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Gender-bias in a fourth grade classroom : a self-study

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GENDER-BIAS IN A FOURTH GRADE CLASSROOM: A SELF-STUDY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

by

Robin K. Pang-Maganaris

May 1997

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ABSTRACT

GENDER-BIAS IN A FOURTH GRADE CLASSROOM: A SELF-STUDY

by Robin K. Pang-Maganaris

Research on the subject of gender-bias suggests that bias exists in classrooms. Researchers have found that teachers give more attention, verbal interaction, classroom discourse opportunities and educational referrals to boys than to girls. This thesis answers two questions regarding gender-bias in my own classroom: 1) In what ways do my teaching practices demonstrate bias; and 2) What causes the bias to exist?

Through the course of this study, I concluded that I engaged in gender-bias for two reasons. The first reason stemmed from my need for classroom management. The second reason resulted from my own gender stereotypes. I also concluded that gender-biased teaching practices were prevented when systematic and concrete plans directed at preventing biased behaviors were in place.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the publication of New York Times' Best Seller books Failing at Fairness by Myra and David Sadker, Reviving Ophelia by Mary Pipher and School Girls by Peggy Orenstein, the United States has been confronted with the question, "Does gender-bias exist in our classrooms?" These books suggest that in terms of curriculum, teacher access and attention, girls are not receiving the same opportunities as boys. As a result of the attention given to these books, the teachers and parents at my school became increasingly interested in this topic. During staff meetings, teachers talked about the issue and strategized ways to ensure that gender-bias was eliminated from our classrooms. Parents formed brown-bag lunch groups to discuss ways to help teachers become more able to see how they might improve teaching strategies.

As these discussions were being held, I began to feel the need to look at my own teaching practices and to search for ways that I might be allowing for gender-bias. More specifically, I began to wonder whether or not I was giving the boys in my classroom the same amount of attention and instruction as the girls in my classroom. And thus the reason for my research project.

Statement of the Problem

My research addressed two questions regarding gender-bias in my classroom:

1. In what ways do my teaching practices demonstrate gender-bias?
2. What appears to contribute to bias in my classroom?

Based on an exploration of these questions, I hope to develop action plans geared towards eliminating gender-biased practices from my future teaching behaviors. These questions arose from my own personal struggle to achieve equality between the sexes in both my teaching practice and my own personal life. My desire for equality is based upon

a feminist belief that equal opportunity has been historically denied to women while men have historically assumed positions of authority and power. In the recent past, women have had fewer privileges and opportunities than men and this inequality has been the accepted norm. As I have matured, I have challenged this position and have attempted to obtain for myself those opportunities and advantages that men have traditionally taken for granted.

Naturally, my quest for empowerment has led me to want the same for the girls in my classroom. I have been compelled to ensure that the girls in my classroom receive the same opportunities as the boys in my classroom. I want the girls to know that they are competent, successful beings, equal to boys. I want them to know that they can break from the traditional and stereotypical role of a passive, submissive woman, should they choose to do so. I want them to know that their place in society is dictated by themselves and only themselves—that society should not place any social demands on them that they do not wish to take on. My struggle to give girls equal opportunities in my classroom has been an attempt to empower the girls.

Feminist theory has also attempted to look at and challenge the status quo of male superiority. The standpoint held by Kristeva (1982) most nearly describes my own perspective on feminism. Kristeva describes feminism as occurring in three distinct phases or generations. First generation feminists attempt to gain for themselves the same rights and opportunities as those traditionally taken for granted by men. A desire for equality through experiences is the prime directive of the first generation feminist.

A second generation feminist also desires equality but does so from a different standpoint. The second generation feminist recognizes that men and women emerge from two different and distinct cultures. As a result, the second generation feminist asserts that equality through opportunity should not always be the imperative because it assumes that what is good for men is also good for women, which is not necessarily the case. The

second generation feminist holds that women should have equal opportunities with men, but only when those opportunities are in the best interest of women.

Finally, the third generation feminist assimilates the beliefs and accomplishments of the first and second generation feminist. The third generation feminist then attempts to take feminism a further step by attempting to obtain proactive solutions that will enable women to truly emerge in their own right.

As a result of my desire for equality amongst the sexes, I have worked towards attaining such in my classroom by attempting to achieve balance through opportunity. Kristeva would categorize my actions as falling within the category of a first generation feminist. As I mature, I hope to move further down the road of Kristeva's feminist perspective. I hope to one day move past merely seeking equal opportunity to a more deeper and meaningful view of feminism as described in Kristeva's second and third generation feminist perspective. However, recognizing that I am a first generation feminist, a closer look then at my teaching practice, in terms of whether or not I am achieving equality in my classroom, is thus in order.

This research is important for the following reasons:

1. Providing an equal education to children is a prime goal of my teaching pedagogy. By identifying areas where gender-bias exists, I will be able to develop an action plan that will focus on eliminating it, thus ensuring equal education to all children.
2. Information gathered in this research may prove beneficial to other teachers interested in preventing gender-bias in their classes.

The chapter that follows, "Review of Literature," will provide the reader with an overview of situations and instances where researchers have found gender-bias to exist in the classroom.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following Review of Literature addresses areas where teachers are gender-biased. I have divided this Review of Literature into four sections. In the first section, "Teacher Contact with Children," I will explore who it is that teachers give their attention to in the classroom. I will also discuss how student achievement, proximity and behavior effect how teachers distribute their attention.

The second section will discuss how teachers interact verbally with children. I have entitled this section, "Teacher Verbal Interactions with Children." In particular, this chapter will focus on how teachers praise, criticize, compliment, question, give wait time and respond to requests for help across gender.

The third section, "Classroom Discourse," will look at how teachers and students dialogue together in the classroom. In particular, I will discuss research exploring whom teachers call on, who speaks in class, and who is interrupted during classroom discussions.

Finally, the last section, "Teacher Referrals to GATE and Special Education," will give an overview of whom teachers refer to special educational services with respect to gender.

Teacher Contact with Children

Teachers are charged with providing children with an education that will enable them to become learned adults. Teachers push, praise, cajole and manipulate students through their interactions with children. Who are the students that receive the pushing, the praise, the cajoling? Are there certain situations in which a child is more or less likely to receive a teacher's attention? In the following paragraphs, I will explore who is most likely to receive teachers' attention. I will also discuss how student achievement and behavior

effect how much attention teachers give to students. Finally, I will examine whether children's proximity to their teacher affects the amount of attention they receive.

Teacher Attention

Over the past 25 years, numerous researchers have been interested in the question of who receives a teacher's attention (Becker, 1981; Benz, 1981; Berk & Lewis, 1977; Brophy, 1985; Cherry, 1975; Leinhard, Seewald & Engle, 1979; Morrison, 1979; Pflaum, Pascarella, Boswick & Auer, 1980; Stake & Katz, 1982). All of these studies indicate to some extent, that boys receive more attention in the classroom in terms of both verbal and non-verbal teacher/child interactions. The following five studies are representative of the findings of these studies.

As early as 1973, Serbin, O'Leary, Kent and Tonick looked at the attention fifteen teachers gave to over 250 lower- to middle-income preschool children. The researchers defined attention as occurring within a variety of categories. The categories included praise, reprimand, yelling, detailed instruction, conversation, touching and helping. Trained observers sat in teacher classrooms and recorded the number of times the teachers engaged in one of the behaviors defined as teacher attention. Serbin et al. found that across all categories teachers gave more of their attention to boys than to girls. Teachers were found to be more apt to praise, reprimand and yell at boys than girls. They were also found to give more detailed instructions and engage in conversation more often with boys than with girls. Finally, they found the teachers touched and helped boys more frequently than girls.

Ten years later, Simpson and Erickson (1983) looked at the interactions of sixteen first grade teachers and their students. Simpson and Erickson were interested in whether or not teachers interacted differently with boys than girls. Simpson and Erickson examined both the verbal and non-verbal interactions held between the teachers and their students.

Verbal interaction was defined as any conversation held between a child and a teacher. Nonverbal interaction included behaviors such as facial expressions, voice tone and gestures that were directed at individual children. Simpson and Erickson found that boys received more verbal and non-verbal interactions than did girls.

In 1984, Ebbeck reported similar findings. Ebbeck investigated thirty preschool teachers working with four and five year-old children. Observers in this study recorded teacher behaviors that were directed at individual children. Ebbeck looked specifically at verbal interactions between teachers and individual children that included conversations, reprimands, directions and assistance. As with the Serbin et al. and Simpson et al. studies, Ebbeck indicated that the teachers interacted more often with boys than with girls.

Sadker and Sadker (1984) also found the same results. Over the course of six years, they gathered data in more than 100 fourth, sixth and eighth grade suburban and urban classroom across four U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. They found that children did not receive equal amounts of teacher attention. According to this study, white males received the most attention from teachers, followed by minority males, then white females and finally minority females.

In a meta-analysis of 81 teacher-student interaction studies (Kelly, 1988), teachers were found to spend 56% of their time with boys and 44% of their time with girls. "Time" was measured in terms of both verbal and non-verbal interactions occurring between teacher and student. Over the course of a student's education (about 15,000 hours), this disparity translates to males receiving an average of 1,800 more contact hours with teachers than females.

The findings of these studies all indicate that boys receive more teacher attention than girls. The question that now follows is, "Why?"

Possible Explanations for Why Boys Receive More Attention than Girls

When looking for plausible explanations as to why boys receive more attention than girls in the classroom, several possibilities come to mind: 1) student achievement affects attention; 2) proximity affects attention; and/or 3) behavior affects attention. The following discussion explores the impact that student achievement, proximity and behavior has on the amount of attention and time a teacher gives to a child.

Student Achievement

Several studies have shown that student achievement impacts who receives attention from teachers. The studies indicate that gender-bias is present. Sadker and Sadker (1984) found that high achieving boys received the most amount of attention in the classroom. Low achieving boys received the next amount of attention. Girls, regardless of their achievement levels, received less attention than boys.

Good, Sikes and Brophy (1973) found similar results in their study of sixteen junior high teachers. The teachers in the study were found to spend the greatest amount of their time with high achieving boys.

Frey (1979) also found that high achieving boys received the most attention. In addition, she found that high achieving girls received the least amount of attention when compared to low achieving girls and all boys overall.

It appears, then, that student achievement influences the amount of attention students receive as higher achieving students receive more attention. However, gender-bias is evident as high achieving boys always received the most attention.

Proximity to the Teacher

Proximity to the teacher impacts the amount of attention children receive. Serbin et al. (1973) looked at the effect proximity had on teacher attention. They found that the

distance boys worked from their teacher had no impact on the amount of attention they received. Boys who worked far away from their teacher got the same amount of attention as boys who worked close to their teacher. Unlike boys, however, girls' proximity affected the amount of attention they received. Serbin et al. found that the closer a girl worked to her teacher, the more attention she received. In addition, the amount of attention girls received who were close to the teacher equaled the amount of attention boys received who worked at a distance from the teacher. Therefore, if girls desired more attention from their teacher, it was in their best interest to be close to their teacher.

Student Behavior

Student behavior plays a role in the amount of time a teacher spends with a student. Sadker and Sadker (1994) describe the classroom as an entity in a perpetual state of spinning out of control. Chaos, however, is not allowable in a classroom. During pre-service education, student teachers spend a great deal of time discussing behavior management and classroom discipline; school districts place heavy emphasis on teachers' abilities to control their classrooms; and tenure is denied to those who are incapable of managing student behavior (Clark, 1978, p. 20). With this emphasis on teachers being able to control the behaviors of children, teachers often focus their attention on those factors that are most likely to send the classroom into a state of chaos.

Bentzen (1963), Oetzel (1966), and Copeland and Wiessbrod (1976) found that throughout elementary schools, males were more often perceived by teachers as having more active and disruptive behaviors in the classroom than girls. In an attempt to manage boys' disruptive behavior, teachers may do one or more of the following:

1. *Spend more time disciplining boys for misbehaving than girls* (Stake & Katz, 1982; Simpson & Erickson, 1983). Teachers in these studies found that teachers were more likely to discipline a boy for misbehavior than a girl.

2. *Pay more attention to boys' aggressive behaviors than to girls' aggressive behaviors* (Levitin & Chananie, 1978; Fagot, 1985; Marshall, 1983; Wooldridge & Richmond, 1985). Serbin et al. (1973) found that teachers intervened at an average rate of three times more often when the perpetrator of aggression was a boy than when the perpetrator was a girl.
3. *Modify the curriculum to match the interest of boys, thus decreasing the probability of disruptive behavior* (Clarricoats, 1978). Teachers reported higher instances of discipline problems with boys when the curriculum was geared towards the interests of the girls (Clark, 1994, p. 23). In order to avoid management problems, teachers then chose to explore curriculum areas that boys wanted. As a result, boys were more likely to have learning experiences that matched their interests.
4. *Provide boys with more public opportunities to speak than girls* (Brophy & Good, 1991, p. 103). The teachers in this study found that when boys were speaking or in the limelight, they were more apt to be on task and less likely to be disruptive. These teachers then gave boys more opportunities to speak as a way to manage their behaviors. Hillman and Davenport (1978) also found teachers giving boys more public opportunities to speak in their investigation of teacher-student interactions in 206 classrooms, kindergarten through twelfth grade.
5. *Call on boy volunteers and non-volunteers more than girl volunteers and non-volunteers when responses are needed in discussions* (Morrison, 1979; Hillman & Davenport, 1978). Morrison, and Hillman and Davenport both found that even in situations where an equal number of boys and girls had their hands raised to volunteer for a task, teachers were still more likely to call on a boy than a girl.

