Choosing Democracy
A Practical Guide to Multicultural Education

Duane E. Campbell
California State University, Sacramento

With contributions by
Peter Baird
Dolores Delgado-Campbell
Forrest Davis
Edmund W. Lee

Kathryn Singh
Eric Vega
Lisa Williams-White
Pia Lindquist Wong

PEARSON
Merrill
Prentice Hall

Upper Saddle River, New Jersey
Columbus, Ohio
Chapter 5

How Society and Schools Shortchange Girls and Boys

with Dolores Delgado-Campbell and Lisa Williams-White

All I ask our brethren is that they take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God destined for us to occupy.

Sarah Grimke, 1837

No person...shall, on the basis of sex, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to, discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Title IX, 1972, U.S. Congress

Gender Roles and Schools

There are strong similarities between sexism and racism. Both teach role relationships that leave one group in a subordinate position. Both are primarily expressed through institutional arrangements of privilege for some and oppression for others.
Both are forms of violence: individual and collective, psychological and physical. Just as previous chapters described how African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, among others, are harmed by low expectations, being female also leads to subtle forms of tracking—even by female teachers (Ginorio & Huston, 2001).

Amott and Matthaei (1991) argue that gender, like race, is as much a social as a biological category:

Gender differences in the social lives of men and women are based on, but not the same thing as, biological differences between the sexes. Gender is rooted in societies' beliefs that the sexes are naturally distinct and opposed social beings. These beliefs are turned into self-fulfilling prophecies through sex-role socialization; the biological sexes are assigned distinct and often unequal work and political positions, and turned into distinct genders. (p. 13)

The school site is a stage on which gender roles are developed in our society, and thus schools contribute to the assignment of unequal status and work opportunity in our rapidly changing economy. Schools serve as "gatekeepers" providing opportunity to some, but not to all.

Between 1983 and 1992, the press, elected officials, and corporate advocacy groups conducted a national debate, loosely termed the "educational reform movement," concerning the role and future of public education in the United States. The leading "experts" in this debate avoided discussions of race, class, and gender issues whenever possible until 1992. In that year the American Association of University Women (AAUW) issued a report, "How Schools Shortchange Girls," that responded to the avoidance of gender issues:

The absence of attention to girls in the current educational debate suggests that girls and boys have identical educational experiences in schools. Nothing could be further from the truth. Whether one looks at achievement scores, curriculum design, self-esteem levels, or staffing patterns, it is clear that sex and gender make a difference in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools. There is clear evidence that the educational system is not meeting girls' needs. Girls and boys enter school roughly equal in measured ability. In some measures of school readiness, such as fine motor control, girls are ahead of boys. Twelve years later, girls have fallen behind their male classmates in key areas such as higher-level mathematics and measures of self-esteem. (AAUW, 1992, p. 2)

### Tracking Female Students

For girls, especially middle-class, European American girls, attending school in the United States can mean getting a head start in the early grades only to be tracked and subsequently held back or diverted into less challenging fields in the higher grades. Recall that in Chapter 1 we defined *tracking* as a system wherein individuals are identified according to specified physiological, cultural, socioeconomic, or academic criteria and placed in academic course schedules (tracks) designed to fulfill select educational prerequisites, develop a specific skill set, or prepare them for specific careers. Oakes (1985) amplifies this definition:
Tracking is the process whereby students are divided into categories so that they can be assigned in groups to various kinds of classes. Sometimes students are classified as fast, average, or slow learners and placed into fast, average, or slow classes on the basis of their scores on achievement or ability tests. Often teachers’ estimates of what students have already learned or their potential for learning more determine how students are identified and placed. Sometimes students are classified according to what seems most appropriate to their future lives. Sometimes, but rarely in any genuine sense, students themselves choose to be in “vocational,” “general,” or “academic” programs. (p. 3)

Tracking of women occurs in our schools despite the fact that the schools are predominantly female turf. For example, women now constitute a majority of all college students and 73 percent of all teachers, concentrated particularly at the elementary school level (NEA, 2002).

The women in charge of these classrooms and schools are usually European American. In most elementary schools, girls are not systematically disparaged and criticized by teachers for being girls, although they may be disparaged for being lower-class Latinas, African Americans, or Asians. The emotions and turmoil of middle-class European American girls are sympathetically understood by elementary school authorities, both teachers and principals. The female-dominated institution produces success for European American girls during the critical early years when the child is defining her own identity and her relationship to learning and schooling (National Education Association, 1990; Sadker, Sadker, & Long, 1989).

Self-Esteem

Although racism and sexism both have damaging effects on the oppressed and on the oppressor, their manifestations in the early years of school are often quite different from their adult forms. While the excellent AAUW report argues that positive cross-sex relationships may be more difficult than cross-race relationships, in elementary schools the problem is more complex. This is because families and schools generally are much better at giving young children positive cross-gender experiences than they are at giving them positive cross-racial experiences. Several examples can be seen in the typical home.

Children develop a view of self in their very early years, usually in the intimate and nurturing surroundings of the home. Evidence indicates that children learn both about themselves and about others by at least age four. Most learning of “appropriate” role relationships takes place under the guidance of females, either in the home or in childcare.

When children or adults work in an intimate relationship with another person in a positive environment, they learn to like and respect that person. This equal-status interaction teaches mutual respect (Butyn, 1989; National Education Association, 1990; Sadker et al., 1989). Almost all little boys have an intimate, trust-building relationship or an equal-status relationship with at least one female—usually their mother. In the early formative years, most boys learn to respect and love their
mother or some other female caregiver, such as a grandmother or aunt. Few young boys learn to dominate their mothers. This early relationship should provide a basis for future learning of mutual respect and cooperation in relationships with women.

Of course, this picture does not match the experience of all children. In a home with an abusive or dominating parent, children may learn abusive and dominating patterns. In homes with a single female head of household, boys may still learn respectful relationships. In some such homes, however, boys may fail to experience positive relationships with males. They then may get guidance from television and the streets—both inadequate substitutes for a caring family. However, generally speaking, prior to age six, most young boys and girls learn to interact with their peers without male dominance. Their early experience of respect and cooperation provides a basis for learning future equality-based relationships.

While families provide opportunities for cross-gender respect, they seldom provide opportunities for cross-racial respect. Most U.S. neighborhoods, cities, and families are segregated by race and culture. Most of our cities are more racially segregated in 1990 than they were in 1960 (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitie, 1997). Too many of our young children do not develop an intimate, loving, caring relationship with persons of other races.

The teaching profession remains female dominated and racially segregated (National Education Association, 2002). As a result, too few young students have a positive relationship with a teacher from a minority ethnic group. The lack of this intimate, perception-shaping experience makes learning mutual respect and cooperation in cross-cultural relationships more difficult. Some children learn to fear the “other,” the outsider. This fear establishes a basis for future learning of prejudice.

The lack of cultural diversity in the upbringing and schooling of young children hits the children of minority cultures hardest. When African American, Vietnamese, or Latina girls enter school, they enter a new culture, often one where they are regarded as “other,” “different,” and “inferior.” The shock may be profound. Some of these children may suddenly feel uncertain about themselves and become withdrawn or defensive. Their ability to learn also suffers. Too often failure and frustration in school attacks a student’s self-image and distorts her view of her home culture (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1994; Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Young girls (and boys) of color usually first experience an inferior, castelike status in their neighborhood school.

