

## Background Information

Along with class and ethnicity, gender has a major impact on people's experience of education. In recent years. There have been some important changes in this area. For example, while both genders have raised their level of attainment. Girls have now overtaken the boys.

I carried out a research which shows the progress of both genders at school and the changes there has been since then and now.

Until the late 1980's there was a huge concern for girls underachieving. They were not doing as well as the boys in exams, and they were less likely to take A- levels and go into higher education. Things however changed in the 1990's, girls started putting more effort and concentration into their work. There are also concerns for the subjects girls were choosing for GCSE for example, they are less likely to apply for a degree course in sciences such as physics and information technology. This had a huge impact on the job opportunities they will get in the future.

This shows the differences in both genders, saying that boys were better than girls in education and were more settled on going onto higher education. There are many factors for this reason. They could be: the way they have been socialised; peer pressure; the media and culture; religion background. These are the external factors; other reasons may be within the school and the educational system, and the effects of equal opportunities policies. That was the past, times have changed so much that girls are doing enormously better than boys.

Aim 1- To analyse the GCSE results of both genders in order to see who achieves better.

Many Sociologists argue that the difference between girls and boys achievements especially the more improved achievement with girls results, can be best explained by changes that have occurred in factors outside the school such as the following:

**Curriculum-** some sociologist believe that the curriculum favours girls. As to do well in school you have to have good verbal and organisation skills, girls seem tend to be better at this than boys. Also girls tend to be better at coursework than boys and this helps them to get good results.

**Behaviour-** there is mounting evidence which proves that girls work harder and are more motivated than boys. More effort and time has been put into work and homework by girls. They take more care with the way their work is presented. Girls tend to be more organised than boys which results in them meeting deadlines more successfully than boys.

**Changes in the Organisation of Education**- the National Curriculum emphasis on science means that girls cannot avoid doing some 'hard' science. Also, the coursework involved in GCSE, GNVQ and some A-Level requires organisational skills and sustained motivation skills that girls seem to be better at than boys.

**Feminism**- the work of feminist sociologists led to greater emphasis on equal opportunities in schools. Teaching approaches and resources were monitored for sex bias to make sure more 'girl-friendly schooling' especially in sciences. As a result teachers are now more avoiding gender stereotyping in the classroom. Some anti-sexist initiatives have raised both teachers' and girls' awareness. Single sex classes in some subjects, projects such as girls into science and technology and the exploration of sexism through PSE and Citizenship classes have made an effect on females.

**The Job Market**- There are increasingly more job opportunities for women in the service sector of the economy. Many girls have mothers in paid employment who provide positive role models. As a result girls acknowledge that the future offers more choices- economic independence and careers are now a real possibility.

**Better socialisation for schooling**- Research indicates that girls spend their leisure time differently from boys. Boys relate to their peers (e.g. being active in a range of ways), however girls relate to one another by talking. This puts girls in an advantage because school is essentially a language experience, and good levels of comprehensive and writing skills are required by most subjects. Other research shows that girls like reading, but boys prefer more active communication media such as computers and videos and games.

**Female Expectations**- many women nowadays are looking well beyond the mother – housewife role. In a survey in 1976, Sue Sharpe found that girls' priorities were 'love, marriage, husbands, children, job and careers. This research was repeated in 1994 and when it was she found out those priorities had changed to 'jobs, careers and being able to support themselves.

According to Ruth Hartley, Socialization takes place through four processes, manipulation, canalization, and verbal appellation and activity exposure:

**Canalisation**- this involves directing the attention of male and female children to objects or aspects of objects. Examples of this are giving girls dolls for pots and pans to play with and encouraging boys to play with guns, cars, and aircrafts. Through this kind of differential treatment,

the interests of girls and channelised differently by their parents and they develop different capabilities, attitudes, aspirations and dreams. As they grow older they are aware of things that are considered suitable for boys and things that are considered suitable for girls.

**Verbal Appellations-** this is also different for boys and girls. For example we often say, "oh how pretty you look!" to girls, and to boys "you look smart and strong!". Research studies show that such remarks build up self identity for girls and boys. Children learn to think of themselves as males or females and so to identify with other males and females. Family members constantly address aspects of gender roles directly in the way they talk even to very young children and they also convey the importance given to each child.

**Manipulation-** this is the way parents handle their children. It is noticed that boys are treated as strong, autonomous beings right from the beginning. On the other hand, mothers fuss with the baby girl's hair, dress in a feminine fashion and tells her how beautiful and pretty she is. These physical experiences of early childhood are very important in shaping the self-perception of girls and boys.

