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ABSTRACT

Although schools should be places which boost children's self-esteem, they usually play an important part in damaging the self-esteem of their female students through various forms of gender bias. This study explored how public coeducational schools can strengthen the self-esteem of girls in grades 7-12. Twenty subjects, all of them female, Caucasian, and middle or upper-middle class, participated in the study; 10 female students and 10 teachers and staff members. The researcher met with subjects individually and then analyzed the subjects' responses as to how schools can improve girls' self-esteem. Results indicate a need for teacher and staff training for awareness and skills, as well as curriculum reform, to strengthen girls' self-esteem. The interviews reinforced previous research which found that public coeducational schools are not addressing the issue of gender bias and that girls will not receive an equitable education until these inequities are resolved. Unlike educators in girls' schools, teachers and staff at the public coeducational schools were not focused on gender issues in their schools or classrooms. Schools will have to commit more than superficial resources to teacher training if they are sincere in their efforts to strengthen the self-esteem of their female students. Contains 11 references. (RJM)

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Strengthening the Self-Esteem of Adolescent Girls Within the Public School System

By

Carla Emil

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of The Dominican College Department of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education: Curriculum and Instruction

San Rafael, CA

May 1993

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how public coeducational schools can strengthen the self-esteem of girls in grades 7-12. Twenty subjects participated in the study: ten female students and ten teachers and staff members from both coeducational and single-sex girls' middle and high schools in the San Francisco Bay area. Transcribed interviews were analyzed for subjects' responses to how schools can improve girls' self-esteem. Results indicated that there are various ways in which schools can effect change, including teacher and staff training for awareness and skills, and curriculum reform.

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Introduction

Schools should be a place where the self-esteem of our children is fostered and nurtured. Instead, our schools are playing an important part in damaging the self-esteem of its girl students, systematically if unintentionally, through various forms of gender bias. The result is that girls are not receiving the same quality or quantity of education as boys. Girls begin first grade with the same levels of skill and ambition as boys but often, by the time they finish high school, girls have fallen far behind. Middle School years are often the turning point, when girls' self-esteem appears to decline dramatically.

Unfortunately, coeducational schools in particular appear to contribute to this drop in self-esteem and do little to correct the problem. Single-sex girls' schools seem to be having more success, where it is found that young women emerge more confident than at coeducational institutions. If girls are to receive an education equal to boys, coeducational schools must begin to address this critical issue of self-esteem as part of the curriculum, as well as in teaching and administration strategies and practices.

Statement of the Problem

What can public coeducational schools do to strengthen the self-esteem of girls in grades seven through twelve?

Self-esteem is the ability to value one's self; to believe in one's self and have faith in one's competence. Self-esteem can be used interchangeably with the word self-worth.

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Rationale

Satir (1988) describes that adolescence has served its purpose when a person arrives at adulthood with, among other things, a strong sense of self-esteem. She believes that an atmosphere in which individual differences are appreciated is one of the key factors in achieving a sense of self-worth. Adults are the initiators, teachers, and models for self-esteem. With high self-esteem people have faith in their own competence. They are able to ask others for help, yet believe in their own decisions. People with low self-esteem are fearful. They expect to be cheated and depreciated by others. They fear risking new ways of solving problems. They often feel like failures. At its extreme, psychoanalytic psychiatry tells us, pathologic loss of self-esteem is characterized by clinical depression (Campbell, 1989).

For many girls, academic success is the most important aspect of self-esteem, and girls' feelings about their success in school are greatly influenced by their teachers. Schools and teachers can play a critical role in enhancing girls' self-esteem and academic aspirations. However, the American Association of University Women report (AAUW, 1991b) shows that the role teachers play is often less than positive. Satir (1988) believes that "It is possible to raise anyone's self-esteem, no matter what one's age or condition. Since the feeling of low self-worth has been learned, it can be unlearned, and something new learned in its place" (p. 27).

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Background and Need

Until the 1970s, there had been an absence of girls from the major studies of adolescence. In the last twenty years, however, psychologists and educators have begun studying the intellectual, ethical, and psychological development of adolescents in educational settings. There was an interest in understanding why women students talk so often of problems and gaps in their learning and frequently doubt their intellectual competence (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Gilligan (1982) described various psychological and developmental differences between men and women. She proposed that our society has become accustomed to seeing life through men's eyes and "implicitly adopting male life as the norm" (p. 6). Central to Gilligan's work is the notion that in doing so, society places little value on the way that women see the world and relate to others. In fact, until recently, we have not even tried to understand these differences.

Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990) recorded the study of girls' psychological development conducted at the Emma Willard School between 1931 and 1984. This study described how even young women of relative privilege, studying in an environment designed to foster their education and development, exhibited increasingly conflicted views of themselves and their responsibilities and opportunities in the world.

Recent research by the AAUW has also determined the need for us to focus on young women in our schools. They propose that little attention has been paid to the issue of gender equity in the schools, and the understanding of self-esteem as it relates to gender equity is an even newer area of exploration. Their 1992 report details the ways in which the public school system deprives

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girls of an education equal to that of boys. A key factor in students' success in school appears to be self-esteem. Initial research shows that much of the difference between the educational aspirations and career goals of girls and boys can be traced to a gender gap in self-esteem that widens during the school years (AAUW, 1991a). Girls end up much less confident about their abilities, much less likely to value themselves for their talents, much less likely to think they are good at things and can get things done (AAUW, 1991b).

Gilligan, as cited in the American Association of University Women report, (AAUW, 1991b) describes this drop in self-esteem as girls come up against an impasse around middle school age. She reports that girls hit a "moment of resistance" when they reach unpleasant understandings about society. Girls begin to understand that many people do not want to hear what they are saying. The questions that they ask and the way that they view the world, different than their male peers, become disruptive of the curriculum. Gilligan believes that this results in the silencing of their voices and a loss of assertiveness and self-confidence.

While the AAUW research has presented initial recommendations for changing the educational system to make it more gender equitable, this study will draw on its findings and those of Gilligan et al. to develop a further understanding of what is happening to girls in our schools today. What role do the schools play in the deterioration of self-esteem? What can schools do to address the problems that young women are having in this critical area? And what can we learn from the successes of single-sex girls' schools that might add to our understanding of girls' learning styles and issues around self-esteem?

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Review of the Literature

This review examines three areas into which the research appears to fall: 1) Gender equity in the schools, focusing on issues of self-esteem, 2) Girls' learning styles and, 3) The successes that single-sex girls' schools are having in educating young women.

Gender Equity and Self-esteem

The AAUW is at the vanguard in the exploration of gender equity in schools. In 1990 the AAUW conducted a national research project to study the interaction of self-esteem and education and career aspirations in adolescent girls and boys in today's society. The study included 3,000 children between grades 4 and 10 in 12 locations nationwide.

The study (AAUW, 1991a) found that as girls and boys grow older, both experience a significant loss of self-esteem in a variety of areas; however, the loss is most dramatic and has the most long-lasting effect for girls. Girls, aged eight and nine, are confident, assertive and feel good about themselves. They emerge from adolescence with a poor self-image, constrained views of their future, and much less confidence about themselves and their abilities. The study found that 60% of elementary school girls say they are "happy the way I am," a core measure of self-esteem. Sixty-seven per cent of boys surveyed strongly agreed with the statement. Over the next eight years, girls' self-esteem fell 31 points, with only 29% of high school girls saying they are happy with themselves. Almost half of the high school boys, 46%, retained their self-esteem. The difference between the self-esteem of boys and girls had increased by 10 points.

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Otner key findings show:

1) Adolescent girls are more likely than boys to have their declining sense of themselves inhibit their actions and abilities. This difference accentuates with age. Boys' sense of confidence in their ability to "do things" strongly correlates with general self-confidence. Boys report a greater willingness to speak out, are more likely than girls to "speak up in class a lot" and "to argue with my teachers when I think I'm right."

2) Physical appearance, fundamental to the self-esteem of all young people, is much more important to the self image of young women than of young men, and society tells girls more strongly that their worth is dependent on their appearance.

3) Self-esteem is critically related to young people's dreams and successes. The higher self-esteem of young men translates into bigger career dreams. Girls are much more likely than boys to say they are "not smart enough" or "not good enough" for their dream careers.

4) Family and school, not peers, have the greatest impact on adolescents' self-esteem and aspirations. As boys find people believing they can do things, they end up with higher self-esteem as they go through adolescence. Young women find people, including their teachers, believing that they cannot do the things they believe they can. The result is lower self-esteem.

5) Math and science have the strongest relationship on self-esteem for young women, and as they "learn" that they are not good at these subjects their sense of self-worth and aspirations deteriorate.

