

# Feminization of schools and role models



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The final explanation into the reasoning's behind GCSE boys' underachievement is the changes to female attitudes as well as feminization within education. According to Loper (2016) education has become 'feminised', this means that schools are not catering to boys' in a sense that schools do not nurture 'masculine' traits such as leadership and competitiveness. Instead, in most schools qualities which are associated with femininity such as being attentive in class and systematic working. Loper (2016) argues that coursework plays a major issue in academic achievement within the genders as outdoor adventure and final exams should be emphasised in the curriculum. Research conducted by Loper (2017) suggests that girl's attitudes have changed over the years as a study conducted by Sue Sharp in 1972 focused on changing the attitudes of females within a secondary school. Sharp started by studying a group of secondary school girls and asking them what they considered to be important in their lives to which the girls replied 'Marriage, husbands and children'. Sharp then conducted the research again in 1991 and found the responses were different to when the research was first conducted, the replies of the girls were now saying 'Being financially stable, independent and having a good job'. This shows us that girls are now confident within society and shows that they work harder than men in order to achieve their own personal goals. This also shows us that boys' may be lacking in confidence which could be due to the change in the job market as there is a rise in 'feminine' jobs as opposed to 'masculine' jobs.

This can have a negative impact on boys' as they do not have sufficient male role models in order to boost their confidence. However, Barber (1996)

argues that boys' are overconfident and he showed that boys' overestimate their ability whilst girls underestimate theirs. Barber conducted research which showed that boys' thought it would be easy to pass an exam without putting in effort, and when they failed they had a tendency of blaming the teacher and feeling undervalued. This can show us another reason as to why boys are underachieving in GCSEs as they set themselves with high expectations but do not put in the effort to get to where they want to be. The feminisation of teaching was a controversial matter in the nineteenth century. Although in the 21st century, feminisation in education is not a big issue, however it can possibly help us understand the reasoning towards the explanation behind the underachievement of GCSE boys'. More female teachers are present in primary schools whilst there is only a few men that take up the primary school/secondary school teaching role. This clearly shows that girls have positive role models such as their female teachers to look up to, whilst boys would most likely struggle to identify with female teachers therefore they will find another way to create their own, leading boys' to create sub-cultures within schools.

The idea around there not being enough male teachers within schools can mean that the learning styles and the way in which the pupils are taught are more appropriately suited for a female. A sociological explanation as to why role models have an impact on an individual's development whether male or female is the ' Social learning theory'. Albert Bandura (1977) developed the social learning theory which focuses on how behaviour is learnt from the environment through the process of observational learning (Akers and Jennings, 2015). The theory suggests that children learn and understand and

gain knowledge through their environment and what they observe from it. Children do not only learn from the objects and things around them but also from their peers, family members, favourite celebrity etc. Children tend to observe behaviours around them including people, those people who are being observed are known as models. Children pay attention to their role models and encode their behaviour which in the end, ends up being copied (Akers and Jennings, 2015). In terms of GCSE boys' underachievement, boys' need to be seeing more male teachers so that they also have a 'model' to look up to in order not to threaten the masculinity ideology.