

Topic:

Gender Equality: Men Suffer Without Women

Author:

Cloe Yeh. Taipei Fuhsing Private School. 10 Ho.

Naomi Tan. Taipei Fuhsing Private School. 10 Ping.

Vanessa Huang. Taipei Fuhsing Private School. 10 Ping.

Instructor: Mr. Calhoun

Abstract:

The rising importance of gender equality has challenged the absolute tradition of silence, allowing people to speak up for themselves. This study will explore the issues of how individuals, men specifically, are oppressed by society and how it connects to health by using social experiments to prove the problems are profound. The researchers' thesis states that as an individual endures more oppression by society, the possibility of mental health issues increases. Therefore, we would like to promote more cooperation between men and women in order to improve men's mental health. The results of our investigation indicate that men do get influenced through women's help, as men and women working together would result in better results than just men working by themselves. In addition, as men and women work together, men would be able to improve their mental problems as they have lower stress levels.

I. Preface

A. Background/Motivation

Gender inequality has always been a major problem in our society. Whether in our culture, religion, or education, it exists in everyone's daily life. Even nowadays, with many people realizing the problem and trying to achieve gender equality, in which both men and women can be seen and treated equally, some standards and rules in cultures often act as a barrier that blocks people from reaching it. Gender inequality started thousands of years ago, when ancient people relied on the "strength of men" to hunt outside, resulting in women taking care of everything else in the house. This formed a stereotype that women are weaker than men, and men are not allowed to show their weaknesses such as crying or losing against women. With this stereotype, pressure on men to do better became more intense as women's positions are gradually becoming more equitable with men.

The motivation of this essay stems from the Pearson *The Cultural Landscape- An Introduction to Human Geography (Thirteenth Edition)* textbook. In chapter 2.4 [Why the population might change in the future], the content discussed female pregnancy rights in China and India, and how women have been mistreated (Rubenstein 2020). China officials started making substantial progress in reducing the NIR (Natural increase rate) beginning in 1980. To expound, the family planning program was known as the "One Child policy." On the other hand, the Indian government is doing a similar program - national family planning program - forcing women to reduce birth rates. These programs violate females' autonomy, causing clusters of women to suffer under these policies. Yet, the world always discusses women as if women are the biggest victims, but what about men? Therefore, instead of focusing on women, we would want to create an in-depth study looking at men's rights in society and the possible negative consequences of these gender inequalities.

B. Purpose/Address problems:

The purpose of this paper is to promote gender equality in our society in order to lower the rate of people having mental health problems. Since some people tend to be mentally sick due to the pressure they get from our unequal society, we hope to try and create an equitable community so that less people will be pressured from it. In Asian regions, women are still being discriminated against due to their culture, often enduring unfair treatment, thus oppressed by society. A news article delves deep into the fragility of women's rights in Afghanistan. In recent weeks, as Taliban forces have surged triumphantly across the country, inequality towards women has been revealed. The Afghanistan government banned most of the education for young girls. Moreover, women are forced to leave their jobs. However, The Taliban spokesman has continued to guarantee the respect for women's rights, but his claims ring more hollow than ever (Barr, 2021). To elaborate, because of the oppression women bear in society, it causes the majority of women to have mental health issues, especially depression. Key findings in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Data Brief issued on February 13 shows that in 2021, 10.4% of women were diagnosed with depression, which is twice higher than men, 5.5% (Brody, et al., 2018).

However, even though the problems associated with women are more obvious in society, people tend to ignore men's unfair treatment. According to a WHO observation reported by Quartz, "men tend to have shorter life spans than women worldwide, the report found that the discrepancies between men and women's health outcomes were even greater in countries with higher levels of gender inequality" (Selby, 2018). Men are more likely to react to fight-or-flight situations due to stress compared to women because of the differences in their brain responses. As a result, the reaction of men to high levels of stress increases. Therefore, as men cooperate with women, men often face more stress because of their sensibility, which directly creates even more mental and physical problems, such as high blood pressure and decreased productivity. Therefore, we believe that the higher the inequality level in a certain country is, the higher the individual's chance of getting a mental or physical problem is.

