urban communities, especially—Toronto, Los Angeles, Sydney, London—are all thoroughly multi-cultural. In these and in many other cities throughout Canada and the world the everyday encounter with cultural difference is now commonplace. Such a phenomenon is bound to have profound effects on the preparation of teachers, effects that we are only beginning to comprehend.

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We are beginning to understand that preparing beginning teachers for culturally diverse classrooms raises some surprisingly difficult questions for teacher education. The most obvious difficulty is that we lack the experience of educating for difference. The curriculum of teacher education has been traditionally structured around an array of commonalities of normal child development, learning theories, provincially mandated programs of studies, instructional planning procedures, and the identification and measurement of expected outcomes. It is a curriculum of sameness, aided and abetted by the fact that the "discourse of the university" requires knowledge that is both certain and able to be exchanged from one who knows to one who does not. Given this tradition of conformity, what are we to say now about diversity in the preparation of teachers?

A second difficulty emerges when we actually try to address cultural difference in the teacher education classroom. Here we find that the absence of secure knowledge awakens the ambivalences of cultural identity among students in a context that is already fraught with the uncertainties of forming identities as teachers. Britzman (1991) characterizes the process of becoming a teacher as a "biographical crisis," saying, "It is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present and future are set in dynamic tension" (p. 8).

For beginning teachers, faced with the fact of having to prepare to teach in contexts of cultural difference, their desire to teach and to be seen to be a teacher now becomes entangled with issues of cultural identity. We have found that this entanglement produces a highly charged emotional response in which heated arguments quickly erupt over rights, race, and redress in Canadian society. The fact that these topics come to the fore suggests that there is more at stake than we originally anticipated when we actively pursue teacher preparation for cultural difference.

In this article we fully acknowledge the essential difficulty of teacher preparation in the context of cultural difference, believing that this difficulty alerts us to what is at work when we undertake the education of teachers in a pluralistic society like Canada's. Indeed, by attending to the question of difference, we are in a real sense questioning the basis of teacher education constructed as a "curriculum of sameness."

Research Context

We initiated an action research project in late 1996 with the intention of improving attention to cultural difference in our teacher education program at the University of Alberta. Action research typically begins with reconnaissance of the existing situation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Our investigation began with an inquiry about the ethnocultural family and school backgrounds of students in the Secondary Education Route of our teacher education program. Initial surveys of 320 preservice teachers revealed that over 92% of them were nonimmigrants with English as their first language. More than 75% of these student teachers also had parents who were born in Canada, with English as their first language. Slightly more than one half of the students surveyed had gone to school in rural or suburban districts. The vast majority reported that there was little cultural diversity in their school or community.

Action research also provides reflective insight into the perspectives of the researchers. We now count it as a sign of insensitivity to our own cultural locatedness as Anglo-Saxon, white teacher educators that we did not include First Nations ancestry in this initial survey: an error that we corrected in a subsequent "snapshot survey" of 50 student teachers in late 1998. This second survey suggests that there have been some changes, with a larger percentage of immigrant students (14%), with a further 14% identifying themselves as having First Nations ancestry. Sixty-two percent of these students' parents were born in Canada, rather than 75% as in the previous survey, and there was also more diversity in the first languages spoken by students represented in this smaller sample. Although we are not able to draw any definite conclusions based on this smaller survey sample, we believe the population of student teachers, although still predominantly white, is now beginning to be somewhat more reflective of the ethnocultural diversity of our school population in urban Alberta.

Classroom Action Research

In designing the initial action step of the project, we were faced with the issue of where appropriately to insert the matter of cultural diversity in the teacher education program. We were aware that no required courses on cultural diversity existed in the present program at the University of Alberta. Without formal courses it was likely that many students would complete their teacher education without having had any consistent attention given to issues of race and culture in any aspect of the program. This surmise was verified in interviews with student teachers. We also knew the limitations of course work. Research in the United Kingdom, for example, suggested that the assignment of compulsory course work might actually increase racial intolerance. Moreover, because our interest was in how student teachers integrate the matter of cultural difference in the formation of their teaching identities, we determined that the topic ought to be infused in existing courses. Accordingly, we selected one compulsory course in the Initial Professional Term as the site for introducing a topic on culture and teaching.¹

The course chosen in this term was Educational Policy Studies (EPS) 310, *Managing the Learning Environment*. This particular course was selected because it wraps around either side of a four-week field experience, functioning as a kind of home room for student teachers for the discussion of issues of theory and classroom practice, especially in relation to classroom management. It is a multisectioned course, with each section having from 25 to 30 students with a variety of subject area major and minor specializations. We approached the course coordinator with the offer of working with course instructors who might be willing to collaborate with us and with a team of graduate students in introducing the topic of cultural difference and teaching in their section of EDPS 310. A meeting was convened to discuss details of this collaboration.

