Gender Bias on a Lower Track

A look at gender bias in lower academically tracked seventh grade classrooms

Existing Research

"Peter Pan isn't a Girl's Part': an investigation of gender bias in a kindergarten classroom"

"Giving Women a Chance to Learn: gender equality principles for HPERD classes"- a look at physical education classrooms

"A Case Study in Gender Equity for Basic Instruction Programs"- a look at college level physical education classes

"Sex Matters: Why we can't ignore gender bias in the classroom"- a look at math and science classes

"Challenging Gender Bias in the Fifth Grade"- a look at gender bias in a fifth grade classroom

"Teacher-Student interaction: an exploration of gender differences in elementary physical education"

"Gender Gaps"- a combination of many different research studies looking at females in schools

Research Question

- Many of these studies have looked at classrooms and asked whether gender bias exists within the walls of a school. Yet, many have failed to examine the lower tracked students to see if gender bias occurs even in the lower academic levels. In this study I will attempt to answer whether lower tracked students face gender bias in their classrooms and if so, what types of biases do these students face across multiple subjects.

Main Points of Thesis

- Males receive more interactions than females in the classroom
- Females receive more complex or substantial interactions than the males
- There is a gender bias that does exist in these academically lower tracked classrooms

Defining Terms

- “Simple interaction”: An interaction in which the student and teacher only exchange a few quick words (such as yes or no)
- “Complex interaction”: An interaction in which the student and teacher carry on a discussion or conversation for a longer period of time (such as a question, response, follow up, and explanation)

Methods

- Obtained permission from Institutional Review Board
- Set up a contact at a Hartford public middle school (HMS)
- Placed into three classrooms: math, science, and social studies… all seventh grade classrooms
- Observed each classroom a total of three times using non-intrusive observational methods
- At the time of each observation I recorded interactions using a coding system, as well as recording personal observations of the classroom

Analyzing Data

- Took my coded observations and created tally sheets to record each of the types of observations from each class observation
- Totaled each tally sheet and combined the three observations from each classroom
- Created ratios of interactions per student in the classroom keeping males and females separate

Total Interactions

	Male	Female
Math	22.7	14.7
Science	19.6	14.7
Social Studies	8.8	6.9
Averages	17.0	12.1

Simple and Complex Interactions

Teacher Initiated Simple Interactions

	Male	Female
Avg.	8.5	5

Teacher Initiated Complex Interactions

	Male	Female
Avg.	2.5	2.9

Student Initiated Simple Interactions

	Male	Female
Avg.	4.3	2.5

Student Initiated Complex Interactions

	Male	Female
Avg.	1.7	1.7

Simple and Complex Interactions Totals

Simple Interactions

	Male	Female
M	17.7	8
S	15.3	10.6
SS	5.8	3.9
Avg.	12.9	7.5

Complex Interactions

	Male	Female
M	5	6.7
S	4.4	10.6
SS	3	3
Avg.	4.1	6.8

Additional Observations

- Math Class: males were patted on the backs and heads in very fatherly manner; males were repeatedly warned and punished for rule infractions, females were simply ignored or talked to quietly; teacher's eyes were focused on male groups; called on males before females when hands were raised;teaching of females occurred mostly during quiet group work time
- Social Studies Class: quick to punish girl who called out but listened to boy who called out; worked with boys without their asking during quiet work time; spent more time with girls during quiet work time but waited for them to raise their hand before approaching them
- Science Class: referred to the females as "honey"; spent three minutes repeatedly telling a boy to take his seat before punishing him while she gave one female detention immediately; encouraged the boys in small group work from afar but sat down at the table with the girls to see how they were doing

Conclusion

- The males received, on average, more total interactions than their female peers in the classroom
- The interactions that females received, on average, were more complex than those received by the males

Gender bias does exist in the classroom in the form of males receiving more interaction time with the teacher, but this interaction time is less qualitative than the interactions of teachers with female students