II. Literature Discussion

An article written by Daneile Selby suggests that the pressure of stereotype and gender inequality harm men's mental health significantly. Due to social norms, men would put much more pressure on top of them which causes them to increase their risk of health issues. Such non-communicable diseases as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes are only a small account of all symptoms. "Living in a country with gender equality benefits men's health, producing, for example, lower mortality rates, higher well-being, half the chance of being depressed, a higher likelihood of having protected sex, lower suicide rates, and a 40% reduced risk of violent death," the authors wrote in a report summary, clearly addresses the problem that men do actually live a happier life when the society is more equal (Selby, 2018). This article would not be biased because the author is a woman that's trying to write an article without prejudice and talks about facts and statistics, which make the whole article become more convincing.

A book *Social Science & Medicine*, written by Maria Lohan, states that although men created positive personal spaces for recognition and success, their achievements were circumscribed by

significant social inequalities. The book discussed the will-to-love (WTL) on men, presented and considered as a simple and easy-to-use indicator of happiness, showing that WTL is significantly related to survival in univariate analysis. “Survival of men was predicted by age, daily functioning, SRH, working outside home or volunteering, and self-esteem” (Lohan, 2007). This conclusion indicates that because men have higher self-esteem, this causes men who want to perform well will eventually lead to huge pressure. Hence, become unhappy and have lower WTL, that is, to have lower survival rate. The book source is not biased because the journal incorporates numerous findings, statistics, and professional experiments done by sociologists. Directly addressing the issue of how self-esteem harms men as a whole, the situation might even become more serious as men experienced greater gender inequalities.

An American Journal of Sociology written by Michael Hughes and David H. Demo, constructed an experiment on black Americans, expounded that self-esteem, racial self-esteem, and personal efficiency are interrelated. This manifests that all men in different races show a much lower personal efficiency because “personal efficacy is generated through experiences in social statuses embedded in macrosocial systems of social/gender inequality”, meaning that as men endure more social or gender inequality, their personal efficiency decreases (Demo & Hughes, 1989). This piece is related to our topic because it talks about minorities having higher self-esteem yet having lower personal efficiency.

Based upon these researches, it is clear that all men face higher levels of pressure compared to women by having higher self-esteem, wanting to present a good performance that eventually causes WTL rate to decrease. Hence, causing health issues and early death.

III. Observation Method

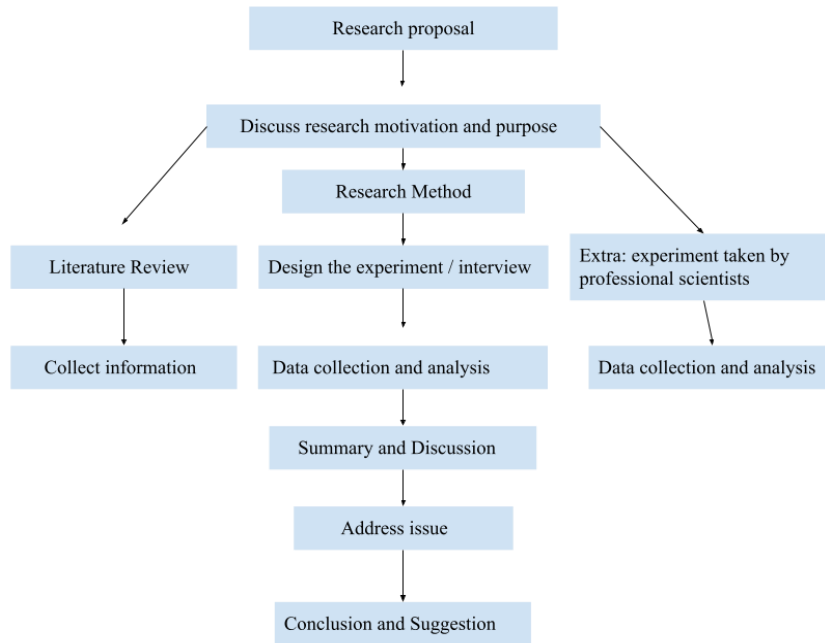
Research was going to be tough. With our limited space, time, and resources, we had to think very hard about how to conduct our experiment. The way we arrange our observation as an experiment is to see the relationship between girls and boys. To elaborate, experiment is the easiest, efficient way for us to observe the general pattern in a short period of time.