**Activity Exposure-** Both male and female children are exposed to traditional masculine and feminine activities from their very childhood. Girls are asked to help their mothers with household chores, boys accompany fathers outside. In communities where the sex is separated, girls and boys live in two distinct spaces and are exposed to very different activities. It is through these processes that children take in the meaning of masculine and feminine, and internalize them almost unconsciously. Many of us are not always aware of this. Children also learn these roles without being aware of the fact that they are moulded. If there were no difference between girls and boys everywhere behaved more or less same way, one could argue that gender roles are based on Sex, but that does not happen in reality.

**Parent Labelling-** some studies suggest that parents are more likely to read to their daughters than their sons when they are young. When girls are at a young age parents tend to think they will be more interested in educational things than boys. The labelling of girls could then mean they accept this label and become more intelligent in school (this is called self fulfilling prophecy- when a person accepts the label they have been given).

▲im 2- To compare the results and point out the difference between both genders and ▲im 3.

**Subcultures-** these are groups of people who have different norms and values to the rest of the school. Subcultures can be anti school- where pupils are rude to teachers, don't do homework, truant and get into fights. Various sociologists argue that boys are more likely to be in these groups and think educational is a waste of time and that it is not 'macho' to do well at school.

Subcultures can also be pro school- where pupils are very committed to school; they do all their work on time, always on time to their lessons, behave and never truant. It is argued that girls are more likely to be in these subcultures than boys. This then explains the differences, as the boys in the anti school subcultures will fail and the girls in the pro school subcultures will do well.

Different subject choices has an effect on both girls and boys overall education. Boys are more likely than girls to study Physics and Computer Studies while girls are more likely to choose subjects such as Biology and Arts and Languages. Girls are more likely than boys to go on to Further and Higher Education on leaving school. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to go directly into employment after leaving school. Subject choices in Higher and Further Education reflect choices made by both girls and boys in secondary school. In further education, the majority of enrolled vocational students in Engineering and Technology in 2004/05 were male, while females made up the majority of those taking subjects related to Medicine, Social Studies, Languages and Creative Arts. This pattern is replicated for students entered in Higher Education

▲im 3- To see which gender tries hardest in class

Michelle Stanworth had been working as teacher for eleven years in secondary school before embarking in 1979 on a study of sexual divisions in the classroom. Michelle Stanworth observed a classroom of girls and boys and discusses her major findings: the gendered nature of teacher-pupil relationships, the greater time given to male pupils and how these differential reactions influenced students' identities. She also talks about the influence of the study, its limitations and contemporary research in the area.

Sociologist Dale Spender goes on to argue that that girls get less attention than boys in the classroom and argues that this is a reflection of the domination that they have in society as a whole. Those without power are always the most vulnerable and tend to play a submissive

role. Girls learn these attitudes in the classroom (it is part of the hidden curriculum) they discover that by avoiding a dominating role and that of an intellectual, they become less of a threat to their male peers. She notes that how in one-study girls thought it natural those boy students should ask questions and make the protests. The females should 'just get on with it' even though the work was considered tedious or pointless. Dale Spender also argues that Even when girls went into the classroom (obviously they have committed Feminist) and tried to give equal time to females, and males in the classroom, she still found that 38% of the time was spent with the girls. Spender argues that they have to wait longer for what attention they do receive in the classroom, and that females are usually treated dismissively by the males present. Boys often insult girls, yet teachers fail to tell them off for doing this. Spender believes that males play an important part in 'damaging girls education'. Boys do not like girls and 'find them inferior, unworthy, and even despicable. Girls react to this by keeping a low profile. However, Spender does not just blame the educational system, she sees the domination of males in society as the basic cause of the problem, but schools help to reinforce this dominance and continuance. Spender concludes that 'Mixed sex education is a preparation for 'real life'... for in real life it is men who dominate and control, but this is not equality of educational opportunity, - it is indoctrination and practice in the art of domination and subordination'.

Other Research shows boys made twice as many contributions as girls, and talked for longer. This may have been in part because they were getting more encouragement from the teacher

Research confirms what most kids would already be able to tell you. Boys are noisy; they call out answers, argue and are rude to girls. Girls, on the other hand, are more inclined on average to sit quietly, avoid joining in discussions, and ignore the boys.

Even when the teacher is chairing the conversation, boys are still in charge. Various studies have come up with the same conclusion: boys get more attention from teachers than girls do.