Summary of Teacher Contact

It appears then that, while boys and girls are equally present in the classroom, the attention teachers give to students is influenced by gender. According to the research cited, boys generally receive more attention in the classroom than girls.

The following section will look at the verbal interactions held between teachers and students.

Teacher's Verbal Interactions with Children

Gender-bias may also be manifested in how teachers speak to children. There is a multitude of ways that teachers can interact verbally with children including, praise, reprimands, directions and conversation. The following sections will look specifically at how teachers interact verbally with students in terms of praise, criticism, compliments, questions, wait time and directions they give to children.

Praise

Praise reinforces for a child that a task has been done well. Praise lets children know that they have been successful and that their efforts have been worthwhile. Several studies have found that verbal praise from a teacher has a positive impact on student behavior (Hughes, 1973; O'Leary & O'Leary, 1972, Rosenshine, 1976). In a study conducted by Sadker and Sadker (1994, p. 54), teachers offer praise to their students in approximately 10% of their verbal interactions. Numerous studies have concluded that boys receive more of this praise than girls (Brophy, 1985; Eccles & Blumenfeld, 1985; Fennema & Peterson, 1986; Jones, 1989; Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 54; Good et al., 1973; Simpson & Erickson, 1983).

When looking specifically at the kinds of praise given, 90% of the praise given to boys is for the intellectual quality of their work, versus 80% for girls (AAUW, 1989). Additionally, 10% of the praise given to boys is for the neatness of their work versus 20% for girls (AAUW, 1989; Dweck, Davidson, Nelson & Enna, 1978; Parsons, Kaczala & Meese, 1982).

There is also research suggesting that teachers communicate praise to boys and girls differently. Boys receive praise that lets them know that they have done well because of their ability, such as, "Great job on that math test. You are really good at math" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 54). In this example, the second sentence, "You are really good at math," communicates that a boy's success is based upon a specific ability that he possesses. Girls receive praise that lets them know only that they have done well, such as, "Great job on that math test." Praise for ability is left out.

The implications of these findings are that girls are less likely to hear that they are successful because of their ability and more likely to hear their work praised for how it looks, not usually an indicator of intellectual or academic ability. When attempting to develop competent, successful students, feedback promoting children's intellectual ability is more beneficial than feedback focusing on their ability to do something neatly. Thus, according to Sadker and Sadker (1994) boys generally hear more messages that help develop their sense of competence.

Criticism

Criticism relays to children that they are not participating or producing at a level acceptable to the teacher. Criticism sends a message that the demonstrated behavior needs immediate modification. Criticism can be a double-edged sword--on the one hand, criticism can undermine self-esteem and be painful; on the other hand, criticism requires a child to re-strategize past behavior in an attempt to meet higher expectations. Stallings and

Kashowitz (1975) found a positive correlation between teacher criticism and student performance. However, Brophy and Evertson (1974), and Rosenshine (1976) found negative correlation.

In four separate studies, researchers found that boys receive more criticism than girls (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 54; Good et al., 1973; Jones, 1987; Parsons et al., 1982; Simpson & Erickson, 1983). Dweck and Gillard (1975) found that the ways criticism was delivered to children differed across gender. Dweck and Gillard suggests that boys were more apt to receive criticisms indicating that failure was due to a lack of effort as opposed to a lack of ability. In addition, criticisms directed to boys were softened with a sentence suggesting that the child had the ability to do better in the future (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p.96). For example, boys heard criticisms, such as, "You failed because you didn't try hard enough. If you try harder, you will do better in the future." Girls, however, received more criticisms that were blanket statements of failure, for example, "You failed the math test." Missing from the criticisms of girls was suggestion that there would be future opportunities to do well. The implication is that girls fail because they lack the ability to do the task.

The ramifications of praise and criticism to boys and girls are multiple. Boys get messages suggesting that when they succeed it is because of their ability; girls get messages implying that when they succeed it is because of their effort. When boys fail, the message they receive suggests that their failure is because of lack of effort; in contrast, girls get messages that imply they fail because of their ability. The differences between the words "effort" and "ability" are distinct. "Effort" implies that a person has external control over a task, that is, success or failure is attributed to the degree to which effort is extended. "Ability" implies an innate aptitude decreeing that a person will be successful or fail because that person possesses an intangible, uncontrollable commodity. That is, control

over success and failure is minimal because either a person possesses the ability or aptitude or s/he doesn't possess the ability.

Ryckman and Peckham (1987), and Dweck, Davidson, Nelson and Enna (1978) believe that there are internal ramifications felt by children based upon how teachers view success. They believe that, because boys are more likely to view that their successes are attributed to ability and failures to effort, they may be more willing to persevere during hardship because they have internalized that, even in the face of difficulty, they still possess the ability to do the task. All, then, that is required of boys in order to succeed is more effort. Ryckman and Peckham (1987), and Dweck et al. (1978) also believe that girls find themselves in a different situation. They assert that because girls are more likely to hear that their successes are due to effort and their failures are due to ability, these feelings result in a sort of helplessness when girls encounter difficulty. Ryckman and Peckham (1987), and Dweck et al. (1978) assert that this helplessness results in girls being more likely to internalize that no matter how hard they work at a task, they still lack the ability to do the task. The ramifications of helplessness mean that girls may be less likely to risk in the future, thus limiting opportunities for achievement.

Compliments

Compliments teachers bestow upon children also differ according to the gender of students. Compliments to boys are generally brief and make connections to a physical skill or an academic topic, such as, "Your hat is neat. It reminds me of the kinds of hats chefs use to cook with." Compliments to girls are usually longer and focus on her appearance, for example, "Your hat is pretty. You look really adorable in it" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 57). This suggests that compliments to boys make ready them to become active participants in the world while compliments to girls encourage them to focus on their appearance.

Questioning Techniques

The ways in which teachers question children have been found to vary according to the gender of the student. Morrison (1979) investigated 32 fourth through sixth grade classrooms in a middle- to upper-income suburban school. He found that teachers asked boys more open-ended, challenging questions, which encouraged them to use higher ordered thinking skills, such as, "What is your opinion of X and why do you think that it is valid?" (Morrison, 1979). Girls tended to be asked only their opinions and not their reasoning, such as, "What is your opinion of X." In addition, girls were less likely to be challenged to defend their position, thus giving girls less of an opportunity to express and support their views.

Morrison (1979) also found that the teachers in his study were more likely to ask boys questions that required them to interpret and explain results, while girls were more likely to be asked product questions requiring them to re-state procedures and observations. For example, boys were asked questions such as, "Explain the results of this science experiment," and girls were asked questions such as, "Tell me what you did in the experiment." Asking children to interpret data requires more complex thinking skills than having to report back procedures. One set of questions asks for analysis; the other asks for reporting. Children asked to interpret data on a more regular basis then find themselves in a more academically challenging environment. These findings suggest that boys are given more opportunities to use higher-ordered thinking skills.

Good et al. (1973) found similar results when they investigated the questioning techniques of sixteen teachers. They found that boys were asked process-oriented questions more frequently, while girls were more frequently asked product-based questions. For example, boys were asked questions like, "Can you explain why X occurred?" while girls were asked questions like, "What happened to X?" Good et al.

concluded that, in general, boys were more likely to be asked to respond to questions that required higher-level thinking skills than were girls.

Wait Time

Increased wait-time has been attributed to raising the level of achievement in children because it allows children to fully think through responses (Tobin, 1979). In their investigation of classroom teacher wait-time, Gore and Roumagoux (1983) found that the five teachers in their study gave boys significantly longer wait-time than girls, as calculated by a t-test. Teachers in this study allowed boys more time to think through their thoughts. With girls, teachers were more likely to move on to another child for the answer rather than allowing the girls the time to share.

Responding to Requests for Help

When children ask for help, the responses from teachers vary dependent upon gender, according to a study conducted by Serbin et al. (1973). When boys in the study asked for help, teachers gave detailed, descriptive explanations designed to enable the boys to carry out the task on their own, such as, "First you need to do x, then y and then z." When girls in the study asked for help, the teacher typically completed the task for them (Serbin et al., 1973). This research suggests two things. First, that boys receive more hands-on experiences than girls when learning to do tasks. Second, it suggests that boys are more likely to be allowed to actually complete and engage in a task than a girl.

Summary of Teacher's Verbal Interactions with Children

According to the studies cited above, boys generally received more verbal interactions with their teachers than girls. Boys received more praise and criticism. They also received more process and higher-level thinking questions than girls. They also

received more wait-time. Finally, they were given more detailed, descriptive explanations than girls. Consequently, boys tended to be challenged at higher levels than girls.

The following section will provide an overview on the ways in which discourse is conducted in the classroom.

Classroom Discourse

Teachers are constantly guiding children through discussions where information is shared, questions are asked, assertions are made and answers are given. The following section will be a report of whom teachers call on, who speaks during discussions and who is interrupted the most during discussions.

Who Teachers Call On

Becker (1981) and Stallings (1979, p. 5) looked at whom elementary school teachers called on the most. Both Becker and Stallings found that boys were called on more frequently than girls. Interestingly, however, Becker and Stallings found that boys did not attempt to answer questions any more than girls. In fact, boys and girls were equally apt to raise their hands to answer questions.

Sadker and Sadker (1984) also found similar results. They determined that boys were called on more often than girls. They partially attributed their findings to the ways boys and girls raise their hands to get attention. Sadker and Sadker (1984) found that boys were more apt to raise their hands high and straight in the air while girls were more likely to raise their hands bent at the elbow. They surmised that teachers, when looking out in the midst of raised hands, were more likely to see a hand that is standing straight and tall than one raised bent and at an angle, resulting in boys being called on more than girls.

Sadker and Sadker (1994) also found boys were more likely to change their strategy for gaining attention when being overlooked. They noticed that boys made noises

such as "oohh, oohh" or "aahh, aahh" to get the teacher's attention. They also bounced in their seats or got up and moved to another place in the classroom to get attention. Girls, however, when ignored by the teacher, simply put their hands down. Boys changed their strategies for getting attention; girls simply gave up. Furthermore, when ignored and not called on by the teacher, boys were more likely than girls to express verbal disappointment, thus gaining recognition from the teacher.

Interestingly, Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that when discussions in the classroom moved quickly, the rule to raise your hand fell to the wayside, resulting in children calling out. Sadker and Sadker found that in these situations, boys were eight times more likely to call out in class than girls, resulting in boys dominating discussions. Becker (1981) also found that boys called out more answers. Overall, teachers in these studies tended to give the floor to the children who were most likely to call out. These studies determined that boys were more likely to be the ones to interrupt.

Who Speaks in Classrooms

Redpath and Claire (1989) found that elementary school boys take three times as many turns speaking in discussions than girls. As a result, boys were found to dominate discussions. Hendrick and Strange (1991) found that when girls do speak, they asked questions, acknowledged the comments of the speaker, and tried not to interrupt. Boys, on the other hand, spoke by asserting the knowledge they had gained through the discussions and challenging the speaker. The AAUW survey (1992, p. 25) found that boys were twice as likely than girls to argue with a teacher when they felt they were right. Taken together, these studies suggest that boys talked more than girls in class and that when boys spoke, they did so in a more assertive, challenging fashion.

Some researchers have found that boys are often viewed as more knowledgeable about a subject matter than girls because they participate in class more than girls (Redpath

& Claire, 1989). Interestingly, Jones (1989) found in an analysis of 60 classrooms that teachers modified their lessons according to the kinds of procedural questions they thought they might get from their students. Jones found that boys tended to ask more procedural questions than girls such as, "I don't understand how to do X. Can you explain it again?" As a result, lessons were geared more often to meet the needs of boys.

Who is Interrupted During Discussions

Another way in which classroom discourse may be biased relates to interruptions in discussions. Hendrick and Strange (1991) found that teachers were more likely to interrupt female students engaged in conversations with one another than they were to interrupt males involved in conversation. They also found that when teachers were in conversations with girls, they were more likely to allow boys to side-track their conversations than they were to allow girls to side-track their conversations with boys. Finally, they found that teachers allowed boys to interrupt them more than girls.

Sadker and Sadker (1994, p. 272) asserts that the net effect of such interruptions is that boys internalize that their words are important because they are allowed to fully complete their sentences and are allowed to interject into conversations as desired; girls, however, internalize that their words are less important and that they can be interrupted at any time.

