DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 668 SO 018 704

AUTHOR	Porter, Paige
TITLE	Gender and Education: Sociology of the School.
INSTITUTION	Deakin Univ., Victoria (Australia).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-7300-0400-7
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	145p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Deakin University Press, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia 3217 ($14.50).
PUB TYPE	Books (010)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Educational Opportunities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Feminism; Sex Bias; *Sex Discrimination; Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; Vocational Education; *Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia

ABSTRACT

This book presents a comprehensive review of the progress in equal education for females through an introductory discussion and six readings. The introductory discussion examines the theory that the state and consequently, the education system are seen as having the promulgation of the dominant class hegemony as an important part of its function. The document also traces the interaction between gender and education in the domestic curriculum, vocational opportunities, and the working conditions of women teachers. In the first three readings, Sara Delamont looks at ways to counter sexism during the child's formative years; Dale Spender discusses the different ways that males get more attention in the classroom; and R. W. Connell, D. J. Ashenden, S. Kessler and G. W. Dowsett point out that schools differentiate between male and female students in ways which reinforce sex stereotypes. The results of the study carried out in 1974 by the Schools Commission on "Girls, School and Society," is discussed in reading four. In reading five, Jean Blackburn discusses removing formal barriers to access to education for girls and boys, and in the final reading Jane Kenway and Sue Willis offer alternatives to single-sex schooling as a solution to unequal education. An annotated bibliography is appended. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ERIC

Sociology of the school

Gender and education

PAIGE PORTER

Murdoch University

Deakin University

ERIC

This book forms part of the EED423 *Sociology of the School* course offered by the School of Education in Deakin University's Open Campus Program. It has been prepared for the EED423 *Sociology of the School* course team.

Course team
Lawrence Angus
David Dawkins (chairperson)
Kaye Lont (course developer)
Fazal Rizvi
Peter Watkins

Consultants
Jennifer Nias
Paige Porter

The course includes:
Lawrence Angus, *Schooling for Social Order*
David Dawkins, *Economics, Politics and Education*
Jennifer Nias, *Teacher Socialisation*
Paige Porter, *Gender and Education*
Fazal Rizvi, *Ethnicity, Class and Multicultural Education*
Peter Watkins, *High Tech, Low Tech and Education*

These books are available from Deakin University Press, Deakin University, Victoria 3217.

Students enrolled in the course also receive supplementary material.

Published by Deakin University, Victoria 3217
Distributed by Deakin University Press
First published 1986

© Deakin University 1986

Edited, designed and typeset by Deakin University Production Unit
Printed by Deakin University Printery

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-publication data

Porter, Paige H.
Gender and education.

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 7300 0400 7.

1. Sex discrimination in education. 2. Educational equalization. I. Deakin University. School of Education. Open Campus Program. II Title. III. Title: Sociology of the school.

370.19'345

Series introduction

One feature of education is the gap that exists between academic interests and teacher practice. The theoretical and research interests of academics, on the one hand, are not readily available to teachers; the practical concerns of teachers, on the other hand, may not be taken account of by academics.

It is hoped that this series of monographs will provide a link between academic thought and research and the practice of teaching. Each volume in the series discusses contemporary educational issues and research in a way that can inform educational practice. They do not provide a set of prescriptive recommendations, but present a discussion of theory and research with the intention of highlighting the implications for educational practice in a way that can inform teachers.

The issues discussed in this monograph series include: the relationship between the political and economic institutions of society and the education system, suggesting a link between socio-political conditions and educational policies and programs; the experience of teaching, emphasising the importance of the self-concept of teachers in their socialisation into a professional role; ethnicity and multicultural policy, suggesting that these are best understood in terms of social class and what this might mean for teachers; a view of gender-related inequalities in education that suggests that these are best understood in terms of ideology about the family; the impact of new technology on society and the implications this may have for education; and the possibilities that confront the education system and the practising teacher.

It is hoped that these monographs will clarify some of the complex issues confronting educationists and will stimulate thought and discussion among teachers that will inform their own practice and add to the continuing debate.

David Dawkins
Course team chairperson

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Contents

Series introduction iii

Gender and education 1

Introduction 3

Social reproduction theory 3

Conceptualising social change and human agency 6

Conceptualising gender: Making women visible 9

Arenas for analysis: The development of bureaucracy in education and the relationship between the family and education 13

Examples of the interaction of gender and education: Public schools in twentieth-century Western Australia 18

The domestic education curriculum 22

Choice of course by students 24

Vocational opportunities 26

The working conditions of women teachers 33

Discussion 37

References 39

Readings 43

1 The formative years: Nursery, infant and junior schooling 45
Sara Delamont

2 Make trouble—get results 71
Dale Spender

3 Kids, their schools and the organisation of social life 82
R. W. Connell, D. J. Ashenden, S. Kessler & G. W. Dowsett

4 Girls, school and society—eight years on
Working Party on the Education of Girls 97

5 On education and women 105
Jean Blackburn

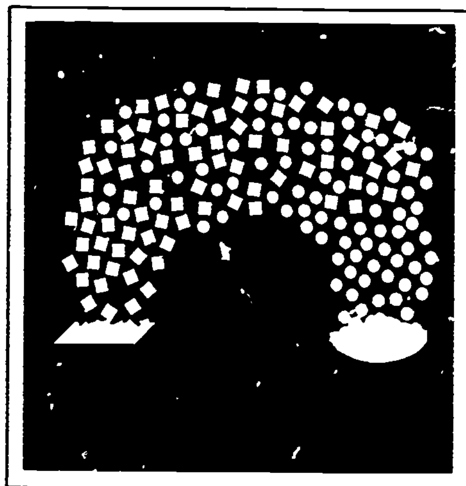
6 Countering sexism the single-sex way: A flawed proposition 116
Jane Kenway & Sue Willis

Annotated bibliography 135

About the author 143

Acknowledgments 144

Gender and education



ERIC

Introduction

In 1971 Michael Young, a well-known British sociologist and educationalist, edited his seminal book on the sociology of knowledge, *Knowledge and Control*. In this book he drew together a number of authors who tried to delineate the ways in which much of what we accept as everyday 'knowledge', including school 'knowledge', is socially constructed, meaning that it is a creation of particular dominant groups in a particular kind of society at a particular point in time and serves to help maintain them in power. Furthermore, the air of truth and of tradition that is conveyed with regard to such knowledge ensures that for the most part we do not ordinarily question whether these assumptions really are the best or indeed the only way to understand the world, whether they mask hidden power relationships and structures, or even whether they limit our perspectives in ways which might actually be detrimental to ourselves.

In the preamble to that book, Young (1971) included a short poem by Robert Desnos, a French poet, which illustrates in simple form the complexities of some of the related social theories and concepts to which I will refer in this monograph on gender and education, including social reproduction theory, the concept of hegemony, the concept of ideology and the concept of utopia. The stanzas by Desnos follow.

> One day young Captain Jonathan,
> he was eighteen at the time,
> Captured a Pelican
> On an island in the Far East.
> In the morning,
> This Pelican
> of Jonathan's,
> Laid a white egg
> and out of it came
> A Pelican
> Astonishingly like the first.
> And this second Pelican
> laid in its turn
> A white egg,
> From which came inevitably
> Another
> Who did the same again.
> This sort of thing can go on
> a very long time,
> if you don't make an omelette.
>
> (Desnos, in Young 1971, p. i)

Social reproduction theory

Social reproduction theories are theories which try to explain why pelicans keep producing white eggs which keep producing pelicans which keep producing white eggs, and so on. Specifically, social reproduction theories developed as an attempt to understand just how capitalist systems seemed to be able to hold themselves together and to continue relatively unchanged, or how they were able to reproduce themselves. This was of both real and theoretical interest, given Marxian predictions regarding the self-destruction of capitalist states. For example, Antonio Gramsci

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

(1891–1937), Italian political theorist, developed a different interpretation of Marxian thought which concentrated more on the superstructure—social institutions which grew from the production system—than on the economic base itself (Gramsci 1971). In explaining how capitalism was able to maintain itself he focused on the concept of 'hegemony', by which he meant the success of a dominant class in projecting its own particular way of seeing the world of human relationships so that this is accepted as common sense and the natural order of things by those who are in fact subordinate to it. The state, and consequently the education system as an important part of the state, are seen as having the promulgation of this dominant class hegemony as an important part of its function.

Louis Althusser (1918–), a French philosopher, in an influential essay argued that all societies are based on a particular mode of economic production and to continue to exist they must reproduce both the labour power necessary to maintain that system *and* the relations of production, or the world view necessary for people to continue to believe in that particular economic system (Althusser 1971). Althusser viewed education as an 'ideological apparatus' of the state which had become, in mature capitalism, the key means by which this reproduction occurs. He stressed the way in which the school, through an ideology of neutrality with regard to its function actually reproduces both the labor power and the relations of production. It does this through its teaching of basic knowledge and skills, and through the inculcation of the kind of behaviour and attitudes required to facilitate submission to the rules of the established order.

Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), contemporary French sociologists studying the French education system, have stressed another element of reproduction theory, and that is how in a class-based social system the relevant social practices are perpetuated. They argue that not only does the education system maintain and stabilise the class structure but that it does this, together with the family, by inculcating within the growing child a system of dispositions, or 'habitus' which will facilitate the ability to behave in the class-appropriate ways in later life. Furthermore, the kinds of acceptable knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that belong to the upper classes are the same as those that are increasingly required the higher one goes in the educational system. Conversely, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that are prevalent in the lower classes are increasingly *less* acceptable within the education system the further up one goes. In addition schools mask their arbitrary nature and appear 'natural'—they just reward merit—thus legitimating not only themselves but the whole social structure as well.

The most clear-cut and comprehensive analysis of education from a reproductive framework is the 1976 work of American economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976). *Schooling in Capitalist America* is a historical study which traced the relationship between changes in the American system of economic production and educational reforms. Bowles & Gintis (1976) see this relationship in terms of a 'correspondence principle', in which a close connection between education and the capitalist production system is ensured, not through the content of education but

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

through the correspondence between the social relations of the workplace and those of the school. Specifically, the authority and control system in schools replicates the hierarchical division of labour in the vertical power structure of the workplace. Students' lack of control over their curriculum is similar to workers' lack of control over the content of their jobs. The motivational system in schools, based as it is on grades and the threat of failure, is similar to the worker's situation with regard to wages and the spectre of unemployment. The compartmentalisation of academic knowledge in schools is similar to the fragmented nature of jobs in most industries. The emphasis on competition between individual students in schools is similar to the stress on individual competition in the workplace.

These reproduction theories have provided considerable incentive to rethink the role of education in contemporary society. They have been a welcome relief from either self-congratulatory approaches about the grand historical march of social progress led by schools, or the blame-the-victim approaches which accept without question the basic economic and political structures of a society and consider solutions to the educational 'problems' of those seen to be deficient in terms of the dominant social system.

However, reproduction theories have some weaknesses. With Robert Desnos and his pelican in mind again, they do not explain how omelettes ever get made. Furthermore, while it is apparent that both a male and female pelican must in some way be involved in the production of the egg there is no allusion whatsoever to either the sex of the pelican nor the relevant interaction that must have occurred. Social reproduction theories have two major problems, one is their determinism and the other is their sexism. (I hasten to add that these are not the *only* social theories that suffer from these weaknesses.) The deterministic nature of these theories means that the stronger one argues for the power of the social structures, the harder it is to explain how an individual or group ever escapes their impact or, indeed, how any social change ever occurs. Further, the implication within such perspectives is that people do not understand what is happening to them, that they cannot change their own lives, that they are not human agents but objects.

The sexist nature of the theories lies in the fact that they do not consider different male and female life experiences, and that their entire interpretation of social life is dictated by the typical *male* life pattern, e.g. participation in the world of paid work. Insofar as they begin their theorising from a mode of production which is taken entirely to be that of the workplace, they ignore a huge hidden infrastructure of the economy in unpaid work and hence the work and lives of women. They ignore gender as a set of power relationships as important as social class. And they relegate the most crucial aspect of social reproduction—the organisation of sex and procreation—to theoretical non-existence. Women, insofar as they are considered at all, are dealt with by attaching them to males. But mostly they are simply invisible. In the next sections I will consider ways in which both the determinism and sexism of social reproduction theories can be moderated

ERIC

Conceptualising social change and human agency

The search for an understanding of how the *determinism* of the social reproductive perspective, both theoretically and in 'real life', can be moderated has recently preoccupied a number of writers. For example Henry Giroux (1981), an American academic, discusses the concept of 'resistance' and how both individuals and class groups are sometimes able to resist the hegemony of the dominant groups in education. Willis (1977) provides an insightful interpretation of how working-class English boys are able to resist the middle-class culture of the school, but he takes the argument down a circular path as the boys' resistance is eventually interpreted as part of the hidden process *confirming* their own class position. Australian sociologist Bob Connell breathes life into the relationships between schools, kids and their families by describing the dynamic interplay of class relations and gender relations in education. As such, both the content and style of his and his co-workers' research and writing works against determinism (Connell et al. 1982). In an essay on social reproduction theories he talks tantalisingly about 'liberating practices' and how they must be seen to emerge from the mundane and not the exceptional:

> Illumination is in no sense an exotic event, to be achieved only by the arcane. It arises in the midst of the everyday, and that is part of what is astonishing. So with culture, no realm separate from one of power; and so with the breaks and reconfigurations, large and small, that we are gesturing towards with a clumsy word like 'liberation'.
>
> (Connell 1983, p. 161)

Another approach to loosening up reproductive theories is to conceptualise the role of ideology somewhat more loosely than did Marx, utilise some of Max Weber's ideas on how tension can occur between ideas in a society and the interests of the dominant groups, and then introduce Mannheim's notion of 'utopias' to provide a source of counter-hegemonic ideas and activities. This is what Betsy Wearing (1984) did in *The Ideology of Motherhood*, and it is an approach with much potential. Briefly, the concept of ideology as it has been primarily used in sociology derives from Marx's notion of the ideas of the ruling class who succeed in having those ideas accepted as the 'legitimate' way to understand the world, thus disguising the basic ways in which they are already exploiting those who do not own or manage the means of production and must sell their labour for wages. Ideology in this sense provides a false, or at least partially false, understanding of the world. What it disguises are the actual relations of material production.

For German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) 'ideology' is a 'world view' which legitimates underlying power structures which include, but are not limited to, those having an economic base. He sees power as also emanating from political and social bases. Furthermore, he argues for the possibility of tensions in society between some prevalent ideas and the interests of dominant groups. Ideas in many different realms may exist which do not correspond to the interests of powerful groups. When and if they eventually do correspond, the conception Weber uses is that of 'elective affinity'. Some ideas have an affinity with the interests of

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

powerful groups, and if so they are likely to become part of their world view, and hence the world view that is promoted as the 'natural' one. Thus this Weberian understanding of ideology allows for the possibility of ideas which do not correspond with dominant interests existing, and indeed even at some point in time coming to be seen to reflect dominant interests and hence being incorporated into the hegemonic ideology. This allows us to conceptualise the operation of a hegemonic ideology and at the same time other ideas—and people—who are challenging the *status quo* (Wearing 1984; see especially pp. 15–30).

This perspective can be taken further through reference to German/British sociologist Karl Mannheim's (1893–1947) concept of 'utopia'. Mannheim distinguishes between ideology which he sees as ideas reflecting dominant groups, and 'utopia' which he sees as ideas reflecting the interests of a subordinate but ascendent group. Wearing (1984), commenting on Mannheim's perspective, points out that

> For Mannheim ... the bearers of ideology represent the prevailing social and intellectual order and they experience that structure of relationships of which they are the bearers. But he sees that within any given society there are groups 'driven into opposition to the present order' who are oriented towards the first stirrings of the social order for which they are striving and which is being realised through them. These groups are bearers of utopian ideas which, unlike ideology, 'transcend the existing order' and attempt to 'break the bonds' of such an order 'while at the same time containing in condensed form the unrealised and unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of the age' and which 'become the explosive material for bursting the limits of the existing order'.
>
> (Wearing 1984, p. 25–6)

Mannheim's concept of utopian ideas allows us to explain not only *individual* resistance to dominant groups and the hegemonic ideology but also organised *group* resistance. In doing so it also provides a way of conceptualising both the possibility of individuals directing their own lives *and* social change. This is useful in thinking about both social class and gender divisions with regard to education.

Yet another way in which we can understand the social reproduction process without getting lost in determinism and sexism is through our conception of the role of the state. In traditional Marxian thought the state is a superstructure built upon the exploitative economic base which reflects the interests of capitalists. Its basic role is to help reproduce the means and relations of capitalist production. However, again a number of theorists, in trying to account for the existence of a much more complex state in mature capitalism, have presented an interpretation which accords the state some autonomy from its economic base. For example, Bowles & Gintis have developed their views beyond the simple correspondence theory discussed earlier. In their more recent work they have elaborated on the contradictions which exist within the state and between the state and the production system (Bowles & Gintis 1981). They now see society as an 'ensemble of structurally articulated sites of social practice' in which a site is a 'cohesive area of social life characterized by a specified set of characteristic social relations or structures' (Bowles & Gintis 1981, p. 229). The sites which are most apparent in advanced capitalistic democratic

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

social formations are those of capitalistic production, the patriarchal family, and the liberal democratic state.

The site of capitalist production is characterised by private property in the means of production, market exchar.ge, wage labour, and capitalistic control of production and investment. The patriarchal family is characterised by a structure based on gender, kinship and age relations. 'The liberal de~nocratic state is characterized by near universal suffrage and general civil liberties' 'es & Gintis 1981, p. 230). These three social sites are seen as f l in defining the major relations individuals have *vis-a- is* their ..ety. 'None of these can be understood as reducible to or derivative from the others' (Bowles & Gintis 1981, p. 230). Each site is capable of relations of domination and subordination. Capitalist production is a site of domination of capital over labour, the patriarchal family is a site of domination of men over women. But the liberal democratic state, while central to the reproduction of the conditions of domination and subordination in the economy and the family, is not *necessarily* a site of domination itself.

A 'contradictory totality' flows from the articulation of these three sites and the dynamics of education emerge from this. Specifically the central contradiction in the education systems of advanced capitalist societies lies in the fact that education has a central role in reproducing the political structure of the capitalist production process and thus property rights, it has a key role in helping to reproduce the patriarchal family and thus male rights, but as a sub-system of the state it also has a role in defending what are perceived to be general human rights. Thus contradictions are inherent in the action of educational systems and policy can be, at one and the same time, progressive and reproductive. In this formulation of the state it is given both reflectivity *and* autonomy from the economic base. Furthermore, it is also credited with some real progres- e' impact via its liberal democratic discourse of natural rights. Given t' r ducation is a key arm of the state this conception allows us to explain how educational authorities can be both progressive and conservative with regard to class and gender divisions. It also illuminates the way the state is both a site of social struggle *and* the prize itself.

Finally, American economists Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin, in their work on the relationship between education, the economy and the state, have drawn attention to the historical and dialectic character of this process (Carnoy & Levin, forthcoming, pp. 25–6). In a somewhat similar vein to Bowles & Gintis (although emphasising the primacy of the economic base more strongly than B wles & Gintis) they suggest that schools as public institutions must guarantee citizen's rights to some extent, while private institutions are more proscribed by property rights. The expansion of the state in this century in a variety of areas, including education, is se n as increasing the protection of citizens' rights, not decreasing them as suggested by conservatives, precisely because the 'growth of the public sector seems to have deve'oped l argely in response to demands for rights and guarantees not available from the free market' (Carnoy & Levin, forthcoming, pp. 25–6). They go on to develop a model of educati nal change which includes this dialectical element.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

> The dynamic of the American educational system, we suggest, can best be understood as part of a much wider social conflict arising in the nature of capitalist production, with its inequalities of income and power. These inequalities lead to struggles by subordinate, relatively powerless groups for greater equality, economic security, and social control. In a politically demo[illegible] society, the State provides space for such struggles. In public education, as our historical sketch has shown, the social conflict is expressed in the conflict between reforms aimed at reproducing the inequalities required for social efficiency under monopoly capitalism and reforms aimed at equalizing opportunities in pursuit of democratic and constitutional ideals.
>
> (Carnoy & Levin 1985, p.24)

Thus through these concepts—the '*resistance*' by subordinate groups to dominant groups, '*liberating practices*' that exist within the structures and processes that dominant groups have established, *hegemonic ideologies* that are countered by sets of '*utopian*' *ideas* through subordinate but ascendent groups, and a view of society which sees *the state* as not just reproducing social divisions but also capable of progressive attitudes and actions in a dynamic struggle—one has a framework for examining the way in which social reproduction occurs, but also a way of seeing that people are subjects not objects, and social change is possible. All of this is relevant in understanding both class and gender in education. Bowles & Gintis have even inserted gender specifically into their framework at least by way of suggestion if not complete analysis. Yet some additional clarification is needed if we are to understand gender's interaction with education as well as class.

Conceptualising gender: Making women visible

The basic tenet in most feminist theory is that gender is as important a source of power as class, and that any theory which orients itself totally around the means of production (defined as the labour–capital relationship) must inevitably obscure or submerge power based on other sources. As Heidi Hartmann, in her comprehensive paper on the unhappy marriage between socialism and feminism, succinctly put it: 'Marxism and feminism are one and that one is Marxism' (Hartmann 1981, p.2). The debate is extensive but essentially it is very difficult to deal with women in socialist theory by doing anything other than—again—attaching them to the men who are presumed to support them via the paid workplace.

However, social theorists who see gender as an equally competing if not *more* pervasive source of power in society than class, chronicle the long history of gender-based exploitation, argue that such exploitation is based on the organisation of sexual relations and procreation (instead of the organisation of the means of production), and that the most salient part of the hegemonic ideology perpetuated by the dominant group (adult males) is that of biology as destiny for women, with our society's resulting notions of 'the family' and 'motherhood' seen as 'natur[illegible] [illegible]d inevitable.

Without going into the extensive debate between so-called socialist feminists and radical feminists (who differ generally on the primacy given to the power structures which emanate from the organisation of production versus the organisation of sexuality) many theorists would suggest that a binocular approach is needed, i.e. a way of seeing how gender and

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

class structures have developed in *interaction* with each other. Bob Connell argues for the need for an account of a 'joint dynamic' between the class structure and the sexual power structure which focuses on historical change. 'It is a question of the interplay between the generative processes that produce capitalism and patriarchy, their processes of transformation, and their tendencies toward crisis' (Connell 1983, p. 38). Joan Kelly, in advocating adopting a 'doubled vision' in this regard, stresses the public importance of personal relations and the personal importance of public relations. She points out that

> *woman's place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally.* It is a subordinate position, and it supports our social institutions at the same time that it serves and services men. Woman's place is to do women's work—at home and in the labor force. And it is to experience sex hierarchy—in work relations and personal ones, in our public and our private lives. Hence our analyses, regardless of the traditions they originate in, increasingly treat the family in relation to society; treat sexual and reproductive experience in terms of political economy; and treat productive relations of class in connection with sex hierarchy.
>
> (Kelly 1979, p. 221, original emphasis)

Thus public and private are not separate spheres but intimately related. How private lives are organised is directly related to how public lives are organised, and how public life is organised is directly related to how private lives are organised.

In understanding the 'joint dynamic' or 'doubled vision' of gender and class it is for the most part the effects of gender which are the least understood, particularly by male social and political theorists. Dale Spender (1982), in her book on the effects of the 'invisibility of women' in the education system, discusses the way in which much of what we think of as human experience is really male experience. Spender argues that many of our understandings of the world as seen in our culture, our institutions, and our economy are understandings based on a male experience of the world. Because of the historically-based hierarchy between men and women, women experience the world differently from men, but this is not generally recognised. Male experience is taken as universal, but in fact it is only part of human experience. This perspective is important in developing an understanding of the processes of social production in respect of gender.

It is useful to elaborate the argument further. Spender argues that the male definition of the world occurs in three ways. Firstly, the way in which *male* experience is seen as *all* experience is related to the way in which *female* experience is not seen at all but is *invisible*. Women's experience of life has largely disappeared from our knowledge of the past. Most people are ignorant of past women's achievements and of their everyday lives. This omission grows and becomes the ostensible reason for the continuation of the ignorance. The result is a distorted history but one which is not seen to be distorted. The second mechanism that facilitates a male definition of the world is the way in which *male* experience is seen as *central* to life and *female* experience is seen *in relation* to male experience and hence peripheral. Men make meanings of life as it appears to them and they name it accordingly. Thus their experience is central and women

are defined in relation to men's experience. This can be seen in our distorted sociology and economics.

For example, the way in which 'work' is defined as what men do but not what women do, no matter how many hours are actually spent in physical chores. This means that women actually find themselves saying nonsensical things like 'Oh I don't work, I'm just a housewife.' It also means that women's work does not get dealt into economic theories and statistics and consequently economists can describe now our economy supposedly operates while completely ignoring a huge hidden and essential economic infra-structure in terms of the unpaid work done by women in servicing men and homes, raising children, consuming, caring for the ill and aged, and providing social welfare services to a wide cross-section of the community. Furthermore, international agencies like the United Nations who gather large amounts of data on different facets of work in different countries have been responsible for categorising data in essentially illogical ways, such as their practice of counting agricultural work done by men as contributing to the gross national product but not agricultural work done by women.

The third mechanism that facilitates a male definition of the world according to Spender is the way in which *male* life-cycle development is seen as the *norm* for human development and *female* development is seen consequently as *deviant*. The male is seen as the normal, representative, paradigmatic human being, and women are judged against this standard and found wanting. For example, psychologist Carol Gilligan (1982), has described the impact of this way of thinking on our psychological theories. She argues that most of the major developmental theorists, such as Piaget, Erikson, Bettleheim, and Freud, have all equated male development with human development, particularly insofar as their theories stress the concept of 'separation' as a milestone of childhood/adolescent development. Attaining psychological separation is seen as the key to maturity. But the reality is that due to our historically-based family structure in which women are the primary child-carers, little boys *do* have to distinguish themselves from their mothers and other female care-givers in order to assume an adult and male identity, but little girls do not to the same degree. Yet girls are then seen as having greater 'problems' with separation than boys. But the problem lies in the definition. Normal male development is taken as universal and girls' inability to separate is then seen as a failure to develop normally. In conjunction with this, girls' developed ability to 'attach' rather than separate is seen as a weakness. When the focus on separation and individual achievement extends into adulthood, and maturity is equated with personal autonomy, then concern with relationships appears as a weakness of women rather than a human strength. Yet surely while individuation is clearly one important aspect of mature human development, so too is attachment.

The point of this kind of work is that it draws our attention to the effects of the past which are embedded in the present. Historically, our social institutions developed in a way which was directly related to the existing hierarchy between men and women. Thus all of our present social structures are likely to reflect that historical relationship. But because they

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

seem to have 'always been', because this has suited particular dominant groups, it is very hard now to 'see' how our modern institutions—and attitudes—are gendered. Analyses like Spender's and Gilligan's are useful for helping to perceive the world differently.

There have also been a large number of writers who have tried to describe the role that the education system plays in the process of social reproduction in relation to gender. For example, Ann Marie Wolpe (1978) has argued that the education system functions to satisfy the requirements of both the division of labour within the family and the sexual division of labour in employment. It does this through providing basic training in the necessary skills and transmitting the appropriate ideologies which will fit girls into, at one and the same time, the 'female' labour market and the traditional wife and motherhood roles within the family. Thus the two systems are linked together and the education is functional for both. Michele Barrett (1980) has also argued that schools contribute to reproducing women's dual relationship to the class structure through ideology, the structure and organisation of schools, the mechanisms of channelling girls into the sexual division of labour, and the definition of the curriculum and legitimate knowledge.

Miriam David has examined the relationship between the state, the family and education in the United Kingdom and argued that:

> the family and the education system are used in concert to sustain and reproduce the social and economic *status quo*. Specifically, they maintain existing relations within the family and social relations within the economy—what has sometimes been called the sexual and social divisions of labour.
> (David 1980, p. 1)

In a historical analysis David looks at the growth and specification of parental responsibilities and rights in connection with the development of mass compulsory education, and the political aims of education with regard to the division of labour in the family and the workplace. In particular she looks at the development of curriculum to teach girls about mothering and sexual division of labour in the home, the 'familial ambiance' or the organisation of schooling, and the treatment of women in teaching.

Thus to be able to conceptualise how *gender* differences operate in education it is important to 'double our vision' by keeping the operation of *class* in mind. Class differences and gender differences have developed together in ways that make it impossible to usefully separate them for the purposes of understanding either. It is also important to place the present in the context of the past and to search out the *historical base* for current practices. This helps to avoid a dissolving away to biology for explanations. We must also keep trying to *make women visible* in our analyses by continually asking the question about the public importance of personal relations and the personal importance of public relations. Given the strength of the public-private dualistic view of the world in our present society, and the ideological attachment of women to the private sphere and men to the public sphere, it is likely that by continually questioning the implications and effects of this social division we can 'demystify' it and 'see' more clearly how the lives of men and women interact.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Arenas for analysis: The development of bureaucracy in education and the relationship between the family and education

In analysing gender and education one could look at many different areas. My preference is to examine two areas which I believe to be crucial in understanding what has gone on and is now going on in the lives of boys and girls in schools, their teachers and their parents, but which are not typically considered in much depth. One is the way in which gender differentiation has been related to the development of bureaucracy in education, and the other is the relationship between education and the family.