6) There is a circular relationship between liking math and science, self-esteem and career interests. Students who like math possess significantly

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greater self-esteem. Students with higher self-esteem like math and science more. These students like themselves more, feel better about their school work and grades, consider themselves more important, and feel better about their family relationships.

Following the 1991 report, the AAUW held a roundtable to discuss their research findings with a group of educators, business people, public officials, and the media. The report (1991b) includes input from the roundtable participants. Research by Gilligan, Sadker and others reveals that teachers initiate more communication with boys than with girls in the classroom, strengthening boys' sense of importance. Teachers also ask boys more complex, abstract, and open-ended questions, providing better opportunities for active learning. They encourage more assertive behavior in boys than in girls, evaluate boys' papers for creativity and girls' for neatness, and give boys the time and help to solve problems on their own, but "help" girls along by telling them the right answers.

The AAUW (1992) report synthesizes all of the available research on the subject of girls in school, and details evidence that girls are not receiving the same quality or quantity of education as are boys. The report proposes that there is clear evidence that the educational system is not meeting girls' needs, beginning as early as preschool, whether one looks at achievement scores, curriculum design, staffing patterns, or self-esteem levels.

Researchers have puzzled over the drop in girls' self-esteem as they go through school. Nelson, as cited in AAUW 1992, attributes this drop in self-esteem to the negative messages delivered to girls by the school curricula. "Students sit in classes that, day in and day out, deliver the message that women's lives count for less than men's" (p. 67). The report describes historian

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Linda Kerber's suggestion that there is a connection between falling self-esteem and curricular omission and bias. Lowered self-esteem is a reasonable conclusion if one has been subtly instructed that what people like oneself have done in the world has not been important and is not worth studying (AAUW,1992).

Sandler, as cited in The National Coalition of Girls' Schools report (1992) proposes that girls need to be provided with the knowledge of the female experience if they are to develop a positive self-image and increase their self-esteem. "If we do nothing in our curriculum, we reinforce the stereotypes that women are passive and less important than men, that women are there for men's benefit, that women are not the achievers in this society, and that men are..." (p. 39).

Sandler, in The National Coalition of Girls' Schools report, describes what happens to girls in the classroom and the messages that the school itself gives to girls. Under a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and other federal agencies, the Center for Women Policy Studies examined research done by linguists and communication researchers to identify the ways in which male and female students are often treated differently. Sandler calls this situation the "chilly climate," a series of small behaviors that communicate to some or all females that they are not as worthwhile and are not expected to participate in the classroom or anywhere else as much as males are expected to participate. The FIPSE examination confirmed that 1) Girls and women do not participate in classrooms as much as males, 2) Most young women major in traditional "female" fields rather than in fields like mathematics

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and science, and 3) For many young women there is a drop in self-esteem during early adolescence and again during college.

Girls' Learning Styles

Virginia Wolf, as cited in Gilligan (1982) describes that "It is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex ... it is the masculine values that prevail" (p.16). Our schools, as microcosms of our larger society, have typically geared education to the learning styles of males, and have ignored the differences that exist between how girls and boys, young men and women, view the world and relate to others. Most of the institutions of higher education in our country were designed by men and most are run by men. In recent years, feminist teachers and scholars have begun to question the curriculum, the structure and the pedagogical practices of these schools and have suggested proposals for change (Belenky, 1986).

Jacobs, as cited in The National Coalition of Girls' Schools report (1991), proposes that the way women learn, act and interact is different than men; not better or worse but different. The answer is not for women to be like men. The answer is to address these differences rather than to change who and what women feel comfortable being. Jacobs suggests a number of teaching techniques that address the learning styles of women, including: cooperative learning, writing activities including reaction papers, the use of journals, students watching other students work, and interviewing. She also suggests that teachers, especially math and science teachers, let their students see how they work through problems. "What we never show our students is that it took you twelve pieces of paper before you could even start a problem. That is important

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because young women want to be perceived in a favorable light. They want to be right. And you need to show that you take risks" (p. 53).

The Emma Willard School, a girls' school described by Gilligan et al. (1989), reviewed and balanced their curriculum to respond to the inclusion of women within it. Importantly, they also became more attentive to their practices of listening to questions asked by its students and in reflecting on their own responses. They also tried out diverse approaches to teaching that supported girls' learning styles, such as cooperative learning. "Most schools tend to foster rule-oriented, abstract thinking, whether in mathematics and science or history or social studies. Less attention is given to features we identify here as associated with a response connected learner" (Gilligan, 1898, p. 68). Connected learner is described as a person who is interdependent in their learning. This is often a common learning style of girls.