Summary of Classroom Discourse

The research cited points out that, in general, boys dominate classroom discussions. Boys are called on more than girls and engage in strategies that ensure they will be called on. Boys talk more than girls in discussions. Boys are also interrupted less than girls, again giving them more opportunities to express their ideas.

The section that follows will provide an overview on whom teachers refer for special services in the classroom.

Teacher Referrals to GATE and Special Education

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) and Special Education programs are designed to meet the needs of the most talented and the most struggling students, often through pull-out programs. Children referred to these services benefit from increased instruction and/or extension activities. In a study conducted by BenTsvi-Mayer, Hertz-Lazarowitz and Safir (1989), 300 teachers and student teachers indicated that they were more likely to remember boys as star students in their classrooms. Gore and Roumagoux (1983) report in their study of five fourth grade teachers that these teachers were eight times more likely to identify a boy as a star student than a girl. Identified star students are more likely to be referred to GATE if they qualify through testing, thus entitling them to enhanced curriculum. Boys, then, have greater access to GATE programs.

The same holds true for special education programs. In a study conducted by Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher and Escobar (1990), boys and girls were found to have near equal difficulties with reading skills (about a 1.2:1 ratio). However, boys were two to four times more likely to be referred for special education than were girls. Instead of focusing on learning needs, teachers often used behavior as a criterion for referral. Vogel (1990) found that girls were often identified for special education later in life than boys and that boys were more likely to be referred without needing the help because referral was based upon behavior problems. While these studies indicate a bias against girls in that they are referred later in life for special education, the studies also indicate a bias against boys as boys were more likely to be labeled as having a disability when in fact none existed.

Conclusion

When looking at teacher's contacts with children, teacher's feedback to students, classroom discourse, and teacher's referrals to special programs, the research suggests that boys and girls are not receiving equal treatment in schools. The studies referred to in this chapter indicate that, on many levels, children are receiving unequal education in terms of teacher contact, feedback and referrals. In light of this information, the question that then follows for me as a fourth year fourth grade teacher is, "In what ways do I engage in gender-biased teaching and what appears to contribute to these biased practices?"

Having provided the reader with an overview of who teachers are in contact with in their classrooms, how teachers interact with children, how classroom discourse is conducted, and whom teachers refer for special educational services, I will now introduce the reader to the study that I conducted. In Chapters I and II of this thesis, I provided the reader with an introduction to my research and an overview of the relevant literature. Chapter III will discuss the methodology I used to conduct my study. Included in Chapter III will also be a discussion of the participants involved, as well as, data collection and data analysis processes. In Chapters IV and V, I offer interpretations of the data I collected. Chapter VI discusses the next steps that I will take as an educator.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section entitled "Research Methods," I will describe the methodology used for this thesis. I will begin by describing the nature of action and self-study research as these were the major frameworks in which this research was grounded. I will also describe qualitative research since I used qualitative research techniques to conduct this study.

In the second section entitled "Participants," I will provide the reader with an overview of the people involved in this study. I will describe myself and my teaching philosophy as I was the primary participant of this research project. I will also describe the school and the children involved.

In the third section entitled "Data Collection," I will describe how I collected data. Specifically, I will describe how I used both a reflective journal and field notes as data collection tools. In the last section entitled "Data Analysis," I will discuss the process by which I analyzed the data.

Research Methods

In order to conduct this research, I used self-study and action research approaches. Through self-study, I looked critically at my teaching practices. As a consequence of examining my teaching, I changed my teaching practices. In this way, what began as self-study evolved to action research. Using qualitative research techniques, I gathered and analyzed my data. This section will describe the nature of self-study, action research and qualitative research techniques.

Self-Study

In a self-study, the researcher is interested in investigating him or herself in an attempt to come away with a deeper, more meaningful understanding of him or herself. Pinnegar (1995) writes that the role of a self-study researcher consists of many facets. The researcher takes on the role of the research designer, data collector, interviewer, interviewed, data analyst, interpreter and narrator. Pinnegar and Russell (1995) state, "as both the subject and the researcher of an inquiry, the author [of the study] provides simultaneously the experience of volatile research settings and the analysis of the experience in ways that may allow others to understand and use the findings in their own practices . . . it reveals the author [of the study] as researchers, as educators, and most importantly, as human beings" (p. 6).

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), self-study has strengths and weaknesses. The primary strength of self-study is that "everything you read and hear can be connected, or at least considered for connection, to your phenomenon" (p. 55). In the role of both researcher and subject, the researcher is privy to the intimate workings of his- or herself and through this intimacy is allowed access to information that outsiders are denied. However, Travers (1964) asserts that self-studies are laden with bias in two ways. First, self-studies are biased because the researcher often overlooks important data because he or she is so deeply entrenched in the study through his or her active participation. In addition, Travers believes that researchers engaged in self-study may be tempted to corrupt the data or findings in an attempt to present him or herself favorably. However, Travers does state that the researcher engaged in self-study is "not untruthful in his report, but he is selective in what he reports and how he reports it" (p. 272).

I chose a self-study format because it allowed me to not only collect data indicating gender-bias in my teaching practices, but also to explore possible explanations for why I engaged in the practices. In my having chosen a self-study approach, I recognize both the

strengths and the weaknesses. I readily admit that my research may contain the kinds of biases Travers describes. Yet, despite the potential biases, I feel my choice of self-study is still valid. It is valid because my research questions attempt to answer, not only the ways in which I engaged in gender-biased teaching practices, but also my perceptions as to why I engaged in such behaviors. If my research question only attempted to look at the ways I engaged in gender-biased practice, a self-study would not necessarily be the most effective format through which to collect data because of the potential for bias. Instead, the use of a trained outside observer would be a more appropriate choice. However, since I attempted to answer the question as to why I believed I engaged in gender-biased practice, self-study was most appropriate. Travers (1964) writes that "the individual is the person who knows himself best" (p. 269) and that through such knowledge, motivations can be best determined. Through my research, I wanted to know more than just what I did in class, but why I acted as I did. I, therefore, am the person best qualified to understand my motivations.

Action Research

The purpose of action research is to enact change within an environment. In action research, the researcher identifies an area in need of improvement. Through the course of the research investigation, solutions or action items are found that will result in the desired improvement. Hopkins (1985) states that action research "combines a substantive act with a research procedure; it is action disciplined by inquiry, a personal attempt at understanding whilst engaged in a process of improvement and reform" (p. 32). Isaac and Michael (1971) state the purpose of action research is to "develop new skills or new approaches and to solve problems with direct application to the classroom or other applied settings" (p. 14).

Action research has both pros and cons. Isaac and Michael (1971) believe the major benefit of action research is that it is directly relevant and beneficial to those involved

in the study because it is research geared at improvement. However, Isaac and Michael (1971) assert that action research is problematic because it "lacks rigor because its internal and external validity is weak . . . Its objective is situational, its sample is restricted and unrepresentative, and it has little control over independent variables" (p. 27).

Action research, despite its critiques, proved to be a particularly useful model for my research because it is designed to recognize problematic areas in a setting in order to find solutions to those problems. In this research project, my goal was to identify practices in my teaching that were gender-biased and to understand why they occur. With the knowledge gained from this information, I hoped to change my behavior so that I would not continue to engage in gender-biased practices in the future. Because of my desire for a change in future behavior, action research fitted particularly well with my research goals.

Qualitative Research

Bogdan and Taylor (1975, p. 4) describe qualitative research as "research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior." Qualitative researchers attempt to tell the stories of participants in a way that may be useful for helping to interpret or understand the behaviors, motivations, goals or desires of the participants. Qualitative research also strives to make connections and predictions that can be generalized to others. Qualitative research is an attempt to tell a story rather than to ascertain absolute truths.

My research is an attempt to tell the story of how I treat my students, both girls and boys. My research is also an attempt to understand my teaching behaviors and possible motivations for engaging in any gender-biased practices. As a result, my research can be categorized as being qualitative in nature.

Participants

This section will provide the reader with an overview of those involved in this research project. I will describe myself and my teaching philosophy since I was the primary participant of this research project. I will also describe the school and the children involved in this study.

Myself

I was the primary participant of this research project. I am a 4th grade teacher in a suburban public school. As an educator, I have been influenced by three global theoretical perspectives. The first perspective that has influenced my teaching has been a feminist perspective. The second influence has been a post-modern constructivist perspective to education. The third influence has been work conducted by Ira Shor and Paolo Freire who advocate for "empowering education."

Feminism has played a significant role in helping me define my teaching pedagogy. As described in Chapter I of this thesis, my feminist beliefs have created in me a desire for equality between the sexes. As a result, the choices I make as a teacher in terms of how I provide for the education of the children in my classroom are influenced by my desire for equality. I have actively sought to ensure that boys and girls are given equal opportunities and to assure that no one sex dominates my classroom.

Post-modern constructivism has also had a significant impact on my teaching practices. A post-modern constructivist approach to education contends that there are no absolute truths in knowledge; instead, knowledge is specific to individuals and based upon the reality or past-background knowledge that individuals bring to a learning situation (Elbaz, 1983). Constructivists view education and "curriculum as a process--not of transmitting what is (absolutely) known but of exploring what is unknown; and through exploration students and teachers 'clear the land' together, thereby transforming both the

land and themselves" (Doll, 1993, p. 155). I view my role as an educator as being one by which I work side-by-side with children, helping them to understand the world in which they live. As a result of this belief, I lecture as minimally as possible in my classroom because I do not believe that knowledge is learned exclusively or even in large part through a transmission model. Instead, my focus is on helping children generate the questions they have about subject areas and then guiding them towards resources that will help them find the answers to their questions. The children are thus an integral part of the learning process in which their active participation leads to knowledge. An example of how this philosophy is implemented in my curriculum can be seen in children having ample opportunity for choice. Children make their own choices about what they read, what they write, what they research and how they learn.

My teaching pedagogy has also been influenced by the works of Ira Shor (1992) and Paolo Freire (1970). Shor and Freire both advocate for children to be active and empowered learners in any and all educational settings. Freire (1970) contends that children are as important in an educational setting as the teacher and that both need to be actively engaged in the learning experience. Shor (1992, p. 15) asserts the need for "empowering education," which he defines as :

... a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society ... The goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change.

As with Shor, I believe that education is much more than having children learn content contained within a textbook as delivered by the teacher. I also believe in Freire's assertion that children are as important in the education process as the teacher. I believe that children must be actively and intrinsically involved in the learning process. Additionally, I believe that children need to be helped to view their learning as a mean by which social change can be achieved. I encourage children to take what they have learned

in class, relate that knowledge to the world in which they live, and use that knowledge to change the things in their lives they feel to be unjust.

An example of how I attempt to help children connect their learning to their lives and then to action can be seen in the following: One year, the children in my class were reading the book Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes (Coerr, 1977). The book describes the life of a Japanese girl dying of leukemia, which she contracted as a result of being exposed to radiation from bombs dropped on Japan during World War II. After having read the book, the children in my class were incensed that the United States chose to drop an atom bomb on Japan. I then said to the children, "Now that you have read this book and are feeling angry about what happened, what are you going to do about it?" The children chose to write letters to the President of the United States relaying their anger over what had happened and offering suggestions for future ways to handle conflict in a more positive fashion. Shortly after mailing the letters, the children received a response from the President concurring with their viewpoints. As a result, the children felt empowered by their actions and were encouraged to see that despite the fact that they were just children, their opinions were valued. My readings of Shor and Freire, and their advocacy for education to be more than just content learning but rather an opportunity to enact social change, pushed me to push the children further than just reading the book. Instead of simply reading the book and writing a book report, I encouraged the children to take meaningful social action.

The post-modern constructivist perspective to education and the works of Ira Shor and Paolo Freire have been major influences on my pedagogy. There has been a multitude of other influences including professors in my pre-service teacher education program, fellow teaching colleagues, and the children themselves. All have helped to form me into the teacher I am today.

In regards to this research being a self-study, there are two issues that must be addressed. First, since the scope of this self-study has been to look at my practice and reflect upon occasions when I have engaged in gender-bias, it is possible that the data I collected could have been slanted by the knowledge I possess on the subject. Through extensive readings and self-study, I have spent the past six months learning how teachers engage in gender-biased practices in their classroom. I am now critically aware of where and how gender-bias can exist in the classroom. It is therefore possible that I may have read gender-bias into situations where in fact none exists. On the other hand, however, this knowledge has been critical to my research, because without such knowledge, I would have been blind to situations that were, in fact, biased.

The second issue that must be addressed lies within the actual self-reflection process I used to analyze my data. As I am both the subject in this study and the researcher, analysis is limited by the degree to which I am able to be objective and honest in both gathering and analyzing the data. At the same time, however, because I am both the subject and the researcher, I am privy to the internal thoughts and motivations of the subject (myself) that most researchers would be denied.

The School

The school itself is an "alternative" school within the school district. As an "alternative" school, we have set ourselves apart from the rest of the schools in the district by establishing a teaching philosophy by which all of the fourteen teachers at the school gauge their practice.