I would like to look first at the development of bureaucracy in education. In Australia, as in North America and Great Britain, the development of mass compulsory education systems provided by the state occurred at the same time that business and governments were developing bureaucratic forms of organisation during the period of early capitalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early half of the twentieth century. (See Tyack (1974), for example.) One of the features of bureaucratic organisation is the division of tasks so that a separation occurs between conception and execution. Those who conceive of the task may not be those who are responsible for its execution. Richard Bates (1983) and others have argued that in education this appeared as a separation of administrative concerns from educational concerns. Some people became exclusively concerned with organising, planning and administering schooling and others became almost exclusively responsible for providing the actual education itself. Furthermore, Bates has suggested that the separation of administration and educational concerns was accompanied by the development of a 'cult of efficiency' in education in which a narrow definition of the provision of educational services became the paramount concern of educational administrators. Closely connected with this was the growing concept of expertise in education, or the idea that only certain kinds of people with specific credentials, experiences or skills could be responsible for the social engineering of which the development of compulsory education was a part.

How do the gender issues relate to the development of bureaucracy in education? I would argue that there are at least three ways we can observe this interaction: in gender-linked job types, in gender-linked job descriptions, and in gender-linked job opportunities and power. Gender-linked job types in educational bureaucracies are the easiest to observe. The development of bureaucracy clearly went hand-in-hand with gender-linked jobs in education. Essentially men became responsible for the conception, and women the execution, of schooling. Men became the administrators and women the teachers. Furthermore, as one moved up the educational status ladder of primary through tertiary education the more likely one was to find more men and fewer women. In addition in the important clerical support systems for schools and educational bureaucracies the same pattern was repeated with female secretaries and male managers. David Tyack (1974), writing about the development of American urban education at the turn of the century, has demonstrated how in that country the developing bureaucratic forms of organisation were able to use the existing gender stratification system to the advantage of male

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

administrators (and also to the advantage of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant administrators).

The development of bureaucracy in education also went hand-in-hand with gender linked job descriptions. This is a somewhat more subtle manifestation and has to do with the ways in which what are actually gender-linked jobs are defined officially in non-gender-linked ways but actually structured so as to nurture the gender link. It is a good example of the 'sexism you are having when you aren't having sexism'. Let us consider a non-education example for the purposes of illustration. Rosabeth Moss Kantor (1977), in her study of *Men and Women of the Corporation*, has made some interesting observations on the organisational structure of secretaries' jobs and the relationship between female secretaries and male bosses. Basically Kantor argues that what it takes to be a good secretary perpetuates differentiation between clerical and managerial hierarchies and prevents secretaries from job mobility. In her view the social organisation of secretarial work involves three aspects: the fact that secretaries derive their status from their bosses and the boss's status determines the power of the secretary, that there are very few limits on managerial discretion with regard to secretaries' work as secretaries must respond to a constant flow of orders and are expected to provide personal services, and finally that there is also an expectation of strong personal loyalty from the secretary to the boss.

Kantor argues that these characteristics of the organisation of secretarial work cause secretaries to display behaviour and attitudes which are taken to be female attributes but which are really the orientations of people whose strategies for achieving recognition and control are constrained by the social organisation of their job. For example, in one study the female secretaries in a large organisation eventually became parochial in the sense that they narrowed their interests to their own small part of the organisation as this was what their bosses encouraged, they became timid and self-effacing about their own skills or potential talents, they became addicted to praise as that was a central element in the reward structure of their job (as opposed to money or mobility), and they became prey to emotionality and gossip as a classic way in which the powerless get something from the powerful through emotional manipulation. But what is important is that the attitudes and behaviours that they were rewarded for as good secretaries were exactly the opposite of the attitudes and behaviours they needed to move into management (which were thinking broadly about the whole organisation, being confident about their abilities, and able to take criticism as well as praise). The social organisation of the secretaries' jobs also encouraged them to resist organisational change.

Let us examine these ideas in education. For example, it is possible that the social organisation of the job of primary school teachers works against job mobility into administration, in that the attitudes and behaviours that are needed to be seen to be a good primary school teacher are quite different from those that are needed to be seen to be a good manager, e.g. a principal. It is also possible that the attitudes and behaviours that are needed to be seen to be a good primary teacher are quite different

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

from those needed to be seen to be a good secondary teacher. It is even possible that the attitudes and behaviours needed to be seen to be a good school teacher in general are quite different from those needed to be seen to be a good tertiary academic. Furthermore, it is a fact that each of the 'lower' levels is more female-dominated than the 'higher' levels. Thus the jobs may be socially organised and structured in such a way so as to maintain the gender link, while seeming to maintain only what is perceived to be essential job descriptions. Finally, since women mostly hold the jobs lower in the hierarchy, the job descriptions and related job characteristics are also seen to be female characteristics and not just job-related expectations. The circle closes.

As a last point in this area, with regard to the relationship between the social organisation of the job and resistance to change, Michael Apple (1982) has done some interesting work in which he argues that one can understand little about educational change without recognising the significance of the gendered labour force of teaching. He suggests that the history of curriculum reform in schools has been largely the history of 'patriarchal politics' in which male academics and male administrators try to intervene in the work of a largely female teaching workforce. It is through this dimension that he interprets much of the (gendered) resistance to curricular reform.

The third way in which gender interacts with the development of bureaucracy in education lies in gender-related job opportunities and power. An important point here is the extent to which having opportunities and power, versus not having them, creates a self-fulfilling prophecy for both the haves and the have-nots. Returning to Kantor's (1977) work, she argues that what power in bureaucracies is all about is in getting for the group, for subordinates and followers, a favourable share of the resources, opportunities and rewards possible in the organisation. She also points out that power begets power, and that people prefer to associate with the powerful. Bureaucracies are complex organisations which ensure dependency upon many others for decisions to be made. Powerful people can help to short-circuit the dependency by creating some certainty. With regard to women in bureaucracies, Kantor argues that the preference for male managers is to a large extent a preference for power.

It is not difficult to envision this argument applying to educational bureaucracies as well. In organisations like schools where women have not had the same historical opportunities for power and hence efficacy, it is not surprising that males are more powerful and seen to be more powerful. In building a career in education it has been safer to form alliances with males rather than females in that the reality has been that males would be more likely to become powerful, and hence facilitate more certainty, in these complex organisations.

The second area of education which I would like to consider is the relationship between education and the family. What I would like to argue is that gender differentiation is crucially based in our ideas, our ideology, about the family and that the education system is particularly implicated in reproducing traditional views in this area. The importance of the family lies in the reality that it is this institution that is most basic in governing

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

male-female relationships. It is with regard to the family that the status of men and women is most clearly determined. Thus our notions about the 'proper' kind of family are important in understanding the status of men and women. In reality there are, of course, many different kinds of families in which men and women play many different roles in many different ways. Yet it is in the ideal rather than the real that ideology about the family is most obvious and the most powerful. In our society for about the last one hundred years the ideal family has been seen as one in which there exists one male wage earner who brings outside income into the family, and one female who remains at home and whose responsibilities are basically to service the male and offspring. This notion of the family is enshrined and entangled in the concept of the 'family wage' which was given considerable impetus in Australia through the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1907.

This type of family is different to the one which existed prior to the Industrial Revolution, in which the entire family unit was responsible for bringing income into the family, and looking after family members was the responsibility of several members of a larger and often extended family unit. Many observers have pointed out that with the development of the factory system came an increasing division of labour in which economic production was shifted out of the home and away from women and children (see Kuhn & Wolpe 1978; Eisenstein 1978). It became the domain of individual men who were paid a wage on which the entire household was expected to survive. Consequently women were increasingly perceived as non-contributors to the economy, yet the new system was actually dependent upon the unpaid work of women as well as the paid work of men. The role of women within the family in caring for men, children, aged relatives, providing social welfare services to the community, and consuming, are key economic roles. They must be done for society and the economy to function. If there is not an unpaid woman in the family to do them, then someone from outside is hired and paid to perform exactly these tasks. Furthermore, it is clearly in the interests of private capitalists and governments for as much of this to remain *in* the family as possible. This is the distinction between the public and private spheres, and this is the way in which women are actually *part* of the economy but not seen to be part of the economy.

Thus we have an ideal family image and ideology which enshrines economic dependency for women. An extension of this basic patriarchal system is that women are culturally defined as dependent whatever the reality of individual circumstances. Hence all women are perceived as 'naturally' dependent on men. When it is obvious that a particular woman because of her job or power is not dependent, then she is perceived as an aberration, and however commendable her behaviour it is not 'natural'.

The education system becomes implicated in confirming this particular ideology about the family in the multitude of ways it reinforces these notions, e.g. the hundreds of little acts which encourage girls towards academic areas and future jobs which are most likely to ensure their future economic dependency; the continuing lack of women in decision-making roles in which modelling of independence could be observed, the teaching

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

of a history which portrays the only 'productive' members of the society to have been men, the various ways in which the higher status of men is confirmed, such as the well-known research showing that teachers spend far more time and attention on boys in classrooms than on girls, and so on (see Spender 1982). What is important to recognise here is that this is not just mindless discrimination. The spoken and unspoken justification lies squarely in our ideology of the family as discussed earlier. That is *why* it happens. And that is the reason it is not solved simply by the large number of genuine reforms introduced in schools in this area in the last decade. Sexism in education has to be confronted directly in terms of its relationship with the ideology of the family.

There have been a large number of theories and concepts considered so far in this monograph with regard to the interaction of gender and education. Initially I discussed the usefulness of social reproduction theories as providing a basic understanding of how gender and class were mediated through education. However, I also pointed to the determinism and sexism inherent in these theories. I then suggested ways in which, conceptually, some of these problems could be moderated. Social reproduction of both class and gender can be seen to operate through the hegemony of dominant groups—both capitalists and adult males. This hegemony is heavily dependent upon ideology which legitimates these power relations. Yet ideas do exist in society which are not aligned with these dominant interests, including relatively organised sets of ideas representing alternatives, or utopias. Utopian ideas are usually held by subordinate but often ascendent groups. In addition there are many incidences of individual resistance. There are also likely to be contradictions and liberating practices which exist within the hegemonic structures and processes. Indeed, the state itself has increasingly become both a site of social struggle between dominant and dominated groups and a prize itself. Furthermore, in conceptualising this process it is important to keep the *joint* dynamic of gender and class firmly in mind and to discover the historical origins of present practices. Finally, in making women more visible in this process I have suggested that the relationship and interaction between the public and private spheres (particularly in the workplace and in the family) is crucial for a fuller understanding of the interaction of gender and education.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Examples of the interaction of gender and education: Public schools in twentieth-century Western Australia

It should be obvious that the agenda that I have suggested for an analysis of gender and education is an extensive one, and one which is beyond the scope of this monograph. However, what I would like to do is to briefly provide several examples using the concepts I have discussed. In looking at certain aspects of state education in Western Australia in this century it is necessary first to sketch an overall picture of both the nature of economic and political development during this period, and the provision made for public education.

Briefly the period of 1890–1900 in Western Australia was dominated by gold rushes in the Kimberleys and later at Yilgarn in the east. This brought in a large number of immigrants and changed what had been primarily a wool- and timber-producing colony into one in which gold made up 88 per cent of the total export income in 1900. Manufacturing was a very small sector, and Western Australia was a heavy importer of such goods.

The period from Federation in 1901 until the First World War was characterised by slower economic and demographic growth, with more emphasis on land settlement. However, in 1913 gold still made up 61 per cent of total export income. The other main products were wheat, flour and other products associated with agriculture in general. Manufacturing remained quite a small proportion of the economy. Population growth between 1890–1915 peaked during the gold rush period. The high percentage of males to females was also a characteristic of the era, as it had been since colonisation, although it did decline over the two decades (Appleyard 1981). See Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic trends in Western Australia, 1889–1915

Year	Males	Females	Total	Net migration	Natural increase	Females per 100 males
1889	26 890	18 770	45 660	863	983	70
1891	32 176	21 001	53 177	3 758	917	65
1893	40 975	23 948	64 923	5 187	1 167	58
1895	69 733	30 782	100 515	18 167	769	44
1897	107 655	52 840	160 495	22 301	1 378	49
1899	106 816	63 442	170 258	530	2 850	59
1901	117 885	75 716	193 601	10 435	3 199	64
1903	134 140	90 608	224 748	8 864	3 911	68
1905	146 498	103 640	250 138	5 857	4 873	71
1907	146 264	108 276	254 540	-5 414	4 781	74
1909	151 325	114 350	265 675	1 106	4 898	76
1911	167 993	125 930	293 923	11 923	5 168	75
1913	180 534	139 401	319 935	8 030	6 284	77
1915	170 890	145 773	316 663	-11 451	6 025	85

Source: Adapted from Appleyard (1981, p.234, Appendix 6.1).

ERIC

1913 to 1945 was a period when Western Australia reeled from external forces in the form of two world wars, a drought, and an international depression. This is emphasised by the fact that the '1913 level of real per capita income was not exceeded until 1950' (Snooks 1981, p. 237). Snooks argues that this poor economic situation was contributed to by the state government's 'unbalanced development policy centred on agricultural expansion in marginal rural areas' combined with attempts to 'maximize the growth of population through assisted immigration' (Snooks 1981, p. 240). He suggests that the decline in the growth of the gross domestic product could have been minimised by slowing immigration, and thus reducing agricultural expansion which could have raised productivity in that area, by trying to aid the declining mining industry which had been hit by inflation during the war, and by aiding the higher productivity pastoral and manufacturing industries. This preoccupation with the rural sector in Western Australia, interestingly enough, took place nearly entirely under Labour governments which were in power most of the period between 1924 and 1947. It also continued despite the fact that this was a period of strong urbanisation in Western Australia when Perth's population increased proportionately from just over one-third to over one-half of the total state (Snooks 1981, pp. 237–65).

The period of 1945 to the present has been characterised by the end of the Second World War, Liberal governments and relative economic prosperity, related to primary industry growth and in particular to wheat and wool until the mid-sixties, after which the mining boom carried the state into the mid-seventies. By 1974–75 the relative contribution to total recorded production was about 37 per cent for manufacturing, 31 per cent for mining and 33 per cent for primary industries excluding mining. While there is little doubt that the last mining boom contributed substantially to the rate of growth of personal incomes, it is interesting to note that the distribution of the workforce was heaviest in the wholesale and retail trade combined with manufacturing. This is despite the fact that manufacturing in Western Australia remains well behind the eastern states. It is also the case that the percentage of the workforce in agricultural and related industries has declined (Ghosh 1981). See Table 2.

Population growth in the post-war period in Western Australia has been greater than in Australia as a whole, primarily due to a sharp increase in net migration, particularly between 1966 and 1971 during the mining boom. Migration in general to Western Australia, unlike Eastern Australia, has been primarily from British sources. In 1976 85.5 per cent of Western Australia's population had their birthplace in Australia or the United Kingdom. Western Australia followed the national trend of falling birth rates: from 1891 to 1901 the average annual rate of natural increase in the population was 3.19 per cent, and in 1966 to 1971 this had declined to 1.52 per cent. Table 3 describes the population trends.

The shape of twentieth-century public education in Western Australia took form in 1893 with the establishment of the colonial, later state, Education Department. (See Mossenson (1972) for a comprehensive history of education in Western Australia.) While the provision of 'free, compulsory and secular' primary education had been the task of nineteenth-

ERIC

Table 2 Western Australia's workforce growth and distribution (percentage of workforce), 1947 and 1971

		W.A. 1947	W.A. 1971	Australia 1971
1	Agriculture, including forestry, fishing, hunting	18	9.1	7.4
2	Mining and quarrying	5	4.0	1.5
3	Manufacturing	18	14.7	23.2
4	Electricity, gas and water	n.a.	1.1	1.7
5	Construction	7	10.3	7.9
6	Wholesale and retail trade	14	19.2	18.8
7	Transport and storage	9	6.0	5.2
8	Communication	1	1.9	2.0
9	Finance and property	3	6.5	6.9
10	Public administration and defence	3	5.0	5.4
11	Community services	9	11.1	10.8
12	Entertainment, hotels, etc.	13	11.1	9.2
Total workforce %		100	100.0	100.0
Nos (1000s)		206.4	430.4	5240.4

Source: Adapted from Ghosh (1981, p. 284, Table 8.8).

Table 3 Population in Western Australia and Australia, 1933–1976

Census Year	W.A.	Australia	W.A. population as % of Australia	Sex-ration in W.A.*	Intercensus increase in W.A. (%)	Intercensus increase in Australia (%)
1933	438 852	6 629 839	6.62	114.16	31.89	21.97
1954	639 771	8 986 530	7.12	106.77	27.32	18.57
1966	848 100	11 599 498	7.31	104.10	15.13	9.92
1971	1 030 469	12 755 638	8.08	105.52	21.50	9.97
1976	1 144 857	13 629 250	.40	103.10	11.10	6.85

*Masculinity ratio.

Source: Adapted from Ghosh (1981, p. 287, Table 8.9).

century educators, the period of 1900 to 1930 saw the introduction of the basic structures for the expansion of secondary education in Western Australia. These included the creation of one full four-year state high school, Perth Modern School, in 1911; the development of four other full high schools and two district high schools in agricultural areas in line with the rural politics of the day; the development of central schools in Perth which congregated older primary pupils (Years 7 and 8) into one institution; and the reform and extension of evening continuation classes for working students. In addition Claremont Teachers Training College

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

opened in 1902, Perth Technical School in 1910, and the University of Western Australia in 1913. These innovations clearly delineated secondary from primary education and created a system which continued relatively unchanged until the post-Second World War period.

Educational development did not proceed without strife, however, and the financial restrictions placed on teachers' salaries (and other public servants) during the war resulted in a twenty-day teachers' strike in 1920 and a strengthening of the militancy of the Teachers' Union. After a few less financially stringent years the depression caused the government of the day to close the Teachers College in 1930, again reduce teacher salaries in 1931, and abolish continuation classes in 1932 as economy measures. These actions resulted in the so-called Regulations Strike of 1934 in which teachers worked to regulations and did not perform out-of-classroom duties. Despite the economic situation the government had to re-open the Teachers College in 1934 due to the desperate shortage of teachers. The Second World War and the forties merely prolonged the poor financial situation of government schools.

By the fifties, with the war in the past, the dramatic increase in student numbers resulting from both the post-war 'baby boom' and immigration meant expansion again. Heavy teacher recruitment and building programs went along with a major expansion and reorganisation of secondary education. The official description of the reorganised high school was 'coeducational, comprehensive and community'. Such schools offered a wide variety of courses to cater for the different interests of all students who lived within the school's community district. By 1960 there were twenty-seven such high schools in the metropolitan area and surrounds, and thirty-five such junior high schools in country areas. This type of expansion continued through the sixties and into the seventies, with its attendant financial problems increasing. The 1973 federal election brought some relief with the election of a new Labor government committed to finally responding to the long and increasingly loud demands for federal aid to both government and non-government schools. By the middle of the seventies the long post-war economic boom in Australia seemed to have come to a halt, and inflation and unemployment (especially youth unemployment) resulted in financial stringency in education and elsewhere once more.

This very brief sketch gives a general idea of the development of Western Australia and its provision for public education. What I would like to do now is trace some of the interaction between gender and education in several areas: the domestic education curriculum, the choice of course by students, vocational opportunities, and the working conditions of women teachers. In particular, I will be looking at the *ideology of the family and the associated male and female roles proscribed in relation to it within the private sphere and the public sphere*. I will be considering whether the state, through the education system, had such an ideology, how visible it was, whether there was resistance to it, whether there were contradictions between it and other education policies or ideas, and whether there were other sets of ideas—utopian ideas—around that provided a serious challenge to the hegemonic ideology.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

The domestic education curriculum

Elsewhere I have described in more detail the home economics and needlework curricula, and the choice of the professional, industrial, commercial and domestic courses that secondary students could take in Western Australia in the first three decades of this century (Porter 1983). As this was the period in which the pattern of secondary education was laid down this era is important, particularly since significant changes in that pattern did not occur until the post-Second World War period, and not then until the mid-sixties. In the following section I will firstly describe the period, 1900–30, and then discuss development to the present.

'Domestic economy' was a subject offered to virtually all girls in the upper years of primary school from the beginning of state-provided education. Together with manual training for boys, these 'practical' subjects were seen to provide important eye–hand co-ordination practice, accuracy and tidiness skills, as well as equipping children for their future lives—particularly girls (Education Department, Western Australia 1906, p. 10). Household management centres, which were set up as much like a home as possible, and to which girls came for sessions from contributory schools, were established in 1907. The curriculum was intended to include cooking, the care of the sick, the care of children, household furnishing, cleaning, food purchasing and budgeting. When laundry work was introduced to the course it became controversial, as many parents objected to their daughters doing such a subject at school. Their concerns ranged from the fear that the girls were being exploited (in terms of doing the laundry of other public institutions), the unacademic nature of the work, to the lack of desirability of girls eventually finding employment in this area anyway (Education Department, Western Australia 1908, p. 80). Keeping in mind that State-provided schools were particularly for working-class children, one might attribute their parental resistance to a feeling that middle-class Education Department officials were attempting to 'keep them in their place'. It is likely that they had ideas of prospective employment for their daughters which had more status. They may have also felt that to be good homemakers girls did not need a school course in laundry work. In any event it is likely that both gender and class were in interaction in this area.

The Education Department regularly noted the objections in their annual reports, but continued to pursue the course they felt was most desirable. Their rationale focused on the importance of the training of future wives and mothers of the state, and they eventually made laundry work a compulsory part of the household management curriculum so as to end the disputation. Nevertheless, they continued to defend their domestic course and laundry work over this thirty-year period. Some of the ideology of the family which underscored their rationale can be seen in the following excerpts from annual departmental reports:

> In the schools an attempt is being made to combat with the evils of drink and smoking ... A superficial knowledge of the matter is sufficient to prove that a very common cause which drives a man from his home to the hotel is a badly cooked dinner or a mismanaged washing day. Therefore it seems

to be of more importance to provide instruction in practical cookery and laundry work for the girls who will develop into wives and mothers than to teach theoretically the evils of excessive drinking and smoking.

(Education Department, Western Australia 1909, p. 92)

It is to be hoped that girls who receive instruction in these most necessary arts will be the better fitted for their future destiny as wives and mothers than would have been possible for the large majority of them had they not received such instruction in the schools.

(Education Department, Western Australia 1915, p. 49)

During the period under discussion (1900–30), needlework was another part of the curriculum considered essential for girls, yet it too was a problem area for the Education Department. In this case it was not only the lack of enthusiasm by the students but objections by the female teachers responsible for the lessons. A statement by the Department to its teachers in the *Education Circular* clearly lays out the perceived importance of needlework both for the home and workplace for working-class girls, and the ambivalence of middle-class female teachers in devoting time to this non-academic subject:

There is a strong temptation to push needlework into a corner, and to look upon it as unimportant compared with other subjects. To many teachers ... it does not figure in the list of subjects required for Bursary, or University examinations, and does little towards raising the status of the school ... State education exists primarily for the benefit of the working classes, whose children have to make their own way in the world; and therefore for these girls the ability to make and mend is of the utmost importance. If we look to 'the relative value of subjects' in after life, a woman will rarely be called on to work a sum in square root or analyse a sentence; but nearly every day of her life rents will require mending, and stockings have to be darned. The woman who can do these things well will be a thriftier, tidier, and therefore more useful member of society than the one who cannot.

(Education Department, Western Australia 1900, p. 71)

The lack of interest by teachers, as well as the poor quality of student work, was regularly commented upon by the Education Department in the annual reports. The possibility of salary reduction in this matter was brought to the attention of teachers through the *Education Circular*. 'Teachers are reminded that under Regulation 64, section (a), female teachers not qualified to teach sewing are subject to a reduction in their salaries' (Education Department, Western Australia 1901, p. 96). Furthermore, the issue also reflected differences and disputes between male and female teachers, as men were paid extra for teaching manual work but women were not in the case of sewing. The Education Department was not impressed with this protest by some of its teachers.

Many of our teachers, especially the younger ones, seem to think that sewing is not part of their usual work; they look on it as an extra subject, and some have even asserted that those who teach sewing should be paid extra for doing so, as men are for manual work. It is well to remind such that sewing is an integral part of women teachers' work in every civilised country, and such a claim is as irrational as being paid extra for teaching any other class subject.

(Education Department, Western Australia 1910, p. 101)

The departmental inspectress also lamented 'In many schools it is to be feared that senior girls are robbed of their sewing lessons in order to coach them for University subjects' (Education Department, Western Australia 1910, p. 101). Her view was that the 'Ability to teach it [sewing] should be required of every woman student' and that female teacher trainees should have their College certificate withheld until they satisfactorily passed an examination in needlework.

There is little doubt that needlework for girls prepared them jointly for the sexual division of labour in the home and the workplace. It is also clear that the Education Department had a quite visible ideology about women in this regard and that resistance by female teachers for reasons either of academic status or equity with male teachers would not change their convictions. In another venue it is also apparent that the Department even recognised the economic role of women in the family. In 1921 there was an evaluation of technical education in Western Australia and the subsequent report recommended, amongst other things, that instruction should not be provided free of charge except for courses for industrial purposes only. In this regard they recommended that dressmaking and millinery should only be provided for those in the trades. The Education Department debated this and pointed out that the university offered many courses free of charge which were not directly related to employment. Furthermore, they argued that industry was also *in* the home: 'it must be remembered that the largest single industry in the world is that of home making. It cannot be said that classes which render the women of the community more efficient in their life work are to be considered as of no value to the State' (Education Department, Western Australia 1922, p. 15)

Choice of course by students

Another area in which we can ascertain the ideology underlying the Education Department's programs for girls and boys was the choice that they were given during this period amongst differentiated courses in the categories of professional, commercial, industrial and domestic. The industrial course was reserved for boys and the domestic course was reserved for girls. However, both girls and boys could do the professional and commercial courses. From 1915 through to 1928 the Education Department stressed its concern that too many girls were doing the commercial course instead of the domestic course See Table 4.

The issue was raised in a number of annual reports, and the inspector stressed that the domestic course was a strong one and that girls who took it 'should prove thoroughly capable housewives in the future'. But the problem was that 'This course, however, does not attract the numbers which its value warrants'. The reasons were clear to him and the Education Department.

> One cannot be blind to the fact that at the present day work in the home is not attractive to the great majority of the growing girls . . . They prefer almost any other kind of employment. Large numbers of them desire to enter offices as female clerks . . . Still the shorter hours of labour, the greater freedom, the less strenuous work, and what is still unfortunately falsely con-

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

sidered as the greater social dignity, are attracting too many of our girls from women's natural sphere in the home, and bringing them into competition with men. There is a very large number of girls who are attracted, too, by the professional course... Still there remains the consideration that for nearly all women the home, and all that the term 'home' signifies, is their natural destiny, and it is somewhat difficult to see how girls who drift into commercial and professional work are even going to acquire the training which will make them efficient as wives and mothers in the future ... the outlook for the future is not thoroughly satisfactory. It seems to me if the present tendency for 80 per cent of our girls to rush into office or kindred work is maintained, that the homes of the future will be composed of an efficient male wage-earner and a more or less efficient wife.

(Education Department, Western Australia, 1917, p. 56)

The domestic course for girls was intended to prepare working-class girls for both their work in their own homes and work in the homes of the middle and upper classes. Western Australia, like the eastern states, had always had an insufficient supply of domestic servants. Again the gender and class dimensions of this issue are inseparable. The Education Department, for its part, recognised the problem of the low social prestige of domestic work in other people's homes and stressed the efficiency of their program.

The trouble seems to be that work of a domestic nature has generally in the past carried with it a sort of stigma of social inferiority and has generally been the refuge of those who were uneducated.

Such a condition need no longer apply. We have in connection with our Household Management Classes all over the State facilities for training girls to be just as efficient workers in a home as we have in our Commercial Classes to train them to be efficient workers in an office.

(Education Department, Western Australia, 1917, pp. 65-6)

The popularity of the commercial course compared with the domestic course for girls remained an issue for the Education Department throughout this period, and comments continued in the annual reports that not only did the girls appear to avoid the domestic course but that their parents were also unconvinced of its value. 'The course is undoubtedly one of great value for the future housewives and mothers. The attention of parents has been drawn to the importance of this training, but

Table 4 Enrolment in central schools, Western Australia, 1913-29

	Commercial course			Industrial course	Domestic course	Professional course			
Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Total	Total
1913	297	346	643	277	119	-	-	-	1039
1917	583	823	1406	531	197	203	307	510	2644
1920	490	611	1101	658	367	275	418	693	2819
1924	366	544	910	837	389	522	233	755	2891
1927	378	673	1051	784	429	612	356	968	3232
1929	690	873	1563	823	393	793	309	802	3581

Source: Compiled from Education Department, Western Australia, *Annual Reports*, 1917-30.

ERIC

many of them are doubtful about the possibility of it leading to directly remunerative work' (Education Department, Western Australia 1922, p. 5).

The next thirty years in Western Australia saw little change in this general approach to domestic education for girls. Annual reports continue to talk about the value of both the subject and the course in terms of their importance for future 'mothers of the State' and in terms of their potential 'commercial value'. Domestic economy became domestic science in 1944, home science in 1951, and home economics in 1968, name changes which raise some interesting speculation about the perceptions of such an area as science versus economics, as well as possibly reflecting the subjects' lack of 'fit' with the more typical academic curriculum. The subject remained compulsory for all girls through the sixties when it became an option at the secondary level (remaining compulsory for one year at the primary level). In the seventies it became generally possible for both boys and girls to take either home economics or manual arts. However, time-tabling, peer pressure, teacher and parental expectation still ensure that for the most part girls and boys follow the traditional pattern. Certain areas of home economics, such as food and nutrition, have become somewhat more popular with boys, while areas like clothing and fabric remain almost exclusively in the girls' domain. Home economics has also become an examinable subject for tertiary admittance in Western Australia. This 'professionalisation' of the subject became more possible after the Western Australian Institute of Technology opened a course in home economics in 1975.