Entering school is a major, traumatic event in the lives of many girls (and boys) from these cultures. The average African American or Latina student enters school a few months behind her middle-class counterparts in skill development and remains behind for the next 12 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Although school may not be the primary source of this society’s oppressions, it is often the institution where tracking, labeling, and failing first occur.

Oakes (1988) documents the negative results of tracking African American and Latina youths away from college-bound classes and into general classes, homemaking, and business courses. Evidence indicates that Catholic schools track Latinas
less than do public schools (Oakes, 1985) and that tracking remains a problem for
Latinas in public schools (Ginorio & Huston, 2001).

Research on European American Girls

School failure and intrusion are substantially different for European American girls
than for members of racial and linguistic minorities. Studies by Sadker et al. (1989)
and others (which focus mainly on European American girls) show that gender-based
bias in school is significant and powerful. Some schools still track girls to mothering
roles and boys to college. In the 1980s and 1990s, girls scored lower than boys on
some math and science measures, but by 2000 these differences have been virtually
erased (NCES, 2001).

In the primary grades, the oppression of girls takes different forms. The average
girl enters school academically ahead of boys her age and remains ahead (as mea-
sured by grades and test scores) through the elementary grades (AAUW, 1992). The
major problems of school achievement for these girls occur after they leave the
predominantly female turf of elementary schools.

A multiracial perspective on gender and student achievement leads to distinctly
different conclusions for students of color. Unlike students of color, young Euro-
pean American girls normally do not come to school and encounter a new environ-
ment run by “others.” These girls go from a usually female-centered home culture
to a female-centered school culture. Schools and teachers have positive expectations
for them. Young, middle-class European American girls do not encounter the sub-
stantially destructive attacks on their gender that young minority children (male or
female) encounter on their culture. When students share class, race, and gender
with the teacher or the counselor, they are usually encouraged to “become the best
they can be.” Female students from several minority cultures encounter the oppres-
sion of race and class in school.

Fortunately, gender-role stereotyping in schools is decreasing, but it remains a
problem (Title IX at 30, 2002). The efforts to reduce gender stereotyping among
teachers create new questions about school achievement across cultural groups.

It is often boys who lack role models for the first six years of schooling, particu-
larly African American, Latino, and Asian boys. Whereas European American girls
benefit from their female-centered primary school experience, children of color—
particularly boys—fail. It is boys who encounter the most conflicts, receive the most
punishments in school, and most often get placed in special education and remedial
programs (Sadker et al., 1989).

The positive school experiences of girls begin to change in adolescence. The teenage
years in our society are a time of redefining self and roles. Young girls and boys who
were once self-confident now search for new identities. Earlier self-definitions shift. For
many teenagers, belonging to a group becomes a major goal. Young people look to
their peers for guidance through these difficult and troubling years.
Schoolgirls, at least those European American girls studied, suffer significant declines in self-esteem as they move from childhood to adolescence.

A nationwide study commissioned by the AAUW in 1990 found that on average 69 percent of elementary school boys and 60 percent of elementary school girls reported that they were "happy the way I am"; among high school students, the percentages were 46 percent for boys and only 29 percent for girls.

The AAUW survey revealed sharp differences in self-esteem among girls from different racial and ethnic groups. Among elementary school girls, 55 percent of white girls, 65 percent of black girls, and 68 percent of Hispanic girls reported being "happy the way I am." But in high school, agreement statements came from only 22 percent of white girls and 30 percent of Hispanic girls, compared to 58 percent of black girls. However, these black girls did not have high levels of self-esteem in areas related to school success. Obviously, self-esteem is a complex construct, and further study of the various strengths and perspectives of girls from many different backgrounds is needed in order to design educational programs that benefit all girls. (AAUW, 1992, pp. 12–13)

Young girls who excelled in elementary school may begin to falter as they enter the middle grades (6 through 8). Particular concern has been expressed by teachers over the falling grades of girls in science and math (AAUW, 1992). One apparent reason for this is that young boys are often more assertive in class than girls and receive more teacher attention, both positive and negative. Gilligan (1982), in her groundbreaking work In a Different Voice, hypothesizes that many girls acquire feminine ways of learning and relating to others that are distinctly different from the behavior described as universal to boys and girls by psychologists. In critiquing prominent theories of moral behavior, she states, "While the truths of psychological theory have blinded psychologists to the truth of women's experience, that experience illuminates a world psychologists have found hard to trace" (p. 62). Another researcher, Tannen (1990), describes differences in communication styles learned by boys and girls. It is important to keep in mind that these roles, like all roles within cultures, are constantly changing.

The writing and research of feminist authors also provide important insights into classroom differences. Tavris (1992) systematically examines the research on differences between males and females and finds many assumptions and assertions to be overgeneralized beyond the available evidence. Her book, The Mismeasure of Woman, provides an excellent analysis of overinterpretation from limited data, criticizing work in learning styles and brain activity, as well as Gilligan's assumptions about value orientations and relationships. We must assume, until proven otherwise, that gender differences do not explain or cause differences in school achievement; these differences can be attributed to how teachers and schools treat children (Tannen, 1990; Tavris, 1992).

Early research by Dweck and her associates suggested that girls may learn "helplessness" in math based in part on teacher expectations and on how teachers respond to and evaluate student work. Teachers of either gender could unknowingly concentrate their responses to girls in a way that discourages intellectual effort, particularly in math (Dweck, 1977).
The most recent data we have is from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for 2000. In reading, girls consistently outperform boys at the fourth-grade level.

Years of effort and emphasis on closing the achievement gap for girls, encouraged by Title IX, may have produced significant change since the early research by Dweck.

Concerns continue about girls’ success in math. If you use the comparison “What percentage of students are at or above ‘proficient’ in math for their grade level?”, you get the data shown in Table 5.1. (Figures from NAEP 2000, latest available.)

Table 5.1 reveals a 4 percent to 6 percent advantage for boys in math proficiency as measured by this test.

When the same data is sorted by ethnicity, a different picture emerges. Among girls, the ranges shown in Table 5.2 occur.

The data in Table 5.2 reveals a very small advantage to boys at grade 12 in math (3 points) and a major difference among White/Black/Latino/Asian girls and boys on the same test. What conclusions do you draw from these differences?

It is in middle school, as adolescents, that many girls crash into cultural expectations, an emphasis on looks, and a perceived lack of power. Although most girls make it through adolescence and redefine themselves and their gender roles in healthy ways, too many end up with severe emotional problems.

As young people reach adolescence, they become much more interested in their peer relationships and more distant from their families. In early adolescence,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1</th>
<th>At or above “proficient” in math for their grade level in 2000, NAEP data.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2000 Mathematics Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among males</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you measure at or above proficient in eighth grade by ethnicity you get:

| Grade 8 | 35 | 6 | 10 | 41 |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2000 Mathematics Assessment
young people often struggle with family, wanting to be more with their peers. Their caregivers, parents, and teachers serve as models for how to interact with peers. Adolescents learn “appropriate” behavior from both their parents and their peer group.

