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*Social Inequalities in Education: The Case of Math Women Teachers in Israel*

*Summary*

The thesis "Social Inequalities in Education: The Case of Math Women Teachers in Israel" examines how social perceptions and beliefs about gender influence teachers' behaviours, suggesting that these gendered perceptions can either maintain or challenge educational inequalities. The study focuses on female math teachers in Israel, exploring whether their beliefs about students' abilities in mathematics reflect societal biases and how these attitudes impact student achievement.

Main Findings:

*Gender Bias in the Education System:*

The research reveals that unconscious gender biases are prevalent among teachers in the Israeli education system, manifesting in differences in attitudes and behaviours towards boys and girls. For example, teachers tend to encourage boys more in mathematics and assign them more challenging tasks. At the same time, girls receive less demanding tasks, leading to the realisation of lower expectations regarding their abilities.

*Teacher Expectations and Student Performance:*

Interviews and surveys conducted with 40 female math teachers showed that many teachers hold different expectations for boys and girls. Boys are often perceived as naturally better at math, while girls are seen as needing more support. This perception influences how teachers interact with and promote students, affecting the motivation and performance of female students.

### *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy:*

The study suggests that teachers' expectations can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, where students perform according to their expectations. When girls internalise lower expectations regarding their abilities, it can harm their confidence and willingness to engage in challenging tasks, particularly mathematics. Teachers whose expectations are based on stereotypes may unconsciously skew their teaching methods, thus limiting the potential of female students.

### *Need for Systemic Change and Awareness:*

The author advocates for systemic change, raising awareness and training teachers to recognise and reduce gender biases. It suggests developing intervention programs aimed at promoting gender equality and challenging stereotypes within schools. For example, teachers should be guided to provide equal attention and set high expectations for both male and female students.

### *Conclusions*

The research concludes that gender biases in education are profoundly ingrained and affect students' academic and career paths. These biases have long-term effects beyond the classroom, as students' choices in high school and scholarly pursuits are influenced by their experiences and expectations in primary school.

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including training educators to identify their biases, revising curricula, and creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Educating for equal opportunities means allowing both male and female students to develop their full potential, free from limiting stereotypes.