The research purpose of the experiment is to examine how the class behaves on quiz/or project through different distributions of girls and boys, and observe whether or not the group reflects on grades. Our research hypothesis states that groups with all girls would rank the highest, in other words, receive the best grades; mixed groups would rank the second; all boys would rank the last. The reason why the hypothesis is stated this way is because in ancient times, society branded the stereotype on women as they must not earn education and should stay at home to do chores and take care of the family. Women now feel compelled to break this stereotype by performing better and maintaining high personal standards; men seem to not push themselves as hard, unwilling to accept this new challenge from women. However, there are numerous evidence that manifests the world has been better off, which the liberty of women increases. Hence, researchers would want to know if this phenomenon is correct.

This research will be mainly based on the social experiment and interviews done by us with the support of other researches and sources done by others in the past. For the social experiment, we used 4

different classes (Humanities: literature, history; Science: math, human geography) of students grouped into 3 kinds of pairs: all girls, girl and boy mixed, and all boys. In these pairs, they had to do a 10-15 minutes fact-based test related to what they learnt in the class. After the test, the tests were scored and given to us anonymously with only the genders of the pairs.

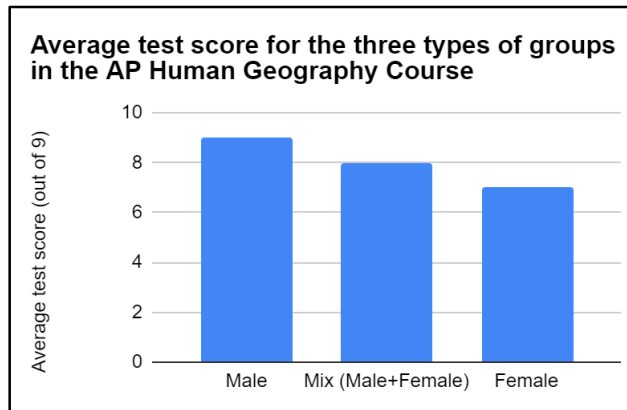
Exhibition 1. Research Procedure



IV. Analysis & Result

AP Human Geography: After conducting the experiment using Google Forms, the result disagrees with our hypothesis. Instead, it was the opposite of what we predicted. Forming a group of two people based on their genders: a group with two boys, a group with one boy and one girl, and a group with two girls - our results showed the group with two boys received the highest score. The mix group received a slightly lower score and the group with two girls scored the lowest. Although the gaps between the scores are small, the group with two girls made more mistakes than the group consisting of two boys. Therefore, the result for this specific subject disagrees with our hypothesis.

	Boys Pair	Mix Pair	Girls Pair
AP Human Geography (out of 9)	9 (familiar)	8 (unfamiliar)	7 (familiar)
Average	9	8	7