In the last 30 years, we have witnessed a strong penetration of the home and school by popular culture, frequently observed in music and videos. Popular culture, such as music videos, also teach and model another proposal of “appropriate” dress and behavior, a model that has been dramatically sexualized since the 1970s. Now, people as young as 9, 10, and 11 are presented with open and confrontive sexuality, drugs, and violence as a normal and natural process. Young people, children, develop their identities with both the popular culture and the family cultural choices presented to them, and market forces are very strong (Leadbeater & Way, 1996).

In middle school and high school, when young women have a peak concern with appearance, some experience harassment for their looks and others are harassed because they avoid sexuality. Peer pressure can lead to drug use, early sexual relations, and leaving school. School can be a harsh and difficult world to negotiate. Depression and eating disorders are frequent introductions to crises. Young women need coaches and support during this time (Pipher, 1994). We discuss this further in Chapter 6.

Feminist researchers have developed the concept of “silenced voices” among students. Fine (1993), in her study of a major New York City high school, found that systematic “silencing” of girls’ voices (by not respecting their opinions) helped teachers to preserve an ideology of equal opportunity while in fact the schooling practices reinforced inequality. Fine’s research offers dramatic examples of the conflict between what some teachers want to pursue as democratic goals and the reality of public school experiences.

At the high school level, teachers’ discomfort with discussion of sexual issues prevented the school from serving as a source of valid and valuable information, so girls turned elsewhere, to the streets, for information. The work Urban Girls, Resisting Stereotypes, Creating Identities (1996) deals with the multiple struggles of girls from diverse racial/ethnic and cultural groups.

When schools refuse to deal with the urgent issues of young women—contraception, sexuality, and so on—some women choose to leave school (Fine, 1993).

By high school, girls begin to make career choices. Influenced in part by the ideology of movies, television, teen magazines, and popular culture, some—not all—young women learn to prefer nonacademic, unchallenging classes. They come to regard intellectually rigorous classes as “unfeminine.” Faludi (1991) describes this as an “undeclared war” on women and feminism, arguing that some current counseling practices continue to track girls to become nurses rather than doctors, legal secretaries rather than lawyers, elementary school teachers rather than college professors. The American Association of University Women reports that between 40 percent and 50 percent of female dropouts leave school because they are pregnant (AAUW, 1992). Their childcare responsibilities sharply limit their future economic opportunities. Later, deprived of a quality education, they will find themselves laboring long hours doing unfulfilling work for low pay in a gender-stratified workforce (Title IX at 30, 2002).
The Lure of the Beauty Myth

Many girls and young women become preoccupied with their personal image and their relationships with others. Later, by high school, this becomes the "beauty and romance" myth. Television and popular media teach that a girl can achieve success, defined as marriage and wealth, by becoming beautiful and shrewdly using her sexual powers.

Wolf (1991) discusses the destructive effects of the beauty industry and its ideology. As she describes in The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women, the myth is that girls do not need to prepare for a career; they can just be beautiful and become a model, a star, or at least a mother. (The male equivalent of this myth is to plan to become a major league sports figure and make millions of dollars.)

Girls who are heavily represented in Advanced Placement and higher track classes usually have a number of ways to express and to represent themselves and are less likely to buy the "beauty hype." For example, these girls may be in band, dance, sports, clubs, and/or student government. On the other hand, African American girls and Latinas are underrepresented in these classes and usually have fewer school-based support systems to contend against the corporate beauty barrage. African American girls and Latinas are, at the same time, less represented in the ads and promotions of the beauty culture.

The Sexualization of Girlhood

The popular culture teaches girls contradictory messages about womanhood and sexuality, and masks the violent images that are permeated against them. The media disseminates a vast number of messages about identity and acceptable forms of self-expression, gender, sexuality, and lifestyle (Gauntlett, 2002), while the adolescent culture often also yields inaccurate and uninformed expectations about sexuality. Further complicating the realities of gender messages are societal conditions that girls are raised in: growing divorce rates, chemical addictions, casual sex, and violence against women—all have had a profound impact on the development of women's roles.

Dr. Mary Pipher's study of adolescent girls, Reviving Ophelia (Pipher, 1994), examines the challenges of young women growing up in a looks-obsessed, media-saturated, "girl-poisoning" culture. Increasingly, girls have been sexualized and objectified in every facet of the popular culture—advertising, movies, music videos, and video games, leaving few protected spaces for them to claim a true and wholesome identity.

Wolf (1991) argues that girls' self-esteem may be predicated on being admired by boys, usually for their physical beauty or sexual availability. Adolescents become increasingly influenced by their peer culture as they begin to form a stable identity. And vulnerability to peer groups generally peaks in early adolescence and remains important as individuals move through high school into young adulthood. Lack of knowledge and awareness of one's sexual identity makes one more susceptible to
peer pressure. This realization peaks in adolescence during a time when middle school girls sense their lack of power in a society but generally are unable to articulate what they sense.

Powerlessness goes undefined, yet it is enacted in their daily, lived experiences based on expectations that are externally created. According to Pipher (1994), "bright and sensitive girls" are most likely to understand the implications of the media around them and be alarmed, yet they lack the cognitive, emotional, and social skills to handle this information. "They struggle to resolve the unresolvable and to make sense of the absurd" (p. 43). Less perceptive girls miss the meaning in sexist ads, music, and shows entirely, thereby aiding their subordination in a consumer-based society that capitalizes off their experiences.

How do young girls cope? Pipher (1994) identifies four general coping styles that girls display: conformity, withdrawal, depression, or anger. All of these strategies can be debilitating without adequate intervention from people who can help them analyze the culture pressures and to reclaim a sense of self-worth.

Pressure to fit in with the peer group expectations and norms has a cost. For example, a recent study conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a corporation for reproducing health research, policy analysis, and public education, found that the younger women are when they have intercourse, the more likely they are to have had unwanted or nonvoluntary sex. (Guttmacher, 1999) Many young women try too hard to fit the mold—to be slender, feminine and perfect; to fit a false male-imposed expectation. They have been trained to be what the culture wants of its women, not what women want for them.

The "girl power" rhetoric of the nineties ushered in the image of sassy, self-empowered women through mainstream music artists like the Spice Girls and Destiny's Child. These female pop stars sing about financial and emotional independence; they simply do not need men to define their sense of self, while at the same time, the music lyrics of Jay-Z talk about women in derogatory manners and highlight women's preoccupation with providing sex for money and material goods.

The contradictory roles of female portrayals continue as network television provides young girls with generations of female models whose achievement is defined through traditional roles such as marriage, and advertisers and script writers who continue to present women in violent and degrading scenes (Fitzell, 1997).

More recently feminists have examined the oversexualization of womanhood and ultimately girlhood. The video culture as promoted by enterprises such as MTV (Music Television) and BET (Black Entertainment Television) often suggests a point of view about female sexuality. Holroyd (1985) concluded that portrayals of teens on television are often distorted and overemphasize sexuality, that television has become increasingly sexual, and that MTV has become overtly sexual. Moreover, Media and Values (1989, Spring, No. 2) edition has examined the skewed messages that media teaches adolescents through videos about sexuality and its consequences.

