

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 473

SO 021 144

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 TITLE The Cost of Sex Bias in Schools and Society. The Report Card #1. Updated Edition.
 INSTITUTION American Univ., Washington, D.C. Mid-Atlantic Center for Sex Equity.; NETWORK, Inc., Andover, MA.
 PUB DATE 89
 NOTE 10p.; This edition updated by Mary Jo Strauss.
 PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Females; Males; *Sex Bias; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Fairness; Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Problems; Social Science Research

ABSTRACT

The losses that both girls and boys suffer because of sex bias in society and in education are summarized in this report. For both girls and boys, statements based on research in these fields are listed in the academic, psychological and physical realms, and career and family relationships. (53 endnotes) (DB)

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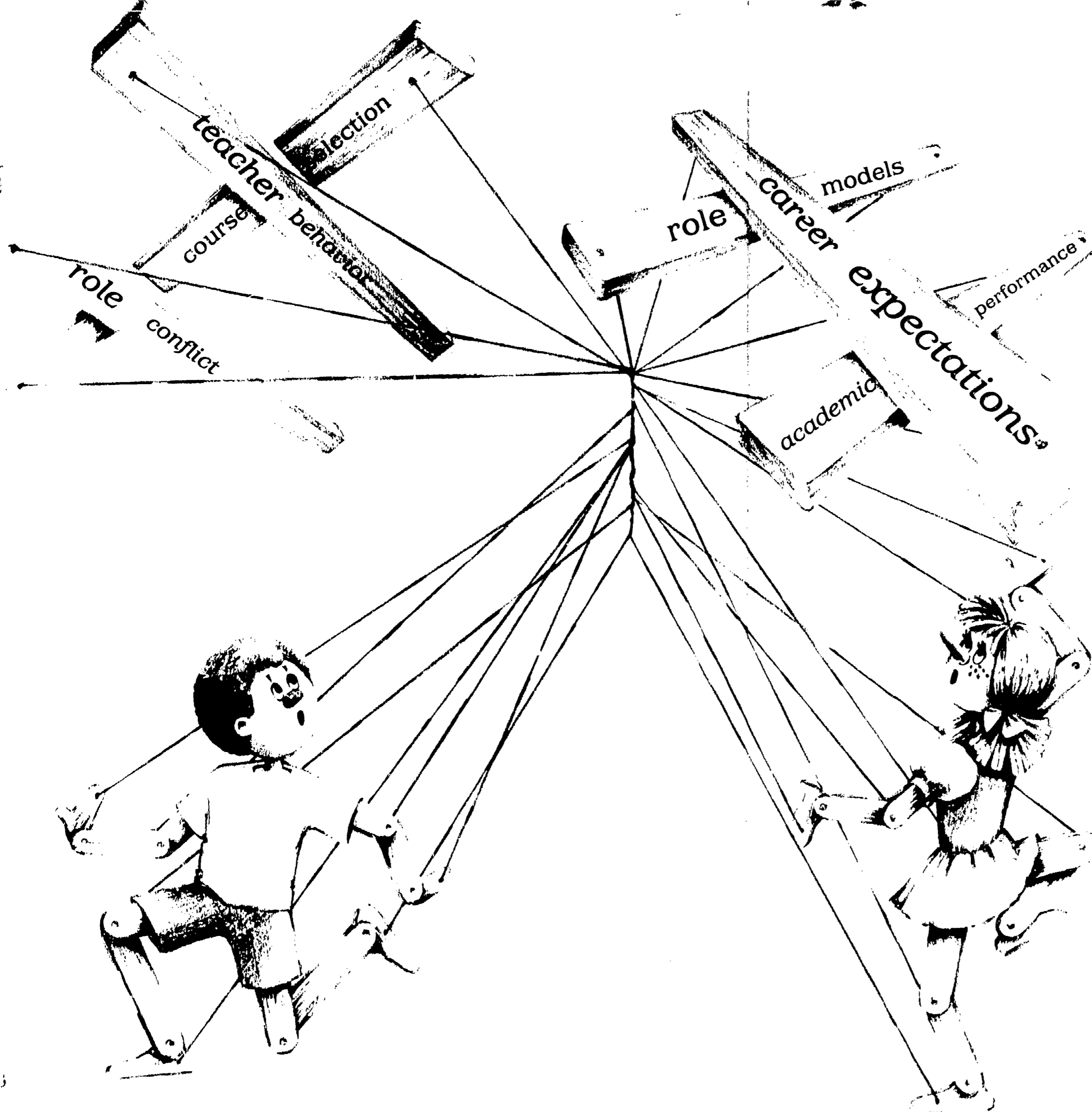
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Report Card: The Cost of Sex Bias in Schools and Society