We suggested introducing student teachers to the question of cultural difference and teaching with a 30-minute informational video, *Cultural Conversations: Diverse Cultures/Complex Teaching*, which was produced to inform students of the nature and extent of cultural diversity in Canada and to show how it was being engaged by some of our partner schools in Edmonton.² Although the video was informational, it was meant to be a vehicle for intro-

ducing the topic and for provoking discussion about the role of cultural diversity in becoming a teacher. Our story of one EDPS 310 class illuminates the affective dynamic of desire and resistance that the topic of cultural difference opens up in the teacher education classroom.

The Story of Joyce's Class

The course instructor Joyce is a former teacher and now a doctoral student. Teaching a section of 25 students in *Managing the Learning Environment* constitutes her graduate teaching assistantship. Joyce considers that her biography accounts for her strong personal investment in the theme of cultural difference and teaching. She is of European heritage, but is married to an Aboriginal man and is the mother of two young children who are now in elementary school. Her class had devoted about four and a half hours, or about 15% of the instructional time, to issues of cultural difference. This is a generous focus considering the pressing topics of classroom management and organization that occupy students' concerns in this course.

Her initial class session on questions of culture and diversity occurred immediately prior to the four-week field experience. Most class members welcomed the topic as being highly relevant to their teaching. They were aware that many classrooms are culturally diverse and fully expected to encounter this in their teaching. However, the session also raised anxiety levels. Teaching for cultural diversity now became another area of concern among the many others, vying for their attention as they prepared for their first field experience. Student teachers' anxieties most often were translated into requests for management tips, although it was also apparent to them that handling cultural diversity was too complex a matter for much useful preparatory advice. Failing the possibility of advanced preparation, most students seemed content to fall back on their own good will. "I don't know what to do, but I will listen carefully and try to adapt" was a typical remark. An overall attitude of concern, polite interest, and absence of antagonism seemed to prevail among most student teachers. A minority, however, clearly brought some strong personal investments to multicultural or anti-racist education. Two of the most vocal were First Nations students.

A second class session on the theme of cultural diversity was held in the week following the field experience. This began with a large lecture-hall assembly of about 150 students that combined Joyce's group with five other class sections of the course. This aspect of the class consisted of reviewing the film followed by a panel discussion in which four student teachers related their experiences with cultural diversity in their recent field experience. Because this was a large class assembly held in an early morning session across campus, many students arrived late. Some appeared to be inattentive during the class and spent time chatting among themselves. This tardiness and inattention annoyed Joyce.

Back with her own course section of students following the large lecture, Joyce began her final planned class on cultural diversity by admonishing her students for their behavior in the previous lecture session. "Such behavior," she remarked, "is both rude and shows a lack of regard for the topic. Sensitivity to cultural diversity and to racism is important," she argued. She then went on to recount her own experience with racism that she had encountered in her

younger years while on a weekend trip with a group of co-workers who happened to be Native. The group had come into town to enjoy a weekend off work from a mining camp in the Yukon. She described how first the restaurant waitress and then a souvenir shop owner refused them service. At first she was puzzled; as a white person Joyce had never experienced such a refusal. When she realized the reasons for the refusal of service, she became angry. Her friends tried to calm her, advising her "to just forget it." This advice further angered Joyce because she realized they were used to discrimination.

Joyce's ongoing anger at this racist treatment of her friends was evident as she recounted the story. The student teachers, feeling her anger and hurt, were quiet. Joyce ended the story by saying, "I tell you this because I think it is important for you to know that racism exists, and you will be teaching my children!" The silent listening was followed by nods and looks of understanding from a handful of student teachers, many of them from minority backgrounds. One student began a general discussion, arguing for anti-racist rather than multicultural education.