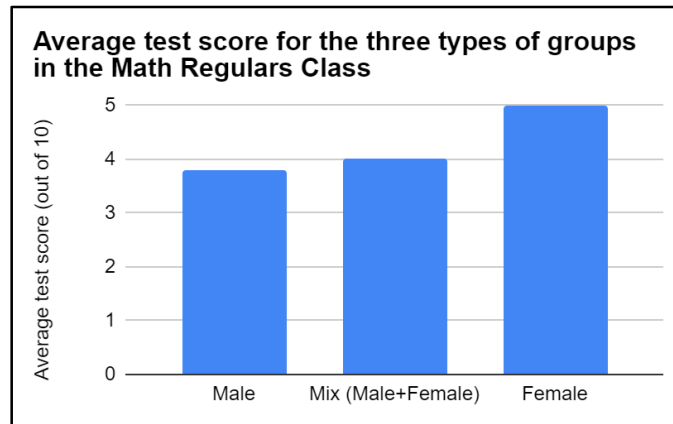


There are some possible confounding variables for this experiment result. First, the boys may have felt a stronger need to perform in a class of older students because the AP Human Geography is a course with students from 10-12th grade. Secondly, the girls probably felt nervous in the mixed-grade environment. Another important factor of this experiment is that there is only one group from each pair (all girls, all boys, mix), meaning that the data is very limited and there's no average due to the number of people in class. Also, in this new class structure, the teacher/experimenters chose the pairings; the likelihood of the boys pairing with a friend was more likely than a girl pairing with a friend, because boys in the class tend to have a large friend group of friends while the girls have smaller groups.

ANALYSIS: Two boys, by themselves, scored the highest. Maybe this meant they were the most relaxed. Felt no pressure and so they could perform better and without judgement. It reflects the high self-esteem of the boys that had confidence of doing better in the exam. Once a boy was paired with a girl, pressure may have caused a lower performance. For girls, when working with another girl, they may have felt more comfortable and less competitive that led to poorer performances.

Math: After conducting the experiments using paper tests given to two different classes by the same math teacher on the same day, the result agrees with our hypothesis. By forming 5 groups with two boys as a group, 5 groups with one girl and one boy as a group, and 5 groups with two girls as a group - our results showed the 5 groups with two girls as a group received the highest average. The mix groups received a slightly lower average and the boy groups received the lowest average. The gaps between the averages are bigger than expected, with a 1.2 between the groups with two girls and the groups with two boys. Therefore, the result for this specific subject agrees with our hypothesis.

	Boys Pair	Mix Pair	Girls Pair
Math Regular (out of 10)	2 (familiar) 3 (unfamiliar) 4 (familiar) 4.5 (unfamiliar) 5.5 (unfamiliar)	1 (unfamiliar) 2 (unfamiliar) 4 (familiar) 5 (familiar) 8 (unfamiliar)	3.5 (unfamiliar) 5 (unfamiliar) 5 (familiar) 5 (familiar) 6.5 (familiar)
Average	3.8	4	5

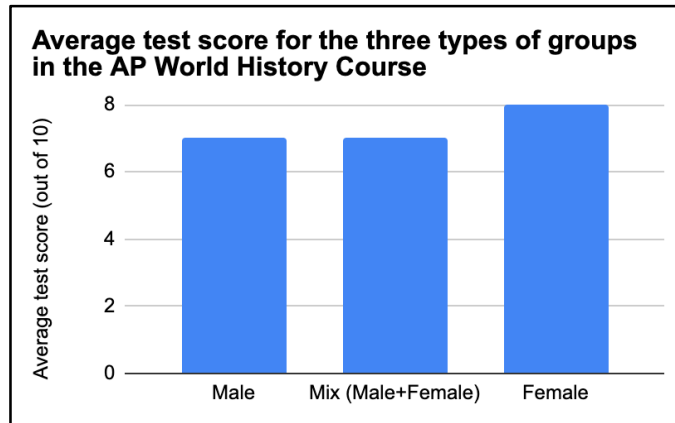


Some possible confounding variables of this experiment. First of all, the two classes had a different amount of time to finish the test. One had 25 minutes the other only 15 minutes. Another factor is that the math teacher answered students' (mostly girls) questions and gave hints, which may have let some groups have higher scores. The girls were mostly friends with each other in pairs too. Furthermore, the boys in the first class with 25 minutes were more comfortable in discussing because the pairs were all friends, while the boys in the 15 minutes class were less comfortable in their pairs because they were unfamiliar with each other.

ANALYSIS: 5 pairs of girls, scored the highest average in total. Perhaps they were more relaxed and had less pressure in discussing the content with the other girls. When the boys and girls were mixed into 5 pairs, they may have felt a little more pressured than the other groups considering that they were not as familiar with each other as the other groups, which might have led to a lower performance. As for the 5 groups of boys, most of them were not close friends, which may have caused some awkwardness for them. Their lack of confidence in this subject (because it's regular, most people here are not good at math) reflected their low self esteem that might have led to a poorer efficiency for their performance.