We consider ourselves to be a "whole language" school in terms of language arts instruction. As a whole language school, reading and writing instruction is done through the context of children's actual reading and writing. For example, writing skills are taught to children while they are engaging in the process of writing their own self-selected stories.

We also consider ourselves to be a "constructivist" school. By this, we mean that children learn best when they are learning through hands-on experiences. Through hands-on experiences, children develop their own knowledge as opposed to having knowledge transmitted to them via the teacher. The role of the teacher, then, is to provide children with learning opportunities by which they can create their own knowledge. For example, children learn to add by being presented with numerous situations where addition is needed. The children then discover for themselves efficient and effective strategies to solve the addition problem. Addition algorithms are not taught by teachers to students because it is believed that children must develop strategies on their own if the strategies are to be internalized by the student. At times, direct instruction is provided to children. However, it is delivered in the context of having the children realize that the instruction is just "another way" not the "only way" to solve a problem.

The Children

The children I taught during this study were twenty-eight fourth graders ranging in age from nine to eleven years. Sixteen of the children were girls; eleven were boys. The majority come from middle- to upper-income families. Twenty-one of the children are Caucasian and the remaining seven are Asian.

Data Collection

Through my extensive readings on gender-bias in the classroom, I became aware of several areas where teachers engage in biased practices. Keeping this information at the forefront of my mind, I decided to research ways I treat children. As I explained earlier in this paper, equal treatment of children has always been a primary goal for me. Therefore, investigating whether or not I treated the children equally across the sexes was of critical importance to me.

I gathered data in two ways. My primary data source was a reflective journal that I kept over the course of one month. The second way I collected data was through field notes. The following will be a discussion of how I used a reflective journal and field notes to collect my data.

Reflective Journal

As my primary data collection tool, I used a reflective journal. I wrote in the journal over a period of one month which resulted in twenty-two entries. In the journal, I wrote about my interactions with children, focusing on who received my attention. At the beginning of the study, I loosely defined "attention" as being any situation where I helped, talked or interacted with children. As time passed, I revised this definition of teacher attention to include whom I called on during discussions, whom I gave eye contact to, whom I listened to, whom I helped and whom I disciplined. In addition to writing about whom I spent my time with, I also evaluated whether or not the children were receiving equal treatment. Additionally, I described in my journal my perceptions as to why equal treatment did or did not occur.

In order to narrow the scope of the journal and make data collection more manageable, I chose to write about events that occurred during a single 45-minute time period per day. I felt that narrowing the amount of time I focused on was important because if the time segment were too long, I feared I would not be able to remember all of the events that transpired. For the purposes of this thesis, "evaluation period" will be used to describe the time of the day that I chose to write about in my journal.

Prior to the start of the school day, I chose the curriculum area I would use as my "evaluation period." The evaluation periods occurred during all of the subject areas I taught, that is, I used as an evaluation period a science lesson, reading lesson, math lesson, etc. I felt that varying the times of day and curriculum periods was important because then

I could best gain a global perspective of my teaching style. I feared that if I focused on my teaching during a single curriculum area or time, the data would not provide a global perspective on my teaching, but would, instead, reflect how I interacted with children during a specific curriculum period, such as math or reading or writing.

At the beginning of each evaluation period, I mentally clarified my goals, which were: 1) to determine how I interacted with children in terms of the attention I gave boys and girls respectively; 2) to decide if I was treating boys and girls equally; and 3) to develop a rationale for why I was giving my attention to the children who were receiving it. I then went to work with the children and waited to see what kinds of information became available to me that fit with my three goals. While I worked with the children, I kept field notes documenting my interactions with the children. They served as a memory refresher when I wrote in my journal later in the day.

Although I began each evaluation period determined to note any type of interaction with or attention given to children, I typically found that some sort of special "gender-bias issue" came to the forefront warranting closer examination. For example, on one occasion, I became aware that I was giving more eye contact to boys. As a result of noticing that I was engaging in a potentially biased practice, I then spent the rest of the evaluative period looking specifically at that practice. I did so by directing all of my attention to the practice and taking field notes on what I observed. On another occasion, I thought that I was calling on boys and girls equally during a classroom discussion. In order to confirm that my perception was in fact a reality, I began to track whom I was calling on by writing student's names on a sheet of paper as I called on them. So, although it had been my intent during that evaluative period to note all ways that I interacted with children, I found, instead, that I focused primarily on whom I called on during discussions.

As soon as possible after the evaluative period, I sat down and wrote about the experience in my journal. In this journal, I described what happened during the evaluation

period and how I collected field notes. I also offered an explanation for why the events had transpired. For the most part, I was able to write about the experience within an hour of it having occurred. I was able to write about the experience within this time frame because my class schedule is structured so that recess, lunch or dismissal occur every one and a half hours. I used these breaks to write in my journal. While I wrote, I used my memory, along with any field notes I kept, to describe as best I could the experience.

Field Notes

The field notes I gathered took the form of tallied logs, brief anecdotal records and written lists of specific behaviors I engaged in. These notes proved useful because they helped me to remember what I had done with the children. They also provided me with hard data. For example, when I examined whom I helped in class, I quickly jotted down on a piece of scratch paper the name of the child I helped and how I helped. I recorded this information every time I helped a child during the 45-minute period. When it came time to write in my journal, I then used the notes to refresh my memory. The following is an example of a field note:

<u>Field Note Example</u>	
Who and how I helped during seat work:	
<u>Child</u>	<u>Help Provided</u>
Jeremy	answered question
Elana	corrected answer
Liana	gave feedback on writing
Timothy	corrected spelling/punctuation
Jaimie	explained directions

Data Analysis

After a month of writing in my journal, I ended the data collection process. By the end of the month, I had twenty-two journal entries ready to be coded and evaluated. I also had field notes that needed to be integrated with journal entries.

The first thing I did was to take my field notes and combined them with the journal entry with which they corresponded. For example, if I took field notes on April 2, I added the field notes to the April 2 journal entry. I did this as a way to organize all of my data into one cohesive document.

Having integrated my field notes and journal entries, I then coded the journal entries by going through a multi-step process. First, I read through all of the entries in order to gain a global sense of my experiences. By reading the journal in its entirety, I realized that there were many key ideas or issues raised pertaining to who I gave my attention to in class. I decided that the next step was to list all of the key ideas.

I then carefully re-read each entry looking specifically for information that told me how I interacted with students in terms who received my attention. Through examination of the entries and field notes, I found that the journal entries described ten distinct ways in which I interacted with/gave attention to children:

1. I called on children equally across gender.
2. I helped children equally during seat work.
3. I gave leadership roles to children equally.
4. I usually called on boys first during discussions.
5. I gave more eye contact during group discussions to boys.
6. I was more likely to walk away or physically leave a discussion when the speaker was a girl.
7. I disciplined boys more frequently and more firmly than girls.
8. I perceived that boys were more off-task than girls.

9. I usually acknowledged boys first when many children were shouting my name at the same time.

10. I reminded boys and girls equally to raise their hands.

Once I had identified these ten different behaviors, I organized the information into a table. I separated the table into three columns. In the first column ("Example"), I listed each of my behaviors as they related to interactions with students. In the second column ("My Explanations"), I briefly explained why I believed I engaged in such behaviors. In the third category ("Indicates bias"), I indicated whether each of these behaviors were gender-biased (See Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. How I further categorized my data

Example	My Explanations	Indicates Bias?
I called on children equally across gender.	I consciously monitored my behavior by counting.	No
I helped children equally during seat work.	I track the children I help by keeping notes on a clipboard that I carry with me.	No
I gave leadership roles to children equally.	I track who has had past leadership roles by gender.	No
I usually called on boys first during discussions.	I did so to monitor and modify behavior	Yes
I gave more eye contact during group discussions to boys.	I did so to monitor and modify behavior.	Yes
I was more likely to walk away or physically leave a discussion when the speaker was a girl.	I was willing to walk away when a girl was talking because I felt I could trust that the girl would be more likely to stay on-task without my presence.	Yes
I disciplined boys more frequently and more firmly than girls.	I was more willing to discipline boys because of feeling the need to prevent girls from being hurt by the discipline. I also felt that boys were easily able to handle discipline and get over hurt feeling.	Yes
I believed that boys are more off-task than girls.	Not sure.	Yes
I reminded boys and girls to raise their hands equally.	I have a system in place where I routinely remind all children to raise their hands.	No
I usually acknowledged boys first when many children were shouting my name at the same time.	I do so to monitor and modify behavior	Yes

Once the table was assembled, I looked at which entries generated a "yes" and which generated a "no" in the "Indicates bias" column in the table. I placed all of the entries that received a "yes" into one category and the "no's" into another. I thus had two categories by which to classify my entries. The first category (hereafter referred to as "Ways I Treated Children Equally") demonstrated ways that I treated children equally across gender. I found that I treated children equally in terms of: 1) calling on children; 2) helping children during seat work; 3) giving leadership opportunities; and 4) reminding children to raise their hands.

The second category (hereafter referred to as "Ways I Treated Children Unequally") demonstrated ways that I did not treat children equally across gender in terms of: 1) calling on boys first; 2) giving more eye contact to boys; 3) walking away during discussions when the speaker was a girl; 4) disciplining boys more frequently; 5) perceiving boys to be more off-task than girls; and 6) acknowledging the loudest child before others.

Having separated my teaching behaviors into the two categories, "Ways I Treated Children Equally" and "Ways I Treated Children Unequally," I then looked at my explanations for why I engaged in these behaviors. I hoped that by looking at these explanations, I might find additional trends.

In the category, "Ways I Treated Children Equally," I did not find any additional trends. However, I did find trends in the category "Ways I Treated Children Unequally." Through analysis, I realized that the ways I treated children unequally could be separated into two sub-categories which I will refer to in the future as: 1) Biased Based Upon Behavior Management Reasons; and 2) Bias Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes. I placed calling on boys first, giving boys more eye contact than girls, walking away from discussions when the speaker was a girl and acknowledging the loudest child first in the "Biased Based Upon Behavior Management Reasons" sub-category. I then placed disciplining boys more frequently and perceiving boys to be more off-task than girls in the

"Bias Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes" sub-category. Table 6.2 summarizes how I sub-categorized how I treated children unequally.

Table 6.2: Sub-categories of how I treated children unequally

Biased Based upon Behavior Management Reasons	Bias Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes
Calling on boys first	Disciplining boys more frequently
Giving boys more eye contact than girls	Perceiving boys to be more off-task than girls
Walking away from discussions when the speaker was a girl	
Acknowledging the loudest child first.	

Summary

This chapter described the methodology by which I conducted this research. I described my research methods which included self-study and action research guided through the use of qualitative research techniques. This chapter also described the participants involved in the study including myself, the school and the children. Finally, this chapter addressed my data collection and analysis processes.

The next two chapters will provide the reader with a discussion of these data. Chapter IV, "Ways I treated Children Equally," will describe ways I found myself treating children equally across the sexes. Chapter V, "Ways I Treated Children Unequally," will describe how I did not treat children equally across the sexes.

CHAPTER IV

WAYS I TREATED CHILDREN EQUALLY

During the month I kept my journal, I found four basic ways that I treated children equally, that is, what I consider to be non-gender-biased practices. I found I: 1) called on children equally; 2) helped them equally; 3) gave equal leadership opportunities; and 4) reminded them equally to raise their hands. As I looked at each of the examples, I realized they were non-biased as a result of my active and conscious attention to assuring that I provide for equal opportunities in my classroom. Each is also an example of where I had in place specific and concrete systems of ensuring non-bias.

I first developed these systems when I was going through my pre-service education. At the time, I had heard rumors of teachers engaging in gender-biased practices such as only calling on boys, helping boys more than girls or allowing boys more leadership opportunities than girls. In addition to the rumors, I had witnessed a few teachers giving boys preferential treatment during classroom observation periods that I attended during my teacher preparation program. For example, I observed one classroom discussion where the teacher conducted a lesson and only called on boys despite the multitude of girls' hands that were raised. My colleagues also witnessed gender-biased practices in the classroom. For example, a friend told me about a teacher who consistently put the needs of boys ahead of girls by helping boys first with classwork.

Having seen teachers giving preferential treatment to boys and hearing stories of other student teachers seeing the same, I became committed to making sure that these biased practices did not occur in my classroom. I, therefore, began my teaching career with specific plans to rectify any possibilities for abuse.

The following section will describe the ways that I treated children equally as documented in my journal and my reflections as to why I treated them equally.

Example #1: Calling on Children

The first example of where I treated children equally was in whom I called on during classroom discussions. Research conducted by Becker (1981), Stallings (1979, p. 5), and Sadker and Sadker (1984) all reported that the teachers in their studies called on boys more than girls. I did not, however, find this to be the case in my teaching practices.

On three occasions, I tracked the number of times that I called on boys versus girls by physically counting the occurrences. In each instance, I found that I called on boys and girls equally. On February 27, I wrote in my journal:

In thinking through the way I treated the children, I realized I called on boys and girls equally. I also realized that the reason I was calling on boys and girls equally was because I was keeping track with my fingers whom I called on. When I called on a boy, I raised a finger on my right hand; when I called on a girl, I raised a finger on my left hand. Throughout the discussion, I paid attention to how many fingers I had raised for boys versus girls and did not let the boys voice their opinions in class more than girls.