Vocational opportunities

Other aspects of the ideology of the Education Department regarding the family and male/female roles over this period can be examined with reference to a large number of official sources. For example, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System* (1938) is an interesting document both for what it does and does not say with regard to the employment of girls and boys. The Commission was concerned with the entire area of youth employment and unemployment, education, training and apprenticeships. Not surprisingly the bulk of the report was clearly focused on the future of boys in the world of paid work. Although the report described the centre of its concern as 'youth', which it defined as 'any young person between the ages of 14 and 25 years' it went on to talk nearly entirely of training boys, finding employment for boys, organising apprenticeships for boys, etc. (*Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System*, 1938, p. vi–vii).

The report did make one specific recommendation for girls when it noted that there was no provision for domestic science in any of the technical schools, only provision for dressmaking and millinery, and went on to recommend that 'instruction in domestic science be included in the technical curriculum' (*Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System*, 1938, p. xxxi). (A new course in hairdressing had just been established with outside funds.) The Superintendent of Technical Education, in evidence to the Commission, commented:

> Many girls leave school with a limited knowledge gained in the domestic science centre . . . From both the domestic and the employment point of view it is desirable that the technical schools should be equipped so that they could continue the work of the domestic science centres and give the girls who have left school and older women the benefit of such training. It is agreed that many young women must in future become domestic workers, and that the status of such work should be raised by a systematic course of training . . . In such a course the following could be incorporated:- Cookery (elementary, advanced and invalid); hygiene; housewifery; science; physiology; laundry work, etc.
>
> (*Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System* 1938, p. xxvi)

In one short section the report directly tackled the controversial issue of female employment. It began by pointing out that 'In spite of the general impression to the contrary, there has not been a world-wide invasion of the labour market by women in the twentieth century'. Instead what had happened was that women had moved from the traditional occupations of women, in particular agriculture and domestic service, to occupations with better conditions, such as light industry, commerce, the civil service and the professions. The report stated the view that

> Women are in the main employed in avocations to which they are particularly adapted. In some industries . . . a lighter touch is required, or a more deft operation of some machine is necessary and it will be found that for the most part women preponderate . . . I may cite the case of machinists working on adding and computing machines. This type of work is of a tedious and monotonous nature, and is essentially sedentary, and it was found that men would not stick to the uninteresting and, after a while, mechanical process of working a machine, especially as that particular line of work offers little or no prospect of advancement . . . The fact is that males generally show no inclination to take up these classes of work. In the teaching profession, too, this is the case. The Department has difficulty in obtaining men teachers. Yet here is a profession in which discrimination in wages for a similar class of work is actively practiced to the extent that on an average the male receives approximately one-fourth more than the female.
>
> (*Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System* 1938, pp. lxii–lxiv)

The report went on to argue that there was no point in trying to force women out of the workforce, because in the main they were in occupations which suited their 'delicate movements' or 'temperament'. Thus while they did not oppose women being in paid work, they did see the issue quite clearly in terms of essential differences between the sexes. In particular, women unlike men, were better able to tolerate monotonous, tedious, sedentary and uninteresting jobs with no future in them.

The occupations to which women were seen to be suited were delineated in a highly promoted booklet put out by the Education Department in 1936, and used for many years afterwards. Entitled *A Guide to Occupations for Boys and Girls*, the document was a reasonably comprehensive review of available employment opportunities in Western Australia at the time. What is most striking from the perspective of the underlying ideology regarding male and female roles was the very limited nature of the jobs available to girls compared with boys. See Table 5.

ERIC

Table 5 Occupations for boys and girls, Education Department, Western Australia, 1936

Level of Education	Boys	Girls
Employment for those who leave primary school	Shop and warehouse assistants, factory hands; agricultural work; Government Railway Department; Royal Australian Navy	Shop and warehouse assistants: factory hands; waitresses; cooks; domestic service; laundry work
Employment for those with junior technical course	*Skilled trades-apprenticeships*: Building trades—bricklaying, stone masonry, plastering, carpentry and joinery, plumbing, sheet metalwork, painting and decorating Engineering trades—fitters and turners, pattern makers, welders, electricians, motor mechanics, brass finishers, blacksmiths, boilermaking, moulding, coach building, government railway workshops, postal service, junior mechanics Household supplies, food, clothing—breadmaking, pastry cooking, butchering, tailoring Furniture trades—cabinet making, wood-turning, upholstery, chair and frame making Printing trades—hand composing, machine composing, letter press machining Others—hairdressing, saddlery and harness-making, jewellery and watchmaking, shipwrighting and boat building	*Skilled trades-apprenticeships*: order tailoring; factory tailoring; dressmaking and millinery; printing and book-binding; photography; beauty parlour and hairdressing

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Level of Education	Boys	Girls
Employment for those with junior high school course	Commonwealth Public Service—junior officers, clerical division, telegraph messengers	Commonwealth Public Service—telephonists, female assistants, typists
	State Civil Service—junior clerks	State Civil Service—junior typists, junior machinists
	Government Railways—junior clerks	Nursing
	Police Department—cadets	General clerical work
	Commonwealth Defence Forces—commissioned officer	
	Mining industry—(+ School of Mines course) assayer, mine surveyor, geologist, electrician, draughtsman	
	Others—banks; insurance firms; municipalities; commercial institutions; general clerical work	
Employment for those with high school course (most occupations require further tertiary study)	[Sex not specified as above but discussion is in terms of 'boys', except for teaching] Professional occupations—professional accountancy; architecture; dentistry; engineering; journalism; law; medicine; pharmacy; surveying; veterinary science	
	Teaching—government schools, non-government schools.	

Source: Adapted from Education Department, Western Australia 1936, pp. 14–56).

The 'flavour' of the Education Department's annual reports began to change in the fifties, and the style and the language generally became less personal and more bureaucratic. Directors-General and other high-ranking officials stopped revealing as clearly the values they were promoting in education, and the reports became more strictly information-providing documents. However, the various working parties set up from this period on to consider the reorganisation of secondary schools, combined with the Department's *Education Circular* and the *Western Australian Teachers' Journal* to teachers, are still good sources of the views of the day.

For example, the so-called Neal Report, *The Secondary School Curriculum*, which was worked on over the period of 1958 to 1963, produced

an interim report in 1958 and a final report in 1964 (Education Department, Western Australia 1964). The report is interesting in general for its combination of humanistic values and attempt to consider the needs of all students in the new style comprehensive, co-educational community high school, and its *approach* to achieving this which involved developing a highly differentiated cumulative curriculum in which students would be organised through streaming into ability groups based heavily on intelligence tests. In relation to home science and manual training the report clearly stated the view that too much time was spent on these subjects in Western Australia and that their compulsory nature was questionable, and, furthermore, that it was likely that they were being taught in too academic a manner in an effort to maintain academic respectability (Education Department, Western Australia 1964, p. 31). As the report was very concerned that the school teach about social and personal responsibility needed for living in a democratic society, as well as the more traditional academic areas of study, it was something of a statement in favor of general education as opposed to pre-vocational education. Consequently, practical areas like home science and manual training were seen as less necessary than the social education which, by implication, was being neglected. The view that modern families were asunder and that one of the roles of the school was to compensate for these deficiencies was one of the evident reasons: 'Living in a modern community demands skills and attitudes beyond those normally provided in social education by the family and social life. The school should try to develop these and also to supplement inadequacies existing in some homes and environments' (Education Department, Western Australia 1964, p. 1).

The Dettman Report, *Secondary Education in Western Australia*, in 1969 continued the discussion about secondary reorganisation (Education Department, Western Australia 1969). It, too, stated broad humanistic aims for education, although it did reintroduce the notion of pre-vocational subjects, partially as a response to the rising secondary retention rates. It also came out against streaming based on general intelligence. With regard to the specific education of boys and girls, amongst other things, it notes with expectation: 'While it is usual for the most capable students to follow the academic course, some elect to take the general course. This is particularly the case in relation to some girls taking the commercial course' (Education Department, Western Australia 1969, pp. 40–1). (This future for academically able girls was also described in the Neal Report, 1964.) The report also comments with favour on the innovation of work experience programs, and cites the example of one metropolitan high school which succeeded in gaining work experience for its students in the categories below. It is hard not to observe that the occupational categories considered appropriate for boys and girls in 1936 would still seem relevant. See Table 6.

As in the Neal Report, the importance of pastoral care, guidance and the 'inculcation of the moral values upon which our society rests' were seen as important roles for the school, given the demise of the family, which was at least partially due to mothers, and as well fathers, going out of the home to work:

Table 6 Occupational categories appropriate for girls and boys, 1936

Boys	Girls
Cabinet making—furniture factory	General office work—steel distributor
Storeman/dispatch—plywood distributor	General office work—cement tile manufacturer
Factory hand/delivery—laundry service	General office work—machinery firm
Fettling—diecasting factory	Book-binding—printing firm
Metal machining—general engineering works	Shop assistant—chemist
Bowser attendant/lube attendant—service station	Shop assistant—drapers
Motor body building—body works	Shop assistant—chain store
Sheetmetal working—sheet metal fabricators	Telephonist/receptionist—vehicle distributor
Battery building—battery factory	Factory hand—chicken hatchery
Butcher—retail butcher shop	
Electrical maintenance—industrial electrical service	
Storeman—paint manufacturer	
Process worker/storeman—aluminium extrusion plant	
Motor mechanic—stationary engine distributor	

Source: Education Department, Western Australia (1969, p. 48).

> In current society, however, with so many homes where both parents go to work, where many children are unsupervised for an appreciable time after school, and where many homes seem to be affected by a diversity of factors harmful to children, the school must assume more and more responsibility in the field of character training.
>
> (Education Department, Western Australia 1969, pp. 72-3)

In 1973 the Education Department compiled a report on discipline in schools and during that exercise they surveyed secondary students with regard to their vocational aspirations. The *Educational Circular* reported those results with a discussion on the merits of vocational versus general education. The varying sex differences in the data were also noted. However, one of the interesting aspects of the figures is not only the obvious sex-role stereotyping, for example, of girls in category C, but overall the large number of girls wanting to pursue categories A, B and C (70 per cent); see Table 7. The article's own question is relevant: 'But does this mean that schools should cater for these varying interests?' (Education Department, Western Australia, August 1974, p. 218).

In 1975, at the request of the Minister for Education, a Committee on Sexist Discrimination was formed to look into discrimination against males or females in the state education system. Amongst the areas considered by that committee was the subject and course choice by students.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Table 7 Vocational aspiration of secondary-school students

	Occupational category	Males	Females
A	Doctor, professor, lawyer, accountant, clergyman, architect, etc.	940 (38%)	528 (23%)
B	Business owner, farmer, contractor, etc.	320 (14%)	85 (5%)
C	Teacher, lecturer, social worker, etc.	303 (13%)	1013 (42%)
D	Insurance salesman, real estate salesman, government department clerk, bank teller, etc.	182 (9%)	274 (11%)
E	Electrician, hairdresser, mechanic, baker, etc.	483 (20%)	428 (17%)
F	Truck driver, labourer, machinist, etc.	150 (6%)	52 (2%)
Total number		2528	2480
Total percentage		100%	100%

Source: Adapted from Education Department, Western Australia (1974, p 218).

In their report they noted that it was still the case that girls at Year 8 took home economics and boys manual arts, and that further, because of prerequisites and teacher attitudes, most students continued to take the traditional subjects in their high school options. One important consequence of this was that the 'practical' areas at the secondary level involved girls doing home economics which had limited employment possibilities in the seventies, and business education courses geared to a narrow range of occupations, while the boys, through manual arts, were actually able to do a large range of pre-vocational options (Education Department, Western Australia 1976, p. 42–7).

The report was also critical of the vocational guidance resources in use in Western Australian schools, and pointed out that in 1975 there were 14121 students in pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships and that less than six per cent of these were girls, nine-tenths of whom were in hairdressing, while the boys were in sixty-four different kinds of jobs. It was not unlikely that there is a link between the occupational choices made by girls and the options and information provided in schools. The report made a number of recommendations to the Minister regarding possible changes in Education Department policy (Education Department, Western Australia 1976, p. 55).

In 1981 the Research Branch of the Education Department investigated the relationship between sex and subject choice in more detail (Brown 1982; Brown & Fitzpatrick 1981). Their conclusions were straightforward:

> In Western Australia, the patterns of enrolment of boys and girls in both tertiary admissions and general elective subjects in high schools have not changed since the early 1970s. Marked sex differences in enrolments are evident at Year 8 level, and intensify through secondary school. More girls still enrol in home economics, typing and language areas; more boys enrol in mathematics, technology and science-oriented subjects.
>
> (Brown 1982, p. 1)

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

The reasons for the persistance of these sex differences in subject choice in the schools in their study were:

1 the constraints of what was actually available after schools timetable for 'majority' interests;
2 the social isolation felt by students who chose an option thought to be more suitable for the opposite sex;
3 the discouragement of some teacher counsellors because of their concern for what they saw as the well-being of the students, or their pragmatism in vocational guidance, or the shortage of resources, or their clear value positions;
4 and, finally, the different backgrounds and experiences of boys and girls in relation to these subjects.

It was obvious that the Education Department was beginning to become responsive to a variety of social forces with regard to equality of opportunity for girls in education. The most clear-cut indication of the change in the official ideology in this regard was the statement on policy from the Director-General's office on 'Equality in Education with Particular Reference to Women and Girls', which was released in May 1980. The statement announced that the 'Education Department supports the concept of equality of opportunity through education'. They also acknowledged that female teachers 'have a right to work and to have equal pay, and to have equal access to all benefits and opportunities.' However, they did note that there were 'social and family pressures which make equality for women difficult to achieve'. Nevertheless, the intention of the Department to examine some of these issues was given. It is to this area of the working conditions for female teachers that I will now turn (Education Department, Western Australia, July 1980, p. 197).

The working conditions of women teachers

Attitudes towards women teachers are extremely important because they clearly denote what are considered appropriate life styles for adult women—and hence implicitly the direction schools should be guiding girls—and because of the direct potential influence of women teachers as role models for the girls themselves. One of the areas where the attitude of the Education Department has been clear has been in the simple numbers of females and males in the teaching ranks. In the early years of this century it was common for the Education Department to regularly lament the lack of men in teaching and the need to improve conditions to attract the 'best men'. For example, in 1909 some of the problems seen to be associated with too few male teachers were that women could not manage older children especially boys, women had to specialise in infant teaching which meant not enough teachers in the upper grades; there were accommodation problems in country areas for women, and women could not teach agriculture to boys in rural areas (Education Department, Western Australia 1909).

By 1915, after the beginning of the First World War, the problem worsened. The principal of the Teachers College discussed why it was so hard to attract men, and concluded that it related to the following aspects:

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

the fact that fewer boys remained at school until age eighteen, that boys did not show the same interest in teaching as girls, that there were more prospects for advancement in other professions for men, that the entrance examination rejected more men than women, and that women did better at the examinations at the College. Furthermore, 'women students have been noted for their fine bearing and gentle ways, their intellectual capacity and their ability in both lecture room and school.' Women also did better in the practice schools, and the principal concluded: 'but it must be remembered that women at the age of studentship, say from 18 to 21, as a rule are more adaptable, find more interest in teaching problems, and more readily get in touch with children than young men of the same age' (Education Department, Western Australia 1915, p.94). These comments are made in the context of complaining about the lack of men. It would seem that whatever the superior accomplishments of women teachers they were not desired, at least in large numbers, by the Department.

Other 'problems' identified with too many female teachers over the years include: women lack the confidence to teach older students; the 'education of future manhood' should not be left to women; women do not want promotion; schools in mining and timber towns need men; science work will suffer; sport will suffer; discipline will suffer; women are happy with low salaries, so depress the going rate; women will resign and serve less time; women cannot handle responsibility; women cannot handle power; women cause unemployment.

This discussion regarding too few male teachers continued until the mid-fifties, when there were actually more male than female teachers, and the Education Department began to discuss the issue of too *few* women teachers, which it described as creating 'organizational problems', e.g. the staffing of primary schools, the teaching of home ecomomics and needlework, etc.

Another area where the attitude of the Education Department towards men and women comes out clearly is in the concessions given male teachers during and after the two world wars. This is particularly important in the context of the development of the state education bureaucracy. For example, during the First World War, in a section of the annual report for 1920 which stressed how the requirements for entry to the teaching profession had risen considerably in recent years, and how permanency could only be obtained through a course of professional training, the Education Department also observed that some consideration needed to be given to the male teachers who served on active duty. It noted that many of them had been in the middle of courses which would have entitled them to a higher classification, and that years spent in the service made it difficult to prepare for departmental examinations. Nevertheless, none should be disadvantaged by their service. Thus 'Provided that the teachers in question show, within a reasonable time, that they possess the necessary teaching skill and power of control, they will be advanced in classification without undergoing the usual examination' (Education Department, Western Australia 1922, p.8). The Department also commented on how well the returned servicemen were doing as a result of their experiences.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

'The years as soldiers gave new experience, new ideals, and new feelings entirely, which have all tended to broaden the men's outlook and to sharpen their initiative and resource' (Education Department, Western Australia 1920, p. 50).

During the Second World War a long list of concessions was made by the Education Department, including such items as: the payment of superannuation contributions, the granting of long-service leave, Christmas pay, overseas service counted as qualifying for promotion, permanency maintained, assistants to go to head-teacher lists, consideration given to promotion to inspectorships, military service taken as equal to teaching service for all promotions, various waiving of regulations for women marrying servicemen (*W.A. Teachers' Journal*, 8 November 1941, pp. 141–2). However, for those women teachers who also responded to what was an urgent call for both male and female volunteers from Military Headquarters the Minister informed them that they must resign their positions and hence receive no long-service leave, superannuation pay or any other benefits. The Teachers' Union protested about this, but to no avail (*W.A. Teachers' Journal*, 3 December 1941, p. 160).

During both wars the Education Department commented on how efficient and effective the women teachers were and how patriotic it had been for the married women 'on supply' to come to the aid of the state. After the wars the 'temporaries' were let go as soon as possible. It is obvious from the annual reports that during wartime the women were considered competent to handle all the areas they were considered incompetent to handle at other times. It is also interesting to note the extent to which the Education Department was willing to go to adjust to men's service to the country in terms of military duty, when compared with the perceived difficulties in adjusting to women's service to the country in terms of marrying, bearing and raising children.

The area in which we can see most clearly the ideology of the family held by the Education Department is the 'equal pay' issue. Equal pay for male and female teachers doing the same job was actually a very early plank of the Western Australian Teachers' Union. From 1917 until 1971, when it was finally implemented, equal pay was a major and continuous issue for discussion in the organ of the Teachers' Union, the *W.A. Teachers' Journal*. It is impossible to trace the complexity of this issue in this short monograph. However, I will touch on a few important aspects.

The crux of the issue was the extent to which the basis for wages was seen as the 'family wage'. This basis was introduced into Australia in the so-called Harvester judgment handed down in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1907. The 'family wage' is based on the concept that a man must earn enough to support a wife and children as well as himself, with normal needs in an average community. As it was assumed that women did not have dependents and that the 'family wage' was based on this 'need', as well as personal efficiency in doing the jobs, 'The imposing edifice of a "family wage" was to bar the progress of women's pay rates for over half a century' (Ryan & Conlon 1975, p. 91).

In 1920 the Education Department firmly stated this issue for teachers:

The vexed question of the relation between men's and women's salaries has

ERIC

received careful consideration. In the abstract, the claim that equal pay should be given for equal work seems just. But our present economic system is based on the family, and in every trade or profession a man's pay must be such that he is enabled to support a wife and family, and so provide for the bringing up of the next generation.'

(Education Department, Western Australia 1920, p. 9)

The first major confrontation in Western Australia on this issue was the combined Public Services Strike in 1920, which lasted twenty days. As women teachers were in the considerable majority in the Teachers' Union, and as it was their salaries which were a particular grievance, it was very much the same women who supported this militant action. In May 1920 the women of the union executive published 'The Women's Manifesto' in the *W.A. Teachers' Journal* urging women to support the executive in whatever action was necessary. They said in part:

> We women teachers have realised for some time past that our services were not being rated at their proper value. During the war all financial claims were waived ... £25.000 has recently been spent in a partial re-adjustment of salaries ... Practically the whole of this has been given to male assistants and head teachers ... except in the lowest grades, and then only in niggardly fashion, the women teachers as a body received nothing. Our indignation at the injustice of it is natural, but the remedy is in our own hands. Seventy per cent of the teachers of this State are women—we have an overwhelming majority. If we combine to give the Executive our wholehearted support our just claim must be recognized ...
>
> (*W.A. Teachers' Journal*, 10 May 1920. p. 41)

The strike was well supported and initially appeared to have won its goals: interim salary relief, similar treatment of both sexes, and the establishment of the Public Service Appeal Board. However, the Education Department soon reneged on the similar treatment of the sexes, and the Equal Pay case brought to the newly established Appeal Board was heard, and then cast out on the grounds that it was an 'abstract question'.

The union argued that, basically, women teachers were doing the same work as men teachers, that the majority of positions were interchangeable, that where they were not they were of equal responsibility and standard, and that during the war the women had done so well they evoked the congratulations of the Director and the Minister. The Minister argued in opposition that because of the 'economic' factor men had to support families and thus needed higher wages, that if there was more money available he would prefer to raise men's salaries so as to attract more into teaching, and that equal pay was against public policy because it could discourage marriage (see the *W.A. Teachers' Journal*, 10 December 1920-10 February 1921).

The Western Australian Teachers' Union then persisted with deputations to Ministers on equal pay after resolutions of annual conferences in approximately *every other year* until the change of policy in 1965. The union was accompanied on a number of occasions by representatives of a large number of other women's organisations. By the 1930s the cause of married women teachers was also a standard subject of deputation. In the 1940s the issue of promotion, and in particular women as heads of schools, began to be pushed. In 1968 accouchement leave was granted.

Equal pay came in stages by 1971. Married women were allowed on permanent staff in 1972. 1972 also saw the first woman principal of a co-educational senior high school. The Director-General's policy statement on equal opportunity was issued in 1980. A Superintendent was appointed and an Equal Opportunity Unit established shortly thereafter. There is little doubt that the women in the Western Australian Teachers' union were active and instrumental in these achievements. John Negus, President of the Union in 1982, commented after the annual conference on the strength of the 'anti-sexism lobby' within the union: 'One other, not so obvious, feature of Conference which bears remarking upon is the rise of the women's movement or the equal opportunity lobby as a real force in teacher politics' (*Western Teacher*, 10 September 1982, p.6).

Discussion

This short examination of the 'official' ideology about the family held by the Education Department in Western Australia illustrates various aspects of the nature of the relationship between the state, the family and education. First it is apparent that the Education Department *had* a view of the proper form of the family, that the family was seen as a most important institution in society, and that the Department viewed its function as partially to train children to fit into their appropriate roles within the family and to treat female and male teachers accordingly. It is also clear that those roles were sex-specific, and that they represented very much the traditional nineteenth-century romantic notions of home and hearth, as well as class-based notions about the appropriate forms of working-class families. The official ideology then was very much the traditional view of the day, until quite recently.

This is perhaps not very surprising. What is interesting, however, is that it is also clear in this case that there was at various times resistance to the official view, that the Education Department perceived it as such, and attempted to deal with it—though primarily by pushing their own view more strongly or more consistently. Thus the resistance by parents to laundry work in the household management curriculum was dealt with by introducing compulsion. The resistance by female teachers to sewing was sanctioned by reductions in pay and attempts to make it a compulsory subject in the teacher-training institution. The preference by female students and their parents for the commercial over the domestic course was lamented publicly for years. In this case, although they could ensure that all girls did some domestic subjects, given their other commitment to freedom of choice, they could not formally insist that all girls did the 'appropriate' course.

Although the arguments for the expansion of secondary education were initially couched entirely in terms of the needs of boys and, in particular, the educational waste to both 'the boy and the nation', they moved very quickly during the First World War to begin to include efficiency in the competition between nations, and the needs for an educated populace in a democracy. After the Second World War there was an increasing consciousness of Australia as a nation, combined with a view of schooling as serving the state by promoting a better kind of society. Notions of

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

individualism and the use of education to further the development of every individual's potential also became part of the rhetoric of the Education Department.

It is in these notions--democracy, preparing citizens for a better society, the development of individual potential—that contradictions begin to emerge with regard to education for boys and girls. Girls should be trained for efficiency in the home, yet they should develop their individual potential. Girls should do domestic courses to prepare for their inevitable destiny as wives and mothers, yet the commercial and professional courses were open to them and they took advantage of them. Girls would only 'end up' in the home, yet secondary schooling should be compulsory for them and the content of that schooling should be primarily academic. Girls would be financially dependent upon husbands, yet training for remunerative work was important. Girls of high academic ability should do tertiary study where possible, yet they should eventually retire from the workforce to be good homemakers. Girls should aspire to marriage, yet once this was achieved they should forfeit their right to paid employment, or if not, should accept there would be no concessions for family life. These were the kinds of contradictory messages about education, the family and the role of the state which were increasingly evident in state ideology in the Western Australian case.

Finally, it is also evident that in the case of education for a long time there have been utopian ideas regarding the role of women. They have been well represented by women in the Western Australian Teachers' Union and they have been, while not entirely successful, sufficiently successful to have moderated much of the rhetoric and some of the practices in schools which have disadvantaged girls and women teachers. Women teachers have been the force for considerable change in education, and, while they have been influenced by the recent upsurge in the women's movement which has been active in the Western world since the late sixties, they have also been influenced by a long and continuous history in education in Australia of battling for equal pay, rights for married women, and promotional opportunities. Betsy Wearing makes this point, in her study of the ideology of motherhood, when she points out that some women have been able to question that ideology of motherhood and the family: 'I refer to middle-class professional women who have acted in this movement as bearers of utopian ideas which transcend the existing social order, challenge existing gender and class structures and relationships of power and reveal as ideological prevailing "taken-for-granted" beliefs about gender relationships and roles' (Wearing 1984, p. 27).

These examples also enable us to see how the state—and its education system—*has* been a site of social struggle for interlinked gender and class issues. That it is also the prize itself is apparent in the case of equal opportunity in education.

ERIC

References

Althusser, L. (1971), *Lenin and Philosophy*, New Left Books, London.

Apple, M. (1982), 'Work, gender and teaching', manuscript prepared for *Teachers' College Record.*

Appleyard, R.T. (1981), 'Western Australia: Economic and demographic growth 1850–1914', in C.T. Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A., pp. 211–36.

Barrett, M. (1980), *Woman's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*, Verso, London.

Bates, R. (1983), *Educational Administration and the Management of Knowledge* (ESA841 Theory and Practice in Educational Administration), Deakin University, Vic.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.C. (1977), *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Sage, London.

Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1976), *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Harper and Row, New York.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1981), 'Education as a site of contradictions in the reproduction of the capital–labor relationship: Second thoughts on the "correspondence principle"', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 2(2), May.

Brown, S. (1982), The lines of least resistance: Factors affecting sex differences in subject choice in lower secondary schools, paper presented at the Women in Education Conference, Perth, W.A., April.

Brown, S., & Fitzpatrick, J. (1981), Girls, boys and subject choice, Discussion paper no. 11, Education Department, Perth, W.A.

Carnoy, M., & Levin, H. (1985), *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif.

Connell, R.W. (1983), *Which Way Is Up? Essays on Sex, Class and Culture*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Connell, R.W., Ashenden, [illegible] Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G.W. (1982), *Making the Difference: [illegible] [illegible]ies and Social Division*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

David, M.E. (1980), *The St[illegible] Family and Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Dettman Report, see Education Department, Western Australia (1969).

Education Department, Western Australia (1900), *Education Circular.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1901), *Education Circular.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1906), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Austr[illegible] (1908), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1909), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1910), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1914), *Annual Report.*

ERIC

Education Department, Western Australia (1915), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1917), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1920), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1922), *Annual Report.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1936), *A Guide to Occupations for Boys and Girls.*

Education Department, Western Australia (1964), *The Secondary School Curriculum*, Perth (Neal Report).

Education Department, Western Australia (1969), *Secondary Education in Western Australia*, Perth (Dettman Report).

Education Department, Western Australia (1974), *Education Circular*, August.

Education Department, Western Australia (1976), *Males and Females in the State Education System of Western Australia, a Report to the Minister for Education*, Perth, July.

Education Department, Western Australia (1980), *Education Circular*, July.

Eisenstein, Z. R. (1978), *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Ghosh, R. N. (1981), 'Economic development and population growth in Western Australia since 1945', in C. T. Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W. A., pp. 267–93.

Gilligan, C. (1982), *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Giroux, H. (1981), 'Hegemony, resistance and the paradox of educational reform', *Interchange* 2(2–3), 3–26.

Gramsci, A. (1971), *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers. New York.

Hartmann, H. (1981), 'The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union', in L. Sargent (ed.), *Women and Revolution*, South End Press, Boston.

Kantor, R. M. (1977), *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Basic Books, New York.

Kelly, J. (1979), 'The doubled vision of feminist theory: A postcript to the "Women and Power" Conference', *Feminist Studies* 5(1) Spring, 216–27.