Today's music videos of hip-hop artists such as R. Kelly (a married man who was recently brought up on allegations of sexual misconduct with a 14-year-old girl), rap artist Jay-Z, and rock artists Kid Rock and Blink 182, have all used women as
objects in their music. Recently, the female vixen persona, as seen through mainstream pop icons such as Britney Spears, Janet Jackson, Jennifer Lopez, Lil' Kim, and a decade earlier, Madonna, has captured the attention of both adolescent males and females through provocative dress, sex appeal, and selection of hair and makeup.

Hansen and Hansen (1988) found that watching rock music videos increased the accessibility of the sex-role stereotype schema. Given that adolescents' television viewing averages five to eight hours a day, their access to negative gender role images in heightened. McGhee and Fruesh (1980) studied the relationship between time spent viewing television and their knowledge of adult sex-role stereotypes. Not surprisingly, the researchers concluded that heavy viewers tended to have more stereotyped perceptions than did light viewers of television.

Other researchers have chronicled research about sex-role stereotypes in media (Kilbourne, 1999). Kilbourne concluded that television viewing makes an independent contribution to adolescents' sex-role attitude over time given that the average American is exposed to more than 3,000 advertisements a day and watches three years' worth of television ads over the course of a lifetime. Kilbourne suggests that this barrage of advertising drastically affects young people, especially girls, by offering a distorted reality about women's lives and portrayals in popular culture.

In addition, she argues that there is a reciprocal relationship between the amount of television viewing and the degree of congruence between sex-role attitudes and behavior. Consequently, the amount of television viewing, coupled with what adolescents learn from their families about media sexuality, are the strongest determinants of how young people's behavior is affected by the popular cultural images (Childers & Brown, 1989; Kilbourne, 1999). Newcomer and Brown's (1984) study found a strong and significant relationship between the amount of sexually oriented television programs watched (as a proportion of all television viewed) and the probability of an adolescent's having had intercourse.

Given the power of media's negative messages about women, young girls must be educated to recognize and reject their socialization. This begins by teaching young people to understand how media and our culture impacts our thinking, in order to gain self-knowledge and to develop their total capabilities. Only when this occurs can we help young women to make conscious choices about who they are and what they want, rather than subconsciously conform to society's expectations (Fitzell, 1997).

Young women need models in their lives that display assertiveness, strength, self-pride, and social responsibility. They need to see women in their lives who value their self-worth and their self-image, and men who respect and validate self-confident women. In a world captivated with fashion advertising, media hype, the music and video pop culture, and gender stereotypes, girls need tangible female models who base their self-worth on who they are and not what society says they should be.

Positive television viewing could help to counterbalance negative images. For example, cable networks such as the Disney Channel, UPN, PBS Kids, Nickelodeon, and Fox Family each provide positive programming that is appropriate for young viewers and teens.
Television, film, and print media and the culture of consumerism often shape teenage girls’ worldview more than does their school experience. For many, the shopping mall is the campus of choice.

**Media Literacy**

Issues such as violence against women and girls, eating disorders, coping with grief and loss, date rape, the rising rate of HIV/AIDS in teen populations, and the impact of teen pregnancy on girls’ mobility must be integrated into classroom discussions and into school-based educational programs. Teachers can have young people write letters to magazine editors and advertisers to let them know that they are offended by an ad. Young people can also be encouraged to boycott products whose advertising is offensive.

Many online resources provide rich and age-appropriate information to use for classroom discussions on these issues. *Ms.* magazine is one source that is at the forefront of exposing media stereotypes and helping young people learn about issues that affect women everywhere. In addition, FEMedia online provides a site where girls can read about how the world views and defines women and girls. This site provides a bulletin board where questions are posted and young people are able to express their views on issues. The site posts articles on a wide variety of topics. Recently featured were articles explaining how women and children are being sold as slaves in the United States to work as prostitutes and servants, another article talked about gender apartheid in Afghanistan, and another explained the problems with “Bride-Price” in India and how this has led to the burning of women. Teachers can construct classroom bulletin boards encouraging students to anonymously post their ideas about issues. This sharing can then be used as a springboard for weekly discussions on contemporary topics.

Another web site, [http://www.girlzone.com](http://www.girlzone.com) is a resource where teachers can access girl-centered information on topics such as college, careers, health-related issues, sports participation, and summer reading lists. The site also provides opportunities for teens to post messages on topics that are important to them, and the staff has committed to respond to all girl’s inquiries and questions.

Teachers can also integrate meaningful and relevant biographical and nonfiction reading about women and girls into classroom content.

In *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century*, Hechinger (1992) gives numerous examples of school-based health clinics providing important information to young adolescents. Although conservatives have attacked such clinics as interfering in the parents’ role, the authors of the present chapter believe that it is better to not have 11- to 14-year-old girls getting pregnant and encountering sexually transmitted diseases. We prefer that young women grow beyond 16 before having children. To make it through adolescence without birthing children requires that young women and men clarify their own views on sex and sexuality and that they be taught adult decision-making skills.
Adolescence is a time of high risk. Peer pressure to participate in sexual relationships at a young age has grown significantly in the last 20 years. Young women need self-confidence and support from others to protect themselves from the peer pressure and the sexual harassment they encounter in school (Rotheram-Borus, et al., 1996).

When questioned, young women report that the peer pressure to engage in sex by both boys and girls, and their own desire to love someone and to be loved, leads to sexual behavior and pregnancy (Hechinger, 1992; Pipher, 1994). Early pregnancy and childbirth lead many to leave school and face subsequent lifelong poverty. For some, early pregnancy is an introduction to a life of abuse and behavioral problems that are then passed on to their children (Children’s Defense Fund, 2001).

Not all young people become interested in sex at age 11, or 12, or 14, or even 16. Interest in sex is a result of a complex series of social, psychological, biological, and cultural events. In our society, television, magazines, and movies regularly define being female as to “grow up” fast, to have breasts, to have a boyfriend, and to become sexually active. Many young people are pressured to be sexual—and to be sexually active—while they would still prefer the safety of early adolescence (Pipher, 1994; Kilbourne, 1999). Girls and boys, particularly in middle schools, deserve the support of empathetic teachers, counselors, and parents in their times of changing identities (CDF, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

Sexual behavior, particularly by the very young, has severe consequences (Pipher, 1994). Sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise. AIDS due to unprotected sex and drug abuse presents a serious crisis. Sexual education could be included in several areas of the curriculum, including literature, science, health education, and social studies. English literature classes, for example, could use stories or poems dealing with teenage sexuality. Role-playing of peer pressure and writing journal entries can further explore these themes.

Assisting Young Women

Women teachers, with their own role identity clear, can assist young women by serving as mentors, encouragers, and providing a sounding board for young women's role and gender questions. Teachers, counselors, coaches, librarians, and nurses have opportunities to establish trusting and helping relations with these young women. If a teacher acts in a trusting and friendly way, and respects students’ confidences, she will attract students who are looking for support, a smile, and a person with whom they can talk. Often a teacher’s small gestures of encouragement and expressions of interest and support can change a student’s direction (see Figure 5.1). (See also the discussion on coaching in Chapter 7.)