On March 20, I wrote:

As with yesterday, I called on boys and girls equally during morning group. Again, I used my finger system to keep track of whom I called on which helped me to stay focused.

On March 25, I wrote:

I decided to pay specific attention again on whom I called on during a math discussion. I had asked the children to share their strategy for solving a math problem. I then asked who wanted to share their strategies. I called on the children whose hands were raised. Since I had a clip-board handy, I made a tally mark on my paper as to whether the person I called on was a boy or a girl. As in the past, by the end of the discussion, boys and girls had an equal number of tallies.

As each of the journal entries indicates, I kept track of whom I called on by gender by using my fingers as counters. Every time I called on a boy, I put up a finger on my left hand; every time I called on a girl, I put up a finger on my right hand. If I found that one sex dominated the discussions, I refrained from calling on that gender until a balance was achieved.

I began this system of using my fingers to track participation by gender on the very first day I became a teacher and it has proven successful in helping me call on children in a balanced fashion.

Example #2: Helping Children

Teachers spend a large portion of their time helping children with their school work. Teachers can help children by clarifying directions, challenging children to do further work, answering questions, etc. Two of the journal entries I wrote were on the topic of whom I helped during seat work. Both journal entries indicated that I stopped to help children equally across gender while I roamed through the classroom during seat work. In the first journal entry, I described a general feeling I had about how I helped children in terms of equity issues. In the second journal entry, I gathered actual field notes on a clipboard that demonstrated I stopped to help both boys and girls equally. On February 29, I wrote:

The children were working on their proposals for what they want to work on during Social Studies. I moved around the room giving help with children as necessary. I think that I did a pretty good job of hitting all of the children regardless of the sex. I stopped to help girls as often as I stopped to help boys.

This journal entry, although not specifically authenticated with hard data, provides one piece of information indicating that I helped children equally across the sexes. My March 14 entry provides hard data that substantiates the beliefs I held on February 29. On March 14, I wrote:

Today during math, I kept a check-list of who it was that I interacted with and what kind of help I gave. From the data I collected, I found that I helped boys and girls equally. During math there were 8 boys and 8 girls in class. I helped the boys 9 times and I helped the girls 9 times as well. As to the kinds of help I gave the children, I was mostly checking in with them on how they were doing with the assignment or providing extra help where necessary. I'm not surprised that I helped the children equally across gender because I try hard to get around to everyone.

Both journal entries give examples of how I helped children equally regardless of sex. The second journal entry gives further clarification as to how I used a check-list to note who and how I helped children. As with ensuring that I call on children equally, I also have a system in place where I try to achieve balance in whom I help during seat work. I routinely circulate with a clipboard in my hand. On the clipboard, I keep track of whom I help and what kind of help I offered. One of the things I consciously monitor on my clipboard is the number of children I help according to gender. I pay specific attention to gender because of the early commitment I made to ensuring I helped girls and boys equally. If I notice that I'm helping one sex more than others, I attempt to achieve balance later in the day. While it is true that one gender may come out ahead during a specific class period, by the end of the day, balance is achieved.

The following text is an excerpt of the field notes I collected on March 14 and is provided here as a way to help the reader understand how I collected the data:

<u>Field Notes taken on March 14</u>	
Who I helped and how during math:	
<u>Child</u>	<u>Help Provided</u>
Daniel	Challenged answer
Jessa	Asked her to explain her answer more thoroughly
Erik	Re-explained activity's directions
Whitney	Encouraged her to keep working on problem
Hayden	Asked him to explain strategy

Example #3: Giving Leadership Opportunities

The third example of non-biased practice revealed in my journal lies in my giving boys and girls equal opportunities to take on leadership roles. On March 11, I wrote about how I provide for equal leadership opportunities for both boys and girls:

... Here is a few ways I've noticed that I ensure boys and girls have equal leadership opportunities.

Every week, I choose a president . . . The president is an important job in our class and one which all of the children want to have. I rotate the job of president by sex . . .

Another way I noticed that I share out leadership opportunities is in P.E. When choosing teams, I make sure that one team captain is a girl and the other is a boy. I also make sure that if the game requires a key player (for example, in football there is a quarterback), the rules of the game say that the quarterback has to switch off by gender . . .

I also noticed that I give out things kids want (balls at recess, computer time) by gender--one day it is a girl, the next day it is a boy . . .

The last thing I noticed that I do to share out leadership opportunities is to make sure that whenever I need a class expert to show other children how to do something, I always choose one boy and one girl.

As I described in my journal, there are various ways children are highlighted in my class. Children are chosen to be weekly class presidents where they run class meetings. Children are used as class experts to teach others how to do things. For each of these, I rotate whom I choose according to gender. When children are engaged in team sports or working in cooperative groups, I also make sure that no gender dominates by having key roles rotate by gender. I attempt to make sure that no one child or gender has more leadership opportunities than another.

In contrast to calling on children or helping children, I do not actually keep physical notes on who has leadership opportunities. Rather, the tracking system I use to make sure that boys and girls receive equal opportunities is by paying conscious attention to what I did the last time opportunities were available. In the case of choosing a class president, for

example, I think back to the previous week and remember the gender of the child I chose. I then make the current week's decision by what I did last time. Although less of a tangible system than how I track whom I call on and help, this system has proven to be helpful in keeping equality at the forefront of my teaching behaviors.

Example #4: Reminding Children to Raise their Hands

Sadker and Sadker (1994) and Becker (1981) reported that boys called out more in classroom discussions than girls. Sadker and Sadker found that boys were eight times more likely to call out than girls; Becker found similar results. Sadker and Sadker, and Becker also noted that the teachers in their studies tended to allow the children who called out to voice their ideas despite the fact that they had not raised their hands. Since the boys in these classrooms were more likely to be the ones to call out, they, in turn, had more classroom speaking opportunities.

Because of these findings, I began to wonder who it was in my classroom that called out. On March 5, I wrote:

Most of the literature I've read say that boys call out a lot more than girls. I think this is true. What makes me think this is so is that I have five more girls in class than boys and yet from what I've been noticing, boys and girls call out equally in class in terms of sheer numbers (which means boys are doing it more frequently from an overall percentage standpoint) . . .

This journal entry indicates that I believed Sadker and Sadker (1994) and Becker's (1981) findings to be consistent with the behaviors in my classroom, that is, I believed boys called out more frequently than girls. The question, however, is what did I do with children who call out? On March 5, I looked specifically at what I did when children called out by making mental note as to my actions. I found it easy to keep track of my actions mentally because I found I did the same thing regardless of the gender of the child.

I found that on the day I collected the data, I consistently reminded all the children to "raise your hand if you have something to say." My journal entry states:

I tried to pay attention to who it was that I was reminding to raise their hands, and, unlike what the literature says, today I was reminding boys as equally as I was girls to raise their hands. In actuality, each time a child called out, I found myself saying, "If you have something to say, you need to raise your hand."

I think the reason I found that I remind children equally is because I find calling out to be particularly annoying. In fact, I'd consider it to be a pet peeve of mine. Whenever children call out, I automatically remind them to raise their hands. I do know, however, that I'm not 100% of the time consistent in doing so--but at the same time, I'm not 100% consistent in doing anything. So I guess, overall, I do a good job of reminding children to raise their hands simply because I find calling out to be irritating.

This journal entry provides insight into why I try hard to remind all children to raise their hands, that is, because I find calling out to be particularly irritating and want the behavior extinguished in my classroom, I work hard at getting kids to stop it. As a result, my very strong dislike of children calling out provides a "system" of sorts that helps me treat children equally.

Summary of Why I Treated the Children Equally

Through an examination of my journal entries and other notes collected during my research, I found that I treated children equally in four basic areas. I found that I was unbiased in whom I called on, whom I helped, whom had leadership opportunities and whom I reminded about raising their hands instead of calling out.

In each of these examples, I believe I have achieved equality because early in my teaching career, I determined these areas to be potential problems and developed systems that helped me avoid engaging in these behaviors. Key, then, to my having assured equality in these areas has been: 1) recognition of the problem; 2) a commitment to prevention; and 3) a concrete and systematic prevention plan.

CHAPTER V

WAYS I TREATED CHILDREN UNEQUALLY

In the previous chapter, I gave an overview of the ways I treated children equally across sex in my classroom. This chapter will be devoted to discussing ways I found myself treating children unequally.

Despite my firm pedagogical convictions to building and maintaining a biased-free classroom, I found many occasions when I am biased. In particular, I found six instances where I engaged in teaching practices that were more beneficial for one gender than to another. They are:

1. I called on boys first more often than I called on girls;
2. I gave more eye contact to boys than to girls during discussions;
3. I was more likely to walk away or physically leave a discussion when the speaker was a girl;
4. I disciplined boys more frequently and firmly than girls;
5. I acknowledged the loudest child in my class before others.
6. I believed boys to be more off-task than girls.

As discussed in Chapter VI, Data Analysis, I have organized these gender-biased practices into two sub-categories: 1) Biased Based Upon Behavior Management Reasons; and 2) Bias Based Upon my Own Gender Stereotypes.

The following section will provide a discussion of the ways I treated children unequally in my classroom and my perceptions as to why I did so. I have entitled this section "Biased Based Upon Behavior Management Reasons." In this section, I will discuss how my need for classroom management resulted in gender-biased practice. The next section is entitled "Bias Based Upon my Own Gender Stereotypes." In this section, I will discuss the ways I treated children unequally because of gender role stereotypes I developed as a child.

Bias Based Upon Behavior Management Reasons

When examining the six areas where I was biased, I realized that four out of the six were a result of my need to maintain order in the classroom. My journal entries revealed that: 1) I called on boys first more than girls; 2) I gave boys more eye contact than girls; 3) I was more likely to leave a group discussion when the speaker was a girl than a boy; and 4) I acknowledged the loudest child in my class. These were all attempts to maintain order. By "maintaining order in my classroom," I mean that I want children to be on-task a majority of the time when they are working alone, in cooperative groups or in large groups (in choosing "a majority of the time" for children to be on-task, I have chosen that amount because I work with nine and ten year-olds. Expecting nine and ten year-olds to be on-task 100% of the time is something I consider to be unrealistic). In addition to wanting them to be on-task, I want them to listen to whoever is speaking (regardless of whether that person is another child or me), I want them to be in control of their bodies inside the room (that is not running, pushing, shoving), and I want them to be talking to one another as opposed to yelling in the classroom. I also want them to follow directions.

Over the course of my four years of teaching, I developed a belief that in order to maintain this kind of control, I needed to pay more careful attention to the behaviors of the boys. In general, it was my belief that boys were the ones most likely to send my classroom out of control because of the behaviors they engage in. Overall, I believed that boys tended to be more rowdy and disruptive than girls. These beliefs were based upon intuition. I had never gathered hard data proving or disproving my beliefs. Because I want to maintain classroom order, I developed certain practices to make sure that order was maintained. Through this self-study, I have found that they are often gender-biased.

In the following sections, I will describe the classroom management techniques I used that resulted in the unequal treatment of children. I will also discuss why I think I engaged in these practices.

Example #1: Calling on Boys before Girls

Children and teachers engage in constant dialogue. Teachers talk with children individually. Teachers also lead classroom discussions. As discussed in the previous chapter, "Ways I Treat Children Equally," I found that I called on boys and girls equally in classroom discussions. However, in a deeper examination of how I conducted classroom discussions, I found that when I asked the class a question, I almost always called on a boy first to answer. I gathered this data by counting and tracking on my fingers the number of times I called on a boy first versus a girl during a classroom discussion. On February 27, I described the following:

... I noticed ... my tendency was to want to call on boys first and then girls ... In fact, I found I almost always called on boys first.

I think I'm doing it because I want to acknowledge those boys immediately although I'm not sure why I'm feeling the pressure to call on them immediately when I don't have that same pressure for girls. Am I wanting to contain their behaviors? Is it because they are moving their hands or bodies more thus being more eye catching? I'm not sure but I am feeling pressure to acknowledge them first.

As described in my journal, I found that I typically called on boys before girls. Even in situations where there were many more girls raising their hands than boys, I still felt compelled to call on a boy first. Something deep inside of me created a desire to acknowledge their hands before girls'.

This practice is clearly biased because it means that boys have more opportunities than girls to voice their opinions first. In my opinion, the opportunity to share first is important for two reasons. First, when I ask close-ended questions, the person who answers first is usually the person who gives the correct answer. Thus, if boys are allowed to answer first more often than girls, they are having more opportunities to be "right" in front of the entire class. For example, there are times in my classroom when I ask questions where there is a definite, definitive answer like, "If there are 100 candies in a jar and five children are to share the candies equally, how many will each get?" After

asking such questions, I give children what I refer to as "think time" so that everyone is able to generate an answer. Children are told that once they have an answer, they are to put up a thumb. Once a majority of the class has their thumb up, I call on a child to share his/her answer. As I stated earlier, I found that in these situations, I usually called on a boy first. Because of the ample think time, he is usually able to provide the correct answer. Overall, because I called on boys first more frequently than girls, it meant that boys were having more opportunities to be "right" in front of the entire class than girls.

