

## **The Gendered Classroom (Kimmel, chapter 7)**

Formal education was once reserved primarily for upper-class boys and men. Opponents of education for women predicted dire consequences for both sexes.

Schools teach boys and girls that they are different and that difference is the cause of inequality (rather than the other way around). This happens both through the official curriculum and the “hidden curriculum.”

Teachers view boys and girls as having different attributes, interests, and needs. They give more attention to boys and allow them to dominate class.

Images of males have traditionally been more prevalent than those of females in books and other media—and these images have been gendered. Kimmel argues that images of women have changed for the better. However, “there has been no comparable change in the depiction of men or boys in children’s books, no movement of men toward more nurturing and caring behaviors. As in real life, women in our storybooks have left home and gone off to work, but men still have enormous trouble coming back home” (p. 164).

By adolescence, boys and girls have diverged. Girls may lose confidence while boys gain it (but remember Barnett & Rivers’ critique of this claim). However, there are bad effects for boys as well—higher rates of learning disability diagnosis, dropping and flunking out, and misbehavior.

Some observers claim that schools now discriminate against boys. However, Kimmel suggests that boys “bump up against the norms of masculinity” (p. 170). E.g., English and foreign languages are for sissies.

There are now more men than women in college, but the rates have gone up for both. Much of the gender difference is connected to race—there is a shortage of nonwhite males.

Education is also a gendered workplace with similar dynamics as other workplaces. Teaching children is women’s work and is paid accordingly. Male teachers are more prevalent in higher education, particularly in the sciences, at higher ranks, and at more prestigious universities.

“[The] assumptions... that males and females are so fundamentally different that we could not possibly learn equally and together... plague both boys and girls. Gender inequality in education produces the gender differences we assume, with deleterious consequences for both genders; it impairs both boys’ and girls’ efforts to find their voices, discipline their minds, and prepare themselves for their futures” (p. 179).