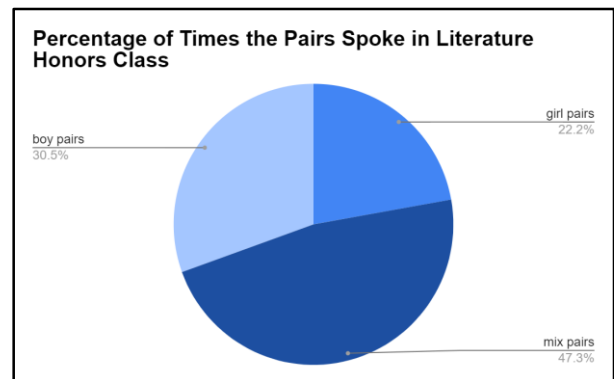
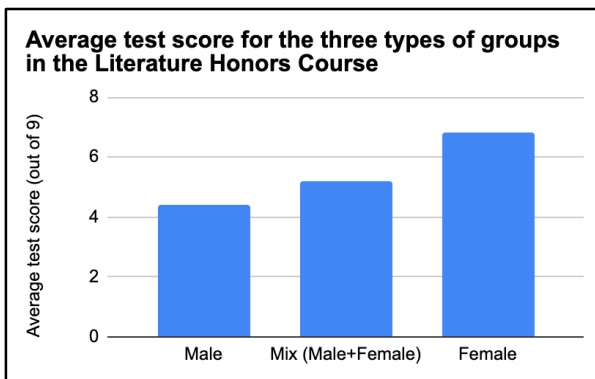
AP World History: After conducting the experiment using Google Forms, the result agrees with our hypothesis. We formed 2 groups with two boys as a group, 2 groups with one boy and girl as a group, and 2 groups with two girls as a group - our result showed that the 2 groups of girls have the highest average compared to the other groups. The mix groups have the same average of 70% with the 2 groups of boys. The results had a gap of 10% between the 2 averages of 70% and 80%. Even though the result of the mix groups and the boy groups having the same average was unexpected, this still agrees with our hypothesis that the girl groups have a higher average than the others.

	Boys Pair	Mix Pair	Girls Pair
AP World History (out of 10)	9 (familiar) 5 (unfamiliar)	7 (unfamiliar) 7 (unfamiliar)	8 (familiar) 8 (unfamiliar)
Average	7	7	8



Some possible confounding variables for this experiment is that the data is limited because there was one class that hadn't received the test due to the pressing time of exam week. The class that received the test had only 10 minutes to answer 10 document-based questions, which might have increased their pressure. Also, in the class, all boys were a group of friends, probably causing the boys to feel more comfortable while doing the test. Additionally, the teacher jokes a lot and sometimes pulls pranks on the boys, so the class might have thought the surprise test was just another joke, which may have caused them to not treat the test seriously.

ANALYSIS: The 2 pairs of boys along with the 2 pairs of mixed genders, had a lower average in total compared to the 2 pairs of girls. With the lack of seriousness, the boys, who are usually loud, may have had less pressure and felt more relaxed when having the exam, combining with their low self-esteem, which led to a lower score for them.



Literature Honors: After conducting the experiments with both classes of Literature honors, the result agrees with our hypothesis. We created 15 groups: 5 boy-boy, 5 boy-girl, 5 girl-girl. Our results showed the 5 girl-girl groups have the highest average, 6.8. The mix groups have a lower average and the boy-boy groups have the lowest average. The gap between the averages are bigger than expected, with a gap of 2.4 between the 5 girl groups and the 5 boy groups. We conducted the experiments in a different way compared to the previous subjects. First, we split both classes of Literature honors into

pairs and based the results on the correctness of the class materials, not an exam. Then, we marked down the number of times the groups spoke in the class, as it contributed to a big part of comfortableness and the feelings of being involved.