When I ask open-ended questions, the person who answers first is usually the person who sets the "tone," both content-wise and behaviorally, for the rest of the discussion. Children often build discussions based upon what they heard the previous person say. Also, children who have no opinions to offer when a question is first asked often use what they've heard others say as a place from which to build their own opinions. The "first" child then has a sort of control over the discussion that subsequent children are less likely to have.

Regardless of the kind of question I ask children, the net result is that because I call on boys first, they are the ones who are having more of an opportunity to be "right" and to shape opinions and/or the path by which the discussion follows.

Attempting to understand why I felt pressure to call on boys first has been difficult because I do not have a clear-cut answer. I know that when I looked out into the sea of raised hands, I felt an internal pressure to call on a boy first. I think the pressure comes from my wanting to keep the boys contained during large group discussions. The reason I have this feeling of wanting to contain boys' behaviors is that during large group discussions, I feel as though the boys are more likely to disengage from the conversation unless I actively pull them in by calling on them. Because I want as many boys involved in the discussion as possible, I believe that I call on them first as a way to keep them actively involved in the conversation.

Interestingly, however, once I recognized that I was calling on boys first more frequently, I attempted to call on boys and girls first equally. As I led discussions, I consciously paid attention to the fact that I wanted to call on girls first as often as I called on boys and attempted to modify my behavior accordingly. Although I was able to call on girls and boys first equally, I found that doing so did not come naturally to me despite a desire to change my biased behavior. On February 28, I wrote:

During morning group, I decided to check in on how I was doing with calling on children equally first . . . I found that although I had managed to call on boys and girls first equally, it was not my natural instinct to do so. I found that I actually had to force myself to call on girls first.

I guess my past behavior has so ingrained itself into me that extinguishing this behavior is something easier said than done. I'm also beginning to realize that since I feel I have to call on boys first because I'm wanting to keep them on-task, I have to make a decision: do I allow my wanting to keep boys on-task to override my need to provide for equal opportunity in my classroom? In other words, I'm feeling as though if I am going to be successful in calling on boys and girls first equally, it means that I am going to need to let go of wanting to keep boys involved.

Changing my practice on calling on boys first was not as easy as I thought it would be. However, as time progressed, I found it to be increasingly less difficult as noted in my journal entry on March 6.

I started science today by paying attention to whom I called on first during classroom discussion. Since discovering that I called on boys first, recognizing this to be something I want to change, and becoming committed to changing this behavior, I have noticed growth. I'm noticing that I'm more easily calling on girls first and that I have considerably let go of the pressure I felt to keep boys on-task during class discussions. In fact, I tallied whom I called on today first during science and I am pleased to report that I called on girls first 7 times and boys first 6 times. I also noticed that I'm not having to "force" myself to call on girls first as I did when I wrote on February 28. I really think that it's because I decided that it was more important for me to call on children equally than for me to keep boys on-task during discussions.

In summary, I originally found that I called on boys first more frequently than girls. Through reflection, I realized that my behavior was motivated by a desire to keep off-task behaviors on-task. In recognizing boys by calling on them first, I was hoping to keep them

engaged in the discussion, thus preventing them from becoming off-task. Having recognized that I called on boys first, deeming this practice to be inconsistent with my goal of equality, I attempted to change the behavior. I found that change was not a simple process because it meant that in order for me to achieve equality in terms of whom I called on first, I had to first let go of my desire to keep off-task behavior on-task. Once I was able to let go of my desire to keep off-task behavior on-task, I found it much easier to call on children first equally.

Example #2 : Giving Eye-Contact to Children

Typically, during large group discussions, children sit in a large circle so that they are able to look at one another while talking. I also sit in the circle. During the discussions, I make an effort to maintain eye contact with the speaker because I believe that my eye contact is a way of letting the child know that I am engaged in the discussion and paying attention. What I noted when examining my teaching practice was that I was more likely to maintain eye contact with a male speaker than a female speaker. On February 28, I wrote:

I was noticing today in group that when boys were telling stories, I was more likely to keep eye contact on them for the entire time they told their stories. But, when girls told stories, I was more likely to break eye contact and look at other kids (usually boys) to get them to stop doing something inappropriate. I noticed this on four different occasions throughout the course of the day. I'm wondering if this is a regular behavior of mine and I'm also wondering if the girls are noticing.

I did not keep an actual count of whom I broke eye contact with and whom I did not. However, at the end of the teaching period, I immediately sat down and wrote in my journal so that my thoughts and perceptions were accurately portrayed. Despite my lack of hard data, I feel confident that my perceptions are accurate because I made a conscious effort to mentally tally how I managed my eye contact.

On this particular day, I found that I was continually distracted while one girl was telling her story. Instead of looking at her throughout her story, I found myself breaking eye contact and looking at other children. In fact, her story lasted only two to three minutes yet I broke eye contact with her five times. I began to wonder if breaking eye contact with children when they were telling stories was something that I consistently did. I then decided to pay careful attention to whom I was breaking eye contact with throughout the rest of that morning group and continued to monitor my behavior throughout the rest of the day.

I discovered that when boys were telling stories I looked at them throughout the entire story. As my journal reflects, I found that I was less consistent about maintaining eye contact with girls than I was with boys. For example, if John was telling a story, I found myself looking at him throughout the entire story. While I was looking at him, I acknowledged his story-telling with nods or other affirmative types of actions (smiles, grins, etc.). I did not find myself doing this when the speaker was a girl. Instead, I noticed myself breaking eye contact regularly. For example, if Mary was to tell a story, I found myself looking at her for a chunk of time while she was talking, affirming what she was saying with non-verbal gestures, breaking eye contact with her to look at other children, then returning my eye contact to her after I had assessed what the other children were doing.

I believe that this practice demonstrates a bias on my part because it indicates that I am more likely to remain within a conversation through my eye contact when the speaker is a boy than when the speaker is a girl. In other words, I am more likely to allow myself to be distracted when the speaker is a girl than when the speaker is a boy.

In addition to boys maintaining my eye contact for longer periods of time, what this finding also suggests is that boys are receiving more affirmative non-verbal gestures (smiles, nods, grins) from me while telling their stories than girls.

This discrepancy is problematic for me as a teacher who wants to treat boys and girls equally. As a person wanting equality in my classroom, I should be remaining in a conversation through its entirety, regardless of the sex of the person.

In trying to understand why I break eye contact with children, I realize now that I typically use eye contact as a way to monitor behavior. Occasionally, children have difficulty listening and will become restless or start whispering to others. When these children fall off-task, I find myself wanting to re-engage them in the conversation. Rather than calling out their names and verbally telling them to pay attention, I find myself staring at the children until they notice my gaze. Typically, once they notice me looking at them, they stop whatever off-task behavior they are engaging in and get back on task. I am then satisfied. This explains that I break eye contact with one child in order to get another child on-task.

This explanation, however, does not provide a reason for why I more frequently break eye contact when girls are speaking. Unfortunately, my journal does not provide further insights into this dilemma. It could be argued that the reason I break eye contact more with girls than boys is because the children in my class are more likely to be off-task when the speaker is a girl than a boy. If this was the case that more children were off-task when girls were speaking, then the reason for my breaking eye contact with girls could be explained accordingly, that is, I break eye contact with girls more often because more children are off-task thus needing my guidance back into the discussions. This scenario, however, is not the case. Children are equally off-task. Therefore, no rationale can be provided through this avenue.

Having noticing this trend in my behavior, I have given it much thought attempting to find explanations for my behavior. I think that the reason I maintained eye contact with boys more frequently is similar to the reason I had for calling on boys first. With calling on boys first, I believe I did so in response to a pressure I felt to contain the off-task

behaviors of boys. By calling on boys first, I felt as though I was keeping them engaged in the discussion, thus preventing them from becoming off-task. Similarly, I believe I maintained eye contact with boys more frequently as a way to keep them engaged in the discussion. By looking at boys throughout their entire story-telling, I believe I was providing them with a reason to stay active in the discussion. With the girls, I believe I felt less of a pressure to keep them engaged and was thus more willing to break eye contact. In essence, I believe that what was motivating my actions was the belief that the boys needed my active attention to keep them on-task. I believed that my maintaining eye contact was one way of keeping them on-task.

In summary, I noticed that I was more likely to maintain eye contact with boys during their story-telling than with girls. After reflecting upon my actions, I have come to realize that I use eye contact as a way to monitor behavior. Believing that I needed to more closely monitor boys' behavior, I felt as though they really needed my eye contact to keep them on-task. At the same time, however, I did not feel that girls needed this monitoring and was thus more willing to break eye contact.

Example #3: Remaining Physically in Discussions

During class discussions, there are times when I will walk away briefly from the discussion to attend to another matter. If the class is engaged in a discussion that is moving along comfortably with everyone participating well, I will occasionally stand up and leave the conversation to talk to an adult aide or quickly gather materials. In the beginning of the year, I engage in this behavior haphazardly. As the year progresses, however, I make a conscious effort to do this more frequently, primarily because I want the children to become more and more independent in their ability to maintain and sustain their own conversations.

On March 12, I kept a record of the times I left a discussion, my reasons for doing so and who was speaking when I left:

Today, in the middle of a girl's story, I got up out of my chair and left the circle to do something else. When she was finished speaking, I got back into the circle. I then began to wonder if I tend to get up and move out of the circle more when a girl is speaking than when a boy is speaking.

I decided to make note of the times when I walked away from a discussion, my reasons for doing so and who was speaking. Throughout the rest of the day, I left a whole class discussion four times. Interestingly, each of the four times I left, the speaker was a girl.

As my journal entry reflects, I found myself more likely to leave a group discussion when the person who had the floor was a girl than when it was a boy. This indicates bias because it means that I am present for more of what boys are saying than for what girls are saying. When I walk away from a discussion, it means that while I am gone, I am missing out on what the speaker has to say. It means that the speaker's opinions or thoughts are not being fully recognized by me.

My March 12 journal entry also gives some insight into why I think I'm more likely to leave a conversation when the speaker is a girl:

In reflecting upon why I believe I am more likely to leave when the speaker is a girl, I think that what comes up for me is an issue of trust. I feel as if I can leave discussions when a girl is speaking because I feel more trusting of her. I believe that girls are less likely to say something outlandish thus creating chaos. As a result, I feel I can move out of the circle and get the things done that I might need to do. When the boys are telling stories, I feel a tiny bit apprehensive that something might go wrong and so I tend to want to stay in the circle to monitor their stories.

In essence, this journal entry describes my willingness to leave when the speaker is a girl versus a boy because of my desire to maintain order. From my past teaching experiences, I have come to believe that girls are more likely than boys to stay on-task during a discussion when I am not present. For example, I believe that if I leave a discussion when a girl is supposed to be talking about frogs, she will in fact continue to talk about frogs when I am gone. Conversely, I have come to believe that when boys are

the speakers, I have to stay with the discussion as a way to make sure the boys do not lead the discussion down a completely unrelated path. For example, I feel somewhat apprehensive when I leave a discussion when a boy is supposed to be talking about frogs. I am concerned that he will change the subject and start talking about what he did over the weekend. As a result, I feel more comfortable getting up and leaving when a girl is speaking because I feel more trusting that she will continue to talk about the discussion topic in a relevant fashion. I must point out, however, that my belief that girls are more likely than boys to remain on-task during discussions is based upon an intuitive assumption. I do not have hard data to support this belief.

In summary, I found through an examination of my teaching behaviors that I am more likely to leave a discussion when the speaker is a girl than when the speaker is a boy. Through reflection, I have come to believe that my actions are based upon a pre-conceived assumption that girls can be trusted to stay on-task regardless of whether or not I am present during the discussion. My actions are also based upon a pre-conceived assumption that boys are less likely to stay on-task during discussions when I am not present. As a result, I am more likely to leave a discussion when the speaker is a girl.

Example #4 : Acknowledging the Loudest Child First

The children and I engage in numerous discussions throughout the day. At times, classroom discussions can become animated and all of the children will begin talking at once. Usually, during those times, children are shouting out my name hoping to elicit my attention so that they can have the discussion floor. On April 1, I wrote:

I've been thinking about those times during classroom discussions when everything falls apart and all of the children are talking at one time because they are very excited. Often, I'll just ride out the excitement and let the children talk until they calm down. What I've become interested in during those times is who it is that I acknowledge and pay attention to.

What usually happens is that while the commotion is going on, I'll usually give eye contact and listen to individual children--I'll be able to tune out the rest and hear what they have to say despite the noise. Often, they are all vying for my eye contact and my acknowledgment. They'll all start out by yelling out my name or trying to get my attention. Of course, I won't be able to look at them all so they'll then move on to trying to get the attention of others in the classroom.