Teachers can be the first to notice such crisis signs as bulimia or anorexia, and to ask for the assistance of the school nurse or counselor. Teachers can bring out into open discussion the commercial overemphasis on looks, dress, and being thin that
Figure 5.1 A Teacher Inspires a Student

Maria’s family moved, so she was forced to change schools in sixth grade. She was shy, and insecure about her abilities. Her new teacher, Miss Vernon, taught both English and Spanish classes. She was gentle and encouraged Maria’s comments, even though Maria spoke softly and avoided attention. Miss Vernon smiled and encouraged her with comments, a touch on the shoulder, and support.

One day Miss Vernon stood next to Maria’s desk and handed her an English paper with a large gold seal on it. She smiled and said, “Maria, you are a smart girl.” Maria felt warm, glowing, and proud. This small event continues to inspire Maria to this day. She went on to college and is now a teacher herself. Whenever she faces a difficult problem, a confusing assignment, she remembers the encouragement and the faith that Miss Vernon had in her.

endangers some young women’s lives. They can also be aware of signs of abuse, bruises, cuts, or broken bones. The pressure that some girls feel to “have a boyfriend” may include staying with a person who is possessive and abusive. In this situation, girls need to talk with a teacher. Teachers can refer the young people to a local Women’s Center. You can initiate these discussions by placing a Domestic Violence poster in your room, or by handing out the business cards of a responsible center. To keep current on these issues we recommend Ms. magazine. Many adolescent girls respond to their natural body growth with an unwarranted fear of weight gain.

Young girls are dieting and skipping meals far too often for good health. Schools cannot change the commercial media’s emphasis on the “perfect” image, but they can promote a healthy balance of personality development, learning social skills, good health, and physical fitness. Friendly teachers can advise young women on dress and makeup, to counter the sometimes bizarre messages of magazines and television, thus helping students to develop healthy self-confidence.

The feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s affected many teachers’ views of themselves and of their roles as advocates for young girls. Weiler (1988) argues that feminist sociologists constructed a new way of looking at school success and girls’ resistance. Her work offers a detailed analysis of how several female teachers experienced gender issues. These teachers were committed to working with their students to challenge traditional gender roles. They each had a strong sense of social justice and drew from their commitment in selecting teaching strategies. Many believed that they, themselves, had suffered professionally as a result of the prior generation’s rigid gender roles. In this study, each teacher’s own sense of self, her view of her own relationship to feminist goals, was an important factor in her selection of instructional strategies.
Sexual Orientation

Friend (1993) argues that our schools and society have

a systematic set of institutional and cultural arrangements that reward and privilege people
for being or appearing to be heterosexual, and establish potential punishments or lack of
privilege for being or appearing to be homosexual. (p. 211)

Adolescents face many crises of identity. Some young people, about 10 percent,
face a conflict between their emerging sexual orientation and the socially approved
norm (Friend, 1993). Deciding on or accepting a sexual orientation other than the
socially approved one involves a number of social, psychological, and personality
conflicts. Recognizing homosexual orientation can provoke crises in students’ lives.
Students who acknowledge and exhibit homosexual behaviors are often subject to
assault, harassment, and violence in school. (Gipson, 2002) Violence toward homo-
sexual students is a major problem for some students, and it deserves to be dealt
with in the same manner as other hate crimes (Friend, 1993).

When students face such troubling decisions as whether to acknowledge or hide
their sexual orientation, they need to talk with adults, with teachers, and with coun-
selors. When the curriculum silences any student voices and omits coverage of sexual
orientation issues, the vulnerable students are left on their own. Failing or leaving
school, or even considering suicide, are among the consequences of some schools’
unwillingness to stop sexual violence. In addition to protection, students need
opportunities to think and rethinks their emotions, feelings, and decisions (Reveles,
2000). Human relations lessons on name-calling and homophobia provide opportu-
nities for students to explore identity conflicts.

The school environment can be made more accepting. Some middle schools have
clubs with sponsored activities. Sexual orientation is a sensitive issue, because stu-
dents are often unsure of themselves and may not have come out to friends and
family. This is more volatile in adolescence when identity and acceptance are such
important issues. (Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Reveles, 2000). Students who do
acknowledge an orientation other than heterosexual are too often harassed and
intimidated by classmates (Gipson, 2002). It is helpful if there are community agen-
cies or support groups that can help the student and their families think through
these issues and provide counseling, social activities, and support groups.

Limited Choices for Non-College-Bound Women

Until recently the typical U.S. high school has had little to offer non-college-bound
female students in the way of technical and professional preparation. Business
courses, for example, offered little more than secretarial training.

The conservative school reform movement (1982–2002) sought to reestablish a
common academic curriculum for all students in high school. Schools concentrated
their time, energy, and funds on improving academic programs. Opportunities for
college-bound students improved. But in their emphasis on academic excellence, these professional class reformers neglected vocational preparation—a critical omission at a time when job opportunities and the skills needed to take advantage of them were rapidly changing. Thus the post–high school opportunities of non-college-bound students became more restricted than ever (Weis, 1988, 1990).

In 1994, the U.S. Congress passed, and President Clinton signed, the School to Work Opportunities Act (PL 103–239) to encourage states and local schools to develop new, high-technology programs to help students move from school to employment. The Law was supplemented in 1998 by the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. At present, states should have developed and implemented their own school-to-work programs. While states vary widely in their commitment to improving school-to-work opportunities, in general this segment of education has been desperately underfunded since the 1980s. Working-class students, who are not going on to college, often do not receive equal opportunities in secondary schools.

School-to-work programs offer preparation for the new knowledge-based economy to students as part of their high school and community college preparation. Well-developed programs motivate students to remain in school by providing them with workplace experience and introducing them to the adult world of work (see Figure 5.2). School-to-work counselors assist students to explore new,

**Figure 5.2  A School-to-Work Success Story**

Noemi was a troubled teenager. She daily considered leaving school. She was sexually involved and feared that she was pregnant. Her group of friends was into drugs, gang activity, and frequent petty crime. Her grade-point average was 1.5, and she missed more than 20 days of school each semester.

Then, a school-to-work counselor got her a position working in food preparation and catering. The work schedule forced her to be on time and to improve her cleanliness habits. Entering the world of work gave Noemi a feeling of maturity, an exit from her adolescent troubles. Her circle of friends changed as she worked daily and met new people, many of them more mature and with a sense of purpose.

She says, “I feel that I am more prepared for work than the college-bound students. I work in a real hospital, with real patients, employees, and customers. Every day I am learning something new.

“For me, getting an education now means more than just going to school. This program (school-to-work) has really helped me to focus. Now I want to finish high school and go on to college.”
emerging industries for their career choices. Equity efforts in school-to-work programs should include preparing girls for high-technology-based positions (Title IX at 30, 2002).

Teachers can assist students in taking advantage of school and work opportunities by sharing their own life histories and by encouraging young women to get a good education. Young women 16 to 18 years old often look mature and dress in an adult manner. Many even engage in adult sexual behavior. Yet their consciousness of the reality of the working world remains underdeveloped.

