Exploring the Gender Achievement Gap Among Minority Students

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Research Questions

What social factors contribute to the achievement gap between male and female minority students in Hartford?

More specifically:

• How do role models affect the achievement gap?

• Do single-gender classrooms help to close the achievement gap?
Background

• High School Completion Rates according to National Center for Education Statistics for 2005
  - White students: 93%
  - Black students: 87%
  - Hispanic students: 63%

• NCES report on Minority Serving Institutes found that “women accounted for 57% of the total U.S. undergraduate enrollment in 2004”
Background Literature


Significance

• Limited research on racial-gender achievement gap in lower levels of education


• CT State Department of Education and the State Education Resource Center statewide conference: Addressing the Achievement of Connecticut’s Black and Hispanic/Latino Male Students, March 2007
Methodology

• Meyer Ebling Middle School*
  - 6-8th grade public middle school in Hartford
  - Predominantly minority student population (92.3%)
  - Listed as one of the Connecticut Elementary and Middle Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress for the 2006-07 School Year

*pseudonym
Methodology

• Participation observation of 3 single gender classrooms (22.5 hours)
  – Spent 1.5 hrs a week with each class for a month
    • 1 male English class (Howard*)
    • 1 male Math class (Moorehouse*)
    • 1 female Math class (Spellman*)

• Cluster of 6 classes
  – 3 male groups, 2 female groups and one mixed group
  – 6 teachers; one male, no Black or Hispanic teachers

• Interviewed 10 students (5 male, 5 female) and 6 teachers

*pseudonyms
My research argues that:

- Students and teachers have lower expectations for male students than female students.
- Male minority students have a lack of positive male role models.
- Single-gender classes are more beneficial for female students and therefore are not helping to close the gender gap.
Findings

Students and teachers have lower expectations for male students than female students.

• “We have some very challenging girls and we have some silly boys they’re not, they’re just immature, they’re not um... they’re just kinda young.” Ms. Mott*

• “I think the girls do better in school... because they’re more interested in stuff. Boys, we don’t care, some of the boys...” Issac

*pseudonyms were given to all participants
Findings

• “When the boys aren’t doing good and they see somebody else doing good, they be thinking about him as like a goody-goody...girls get called goody-goody, but they like type meant for it, almost sort of...” Issac

• “A lot of people say that boys are more immature, but just it’s like they rather have fun than take things seriously.” Nia
Findings

Male minority students have lack of positive male role models.

- Of the 5 male students interviewed only one mentioned a male as a role model
- One male teacher, out of 6
- Of all students interviewed only one knew a minority male who had graduated from college
Findings

Single-gender classes are more beneficial for female students and therefore are not helping to close the gender gap.

• “Well the girls are a whole lot more serious in their academics, again that’s the girls wanting to please...as a whole to make their class good. The boys...they don’t own their group yet, I don’t know if that will happen over time, but that’s what we’re hoping for.” Ms.Sinclair
Findings

• “...with the boys, it’s kind of, I think, it’s a little less successful than I wanted it to be. I think they do have a good some kinda sense of teamwork, but their level of immaturity is increased when they’re all together in a group...there’s not a girl there for them to act appropriately for...” Mr. McNeil

• “The boys are very competitive when I hand them out something and it’s like ‘we’re all going to do this together, see who gets it done first’ that’s where boys will thrive...they want to win, but when it’s working together, there’s no motivation on their part, but when turned into a competition that’s when they want to work.” Ms. Sinclair
Future Research

• Ways in which to alter instruction to suit the needs of minority male students

• Influence that male teachers and mentors have on male students
### Research Questions
- What social factors contribute to the achievement gap between male and female minority students in Hartford?
  - More specifically:
    - How do role models affect the achievement gap?
    - Do single-gender classrooms help to close the achievement gap?

### Thesis Statements:
- Students and teachers have lower expectations for male students than female students.
- Female students influence each other more positively with their schoolwork than male students.
- Male minority students have a lack of positive male role models.
- Single-gender classes are more beneficial for female students and therefore are not helping to close the gender gap.