

Critical review of: judith gill and karen starr's gender and schooling: still mak...

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This article written by Judith Gill and Karen Starr highlights the history of gender reform in the Australian education system and the backlashes associated with it. The main debate which is being discussed in this article is that of disadvantaged boys. After a long time of feminists fighting for equal rights of girls in Australian schools, the Boys in Education lobbyists are fighting for increased attention to be given to boys in schools. Gill and Starr don't believe that the boys are disadvantaged and have written this paper to demonstrate the superfluousness of the Boys in Education lobby and the lack of necessity for their demands. As an introduction the authors outline the causes feminists have been fighting for girls to gain equal rights in schools. These fights were necessary as in early feminists accounts the concepts of girls being the deficient gender were reinforced in schools. Since 1975 though, because of the feminists' movements, girls in schools have been getting catered to almost as equally as the boys with inclusive curriculums and raised awareness of the problems of inequality in education. There are still more areas that need to be changed in the schooling system to ensure the highest amount of gender equality that are currently possible in this man's world. For example; the study areas should be changed in that boys and girls can easily chose non-traditional subjects respectively. The backlash of striving for equality and making the schooling equally rewarding for girls, is that the boys (or at the least Boys in Education lobby men) are feeling forgotten. Gill and Starr use a sarcastic undertone whilst describing the goals, strategies and research of the lobby; Most notably the Boys in Education lobby's stance on the Theory of Gender. The lobbyists describe the boys in their research in a very ' boys will be boys' manner. That is to say

that all boys are the way they are because of biology and only biology itself is to blame for their behaviour and schooling failures. This goes against the beliefs of feminist arguments which side on the constructed gender theory that acknowledges biology in the most minimum form while attributing behaviour or personality to the dynamic social construction of gender. In ignoring the social construct of gender, the lobbyists are not fully understanding the position of the boys and furthermore reinforcing a gender stereo type of all boys. The questions should be ' which boys?' and, in order to explore the reasons of these specific boys' behaviours, it is necessary for the lobbyists to look beyond the biological make up of boys. Furthermore there is lack of research which has gone into saying that boys are at a disadvantage because they have been neglected from the equalising of genders in schools. Gill and Starr have explored the reasoning for the Boys in Education Lobby movement and have found that most of the research is nothing more than hearsay or rhetoric. Whereas the feminist movements in schools are very well backed up by research for example; research shows that the interest of girls is subordinated in schools. This is still the case. We should be asking then, why do the boys need more help when they are already getting a better deal than the girls? The answer to this is hegemony. The hegemonic nature of men, that is keeping their dominant position in society as forever dominant, is forcing the Boys in Education lobbyist to do all they can to secure the hierarchy of gender in school and in turn of society. Gill and Starr do a wonderful job of explaining to their readers the real reasons, reasoning, and research done behind the work of the Boys in Education lobby and its movement. If nothing else, the reader will leave with

knowledge of why it is still a man's world. Chapter 7 from: Johnson, B & Reid, A. (Eds). (1999) Contesting The Curriculum Katoomba, NSW : Social Science Press Pp90-99