Feminist scholarship argues that girls benefit in school from assistance in developing self-confidence, rather than relying on beauty images (Erkut, Fields, Sing, & Marx, 1996). Girls should receive praise for their intellectual work, not for their conformity and obedience to marketed images of women. All young women need to be encouraged to pursue a well-rounded, rigorous education. Female teachers sharing experiences from their own lives validate the experiences of younger women.

Often neither the working class students nor their families understand the entry points for professions. Working as a nurse’s aide or a teacher’s aide places career alternatives in front of the students while they earn money. And the career world places them in daily contact with a number of adults and encourages adultlike behavior, such as preparing for the future.

Students appear to understand the system but do not. Few, for example, know that it takes five years to be a teacher, or that most doctoral study is financed. We regularly encounter teenagers who do not know that tuition at state schools is very different than at private colleges.

Or other teenagers who pay thousands of dollars for training in a career or technical institute when the same preparation is available at the local community college for one-tenth of the cost. Most young people do not know the economics of jobs and careers. Teachers can ally with the students by helping with these immediate issues. If they do not know these basic issues, then they certainly do not know more subtle issues.

The number of high school (and college) students who work has tripled since the 1970s. Work hours and school assignments are often in conflict, with work winning out. Students, of course, are affected by the consumer culture and the beauty myth as advanced on MTV, television, and radio. Young girls and boys know that self-esteem is often measured by what you own, the clothes you wear, the car you drive, the newest cell phone.

One consequence of this extreme materialism is to leave school for work. Many young people work, not to contribute to their family, but to compete in this material world. Results include lower course grades, less homework turned in, less participation in extracurricular events, and less commitment to schooling itself.

Sharing adds a mature view to questions of consumerism, career choice, and sexual role. In Chapter 6, we present further suggestions and strategies on developing positive self-esteem.

The new high-skills economy demands that students acquire both academic knowledge and workplace skills. School-to-work placements help students to earn
money and to see the immediate application of their school courses. Worksites provide interesting, relevant, and paid experiences to encourage young women toward further training, two-year colleges, and quality entry-level jobs. Often work placement is a major motivation for students, and effective programs provide a guided transition from adolescence to adulthood.

**Gender, Race, and Class**

The importance of gender issues can change from one generation to the next and is culture-specific. It is often difficult or impossible to separate race, class, and gender discrimination, because the oppressions interact with each other. Research on the school behavior of girls and young women of color was notably absent until recently. Most researchers have assumed that young girls have similar experiences across cultures (Leadbeater & Way, 1996).

Women of color have gained university positions and political leadership in recent decades and have turned their research skills to documenting the conflicts faced by African American, Latina, and working-class girls in schools. Weis and Fine (1993) have documented some of the ways young women face and react to sex education in high schools, collecting powerful essays that begin to move beyond the more restricted early research boundary of European American women.

A particular concern has been voiced concerning the destructive impact on African American children, particularly boys, of common public school practices such as negating children's home cultures and using biased assessment methods, usually carried out in elementary schools by female European American teachers. Researchers King, Foster, Ladson-Billings, and others have documented several basic issues facing African American girls and boys in classrooms in *Teaching Diverse Populations: Formulating a Knowledge Base* (Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994). They have suggested characteristics and tendencies in the African American culture that teachers can use as background information to reduce the cultural conflicts in the classroom and to improve student achievement. The excellent work *Urban Girls Resisting Stereotypes, Creating Identities* (1996) offers a needed balance to the earlier limited research.

The predominantly European American teaching profession needs such research to begin to understand the diverse classroom roles of girls and boys within specific cultures. For example, young Latinas who succeed often have supportive parents, particularly mothers (Gándara, 1995). These insights support the importance of schools offering programs to develop parental support for education and for attending college. (Gándara, 1995; Ginorio & Huston, 2001) One persistent social myth is that women do most of the work in the home and men do most of the work outside the home. Amott and Matthaei (1991) provide a multicultural history of how farm and working-class women have labored for wages in increasing numbers since
the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the United States in the 1840s. The great historical and social events of the twentieth century—the Great Depression (1929–1939), the shift from a rural to an urban society, the worker shortages caused by World War II—brought even more women into the paid labor force. More recently, the economic stagnation that began in the 1970s has produced a dramatic increase in the number of middle-class women entering the paid workforce (see Figure 5.3). Although more than 50 percent of all women of color have been in the paid labor force since the 1950s, since the 1970s more than 50 percent of all women over age 16 have worked for wages (Amott & Matthaei, 1991). According to the AFL-CIO,

More women are working than ever before. And they’re looking for solutions to the problems of juggling work and family, making ends meet and finding respect and opportunity on the job.... Over the past century, women workers have grown steadily in number and as a proportion of the workforce.

- The number of working women has grown from 5.3 million in 1900 to 18.4 million in 1950 and to 66 million in 2001.
- Women made up 18.3 percent of the labor force in 1900, 29.6 percent in 1950 and 46.6 percent in 1997 (AFL-CIO, 2002).

In the United States, many women of color must assume extra responsibilities to protect and advance their community’s interests. African American women, for

Figure 5.3  Women’s Share of the Labor Force, 1870–1997

![Graph showing the percentage of women in the labor force from 1870 to 1997.](Source: Fact about Working Women. AFL-CIO. Available at www.AFL-CIO.org/women/wwfacts.htm. Used with permission.)
example, are often looked to as the centers of strength and the source of leadership within their communities. Perhaps because they are regarded by the macrourulture as less threatening than African American men, African American women may be less impeded and more accepted as they assume positions of responsibility in their communities or seek career advancement in the professional world. West (1993b) describes the fear of black men and the acceptance of African American women as in part a result of "psychosexual racist logic." Yet many African American women are well-prepared for their role as economic providers. Many African societies had strong female leadership. Slavery forced a matrifocal family structure on the African American community. The women of many African American families have drawn strength from this long tradition of female leadership.

Latinas share many of the racially based economic burdens of African American women, including the responsibility to care for the elderly and for extended families. Strong female leadership was also common in many Mesoamerican societies prior to the Spanish conquest. Currently, matrifocal family structures have developed in Mexico in response to the migration of millions of male farm workers to labor in U.S. agricultural fields. Most Mexican American and Latino families in the United States remain patriarchal, similar to those in the dominant European American society (for more on this complex issue, see Gándara, 1995; García, 2000; Ramirez & Castañeda, 1974; Váldes, 1996). Girls and young women have paid a price for this continued patriarchy, lagging behind African American women in entrance into college and professional schools until the 1990s (Ginorio & Houston, 2001).

The oppression of African American, Latina, and some rural European American women has taught them to work in cooperative communities. Families take care of the elderly, care for children troubled by divorce and abandonment, and take extended family members (cousins, aunts, etc.) into their homes. In these communities, women serve on school–parent advisory councils and keep churches functioning. Women are the primary social service providers in these communities.

School curricula should acknowledge and recognize the extensive contributions of women to the community's health. The female-centered home and community provide a rich and extensive breadth of background knowledge on which to build an educational curriculum. Moll, Vélez-Ibañez, and Greenberg (1992) assert that children gain when classrooms draw on this community knowledge and use it to advance literacy instruction. Multicultural education is important in this context because curriculum and literacy efforts should give more emphasis to women's contributions to provide role models for female students and to counterbalance the devaluation of women by the media and by the patriarchal traditions of the macroculture.

