



Academic Disparity Facing Boys in the United States

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Figure 5: Teacher and Male Student

Introduction

Academic disparity has been a frequent topic of discussion within the United States, especially when in concern for the disadvantages plaguing girls within the education system. However, many researchers have discovered that girls are outperforming boys in academic achievement across all age and ethnic lines, thus initiating a major gender shift in college enrollment and occupational patterns. Although multiple sources agree that classroom dynamics are directly related to the scholastic deficit facing boys, many debate over the causes behind this dilemma and the most effective measures to implement.

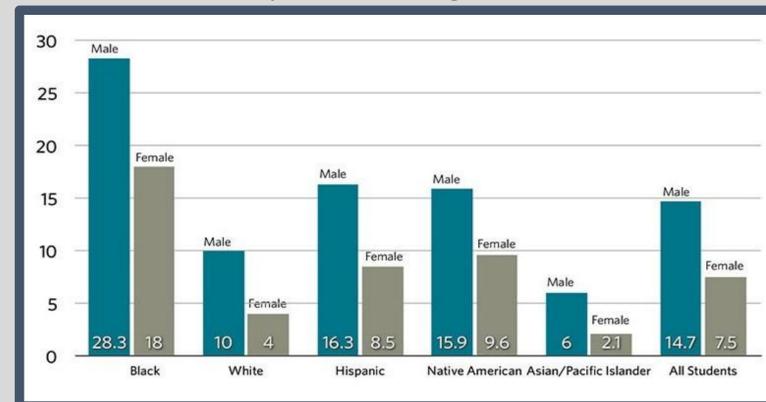
Identifiable Issues

- Boys account for 71% of all school suspensions. This includes 59% of Black boys and 42% of Hispanic boys. (U.S. Dept of Ed and Schott Foundation Report)
- Boys comprise 67% of all special education students. Almost 80% of these are Black and Hispanic males. (USDOE and Schott Foundation Report)
- Boys are five times more likely than girls to be classified as hyperactive and are 30 percent more likely to flunk or drop out of school. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- Girls outperform boys in grades and homework at all levels. (NCES)

Review of the Literature

My review of the literature was compiled into two main sections: the influence of teachers on male academic achievement and the role in which male students play on their own their academic progress. Themes explored under the former topic included the impact that a teacher's gender perception, curriculum, and class structure may possess in shaping male academic disparity. Subjects explored for how personal factors may affect the student's academic success within the classroom included their perceptions of teachers, their overall academic proclivities, and their racial and socioeconomic composition. Most consistent throughout the literature was that teachers across all racial and socioeconomic lines possess a significant role for student classroom performance and that a healthy student-teacher relationship is paramount to ensuring male academic prosperity.

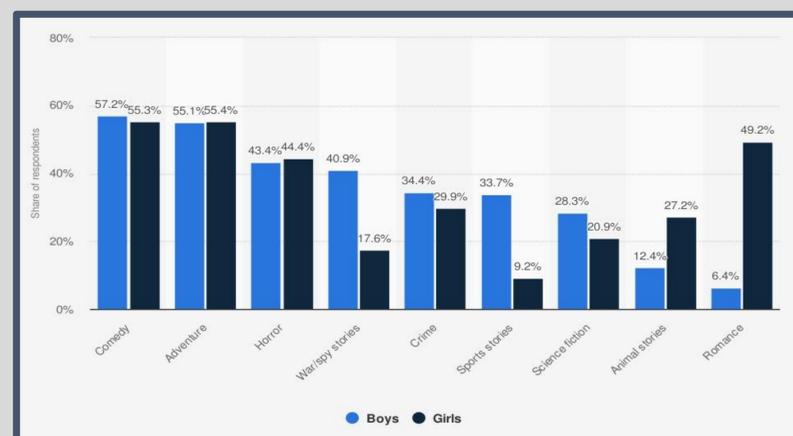
National middle school suspension rates in 2006 by race and gender



OECD average distribution of boys and girls according to the levels of proficiency in reading



Favourite book genres among boys and girls in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2012



Future Directions

Most of this literature review focused on younger males in primary education, so there is much need for further study that addresses the issues unique to older male students within secondary and post-secondary education.

Although slightly addressed within the literature, further study would be needed to assess the full impacts of reducing access to physical activity (i.e. recess and gym) throughout the school day.

Much of the research also points to the motivation levels of boys influencing academic achievements. Although some ideas were suggested, there would need to be more focus placed into the different techniques to boost their motivation to learn.

Proposed Solutions

These are some of the suggested measures that would encourage male academic achievement within classrooms across the United States:

- Diversify reading genres offered to students within the classroom..
- Introduce broader creative writing prompts that could interest boys.
- Infuse physical activity into curriculum through class participation and projects.
- Reduce negative disciplinary and suspension rates.
- Form beneficial relationships with boys.

References

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