

introduction

Single-sex schools are often praised for superior academic performance, with studies indicating that students in these settings achieve higher grades. However, the implications for social development remain less clear. Single-sex environments may limit opportunities for interaction with the opposite sex, potentially hindering the development of essential communication skills and interpersonal relationships later in life. On the other hand, these schools can foster self-confidence and independence by minimizing gender-based pressures, allowing students to engage more freely in traditionally male-dominated subjects and discussions

results

Friendship Dynamics

Interviews revealed significant differences in friendship dynamics between participants from single-sex and mixed schools. Mixed school attendees described adaptable friendships, with enduring connections maintained from secondary school. In contrast, single-sex school participants reported more consistent friendships, with one stating her core group remained intact throughout school. Some mixed school participants recognized that girls from single-sex schools often formed closer friendships.

Sociability with the Opposite Sex

Mixed school participants expressed high comfort levels in interacting with both genders. One participant emphasized her ease in initiating conversations, while another noted that mixed environments helped her develop confidence. Conversely, single-sex school participants shared discomfort in engaging with boys, with one stating she struggled to initiate conversations.

Transitioning to University

In transitioning to university, mixed school participants felt confident and ready to engage socially. In contrast, those from single-sex schools faced challenges, with participants admitting they found it hard to adjust to interacting with the opposite sex.

objectives

This research focused on investigating the following:

- **Impact on Social Interactions:** Investigating how single-sex schooling influences the frequency and quality of social interactions with the opposite sex.
- **Long-Term Social Outcomes:** Analysing the long-term effects of single-sex schooling on social skills
- **Self-Confidence/Independence:** Assessing whether single-sex schooling contributes to higher levels of self-confidence and independence, particularly in mixed-gender social situations later in life.

methodology

This study received ethical approval from the University of Cambridge's Department of Psychology Ethics Committee. It involved undergraduate students, over 18, who had attended single-sex or coeducational schools in the UK.

The research began with a questionnaire administered on Qualtrics, where informed consent was obtained electronically. After completing the survey, participants engaged in semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire aimed to gather demographic data and the semi-structured interviews provided insights into personal experiences and perceptions regarding social development.

How differently do Mixed and Single-Sex schools shape social development?

Joelle Oki

conclusion

This study examined the effects of single-sex versus mixed schooling on social development among six undergraduate students at the University of Cambridge.

Findings indicated that mixed school attendees reported greater comfort in interacting with the opposite sex, maintaining more friendships and engaging in extracurricular activities, which enhanced their social skills. In contrast, single-sex school participants expressed discomfort in mixed-gender interactions and relied heavily on same-sex friendships. While they valued the deep bonds formed in their all-female environment, many faced challenges transitioning to mixed settings in university, suggesting single-sex schooling may limit confidence and social skill development.

The study's strengths included its mixed-methods approach, but limitations such as a small sample size (N=6) hinder generalizability and quantitative analysis. Future research should explore these dynamics on a larger scale to better inform educational practices.