Although European American women have attended colleges since the 1840s, and African American women have had access to the traditionally Black colleges that rose up in the South after Reconstruction, substantial numbers of other women of color did not gain access to higher education until the 1970s. The development of both ethnic studies and women's studies on campuses has opened new doors of
scholarship and expression. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, hooks (1994) offers several powerful essays on how race, class, and gender interact in the classroom.

An outpouring of African American, Latina, Native American, and Asian women writers has redefined women's sphere in the United States to include women of color. Amy Tan, Gloria Anzaldúa, Maya Angelou, bell hooks, Olivia Castellano, Paula Gunn Allen, Wilma Mankiller, Marian Wright Edelman, and others provide insights into the diverse voices and insights of the many peoples of our nation.

**Title IX and Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action programs since the 1970s have been effective in promoting women and in breaking down traditional rigid gender roles in many universities. Currently, college-bound students benefit from changing work opportunities and the victories of the feminist movement. There are now more women doctors, lawyers, and college professors than ever before. In 1994, women received 38 percent of medical degrees, compared with 9 percent in 1972; 43 percent of law degrees, compared with 7 percent in 1972; and 44 percent of all doctoral degrees, compared to 25 percent in 1977. Women now make up the majority of the students in U.S. colleges and universities and make up the majority of recipients of master’s degrees (Women’s Equity Resource Center, 1997).

Women’s studies, apprenticeship programs, and mentoring have opened important new opportunities. Title IX (1972) describes the federal commitment to equal gender treatment in matters of federal assistance:

> No person . . . shall, on the basis of sex, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to, discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance....

**Title IX** was authored by U.S. Representatives Edith Green (Oregon) and Patsy Mink (Hawaii). As a result of the passage of Title IX in 1972, the role of women and girls in education has changed substantially. Title IX prohibits sexual discrimination and sexual harassment in educational institutions receiving federal funds. The act prohibits discrimination in recruitment, educational programs, activities, financial aid, counseling, athletics, employment assistance, and other school functions.

Special programs provide additional counseling and encouragement for Latinas and African American women to attend college (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Well-educated young women are choosing careers as doctors, attorneys, and politicians. As yet, however, the benefits and advantages of the feminist revolution of the 1970s are less apparent in the school lives and career opportunities of the 50 percent of women high school graduates who do not go on to college.

In spite of Title IX, we still see female students overtracked to classes in cosmetology, whereas boys take advance computer and information technology programs (Gaines, AAUW, 2002).
Many school districts now provide continuing education through alternative schools for the increasing number of pregnant middle school and high school students. It is particularly important that these students receive quality academic and technology preparation to give the students an equal chance at success in world of work (Title IX at 30, 2002).

**Women's Story in the Textbooks**

Although feminist scholarship has made strides in the university, this progress is only beginning to have a significant impact on public school textbooks. Tetreault (1989) and Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981) have written about the invisibility and fragmentation of women’s history, particularly women of color, in literature and text illustrations.

Some progress is being made. Publishers have started to delete linguistic bias and to use gender-neutral terms. States are requiring that texts move beyond depicting women in stereotypical roles. The National Women’s History Project has developed excellent new materials to overcome this invisibility.

Students seem to develop self-esteem and a sense of being socially centered when they see their role models in books and other educational materials. Women’s literature, history, and sociology assist female students in evaluating their own experiences and traumas. Readings in these areas can help young women gain perspective on the pressures of surrendering self and goals for temporary status and temporary relationships. Social history and popular histories record the extensive participation of women in building our communities, public schools, and social institutions. Readings from the era in which the “cult of true womanhood” was promoted (1800–1860) help students to reflect on how public images and role models can promote profit-seeking rather than developing human potential. Readings from the Progressive Era (1890–1920) help students to see how immigrant women organized unions and (European American) women made significant advances in attending colleges and entering the professions.

The curriculum should be authentic, realistic, and inspirational. Reform requires more than adding a few new heroines to existing textbooks. The writings and speeches of Dolores Huerta, Fannie Lou Hamer, Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Marian Wright Edelman, and others are important additions to the curriculum.

Women students can keep journals to reflect on their own lives. Recording a journal helps young girls through times of doubt and insecurity, as does developing friendships. Teenage girls can learn to accept themselves as they are and build a positive future instead of dreaming of cosmetic makeovers.

Young women also gain from learning about the leadership and activism of women in their communities. Working-class women and women of color have raised families and survived. They have created a positive life for their children. Presenting guest speakers from the community teaches that average, normal people run unions, institutions, and essential community organizations. Guest speakers bridge the gap between the school and adult reality. The curriculum empowers and motivates students when it presents hope and optimism without presenting a superwoman model of accomplishment.
Wilbur (1992) states that a gender-fair curriculum has six attributes:

1. *Variation*, that is, similarities and differences among and within groups of people
2. *Inclusive*, allowing both females and males to find and identify positively with messages about themselves
3. *Accurate*, presenting information that is data-based, verifiable, and able to withstand critical analysis
4. *Affirmative*, acknowledging and valuing the worth of individuals and groups
5. *Representative*, balancing multiple perspectives
6. *Integrated*, weaving together the experiences, needs, and interests of both males and females

Wilbur and the AAUW (1992) report argue that so far no major curriculum reform efforts have explicitly used gender-fair approaches.

The AAUW report offers a list of more than 40 action items for change. Individual teachers may pursue the following 12 items from the list (AAUW, 1992):

1. Teachers must help girls develop positive views of themselves and their futures, as well as an understanding of the obstacles women must overcome in a society where their options and opportunities are still limited by gender stereotypes and assumptions.
2. The formal school curriculum must include the experiences of women and men from all walks of life. Girls and boys must see women and girls reflected and valued in the materials they study.
3. School curricula should deal directly with issues of power, gender politics, and violence against women. Better-informed girls are better equipped to make decisions about their futures. Girls and young women who have a strong sense of themselves are better able to confront violence and abuse in their lives.
4. Curricula for young children must not perpetuate gender stereotypes and should reflect sensitivity to different learning styles.
5. Girls must be educated and encouraged to understand that, mathematics and the sciences are important and relevant to their lives. Girls must be actively supported in pursuing education and employment in these areas.
6. Existing equity guidelines should be effectively implemented in all programs supported by the local, state, and federal governments.
7. Local schools and communities must encourage and support girls studying science and mathematics by showcasing women role models in scientific and technological fields, disseminating career information, and offering “hands-on” experiences and work groups in science and math classes.
8. Continued attention to gender equity in vocational education programs must be a high priority at every level of educational governance and administration. Have students discuss how gender roles are changing in their own generation.
9. Testing and assessment must serve as stepping-stones, not stop signs. New tests and testing techniques must accurately reflect the abilities of both girls and boys.

10. Girls and women must play a central role in educational reform. The experiences, strengths, and needs of girls from every race and social class must be considered in order to provide excellence and equity for all our nation's students.

