



Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School (Studies of Great Texts in Science)

By Barrie Thorne

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Thorne, a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California, offers her insightful observations of elementary school students in class and at play. Though, as she admits, her status as an adult and an observer may have affected what happened around her, Thorne presents a fascinating account of how children divide themselves--and how others divide them--along gender lines. Breaking students into teams for contests and the eternal game of "cooties" (a contamination attributed more often to girls than boys) reveal much about the microcosm that these students inhabit, and an extensive look at the tomboy, both in literature and in life, compares her ambiguity (sometimes an insult, sometimes a compliment) to the negative attitudes often elicited by gender-crossing in the other direction. Thorne argues convincingly against the theories of scholars like Deborah Tannen and Carol Gilligan that boys and girls have different "cultures," and she attempts to discourage "gender antagonism." A final section offers concrete steps for teachers to take in forming the attitudes--about gender and other topics--of coming generations.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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From Library Journal

Thorne, well known among educational psychologists for her work in gender studies, presents her findings on gender roles among children and teenagers in school. Using a three-step approach, she describes recent findings in the field, presents her own findings, and then examines the correlations and discrepancies. In her thoughtful interpretation of these findings, Thorne makes a significant contribution. Her study is important not just for her insight into gender but for her explanation of how research itself operates within conventions and traditions. Recognizing that the way students are grouped and segregated is an increasingly important issue in classroom and school management. Thorne suggests a new paradigm for examining how psychologists and teachers deal with gender. Her study is well documented, with meticulous notes and a comprehensive bibliography. For academic and large public libraries.

- Nancy E. Zuwiyya, *Binghamton City Sch. Dist., N.Y.*

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Review

"A stunning achievement. Through the most careful, finely wrought sociological observation, Thorne transforms our ability to see gender in social life. She demonstrates that every action . . . is worthy of interpretation and infused with social and cultural meaning. We have been hearing from feminist theorists that gender is contingent and constructed, but only *Gender Play* shows us--in richly complex detail--how. Feminist scholarship takes a major step forward with this book."--Nancy J. Chodorow "author of *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* "

"This is a beautifully observed, as well as deeply reflective book . . . pathbreaking research is combined with vivid and enjoyable writing. Thorne will help teachers and parents, as well as students and researchers, gain a new understanding of issues about gender."--Bob Connell "author of *Gender and Power* "

"Destined to be a classic . . . a wonderful text--beautifully inflected, reflexive, responsive to diversity and differences, and grounded in careful ethnographic work."--Laurel Richardson "author of *The Dynamics of Sex and Gender* "

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Shannon Grant:

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Royce Britton:

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