Acknowledging that discussions can become lively in class, I examined who it was that I acknowledged during those heated times. I found through an examination of my teaching that the children I acknowledged were the loudest children in my class. I continued to write on April 1:

I tried hard today . . . to look at who it was that I was acknowledging with my attention [during those times when discussions became heated]. Unfortunately, I found that the loudest children were the ones I looked at and acknowledged. And, those loud children were the boys. During the six times today that "chaos" broke out, I found myself making eye contact with nineteen kids [I tracked this by marking tallies on a piece of paper]. And, thirteen of the nineteen kids were boys. I usually found myself making eye contact with the child who was yelling out the loudest, letting that child say what he had to say, and then moving on to the next loudest child, etc.

As my journal indicates, I typically gave my attention to the loudest child in an attempt to get that child to quiet down. I'd usually look at the child and allow him/her to share his/her ideas because while s/he was sharing, s/he usually quieted down, which is something I wanted to achieve. Since the loudest children in my class were boys, I found that when classroom discussions got chaotic and everyone was shouting my name, I usually paid attention to the boys first. This is a biased practice on several levels. My April 1 journal entry concludes with reasons for why I found this practice to be biased. I wrote:

I'm finding this troubling information to me for several reasons. First, I don't like it because even though I don't want to, I am rewarding the loudest child with my attention. I'm giving them reason to be loud because I'm making it okay by paying attention to them. I'm also not liking it because I'm not giving the girls in my class equal access to my attention because they are typically quieter than the boys so when "chaos" breaks out, I'll be more likely to not acknowledge them.

In summary, I found that when classroom discussions become lively and all of the children are vying for my attention, I acknowledged the loudest child first and then the second loudest child, etc. I found through reflection that the reason I engaged in this practice is because I wanted to restore order in my class. By acknowledging the loudest child, I hoped to quiet him or her down, thus helping to restore order. I also found through a tally that I acknowledged boys in a majority of cases. As a result, girls were acknowledged less in these situations because, generally speaking, they were not as loud as the boys.

Having discussed the ways I treated children unequally because of my need for classroom management, the following section will now discuss the ways I treated children unequally because of biases I possess from stereotypes I have about gender roles. I have entitled this section "Bias Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes."

Bias Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes

My journal indicates that I treat children differently in terms of how I discipline boys and girls and in terms of how I regard children's off-task behavior. In both instances, I've come to realize that my behavior has been influenced by stereotypes I developed as a child that have persisted through adulthood. In this section, I will discuss how these personal stereotypes have resulted in my engaging in biased teaching behaviors. I will first discuss how these personal stereotypes influenced the way I disciplined children. I will then discuss the impact these stereotypes have had on my perceptions of which children are off-task in class.

Example #1: Disciplining Children

Traditionally, teachers establish classroom rules and expectations prior to children beginning the new school year. In my classroom, however, the children work in

cooperative groups to establish classroom agreements or rules on the first day of school. I have always asked the children to develop the rules because I believe that, in order for the children to agree to the rules, there needs to be a personal "buy in" on their part. By having them develop the rules, I believe that they experience this "buy in" and as a result are more committed to maintaining the agreements. The agreements the children generate have always been ones that I agree with. In fact, in the four years I have taught, I have never had to modify or add a rule that I felt was missing from the children's list. We have agreements such as "respect other people's belongings," "listen to the person who has the floor," "no side conversations," "walk inside the classroom," and "keep your hands and feet to yourself."

In addition to developing classroom agreements, children also develop consequences for breaking agreements. The consequences involve a three-step system: 1) a verbal warning; 2) asked to leave the classroom and wait outside the door until you're ready to return as a "learner"; and 3) go to the office for an extended time-out. The first step involves my reminding the child that his/her behavior is not okay and that s/he needs to make different choices in the future. The second step is used for children whose behaviors do not change with a warning. They are asked to leave the room, stand outside and reflect upon what they have done that is not consistent with the classroom agreements. Once they feel they are capable of working successfully in the classroom, they are free to return. In this circumstance, I will say, "Please go outside and return to class when you feel you are capable of X." The last step, being sent to the office, is used for children whose behaviors have not changed, even with time to reflect outside the classroom. By this point, the classroom is clearly not a place where they can be successful and a time-out is required.

Despite the establishment of class agreements and consequences, I discovered that I was biased in how I disciplined boys and girls. I found that I was less consistent with girls than I was with boys. When boys were in need of discipline, I was easily able to follow

the established class consequences. In contrast, however, when girls transgressed, I often hesitated. I found that I was much more willing to let girls' behaviors slide or to ignore what they had done. On March 1, I wrote:

Today, I paid attention to who it is that I send out of class when they are misbehaving. As I had thought, my inclination was to send boys out rather than girls. I tend to give girls more warnings or ignore their off-task behavior. When I see the girls goofing off, I think to myself, "I should send her outside" but I don't because the next thing I think is "but if I send her outside, she'll be crushed." With boys, I don't hesitate . . .

When I looked carefully at my discipline practices, I realized I had a dual standard—boys were dealt with consistently in accordance with classroom consequences; girls were allowed more leeway.

In examining my actions, I discovered that I was having difficulty being stern with girls based on an old-fashioned stereotype that girls are weak and need protecting. On March 1, I wrote:

I'm realizing now that why I've had a hard time sending them out is that I've been on some level buying into the awful stereotype that girls are weak and their feelings need to be protected. Therefore, if I'm too harsh, they'll crumble. With the boys, I guess I must be feeling that they are "tough" and will get over any sad feelings or that their self-esteems are less fragile than the girls.

As my journal indicates, I felt uncomfortable disciplining girls firmly because I was afraid of hurting their feelings or making them cry. I believed that if I sent a girl to the office or disciplined them by using the class consequences, they would "crumble." Whenever I saw a girl off-task, I found myself thinking, "I should send her outside." On many occasions, however, I did not send her outside because my subsequent thoughts were, "But if I send her outside, she'll be crushed." In contrast, however, I had little difficulty disciplining the boys because I believed that they could withstand the punishment and their feelings would not be hurt. Therefore, disciplining boys was much easier because I wasn't worrying about their feelings.

In recognizing that I engaged in these practices, the immediate question for me was, "WHY?" After some thought, I began to realize that the answer probably lay in my childhood. As a child, I grew up within a family and cultural system that dictated that girls are the weaker sex and in need of protection. My father had very definite beliefs about how girls and boys should behave, all of which taught me at a young age that girls are the weaker sex. My mother also accepted the roles my father deemed appropriate for girls and boys. For example, my brother was allowed to do many things I was not allowed to do simply because he was a boy. He was allowed to play outside unsupervised, to go to the park alone, to have more autonomy. I, however, was always required to be in a group of friends or escorted by adults if I wanted to do anything. My father's beliefs and rules were not unusual within the community and culture I grew up in. In many other households, girls were also denied the same kinds of opportunities as I was in an attempt to keep them safe and prevent their feelings or their bodies from being injured. Boys, on the other hand, were encouraged to be rugged and tough. They were taught to be strong and that they had the ability to overcome any difficulty. I grew up not questioning these beliefs and thus accepting them to be true.

As I entered adulthood, however, I began to question these beliefs and actually began rebelling against them. A major influence in my life was the experience I had working for a local Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The YWCA's mission is to empower women. As an employee of the YWCA, my views about gender roles changed through the daily interactions I had with women in the agency who were committed to the empowerment of women. In the three years I worked for the YWCA, I went from accepting that women are weaker than men to believing that women are equal to men. I have since striven for gender equality. And yet, despite my adult quest for equality, I found this childhood belief system to be still ingrained in me and it was manifested in my hesitation to discipline girls as I do boys.

Removing this childhood belief from my teaching practice has been challenging. In my journal, I described how it was hard for me to overcome my difficulty in disciplining girls despite my own intense discomfort with this hesitation. On the one hand, I was appalled with my behavior; on the other hand, I had a hard time undoing what I was accustomed to doing because of a deeply ingrained belief system. The following journal entry written on March 1 reflects my feelings:

I must admit that I am feeling pretty horrified with this realization [that I discipline boys and girls differently based upon gender stereotypes] because I don't want to believe that this is what I have been doing. The possibility for what I might be communicating to the children unconsciously through this practice makes me want to puke. What if girls are getting messages that as long as they are cute and cuddly, they don't have to face consequences for their actions OR (worst yet) when they are in a jam, all they need to do to get out of the situation is to smile? And, what about the poor boys--am I teaching them to grow up to become men who learn to stuff their feelings? Now that I really think about this, I know that the boys are as hurt as girls when they get sent out of the room, but I'm teaching the boys that their role is "to get over it and be tough."

Immediately upon discovering that I disciplined children from a biased perspective, I sought to change my behavior. I did not, however, find change easy to achieve as this journal entry on March 2 reveals:

I actually sent outside a few girls who were goofing off today. I did it but I can't say that it was easy. Sending them outside was really hard for me because I felt I was being particularly cruel to these "poor, sensitive girls" (despite the fact that the boys would have received the same consequence in a heart beat). I guess changing my behavior by sending girls outside is easy. The hard part, however, is getting rid of this feeling that girls are weaker, thus deserving of special treatment.

As I paid attention to this issue, I found it easier to discipline children equally. On March 4, I wrote:

I'm still catching myself holding off from giving the same kinds of consequences to both boys and girls. I noticed it today during our class meeting. We had all agreed that if someone shouted out, I'd send that person out of the room and they could return when they felt ready to participate in the discussion by raising their hands. I sent one boy out after another with little problem. But, there was one girl who kept calling out. I really had to struggle with myself to send her out of the class. I kept letting her slide. She'd call out, I'd ignore her or incorporate her calling out into

the conversation. Yet, the next time a boy called out, they were out the door in a flash. After a while, I got a hold of myself and forced myself to send her out. Once I did it, I found it easier to send her out the following times.

I guess I'm disappointed in myself because I thought that by recognizing I had a problem with this, I'd be able to "cure" myself quickly and easily. I'm finding it much harder to get rid of my feeling that I'd "crush" a girl by sending her out than I thought it would be. This is really showing me how ingrained I have into my essence that girls are supposed to be protected and boys toughened EVEN though I hate absolutely hate this notion. My struggle with this issue is really showing me how insidious gender stereotypes are EVEN in people (such as myself) who are constantly striving to eliminate gender-bias from their lives.

On March 8, I wrote:

Today I worked really hard on disciplining boys and girls equally (with the same intensity) in light of my revelation from Friday. After the first few times, I found I have gotten over my hesitation to be stern with girls or to send them out of the room. Although I did cringe the first few times (I still somehow believed that the girls would fall apart into tears), I realized that it really was okay for the girls.

As I should have known before but somehow didn't, the girls did not break, they were not crushed, they were not devastated. They acted just like the boys when they have hard consequences . . .

I am appalled to think that I've been teaching for 4 years and all that time I carried with me this weird belief that somehow I needed to protect the girls and couldn't discipline them as I did the boys because the girls were too fragile.

As my journal reflects, once I discovered bias in my interactions with boys and girls, I found I had to consciously force myself to treat boys and girls the same. I had a very hard time believing that the girls in my class could withstand the same discipline I gave to boys. In fact, the first time I sent a girl to the office, I held my breath because I expected her to burst into tears immediately. What I found, however, was the girls did not burst into tears. In fact, they held up to discipline just as did the boys. Interesting to note was that even after I began to discipline boys and girls equally on a regular basis and found that girls were comfortable with the discipline, there still existed in me a small discomfort each time I punished a girl. Today I am disciplining boys and girls equally but it continues to be a tiny bit more difficult for me to be as firm with girls as I am with boys.

In summary, my journal revealed that I disciplined boys and girls differently. I found that I was more stern and less hesitant to discipline boys. Through reflection, I realized that this behavior was grounded in a stereotype I developed as a child, that is, girls are fragile and in need of protection while boys are strong and capable of withstanding difficulties. Once I recognized my biased behavior, I became committed to change. Although change did come, it was not an easy process and it is one in which I am still engaged.

Example #2: Who I Assumed to be Off-Task

Prior to my undertaking this study, if a person was to ask me, "Who do you think is more off-task in class: boys or girls?" I would have said without hesitation, "Boys." On March 20, I wrote in my journal:

Before I started keeping this journal and paying attention to behaviors in my class, I would have said that boys fooled around more than girls. I'm not sure why I would have said that but it would have been my gut reaction--perhaps because when boys fool around, they usually do it louder and more boisterously.

Although I had never actually sat down and examined children's off-task behaviors, my intuitive self would have said that boys were more off-task than girls. Also, when I think back upon my teaching career and think of off-task behaviors, boys' behaviors are the ones that stand-out most clearly in my mind. As my journal suggests, one possible reason for believing that boys are off-task more frequently than girls is that when they are off-task, they usually are more demonstrative and physical with their behaviors.