11. A critical goal of education reform must be to enable students to deal effectively with the realities of their lives, particularly in areas such as sexuality and health.

12. Child care for the children of teen mothers must be an integral part of all programs designed to encourage young women to pursue or complete educational programs. (pp. 84–87)

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of feminist scholars, educators, and some textbook publishers, self-image and role stereotyping problems for girls continue (Title IX at 30, 2002). Clearly, schools and textbooks are less powerful in their influence than the commercial marketplace. They are no match for television programs and multimedia advertising campaigns of the popular youth culture. We are unlikely to make much progress on this front until large companies and the advertising agencies they hire cease to exploit sex and gender stereotyping for profit.

Teaching for Equity

Teachers may use several strategies to improve the success of girls in school. Cooperative and collaborative learning work well (see Chapter 10). Teachers can place students in small groups of six to eight to listen and work together for part of the curriculum.

Girls and young women can be assigned the status of experts on a given topic and make presentations to the class. Students can learn to critique and improve the work of their group. Girls should have equal opportunity to be in charge or to assume responsibility in the classrooms. This generation has many young women who are experts on computers, microscopes, and other forms of technology. Effective teachers place young women in high-status positions as appropriate.

Many teachers have found success by emphasizing young women's verbal and written communication strengths. Girls often do well on assignments of journal writing. Keeping journal records of their observations in science, history, and biology may produce more success for girls. Establishing a positive, trusting relationship with your students is the first step. This is the subject of Chapter 6.

Teachers can encourage girls to keep journals and to read literature about their many adolescent conflicts. They can make close and consistent contact with the home. Although home contact is frequent in elementary school, it usually declines in middle and high school. This decline in contact hurts students. Many adolescent girls and boys prefer to build a wall of separation between the home and the school. The break in communication allows them a space of liberty. However, the commu-
nication gap separates young women and men from the consistency of support they need from the adult world. Teachers can extend themselves to get to know families. You can refuse to be a party to young people’s attempts to build the wall between school and home.

You can find other excellent teaching ideas at the Website of the National Women’s History Project (www.nwhp.org/) and at www.edc.org/WomensEquity.

The Counterattack

In 1994, Congress passed revisions to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the two basic federal programs for schools. The decades of feminist scholarship—particularly the work of the AAUW—led to efforts to strengthen the gender-equity provisions of ESEA by allocating some $3 million in new money for gender-equity activities. A counterattack was launched by Diane Ravitch, former undersecretary of education during the Reagan and Bush administrations, and other critics of feminist and gender-based research. Ravitch claimed that the proposed allocation “takes as findings of Congress that all these flawed research claims were true” (quoted in Schmidt, 1994, p. 1). Senator Nancy Kassebaum argued against the legislation, saying that gender-inequity claims were “supported only by a small body of research which has questionable findings” (quoted in Schmidt, 1994, p. 16). Finally, Professor Joseph Adelson of the University of Michigan called the AAUW studies “a propaganda machine that does not seem to respond to any contrary evidence” (quoted in Schmidt, 1994, p. 16).

In 1996, California voters passed Proposition 209, which banned equal opportuni-
ty programs in the state. Conservatives claimed that affirmative action programs amounted to reverse discrimination. Conservative activists were able to cut the funding for major Title IX enforcement efforts (Title IX at 30, 2002).

The counterattack against claims of gender-based failure in school is growing. Like the attacks on multicultural education (see Chapter 12), critics accuse advocates of gender equity of promoting an ideology. (In the following two chapters, we discuss the role of ideology in shaping research perspectives and educational philosophies.)

This chapter concludes the social-political foundations underlying multicultural education. The emphasis in Part 2 shifts to concrete teaching strategies to help empower all cultural groups to seek cultural democracy.

Summary

Schools, particularly elementary schools, are primarily female institutions. Young girls do well in elementary school. Recent evidence in the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that girls are doing as well or better than boys in reading in grades 4, 8, and 12, and almost equal to boys in math in grades 4 and 8.

Gender issues interact with race, culture, and class to influence the development of young girls and boys. Gender stereotyping and sexual identity become
volatile issues in middle and high school. Girls need supportive teachers to deal with dangerous cultural practices, including sexual behavior and dieting. Students need adult assistance and guidance in these difficult years. Feminist research has been valuable in identifying problems and developing responses for teachers to use in making their classrooms more supportive.

Questions Over the Chapter

1. Define gender-role stereotyping.
2. How does your gender influence how you learn about culture?
3. Girls tend to be more successful than boys in school in grades K through 6, but many begin to encounter difficulties at Grade 7 and above. What factors contribute to this change?
4. List some ways schools may track girls. Why is this practice damaging? (Note that tracking’s effects may be either negative or positive.)
5. What is the “beauty myth?” How does it negatively impact girls?
7. What is the name of the primary federal legislation requiring gender-fair school policies?
8. What factors contribute to a “crisis of self-esteem” in middle and high schools?
9. Describe your own development of self-identity as you recall your adolescent years.
10. What careers for women do not require a college education? What high school classes or subjects prepare students for these careers?
11. List jobs you have held (including part-time). What high school study prepared you for these jobs?
12. How has sexual responsibility changed in the last decade? What evidence do you have for your conclusion?
13. What behaviors are prohibited by Title IX?

Activities for Further Study of Gender Relationships

1. In a small group of students, discuss and summarize the effect of gender relationships on schooling. Report as a team to the class.
2. Invite a Chicana or African American feminist to speak on the relationship between ethnic and feminist struggles.
3. In small groups, describe recent experiences in which you were treated unfairly based on your gender or race. Then share your stories with the entire class.
4. Complete a life history interview with a female over age 40. Share your interview with the class.
5. Compare racism and sexism. How are they similar? How are they different? How does socioeconomic class affect each?
6. In a class discussion, predict five major changes in gender-role relationships that will take place in the next decade. Discuss how these changes may affect schools.

7. Interview another student. If that student is not going into teaching, what other profession would he or she select? Ask what influences might encourage him or her to select teaching. Share your interviews as a class. Look for patterns in the respondents' choices.

8. View the video *Killing Us Softly III*. What are your reactions?

9. Bring four advertisements from women's magazines that promote "the beauty myth." What messages are the ads sending to readers?

10. Ask students in your class who are mothers or fathers to describe the financial difficulties of graduating from college.

11. Describe to the class the reasons for your choice to become a teacher. How did the female domination of the profession affect your schooling and your career choices?

**Teaching Strategies for Use with Your Students**

1. Include the study of power and gender equity in the curriculum.

2. Teach students to recognize and oppose gender stereotyping.

3. Study stereotyping presented in commercial media. Identify what values are being advocated, and develop ways to present alternative values to students.

4. Use self-esteem-building lessons for girls and boys to combat the stereotyping messages of commercial media.

5. Use role-playing and role-reversal strategies to resist stereotyping.

6. Use a nonracial definition of women's achievements. Include the contributions of women of color.

7. Make the curriculum inclusive, including examples of women in non-traditional careers.

8. Write for and use the excellent materials of the National Women's History Project.

9. Praise and encourage girls for their academic excellence and skills, in addition to areas such as neatness and compliance.