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From the Publisher

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The origins of this journal can be traced back almost 15 years, to a day when a little boy named Andrew Phillips came home from school on the brink of tears. The teacher had given each of the children in the class a small box of crayons and a blank sheet of white paper. "Let's have a little creative time. Draw whatever you want," the teacher had said.

Andrew had used his black crayon to draw two stick figures stabbing each other with knives. Other kids in the class (which happened to be mostly girls) had drawn colorful pictures of people and pets and flowers and trees. The people in the girls' pictures had hair on their heads; they had clothes on their bodies. Andrew's stick figures had none of these adornments. The teacher praised the girls' drawings, but not Andrew's.

Andrew came home upset. His mother Janet arranged to speak to the teacher, who was unapologetic. "Actually, I considered making a referral," the teacher said.

"A referral? What do you mean?" Janet asked.

"A referral to mental health. After all, he did draw two people attacking each other with knives."

"But he's a six-year-old *boy*," Janet said.

"Of course he is, and that's why I decided against initiating the referral."

A child's choice of what he or she wants to draw says something important about who that child is. A boy who wants to draw pictures of soldiers fighting, or rocket ships smashing into planets, is a different sort of child from the girl (or boy) who wants to draw children, or pets, or flowers.

Here's an old fable:

> *Nasrudin was the chief keeper of ornamental birds for the king. One day, walking about the royal grounds, he saw a falcon which had alighted on a tree. He took out his scissors and trimmed the claws, the wings, and the beak of the falcon. "That is at least some improvement," he said. "Your keeper had evidently been neglecting you."*
>
> *Moral: You cannot turn a falcon into a robin or a dove. You will merely succeed in ruining the falcon.*

The teacher had said, "Why can't you draw something less violent? Something more like what Melissa drew, or Emily?" But what Andrew heard was *Why do you have to be who you are, why can't you be someone else?* Why do you have to be a falcon? Why can't you be a robin, or a dove?

Gretchen was a bright girl, outgoing and talkative with her friends, but in class she tended to be quiet. One day the teacher asked whether anyone could name the capitol of Australia. Nobody raised their hand. After class, the teacher called Gretchen aside. "Gretchen, you spent a month in Australia last year. You knew the answer to that question, didn't you?"

Gretchen nodded.

"Why didn't you raise your hand?" the teacher asked.

"I was pretty sure I knew," Gretchen said. "But I wasn't 100% sure, maybe just 98% sure."

"Gretchen, 98% is good enough. If you wait until you're 100% sure, you'll never raise your hand."

Gretchen nodded. But she still wouldn't raise her hand.

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Andrew's Mom pulled him out of the well-regarded private coed school he was attending and transferred him to an all-boys school. Before long he was drawing again. The teachers at the boys' schools weren't so insistent on the boys using lots of different colors. Instead, they asked the boys to tell the stories behind the pictures. Andrew loved telling his stories about heroes and dragons and battles. One of his drawings, from 2nd grade, is shown at right. The caption reads "He shook his lance and it shot a lazer and it cilled the dragon. But it was stilt ULIV."

Andrew blossomed at the boys' school. He became not only an artist, but a writer, an actor, and an athlete. And what an athlete. Andrew grew into the most talented athlete I ever saw in my 22 years of medical practice. By the time he graduated from Georgetown Prep (another all-boys school), he was 6'8" tall, 290 pounds of solid muscle. He was recruited by almost every NCAA Division I football program. He chose Stanford because it had the best academics of any program offering him a scholarship. At Stanford he is majoring in the classics, studying Latin and Greek – and he made several crucial plays in Stanford's remarkable upset of #1-ranked USC, a game in which Stanford was a 40-point underdog. Andrew is on his way to being a real celebrity, so he doesn't mind my using his real name here.

His mother, Janet Phillips, has sent all four of her sons through boys' private schools. It's expensive, but Janet and her husband believe it's worth the cost.

Back in the spring of 2002, Janet and I were discussing her four sons. "I shudder to think what would have happened if I hadn't had any other options, if I had to leave Andrew at a coed school," Janet said. "I think he would have become one of those boys who hate school."

"It's lucky you and your husband were able to get him into a good boys' school," I said.

"We've been fortunate," Janet agreed. "But what about parents who aren't so fortunate? What about parents who can't afford boys' private schools, or who don't have access to a boys' school in their city?"

"There are more than 90,000 public schools in the United States, but fewer than a dozen of them offer single-sex classrooms," I said. We both wondered: Why couldn't more schools offer single-sex classrooms, as a *choice,* for parents who want that option?