Kuhn, A., & Wolpe, A. M. (eds) (1978), *Feminism and Materialism: Women and the Modes of Production*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Mossenson, D. (1972), *State Education in Western Australia 1829–1960*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A.

Neal Report, see Education Department, Western Australia (1964).

ERIC

Porter, P.H. (1983), 'The state, the family and education: Ideology, reproduction and resistance in Western Australia, 1900-1929', *Australian Journal of Education* 27(2), 121-36.

Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System, Perth, 1938.

Ryan, E., & Conlon, A. (1975), *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788-1974*, Thomas Nelson, Sydney.

Snooks, G.D. (1981), 'Development in adversity 1913 to 1946', in C.T. Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A., pp.237-66.

Spender, D. (1982), *Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal*, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society and Chameleon Editorial Group, London.

Tyack, D.B. (1974), *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Wearing, R. (1984), *The Ideology of Motherhood: A Study of Sydney Suburban Mothers*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

W.A. Teachers' Journal (1920), 10 May.

W.A. Teachers' Journal (1920-21), 10 December—10 February.

W.A. Teachers' Journal (1941), 8 November and 3 December.

Western Teacher (1982), 10 September.

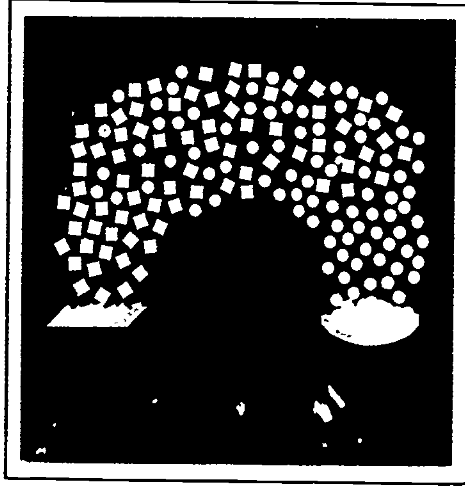
Willis, P. (1977), *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, Saxon House, Farnborough.

Wolpe, A.M. (1978), 'Education and the sexual division of labor', in A. Kuhn & A.M. Wolpe (eds), *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Young, M.F.D. (ed.) (1971), *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, Collier-Macmillan, London.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Readings



ERIC
Full Text Provided by ERIC

1

The formative years: Nursery, infant and junior schooling

Sara Delamont

Source Sara Delmont *Sex Roles and the School*, Methuen, London, 1980, ch 2, pp 10-44

The Jean Ritchie column (in the *Sun*, Wednesday 20 September 1978) was headed 'How can a girl be a boy?' and began as follows:

> For the benefit of liberated lady schoolteachers everywhere: my kids are boys and – believe it or not – they're different from girls.
>
> What's more, I don't want any feminist schoolmarm putting her ten-point plan to annihilate the difference between the sexes into practice in their classroom.
>
> I'm happy that they fight, get dirty and are better at running and jumping than the girls they know.
>
> I'm happy that the girls are more articulate, want to play gentle games, and care about getting their clothes dirty.
>
> I'm happy, for goodness sake, that they are different.

Jean Ritchie was criticizing a ten-point, anti-sexism programme which she claimed, 'the liberated lady teachers are following'. She disliked girls being asked to carry things, to get dirty, and to change for games with boys, but admitted that 'some of the other points are sound'. (These were not specified for us.) The reader of this book might now ask why, if 'liberated lady teachers' were busy implementing a ten-point plan to eradicate sexism, s/he had not heard anything about it before now, or indeed why this book had been written arguing that schools reinforce hyper-conventional sex roles. The answer is that the *Sun* was reacting hysterically to an article in the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* in which one deputy head in a primary school gave the ten ways in which she tried to counteract sexism (Shave, 1978). The following issue (76) ran a feature on the row Shave's list had provoked in the national press and the reaction in the village where she worked. During the same period there was another rumpus in Devon over a draft council report on sex

ERIC

stereotyping in primary schools. Here the chairman of the education committee which rejected the report told the press that:

> If parents wish to bring up boys as boys and girls as girls, this would seem to be highly desirable and fundamental to family life. If boys are to be turned into fairies and girls into butch young maids, it should be for the parents to decide and not the education authority or schools. (*TES*, 13.10.78)

Note here the confusion between sex and sexuality. The chairman seems to be assuming a girl engineer would be a lesbian! One can reasonably enquire what the documents which provoked such anger were like. The Devon report was rejected in draft, but Sally Shave's ten points were published, and are set out below.

Ten ways to counter sexism in a junior school

1 I teach on a one-to-one basis. It's exhausting, but it lessens the need for the children to conform.

2 I dress and behave in school and use the same language and mannerisms as I do in the community, with parents and friends, hoping to lessen the gap between school and home.

3 I've made sure the school purchased and used a varied reading scheme consisting of nonsexist books. And we always discuss the sexism in traditional stories, like *Cinderella*, and often reverse the roles in such stories.

4 I never, even for the slightest convenience, divide the children into boys and girls, for any activity.

5 I never co-operate with teachers' requests for 'Four strong boys to move these boxes, please.' I train the girls to lift and carry – very difficult at first.

6 I introduced and encourage mixed sports. The boys love mixed netball and hate mixed football.

7 In sewing and cookery which the boys do I always oppose suggestions that the boys will grow up homosexual (by parents or children) by asking why this would be such a bad thing anyway.

8 The children change for PE and swimming in mixed sex groups.

9 I encourage the girls to wear jeans and easy-going clothes and to get dirty if necessary.

10 We have discussions on sex, family life and different ways of life in the community. I never give them the 'beauty of sex and the mystery of life' talk.

Shave's article was written up in several places, including the *Daily Express, Daily Mail*, local evening papers and the *Sun*. The *Spare Rib* editorial co-operative writing in the following issue said this was the least extreme article in the magazine, but the most straightforward and quotable. One can only see why the press regard Shave's suggestions as startling when one realizes how segregated and distinct the two genders are kept even before puberty when their physical and mental capabilities are very similar. The children of Britain grow up with sex-

stereotyped names, clothing, toys, games, books and comics, which mean that by the time they are of school age gender stereotypes are deeply embedded. The normal school reinforces these stereotypes rather than challenging them, as we shall see, and this is why Sally Shave's plan seems so outrageous. This chapter examines how sex stereotyping is built up in young children and then how it works in schools and classrooms.

The naming of children

The minute a child is given a name he or she is forced into a classification system, which gives the baby a gender label and tells us quite a lot of other things about the person concerned. Thus we can tell that Ruxsana and Sapanjit are probably Pakistani; Rhian and Mair are Welsh; Bernadette and Theresa are Catholic and probably Irish too; Ishbel and Margot almost certainly Scots; Tracey, Stacey and Donna are working class; while Emma and Charlotte are middle or upper class. All these people are also clearly female; Ibrahim, Geraint, Joseph, Donald, Darren and Charles would be male equivalents. Names which are ambiguous as regards gender are relatively uncommon. The *Collins Gem Dictionary of First Names* (1976) has 'over 2000 names', each labelled carefully 'm' or 'f'. Only twenty-four names are labelled 'm or f'. Male and female names are also chosen for different reasons, as this rhyme from an American book (quoted in Walum, 1977, pp. 38-9) shows:

> She's made of sunshine, sugar and spice . . .
> Someday she's bound to change her name
> Now choose the one that will stay the same.

This rhyme headed a list of girls' names. while that for boys includes the lines:

> The name that polls the winning vote
> The famous name that makes up quotes.

Walum argues that American parents choose pretty names for girls which are polysyllabic, 'more melodic, and softer' while boys' names are 'short, hard-hitting and explosive'. Boys' names are short in themselves, like Lance, or have short diminutives, like Josh and Nick. A small study I carried out of 1250 children between nine and fourteen in two English cities suggested that this was true of white, English-speaking parents in Britain too. Boys' names commonly used are monosyllabic or have short abbreviations. The girls' names are polysyllabic, and fussy, pretty and pert rather than serious. The naming of children, then, labels them not only with their gender, but carries messages about strength versus frivolity.

Clothing children

The kinds of clothes in which the children are dressed continue this gender labelling. Walum (1977, p. 42) argues that from

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

early childhood children's clothing is sharply gender differentiated:

> In a trip through an infant section of any department store . . . on the girls' racks are princess dresses, granny gowns, pink satin pantsuits, and bikinis: on the boys' . . . are baseball uniforms, tweed suits . . . astronaut pajamas and starched white dress shirts.

The position in Britain is essentially similar. I examined the clothes offered for sale in the catalogues produced by the firm *Mothercare* for summer 1978 and winter 1978. These clothes are in an intermediate price range, not the cheapest available, but are best sellers and typify what British children wear. The *Mothercare* catalogues have a modern, progressive air, for fathers are shown bathing and carrying babies around and some of the pregnant mothers and the child models are black. There is, however, no unisex in the children's clothes once they leave babyhood behind. Perhaps the most interesting example of the gender differentiation is that only boys are shown in track suits. Yet if ever there was a garment designed for activity, and suitable for both sexes, it is the track suit. Adult women athletes wear them, but not the children in the *Mothercare* books. The world of clothes is gender typed and so too are the toys and games they play with.

Toys and games

The toys and games bought for the British child are noticeably class biased. The affluent working-class child has different toys bought for different purposes from the child in an 'intellectual' middle-class home. The working-class child who reaches a nursery school or day nursery may encounter the 'educational' toys there, however, so these have a wider influence than their narrow circulation among parents. I examined catalogues specializing in educational toys (*Galt* and *Offspring*) and the toy section of two general catalogues (*Quality Post* and *Marshall Ward*). A detailed analysis of the pictures and the texts leads me to the following conclusion. The world of toys and games offers girls a far more restricted range of roles than it does boys, and the roles offered girls are essentially passive, home-centred, non-scientific, non-technical and good. Boys are offered twenty-four roles, girls eight. While many of the boys' occupations are unrealistic, Robin Hood, Big Game Hunter, Spaceman, Dracula, Red Devil Parachutist, Cowboy and Indian, there is a variety of realistic adult male roles: engineer, postman, private soldier, policeman, footballer, cricketer, boxer, teacher, artist, sculptor, carpenter, driver and frogman. In contrast, girls are offered teacher, make-up artist, jewellery maker, nurse, secretary, dress designer, Miss World, ballerina, and a whole variety of domestic skills: cleaning, cooking, sewing and shopping. Who wants a model supermarket trolley at £4.50? Or a model washing machine at £10.00? There is no cowgirl, or

ERIC

Maid Marian, and Charlie's Angels and the Bionic Woman do not *do* anything. While Bionic Man has a space mission kit and bionic transporter, Bionic Woman has bionics in her arms and a denim suit to make her fashionable! She does not have a parachute, a car, a bike, a horse, or a gun. Charlie's Angels are also given fashionable clothes, not guns or cars. While the boy can dress his Action Man as a Red Devil Parachutist, a frogman, or put him in a tank, helicopter or submarine, or play with Batman and Robin in a Batcopter, Bat Boat, a Batmobile with firing rockets or a Bat Cycle, the girl can do Jaime Summers's hair.

The *Galt* and *Offspring* catalogues are much less influenced by mass media personalities, though *Offspring* feature games, books and jigsaws with Paddington Bear and the Mr Men, but no women characters. However, the general picture is clear; males have the creative and interesting roles, females are preoccupied with keeping themselves and their surroundings clean. Feminists argue that this is restricting to boys and girls; to boys because they are not offered tender, nurturing roles or skills of cooking and cleaning; while girls are not offered active or scientific roles, or any aggressive or destructive activities. This not only weighs heavily on children whose interests do not 'fit' perfectly, but leads them to stereotype the other gender, as we shall see later in the chapter.

Catalogues do not tell us what toys are actually bought for children. An American study (Goodman *et al.*, 1974) undertook participant observation in a large store's toy department for thirty hours in the pre-Christmas peak period. They also surveyed toys in the catalogues of New York's big department stores, and asked a sample of eighty-four children what presents they had received for Christmas. The observation produced several interesting conclusions. The researchers asked shoppers the age and sex of the children for whom the gifts were being bought. They found that children under two got very similar presents: mainly cuddly toys, and toys to develop skills in handling objects and learning shapes and colours such as blocks, rings and simple constructions. After the age of two sex differentiation set in. The researchers found that the adult buyers had rigid sex role norms about appropriate toys *but* would make exceptions for individual children they knew well with idiosyncratic preferences. In other words, adults did not believe that a train was a suitable present for a girl but would consider buying a train for a girl who had specially asked for one. This fits the British research by John and Elizabeth Newson (1976), who reported that parents, especially mothers, were prepared to adapt to individual children's wishes. Thus, a mother would take her daughter to football games, or let a boy cook, if the children wanted it, without shifting their *overall* expectations of correct behaviour for boys and girls. Given this, it seems sad that schools appear to be *less* tolerant of idiosyncrasies than parents and force children into hyper-conventional roles.

The American observers found that adult toy shoppers spent longer choosing presents for boys than for girls. The majority

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

bought sex-differentiated toys so that, for example, no one bought a scientific toy for a girl. The toys, and the salespeople, were clearly divided to help the adults in choosing sex-differentiated toys. The women sales staff were selling the cheap toys and the simple ones, while men were selling all the most expensive items, such as bicycles and electric racing car circuits, and all the technical things such as microscopes. The researchers also found a price difference. Of toys costing under two dollars, 50 per cent were for girls and 31 per cent for boys, while of toys costing over five dollars only 18 per cent were for girls and 34 per cent for boys. This suggests an imbalance in the price of toys for the two sexes paralleled by the researchers' finding on presents received. They asked forty-two girls and forty-two boys what they had had at Christmas 1972. The two groups had received equal numbers of presents, but whereas 73 per cent of the boys' presents were toys and games, only 57 per cent of the girls' presents were. Girls had received far more gifts of clothes and furniture. A more recent study by Rheingold and Cook (1978) examined the contents of the rooms of six-year-old children, and found that girls had dolls, passive games and arts and crafts while boys had trucks, bricks and equipment for active sports. Similar research needs to be done in Britain to see if the same pattern occurs, but it seems likely that it does.

Books and comics

Many children grow up with few books in their homes, and so most of the discussion of the part played by books may relate more to school life than home life. There are detailed studies of the sex roles which are offered to children in both reading schemes and 'pleasure' books reprinted in Maccia *et al*. (1975), Stacey *et al*. (1974) and Wandor (1972). Here I want only to summarize a piece of work on British reading schemes carried out by Glenys Lobban (1974, 1975) whose findings will stand for this whole area of research and polemic. Lobban took six reading schemes in common use in infant and primary schools in Britain, two from before 1960, two from the 1960s, and two from the 1970s. Between them, these six schemes have been used to teach, or fail to teach, most British children to read. Lobban coded the content of the 225 stories from these series, 179 of which had human characters as opposed to animals only and analysed those with human characters.

Lobban found that there were very clearly segregated sex roles for adults and children. In all the series, the 'feminine' behaviours were domestic, passive, expressive and centred indoors. Lobban coded the adult roles presented, the new skills learned, the leadership roles assumed in mixed activities, the activities shown, the toys and pets owned by the children. Lobban found that the 179 stories contained seventy-one heroes and thirty-five heroines. Most of the heroines starred in traditional female roles such as learning how to care for a new baby. There were seventy-three stories with a heroine and a hero, but

53

Lobban says that the boy is nearly always dominant. The male characters have a much greater range of activities, more toys, more pets. There are more adult male roles shown, and male characters teach small boys many new skills while female characters teach small girls a restricted range of new skills.

It is not only feminists who are unhappy about the world mirrored in the reading schemes. In January 1978 *Good Housekeeping* ran an article asking 'Are books unfair to girls?' which began:

> See John kick a football. See Jane help Mummy with the dishes. See John paddle in the water. See Jane watch from the beach. See John suggest an adventure. See Jane tag obediently along behind. See John grow into a mature person . . . See Jane, on the other hand, grow up to be a right little weed . . .

The article argued that although the best-selling series had begun to 'move with the times', there is still 'no doubt who is boss'. The author said that the books 'reflect a world that is past, or perhaps never existed', a world in which mothers do not work outside the home, and spend all their time on housework.

Turning from the pleasurable activities shown in the reading schemes, such as play, Lobban points out that the boys are shown spending time watching adult men, not relatives, performing their occupational roles and tasks. Girls do not. They see only mothers. Given that mothers are never seen to have jobs except in the *Nippers* series, girls are not shown any adult occupational roles.

This leads into a consideration of other texts available in infant and primary schools: elementary text books. Here we are dependent on American analyses and Nilsen (1975, 208) summarizes their conclusions:

> It is ironic that in recent years, little girls lost out in two different ways. Boys are the dominant figures in the nonfiction section of the library because they are thought to be *more* able than girls in such fields as maths, science, and statesmanship. Then they are the dominant figures in the beginning-to-read books for just the opposite reason. They are thought to be *less* able than girls in the field of language arts.

So much for the reading given children as part of their schoolwork. Most British children spend far more time with comics than books, and absorb gender stereotypes from TV, radio and advertising. Olive Braman (1977) and Sue Sharpe (1976) have looked at comics aimed at the child and the adolescent. They argue that the comics for small children carry the following 'messages':

(a) females are concerned about keeping things and people clean;
(b) females provide food and drink;

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

(c) females tidy up after males;
(d) females help people and do good turns;
(e) females are nurses, males are doctors.

Later children's taste in comics becomes sex segregated. The girl starts reading comics with names like *Bunty* and *Judy* – diminutive girls' names. The boy of a similar age starts reading comics with names like *Hotspur*, *Lion* and *Valiant*. The *content* of the two sets of comics is very different. In the boys' comics wars and sports are the main subjects, with the action often distanced from modern Britain in time and space — so stories are set in foreign countries or deep in outer space. Action is central and emotion at a minimum, except for bravery and team spirit. No women appear in most of the stories except in minor, supportive roles such as telephonists and secretaries. The heroes of the stories are adult men, without dependants, and they are untroubled by emotions of any kind, or even sexual urges. In the girls' con[illegible] heroines predominate in the stories, but they are usually adolescent girls, not adults, and they are deeply embroiled with dependants— small siblings, aged relatives, deprived friends or animals in peril. The stories are mainly about interpersonal conflicts and emotional turmoil. Sharpe (1976, 97) summarizes these stories: 'The message comes across that it is girls alone who are sensitive enough both to have feelings themselves and to be able to detect them in others.'

Braman has a more charitable view of these comics than does Sharpe. Braman highlights the few stories in which heroines capture thieves, rescue pilots, and break into male preserves, while Sharpe emphasizes the lack of female autonomy, the concentration on emotion rather than action, and the isolation of the heroines. The other two categories of comic read widely in childhood, called educational and humorous by Braman, are condemned by both commentators as equally sexist. The 'educational' comics neglect women's roles in all spheres of human activity, and concentrate on scientific and military information. The humorous comics, such as *Dandy* and *Beano*, are read by both sexes, but male characters predominate by ten to one. Other media reinforce the same kind of stereotypes as the children's books and toys. In 1978 we saw a typical advertisement, for a breakfast cereal, in which a small boy, Edward, informed the world of his campaign to save the cereal from adults. In his campaign we have Alfie, Harry, Bertrum (sic) and 'Rachel is our secretary, and she is jolly good despite being a girl.' Enough said.

Thus we can see that the world in which British children grow up is a gender-segregated world, in which all facets of their lives at home and in the community are deeply impregnated with stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Boys are tough, aggressive and creative; girls mild, verbal and domestic. While evidence from the Newsons (1978) suggests that children's idiosyncrasies can be tolerated inside a family, the position changes when a child leaves home for a playgroup, day nursery or infant school. It is to these socializing and educational institutions that we now turn.

Inside schools and classrooms

At the beginning of this chapter the rumpus caused by a teacher who tried *not* to enforce gender stereotyping was discussed. To understand how most educational classes for young children are reinforcing even more rigid gender stereotypes than the wider society in which they are embedded we must examine the available data on schools and classrooms. However, although there has been a significant growth of research on interaction in schools in the last fifteen years (Delamont, 1976a) very little attention has been paid to gender differentiation. There are now several observational studies of infant and primary education (Nash, 1973; Sharp and Green, 1975; Hamilton, 1977 and King, 1978) but only King discusses gender *at all*. Gender in school will, therefore, be examined via five themes, which concern differentiation and polarization in the school, in the classroom and among pupils themselves, using what data are available.

The successful girl

The large-scale studies of national samples have shown that girls have consistently produced superior academic attainment in the primary school in all subjects except mathematics (Douglas, 1964; Davie *et al.*, 1972). There is also evidence that girls get rated more highly for good behaviour and personality by teachers. A study in London by Ingleby and Cooper (1974) demonstrates this female superiority. They collected teacher ratings on 180 children in the London area in primary schools. There were West Indian, Asian, Anglo-Saxon, Cypriot, and other white children in the sample, and they found that girls received more favourable ratings than boys on all the rating scales used except for sociability. Girls were seen as superior in character, brightness, schoolwork, home background and language skills. Over the course of the school year the gap between boys and girls narrowed on all the scales except schoolwork. There were substantially worse ratings for all the ethnic minority children throughout the year which did not improve, but the gender gap was equally pronounced within each group. That is, West Indian girls were rated better than West Indian boys, Cypriot girls better than Cypriot boys, and so on.

Teacher ratings of children are only important if they relate to teacher behaviour or are communicated to the children. There is considerable evidence that teachers' expectations for children do relate to their interactions with them. Brophy and Good (1974) showed that pupils who were believed to be clever were given longer to answer teacher questions, and more prompts and hints to help them answer them, than pupils who were believed to be stupid. Certainly there is evidence that boys get far more disciplinary contacts with teachers than girls do (Jackson and Lahaderne, 1967), because they get reprimanded much more often. More detailed work on this needs to be done in the UK, but what we have suggests that although boys get more

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

teacher attention, much of what they get is negative, 'telling-off'. These consequences of female superiority in work and conduct will be examined in more detail as the chapter progresses.

Observer bias?

Clem Adelman (1979) studied classes in East Anglia for preschool children of three to five years. Although Adelman's work was not intended to focus on gender differences, the fieldnotes he took show gender differences in behaviour, and the kinds of interpretations he put on them. Adelman had a camera mounted in a robot-like structure he called Charlie. When he first took Charlie into a class the 'children were struck silent'. Then 'Sharon . . . went to Mrs S and cuddled up to her in some sort of fright maybe, whilst at the same time a young new girl who was drinking milk with the nursery nurse began to cry.' Quite soon though, children came forward to inspect Charlie, and then 'there were ten or twelve children, the majority of them boys, painting very vigorously the surfaces of Charlie.' Here we see two stereotyped kinds of behaviour. The little girls show fear and cry, the boys come boldly forward to try a new activity. These seem to be typical of studies of young children, but are small girls really more fearful of novelty, or is there a difference in adult interpretation of the behaviour?

We certainly have evidence that the same behaviour from a child will be interpreted differently according to the perceived and believed gender of the individual. For example, Walum (1977, p. 40) reports an experiment in which the mothers were shown Beth, a six-month-old 'girl' in a frilly pink dress, and Adam, a six-month-old 'boy' in blue rompers. Beth was viewed as 'sweet', with a 'soft cry', offered a doll to play with and smiled at more often. In fact they were the same baby, with different 'name' and clothes. In a similar experiment film of a six-month-old baby dressed in yellow engaged in crying, crawling, smiling and so on was shown to a sample of professionals (pediatricians, psychologists, nursery nurses and so on) and amateurs (mothers and the inevitable students). Half of each group of viewers were told that the baby was a boy, half that it was a girl, and all were asked to describe what the baby was doing at each stage of the film. The results were clear. All the professionals, and the students, attributed quite different motives to the same behaviour, according to the gender of the baby. If they thought it was a boy, they described it as angry when it cried; if a girl, as frightened. Only mothers did not attribute motives, but merely said that the baby was crying, crawling or whatever. Thus we do not know if Sharon was frightened of Charlie, or whether Adelman thought she was, or whether she had already learnt that adults expect girls to show fear and reward it with approval.

In part, such attribution of aggression to tiny babies according to their gender reflects a common belief that males are born

'aggressive'. Yet the evidence on this point is clearly inconclusive, and in one famous case turned out to be untenable. Many American researchers had observed new-born babies, to see if there were early signs of sex differences. Study after study showed little girl babies sleeping peacefully or lying quietly in their cots, while little boy babies yelled lustily and waved their arms and legs. The researchers concluded that from birth boys are more active and aggressive, and thus, some argued, aggression in males must be sex linked. So many different American studies showed this behaviour variation that it has ceased to be a research question, yet when some researchers in Britain attempted a replication as routine confirmation, they found that sex difference did not exist among British babies. Boys and girls in maternity hospitals did not behave in distinct ways, but slept or yelled apparently at random. This cultural difference called for some explanation, and the answer turned out to be circumcision. The American boy babies had all been circumcised at birth as a matter of routine, while British ones had not. Thus the supposed sex difference was in fact a reaction to medical treatment. All the American boy babies were in pain or discomfort, having been operated on, while the girls had not been so violated.

Of course, the main importance to these studies of perceived sex and gender differences is that they lead to differential treatment of the two categories of babies. From very early years girls are talked to more, and cuddled more, while boys are tossed around more vigorously. Girls are seen as fragile, boys are not. From their earliest hours, boys and girls are brought up in different ways, to reinforce different behaviours, and punish or prevent 'wrong' activities. There is no real evidence on how far parents, teachers and others are conscious or unconscious of dividing and segregating the young in this way. Nor are there any data on how far educational researchers 'see' the behaviours of little boys and little girls very differently because of their preconceptions. As we read observational studies of schools and classrooms we must remember 'Beth' and 'Adam'. The discussion of data on gender differentiation in schools begins with the features of the formal organization.

The first theme is the formal organization of the school which may mean that pupils lead quite separate lives within the same school building. The second, third and fourth themes are all to do with teacher behaviours inside the classroom. My second is the way in which teachers can and do use rivalry and differentiation between the sexes as an integral part of their classroom management strategies. The third theme is the way in which the *teaching* may segregate and polarize boys and girls, for example by giving them academic material which is clearly labelled 'for boys' or 'for girls'. The fourth organizing theme on teacher behaviour is the ways in which teachers may differentiate between the sexes in their 'socializing', for example in conversations about pupils' clothes, hairstyles and personal possessions. The final organizing theme is the way in which *pupils* themselves

ERIC

may segregate the sexes, and the consequences of this voluntary segregation. However, before plunging into the *minutiae* of interaction in schools and classrooms two points need to be made about gender differences in education. These concern the data on academic achievement and school success, and a caveat about the evidence on interaction patterns.

School organization and gender separation

Schools segregate the sexes in many ways. For example, lavatories, changing rooms, cloakrooms and even playgrounds may be segregated. Pupils are commonly listed separately on the register, lined up in separate groups, and offered different subjects. These organizational arrangements are so common that they are taken for granted, and hence invisible. Most researchers do not even mention that the schools they have studied separate even infants in this way. The school which does not divide boys from girls in these ways will, by its very oddity, reveal how normal such separations are. Carol Joffe (1971) did a study of a nursery school in San Francisco which was self-consciously 'progressive' and wanted to eradicate racial and sexual differentiation. One of the key strategies was to have unsegregated lavatories, and this alone was enough to upset some parents. Just as Sally Shave's ten-point plan seems revolutionary because we take sex segregation in children's schools for granted so, too, a tiny change in a nursery school caused considerable worry among parents. Similarly, King (1978, pp. 67-9) claims that the official record cards in the infant schools he studied were colour-coded differently for boys and girls, that all the registers listed boys and girls separately, and that 'in every classroom boys hung their coats separately from girls' and lined up in separate rows at the door. The teachers regarded these as 'natural' and 'convenient' arrangements and thought King odd for asking about them.

A very similar set of organizational arrangements characterized two nine-to-thirteen middle schools in 'Ashburton', an English town. Data from some research carried out in these two schools will be referred to in the rest of this chapter, and so they are described before their organization of boys and girls is discussed. The two schools, Guy Mannering and Gryll Grange were deliberately chosen for study because of their different histories, buildings, staffing, organization and ideologies. They served a similar catchment area with council and owner-occupied housing, but were otherwise very dissimilar. Guy Mannering has a staff of specialists who had secondary teaching experience, while Gryll Grange's staff came from both junior and secondary schools and most taught a wide range of subjects to their forms. Guy Mannering operates with two ability bands, while Gryll Grange has mixed ability groups. Guy Mannering puts the children into houses, named after male saints, which compete in sport, work and conduct, while Gryll Grange stresses the individual, is non-competitive and has no vertical group-

ERIC

ings at all. Guy Mannering has an extrinsic system of rewards, based on merit points and demerits, while Gryll Grange stresses self-control, and an intrinsic system of responsibility, self-discipline and individuality. Guy Mannering is explicitly Christian, while at Gryll Grange assembly might include a Greek myth, or an Indian fable, and the emphasis is on morality rather than religion. When the two schools were selected, Gryll Grange did not enforce uniform, whereas Guy Mannering places great stress on all pupils wearing it correctly at all times.