Through the course of examining my teaching practices and the children's behaviors, I have begun to find evidence that contradicts what my intuitive self tells me about behaviors. On March 20, I wrote:

I was trying my hardest today to conference with individual children during Social Studies. My attention kept being taken away from the child I was trying to conference with by other children in class who were fooling around. I've read lots and lots about how teachers' attention gets pulled from children by children who are fooling around in class AND that those fooling around are usually boys. However, this was not the case today. The girls in my class today were goofing off big time. I finally had to have a major conference with the entire class and let them know that I was really frustrated by their behavior and that if they were unable to make their own choices, I would be glad to make the choices for them.

As Social Studies progressed, I decided to just observe who was off-task according to gender. Just from my observations, boys and girls were equally off-task.

On March 26, I once again examined who was off-task in class. I wrote in my journal:

I've been thinking a lot about what I found out a couple of days ago regarding how I found that boys and girls were equally off-task so I decided to track it more today. I sat back at my desk while the children were working in cooperative groups and just made tally marks of the children who were off-task, that is, doing something other than and unrelated to the assigned task. During the twenty minutes, I counted nine children who were off-task at some point. Five were boys and four were girls.

On March 27, I again looked at who was off-task in class. I wrote in my journal:

The children were in three different science groups with each group being led by a different parent in my classroom. Because I wasn't having to teach, I decided to track whom the parents had to remind to get back on-task in terms of gender. The parent leading Group A had to remind three boys and four girls to stop talking and get back to work; the parent leading Group B reminded four girls and two boys to get back to work; the parent leading Group C reminded two boys and 1 girl to stop goofing off and get back to work. When I counted the number of times children were off-task as demonstrated by parents issuing reminders, boys were off-task seven times and girls were off-task nine times.

Now, if this "hard" data is indicating that boys and girls are off-task nearly equal amounts of time, why is it that I have such a strong belief in the notion that boys are off-task more often than girls. What's going on?

As these journal entries indicate, despite my belief that boys are off-task more than girls, the data indicate otherwise. The question that thus arises is this: "If boys and girls are

equally off-task in my classroom, why is it that I believed boys to be more off-task than girls?" My journal entry on April 2 sheds some light:

I counted again the number of times boys were off-task versus girls while the children were working in cooperative groups . . . I found the same kinds of data I had collected previously, that is boys and girls were nearly equally off-task (girls were off-task 4 times; boys were off-task 3 times).

. . . When the children were off-task, I not only counted the number of times, I also noted the ways that they were off-task. I found that out of the 4 girls who were off-task, 3 were doing so in ways that were quiet and non-obtrusive to the rest of the class . . . When these girls were off-task, they were being off-task by talking quietly to their friends or doodling on a piece of paper (the last girl was off-task by picking up a nearby ball and bouncing it in class so it was clearly obvious that she was goofing off).

The boys, on the other hand, were a different story. All three of them were off-task in very loud, very obtrusive ways. One child was off-task by throwing an eraser across the classroom; another was shouting at a peer; the last was burping loudly.

So, I've begun to form a reason for why I believe boys to be more off-task than girls even though they are equally off-task . . . I think it is because that when boys are off-task, they do so in more visible, more noticeable ways thus making them more likely to be "caught in the act" by me. I'm also thinking, however, that when girls are off-task, they engage in behaviors that are quieter, more contained, less noticeable thus making it less likely that I will catch them.

This journal entry provides insight into why I believed that boys were more off-task than girls. When the boys in my class were off-task, they engaged in more visibly noticeable off-task behaviors than girls. Because I am more likely to notice them being off-task, I am also more likely to reprimand or remind them to resume their work. As a result, I have developed a belief system or stereotype about boys' behaviors that states that boys are more off-task than girls because I am reprimanding boys more frequently than girls.

This belief system or stereotype is problematic for me on several levels. On the first level, it poses a problem because I have been for the past five years unjustly assuming that boys are more off-task than girls. I have been characterizing boys in an unfavorable fashion and treating them in certain ways based upon flawed assumptions.

Second, because of my belief that boys are more likely to be off-task than girls, I developed teaching practices specifically geared at preventing boys from becoming off-task when, in fact, there is no evidence that boys are more off-task than girls. As I shared in previous sections of this thesis, I called on boys first more frequently than girls, I gave boys more eye-contact than girls, I remained in discussions led by boys more frequently than girls all in an attempt to keep boys on-task. In each of these situations, I based my actions upon a belief system that boys are more off-task than girls and needed more of my efforts to keep on-task. The reality is that these teaching practices are flawed because they were based upon faulty presumptions. Additionally, I also developed these teaching behaviors under the assumption that girls were less off-task than boys and thus needed less monitoring than boys. As it now stands, my findings that girls are equally off-task than boys means that girls have been missing out on instruction and learning experiences because I haven't noticed that they were off-task.

In summary, prior to this study, I operated under the premise that boys were more off-task than girls in class. As a result, I developed teaching practices aimed at preventing boys from becoming off-task. Through the course of this study, I discovered that boys and girls are, in fact, equally off-task. Through reflection, I have come to understand that the reason I thought boys to be more off-task than girls was because boys' off-task behaviors are more visible thus eliciting my attention more frequently than girls' off-task behaviors.

The previous two chapters, "Ways I Treated Children Equally" and "Ways I Treated Children Unequally" discussed my interpretations of the data I collected during this study. I discussed the teaching behaviors that were indicative of biased and non-biased practices. I also provided insight into why I believed I engaged in those behaviors. The final chapter, "Preventing Bias in My Classroom: Next Steps" will discuss the ways that I will ensure bias does not continue to occur in my classroom.

CHAPTER VI

PREVENTING BIAS IN MY CLASSROOM: NEXT STEPS

As I stated in the Methodology Chapter of this thesis (chp. 3), my research was grounded in action research. I looked intensely at my teaching behaviors and brought to light areas in my teaching that are reflective of gender-biased practices. I also determined why I engaged in the behaviors. Now that I am aware that these practices exist, action research demands that I do more than merely recognize the existence of these practices. I need to take steps to remove these practices from my teaching. Therefore, the next question is, "What do I do to remove these biased practices from my teaching?"

This chapter will discuss how I will change my biased practices. I have separated this chapter into four sections. In the first section, "Preventing Bias Practices Grounded in Behavior Management Concerns," I will discuss how I will prevent myself from continuing to use those gender-biased practices I engage in when striving to manage the classroom. In the second section, "Preventing Bias Practices Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes," I will discuss how I will stop using those gender-biased practices that were grounded in my own gender stereotypes. This chapter will also address one final question that has arisen as a result of my having completed this study. The question that has arisen for me is "Is providing for equal opportunities in the classroom enough?" I will address this question in the third section, "One Final Question." The fourth section, "Final Summary" will provide my closing remarks.

Preventing Biased Practices Grounded in Behavior Management Concerns

Through an analysis of my journal, I found that: 1) I called on boys first more than girls; 2) I gave boys more eye contact than girls; 3) I was more likely to leave a group discussion when the speaker was a girl than a boy; and 4) I acknowledged the loudest child in my class first, all in an attempt to maintain control. As previously discussed, I believed

that in order to maintain control in my classroom, I needed to engage in certain practices that would prevent chaos. Since I also believed that the boys were more likely to be off-task than girls, I engaged in these practices in order to keep the boys on-task. I now recognize that each of these behaviors is, in fact, biased, and am committed to preventing them from happening in the future. I believe that I will be able to eliminate these practices if I put into my teaching a systematic and conscious prevention aimed at stopping these practices.

The first thing I need to do is actively commit to ensuring that girls and boys are receiving equal attention in my classroom and put this commitment ahead of my desire for classroom control. As long as I value classroom control ahead of equality, girls will continue to receive less from me because the boys in my class have always been more demanding, thus requiring more attention. In addition to shifting my teaching focus, my plan to prevent biased practice based upon classroom management reasons is as follows:

- 1) When a child is speaking to me, I will make a conscious effort to remain in the conversation with the child until the discussion is finished and not break eye-contact with the child because other children are disruptive;
- 2) I will not leave discussions when girls are speaking just because I believe them to be more capable of sustaining the discussion;
- 3) I will stop giving my attention to the loudest child when everyone is shouting at once. I will instead work on acknowledging the quieter students who are raising their hands instead of shouting; and,
- 4) I will keep track of who I call on first during discussions.

By having these steps in place, I believe I will be able to eliminate these biased practices.

Preventing Practices Based Upon My Own Gender Stereotypes

My journal indicated that I treated children differently in terms of how I disciplined them and who I believed to be off-task in class. Through reflection, I have come to believe that the reason I engaged in those behaviors was because I held stereotypes about gender-specific behaviors that I developed as a child. These pre-conceived stereotypes led me to treat boys and girls differently and led me to believe that boys were more likely to engage in certain behaviors than girls. Clearly, these are biased practices. I believe, however, that changing these practices will be difficult because it means not only changing my behavior, but also altering a belief system I established as a child.

Prior to this study, I had no idea that gender stereotypes I developed as a child affected my adult behavior. I had assumed that because I am an adult committed to equal treatment of children across genders my teaching practices would reflect that commitment. I found, however, that despite my adult convictions, childhood beliefs intruded upon my actions. Key, then, to preventing these practices from continuing to occur is my overcoming the influences that gender stereotyping has had on my behavior. Now that I recognize that, although I intellectually reject these stereotypes, they still impact my teaching, I can critically examine my practices and move towards change. It is my hope that as time passes, I will see change both in terms of my behavior and in terms of permanently undoing those stereotypes I developed as a child.

The last two sections were devoted to laying out prevention plans for eliminating biased teaching practices in my classroom. I discussed how I intend to prevent biased practices that were caused by my need for classroom control. I also discussed how I plan to undo the effects childhood gender stereotyping has had on my adult teaching practices. The following section addresses one additional question I still feel needs to be addressed.

One Final Question

Having come to the end of my thesis, I have one final question. This thesis has looked at the ways in which I engaged in biased and non-biased teaching practices. I have focused on this issue because I want equality to exist in my classroom. By identifying and eliminating biased practices, I hoped to provide for a more equitable classroom for both boys and girls. The question I now have is this: "Is providing for equal opportunities in the classroom enough?" Prior to conducting this study, I would have answered this question with a "Yes." I now wonder whether providing equal opportunities is really enough.

When I began this study, I operated within feminist researcher Kristeva's (1982) first generational perspective. In this perspective, feminists such as myself attempt to achieve equality across gender by assuring equal access to opportunities. I am now finding myself in a new place best described by Kristeva's second generational feminist perspective. Kristeva's second generational perspective challenges feminists to do more than just seek out equal opportunities for women, as I attempted to do by undertaking this research study. Instead, Kristeva challenges one to look closely at the opportunities being sought after and determine whether or not the opportunities are truly appropriate for women. If the opportunity is appropriate, then it should be pursued. In contrast, however, if an opportunity is not in the best interests of women, it should be avoided, even if it means that equal opportunity is being denied. In other words, it is not merely enough to ensure equal opportunities, but rather appropriateness of the opportunity for women needs to be of prime consideration. A second generational feminist perspective seeks for equality for women but not at the expense of women. Therefore, assuming that an opportunity that has been allowed for men is one that women should also have is faulty because it may well be that the opportunity being sought after is not appropriate for women.

My current teaching practice has been primarily directed towards giving girls the same opportunities as those offered boys. Now, however, I am beginning to question this assumption and have begun to look it through the lenses of a second generational feminist. Perhaps in my quest to treat children equally, I have not given either sex what they truly needed because I based my actions on what one sex has traditionally needed or possessed. In my teaching, I assumed that what was good for the boys in my classroom is also what was good for the girls and vice versa. I now believe that I need to do more than just provide for equal access to opportunities. I need to start thinking as Kristeva's second generational feminist would do and seek not only equal opportunity but appropriateness of opportunity as well. Obtaining this objective will be challenging because it demands of me a deep understanding of the nature of both girls and boys. Only by truly understanding the nature of boys and girls will I be able to determine whether or not an opportunity is appropriate. I will need to do more readings and research that will help me to understand whether or not something is appropriate for a child.

Final Summary

I looked at my teaching practices and found that I am gender-biased in some areas and not in others. I found that my non-biased practices were a direct result of my having in place an active and conscious plan for preventing biased behavior. Through the course of this study, I also identified biased practices in my teaching. I found my biased practices to result from one of two causes: a need for classroom management and a negative influence of my own gender stereotypes that I developed as a child.

The objective of this thesis was to find places in my teaching where I am biased and to eliminate these practices so that I can provide for equal opportunity in my classroom. Through the course of this study, I achieved this objective. I identified biased behavior, analyzed it, and provided action plans for preventing the behavior from continuing.

Through the course of this study, I also found myself developing and growing as a feminist. I have found myself moving past a first generational feminist perspective and onto a second generational feminist perspective. I am no longer content to just count the ways in which opportunities are being given out equally in my classroom. I now find that I must move past merely counting and onto analyzing whether or not opportunities are truly appropriate for both boys and girls. Through my growth as a feminist seeking equality, I now have a new direction in which to head for future research projects. My next research project will need to focus not only on eliminating gender-bias practices in order to ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls, but also on determining whether an individual opportunity is really appropriate and in the best interest of a boy or a girl.

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