

SESSION 3: Course-Taking Patterns; Sex Education

Readings to complete before class:

- (1) American Association of University Women. “Course-Taking Patterns.” Chapter 11 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 1998 report, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*.)
- (2) Fine, Michelle. “Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females.” Chapter 17 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 Fine and Lois Weis’s 1993 book, *Beyond Silenced Voices*, and in the February 1988 *Harvard Educational Review*.)

Discussion notes:

(1) AAUW: Course-Taking Patterns

- *Number* of math courses taken by girls and boys nearly equal now, but *type/level* not.
 - Should states make higher-level math required for all students? (AAUW p. 294)
- Have you heard of the issue of boys’ underenrollment in language and arts classes before? Has it struck you as a “problem” like girls’ underenrollment in physics?
- Boys and girls are approximately equally represented in the social sciences and APs.
- Remedial classes and tracking: Good or bad?
 - Good for gifted, not for others?
 - Is it helpful for slower students, or does it just hold them back?
 - Is it the responsibility of the schools to provide for the extremes of the bell curve? The state?
- Girls identified more than boys in gifted programs in elementary school, but they drop out: why?
 - Suggestions: Geek stereotypes, fitting in, etc.
- “U.S. culture often equates higher expenditure of effort with lower ability” (AAUW p. 291). What does this say about boys (who often assume/say their success is due to ability) and girls (who often assume/say their success is due to effort)? Does this stereotype ring true? Could girls’ efforts be to compensate for lower ability, or perhaps to give the *impression* of lower ability so as not to be “too smart”? (“Oh, I just studied really hard for that test; it’s not that I’m a math genius”—and thus geeky and unattractive.)

(2) Fine: Sex Education

- “Adolescent sexuality → victimization and danger” theme.
- “Sex-negative attitudes do not discourage sexual activity, but they do discourage responsible use of contraception. Teens who believe sexual involvement is wrong deny responsibility for contraception. To accept responsibility would legitimate ‘bad’ behavior” (Fine p. 377).
- Personal experience: 9th grade “Life Skills” class video on rape had only female victims of male aggressors depicted.
 - What does this portrayal say to boys who don’t/won’t rape?
 - What about male victims of rape? (More of ‘em than you might think! Though still much smaller than the number of female victims.)
- Don’t get into an argument about abstinence education: rather, focus on academic effects (pregnancy, drop outs...) if possible.
- Surprising that most parents didn’t object to sex ed in schools.

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