Gryll Grange is in purpose-built premises which opened in 1974 as a nine-to-thirteen middle school, in contrast to Guy Mannering, which was formerly a girls' secondary school, and before that an elementary school in Balaclava Road. The staff did not change substantially, although one or two men were appointed. There were, for example, no male PE teachers, and only one woodwork and metalwork master compared to five home economics staff. Gryll Grange started with a mixed staff, mixed pupils and a headmaster. Both schools have modern buildings, for Guy Mannering was rehoused in 1966. However, the Guy Mannering school is architecturally very different from Gryll Grange. Guy Mannering has two storeys, is planned to have private self-contained classrooms joined by long corridors, and has many specialized facilities such as cookery kitchens and three science laboratories. In contrast Gryll Grange is built on a wheel plan, with a 'hub' and 'spokes'. The few facilities which are shared by all pupils are in the hub, with the set of classrooms protruding as spokes from this centre. The school has no stage, the gym facilities are far less lavish than at Guy Mannering, and music lessons in the afternoon have to wait for the (female!) kitchen staff to remove the crumbs and custard from the floor of the dining room. The child at Gryll Grange spends time in a classroom with a class teacher, while the Guy Mannering child is constantly on the move between one teacher and another. Indeed, these brief sketches of the two schools suggest that the pupils' worlds would be very different.

Yet in terms of sex segregation, they are identical. Both schools list boys and girls separately on the register, so that the children are always called to activities in single-sex groups. The nurse, photographer, remedial teacher and so on, use the register, and so call children separately by sex. Both schools have different lavatories, and separate changing rooms, and both teach different games to each sex, with a master giving boys football while a woman teaches girls netball. Neither school allows girls to wear trousers. Both schools separate boys from girls lining them up by sex before and after any activity, so that, for example, in assembly, the children sit apart, because the boys have led and the girls followed or *vice versa*. In these ways the children are constantly reminded that they are either male or female even when this is irrelevant to the activity in which they are engaged. This organizational segregation would not, in itself, be significant if it were not just the first of many ways in which school life separates and then stereotypes boys and girls.

School organization is reinforced by classroom management to which we now turn.

Classroom management

Teachers in many nursery, infant and junior schools regularly use sex and gender as an organizing principle and a management strategy within their classrooms. King (1978, p. 52) offers some nice examples such as the teacher saying, 'Boys close eyes. Girls creep out, quietly get your coats. Don't let the boys hear you!' This shows a teacher using sex segregation to motivate and to control children, a combination which is extremely common. Later King (1978, p. 68) quotes a mistress ridiculing a child with the comment, 'Oh, Philip is a little girl. He's in the wrong queue', as a disciplinary strategy. This is common teacher usage. King also noted a class where, when acting Humpty Dumpty, 'Mrs Pink makes the girls horses and the boys King's men.' Later on during music and movement, 'boys are horses and girls are rats' (1978, p. 68). At one school 'every teacher arranged for girls to hang their coats outside the classroom and the boys inside': they believed boys could not be trusted. Then there is the teacher who exhorts: 'Boys don't sing. Listen to the girls, make certain they sing nicely. Now its the boys turn. Get your best singing voices ready. See if you can beat the girls.'

Exactly similar patterns were found in Gryll Grange and Guy Mannering among nine-year-olds. For example, at Gryll Grange the pupils had to complete a worksheet which asked them to measure features of the room such as the length of the window sills, the height of the doors, and so on. Throughout one morning the teacher encouraged the class to hurry and complete this work, and her incentive was a race between boys and girls. Beating the other gender was intended to be, and seemed to be, a successful motivator. Thus I recorded interactions such as:

> Miss Tweed announces, 'I'm still waiting for most of the boys to do that measuring . . .' Later Yvette has finished measuring work sheet. Miss Tweed says, 'Another girl finished . . .' Later when Tammy and Stephanie are up Miss Tweed says, 'Only seven girls to go.' Someone asks how many boys and the answer is lots . . . Later when Kenneth is up for marking Miss Tweed says, 'Only five girls to go now.' 'How many boys?' 'Nearly all of them.' (30.9.77)

This was Gryll Grange, a 'progressive' school, but Guy Mannering was equally characterized by gender typing. For example, in a cookery lesson the home economics teacher said:

> *Boys* – is it boys who are making so much noise or is it a group of girls? . . . Be careful boys that you get your tables all nice and straight. (28.9.77)

Incidentally, cookery may nowadays be done by both boys and girls, but as King (1978, p.43) also shows, they are clearly distinguished in the school kitchen. He quotes:

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Teacher: What must you do before any cooking?
Children: Roll up your sleeves and wash your hands.
Teacher: Right, girls go first.

The boys put on green-striped aprons, the girls flowery ones.

A number of further incidents will show how typical sex separation is in discipline, motivation and control.

Guy Mannering (9.9.77)
Communal singing in the Hall. Two teachers and all six first-year classes (180 pupils). Towards the end of the lesson they sing *There's a Hole in My Bucket* with the sexes divided. Boys are told to 'pretend to be a bit gormless. I know you're not.'

In Maths
There is a wasp in the room. Mrs Forrest asks a boy to get rid of it. He kills it.

Gryll Grange (15.9.77)
Music with Mr Vaughan. Has pupils clapping rhythms – has two girls doing it alone, then two boys. After playing part of *Peter and the Wolf* has scale singing – competing boys versus girls.

Gryll Grange (6.9.77)
Miss Tweed's class are going to have their school photographs taken. The girls are sent first. (The photographer is in the foyer with a blue backcloth hung up.) . . . Kenneth has made 82 + 47 equal over 300. Held up for public ridicule, told he should be the Chancellor of the Exchequer and that 'Scotsmen don't usually make mistakes over money!' Girls are told 'You've done enough fussing. I know you're all filmstars' and asked about the photographer, 'Did he faint with delight at such loveliness?'

This last extract shows the use of gender labelling in discipline, where boys are shamed by reference to adult males in responsible positions, while girls are exhorted to be beautiful. These kind of controlling strategies shade into teaching, where gender roles are again clearly separated as the next section will show.

Teaching

Teachers in nursery, infant and primary schools value both instructions in basic skills and in social and emotional development (Ashton *et al.*, 1975). In both kinds of instruction they are, on the evidence available, polarizing and differentiating boys and girls and reinforcing quite different behaviour patterns. Lisa Serbin (1978) spent five years observing fifteen pre-school classrooms in New York working in four schools. She offers the following account of the build-up to Easter in 1971 as a typical example of teacher instruction in social behaviour. The teacher played *Here Comes Peter Cottontail* while the boys hopped all

over the room. Then the girls had a turn as rabbits. Next the teacher played *In Your Easter Bonnet* while the girls paraded. The teacher said, solemnly, 'Ladies, that isn't the way we have a parade. When we have a parade, we all walk very nicely, and we pick up our feet so we don't make lots of noise on the floor, and we all walk like little ladies. Now let's do it again.' She played again and the girls tiptoed. A boy asked for a second turn for boys. So the teacher played *Here Comes Peter Cottontail* again. No one said the boys should be quiet.

Serbin's observations show a typical incident with young schoolchildren, where the teaching is about social behaviour as much as any intellectual content, and the social behaviour is highly stereotyped. Other observations Serbin made were that boys got a great deal more teacher attention than girls whether they were physically close to the teacher or not, while girls only got attention when they were physically close to the teacher. The staff told Serbin that little girls were boring, and clung too closely to them, while boys were more independent. These teachers did not realize that their own interaction patterns were reinforcing the very behaviour they disliked. Little *girls* had to stay close beside the teacher to get any attention, while boys did not. The kind of teacher-pupil interaction was also different for boys and girls. Boys got more teacher interaction, more ticking-off, more praise, and a different type of instruction. Boys got 'more detailed step-by-step instruction in how to solve a problem or how to do something for themselves.' Serbin found that boys got eight times as much instruction as girls, and when teachers were faced with this, they said that girls picked up things by themselves, while boys needed teaching.

Serbin also looked at what children chose to play with, and found that those pre-school children who played with bricks, trucks and climbing apparatus were better at all the problem-solving tasks involving visual spatial reasoning. In contrast children who played with dolls and housekeeping materials were better at fine motor tasks. Among these children the two sets of abilities were not totally sex specific, although it was predominantly boys who played with the bricks, trucks and climbing apparatus, and primarily girls who played at housekeeping tasks. Serbin found that teachers were reinforcing the incipient sex segregation. When there were three new toys in the classes, a fishing game, a sewing game and a counting puzzle, the staff told the classes that they could go fishing like Daddy and sewing like Mommy. Then they got boys to demonstrate the fishing game and girls to demonstrate the sewing game. Serbin was also aware that the staff had a biased pattern of object usage. They spent their time among the 'teaching' tasks and did not go over to the bricks and trucks. This meant that girls, who stayed close to the teachers, never went near the bricks or cars. The researchers then asked the teachers to go to the area where the bricks were, and when they did, the girls went with them and began playing with bricks and cars. Similarly, teachers spent little time with the dolls, but if a teacher did go and work with

ERIC

them, boys would follow her there. Serbin says, 'In about ten minutes the whole block corner was occupied by boys and girls, half the children had never been in that area before.' In other words if the teacher encouraged girls to play with 'male' toys by going to work with them herself, girls would play with them, and girls who did improved their spatial reasoning. Yet before the researchers showed the teachers how they were failing to get all children involved in all kinds of task, teachers were unaware of it. If Serbin's observations are true in Britain (and the work of Adelman (1979) suggests they might be) then some action research to encourage each sex to develop all its skills by trying all toys and games seems a priority.

King's (1978) work on infant schools in the West Country shows how instruction in social skills and academic matters are closely tied together. For example, he quotes the following incidents.

> A boy has found a snail in the wet sand box. When a girl went to touch it, the teacher said, 'Ug, don't touch it, it's all slimy. One of the boys, pick it up and put it outside.' (p.43)

Just the thing to reinforce any girl's fear of wildlife and discourage scientific curiosity. The next extract shows a girl being put off mechanized interests.

> A girl is trying to take an aeroplane jigsaw puzzle away from a boy. The teacher stops her, explaining 'Boys like aeroplanes.' (p. 68)

The next extract shows the teacher discussing christening.

> T: What colour do we say for a boy as a rule?
> P: White.
> P: Blue.
> T: Blue for a boy and what for a girl?
> P: White.
> P: Green! Green!
> T: White or?
> P: Pink.
> T: Pink! Pink! That's right. (p. 46)

Here we see a 'lesson' which reinforces a piece of trivial sex segregation *in passing*, for the colour of the baby's clothes are clearly not relevant to the christening ceremony. Such a stereotyping could be ignored, or could be used for a brief discussion of why babies are sometimes dressed in different colours, but typically it is not.

A similar pattern was common in the lessons I observed with nine-year-olds in Ashburton, as the following extracts show:

> *Gryll Grange* (8.9.77)
> In Mrs Hind's class, pupils are doing sentences, including three words from the board:
> boy football corridor
> gorilla cage keeper

monkeys coconuts hunters
soldier army tank
Several ask her about the words so she reads through them. Says of 'soldier army tank': 'That's one for the boys really I suppose.'

Here we see an entirely gratuitous comment by a teacher implying that only boys are interested in warfare. It adds nothing to the lesson, and indeed detracts from it. (It might be good to offer pupils less stereotyped sets of words such as 'girl, football, window', 'WRAC, army, tank', just to see what pupils did.)

Guy Mannering (9.9.77)
They have been sent to Miss Pink as their English master is at a funeral. They are writing an essay on their previous school . . . One boy has trouble with a cartridge. Miss Pink brings him out to desk. She says she was covered in petrol this morning so she might as well get covered in ink . . . Cry from girl 'Err, don't.'
Miss Pink: 'What's the matter?' 'He got ink on his fingers and wiped it on my cardigan.'
'That's not very nice. You wouldn't do that if you had to do the washing!'

Here we see a typical comment which implies that males do not do housework, which attempts to shame them by pointing out how hard domestic work is for women. This reflects the discussion on comics earlier which implied that women are obsessed with cleaning things and spoil male fun by emphasizing cleanliness.

Gryll Grange (15.9.77)
French with Miss Tweed. Miss Tweed can get lots of pupil involvement in French by saying '*C'est une fille*' and pointing to a boy, and vice versa . . . When we get on to individual children answering one girl says she doesn't know whether Ralph is a girl or a boy. Miss Tweed makes a great joke about it, 'been here a week and a half and you don't know if "it" is a boy or a girl.'
Sammy can reduce the whole class to laughter by pointing to Kenneth and saying '*Voilà Maman*'. Nanette can do the same thing, and joke does not pall . . . Duncan calls Malcolm a girl which is very funny to class.
Go back to tape. Miss Tweed divides them into boys and girls, the boys are to copy the man on the tape, the girls are to copy the woman.
11.25: PE
As Mr Valentine appears to take the boys to football, Miss Tweed says '*C'est Maman*' and gets laughter.
After lunch
Miss Tweed is telling her class about a book club. Says this book is for the girls – certain girls – a Monica Dickens pony book.

ERIC

The teaching of French raises interesting questions of a language with gender-differentiated words, which is a new idea to the pupils. Teaching the crucial difference between '*une fille*' and '*un fils*' by means of the pupils' sense of humour may be good teaching technique. However, it reinforces the idea that males and females are completely different, and any confusion is a source of hilarity.

> *Gryll Grange* (16.9.77)
> In Mrs Hind's class. Boy is up at her desk. She reads aloud from book. 'Mary says she likes looking after people who are ill. What would she like to be when she grows up?' The answer is, of course, 'a nurse'. Doctor is not mentioned as a possible answer . . .
> Mrs Hind tells Kenton to show his book to Janice to help her draw an aeroplane.

Here we see a highly stereotyped piece of teaching material, an English comprehension book. Women are nurses, not doctors. It is also noticeable that the teacher does not add the idea of a woman being a doctor to counteract the sexism of the book, which she could easily do. We also see an example of one pupil being asked to teach another, which is a feature of a 'progressive' school. However, the particular example shows an assumed male superiority in the sphere of machinery/transport. The girl is not told to find out about aeroplanes, but to ask a male.

> *Gryll Grange* (30.9.77)
> In Miss Tweed's class for a Maths test. There are mixed questions, straight calculations and problems such as 'If you were sent by your mother to buy half a dozen eggs, how many would you bring her?'

This is again an example of unnecessary sex typing in academic material. Why say it is 'mother' who sends for food and is responsible for providing meals? It could just as easily be 'Dad' sending for the eggs, but it is not. Teaching materials are full of such implicit sexism, which are never counterbalanced by maths problems about Dad going shopping, or Mum digging a trench. If teaching materials and interaction about academic matters is peppered with such stereotyping, then the 'social' interaction between teachers and pupils is smothered in them as the next section shows.

Socializing

Clem Adelman's (1979) study of a nursery class, a nursery school and a reception class is not characterized by an awareness of sex differentiation by the teachers, and as I have pointed out above, the observations may even be biased by sex differences. However, some of his data show very clear distinctions between teacher interactions with boys and with girls. For example, the following comments are all aimed at girls:

In the nursery class
Teacher: What a horrid shout. Look pretty, don't shout. Who are you?
Girl: I am Norah, of course. (p. 54)
Later
Girl: I am going to sit near you.
Teacher: Oh lovely, I would love you to sit by me. Would you like this . . . ?
Girl: No thank you.
Teacher: You are just so beautiful . . . What do you do Jane?
Girl: I just do the housework.
Teacher: What sort of work?
Girl: Help clear up. (p. 55)

Later during the same lengthy extract from the teacher's interaction in the Wendy House she says, 'Mrs Wendy, what a lovely name', 'Oh don't you look beautiful', 'Oh, my favourite lady', 'Do you know Jane Hopcroft, you look absolutely smashing. Oh, isn't it pretty?' (p.56). All these comments are addressed to girls, and nowhere in the long transcript is any such personal comment about appearance addressed to any boys. One teacher, talking to Adelman, says:

> 'Here I am coming to the rescue to help Penny's buttons. Her mummy makes a lot of her clothes and she had only just put that pinafore on for the first time that morning and she was very proud and excited about it.' (p. 62)

Again later Adelman recorded:

> T: Hello, Teresa, what a lovely hat, is that your hat? Let's put it on for you, oh, isn't that super, it has got a bobble on the top.
>
> Teresa: Bobble on the top.
> T: Yes and a pretty blue cardigan. Did mummy knit your cardigan? (p. 93)

Later still the teacher tells Anita her hair looks nice, that 'mummies' decide when hair should be cut and that 'the girls have made some lovely scones' (pp. 74-5). No comments about beauty are addressed to boys in any of the dialogues quoted by Adelman.

Adelman does not comment on the barrage of praise which falls on girls for their hair, clothes and names. However, Carol Joffe (1974) recorded a great many similar interactions in her study of the nursery school in San Francisco, and concluded that girls' clothes and appearance were far more frequently complimented than boys', *and* that girls got more compliments when wearing dresses than in trousers. Boys were much more likely to be admired for fighting: teachers would make comments like 'he really can take care of himself like a man'. Joffe found these comments worrying because the nursery were trying to encourage non-sexist behaviour. Most schools have no such aim, and my data from Ashburton show essentially similar patterns of social interaction to those found by Adelman among pre-school children.

Gryll Grange (1.9.77)
In Miss Tweed's class – afternoon break spent by Miss Tweed in stockroom and visiting third-year area to arrange getting rid of the third-year stuff so she can set out her own. Takes boys to do her porterage – says 'only boys'. All but two boys go off carrying things, leaving *all* the girls working on their drawings.

Guy Mannering (13.9.77)
English with Mr Evans. The new reading book is a family story, *The Day the Ceiling Fell Down*. Mr Evans relates title to the men mending the school roof . . . Tells them that when the boys are men they may have to go up into the attic and get rid of birds' nests.

Guy Mannering (21.9.77)
Topics lesson with Miss Miranda. They come up from gym. Miss Miranda tells them to tidy themselves up — in the mirror if they wish – check their ties are straight, etc. She tells Gabrielle to come into the room like a lady.

Pupils' views

Of course it would be ridiculous to suggest that teachers are enforcing sex differentiation upon pupils to whom it is unknown. Pupils come to school with clearly stereotyped ideas about boys and girls which even a teacher trying to inculcate sex equality can do little to shift if these quotes from Marion Pencavel's (1978) pupils are anything to go by:

> Charley: I think girls are very well off and shouldn't come to bother us to play our games. They are always complaining about how they need new dresses and shows. But men don't – they just take their wallet and go. I'm happy to be a boy because they're tough and can defend themselves but girls just stand there and scream.
>
> Paul: I wouldn't like to be a girl because I wouldn't be able to go to the toilet properly. And I wouldn't be so strong because girls are very weak, and I wouldn't play sissy games like ring-a-ring-roses, and I wouldn't like to have long finger nails.
>
> Andrew: I'd hate to be a girl because girls always have to keep clean and have to help mummy in the house and are not allowed to climb trees.

In a similar vein Sara Lightfoot (1975) asked seven-year-olds to choose a class president and someone to help with work. Pupils of both sexes chose a boy as class president and girl for the helping task. American research described by Guttentag and Bray (1976, p.284) which attempted to change pupil sex-role attitudes among ten-year-olds found that each sex stereotyped the other more than itself. Boys thought girls were neat, sensitive, gentle, cautious, good-looking, obedient, quiet, apt to cry a lot and weak. The girls did not see themselves like this at all.

The curriculum development project changed the girls' views but had little effect on ten-year-old boys.

Children not only hold stereotyped views about the opposite sex, they also segregate themselves. Joffe (1971) quotes an incident where three girls had climbed on top of a large structure in the playground. 'A (male) comes over and C screams, "Girls only!" to which A screams back, "No, boys only!".'

Karkau (1976) found that boys and girls of nine rarely mixed: forming separate groups, playing different games and rarely talking to each other. His pupils even had a taboo on touching or approaching a person of the opposite sex. Girls told him that if they went near boys 'People will think you're "in love" ', and boys said 'if you touch a girl you get "cooties" or "girl-touch" ' which Karkau describes as 'a mysterious quality which can only be removed by saying "no gives".' At Ashburton I recorded a similar segregation, for example:

> *Gryll Grange* (5.9.77)
> I talk to Miss Tweed after break. I comment on how many of her class ... e to stay in at break. She says, yes, last year's did too. If they don't like rushing about playing football, its nicer to stay in and do colouring, elastic band pictur... or board games.
> (This means boys mostly go out, and girls mostly stay in.)

and at Guy Mannering:

> Science, Mrs Forrest
> In the science lab the sexes are seg...ated, boys on the two front benches and girls on the two ... benches. The back two benches are relatively crowd..., girls near me are cramped. Mrs Forrest suggests one girl should move onto back bench for writing. (23.9.77)

When Karkau asked his class about segregation in the playground the boys said that girls *could* play soccer with them, but the girls pointed out that the boys never asked, only boys were captains of teams, the boys did not pass the ball to girls, and if a girl scored, the boys did not cheer. The boys agreed that all these criticisms were true.

My data from Ashburton show the pupils diverging in their interests and a rivalry between the sexes in performing various ...s. For example, these three extracts show divergent interests:

> *Gryll Grange* (5.9.77)
> In Miss Hind's class. The pupils have written essays on *My Favourite Place*, and Miss Hind shows them to me. Many of the boys have imagined favourite places – the jungle/submarine/pirate ships – and lots have to do with fighting. No girl has invented a location, most have chosen real places such as zoos, stately homes, fairgrounds, etc.

> *Guy Mannering* (23.9.77)
> In a staffroom Mr Black said he's often surprised by children's sex typing of topics – not apparent to adults. In

geography he did farming and girls said couldn't they have a topic for the girls?

Gryll Grange (27.9.77)
Mr Valentine is teaching Miss Tweed's class. The task is a pictogram of children's favourite sports. Each child is to nominate a favourite sport. Nearly every boy says a different one while girls go mainly for gymnastics or riding.

Note that the teachers do not challenge the pupils on such points. Rivalry and loyalty are revealed in the following extracts:

Gryll Grange (15.9.77)
This morning there was obvious sex rivalry in racing to get changed after swimming . . . As pupils were waiting in the foyer for their classmates to emerge from the changing rooms so they could all come back to school there were occasional whispers from the girls: 'Three boys and four girls, we're winning. Oh now we're not' as more boys emerge from their changing room.
Later, in French
They do competitive counting. All stand up and say numbers in French in turn. If wrong they sit down. Davina is the last one on her feet. When Maurice was the only boy left there were mutters from other boys that he should win for the boys.

Guy Mannering (13.9.77)
English with Mr Evans. Pupils can have one book between two. Two boys, Dominico and another, are given the books to distribute. Told to give one between two and then give out spares, Dominico and the other boy give out one between two, and Mr Evans says that they must not give all the spare copies to the boys, but must be 'democratic' – he finds a girl for the last spare copy.

Guy Mannering (21.9.77)
In Mrs Bird's cookery class
Mrs Bird asks them which they prefer – gas or electric stoves. Most boys choose electric, many girls choose gas, but only one child can offer a reason for the choice.

One consequence of the pupils' views and behaviour is that when mixed groups were formed, the task did not get done, as in the following extract:

Guy Mannering (23.9.77)
In PE
Pupils are told to get into threes. Girls organize themselves but boys don't. Teacher puts Terence with Coral and Lauretta to the giggles of other boys. The threes are told to get a bench and place it in a specific locality.

Terence, Coral and Lauretta did not co-operate well. This point is returned to later. More disturbingly there is evidence that the more 'progressive' the class, the more polarization there is.

Sussman (1977) studied 'progressive' elementary schools in the USA to investigate the hypothesis that where there is 'partial withdrawal of the teacher's authority' (p.xii) the vacuum is filled by peer-group authority. After observation in a variety of schools she found that:

> In a black ghetto school 1st grade class
> The children's groupings in the room seemed during observation, to be quite fluid . . . The only line of segregation was between the sexes. Ironically, when children are left to group themselves, there is more sex segregation than in teacher-made groups. (p.138)
>
> In the 2nd grade class of the same school
> In this classroom, there was a fairly clear-cut division of peer-groups, not only by sex, but by ethnicity and ability as well. (p.148)

Sussman studied an upper-class school where the 'underground' life preoccupied the pupils and,

> There was an intensive struggle for control of a 'fort' which the boys had built on the playground. They would not let 'outsiders' in. Outsiders included all girls . . . Girls who tried to gain entry on one day were physically attacked by the boys, knocked to the ground, and had their coats torn off. (p.178)
>
> In the 5th and 6th grade
> We remarked that it was interesting, for instance, that when she gave her pupils a chance to change their seats at tables all the shifts were in the directions of segregating girls and boys more completely. (p.193)

Sussman found this sex polarization disturbing, and makes it one major indictment of 'progressive' classrooms. The reader may argue that if pupils separate themselves in this way, it is because such divergence is 'natural' and schools should accept it. My own argument, however, is that all kinds of things may be done 'naturally' by the pupils which schools will not tolerate for a moment, and such segregation should be one of them. After all no school would allow pupils to build a fort for 'black children only', 'council-house children only', 'Catholics only', or 'Band A children only'. Any school which heard those cries would attempt to democratize the fort. Yet children are allowed to be sexist even in 'progressive' schools.

Unpublished data from the Oracle project (Galton *et al.*, 1980) give an academic reason for worrying about pupils' own hostilities. Systematic observation shows that when mixed groups of pupils are required to co-operate upon tasks in the classroom they do not. Teachers who want boys and girls to co-operate on tasks must, therefore, struggle to overcome pupils' sex segregation and hostility. Of course those who do not believe in group work might argue that the separateness of boys and girls is natural and it is no part of the school's job to interfere

with it. However, commentators have been arguing for the last twenty years that elementary school is bad for one sex or the other, and it is to the effects of the sexism just demonstrated that we now turn.

Sexism: who suffers?

The 1960s saw a wave of enthusiasm in the USA for the argument that elementary schools were such hyper-feminized environments that boys were discriminated against (e.g. Sexton, 1974). The 1970s have seen feminists argue that the same environment encourages girls to be so passive and subservient that they are successful in the first school but fail in secondary schools and in life. Before leaving the nursery, infant and primary schools and their part in reinforcing separate and opposed sex roles, it is necessary to examine the kind of deal each gender gets from them.

We know that boys are given worse ratings than girls by teachers in infant and primary schools, that they do worse in academic work apart from maths, and that they are told off more frequently than girls. David Hartley (1978) collected data on 393 pupils in infant schools. The teacher rated working-class pupils as untidier, noisier and less able to concentrate than middle-class pupils, and within each class, boys were rated rougher, noisier, untidier and less able to concentrate than girls. Thus girls from non-manual homes were most favourably perceived by teachers, and manual working-class boys were rated worst. Hartley also got the pupils to rate each other, and their ratings showed clear sex differences in the same direction as the teachers'. Hartley also found that the sex differences were greater in the middle class than the working class. He concludes that 'the pre-school sex-roles of children within the same social class background do not equally prepare them for the pupil role.'

This leads us to ask how the social classes differ in their child rearing of boys and girls. The Newsons (1978) showed that boys were allowed more physical freedom and not kept so close to home. This finding is replicated by Roger Hart (1979) who asked children to describe 'the area you are allowed to play in outside your house by yourself'. The information was plotted on maps and checked with parents for five- to eight-year-olds and nine- to twelve-year-olds. In addition he found that boys changed their environment more by building things, and that boys were more likely to break the rules and go outside their permitted area. Not only that, but mothers knew they broke the rules and ignored the infringement unless they got into trouble while outside the boundary.

These two pieces of research suggest parents operate double standards between their children, with boys allowed more physical freedom than girls. It is also true that even a 'progressive' school disciplines boys much more often than girls and that boys' 'natural' ebullience is not acceptable to it. Throughout the first month at Gryll Grange there was 'trouble' over boys fighting:

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Gryll Grange (15.9.77)
Yesterday there was stone-throwing in the lunch hour. Jeremy H. got hit and had to be taken to hospital, and Kenneth was found with a stone in his hand, but he said it had been thrown at him. Miss Tweed told me she suspects Jack (in Mr Valentine's class). Jack denies it, but the blame has been focused onto the boys in Mr Valentine's class.

Gryll Grange (27.9.77)
Dudley informed me today that he beat up Robin last evening. Robin went to Mr Hogg who ran him home. At the end of the First Year Assembly, Miss Tweed says she wants to see Dudley. Ticks him off very sharply in front of the whole assembly for his 'abominable behaviour'.
At lunchtime Oliver and Kenneth are put outside by the dinner lady . . . Some girls come into classroom to tell dinner lady there are boys fighting, including Kenneth, Oliver and Nigel . . . I put Savlon on Oliver's leg which is badly grazed. He is tearful and resentful.

After break (30.9.77)
Miss Tweed goes out, comes back with the little Asian girl from Mr Valentine's class. Bawls out Alan for stamping on her feet with Dudley. Tells Alan to stay away from her 'then it can only be Dudley'. Alan is reduced to tears.

The boys did fight at Guy Mannering too, for one assembly contained a long lecture about the evils of fighting, and on another day,

Guy Mannering (23.9.77)
Before Miss Kroll arrived to take PE, I got involved in sorting out a fight in the boys' changing room. I was outside reading the posters in the corridor, when a boy came out to fetch me/an adult/a teacher to stop a fight.

Infant and primary schools find it hard to contain such aggression, and boys get poor teaching ratings. This lies at the heart of Sexton's (1974) complaint that schools are emasculating boys. She states that:

> Boys and the schools seem blocked in a deadly and ancient conflict that may eventually inflict mortal wounds on both . . . The problem is not just that teachers are too often women. It is that school is too much a woman's world, governed by women's rules and standards.