Single-Sex Girls Education

There is increasing evidence that girls and young women learn more, learn faster and emerge more confident at girls' schools than at coeducational institutions . This success is believed to be largely a function of the greater number of female teachers who act as role models and mentors and the gearing of education to female strengths and sensibilities.

Lee & Marks (1990) extended the High School and Beyond study to investigate sustained effects of single-sex and coeducational secondary school in the attitudes, values, and behaviors of young men and women, measured 2 or 4 years after high school graduation. Although sustained effects of single-sex secondary schooling appear for both sexes on college choice and post college

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interests, effects on young women extend to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The single-sex educational experience, especially during the formative adolescent period, appears to enable young women to overcome certain social-psychological barriers to their academic and professional advancement.

Smith (1990) found that womens' colleges relate positively to a variety of measures of student satisfaction, perceived changes in skills and abilities, and educational aspirations and educational attainment. In particular, students evaluate these institutions most positively on measures having to do with the academic program of the institution and the contact with faculty and administration.

Method

Subjects

Twenty subjects from the San Francisco Bay Area were interviewed for this study: ten female students and ten teachers and staff members from both coeducational and single-sex girls' middle and high schools. Students were aged 12-17. All subjects were female, Caucasian, middle or upper middle class.

Procedure

The interviewer met with subjects individually. Subjects were asked to respond qualitatively to five core questions (see Appendix) and additional prompts. Interviews were tape recorded, took approximately 30 minutes each, were transcribed verbatim and were analyzed for common themes and original ideas.

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Results

Overall, the interviews identified the following four areas that would help strengthen girls' self-esteem in public coeducational schools.

Teacher and Staff Training

It appears that teacher and staff training is the critical area to address if self-esteem in girls is to be strengthened in our schools. This training should begin in teacher credentialing programs and extend to an overall philosophy in the schools that supports and promotes in-service training, workshops and continuing education. Training should address a number of areas: a) awareness of the issue that schools can, and do, affect the self-esteem of its girl students and that currently gender bias is often not addressed in the schools, b) improving attitudes towards women in general and girl students specifically, c) awareness of differences in girls' learning styles and behaviors, and skills training to address these differences and d) training in curriculum reform.

The interviews described that, in general, teachers and staff members in single-sex girls' schools are aware of the issues around self-esteem and address the special needs of girls in the classroom and through other programs within the school. A principal in a girls' school told the interviewer, "In our program we're very committed to womens' education because we've seen all the research and we know that we are giving students the opportunity to be leaders. They don't have the competition of the male students, they don't have the distractions of the male students, so they have a much clearer focus in their education. They don't feel the discrimination when a teacher calls on the males because the males are making all the noise. Our students make all the noise. We expect them to be

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assertive. By nature of the setting and the clear mind the staff, the faculty, and the administration have about the values of single-sex education, it's much easier for the students to be successful. We are concerned about self-esteem." This was a common theme among all of the girls' schools teachers and staff members interviewed.

The public, coeducational teachers and staff members interviewed, however, did not appear to be focused on the issue of gender equity and in most cases there was little or no awareness of the special needs of girls and the problems around self-esteem for girls in our schools. There appeared to be a focus on multi-cultural and other special population needs in these schools, but no in-servicing or conferences on the subject of gender equity were mentioned. Even when the issue of restructuring was discussed, it appeared that gender issues had not been included in any new direction for this particular school.

While girls' school educators spoke knowledgeably about the AAUW studies, Carol Gilligan, and the book Womens' Ways of Knowing, public school educators interviewed were not aware of this work. When told of Carol Gilligan's research, one public school teacher responded, "But do women really learn differently?" However, an eighth grade teacher at a San Francisco girls' school told the interviewer, "Three years ago I heard Carol Gilligan and it was really revolutionary for me. I came back and reported to my school's faculty about what she said about girls losing voice and so on and problems of self-esteem and about women not being the best at confronting conflict directly and just allowing disagreement to be a healthy part of human interaction ... how girls are not good at that." Because of this experience, the teacher told the interviewer, "I work

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with kids on conflict, trying to get them to say things directly to each other and that kind of thing. I think that helps them feel better about themselves."