.Gretchen's parents decided to enroll Gretchen at the Agnes Irwin School, an all-girls school near Philadelphia. The Agnes Irwin School – like many other girls' schools – has programs in place specifically designed to build girls' self-confidence, to help girls take appropriate risks. The photo at right shows a girl from St. Michael's Collegiate, a Tasmanian girls' school I visited in 2008. Their rock-climbing program begins with the basics. The instructors build on that foundation, one step at a time, until it's no big deal to rappel down the sheer cliff at Freycinet over the Tasman Sea. *Every* girl at the school does this.

Programs like these empower girls. If you have rappelled down a cliff over open water, it's no big deal to raise your hand to answer a question in class.

It wasn't long before Gretchen began speaking up in the all-girls classrooms. Ultimately she went to medical school; then she completed a seven-year residency in neurosurgery. Neurosurgery is a specialty which is overwhelmingly dominated by men, but that didn't faze her. "Four years at a girls' school gave me the belief that I can do absolutely anything – or at least it gave me the courage to try. I'm not afraid to try."

The Montgomery Center for Research in Child & Adolescent Development (MCRCAD), doing business as the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE), was founded in March 2002. The founders included my friend Janet Phillips, mother of Andrew. At the time, it seemed a very pretentious name.

After all, there were at that time only eleven public schools in all of the United States which offered single-sex classrooms.

As I write this, in 2009, more than 560 public schools in the United States offer single-sex classrooms. About 90 of those schools are completely single-sex campuses: all-girls or all-boys. The remainder are coed schools with single-sex classrooms.

Our founding belief, as expressed by Janet Phillips, is that *every parent in every city or town large enough to have 75 kids in a grade level should have the CHOICE of single-sex education for their children.* We're not saying that every child should be in a single-sex classroom. We're saying that every parent should have the choice. We mention "75 kids in a grade level" because if your school has 75 kids in a grade level, you already have three classrooms. It won't cost you anything more to offer one girls' classroom, one boys' classroom, and one coed classroom for parents who prefer that format.

We have learned a great deal over the past seven years. In particular, we have learned that simply putting girls in one room, and boys in another, does not reliably accomplish very much. In some cases it has led to catastrophe. The teacher who has 20 years' experience under her belt is sometimes dismayed to find that the boys who were reasonably well-behaved in her (coed) classroom last year are now, in the all-boys classroom, jumping up and down and throwing things. "This whole idea of putting the boys all in one room is the craziest, stupidest notion I ever heard of," one teacher wrote to me in an e-mail after her first week in an all-boys classroom. Her 20 years' experience in the coed classroom provided her no clue whatsoever regarding the classroom management techniques she would need in the all-boys classroom. In fact, her experience was a handicap. She kept trying to do things that had worked in the coed classroom. No one had explained to her that best practice for classroom management in the all-boys classroom is fundamentally different.

That's what our Association is here for. We are trying to understand and to document the emerging science of gender difference as it pertains to education, and to share what we have learned. We recognize that "the emerging science of gender difference" refers not only to differences *between* sexes but also to variation *within* each sex: the fact that some girls would rather play football rather than chat with friends; the fact that some boys would rather chat with friends rather than play football. We are learning a great deal about within-sex variations as well as between-sex differences.

The single-sex format facilitates the application of many of the principles we are discovering. As I said, the single-sex format doesn't accomplish much if the classroom is led by a teacher who has no training in how to take advantage of the format. That's what our professional development workshops, and our conferences, are all about. Conversely, teachers in coed classrooms have been successful in broadening educational horizons for both girls and boys when they have had this training.

At our most recent meeting, I and the other members of the NASSPE Advisory Board recognized the need for a journal which would provide an appropriate channel for educators to share what they have learned about what works best for girls, and what works best for boys. That's one key mission for this new publication. We also want *Advances in Gender and Education* to serve as a rigorous, peer-reviewed forum suitable for scholarly publications by full-time academic researchers. And, we thought that the journal should also be home for the occasional reflective essay – such as this one.

I look forward to the journey. I hope you will take part. Please be in touch.

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The story of the falcon and Nasrudin was adapted from "The Royal Pigeon" in Anthony de Mello, *The Song of the Bird,* New York: Doubleday, 1982.

The photograph of the girl on the cliff at Freycinet is reproduced by permission of St. Michael's Collegiate School, Sandy Bay, Tasmania.

Andrew Phillips' drawing is reproduced by permission of Andrew and his mother.