Sexton goes on to argue that the schools' values are too passive and feminine to be healthy for growing boys and hence boys become rebellious and underachieve. Her ideal seems to be something more Spartan and scientific than elementary schooling as we now have it. Most feminists have argued that the schools do indeed stress passivity and femininity too much, but that it is the young girls who suffer. Either way, we know that girls are 'successful' pupils at the primary level yet in adolescence lose ground to boys who become the academic 'high-flyers'. We do not know why, and it is to this puzzle that the next chapter turns.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

2

Make trouble – get results
Dale Spender

Source Dale Spender, *Invisible Women The Schooling Scandal*, Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative Society Ltd., in association with Chameleon Editorial Group, London, 1982, Part 2, ch 4, pp 54-66

Historically, men have excluded women. They have proved that women are inferior and wrong and therefore do not deserve the same consideration and opportunities as men. Historically men have interrupted and silenced women and have catered for the interests of men. But anyone who assumed that this was only history would be being misled, for this same process continues today in most of the classrooms of this country, where, in mixed-sex classes, males are the authority figures, males do the talking, and lessons are designed to cater for male interests because, as most teachers acknowledge, if males do not get what they want, they are likely to make trouble. At this moment, female students are being dismissed in class in exactly the same way as their foremothers have been dismissed. and the experience of women is no more likely to be the substance of the curriculum in a mixed-sex school than the experience of women has been the substance of our social knowledge.

It is not difficult to establish who gets the teachers' attention in class, and numerous studies report that boys get most of it in mixed-sex classrooms (see Sears and Feldman, 1976, for an overview of this, and Birgit Brock-Utne, n.d.). But while it has been known for a long time that boys get so much more attention from teachers than do girls, not surprisingly, few attempts have been made to explain this phenomenon or to speculate on its significance: in a society where men are perceived as more important such statistics can simply serve to confirm what we already know about male 'supremacy' and are therefore taken for granted rather than made the subject of further enquiry.

Teachers themselves are very often unaware of the way they allocate their time and it is not uncommon to ask teachers whether they give more attention to one sex than the other, and to have them vehemently protest that they do *not* and that they treat both sexes equally. But when their next lesson is taped it is often found that over two thirds of their time was spent with the boys who comprised less than half of the class. Most teachers do not consciously want to discriminate against girls, they say they do want to treat the sexes

fairly, but our society and education is so structured that 'equality' and 'fairness' mean that males get more attention (see Spender, 1981, a).

If the teachers do not know that they give more attention to boys, and more *positive* attention that enhances the image of boys, the students *do* know. In her recent study in Cambridge, Michelle Stanworth (1981) asked the students who it was who received the attention in class and what sort of attention they received and the students indicated that it was overwhelmingly boys who received the attention and who were given the knowledge that they were important and liked.

In classroom discussion, said the students, boys predominated: for every four boys who participated, there was only one girl. When teachers asked questions they asked two boys to every one girl, and when teachers provided praise and encouragement three boys received it to every one girl. And in these classes there were more girls than boys.

The students themselves provided the data that the boys asked twice as many questions as the girls and made twice as many demands of the teachers' time. And both the boys and the girls stated that teachers are more concerned about boys, they consider boys more conscientious and capable, they get on better with the boys, they enjoy teaching the boys more and are twice as likely to consider boys the model pupils (Stanworth, 1981).

Despite what teachers may think or say they are doing, from the perspective of female and male students there is consensus that boys are considered more important, more authoritative, more deserving and worthy of attention, and this knowledge possessed by the students adds to the confidence of the boys (who go on to say more and demand more attention) and undermines the confidence of the girls (who react by saying less and by attracting less attention). These are the lessons learnt in the classroom from kindergarten to college.

Teachers who teach the lesson that boys are more important than girls are not debased and cruel individuals who are deliberately trying to create or reproduce a sexist society: on the contrary many can be consciously trying to combat sexism. When I and many others have actively tried to change our patterns of behaviour in the classroom, when we have tried to change the proportion of time spent with the girls, the curriculum materials we use, the topics we set for discussion, we have often been spectacularly unsuccessful and for numerous reasons (see also Elizabeth Sarah, *Interaction in the Classroom*).

One reason is that sexism is so pervasive and embedded in our ways of looking at the world that we are sometimes unaware of the extent to which it controls our actions so that even when we feel that we are being just and fair, or even showing 'favouritism' to the girls, empirical evidence can indicate otherwise. Because we take it so much for granted that boys are more important and deserve more of our time and attention, giving the girls 35% of our time can feel as if we are being unfair to the boys.

While it is 'normal' to devote most of our efforts to boys, then even giving slightly more than one third of our attention to the girls seems to be a significant intervention and feels like making an effort to achieve equality.

I have taped many lessons that I and other teachers of mixed-sex classes have taught and there have been numerous occasions when the explicit aim has been to spend an equal amount of time with both sexes. At the end of the lesson I have felt that I managed to achieve that goal — sometimes I have even thought I have gone too far and have spent *more* time with the girls than the boys. But the tapes have proved otherwise. Out of ten taped lessons (in secondary school and college) the maximum time I spent interacting with girls was 42% and on average 38%, and the minimum time with boys 58%. It is nothing short of a substantial shock to appreciate the discrepancy between what I *thought* I was doing and what I actually *was* doing.

Other teachers have also been reasonably confident that they have achieved their aim of allocating their time equally between the sexes only to find when the tapes have been analysed, that spending approximately 38% of their time with girls feels like *compensating* the girls, feels like artifically constructed equality.

'I was so conscious of trying to spend more time with the girls that I really thought I had overdone it' one teacher said in amazement when she listened to the evidence of the tape and worked out that in her interaction with the students only 36% of her time had been spent with girls. 'But I thought I spent more time with the girls' said another who found that she had given them 34% of her attention, 'and', she added 'the boys thought so too. They were complaining about me talking to the girls all the time.'

It should not be surprising that the students should share a similar notion of fairness with their teachers, for we are all members of the same society which accords more significance to males. In the classrooms where teachers were trying to allocate their time equally, their efforts did not go unnoticed by the students, and despite the fact that the teachers were unsuccessful, and were able to spend only slightly more than one third of their time with the girls, many of the boys protested that slightly more than one third was unfair, and that they were missing out on their *rightful* share of teacher attention.

'She always asks the girls all the questions' said one boy in a classroom where 34% of the teacher's time had been allocated to girls. 'She doesn't like boys and just listens to the girls' said another boy where boys had interacted with the teacher for 63% of the time; and these are among some of the more 'polite' protests. From this it would seem that in a sexist society boys assume that two thirds of the teacher's attention constitutes a fair deal and if this ratio is altered so that they receive less than two thirds of the teachers' attention they feel they are being discriminated against.

Many exercised pressure on their teachers in the classroom but some even went further and either complained, or threatened to complain, to those in authority, about the preferential treatment girls were receiving when allocated more than one third of the teachers' time. And this is another reason that teachers are unable to give an equal allocation of time to the sexes — many of the boys are against it, they make trouble and they get results.

Every teacher must try to gain the interest and co-operation of the class. There is only one teacher and many students, and if there is to be 'order' as it is generally understood, then teachers are usually in the position of trying to utilise the interest and goodwill of those whom they are required to teach. In today's classrooms, the point of

view of students is often taken into account — in some areas — far more than is generally acknowledged and it makes common sense to many teachers to enlist the co-operation of their students.

But many males will co-operate only when it is their interests that are taken into account. This means that teachers are not always free to introduce either the forms of discussion or materials they would like. Rather than catering for the class as a whole, in mixed-sex classrooms they may find that they are being manipulated by a group of boys who will engage in uncooperative and disruptive behaviour if they do not get material they find interesting.

This raises the question of what is interesting in general in our society. It has already been established that knowledge about women is not valued — is not considered interesting or significant except by a few funny feminists — and therefore, even if knowledge about women were readily available it would not serve the purpose of claiming the attention or the respect of some boys. On the contrary, introducing knowledge about women (and trying to spend more time in interaction with female students) is more likely to result in a riot than in reasoning.

What is considered inherently interesting is knowledge about men. Because men control the records, and the value system, it is generally believed that it is men who have done all the exciting things: it is men who have made history, made discoveries, made inventions and performed feats of skill and courage — according to men. These are the important activities and only men have engaged in them, so we are led to believe. And so it is that the activities of men become the curriculum.

Making male knowledge the substance of the curriculum is a multifaceted process. A part is played by those who determine what the values of society will be, a part is played by the policy makers and a part is played by the researchers who produce knowledge about men; but a part is also played by male students in mixed-sex classrooms who insist that their interests be catered for — often exclusively. Many teachers can document what happens in a mixed-sex classroom where boys are not the focus of attention — there is trouble!

If boys do not get what they want then many of them are likely to be uncooperative and in a sexist society their lack of co-operation is often expressed in sexist ways. In a society where males are expected to be aggressive, to be authoritative, forceful and masterful, then in many respects boys are only doing what is expected of them if they act in an aggressive manner when registering their protests. Many teachers and students see it as quite legitimate for boys to make trouble, to prevent others from participating, to impose their values on others who may not share them, if they do not get what they want.

'The boys get upset if we try to talk about girls' things' said one female student, 'I suppose it's only right really.' When I asked her whether the girls got upset about having to do only boys' things she said, 'It's not the same. We don't mind doing their things. Sometimes we get upset but we don't say much.' When girls are required to do 'boys' things' they don't make as much noise, they don't mount the same disruptive protests. Girls do not impose their values on the boys, nor do they manipulate the teachers in this way.

Because teaching is so closely allied with class ɔom control in our society (an arrangement which might be altered if women were to have a say) teachers simply cannot afford to have a classroom of unruly boys who are not interested in the lesson and who are bent on causing trouble. The boys get the results — the lessons are directed towards them!

When Katherine Clarricoates (1978) interviewed primary teachers they provided clear evidence that they geared their classes to the interests of boys (despite the fact that they also claimed they treated the sexes equally) because that was the only way the class could be controlled.

> 'Boys are more difficult to control' said one teacher. 'Yes' said another 'they're ever so lively and boisterous.'
> 'It's important to keep their attention . . . otherwise they play you up something awful.'
>
> 'The boys are more difficult to settle down to their work . . . they don't seem to have the same self discipline as the girls do, so its important to direct the subject at them.'
>
> 'I'd tend to try . d make the topic as interesting as possible so that the boys won't lose their concentration and start fidgeting . . . '
>
> 'It's a bit harder to keep the boys' attention during a lesson . . . at least that's what I've found so I gear the subject to them more than I do the girls who are good at paying attention in class'. (Clarricoates, 1978; pp356-357).

This is par the significance of teacher attention being directed to boys. This is hy teachers give them more attention and offer them more praise and encouragement, and why boys talk more, make more demands, question and challenge more. This is the process whereby the *male* exp rience becomes the *classroom* experience, whereby education duplicates the patterns of the wider society.

For girls who are expected to be dependent and docile, any objections they may have to being inculcated in the male experience can t e a different form. Their failure to co-operate can lead to withdrawal, to either 'getting on with the work' and not expecting it to be meaningful or interesting, or to quietly opting out in the corner. Either way, such behaviour of the girls is not likely to be seen as evidence that teachers cannot control their classes, for in most classrooms it is the noise level which is used as the criterion for teacher efficiency, and inside and outside education it is the male who makes the more noise.

The students know that girls are expected to be quiet and docile (and this has numerous consequences) and when Angele Parker (1973) questione. students, both sexes stated that asking questions, challenging the authority of teachers, demanding reasons and explanations — in short behaving in an active way in the classroom — was a masculine activity. And both sexes know that girls who do not conform to these expectations are likely to be punished.

Over and over again my own research has exposed the double standard which operates in the classroom. When boys ask questions,

ERIC

protest, or challenge the teacher (or other students) they are often met with respect and rewards; when girls engage in exactly the same behaviour they are often met with punishment and rebuke. For boys who demand attention and explanations there is *not even a term in the language* to label their undesirable behaviour, but there is for girls — they are unladylike! It is expected that boys should stand up for themselves, that they should assert themselves, and even if and when this may be inconvenient for a teacher, it is behaviour from boys that is still likely to be viewed positively. After all, boys will be boys!

It is not expected that girls should act in an independent manner, and if they do, their behaviour is frequently seen as inappropriate, is viewed negatively, and in many cases is classified as 'a problem'.

Teachers can continue to treat their students in this sexually differentiated way and at the same time report their behaviour as fair and just, precisely because in our society males are perceived as more important. It feels fair and just to pay more attention to males, to accord more significance to their behaviour and more legitimacy to their demands. In a society where it is normal for males to receive preferential treatment, it is also normal to provide such preferential treatment in school.

The consequences for girls are many and varied, and none of them is good. It must be remembered that in the past decade an enormous amount of research has been undertaken which establishes the primary importance of learners being able to talk about their own experience as a starting point for learning. Yet we have . education system where not only is it extremely difficult for half the population to find an opportunity to talk — particularly to the teacher — but where the experience about which they could talk is seen as inappropriate, as not sufficiently 'interesting' to be talked about. (Needless tc say in the research on using one's own experience as a starting point for learning, the influential work of such people as Douglas Barnes, James Britton and Harold Rosen makes no reference to the restrictions placed on females.)

If talking about one's own experience is essential to learning then it must be stated that girls have very reduced opportunities in mixed-sex classrooms — both because of the restrictions placed on their talk and the restrictions placed on their experience.

There can be no doubt that education helps to undermine the self-confidence and lower the self-esteem of girls (this is discussed more fully in following chapters) for they are surrounded by evidence that they are not as important as boys, while teachers give more time, attention and praise to boys, and the lessons they are required to learn present the experience of boys in a positive light. Girls have little choice but to accept what they are daily taught, that they are inferior and wrong.

Bowing to the wishes of the boys in their classrooms, teachers find that there is no shortage of material which is designed to cater for boys: most textbooks assume that the average human being is male, that male experience is the sum total of human experience, and that the activities of males are inherently more interesting and significant. Rather than challenging some of the sexist beliefs of society, many if not most textbooks serve to reinforce sexual inequality. Marion Scott (1980) surveyed *all* the texts used in one London comprehensive

ERIC

school and in her article 'Teach Her A Lesson' reports that sexism is rampant for not only do the majority of textbooks enhance the image of men at the expense of women, they frequently present a distorted representation of the world which is even more sexist than the real world (pp114-115)*. This has to be seen as quite an accomplishment.

But what is learned in the classroom is not confined to the material presented in textbooks. Many insights and understandings can be forged within the classroom which do not depend on received knowledge. First of all, students can find out things for themselves — they can ask questions, make new connections, describe and explain the world in new and different ways; and if girl students were free to make such explorations, to articulate and validate their own experience, then the fact that most encoded knowledge was sexist would not be nearly so significant. They would have another avenue open to them, another possibility for expressing and valuing their own opinions and their own existence.

But such a possibility is usually blocked: the dynamics of the classroom are such that it is males who are in control and the opportunity to make their own knowledge about themselves rarely exists for girls. Instead they are constantly subjected to the lesson that they do not count.

The lesson takes many forms. Sometimes it is an indirect lesson taught by lack of teacher attention and interest. In the classrooms where I have kept a record, not only do girls get less teacher attention, they are required to wait longer for it. When boys seek attention, 'demand' is an appropriate word, and unless the attention is immediately forthcoming they can often make life very difficult for the teacher (and other students). But girls can be 'fobbed off'; their hands can be held up for ages and their often polite requests for assistance can go unheeded as the teacher is obliged to remain with the boys.

In general, boys take up more space, even when they are a minority. They take up more space on their chairs (legs frequently extended as obstacles to unwary travellers), their chairs and desks take up more space, they move around the room more. (They also frequently have more space outside the classroom in corridors and, of course, in terms of sporting facilities: it is not unusual to find large areas of school playgrounds reserved specifically for boys and if there is a division of the playground it is sure to be the girls who get the smaller allocation. This too can be seen as 'fair' in the same way that a smaller allocation of teacher time can be seen as fair.)

Some of these lessons which girls learn about their relative importance (or more precisely, unimportance) are not within the direct control of the teacher, for just as students are required to respond in some measure to the teacher, so too are teachers required to respond — in some measure — to their pupils. And they are required to respond more to males. This raises the question of whether girls should begin to act in the same aggressive and

* The extent to which textbooks show a more sexist view of the world than is experienced in the daily life of students — and the reasons for this — are discussed in Spender (1980) 'Education or Indoctrination?'

ERIC

demanding way as many boys do, and apart from the fact that I fear for teachers if such behaviour were encouraged, I have other reasons for seeking different solutions.

First of all I don't think that such male behaviour is admirable and I see no reason to emulate it. While logically it is perfectly proper to suggest that it would be more productive if boys were to emulate the behaviour of girls, this suggestion rarely arises in a society where male behaviour is assumed to be the best behaviour. But secondly, it is in some ways 'artificial' to suggest to girls that they should act in an autonomous, effective and legitimate manner when every other piece of evidence they gain from the society around them suggests that they are not autonomous, that they are ineffectual and illegitimate. Such behaviour in the classroom would be a departure from the norm, an aberration if it were without social sanction, and could well lead to strengthened feelings of inferiority if it were to fail. And I think it possible that such attempts would fail.

This is because boys can not only make trouble for the teachers — and get results — they can also make trouble for girls. They can use the evidence readily supplied by society that girls are inferior and debased, and they can use it against the girls *with* social sanction.

John Eliot (1974) found himself puzzled by the fact that girls did not participate in his classroom in the same way as boys; they did not ask questions, volunteer information or even discuss the topic at any length. While the significance of the choice of topic seems to pose no problem for Eliot — it was *War* — he nevertheless kept records of what happened in his classroom and found that even when a girl did try to speak, the boys were quick to interrupt, ridicule her, and silence her.

It does not have to be the teacher who establishes the rules and imposes the penalties, who permits boys to talk more, and talk more freely. It is often the boys themselves who lay down the rules and ensure that they are understood and adhered to by the girls: it is often the boys who hand out the penalties, and police the rules, as they do in mixed-sex conversations outside the school (see Spender, *Man Made Language;* 1980).

That boys do not like girls, that they find them inferior and unworthy — and even despicable — is a conclusion hard to avoid when observing and documenting the behaviour of boys towards girls in schools. In the tapes that I have made in the classroom there is the evidence that boys frequently make insulting and abusive (often sexually abusive) comments to girls. There is also evidence that more often than not teachers do not take them to task for this behaviour.

More often than not such attacks are ignored, rendered invisible by the teacher who does not notice (or pretends not to notice) such outbursts. Rarely, it seems, do teachers seek to make an issue out of such behaviour, and when I have asked why it is that such abuse is allowed to persist, even to go unchecked, the response has usually been in the form of an excuse: 'All boys behave like that at their age, it's a stage they go through' and 'It's best not to draw attention to it, they grow out of it you know.' Apart from the fact that I have grave concerns over what they 'grow in to', I cannot fail to notice that such an evaluation takes only the boys into account. What is the effect on girls of this vilification?

ERIC

Most teachers, most boys — and even most girls — will, it seems, acknowledge that boys do not like girls and that this is normal and to be expected. If at times the boys exceed the bounds of 'decency' then it is probably better to turn a blind eye. What is present, but remains unstated, in this rationale, is that it is understandable that boys should dislike girls and that this should be expressed in terms of sexual abuse. The 'problem' is sometimes that boys go too far, not that there is something wrong with their sentiments.

Where this form of behaviour has been documented in the work place it has been called *sexual harassment* (Lin Farley, 1978; Catherine MacKinnon, 1979; Anne Whitehead, 1980) and it has been analysed as male behaviour, designed to intimidate women and to reinforce their inferior status. It is endemic in mixed-sex schools, and applies to females as a group and not as individuals. Initially I thought perhaps girls who challenged male authority in the classroom were likely to be the targets for male contempt, but while it is possible that such girls are the objects of more explicit abuse (which of course discourages them from attempting further challenges to male authority), male contempt is by no means confined to them but is far more generalised. Girls who are quiet, who accept male dictates in the classroom, are just as likely to be viewed contemptuously. Once more we see another example of girls being viewed unfavourably no matter what they do. The value judgement is attached to their sex rather than their behaviour, with girls who act in unfeminine ways being ridiculed and abused and girls who act in feminine ways receiving the same treatment. And girls are intimidated by this behaviour: it is another example of boys making trouble, and getting results.

Michelle Stanworth (1981) asked the students she interviewed 'Who would you least wish to be like?' and with the exception of one girl, they all named a girl. The reasons were various.

Interviewer: Who would you least wish to be like?
Male Pupil: I don't know, let's see (sorting through cards with names of classmates) Oh, one of the faceless bunch I suppose. They seem so anonymous. Probably one of the gaggling girls, let's pick one. Linda, she's ugly. Yes Linda.
Interviewer: Is that because she's ugly?
Pupil: No, but she seems to be immature, she doesn't contribute much to the class. She stands for everything I dislike.
(Stanworth, 1981; p43).

Girls are disliked by boys (and girls) for being non-entities, for being colourless, passive and docile, but they are equally disliked for being individuals and claiming attention, for 'speaking out too aggressively' and 'hogging the limelight'.

It is no accident of course that girls cannot draw on a body of knowledge about women to illustrate how inaccurate and partial are the beliefs about the unworthiness of the female. It is no accident that they cannot present evidence to counter the belief that women deserve contempt because they are women. Such evidence, while it may have been produced by women for centuries, is not handed on by men.

ERIC

Without this evidence it is difficult for girls to challenge male control in the mixed-sex classroom. What arguments are they supposed to offer the boys who dismiss 'girls' things' as silly, who demand priority for their sex, and who cause trouble if it is not forthcoming? What arguments are girls supposed to use to validate their own experience when the ridicule of the boys draws on the basic social assumption that girls are unworthy and contemptible?

In the past men have excluded women from interaction, defined them as inferior, and blamed women for the lowly place they occupy, but this form of behaviour is not just characteristic of the past for it is acted out in classrooms everyday. Whether the lesson is history, English, science or mathematics (sometimes more especially so when it is science or mathematics), girls are being informed that they are not valuable, they do not count, their experience (which includes the experience of being subjected to male control by the male students) is not important or significant.

Many retreat. Overwhelmed by the evidence from the curriculum, the teachers and the boys, girls can accept their 'inferiority' and assume their 'proper' place.

Terrible as it may appear this does not mean that I see the case as hopeless and feel that nothing can be done to dislodge the beliefs and break the pervasive patterns. Women can develop their own ways without imitating the behaviour of men, and some teachers are already making subtle and significant changes (see for example Irene Payne's work in *Learning to Lose,* p174).

One of the reasons that male control continues in mixed-sex classrooms is because its operation has not been exposed. Instead of waiting for the repercussions that are bound to result from trying to allocate more time to the girls, it can be profitable to set for the class the task of determining who gets the teacher's attention. Not only does this help to pre-empt the complaint of unfairness when boys receive less than two thirds of the time, it starts to provide girls with the evidence that they need and which they can use.

One strategy which could help to overcome some of the present problems lies in women generating knowledge from the perspective of women which serves as an alternative and counters many of the myths made by men. Fundamental to the knowledge women generate is the problem of male dominance.

Even raising the question— *who talks most* — a question understandably not raised by men, pays dividends for women. Who takes up time, and space, who sets the topics for classroom discussion, who makes trouble when they don't get what they want? All of these questions can be answered within the classroom by the students themselves and all of them serve to generate knowledge and evidence about women's view of the world.

If space for single-sex discussion can be made available, so much the better for the girls, who, without having to defend themselves to a hostile audience, can explore and express their own experience in a male dominated society.

Currently men hold power and it is therefore not surprising that women should seek approval and confirmation from males. Girls who defer to male authority in mixed-sex classrooms are behaving in a reasonable and logical manner while they believe that such authority

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

is justified. But once women begin to ask questions, male authority becomes problematic. Girls quickly perceive that it is unfair that boys should dominate classroom interaction, that they should determine the dynamics of the classroom, and by challenging the structures of the classroom they are removing many of the means by which male authority is constructed. The floodgates are open. There is not the same need to defer to males, not the same necessity to depend on males for approval.

It was once stated in a volume signed by John Stuart Mill — but on his own admission the ideas within it were generated by Harriet Taylor* — that it was not enough for women to be slaves, they must be willing slaves. When women begin to generate their own knowledge they are often no longer willing. Girls are no longer willing to think it fair that boys should have more of the teachers' attention, that girls should have to wait, that the curriculum should be geared to boys. The hold that men have over women may be pervasive but it is fragile, for it relies so heavily on women's consensus.

Within every classroom there exists the opportunity for making knowledge, even for using this new knowledge as a means of examining that which has already been encoded. At the moment these opportunities are geared towards the interests of males, partly because many males feel they have a right to such opportunities: but they can be used by women.

* See Alice Rossi, 1970, *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill: Essays on Sex Equality*.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

3

Kids, their schools and the organisation of social life

R. W. Connell, D. J. Ashenden, S. Kessler & G. W. Dowsett

Source R W Connell D J Ashenden, S Kessler & G W Dowsett *Making the Difference Schools Families and Social Division* Allen & Unwin Sydney, 1982 pp 93-100 173-83

At various points in our discussion of resistance, compliance, and pragmatism we have seen that their form and consequences are different for girls and boys. Schools have always had a regard for the gender of their inmates, of course, most obviously revealed in simple separation and differentiation: boys' schools and girls' schools; boys' yard and girls' yard; woodwork, metalwork, maths and physics for boys, domestic science, needlework, English and biology for girls; cane for boys, detention for girls; and so on. These patterns are historically variable, and we will explore some of their recent changes later. For the moment we wish to argue that the school's relation to gender is not only one of reflecting patterns of separation and association between male and female; the school is also deeply implicated in the production of masculinity and femininity.

Where this is a question of activities quite clearly directed to this end, we can speak of masculinizing and feminizing practices. In ruling-class boys' schools the project of 'making men of them' has historically been quite explicit; and much can be learned from an examination of their most visible masculinizing practice — sport, and especially football. Brian Andrews, for instance, the son of a company manager, is being comprehensively trained as a competitor by his family and his school. There is a fierce push behind his involvement in football. Unfortunately he is still physically small and consequently last year ran into a series of injuries, culminating in concussion — it took an anxious teacher getting on the 'phone to Mr Andrews before Brian, to his chagrin, was put down to a lower grade playing with smaller boys. Asked what he would most like to improve about himself, his answer was 'to grow bigger physically'. He strongly identifies with his father, and his father puts emotional weight on football as a mark of masculinity. 'I hate football', says Mrs Andrews; but Mr Andrews says 'I like them to win', and turns

out regularly for Brian's Saturday matches.

Ian Walker is a much better footballer than Brian; indeed, has been picked in representative teams. He has a precise knowledge of his body's capacities and limits at this game, refusing, against severe pressure from his coach and peers, to play on the wing because his skills and weaknesses suited a forward position better. His father backed him up in this and discussed the episode with some pride as a sign of Ian's independence and judgment. In Ian's first year at Milton College he was playing no less than three matches every weekend, one for his school and two with local clubs, though eventually he found he couldn't keep this pressure up.

Anthony Graves has even more push from his parents. Mrs and Mr Graves follow all their boys' matches, yell from the sidelines, praise good play, abuse bad. Dad gives up his Saturday golf to come and Mum is at every sports day: 'Wild horses wouldn't lead me away'. Alluding to the school's sports colour, she says

> the three of them are very much blue men — we are blue men

adding to the point by defining herself out of existence.

A dose of old-fashioned school spirit, rather overdone? We think not; something systematic and important is going on here. Competitive spc ad particularly football, is important as a means for the production of a particular kind of masculinity linked to the class situation these boys are moving towards and the work they will be engaged in.

Why football? It's rarely played by women, therefore unambiguously male; it's rough; it's competitive — a constant test of what both the Walkers and the Andrews senior call 'drive'; it's highly ritualized; and it's confrontative in a way that other competitive sports are not — in the course of play you are constantly running up against someone and have to overcome him in a test of personal superiority. The game is well suited, then, to be the emotional focus of the masculinizing practices of the school. We stress, however, that it is only a focus, and that the whole process is very much broader and more complicated. Some kids, after all, reject football. Ian Walker is going off it a bit, the pace has been too hot. Other sports can and do serve: Anthony Graves is more involved with cricket and athletics, and we can see how athletics became an important affirmation of his masculinity by noting the pain caused when an injury forced him to give up the event at which he was school champion.

Crises such as this give clues both the pressure these boys are under and to the peer group dimension of the process. The boys themselves become the police of masculinity. Two of the boys we have been discussing — neither of them particularly rough or aggressive people — have had fights to prove their masculinity, in schools where fights are not particularly common. Anthony Graves' father told one story, with more than a touch of complacency:

> Socially he is not as mature as his peers; and these days if you're not interested in girls in first and second year, you're 'a queer', auto-

ERIC

matically No questions asked; that's the end of that. And he had a bad time in second year because two or three kids in his class kept on and on and on. A couple of them he wouldn't do anything about because they were smaller and he didn't want to hurt them. The third one was as big as he was, and he was biding his time. And he was a friend, and once again he didn't want to stir up trouble. And then he had enough: and beat the daylights out of this kid. And that was the end of that.

Mrs Graves notes that actually both boys got hurt in the fight. Brian Andrews, on arrival at secondary school, was nicknamed 'Squib' on account of his small physique and eventually attacked a boy who kept jeering at him on the theme of this name. Brian lost the fight but saved his self-esteem.