On the subject of teacher and staff behavior and awareness, two co-ed high school students offered some insights. One Marin county high school student reported that in her honors chemistry class she was having a problem with her teacher's attitude and behavior towards her. "I have one teacher who is just really awful to me, like he was putting me down all of the time because it was my chemistry class and I couldn't get the concepts. You know, chemistry is not something that is easy for me and at the beginning he would just tease me and I thought it was because he liked me. When I went into the class I was so excited because I was thinking that I was going to love chemistry because I love science, I really do. I have always loved science and math, you know, and I was thinking chemistry was going to be fun, we get to do experiments and all this stuff and I went in there just really excited about it and I was getting A's and then he started teasing me and making fun of me. I got a really, really bad grade on one test because I just didn't understand it all and from then on he just made fun of me and would tell people what my grades were. He kept putting me down and those kinds of things and he would even call me stupid sometimes and tell me I wouldn't ever make it to college and I couldn't do chemistry and this and that and so, that was awful." The student and her parents went to the school counselor for help. "She (the counselor) kind of made me feel bad because she didn't really, she reacted, but it was kind of like she didn't really want to do anything about it. She told my parents that they could deal with it if they wanted to and that it happens with this certain teacher a lot of times and I guess the administrators don't seem to really take it very seriously." When this student was

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asked by the interviewer if this happens with certain kids more than others the chemistry student replied, "Yea, well, it's usually girls, and girls who aren't the geniuses of the class." In this example, the teacher may not have been aware of his behavior and training may have helped to change it. The counselor, too, would benefit from training on this issue.

The second student had a more positive experience. She has a science teacher who told the class that sometimes people tell girls that they are not as bright in science as the boys, but that is not true. He acknowledged that women may learn differently than men, but that many of them are bright science students. "What will happen a lot is that we have one boy in this class who, whenever the teacher asks a question, this boy blurts the answer out. Not called on, just blurts it out. And this is the only teacher I have ever seen, most teachers go 'good' and move on, but this teacher says to the boy, 'You need to sit and keep yourself quiet, while everyone else is thinking about it.' He said girls tend to sit and think about a question and want to be positive that they are right before they answer and boys are more instinctive and just blurt something out, even if it is not right. He (the teacher) really encourages us to take a minute and then calls on somebody, which is really nice."

Curriculum Reform

Curriculum reform must be initiated that is inclusive of women so that girls are exposed to a greater number of role models and grow up to understand that women, as well as men, have made important contributions to our world.

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Again, girls' schools appear to focus on a gender equitable curriculum while public schools appear to focus on a multi-cultural curriculum but not one that includes women as a special group. A San Francisco public high school teacher described, "Well, look at my own field. I teach history of art. It's March now and I have not spoken about one woman artist yet. Because there hasn't been one that has been written about by art historians. Now there are women doing research on art history and they are bringing up all these names from the past, but other than one or two until the modern period, there is no one that is accepted yet (in the curriculum) and the survey course needs to know about that. And I think to myself: 'What kind of message is that giving to girls?' "

A public high school student told the interviewer, "In terms of adding academic classes, it (the curriculum) has been increasingly focused on gay and African American studies and on Asian studies classes, but never has a Womens' Studies class come up." The same student advised that Womens' Studies, "needs to be taught to the males just as much as the girls. They need to get the role models for the females, but the males need to recognize the achievements of the women."

Segregated Classes and Activities Pilot Programs

Consideration should be given to select segregated classes and activities. A number of educators suggested girls' math or science classes as a possible direction for addressing the needs of girl students. "What the public schools could do ... well, there are some programs I know of where there is a math class only for girls. I think that is a great idea. I think schools could do things more like that. Just have science and math class with a girls' enrollment. I

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would like to see how that works out," suggested a high school teacher. A science teacher advised, "I remember sitting in a math class in high school and feeling so dumb and feeling I studied every night in geometry, every night and I wasn't going out and I was really trying and I couldn't get it. So, it would be interesting to see how much I could have improved if this particular teacher had spent some time encouraging me, that if maybe I had been in a class of only females if there would have been a difference. I think it would be a good idea to try and see, to pilot such a program just to see."

A middle school counselor suggested, "I almost think that we should go back to segregation for P.E. because what happens is, I will go into the gym and all the girls will be lying on the mats next to the boys who will, without any great difficulty, be doing tons of sit-ups and showing off, and the girls will be sort of having trouble getting the first one. And then they are right next to them, they are body to body, so it's a lot easier to giggle, say you have cramps and say you don't feel well, and then it is too ... I think that it is really uncomfortable. I think that to have boys and girls an inch from each other competing in the same exercises, without any kind of personal space, is a difficult thing in P.E."

