

Patricia Lopez

Professor Leo

Expository Writing

Argumentative Essay

14 November 2016

Gender Inequality, for Biological Women,  
That Affects Their Academic Achievement

The academic achievement gap in America for biological women is sadly real today in the twenty-first century. Women of any gender identification, ethnicity, culture, age, or sexual identification face challenges in academic settings that affect their academic success. These challenges arose from the idea of male supremacy which in turn led to gender inequality. Women nowadays are fighting the famous axiom of 'beauty is brains' through the feminist movement. It is expected for women to rely on their physical looks rather than their academic success. Feminism is the belief and act of advocating for social, political, and all other rights of women to be equal to those of men. Feminism is battling gender inequality in more ways than one, and one way is in education. Women's academics are, without them even knowing at times, negatively impacted by gender inequality through challenges in school, society's degrading expectations, male ruled workplace, and their future home life.

In academic settings, women have been seen as below men in many different, stereotypical ways that have led them to face many challenges. There are three very prominent areas in the academic world that are stereotyped for women, thus hindering their education: dress code, what they are expected to learn/excel at, and sports. The

first area is dress code. Public and private schools all have a sort of dress code whether it be uniforms or encouraged type of dressing. These dress codes are targeted specifically to female adolescents and are never enforced for males. Sajani Clerk for the East Side News wrote, "One of the most infuriating situations for a girl is when she is told her clothes are inappropriate because it is "distracting to boys." Girls should not be held responsible for boys' actions. Boys are the ones behaving inappropriately, so the girls are forced to take action? How is that fair? The purpose of the female is not to appease the male; we don't live in a male dominant society. This concept is not effective; all it does is justify the actions of males and sexualize young girls." In this excerpt it is important to emphasize how she writes that girls feel infuriated when they are told they are distracting the boys. This is the perfect statement that reveals gender inequality. Granted, schools and some parents want young girls to dress modestly but the idea of 'modest' changes over the years just how fashion does. One cannot expect a young girl to not follow what social media says is 'in' for the season, just how it cannot be expected for a woman to excel in 'the arts'. This leads to the second area of gender inequality in academic settings which is that women are expected to excel in English, literature, and other subjects of emotion and expected to fail in mathematics, science, and other subjects of critical thinking. It can be argued that this is due to hormones and prenatal hormones circulating in the brain - although this can be true, many women have proved this theory to be incorrect and true or not it is still wrong to set expectations when every human being is entitled to pursue any type of field. This in turn leads to the third area of sports. Just because women are more inclined to be fragile and sensitive and perhaps choose reading a book over solving mathematical problems does not

mean they cannot be strong or endure as much as a man could. Yasmine Moreno, who was a high school athlete said in an interview, "I always saw that guys were preferred. I played basketball and we had to reuse uniforms yearly while the guys' basketball team got new uniforms. Oh, and our principal would also go to their games and not ours." Moreno said this made her feel annoyed and that "it seemed as if the boys were more entertaining to watch." When a female athlete sees a general preference for males in the athletic world it creates a barrier for them and can lead to neglect in their studies to work hard in their sport to prove that they are just as good.

Schools are not the only place placing stereotypes and high expectations for women - society as a whole has placed these negative stereotypes and degrading expectations for women everywhere. It seems as though it is almost impossible for women to escape these unpleasant situations. Especially when they affect their academic performance and success. Women are constantly told that they must be 'pretty' and worry more about finding a husband and worry less about pursuing a career. But what is 'pretty'? Unfortunately, the answer is not here because society changes its image of 'pretty' every year or so. So, if a woman is expected to uphold these standards of beauty to please men and to feel better about themselves... where does education play into this? Women would rather stay up late and wake up early not to finish all homework and get some studying done in the morning, but to plan their outfits, stay up to date with fashion, beauty, and products, and get all dolled up before going to class. "I maintained low B's and high C's all through senior year because I was so worried about my looks instead of my academics. Ha, I made sure I went to the gym two hours each day instead of making sure I finished my homework." said Veronica, an eighteen year

old female interviewee who reflected on her recent high school experience. For some odd reason, intelligent women are seen as threats to man. From that point of view came the ideas that women are to stay home rather than attain a higher education and that they must be submissive since men are the ones that bring money home. Since women are not always encouraged to pursue a higher education they may take the lack of a degree as failure or incompetence. This leads women to never feeling qualified enough - they may have eight out of ten requirements met, but they may feel too this or that and give up on pursuing whatever it was that they had their mind set on. And on another note, LGBTQ people who were biologically born as female are also struggling with gender inequality. Lack of acceptance and respect has caused their academic success to be affected. Not being accepted by society translates to not being accepted in school, which then results in hiding and trying to not 'outshine' the straight students. Society has a tremendous impact on gender inequality for biological women because it is displayed publicly by society, then is rooted at home and results in being played out at school.