There are some important clues here about the nature of masculinity and its making. First, it is far from being a matter of simple role learning. The beginning of secondary schooling coincides roughly with the onset of puberty; boys often begin it at a time of rupture in their relations with their mother and father, and at a stage when there is much unsettled about the kind of person they are going to be. Great exertions by the boys themselves, and by the school regime, directed at a most vulnerable region of the psyche, suggest not the emergence of a 'natural' pattern of personal formation ('boys will be boys'), but social and psychological responses to diversity and fluidity.

That the Independent boys' schools are generally successful in constructing a dominant pattern of masculinity is easily observed. It is not the case, however, that the outcome is a *uniform* or universal form of masculinity. The process is essentially one of conflict, and in the struggles which involved the three boys we discussed a moment ago, some emerge as winners and some do not. Those who do not must make their own peace with the competitive, physically aggressive, space-occupying form of masculinity which dominates their schools. Some resist through a defiant inversion, and go in for study, debating, theatricals and the like ('the Cyrils' as they were dubbed in one school). Others — Anthony Graves is one — piece together a way of being male which capitalizes on specialized strengths (athletics) and avoids the most threatening areas (locker room bonhomie). He wants to be a vet, an unusual choice for a boy of his class. The school's efforts do not abolish diversity, in short, but place limits upon it and construct a hierarchy of forms of masculinity.

This limiting and ordering, and the practices by which it is achieved, are subject to historical change. Indeed just such a process of change was going on in the Independent girls' schools in our sample.

Until very recently several of these schools took as their main task the production of a femininity which complemented the masculinity dominant in the class milieu. They addressed themselves to producing girls whose character was organized around sociability rather than competition, prepared for subordination in marriage rather than dominance, equipped with the interests and skills that would grace a well-appointed home rather than offer challenges to its master. This still goes on, even in schools with an academic leaning.

ERIC

Jenny Lucas at St Margaret's, for instance, brought up in a totally patriarchal home, has a vision of her future in which having a job is very much on the margin. In detailed focus are marriage, and being at home when the children come from school, in a suitable setting:

> *What kind of house would you like to have?*
> I've always had a fascination with being rich [laughs]. Have a nice big — not big — oh yeah, big sort of mansion; not a *big* mansion, but in the country; not here, in England, somewhere nice, all green, and all free . . . all nice furniture and wallpaper and carpet everywhere and chandeliers and you know, sort of all really nice. So it's all homely like and not — I don't want something that's all neat and tidy and doesn't make you feel at home.

Her father reports that she's even got into detailed discussion with him about the cost of her wedding reception. (There is, we should observe, no particular boy in sight.)

At the same time, and in the same schools, another kind of femininity is being formed, in which personal achievement and mastery of knowledge is much more central. We saw the paradigm of this in the Auburn College 'A' stream a few pages back. Girls of this stamp too are mostly looking forward to marriage, but marriage structured differently from their mothers' — organized to service their careers, as well as their husbands'. There is every prospect that those demands will be incompatible with the boys' masculinity, and a good deal of strife is going to result. Tremors are already detectable. Some of our businessmen fathers have already given thought to their bright daughters following in their footsteps and becoming managers. And the conclusion seems to be that they shouldn't, because the men in these firms just wouldn't stand for it.

Male resistance, then, is likely to exclude women from that sphere where capitalist authority fuses most completely with masculinity, ***management***, and therefore deflect career-oriented girls towards the ***professions***. It is notable that that is already where the schools are pointing them in their academic programmes, while in their non-academic curricula there is no equivalent of the boy's training in dominance through heavily-stressed confrontation sports and the like. In both the change and its containment we see how the ruling-class school is an active agent in the construction of masculinities and femininities, and the relations between them. The process has a dynamic growing out of diversity and conflict.

This much is also true of the role of working-class schools in the making of girls and boys, but the relationship is here rather more oblique. We have already seen something of the significance of gender in working-class schools in our earlier discussion of compliance, pragmatism and resistance — especially resistance. This connection is a major theme of Willis's *Learning to Labour*, which argues that working-class boys' resistance to the scholastic culture of the school both cuts them off from jobs requiring certificates of school achievement and brings them to associate masculinity with manual labour. This is 'how working-class kids get working-class jobs', and the means by which a fundamental cleavage in the working class — between mental and manual labour — finds an expression and an agent in the school. 'The lads' follow their fathers into

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

the factories, while the 'ear'oles', the compliers, go into offices.

There is some evidence in our material to support this view. We saw in Mark Grey, for example, a school 'achiever' who distances himself from 'the hoods', and in the process, forms a particular kind of masculinity. On the other side Bill Poulos, arch-resister and male chauvinist, seems to be a classic illustration of Willis's thesis. But there are grounds for caution about this argument.

There is no simple relationship between class and masculinity. Indeed, what impresses us most are the tensions and contradictions at play, and the range of outcomes which that interplay generates. Let us digress briefly to recall some aspects of the situations in which Mark Grey and Bill Poulos find themselves.

Mr Poulos and Mr Grey for example, are husbands, fathers, and skilled workers, but their relationship to their workplace and their families have taken very different courses. The position of working-class men in the work-place is often deeply ambiguous — the celebration of physical strength and skill going intimately with the humiliation of being subject to control by bosses. Mr Grey has been defeated by the latter; Mr Poulos has not. In the Poulos family patriarchy reigns supreme; in the Grey family it is failing.

Mr Grey's failure has been his wife's opportunity — it has given her a strong hold on her son's schooling which she has used to push Mark away from the rough masculinity and class-based resistance of 'the hoods' and toward compliance with the school's programme of academic competition. Bill Poulos, powerfully father-identified, keeps his girlfriends down, resists the teachers, and heads for the factory floor. There are two crucial points here First, as we saw when discussing the Independent schools, 'masculinity' cannot be grasped as a simple social form; it is *not* the case that Bill is masculine and Mark not. Mark is learning to push his mother around, and is strongly influenced by his rugged scoutmaster. It *is* the case that Bill and Mark are constructing different kinds of masculinity. Bill's is the classic 'macho' mould, Mark's is increasingly (though problematically) centred on competitive achievement. What we see are signs of the struggle between forms of masculinity, and the emergence of hierarchies between them.

Second, one of the most striking things about the relationship between the ruling-class boys' school and the production of masculinity is a sort of synchronization of the activity of home, school, and individual, so that the school is the locus of what is usually a mutually-supporting set of family, school and peer practices. The production of a specific kind of masculinity, and the process of class formation, are virtually one and the same. In the working-class school, on the contrary, the production of the dominant form of masculinity is achieved in and through *resistance* to the school. And at least one subordinate form of masculinity, competitive achievement, requires a break with class practices in its constitution.

A similar pattern of disruption is evident in the relationship between the school and working-class femininity. If anything its dislocations are greater than those of working-class masculinity. As we have seen, Bill Poulos's resistance to school is an affirmation of a

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

particular kind of masculinity, where Heather Arlott's resistance to school breaks with conventional notions of femininity. Where the girls of Auburn are conducting a fruitful insurgency on male prerogatives, and are able to look to a viable (if troubled) long-term strategy of career-and-marriage, Heather's strategy leads directly to greater vulnerability in the labour market, and an economic need for dependence on a man.

Heather is in a minority at Rockwell, of course; also in a minority are the girls who opt for attachment to the school's academic programme and, thus, for a chance of promotion out of their milieu via school success. Yet these girls, too, face very hard choices — between the femininity modelled by their mothers and that of the 'career woman', and between the social practices of their families and an unknown which lies beyond Matriculation and tertiary education. For the majority of girls in these schools, the future looks rather more familiar: early leaving, a job, early marriage, and full-time motherhood.

But even a traditional kind of femininity still has to be produced. Delia Prince, for instance, is growing up in a patriarchal household that revolves around the work and leisure interests of her father Fred, a maintenance worker for a public authority. Her mother Rae is a nearly full-time clerical worker, and a full-time mother. Delia's older brother has an apprenticeship, and her older sister is undertaking secretarial training. Delia would like to be a vet, but if she doesn't get the grades, will get a clerical job. She then expects to marry at twenty and have her children.

It all seems like effortless 'reproduction'. Not so: there's a lot of tension behind this. Delia's Mum didn't stay at home when she had young kids; and now feels guilty about that, and about her job now, and tries to make up for it by being an ideal Mum in every other way. She is running herself into the ground doing this. The dominance of Fred Prince's work and interests didn't fall from the sky. When Fred met Rae, she was hoping to become a nurse, which he didn't like — so she got a job in a bank, and was sacked on marriage in accordance with the bank's policy. Delia's peer relations are carefully supervised — her parents introduced her boyfriend to her! Fred tackled the school about drugs and sex amongst students, was told it did happen but Delia wasn't involved. Rae separated Delia from a group who smoked and got drunk on weekends. Delia's femininity has involved, and still involves, a lot of work on all sides.

The school seems marginal in this process. Delia gets a bit of training in Domestic Science. She doesn't rely on the school for her main peer group. We will later suggest, however, that the school is more closely implicated in changes going on in working-class femininity, which a superficial view of its sexism is likely to overlook.

• • •

ERIC

The discussion of gender and schooling, like the older literature on class, has been mainly concerned with the issue of unequal opportunities for boys and girls. There is now a formidable pile of research evidence showing that these inequalities continue to exist, though their character has changed. In recent years there has been a development rather like the 'Reproduction Approach' in the case of class, a focus on the way schools reproduce the subordination of women. This has mainly been seen as a process of imposing sex stereotypes on children. Both perspectives can be clearly seen in the excellent Schools Commission report of 1975, *Girls, School and Society*, which summarizes the Australian evidence and proposes ways to make opportunity more equal and assumptions about sex roles less rigid.

As with the parallel literature on class, we would argue that these two approaches are incomplete, and, by themselves, misleading. Relationships between the sexes are not just a matter of distinctions leading to inequalities. They are also relations of power. When we talk about gender we are talking about ways in which social relations get organized in the interests of some groups, over-riding the interests of others. Nor do the schools just reproduce sex stereotypes or confirm girls in a subordinate position. They do that some of the time; but they also subvert conventions and restructure gender relations. It is not just a little of one and a little of the other. We have to see the schools as involved, to a degree, in the very constitution of gender relations. They are not the main influence doing this, but are certainly one of the parties to the process — helping to construct and reconstruct that whole aspect of social life.

The assumption we make is that being masculine and feminine is not a simple consequence of being biologically male or female. In this we are supported by contemporary research on sex and gender, which demonstrates that what is taken to be masculine and feminine, and the characteristic ways men and women interact with each other, are *socially* constructed above all. Where we differ from most of the literature on 'sex roles' is in stressing that these social relations also are *historical*. To understand the state they are in at any given time, we must understand how they have come into being, how they have been produced. Gender relations change historically. When they are changing quickly (as they have among some groups in Australia recently), the question of how they are produced becomes very obvious. But it is just as important in understanding what goes on when they are changing very slowly, or appear not to be changing at all.

The construction and reconstruction of gender

The Schools Commission report observed that 'throughout its curriculum and organization the school differentiates between male and female students in ways which reinforce sex stereotyped expectations'. This is true, to a limited extent, of what we have seen in our interviews. One can point to school uniforms, modes of punishment,

ERIC

and some differences in curriculum, where boys are differentiated from girls in this way. But this is hardly the main point. As we saw in Chapter Three, some schools at least are very pointedly involved in practices directed towards constructing masculinity and femininity. That football, for instance, is often played by boys and rarely by girls is a trivial point; what counts is the way it serves as a focus for a whole programme of constructing masculinity, and subordinating some forms of it to others.

We have already registered that there is a whole range of masculinities and femininities; stemming from different family patterns, courses of growth and personal choices, and reflected in different kinds of emotional attachments (for instance, homosexual and heterosexual), different traits of character, and different ways of participating in social life.

The high school enters the picture at a very important stage of psychosexual development, and its impact on the construction of gender has to be understood in this light. The masculinizing and feminizing practices within it, such as the cult of football at Milton College, are in important respects responses to psychosexual diversity and its fluidity in early adolescence. The school certainly doesn't brainwash kids into a stereotype — the 'Cyrils', after all, remain. But its intervention has a lot to do with the hierarchy constructed among different kinds of masculinity and femininity; and, at the same time, the relations that are constructed between boys and girls.

It follows from this that different school policies or structures may go some way to *change* the hierarchy of kinds of masculinity or femininity at any one time, and hence affect the overall patterns of gender relations. The clearest example of this in our research was in some of the girls' private schools; the changing balance between different kinds of femininity there has been discussed in Chapter Three. We have also called attention to the much more ambiguous impact of the academic curriculum on working-class femininity. There is an effect, but a selective one: on the academically-successful girls involved in a project of social mobility, who with the aid of the teachers can be shifted out of their present milieu by educational promotion. The tendency here is not to reconstruct gender relations in the working-class milieu, but to split certain kinds of women away from that milieu.

Yet there are changes going on in gender relations in the working class; most importantly to do with women's work.

Women and men's work

The most dramatic change in the Australian labour market in the last generation has been the massive increase in the employment of married women, about 5 per cent of whom had paid jobs before World War II, about 40 per cent at the end of the 1970s. Women have increasingly moved into higher education and the professions. But it hasn't all been progress up the tree. Management has remained largely closed to them; and new industries such as computing, and newly-reconstructed industries such as banking, have grown new forms of sexual division, creating dead-end jobs for women such as

ERIC

key-punch operating. And as employers have found part-time work a useful option, overwhelmingly it has been women who have filled the bill — with resulting low incomes and low promotion prospects.

At the top end of the labour market, the education system has plainly been important for entry into the professions. Not that this has always been quick or easy. Mrs Somerset, for instance, entered a profession in the early 1950s; her career was aborted when its demands conflicted with her husband's. Yet that experience fed into her concern for her daughters, and is a powerful force behind *their* trajectory towards the professions and a new model of marriage. The school, in situations like this, is not acting alone. Rather it is the means through which pressure for change in the sexual division of labour finally takes effect.

In this kind of process it is important to reckon with the teachers themselves. Forty-six per cent of secondary school teachers in Australia are women, probably half of them are under thirty, and the younger teachers are better trained. Teachers are themselves involved in a changed sexual division of labour; and a significant number of the younger women teachers have been influenced by feminism. They, with sympathetic male teachers, support the project of careers for girls, and provide a base for counter-sexist campaigns in schools: in careers advising, in the reading matter supplied to young children, in removing promotional barriers for women in their profession, and in teacher organizations.

Yet there is little mutual influence between teachers and working-class families; so this activity goes on in isolation from changes in the sexual division of labour that are occurring beyond the school fence. The massive change in women's employment has not been in the professions alone There has been a major redefinition of work and responsibility in working-class families too, where married women by the thousands have taken jobs as office cleaners, chicken packers, checkout operators, sandwich makers, label stickers, and the like. Enough of the traditional definition of 'woman's place' remains, especially among the men and boys, to make the conventional housebound wife-and-mother role still a goal for many families. But fewer and fewer households can actually afford it; and two vital changes have occurred.

The rise in workforce participation has meant vastly increased numbers of women who earn a wage, and thus have a measure of financial power of their own. That can mean a real change in power relations in the family. Second, increasing numbers of working-class women, in their own ways, are contesting male control and insisting on independence or equality. This rarely takes the form of a conscious feminism. No working-class mother we interviewed had any contact with the women's movement. But there is here a real and conscious shift from conventional models of womanhood. Sometimes this stems from the failure of a husband to provide adequate support, forcing the wife to get a job of her own. Sometimes there is outright resistance to husbands' attempts to enforce male privileges. Their education has given them no help whatever in understanding and working through these changes; and their daughters seem to be getting a roughly equal amount of preparation to face them. There

ERIC

are educational tasks here — for adult education as much as the schools — which urgently need to be tackled.

School organization

So far we have been dealing with more or less conscious educational policies. There are also ways in which schooling affects gender without any very conscious purpose being involved, by virtue of the way schools are organized and function.

The aspect of school organization where gender relations have been most clearly the object of policy is coeducation. In Chapter Three we noted that there were few signs that this had led to any relaxation of sexism. The research evidence is ambiguous as to whether it depresses girls' academic performance. But there can be no doubt at all that coeducation has had a major impact on gender relations through its effects on teenagers' informal social life. For all the sexism that is still rampant there, encounters between boys and girls in the coeducational comprehensives are enormously freer and easier than they used to be for teenagers incarcerated in the old segregated schools. High school students now are sexual beings in a much more open and obvious way. Here the reorganization of schooling has interacted with the changes in [illegible] life, and the growth of commercial youth culture, to produce a relaxation of prohibitions that is a constant worry to parents and a chronic problem for schools — which can do little to stop a process their own structure has accelerated.

In other respects, the structure of the high school is conservative in the extreme. Almost all retain a decidedly hierarchical form of administration: principal and deputy at the top have very wide powers, and there is a delegation of limited and specific responsibilities to heads of departments. It is not at all exceptional to find state school principals making rules and carrying through policies which are incomprehensible to kids and parents, or even actively opposed by them. Classroom teachers for the most part have a say in general school policy only by courtesy of the principal. It is this kind of authority that ruling-class fathers usually exert in their households, and many working-class men wish they could. It is not surprising that 88 per cent of state secondary school principals in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria are men (even more in Western Australia and Queensland). Those who are women are commonly in single-sex girls' schools; and, whether there or in coeducational schools, they too are working within patriarchal structures that constitute power and authority as the major axis of relations among people.

Yet in terms of the school's authority structure, the most striking unintended effects occur right at the bottom. In Chapter Three we noted that resistance to school discipline and academic teaching is generated among both boys and girls, and in both ruling-class and working-class schools (though much more widely in the latter). For boys, the typical forms of resistance affirm conventional masculinity, even amplify it. Among girls, there is a form of passive resistance

ERIC

to schooling which is common enough; but there is also an active resistance very like the boys', which undermines femininity. In the past, female 'delinquency' normally was assumed to mean becoming a sexually available marginal member of a gang of delinquent boys. But sexual freedom isn't so deviant now; and, anyway, most of the active school resisters are strong young women who are not about to become doormats for the local boys if they can stand up to their parents and schools. So their resistance genuinely does challenge their subordination as women. But the school gives them no help in understanding this difficult and puzzling aspect of their lives, since they won't take advice from teachers, and teachers are by and large exasperated with them anyway.

Extent of the school's role

We have described three main ways in which the school is implicated in the construction of gender and gender relations. The inequalities of educational opportunity and the reproduction of 'sex-roles' spoken of in the literature are, we would suggest, aspects of this larger process. And they are aspects liable to change, because the production of gender is complex and tension-ridden, as well as being the subject of social struggles. Thus the change in high school retention rates — which only a few years ago produced a clear differential in favour of boys and now shows a slight margin in favour of girls — does not in itself mean a fundamental change in the relation of gender and schooling. (It may, for instance, mainly reflect the squeeze on the female youth labour market, and the new conditions under which an old division of labour is being maintained.)

The other reason for caution here is that in some respects the school seems to have very little impact on gender relations. The main institutional site of gender relations in Australian society is the household and family, and we have seen that the school is held, or holds itself, at a distance from what goes on inside most households. The next most important site is the labour market and workplace; and, for the great majority of working women, the school doesn't have a great deal to do with steering them into or away from mass occupations like factory work, retailing, and routine clerical work. (Though, as some of our working-class mothers say, the school can have an effect by doing nothing.) It is notable, too, how quite a major institutional change in schooling, the advent of general coeducation, has made little difference to the depth of sexism, or even to opportunities for educational promotion.

In some other respects, however, the school seems to have a powerful effect. Coeducation did reorganize the social life of teenagers. The school is important in the construction of masculinity and femininity during adolescence, and in ordering the relationships among different kinds of masculinity and femininity. So it isn't a matter of the school being only loosely connected with gender relations in general. We can conclude that its effects in organizing them have been strong but highly specific. If that is correct, it is important in understanding both the potentials and the limits of counter-sexist educational practices.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

We also have clear indications that the connection between gender and schooling is not static, but historical, and responds to the class milieu and the state of class relations. Let us now turn briefly to this three-way relationship.

SCHOOLING, CLASS AND PATRIARCHY

Understanding the interplay of class relations and gender relations is one of the most difficult problems in the social sciences. There are deep differences of opinion about how to pose the problem in the first place, and what a solution might even look like.[14] Though there have been a good many attempts, no-one can claim to have a satisfactory solution at present, and we don't pretend to either. But the issue has come up so persistently in this project that we have had to wrestle with it, and try to get some bearings on the way this interaction affects, and is affected by, schooling.

The first thing to be clear about is that they *do* interact, and that means all the time. Sometimes people think of class relations as confined to the factory and gender relations to the family (or perhaps the drive-in); more formally, that class and gender are complementary social systems, each operating in its own sphere. This, we would suggest, is mistaken. There are gender relations inside factories, and there are class relations inside families and in the upbringing of children. Schooling is a very important case in point, where both class and gender relations are present in the same sphere, and, more importantly, within the same practices.

We would make two other general points, the reasons for which should be obvious from our material. First, both class and gender are, in their different ways, structures of power. They involve control by some people over others, and the ability of some groups to organize social life to their own advantage. As power is exercized and contested, social relations are organized, and come to be in some degree a system. So an important corollary about class and gender relations is that they are systematic rather than random.

But, and this is our second general point, this does not mean being systematic in a mechanical sense, like an air-conditioning system. Both class and gender are *historical* systems, riddled with tension and contradiction, and always subject to change. Indeed it may be better to think of them as *structuring processes* rather than 'systems', that is, ways in which social life is constantly being organized (and ruptured and disorganized) through time. What is most important to grasp about them is their dynamics, the ways in which they exert pressures, produce reactions, intensify contradictions and generate change.

The simplest form of their combined influence is where they simply intersect, and jointly shape some aspect of schooling. To understand what goes on at St Helen's College it is rarely sufficient to know just that it is a ruling-class school or just that it is a girls' school; the fact that it is both is important in understanding most facets of it. The situation of a working-class schoolboy is always dif-

ERIC

ferent from the situation of a working-class schoolgirl; they cannot (except for very summary purposes and at the cost of sloppiness) be lumped together as if there were just *a* working-class situation. We hope our material has shown this fairly fully; and we stress it particularly because there are teachers who have become sensitive to one structure but not the other. It is important to think about educational situations and processes in terms of both.

Complications arise because gender and class are not the same kind of structure. Obviously enough, gender has something to do with biology that class doesn't, and class has something to do with wealth and accumulation that gender doesn't. Unfortunately a good many discussions of educational inequality do treat them in the same way, just as little boxes. This is not what we mean by 'intersection', nor is it a very fruitful way of understanding a relation between social structures.

The joint presence of gender and class, say for a working-class boy, means *a relationship between processes*. It means that the construction of his masculinity goes on in a context of economic insecurity, or hard-won and cherished security, rather than economic confidence and expansiveness. It means that his father's masculinity and authority is diminished by being at the bottom of the heap in his workplace, and being exploited without being able to control it; and that his mother has to handle the tensions, and sometimes the violence, that result. It means that his own entry into work and the class relations of production is conditioned by the gender relations that direct him to male jobs, and construct for him an imagined future as breadwinner for a new family. And so on.

Because they are different kinds of structures, with different dynamics, their relationship with schooling often works in different ways. We still lack a good social history of Australian education; but, even in the fragments we have, it is clear that the history of the two relationships is often divergent. It was, for instance, problems of class relations that led to the construction of mass elementary schooling in the nineteenth century. The school system then tended to segregate children along both class and sex lines (especially after the elementary years) and to have separate curricula too (domestic science *vs* manual arts, etc.). In that respect the two relationships appear similar. But it is clear that what the schools were actually doing for class and gender relations was very different; for the subordinate class got less secondary education while the subordinate sex got more. In the early twentieth century, school participation rates for teenage girls were higher than for teenage boys.

After World War II the schools were again reconstructed in response to a class dynamic, but also in response to the shift in gender relations that had built up steam during the war. So coeducation came in about the same time as urban high schools became comprehensives; both kinds of formal segregation, that is, were dismantled at much the same time. Coeducational comprehensives did not get very far in mixing social classes, but did mix the sexes and reconstruct peer relations. And while class differentials in secondary and higher education remained wide, the sex differential which had been re-established in the 1920s now began to close.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

These points are simply indicators of a problem, not a serious sketch of a history. But it is clear enough that in grasping the intersection of class and gender in contemporary schooling, we have to pay close attention to their different dynamics.

Thinking about 'intersection', however, is not enough. Class and gender don't just occur jointly in a situation. They abrade, inflame, amplify, twist, negate, dampen and complicate each other. In short, they interact vigorously, often through the schools, and often with significant consequences for schooling.

The reconstruction of gender relations that is going on at Auburn College, for instance, crucially depends on the class situation of the girls and the school — the kind of teaching force it has, th degree of autonomy it has, the parental strategies that make professionalism an acceptable programme for the girls. In a very different setting, teachers like Arlette Anderson at Rockwell High see a way for some Rockwell girls to escape sexual subordination in an ocker-dominated, patriarchal milieu, using the class mechanism of social promotion via meritocratic schooling and entry into semi-professional jobs. On a larger scale, we can see that it was in response to class dynamics that the education system as a whole was organized as a system of academic competition. But once it was organized that way, it became available to women to improve their position vis-a-vis men.

It is important, then, that class processes can abrade or erode patriarchal social arrangements, and vice versa. To put this more generally, the two sets of relations can come into contradiction. We would propose as a hypothesis suggested but not proven by our material, that this is a fruitful source of aberrant educational careers. We have, for instance, already discussed a ruling-class school resister, Chris Legrange, who comes from a family that is virtually the scene of a small class war, where patriarchal authority has been eroded, and where Chris uses the threat of downward class mobility via school failure as a weapon in the war with his mother. Yvonne Crisp, an academic high-flyer in a working-class school, has a father who failed as a small farmer and failed to get promotion as a railwayman, and a mother who succeeded as a schoolteacher. Mr Crisp has attempted, and failed, to establish patriarchal authority in the family and a subordinated definition of women's place. The fight between husband and wife has been long and evidently bitter; the emotions and energy involved have fuelled Yvonne's desire to escape from her milieu, and her attachment to academic success as the means; though her real attachment to her father is also holding her back from a full-blooded commitment to professionalism.

Schooling, then, can serve as a means of resolving conflicts that arise from the clash of patriarchal and class relations. It is also possible for it to exacerbate them. This has probably happened in the school's relationship to the labour market. The downturn of the mid 1970s and rising youth unemployment was followed by calls for Mums to get out of the workforce, i.e. to solve the problem by reversion to an older sexual division of labour. That this hasn't happened is partly due to the need of working-class families for two

wages to support their children at school for the longer periods that have become customary, and also partly to the demand for equal economic rights that has been fostered by equal provision of schooling.

Complex and open-ended social dynamics don't lend themselves to neat formulae or simple practical solutions. In raising the issues touched on in this section, we are conscious of muddying the water more than clearing it — we seem to be feeding in complications at a faster rate than ideas that might sort them out. The point is that however poorly understood in theory, these questions can't be avoided as questions of practice. If we want to do anything about changing either class relations or gender relations in education, we must realize that we are also acting in the field of play of the other structure; we need to grasp the ways they each work on, reinforce, and subvert each other. Both barriers to change and potentials for reform arise in this interaction. We suspect that some of the conceptual difficulties may begin to sort themselves out as practical experience accumulates. The main thing is to try.

4

Girls, school and society – eight years on
Working Party on the Education of Girls

Source Commonwealth Schools Commission Working Party on the Education of Girls. 'Introduction' Girls, school and society – eight years on', *Girls and Tomorrow The Challenge for Schools*, Commonwealth Schools Commission, Canberra, May 1984, pp. 1-8

1.1 Concern about the injustice of unequal educational opportunities and outcomes for girls is not new. In 1974 the Schools Commission sponsored an inquiry into the educational needs of girls and women. The study group responsible prepared a report, *Girls, School and Society* (November 1975), which is now seen as a watershed in educational thinking in Australia. It provided the basis for a chapter on schooling for girls in the Commission's 1976-78 Triennial Report, in which support was declared for programs likely to widen girls' and boys' subject choices in schools, raise girls' occupational aspirations and increase teachers' and parents' awareness of sexism in education and its consequences. Similar concerns and intentions were indicated in subsequent Triennial Report, and reflected in initiatives supported by the Commission during the 1970s.

1.2 *Girls, School and Society* prompted State education departments to set up special committees to investigate sexism in education. The reports in various States reinforced the findings of *Girls, School and Society*. In response, Directors-General of Education in the States have issued policy statements (see Table 1.3) aimed at eliminating sexist practices and have appointed special officers to promote non-sexist education.

1.3 These Women's Advisers or Equal Opportunity Officers have played an important role in raising awareness of the needs of girls and have provided a focus for teachers concerned to meet those needs and reduce girls' disadvantage. Activities undertaken by them have included the organisation of in-service courses, seminars and conferences (many supported by the Commonwealth Schools Commission), and collaboration with individual teachers on non-sexist curriculum development.

1.4 In addition, State government teacher unions have appointed special committees to investigate ways of eliminating sexism from education. Some have employed women's advisers, initially funded through Commonwealth Schools Commission subsidies, who have produced special materials for use in classrooms, conducted in-service programs and organised seminars aimed at developing leadership qualities among women teachers.

1.5 The issues raised in *Girls, School and Society* have been explored and publicised in research in Australia and elsewhere, resulting in a greater understanding of the sources of girls' disadvantage and the need for intervention to promote equality. The bias inherent in school readers and texts and in school practices based on unexamined and unjustified assumptions about the differences between females and males, and the teaching of

sex-specific behaviours and expectations have been documented. Girls' educational choices and aspirations have been shown to be closely related to messages in the media and school materials, and in traditional school arrangements. While it is hard to measure the influence of these messages on individuals, all of whom are influenced by factors outside the school, it is clear that schools are doing too little to break the cycle of inequity inherent in the education system and in the position of women in our society.