	Boys Pair	Mix Pair	Girls Pair
Literature Honors (out of 12)	0 (unfamiliar) 4 (familiar) 4 (familiar) 6 (unfamiliar) 8 (unfamiliar)	3 (unfamiliar) 3 (unfamiliar) 4 (familiar) 4 (unfamiliar) 12 (unfamiliar)	4 (familiar) 6 (familiar) 8(familiar) 8(unfamiliar) 8 (familiar)
Average	4.4	5.2	6.8

The literature teacher was using a clipboard to record down things (maybe participation, the students didn't know), which may have caused some pressure and prompted students to speak to earn points. The assignment was difficult so students might have had a hard time trying to express themselves. The teacher was expecting students to speak up, causing more pressure. The girls were mostly friends so they felt more comfortable discussing with each other. But with the pressure of maybe embarrassing themselves, they don't speak up so much. The boys were not all friends so there was more pressure on them.

ANALYSIS: The 5 pairs of girls had the highest scores but the lowest average of times they spoke up. Maybe because they were more comfortable discussing and sharing with their close friends, but when it comes to speaking to the whole class, the girls did not want to speak up due to the possibility of embarrassing themselves. The 5 mixed gender pairs had a lower average of scores but the highest average of times for speaking up. Probably because of the uncomfortableness in the pair groups creating a more tendency to speak in front of the whole class. The mixed gender groups seemed to motivate the girls to perform better (speak up more) than usual. The two classes can be divided into two types of boys -- loud and quiet -- the loud boys often being loud when necessary, while the quiet boys are always quiet because of their lack of confidence, which reflects the low self-esteem of the boys. For the 5 pairs of boys, because most of the pairs were not as close, there was more pressure on them to do well on the task.

VI. Conclusion & Advice

A. Solution of Problem

Our experiment, due to the limitation of time, only had a fixed age group of teenagers between 15 to 16 years old, causing the result to be not as accurate or professional. Looking at the experiments of boys in general classroom settings, it can be concluded that no one solution will fit all men. However, here are some definite conclusions -- the self esteem of boys will affect their performances, whether with others or by themselves. Some things left unknown is that by examining only through this experiment,

we are unable to know if this result applies to all ages since this experiment only included teenagers between the age of 15 to 16 years old. Nevertheless, it is possible that all ages of men can fit our data.

B. Research Advice

Gender inequality is not just harmful for women, it also negatively impacts men. By challenging stereotypes and working to advance gender equality, we can improve the world for all who live in it. According to the article from the World Economic Forum Organization, a way they suggest to improve the mental status of men is through the help of women mentoring them. “We’re hoping that if we encourage more women mentoring men, we can generate more empathy, more co-operation and just more willingness to see each other as people and to work for everybody’s success,” says study co-author Cindi Schipani, professor of business law at the University of Michigan (Marchant, 2021). As women mentor men when working together, it would benefit both parties to reach their common goal through pushing each other to work harder. With our research results, it also shows how when men are working with women, the results are better compared to when men work by themselves. Through the mentoring of women, both men and women can improve together, and also lower the average stress of men. As a result, both sides have benefits. To reiterate, we firmly believe that teachers should arrange students in mixed groups more often in future projects or discussions. Even businesses should give more opportunities to have men work with women in order to push each other forward and improve together.

III. Works Cited

Barr, H. (2021, August 17). The Fragility of Women's Rights in Afghanistan.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/17/fragility-womens-rights-afghanistan#>.

Brody, D., et al. (2018, February). Prevalence of Depression Among Adults Aged 20 and Over: United States, 2013–2016. NCHS Data Brief, no. 303.
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db303.htm>.

Demo H. D. & Hughes, M. (1989, July). Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1).
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/229216>.

Lohan, M. (2007, June 7). How might we understand men's health better? Integrating explanations from critical studies on men and inequalities in health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 65(3), 493-504. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953607002213>.

Marchant, N. (2021, March 8). 5 ways to improve gender equality in the workplace.
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/03/gender-equality-in-the-workplace-ways-to-improve/>.

Rubenstein, J. (2020). *The Cultural Landscape- An Introduction to Human Geography* (13th ed.). Pearson.

Selby, D. (2018, September 19). Gender Inequality Is Bad for Men's Health, Report Says.
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/gender-inequality-mens-health/>.