Here is a report card you will not find in any elementary or secondary school. Nevertheless, it is an important evaluation. It reflects the losses that both girls and boys suffer because of sex bias in society and in education. Years after the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the law that prohibits sex discrimination in schools receiving federal financial assistance, gender inequities continue to permeate schools.



THE COST OF SEX BIAS in Schools and Society

GIRLS

Academic

- Girls' overall academic performance as indicated by national averages on achievement tests surpasses boys' in the early years and then declines relative to boys' as they progress through school. Girls begin school ahead and end up behind.¹
- At the junior high level, males and females do equally well on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics test; however, in grades 11-12, the mean NAEP score for males on the "application of mathematics" component substantially exceeds the female score.²
- On the NAEP science measures, the mean scores of males exceed those of females at all age levels. By age 17, White males outscore White females by 14 percent. They also outscore Black males by 42 percent and Black females by 48 percent.
- On all College Board Achievement and Advanced Placement (AP) tests in mathematics and science, the mean scores of males exceed those of females. Except for AP tests in computer science and mechanics in which White and Asian males score about the same, Asian males outperform all other students in mathematics and science. The AP scores of Asian females and White males are similar in biology, chemistry, calculus and general physics. White female scores are lower and similar to those of Black and Hispanic males, while Black and Hispanic females score lowest on these tests.³
- Males outperform females substantially on all subsections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing Program Examination (ACT). The largest gap is in the mathematics section of the SAT followed by the ACT natural science reading, the ACT mathematics usage and the ACT social studies reading.⁴
- The College Board Achievement Tests are required for admission to more selective colleges and universities. On these achievement tests, males outperform females in French, Latin, Spanish, European history, American history, biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics.⁵
- Students may earn college credit in various subjects through the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Test program. Except in languages and fine arts, males from all racial groups outscore females within their racial groups on AP Tests, so the overall mean score for males in each group is generally higher. However, among Hispanic students taking the 1987 tests, the overall mean score for females did exceed that for males.⁶
- In spite of a decline in performance on standardized achievement tests, girls frequently receive better grades in school. This may be one of the rewards they get for seeming to be more compliant in the classroom. However, this may be at the cost of achievement as measured by standardized tests, independence and self-reliance.⁷
- Girls are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms with minority girls being the least visible. They receive fewer academic contacts, less praise and constructive feedback, fewer complex and abstract questions and less instruction on how to do things for themselves.⁸
- Those girls who are identified as gifted are less likely to participate in special or accelerated programs to develop their talent.⁹
- Girls who experience learning disabilities are also less likely to be identified or to participate in special education programs than are learning disabled boys.¹⁰
- In urban areas, 43 percent of all young males who drop out are likely to return to school. For young females who drop out, the return rate is only 25 percent.¹¹
- In 1987, females received only 38 percent of more than 6,000 National Merit Scholarships awarded on the basis of Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) scores.¹² Sole reliance on a score from a test which is biased results in the underrepresentation of women and minorities in this scholarship program.¹³
- On tests for admission to graduate and professional schools, males outperform females on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) and the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).¹⁴
- While women are the majority of students enrolled at two- and four-year colleges, they are in the minority at the most selective, coeducational, liberal arts colleges and research universities, and are also in the minority of all fulltime, regularly matriculated students younger than 25 years of age.¹⁵