Aside from women facing the challenge of gender inequality in school and through society that affects their academic success, it also is seen in their future out of school. Gender inequality is a generational issue that unless it is brought to the light, taken seriously, and action is taken against it it will show up in an affected female's future family. This generational issue has many prominent factors to it. One example being that if a woman becomes a single mother before graduating high school and drops out, it leads to income and self-esteem struggles. A second example is if a woman is an immigrant and cannot get documentation to attend a college or attain a job. Thirdly, if a lesbian couple combine their income they most likely will not have as

much as expected although their income is combined. These examples have three things in common: academic success challenged, lack of male income, and the outcome of their children's academic success. If a woman does not finish high school due to many different challenges then it is clear that their academic success has been greatly affected. It is proven that males make more income annually and over the span of their life than a woman, regardless of job occupation and title. Without a high school diploma, it becomes hard to find a job. Without a job or an average/high income, it becomes hard to provide for a family. If a female lacks education or income it can heavily reflect on the type of education and learning styles their children have to go through. A biological female, during whatever stage in their life, that has to face and endure gender inequality has a probability of it affecting them negatively which in turn reflects on their future family.

From reading this essay, it is clearly explained how gender inequality masks itself in today's world and how real it is for biological women. Reader, please note that this essay is not to subtly say "men are bad, women are better", on the contrary, this essay is to inform about the battle women face. To overcome gender inequality, action both by an individual and a group must face the fact that gender inequality exists AND that men and women are equal. No one gender is more superior. Natalie Keck for the Titan Tribune wrote, "creating a community of gender equality requires the sexes to recognize that gender inequality is not one-sided. By separating gender biases from everyday interactions, men will feel less pressure to conceal their emotions, resulting in a society where women are not degraded when they do show their emotions." When men and women are able to see themselves as equals then equality can flourish. When women

are really seen as equals in all ways, then their academic success can flourish as well.

The way I could personally take action is to create a more pressing awareness and promoting the true movement of feminism. Feminism at its truest meaning is simply fighting for equality - not to be seen as superior to men. On social media, it's easy to post and share paragraphs of how inequality is shown and how to battle it, while sharing my sources because some people will for sure like to argue but if I can back up my statements then all the merrier. My hope for one day is that there is more headlines for 'gender equality' than 'gender inequality'.

America is still battling gender inequality which leads women of any gender identification, ethnicity, culture, age, or sexual identification to face challenges in their academic lives that affect their success. From dress code in school to how they are able to raise their own children one day. But, through feminism and personal action there is a way to overcome gender inequality. One day 'beauty is brains' will be thought of as a figure of speech from the past.

## Works Cited

Blackwell, Gloria L. "Solving the Gender Equality Equation: Increasing Education and Decreasing Violence." *Economic Justice. AAUW*, <http://www.aauw.org/article/solving-gender-equality-equation/>. Accessed 10 November 2016.

Blume, L.B / Zembar, M.J. "Gender and Academic Achievement." *Education.com*, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/gender-academic-achievement/>. Accessed 10 November 2016.

Clerk, Sajani. "Dress Code Discrimination of Girls in Public Schools." *East Side News*, <http://eastsidenews.org/2014/11/dress-code-discrimination-of-girls-in-public-schools/>. Accessed 10 November 2016.

Keck, Natalie. "Feminism: Fight for Gender Equality." *Titan Tribune*, <http://www.cbsouthtribune.com/1973/opinion/feminism-fight-for-gender-equality/>. Accessed 10 November 2016.

Moreno, Yasmine. Personal Interview. 10 November 2016.

Ochoa, Veronica. Personal Interview. 5 November 2016.

Smilowitz, Ariel. "For U.S. Women, Inequality Takes Many Forms." *The Huffington Post*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-smilowitz/for-us-women-inequality-takes-many-forms\\_b\\_7064348.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-smilowitz/for-us-women-inequality-takes-many-forms_b_7064348.html). Accessed 11 November 2016.

Teigen, Mari. *Gender Equality: Problems, Strategies and Solutions*. Institute for Social Research. Bergen, 20 September 2012, <http://www.uib.no/filearchive/gender-equality-problems-strategies-and-solutions.pdf>. Accessed 10 November 2016.