

# Movement With PURPOSE: Building Equity Within The Single-Gender Classroom

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## Introduction

In this qualitative study, I will observe, research, and notate the importance of single-gender education, in a public school setting.

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to observe the attitudes and abilities of middle school boys and girls in a single-gender classroom setting. Over the course of six weeks, students had the ability to exercise, paint, and create projects that empower them. The students were given the opportunity to participate in the same activities, in the same setting. However, each of the two classes chosen was separated by gender. The first class was comprised of girls between the ages of nine and twelve. And, the second group was boys between the ages of nine and twelve. Both of these groups are considered level two scholars at the FAMU Developmental Research School.

## Aims of the Research

The purpose of my research is to create equity in attitudes, among students and Educators in a single-gender classroom setting. Here is a sample of an interview and how gender can play a role in the treatment of one population over another.

**My goal is to break down gender stereotypes, and to observe how equity among single-gender classrooms can create equity in education.**

The design of each activity was intentional and based on the Freedom Schools Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC) design. As a former Student Leader Intern (SLI), it was my goal to keep familiarity with FS in the qualitative design. Using this model, helped me to reconnect as an SLI, while adding new content in a single-gender setting.

## Research Questions

- Do single-gender classrooms offer a welcomed change in learning?
- Do boys feel equally valued, if taught by a female educator?
- Do girls seem to flourish more in thought and movement with a same-sex educator?
- Are students thriving socially, academically, and emotionally in the single-gender classroom?
- Are both male and female students thriving in single-gender groups?
- Do male and female students interact positively, towards each other when they return to an integrated group?

## Method

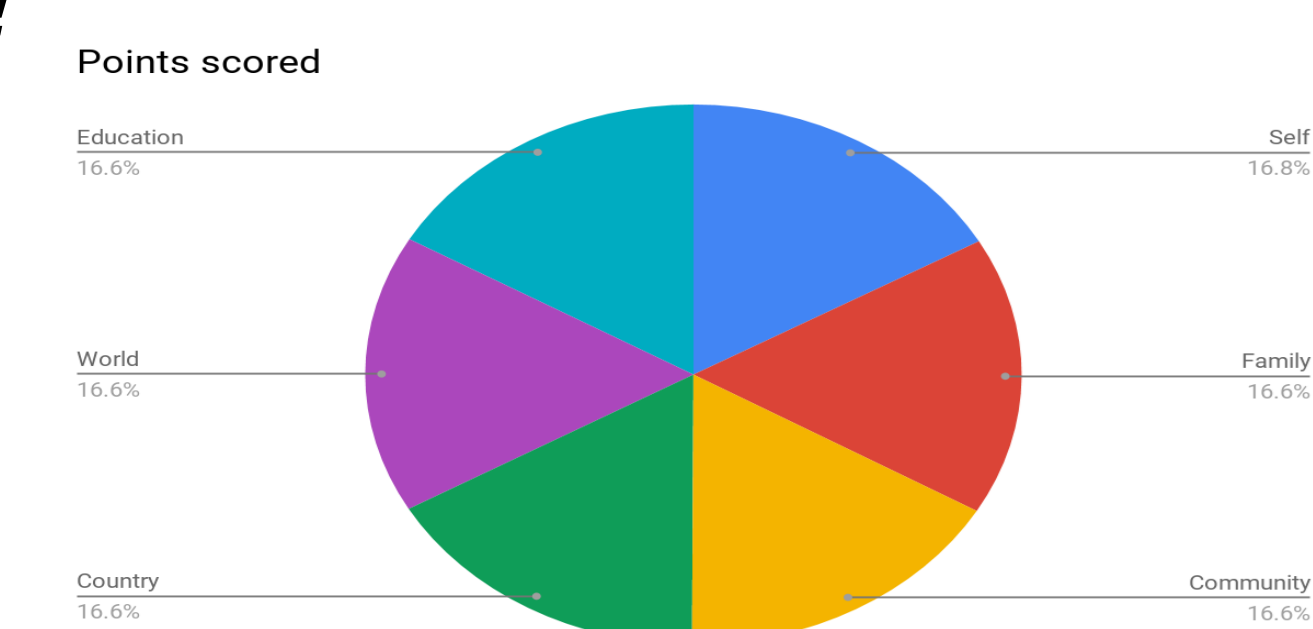
My research method utilized qualitative data sources.

## Research Design

Art, music, language, and the power of people were all understood as tools or instruments that can help student success. While quantitative data is also important, the group size that I taught was large. So I decided to use qualitative data since I was also an active participant in the context of the study. Data sources included observations and artifacts. Central instructional elements included art, yoga, and classroom mentors.

Freedom Schools IRC: *I Can Make a Difference!*

- Week 1: Self
- Week 2: Family
- Week 3: Community
- Week 4: Country
- Week 5: World
- With Hope, Education and Action



## Participants

These students are middle school-aged summer camp students who are between the ages of nine and thirteen years of age instructed in a single-gender setting. Each class had approximately 25 students. The majority of both groups were African-Americans, who have a strong sense of pride and belonging to their community.

Students with parental consent to participate:

- 17 Girls in the age range of 9-13 years of age. (Athletes, dancers, creatives)
- 20 Boys in the age range of 9-13 years of age. (Athletes, dancers, creatives)



## Data Collection and Analysis

Projects: For six weeks girls and boys took part in projects that gave them opportunities to express their personalities.

- **Week 1**/20 mins. Yoga Stencils/Positive "P" words Discussion/What is Purpose?
- **Week 2**/20 mins. Movement /Create your Crown What is your superpower?
- **Week 3**/20 mins. Discussion/ Drum Major Hat What is an HBCU?
- **Week 4**/20 mins. Yoga Abstract Profile Project/ Create your Favorite Place.
- **Week 5**/Three Strengths/ Two Goals/ College Promise
- **Week 6**/Special Guest/ Marching 100 Mentor Locate your College/HBCU



## Results

Students "wished that year-round school was set up like this." (F/S)  
Students kept their projects, and they felt empowered.

## Conclusion

Major Conclusions: In conclusion, my thoughts on the study are that in a qualitative study the root word must be observed. Quality means that as a professional, you care about the work you do and the outcomes of specific actions. My goal was to enter a space of challenges based on gender inequities of both boys and girls.

- Girls in my single-gender classroom exhibited strength.
- Boys in the same setting appreciated bonding events.
- Both groups liked the single gender setting.
- Both groups also asked, "what is the other group doing"?
- Both groups were happy that they had equity in education.



## Discussion

- Girls in a single-gender setting, were more focused on their work.
- Girls were also very assertive, and asked about leadership roles.
- Boys felt left out more often than girls in group settings.
- Boys said that "being tough is the norm." Boys want "more men teachers," "more mentors to talk to" and they asked for more male support.

## Key References

Children's Defense Fund (2019). *Summer Integrated Reading Curriculum Guide*. Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools.

Roehrig, A., Clemons, K. and Norris, K. (2017). The fierce urgency of now: CDF Freedom Schools and culturally relevant pedagogy. In Ortlieb, E. and Cheek, E. (Eds.), *Addressing Diversity in Literacy Instruction* (pp. 251-269). Emerald Publishing Limited.

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