Psychosocial and Physical

- Although females receive better grades than males, they are less likely to believe they can do college work. Females exhibit lower self-esteem than males during secondary and postsecondary education.²¹
- Girls have less confidence than boys in their mathematical ability. Low female confidence and performance in mathematics may stem from society's sex-stereotyping of this field as a masculine discipline.²²
- Girls have less positive attitudes toward science than do boys. With their parents' encouragement, boys, more often than girls, learn science outside of school through toys, hobbies, television programs and museum visits.²³
- Under Title IX, all students must have equal access to extracurricular activities, including athletics. Integrating girls' and boys' sports has led to a decrease in athletic positions and job losses for female coaches in many school systems and to the simultaneous loss of much needed female role models.²⁴
- Many physical education instructors received their training in sex-segregated programs and are unfamiliar with techniques needed to teach classes in which students have a wide range of skill levels. As a result, many "coed" classes still operate with boys on one side of the gym and girls on the other. This perpetuates unequal skill development opportunities for girls, and denies boys opportunities to see girls as physically competent and to enjoy mixed gender competition.²⁵
- One in ten teenage girls becomes pregnant every year. For more than 40 percent of all adolescent girls who drop out of school, the cause is pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is related to a constellation of factors including poverty, low self-esteem, academic failure and the perception of few life options.²⁶
- Regardless of race or ethnicity, poor teenage women with below-average basic skills have almost identical pregnancy rates.²⁷
- Although most adolescents and young adult women have heard of AIDS and other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), the majority do not know about PIDs (Pelvic Inflammatory Diseases) and how extensively adolescent females may be affected or how these microorganisms affect males.²⁸

Career and Family Relationships

- As a result of sex-role stereotyping, society views some occupations as "men's jobs," and others as "women's jobs." Nontraditional jobs for women, those in which fewer than one-fourth of the workers are female, include many better paying jobs, especially those in industrial-technical trades, engineering, science and management.⁴¹
 - Women's nontraditional jobs entail the application of mathematics in the daily work routine and/or the use of tools, instruments and machinery. Since most female high school students avoid industrial-technical programs and the more rigorous mathematics and physical science courses, they are often unprepared to enter apprenticeships or college programs leading to these remunerative jobs.⁴²
 - Only four percent of female high school seniors, compared to 23 percent of male seniors, report having completed two years of trade-industry courses such as automotive mechanics, drafting, welding or truck driving. Only three percent of female seniors, compared to 17 percent of male seniors, report having completed two years of technical courses in communications, transportation or electronics.⁴³
 - Nearly 75 percent of tomorrow's jobs will require the use of computers, but no more than a third of the participants in computer courses, camps and after-school programs are females.⁴⁴
 - Family finances are more likely to affect the college options of females than males. In fact, one study showed that when families were forced to make a financial decision as to whether to send their daughter or their son to college, 80 percent chose the boy.⁴⁵
 - Teenagers who become mothers earn about half the income of females who delay childbearing. When families are headed by young mothers, they are six times as likely to be in poverty.⁴⁶
 - Forty-two percent of all Black families, 23 percent of all Hispanic families and 13 percent of all White families in the United States are headed by women.⁴⁷
 - The preparation that girls receive in school contributes to the economic penalties they encounter in the workplace. Although over 90 percent of the girls in our classrooms will work in the paid labor force for all or part of their lives, the following statistics reveal the cost of the bias that they encounter.⁴⁸
- A woman with a college degree will typically earn less than a male high school dropout.
 - The typical working woman will earn 64.5 cents for every dollar earned by a male worker.
 - Minority women earn 12-17 percent less than White women and 12-13 percent less than minority men.
 - Approximately 77 percent of employed women are in non-professional jobs, and only 11 percent are in traditionally male occupations.
 - In contrast to the popular belief that things are getting better for female workers, since 1964 the gap between the wages earned by men and women has remained approximately the same.