The emotional force of Joyce's story provoked several tales from students' field experiences. One student, Don, told of not really paying much attention to his Native ancestry before the field experience. Dave's father was Native and his mother white. Don's father was in the military and his family had moved often. He had never felt a strong pull to his culture until he had taught at his field experience school that had a large Aboriginal population. Another student, Tamara, spoke of her Russian background and of the affinity she had felt for Russian students in her field experience school. As the conversation continued in the class, the discussion turned to the question of special rights for minority students. Glenn, a young white student, spoke of a friend, also a young white male, who had been denied admission to the police force because of a quota system. This comment provoked much discussion for and against affirmative action initiatives, which continued until the end of the class. Although the importance of multiculturalism and respect for diversity drew general assent, specific cases of affirmative action kept coming up as examples of unequal treatment for members of the cultural majority.

Resistance to Knowledge

The remarkable shift that took place between the two class sessions is instructive. The session prior to the field experience was marked by a general polite interest and a concern for being personally prepared to teach in culturally diverse settings. The second session, which followed the field experience, generated a hotly contested debate between those who appeared to be strongly invested in the importance of culture in teaching and those who actively resisted any attention to cultural difference, fearing that such special attention threatened an imagined equality of merit. Between the two debating parties there was still a now-silent middle group who seemed somewhat nonplused by the vehemence of the opposing viewpoints. The unspoken questions behind the silence and incomprehension of this middle group are important for our discussion here. Why has there been a shift away from a concern for managing diversity? And how did this emotional debate over rights and redress come about?

Certainly we can say that the argument against affirmative action signified a lack of appreciation of the historical effects of racism. A critical anti-racist education will counter this historical amnesia, appealing to a chronicle of undeniable discrimination suffered by First Nations peoples, immigrant groups, and women. Anti-racist education also shows how the effects of such practices continue to be reflected in the language, structures, and social relations of schools and the broader society. Combating the effects of racism forms the basis of arguments for affirmative action to dismantle the edifice of white male privilege.

Calls for anti-racist education provided the flash point for the passionate debate unleashed in Joyce's second class session. In contrast with the first session, in which the students wanted information, students in the second class actively refused information—they did not want to know what the other side was saying. Following Lacan, Felman (1987) and Ellsworth (1997) have argued that such a passion for ignorance is rooted in the resistance of the self to dangerous knowledge. The self resists dangerous knowledge, because it threatens the imagined coherence of the self. The problem with anti-racist education is that it mistakes a resistance to knowledge for a "naïve ignorance," assuming that if only people had more information, they would change their minds. Psychoanalytic theory points out that resistance is neither naïve nor ignorant, but an active rejection of a knowledge that threatens the self with disintegration. In making this observation we do not deny the political dimension of the argument—there is a defense of white privilege at work in Joyce's classroom—but we do caution against misidentifying this as a power struggle that will be discursively settled. A passion for ignorance will not be won over by rational argument or information alone. Britzman (1998) reminds us that education is a "psychic event ... that involves something other than consciousness" (pp. 3-4). As educators wishing to prepare teachers for culturally diverse classrooms we need to address this "something other than consciousness" in our own teaching practice. In order to do so we can simply begin by noticing the dialogue of the deaf that took place in Joyce's classroom and ask what it is that motivates this fierce and unbidden debate between the contending "injustices" of racism and affirmative action. And what is it that leaves the forces of rationality sitting on the sidelines in perplexed silence?

Identity and Identification

A psychoanalytic interpretation of the play between identities and identifications might provide a partial answer into the "something other than consciousness" at work in the debate in Joyce's classroom. Bhabha (1994) distinguishes between identity and identification in this way: "The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity ... it is always the production of an 'image' of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p. 117). Thus we can interpret the student teachers' original interest in gathering skills for the management of diversity as being the familiar identification that students make with the pervasive cultural myth that everything depends on the teacher. In her earlier critical study of teacher education, Britzman (1991) argues that although cultural myths are rooted in "superficial images of the work of teachers ... [they] may bear upon the expectations, desires and investments one brings to and constructs during the process of

becoming a teacher" (p. 6). Summoned by the cultural myth that everything depends on the teacher, the first response by a student teacher to cultural difference will be the desire to manage it. In this construction, diversity remains external to the self, hence there is a thirst for the accumulation of knowledge about the cultural "other" and the need to acquire survival strategies appropriate to the multicultural classroom. At this point, being the teacher in charge of the classroom is still only an abstract, but impending possibility for the student teacher. This possibility quickly becomes an actuality with the enactment of the field experience.