A girls' school teacher suggested, "One thing, you were talking about co-ed schools, one thing I have often thought about is that if I did go back to teaching in co-ed schools, I would push to have segregated advising groups. In independent schools they have advising and I just think that would be so valuable. I think girls need a space to talk about things. Boys do too. I think that it's great for boys and girls to be talking to each other, but I think that if you can carve out one place where you can talk about gender specific issues ... then

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maybe once a month, you can come together and talk or whatever. Girls are going to talk about body image issues a lot more freely among themselves."

Counseling

Expanded and improved counseling services are critical for both boys and girls. Both are suffering because of the loss of adequate counseling in our public schools. However, girls would benefit, in particular, if competent counselors were available to address their specific needs.

A public high school junior told the interviewer, "There's a girl I know who was trying to get something done about sexual harassment and she is a really strong person at school, everybody knows who she is, she's known in town and everything. She felt sexually harassed by this guy and when she actually came in and wanted to talk about it with (the counselor) they just kept telling her that she was exaggerating, or that she must be overly sensitive and they wouldn't do anything about it. It's like they don't want to have to be bugged by these things, they don't want to know what's really going on. When it comes down to it, they don't want to deal with it." While this is one girl's perspective, sexual harassment is a growing issue and adequate counseling services need to be in place to address it, along with other critical issues in girl students lives. Girls need to feel they are being listened to.

Discussion

The interviews conducted for this study appear to confirm previous research that recommends teacher and staff training for awareness and skills, and curriculum reform as the primary means to strengthen girls' self-esteem in

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our schools. The interviews also appear to reinforce previous research that concludes that public coeducational schools are not addressing the issue of gender bias and problems around self-esteem for girls, and that girls are not going to receive an equitable education until they do.

Responses of the educators in the single-sex girls' schools differed dramatically from responses of those interviewed at coeducational schools. Teachers and staff at the public coeducational schools were not focused on gender issues in their schools or classrooms. Some were aware of these issues through reading or discussions with their colleagues, but none interviewed had received any in-service training on the subject. Addressing gender equity in a formal way did not appear to be a priority in the schools where these subjects worked.

A public school science teacher told the interviewer, " It would be nice, I think, to have at least a portion of some in-service devoted to gender equity and issues around educating girls. But it is so hard because we're all spread so thin on these different areas and we're trying to cover everything. One of the frustrations, I think, is that the high schools are really being asked to do everything and I know, as a teacher, it is very daunting, especially when we are also in the process of up-heaving our whole science curriculum. But I would like to definitely see at least an hour or two specifically devoted to that exact topic."

An eighth grade English teacher in a San Francisco girls' school proposed, "The more I teach, the more I think about what is really important. The students, yes, I am giving them tons of skills, but they are not going to remember a book they read in eighth grade when they are in college. What's important is giving

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them the ability to think about ideas now, and if they come out of school knowing how to talk to each other, knowing how to stand up and talk in front of a group of people, feeling good about themselves...that is definitely one of my goals. More than anything else, for them to feel good about themselves. You can't get along if you don't feel OK."

It appears that the public schools can learn something from single-sex girls' institutions. The needs of our girl students must be addressed as critically as the needs of every other population in our schools. However, until our educators in the public schools are fully aware of the gender inequities that exist in their schools, and are committed to doing something about them, we will continue to shortchange girls in our society. It is this paper's conclusion that schools are going to have to commit to more than an hour or two of in-service training, as suggested by the teacher above, if strengthening the self-esteem of girl students is truly a goal. Public schools need to begin thinking about how to make all of its students, including its girl students, feel good about themselves.

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Appendix - Interview Protocol

1) What are some of the things that your school does that make its students feel good about themselves?

2) What are some of the things that your school does that make its students feel not so good about themselves?

3) (For teachers) What do you do in your classroom that makes kids feel good about themselves?

3) (For administrators) What do some of your teachers do that make their students feel good about themselves?

4) Some people believe that schools do things that make their boy students feel better about themselves than their girls students. Do you agree with this statement? If yes, why do you agree? If not, why might people think this to be true?

5) If you agree, what are some things that schools can do to change this situation?

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