BOYS

Academic

- Boys are more likely than girls to be scolded and reprimanded in classrooms or referred to school authorities for disciplinary action, even when the observed conduct and behavior of boys and girls does not differ.¹⁶
- According to data from the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, 81 percent of the incidents of corporal punishment and 71 percent of the suspensions involve males. Of these students, a disproportionately high percentage are minority.¹⁷
- Not only are boys more likely to be identified as having greater learning and reading disabilities, they also receive lower grades, are more likely to repeat a grade and are more likely to drop out of school.¹⁸
- According to data from the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, boys are 71 percent of the students identified as learning disabled, 78 percent of those designated as seriously emotionally disturbed, and 58 percent of the educable mentally retarded students. Of these, a disproportionately high percentage, especially of the educable mentally retarded students, are minorities.¹⁹
- 34,000 fewer Black males enrolled in college from 1976-1986 even though they were completing high school at an increasing rate.²⁰

Psychosocial and Physical

- Society socializes boys into active, independent and aggressive roles. Such behavior is incongruent with school norms and rituals that stress quiet behavior and impulse control. This results in a pattern of role conflict for boys, particularly during the elementary years.²⁹
- Hyperactivity is estimated to be nine times more prevalent in boys than in girls. Boys are more likely to be identified as having school and social adjustment problems. Males have higher psychological distress and higher suicide rates.³⁰
- The leading cause of death for White males ages 15-24 is accidents, especially automobile accidents. For Black males of the same age, homicide is number one.³¹ Black men have a one in 21 chance of death from homicide; Black women, one in 104; White men one in 131; and White women, one in 369.³²
- Males are under pressure to succeed, to be winners, to achieve academically, to prepare for high level careers and earning goals and to excel in competitive sports.³³ Those who are denied legitimate access to success may pursue antisocial or illegal means to gain acceptance.
- Boys are taught stereotyped behaviors earlier and more harshly than girls; there is a 20 percent greater probability that such stereotyped behavior will stay with them for life.³⁴
- Until recently, programs focusing on adolescent sexuality and teen pregnancy were directed almost exclusively at females. Lack of emphasis on the male role placed undue responsibility on females while seemingly condoning males' irresponsibility.³⁵
- In 1983, one-third of all 18 to 25 year-old fathers lived away from at least one of their children. The majority of absent fathers are White; however, the percentage of fathers living away from the their children is much higher among Blacks with 70 percent of young Black fathers absent from their children.³⁶
- Family planning experts say that 50 percent of sexually active single males will contract a sexually transmitted disease by the time they are 25. The highest incidence of venereal disease occurs in young men between 15 and 25.³⁷ Because of their experimentation with sex and drugs, this age group may run a very high risk of contracting AIDS.³⁸ In fact, out of every ten deaths from AIDS, nine are males.³⁹
- The average life expectancy of a baby boy born today is seven years less than for a baby girl. About 60 percent of this gap is attributable to male excesses in drinking, smoking and fatal accidents.⁴⁰

Career and Family Relationships

- Teachers and counselors advise boys not to enter sex-stereotyped careers, thereby limiting their potential in occupations such as kindergarten teacher, nurse or secretary, even though there is a great demand for workers in these fields, particularly in urban areas where unemployment of male youths is high.⁴⁹
- Many boys build career expectations that are higher than their abilities. This results in later compromise, disappointment and frustration.⁵⁰
- Both at school and at home, boys are taught to hide or suppress their emotions; as men, they may find it difficult or impossible to show feelings toward their family and friends.⁵¹
- Boys are actively discouraged from playing with dolls (except those that play sports or wage war). Few schools provide programs that encourage boys to learn parenting skills. Many men, through absence and apathy, become not so much parents as "transparent." Studies conducted during the late 1970's showed the typical father spending only 12 minutes a day interacting with his children. While more recent studies show increased participation, fathers still spend little time alone with their children.⁵²
- Men emphasize the importance of a father earning a good income and providing solutions to family problems. Women, on the other hand, stress the need for fathers to assist in caring for children and responding to the emotional needs of the family. While these differing perceptions of fatherhood lead to family strain and anxiety, progress has occurred. Between 1965 and 1981, men's involvement in child care and housework increased from 1.6 hours to 2.0 hours a day.⁵³

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