Joyce, along with the class members who identified themselves as victims of discrimination, felt deeply offended by their colleagues' seeming lack of interest in the matter of cultural diversity following their field experience. Initially disturbed by what appeared to be relatively weak investments that a number of their colleagues had in multiculturalism, they became even more angry with strong investments that some of the young white male students demonstrated in their denial of the history of white privilege. But seeking a corrective in merely pointing out their complicity in white privilege meets resistance. Young white males, amid negotiating the contradictory discourses of teaching in the formation of their own teaching identities, are unlikely to be receptive to charges of their own complicity in racism and the maintenance of white privilege. Nor are they likely to feel especially privileged during this time of biographical crisis that constitutes learning to teach. "Lessons" about white privilege will probably produce either anger or guilt.

Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion

As we discovered, stories such as the one told in Joyce's class provoke a variety of responses that reflect the multiple nature of the subjectivities that our student teachers bring with them into the classroom and the complex ways they construct meaning from such stories. Ellsworth (1989) reminds us that students enter the classroom with "investments of privilege and struggle already made in favor of some ethical and political positions concerning racism and against other positions" (p. 301). The resistance by many of the white males in Joyce's class to stories of oppression needs to be recognized as a valid reaction by those who are unable to "hear" the voices of others, while at the same time such resistance needs an educational response. Leaving students to founder in a sea of white guilt or self-righteous anger leads to silence and an entrenched resistance to difficult knowledge. Such responses are neither helpful nor pedagogical.

The question that must be asked is: What is the pedagogical task of the teacher in these moments of anger and demands for recognition circulating in Joyce's classroom? The experience of racism cannot be forgotten or ignored. But it does not now seem fair to blame the white males in the classroom as the supposed perpetrators of such racism. Where is the pedagogical entry point? A responsible pedagogy in the face of ethical dilemmas that inevitably arise when stories of oppression are told in the classroom might be termed a pedagogy of compassion. Compassion is a response to suffering. Racism has visited suffering upon both its victims and upon those who must now bear the responsibility for the "sins of the past." The anger circulating in Joyce's classroom is an effect of suffering. Faced with this suffering, it is the obligation of the teacher to

notice this and to respond compassionately. Compassion does not mean ignoring or forgetting; it means recognition of the demand that is there in the suffering face of the Other (Caputo, 1993).³

A pedagogy of compassion may help to move us out of a cycle of blame and guilt that can characterize the critical anti-racist classroom, while at the same time taking account of the resistances to knowledge that lie in "the something other than consciousness." This pedagogy would attempt to build trust in the classroom, recognizing the need to learn about the realities of other people, but also acknowledging that we come from different subject positions and that we need to examine critically what we share and do not share (Ellsworth, 1997). Razack (1998) points out that such a position works from the basis that "no-one is off the hook since we can all claim to stand as oppressor and oppressed in relation to someone else" (p. 47). This position requires that we constantly ask ourselves what we can know and not know when we tell and listen to stories of oppression in the classroom. It asks that we pay attention to what Minh-ha (1989) calls "instinctual immediacy" (p. 40), which is neither rationality nor emotional sharing, but a recognition of each person's subject position and point of departure. Our own experiences suggest that although such a pedagogy is not a panacea for the difficult moral and ethical choices that we face in the classroom, it may offer a starting place for productive conversations with our students.

Notes

1. Teacher education students at the University of Alberta are in one of three programs: a four year Bachelor of Education (BEd Program), a two-year After-Degree (BEd/AD Program), or a five-year Combined Degree (BA, BED; or BSc, BEd Program). Each of these programs consists of a combination of course work in a student's major and minor area of subject specialization and education courses. In these programs there are two professional terms, consisting of a significant period of field experience (practicum) allied with related campus-based education courses. We selected one of these professional terms, the Initial Professional Term (IPT), as the appropriate site for deliberately introducing the topic of cultural difference and teaching to all students in the Secondary Route Teacher Education Program.
2. The educational video *Cultural Conversations: Diverse Cultures, Complex Teaching* was produced by the Culture and Teaching research team in collaboration with three Edmonton partner schools (Harry Ainlay High School, St. Catherine Elementary/Junior High School, and McDougall Elementary/Junior High School). Funding for the video and instructors' handbook was provided by Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism Branch) and by the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration. Details of the video may be obtained from the Department of Secondary Education, 341 Education South, or from the Prairie Centre, 1-17 Humanities Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 2E5.
3. The obligation of the call of the Other is described by Caputo (1993) in *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction*. In this, Caputo acknowledges his debt to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the philosopher of alterity, who "locates the place of obligation in the face ... of the one who suffers" (p. 85).

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