

## ***SESSION 1: History of Gender in Education***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. “Through the Back Door: A History of Women’s Education.” Chapter 2 in *Failing at Fairness*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995. ISBN: 068480073X.
- (2) American Association of University Women. “How Girls Negotiate School.” Chapter 10 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748.  
(This reading was originally published in the AAUW-commissioned 1996 report, *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School*.)

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) *Failing at Fairness*: “History of Women’s Education”**

- Quite surprising in many ways
  - Describes many now-laughable theories on women’s abilities (e.g. algebra vs. ovaries, phrenology).
  - Interesting that now “laughable” – we don’t find things like “women’s careers” or “home-ec” laughable at all (though perhaps could feel it misguided or offensive).
- Changes both slow and fast
  - Hundreds of years till girls could even go to school or receive any education at all.
  - But then, “mere” decades till gender equality more-or-less recognized as a Good Thing to be striving for.
- “Professionalized motherhood” (p. 19) similar to description of the 1950s in Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (to be explored more deeply in Session 8).
- Reagan-era backlash particularly shocking – the late ‘70s and ‘80s were *recent*.

#### **(2) AAUW: “How Girls Negotiate Schools”**

- AAUW = American Association of University Women, founded 1881 (as the Association of Collegiate Alumnae). Funds lots of influential research on girls and women in educational settings (both pre- and post-university levels). Also has funds female graduate student stipends and holds national conferences on women in education.  
<http://www.aauw.org>

- Did you recognize the social cues and norms from your own experience? (Does answer differ depending on gender of student?)
- Big emphasis on role models
  - Really seemed to be a make-or-break factor.
  - What does this mean for areas without lots of female (or male!) role models? For example, physics today or medicine in the past for women, full-time homemaking or nursing for men.
  - Note over 50% of medical school students are female; less than 5% of nurses are male.
  - Keep in mind that there’s often a big difference between the percentage of a professional school class being a certain gender and the percentage of a *profession* being a certain gender. Practicing professionals went to school years ago, when the percentages were often different (usually reflecting traditional gender roles). Brings up “leaky-pipeline” issue too.
- Did you have any difficulties relating to Angela? Why?
- The “schoolgirls” studied were mostly white – would there be different conclusions for other racial groups? What would you expect the differences to be?

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