Government Policy 1975 — 1983

1.6 Today, major political parties in Australia espouse equality for women in policy statements. Government policy is based on the recognition that

> ... Australian women do not yet experience total equality with men or enjoy full participation in all aspects of our society.
>
> (ALP Policy Speech, 16 February 1982, p30)

It emphasises

> ... the need for schools to make a positive contribution to providing girls with realistic information and adequate guidance when they make choices affecting their future. Special efforts are needed to encourage girls to choose school subjects which will give them equal opportunities with boys for entry to the full range of post-school training and higher education possibilities. Extra support is needed by girls if they are to persist with choices which run counter to the traditional patterns.
>
> (ALP Policy Statement, 'Labor's Policy for Schools', p7)

1.7 In its Funding Guidelines to the Commonwealth Schools Commission released on 28 July 1983 the Government made plain its commitment to equality for women and girls:

> Schools have a particular role to play in combatting discrimination on the grounds of sex. Schools can do much to assist girls to gain the confidence and competence necessary for equal participation in today's society.

1.8 The Guidelines foreshadowed funding in 1984 to enable the Commission to undertake projects 'particularly related to improving educational outcomes for girls', and require the Commission to report on 'the impact of all its programs on the education of girls'.

Equity and Schooling

1.9 Despite convincing evidence in *Girls, School and Society* of the educational disadvantages suffered by girls, girls continue to be afforded far less opportunity than boys to realise their potential. The quality of girls' education does not match that of boys in terms of developing confidence and self-esteem or marketable skills. There are still fewer resources for girls' schooling than for boys'. Teachers continue to allocate less of their time to girls than to boys. Teacher interaction with girls does not encourage creativity and inquiry to the same extent as with boys. Teacher education courses for both teachers in training and practising teachers do not give detailed attention to non-sexist curriculum development and non-sexist teacher behaviour. School hierarchies are providing even fewer role models for girls than in 1975.

1.10 As a result girls underestimate their own capacities and have a restricted image of the future. Many girls leave school lacking confidence and poorly equipped to make conscious and informed decisions about future life styles, their options already limited by the content of their school courses. They are likely to drift aimlessly into unsuitable employment,

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

intc unemployment or into situations in which they have little control over their own destinies.

1.11 Women are more vulnerable than men to poverty and to dependence on government welfare payments. As the Office of the Status of Women said in a paper prepared for the National Economic Summit Conference in April 1983:

> In 1981, 60% of pensioners and beneficiaries were women. (They were) 66% of aged pensioners; 100% of widowed pensioners, 31% of invalid pensioners, 95% of supporting parent beneficiaries and 34% of unemployment beneficiaries. Many other women are wholly dependent on pensions or benefits received by their husbands.

The reality of Australian life is that women who are not equipped by their education to shoulder economic responsibility may remain dependent and powerless all their lives.

1.12 The polarisation of boys' and girls' life options through their education both produces and reproduces undesirable gender-based divisions in society. These divisions often alienate men from the family and women from the benefits of paid work despite the fact that most people, male and female, experience both. There is thus a critical mismatch between the actual post-school experiences of many women and the futures for which schools have tended to prepare them.

Girls and the Labour Market

1.13 These educational disadvantages have inevitably produced labour market disadvantages. Girls have formed a minority of the teenage work force but a majority of unemployed teenagers during the past decade (although the decline in the last twelve months in opportunities for apprenticeships has led for the first time to higher unemployment levels for boys). Girls remain unemployed for a longer average period than boys and this difference has widened since 1977. Girls form 83 per cent of all teenagers who have no attachment to either education or employment. Girls' full-time employment has declined at a much faster rate than boys' since the mid-1960s. Girls' concentration in clerical work and their relative absence from those areas where teenage employment has either remained static or grown underlies this difference.

1.14 Occupational segregation is a major determinant of unemployment and of wage and career structures. As a result of the educational limitations placed on them girls have had access to a limited range of occupations when they leave school. The paper prepared by the Office of the Status of Women for the National Economic Summit Conference referred to earlier stated:

> Occupational segregation by sex has changed little over the past decade and remains a marked characteristic of the Australian labour market, despite the increase in women's participation and substantial structural changes in the economy. Occupational segregation divides the labour force into essentially different and relatively non-competing labour markets. The occupations in which women are concentrated are characterised by low pay, low status and limited career opportunities.

1.15 The OECD found that Australia in 1977 had the highest level of occupational segregation by sex of all the countries it studied.

1.16 Girls' under-participation and under-achievement in mathematics, the physical sciences and technology significantly limit their post-school employment and education options. Lacking appropriate prior studies in mathematics and science, many girls are ill-equipped for entry to much post-school training and education, including training courses

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

in computing science. Girls' under-participation in mathematics may well limit their participation in the whole computing field.

1.17 While girls' participation in schools has increased, the overall participation in education of males in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups is markedly higher than that of females (see Table 1.2). In addition, there appear to be two distinct gender-based educational pathways: while greater numbers of females participate in schools, colleges of advanced education of males in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups is markedly higher than that of apprenticeships and universities.

1.18 Data on post-school participation in education indicate that girls have made inroads into some areas previously dominated by males, such as medicine, law, dentistry, economics and business studies, but that this trend has been accompanied by an increasing concentration of women in the predominantly female fields of education, the humanities and paramedical studies. For example, in 1981, 59.2 per cent of women enrolled in universities were in the humanities, social and behavioural sciences, and education compared with 26.7 per cent of men. Only 1.0 per cent of female students were enrolled in engineering/technology and 9.0 per cent in economics, commerce and government compared with 12.8 per cent and 18.0 per cent respectively for male students. In technical

TABLE 1.1
THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN, 1966, 1971, 1976 AND 1982

Occupation	*Employed Women as Proportion of Workers in each Occupation (per cent)*			
	1966	*1971*	*1976*	*1982*
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	40 8	42.3	45.4	45.0
Administrative, Executive and Managerial	12.0	12.0	14.7	14.1
Clerical	59.8	63.8	67.3	70.6
Sales	45.5	48.3	50.9	52 9
Farmers, Fisherpersons, Hunters, Timber Cutters	10.7	15.5	29.4	22.3
Workers in Transport and Communication	12 1	13.7	13.5	14.8
Tradespersons, Production-Process Workers, Labourers, NEC	16 6	13.3	12 8	11.8
Service, Sport and Recreation Workers	58 3	62.7	62.1	63.0
Others (*)	62.4	37.8	55.7	--
TOTAL (†)	29.5	3[illegible] 7	35.8	36[illegible] (2331 [illegible])

NOTES: (*) 'Others' for years 1966, 1971 and 1976 includes the Armed Forces and inadequately described or not stated category

(†) Total numbers employed (in thousands) are given in parentheses

Source ABS, Census 1966, 1971 and 1976
ABS, *The Labour Force Australia August 1982.*
ABS Catalogue no: 6203 0

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

and further education, women were 47.2 per cent of enrolments in 1980. However, few women were in the trades stream, only 7.0 per cent of enrolments in basic trade courses and 4.2 per cent in post-trade courses. Women comprised the majority of enrolments in secretarial studies and non-vocationally oriented courses.

TABLE 1.2

TOTAL EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES, BY AGE AND EDUCATIONAL SECTOR — AUSTRALIA, 1975, 1980 AND 1981 (percentage of relevant population cohorts) FEMALES AND MALES AGED 15-24

	Schools					
	Males			*Females*		
Age at 30 June	*1975*	*1980*	*1981*	*1975*	*1980*	*1981*
15	81.4	84.6	85.1	80.1	85.4	85.6
16	54.0	55.7	54.6	52.1	57.9	57.9
17	29.5	27.5	28.1	26.9	29.9	31.1
18	7.5	5.8	5.5	5 0	5.2	4.8
19	1.7(')	1.5(')	1.6	1.2(')	1.9(')	1.8
20	—	—	—	—	—	—
21	—	—	—	—	—	—
22	—	—	—	—	—	—
23	—	—	—	—	—	—
24	—	—	—	—	—	—
15-16	67.8	6[illegible].9	69.8	66.2	71.4	71.7
17-19	13.0	11 6	11.6	11.2	12.3	12.4
15-19	35.7	34.4	34.3	33.9	35.3	35.3
17-21	7.9	7.0	7.0	6.8	7.4	7.4
20-24	—	—	—	—	—	—

	TAFE(*)					
	Males			*Females*		
Age at 30 June	*1975*	*1980*	*1981*	*1975*	*1980*	*1981(*)*
15	4 7(')	6.3(')	7.8(*)	4.6(')	6.5(')	7.8(*)
16	15.5	19.2	23.9(*)	9.9	15.1	17.6(*)
17	28.3	29.5	33.8	11.4	16 0	17.1
18	32.5	34.9	36.9	10.6	17.3	16 8
19	26.1	28.4	30.6	8.5	13.0	13.4
20	18.8	20.8	21.8	6.9	10 2	10.5
21	13.9(*)	14.4(*)	15.5	5.8(*)	8.3(*)	8.9
22	n.a.	n.a.	12.6	n.a.	n a.	7.7
23	n.a.	n.a.	10.6	n.a.	n a.	6.8
24	n.a.	n.a.	9.9	n a.	n a.	6 4
15-16	10.0	12.8	15.9	7.3	10.9	12.7
17-19	29.0	30.9	33.8	10.2	15.4	15.7
15-19	21.1	23.8	26.8	9.0	13.6	14.6
17-21	24.1	25.7	27.7	8.7	13.0	13.3
20-24	n.a.	n.a.	14.2	n.a.	n.a.	8.1

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Table 1.2 (cont.)

Age at 30 June	Advanced Education(b)					
	Males			Females		
	1975	1980	1981	1975	1980	1981
15	—	—	—	—	—	—
16	0.2(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.2(¹)	0.2(¹)	0.1(¹)
17	1.9	1.8	1.7	3.0	2.7	2.3
18	5.0	4.6	[illegible]	7.3	6.6	5.9
19	6.5	5.9	5.8	8.8	8.2	7.7
20	6.3	5.9	5.6	7.1	7.2	7.1
21	5.5	5.1	5.0	4.3	4.9	5.0
22	4.4	4.2	4.2	2.3	3.3	3.3
23	3.7	3.7	3.6	1.7	2.7	2.6
24	3.2	3.3	3.4	1.3	2.3	2.4
15-16	0.1	0.1	[illegible]	0.1	0.1	0.1
17-19	4.5	4.1	4.0	6.3	5.8	5.4
15-19	2.7	2.5	2.4	3.8	3.6	3.3
17-21	5.0	4.7	4.5	6.1	5.9	5.6
20-24	4.6	[illegible]	4.4	3.3	4.1	4.1

Age at 30 June	University(c)					
	Males			Females		
	1975	1980	1981	1975	1980	1981
15	—	—	—	—	—	—
16	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)	0.1(¹)
17	2.8	2.3	2.3	[illegible]	2.0	2.0
18	7.4	6.1	5.9	5.5	4.9	4.9
19	9.2	7.8	7.7	6.6	6.0	6.1
20	8.9	7.8	7.5	5.9	5.8	5.8
21	8.0	7.0	6.8	4.8	4.7	4.8
22	6.3	5.7	5.5	3.3	3.3	3.4
23	5.0	4.4	4.2	2.2	2.4	2.4
24	4.0	3.3	3.3	1.6	1.9	1.9
15-16	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
17-19	6.4	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.3	4.4
15-19	3.8	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.7
17-21	7.2	6.2	6.0	5.0	4.7	4.7
20-24	6.5	5.7	5.5	3.6	3.7	3.7

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Table 1.2 (cont.)

Age at 30 June	Total(f)					
	Males			Females		
	1975	1980	1981(e)	1975	1980	1981(e)
15	86.1	90.9	92.9	85.1	92.3	93.9
16	69.8	75.1	78.8	65.1	76.0	78.5
17	62.6	61.2	65.8	45.5	52.4	54.3
18	52.5	51.4	52.6	30.0	35.3	33.9
19	43.5	43.6	45.7	26.0	29.9	29.8
20	34.0	34.5	34.9	20.5	23.8	23.9
21	27.4	26.5	27.3	15.3	18.4	19.0
22	n.a.	n.a.	22.2	n.a.	n.a.	14.6
23	n.a.	n.a.	18.4	n.a.	n.a.	12.0
24	n.a.	n.a.	16.6	n.a.	n.a.	10.9
15-16	78.0	82.9	85.8	75.2	84.0	86.2
17-19	52.9	52.0	54.7	33.9	39.1	39.2
15-19	63.3	64.1	66.8	50.9	56.6	57.4
17-21	44.3	43.5	45.2	27.6	32.0	32.1
20-24	n.a.	n.a.	24.1	n.a.	n.a.	16.2

Tables derived from Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission *Learning and Earning* Vol 2, 1982

Footnotes to Table 1.2.

(a) Streams 1-5 (vocational and preparatory courses) only
(b) Includes estimates of students undertaking advanced education courses at TAFE institutions and at partially-funded non-government teachers colleges.
(c) Includes students undertaking university courses at the three defence academies (Duntroon, Point Cook and Jervis Bay)
(d) Includes students undertaking courses at non-government business colleges.
(e) Due to the introduction of a new national collection of TAFE statistics, TAFE data for 1981 are not strictly comparable with those for earlier years Comparability of totals is consequently affected
(f) May be overstated slightly due to the inclusion of a small number of students from an adjacent age category not identified in the relevant age classification
(g) Estimated.
Less than 0.05

NOTE Published statistics of students by age are based on a variety of reference dates. In these tables all data have been adjusted to a standard reference of 30 June consistent with general population statistics.

Conclusion

1.19 There are arguments based on equity and on utility for overcoming girls' disadvantage in schools. A society which wastes a substantial proportion of its human potential limits its own development and creates costs for itself. Women have the potential to contribute significantly to economic recovery. Their earnings are often crucial to the economic security of their families and are essential to strengthening consumer demand.

1.20 The maximisation of a society's potential demands that all individuals be equipped with the confidence and competence to contribute to their fullest extent. All individuals should have equal opportunity to realise their potential and any limitation on access to necessary knowledge and skills on the ground of sex is not only socially unjust but contrary to the interests of Australian society.

1.21 Schools should provide all young people with the skills and confidence they need to plan their lives around the realities of contemporary life, including paid work, unpaid work and leisure. Girls' potential, however, is being limited by deeply entrenched sex-stereotyping. On the other hand, the male stereotype encourages boys to explore a wide range of options and to aspire to high achievement. Social forces limit girls' options, their aspirations, their curiosity, their speech and their space. Schools should help girls to break these limits.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

TABLE 1.3

POLICY STATEMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES 1979–1983

POLICY STATEMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES 1979–1983

STATE	POLICY	DATE OF RELEASE
NSW	*Towards Non-Sexist Education* (Memorandum to Principals)	1979
NT	*Towards Non-Sexist Education* (Circular to Principals)	1979
Tas	*The Elimination of Sexism in Schools* (Tasmanian Education Gazette)	1979
WA	*Equality in Education with Particular Reference to Women and Girls* (Policy from Director-General's Office, gazetted)	1980
Vic	*Towards Non-Sexist Education* (Memorandum to Principals)	1980
ACT	*Sexism in Education Policy Statement*	1980
Qld	*Equality of Opportunity in Education for Girls and Boys*	1981
SA	*Equal Opportunities the Education of Girls in Government Schools*	1983

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

5

On education and women

Jean Blackburn

Source: Jean Blackburn, 'On education and women', address to Annual Conference of Australian Women's Education Coalition, Canberra, October 1981, pp. 1-17

The Australian educational system is being decisively steered in vocational directions and tailored to labour demand, either actual, or predicted on the basis of an evasive 'resources boom'. Within this framework there is concern about the persistence of sex-segregated training and employment, and efforts are being made to encourage girls towards subject choices more appropriate to post-secondary education and training in areas of increasing, rather than of decreasing, labour demand.

Echoed at primary and junior secondary level in arguments about standards, the direction is most evident in the restructuring of upper secondary schooling taking place under the impetus of the Commonwealth Transition Education program and at post-secondary level. At upper secondary level, schools and TAFE vie for money and clientele without any clearly articulated policy for the development of post-compulsory education as a whole. At post-secondary level, liberal studies share the fate of public spending in being regarded as 'unproductive'. Within budgets contracting in real terms, universities and CAEs are urged to reallocate resources in favour of activities directly bearing on that resurgence of private enterprise in which hopes of economic recovery are vested. These shifts in direction are the source of many difficult tensions in higher education. Women staff recently recruited on a contract basis are particularly threatened, and with them developments designed to offset male bias in studies. Blocked promotion, both in higher education and in contracting public school systems blights the hopes for women so recently born in equal opportunity policies and raises affirmative action to the status of necessity if such policies are to have reality.

These educational changes have a wider policy framework, privatising to individuals the social problems raised by economic recession, holding out of the labour market young people whose failure to find employment is attributed to their lack of skills and moving much specific training for semi-skilled work which was once gained on the job into publicly funded institutions. The publicly assisted drift of enrolments towards private schooling is no aberration. It must rather be seen as consistent with a general turn in policies away from public towards private initiatives, as part of the new conservatism which places back on individuals and families much of what in the recent past was coming to be seen as a collective responsibility. Publicly provided services are suspect within that ideology. It is more than coincidental that the assisted drift towards private

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

schooling enshrines inequality. It amounts to a public underwriting of the right of parents to buy for their own children the best education they can afford, dissociating themselves from responsibility for the quality of public schooling. In present circumstances, it might not be too alarmist to suggest that the public schools are being progressively assigned the responsibility for preparing students for jobs of 'other rank', while subsidised schools ·ssively become more markedly the recruiting grounds for higher ·ion. In this regard, the earmarking of a proportion of Commonwealth ·eral recurrent funds for transition activities in *public*, but not in *subsidised* schools may have significance.

The agenda suggested by this collection of issues is obviously too broad to be dealt with in a short paper. I have therefore chosen to restrict myself to some rather disconnected comments on schooling and vocational preparation. In doing so, I have become acutely aware of several quite serious dilemmas which arise in considering action within education and training which might advance the equality of the sexes and extend the employment opportunities of women. I do not believe we yet have a theoretical analysis which can guide us through these dilemmas. I do believe, however, that it is very important that we be conscious of them.

On the one hand, emphasis is rightly given to the need to diversify and extend the participation of women in education and training in order to improve their chances of employment and to raise the levels at which they are employed. This activity is taking place in circumstances where unemployment seems unlikely to fall, despite overall increases in numbers employed, and in which the directions of labour demand are changing in ways which require girls to break out of traditionally female areas of employment. On the other hand, an over-emphasis on such policies sustains the illusion that all those wanting it can acquire work if they have proper skills. More importantly, perhaps, from the point of view of women, it detracts attention from other changes which must be effected in tandem with participation in paid work if sex equality in any fundamental sense is to be achieved. These changes relate to the societal revelations of child care, to the domestic division of labour, and to changed definitions and arrangements for work which would enable shared parenting between men and women to become a reality.

Bruselid (1980) in a critique of public policies in relation to women initiated during the Whitlam era comments in a way relevant to this dilemma. After drawing attention to the fact that the great majority of women (and men) workers have no formal post-school qualifications, she also goes on to say, 'For many feminists work in the form of a career became an end in itself. Liberation was seen in terms of education and social mobility, which gave rise to demands for equality of opportunity. The problems of the majority of working women in low paid and dead end jobs were seen merely as a question of education, opportunity and mobility.' (Bruselid 1980). There are considerable dangers in the present situation of compounding this mistaken emphasis and of advancing educational policies relating only to an elite of women while pretending to talk about all of them.

A second set of dilemmas arises out of attempts to enable individual women to participate more effectively in the meritocratic educational competition from which some will indeed gain better jobs. This is a classic educational dilemma, but it has special significance in the present situation where, particularly at secondary level, we have so few examples of schooling designed to be helpful to young people facing the realities of

ERIC

their several adulthoods. At the very time when academic dominance is being challenged by demands that knowledge be related to its applications and calls are rising for secondary schooling which gives some better understanding of the social and economic world, the implications of drives towards a greater mathematical competence in girls need carefully to be examined. Such drives, along with those designed to encourage more girls into jobs and careers in high technology fields could have educational consequences undesirable on wider grounds and could further raise the prestige of the technological above the human.

There are difficulties in trying to attract more girls into non-traditional occupations, to take an example, without being very clear and specific about why that is being done. No-one can believe that the world would substantially be changed if half of all engineers, boilermakers and technologists were female. Nor is it possible to maintain that such technologically based work is intrinsically, or on any acceptable human valuation, better than teaching and the other service occupations which so many educated women have entered. No simple ideologically based argument that all paid employments which are extensions of women's domestic and child care roles must by that token be inferior will do. Nor does the evidence necessarily support the idea that average earnings of educated women will be higher in technologically based pursuits than in such occupations as teaching.

The argument must be seen to rest squarely on actual and predicted labour demand and be contingent on actual changes being consistent with predictions. There is a good deal of evidence that the differences in earnings between women and men are as great within occupations as across them, and that those differences are strongly affected by women's so-called 'weaker attachment to the workforce' arising out of the primacy of domestic obligations for them. That brings us back to directions in public policies which sharply distinguish 'public' and 'private' spheres, regarding arrangements made in the latter as irrelevant to the former. This may be the most fundamental policy orientation now affecting women. The film *Nine to Five* gave glimpses of how work situations might be changed to take into account other obligations in people's lives if women were powerful enough to influence work arrangements. As we promote women to the top, it might be better to keep our eyes firmly on such possibilities rather than providing justifications so exclusively centering around role models.

How we treat predictions about labour demand has become very significant. Immediate skills shortages do exist and in both the professions and the trades they are mostly in traditionally male fields. We may endorse Selby Smith's statement that:

> On the basis of available evidence, microelectronics technology will significantly displace jobs in certain occupation groups in which currently 50 per cent of the female workforce and 25 per cent of the male workforce are employed.
>
> The long-term objective should be to ensure that women participate more fully in the workforce in a wider range of occupations than they do at present.
>
> Labour market segregation by sex is the outcome of the interrelationship between a variety of factors, economic and social. One factor is the limited and limiting experiences of girls in the education system.
>
> (Selby-Smith 1980)

We must take seriously the conclusion of the Myers Committee in similar vain:

> Women workers are disadvantaged by their education as well as by their con-

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

centration in jobs at risk. In 1979, of those in the workforce whose highest educational level was a trade certificate only 7 per cent were females and most of these held certificates in hairdressing. Even those educated at the tertiary level are less likely than males to have been prepared for the newly emerging occupations in computing, engineering, electronics and scientific and managerial areas.

(Committee of Inquiry into Technological Change in Australia 1980)

Both these statements are followed by the reference to the need to direct more girls in school towards science and maths. But as we advance action along these lines, don't let us lose sight of the other side of the coin—which is that no-one seriously expects a future in which all people wanting it will be able to get paid work.

My own struggles with these dilemmas will be evident throughout the paper, and I shall return to related matters at the end. Turning to action in schools, I again have time to comment in only a very selective way. Most school systems now have official policies favouring either 'non-sexist' education or the promotion of equal opportunity for girls. Special advisers and some units advancing these policies exist both in departments and in some teachers' unions. Activity in these 'ginger' groups continues to be of high quality and is sometimes supported by informally organised networks. Many regular publications emanate from these groups and these have become significant vehicles for the discussion of both action and theory.

There is everywhere however, and not least at Commonwealth level, considerable discrepancy between policy statements and the funds and support systems necessary to make them effective. Some of the difficulties experienced by specialist units in penetrating the system to any depth may be judged by the fact that the newly issued general South Australian policy statement about curriculum, *Into the Eighties*, which was in draft form discussed widely among teachers and school councils, contains no reference to girls. Nor does it include the return of married women in large numbers to paid work among social changes to which schools should respond.

Much attention has been given to the removal of formal barriers to access by girls and boys to any curricular option within the school, so ending the assignment of students to domestic science or woodwork and technical studies on the basis of sex. The removal of such differentiation and the encouragement of girls into non-traditional occupations are seen by many teachers and administrators to fulfil the requirements of 'non-sexist' schooling. Meanwhile, teachers having some deeper understanding of the issues involved in gender formation are often isolated within their own institutions and receive little support in the way of curricular material or advice from beyond it.

Several departments have made and are making particular efforts to increase the numbers of women engaged in decision-making within the system through membership of committees at regional and higher level, and to groom women in various ways for promotion positions. In New South Wales, the Director General has recently urged all schools and regions to set up committees to examine school operations in terms of sex bias and to design and monitor changes (provided they don't cost money!) which would reduce it. We do not yet have evidence of any significant changes in the subject or occupational choices of girls resulting from action taken. Indeed, as the report on subject choice prepared by the Women's Advisers in 1980 confirms, over the junior secondary years,

ERIC

and usually after some compulsory involvement by both sexes in domestic science, typing and technical studies, the old sex based pattern is gradually reasserted as choice is opened up, until by year 10, we are back to square one. The report also shows that at year 12 level, and among students preparing for HSC exams, girls continue strongly to opt out of maths and physics, even though both maths and science in some form are compulsory until the end of year 10. In South Australia in 1979, any post matriculation career or course which required double subject maths and physics was closed to 85 per cent of girls presenting for examination.

The term 'non-sexist' education continues to cover several different agendas and it is not without significance that it has recently been transmuted into 'equal opportunity', so reinforcing meritocratic perspectives on schooling and confining attention to qualifications for paid work. While this is in line with general social and political trends, I think it would also be true to say that there has always been confusion about what non-sexist education involves—as well as resistance to interpretations which went beyond the absence of difference in formal curricular offerings, and the promotion of wider occupational choices among girls.

Approaches which concentrate only on the removal of differences between the sexes in expectations and treatment are not enough. They cannot answer fundamental questions about either education or society. Indeed, merely to concentrate attention on them is to consolidate unreflecting acceptance both of educational and societal arrangements. Education is about the transmission and transformation of culture on the one hand, and about the development of understandings relating to the human condition and of ourselves on the other. Schooling cannot of itself change society or the relationships between the sexes. But it can help young people critically to examine both and to sort through their own priorities, taking into account the realities of the situation as it presents itself to them and appreciating their own potential as agents in transforming it.

In relation to gender formation and to sex roles, it is the proper business of education not to attempt to impose answers approved either by supporters of the status quo or by radicals of various persuasions. Its business is rather to be helpful to young people attempting to understand and reflect on what is, on how it came to be that way and on what they want to do about it, both at the level of their own lives and in relation to social action. As we consider the significance of technological change in relation to the position of women, the issues raised for teacher and schooling are complex indeed. Understandings about the social impact of technological changes immediately suggest themselves as relevant. The impact of the first industrial revolution in defining the nature of work and in changing the organisation and power relationships operating in activities in which income earning work took place are clearly part of an understanding of what is now happening. The particular impact on women of the separation of income generating work from the home remains crucial for understanding the privatisation to women of child care and domestic labour. This assignment continues basically to affect the terms on which they participate in paid work outside the home. Merely to concentrate on the skills which may improve their individual chances of paid work without assisting the development of such understandings does not assist girls to confront the socially structured realities of their lives and to work through to what they want to do about them.

The sexism of schooling does not lie only in such things as the exclu-

ERIC

sion of girls from Aussie Rules or emphasis on domestic science for them. The almost total failure of schooling to be helpful to girls in working through the dilemmas presented by social realities is much more basic. While the capacity to command a decent income in their own right is a necessary condition of their capacity equally to participate with men in setting the terms of a new relationship between the sexes, the virtual exclusion of procreation from the agenda is less than helpful. It is less than helpful to both sexes in the development of priorities relating people to technological change. It is particularly unhelpful to girls because its omission from the count implicitly places the instrumental above the human and devalues the unpaid services which many of them realistically see as playing an important part in their lives. The hiding of this whole agenda positively precludes for both males and females the kind of reflection crucial for the consideration of more equal domestic sharing. It also precludes reflection on the role of paid work in people's lives and on the possibilities opened up by technological change and under-employment. These possibilities are about the emergence of a new balance between paid work, in which we make over our time and labour to purposes set by others for cash returns, and the satisfactions and obligations of other ways of using time and effort. Childrearing is among these satisfactions and obligations, and at certain stages in the lives of most people and particularly of women, is of particular importance among them.

It is not without significance that it is after puberty that girls exhibit evidence of the private struggles involved in coming to terms with the contradictory demands made upon them. Helpful schooling would set up relationships in which those contradictions could be acknowledged and placed in historical and social context. Such a context would illuminate the marginal place of so many women earners in the labour market and their concentration in low paid and casualised employments. It would also illuminate wider social arrangements and priorities in ways equally relevant for both sexes. Certain factual information about work and life in the society is very relevant to these analyses and should be part of every social science curriculum at secondary level. Four-fifths of earners in Australia cannot now finance the buying of a house from their own resources. So the myth of the male provider and of the one-income family needs to be exploded by accurate information. The myth which continues to pervade the thinking of so many girls in adolescence—that they will find some male who will deliver them from responsibility for earning their own livings and from responsibility for their lives—needs similar exposure. The fact that female earnings are necessary to the maintenance of families is important for both sexes to assimilate.

In 81 per cent of two-parent families studied by the ABS in 1975, the housework was usually done by the woman, even though some 46 per cent of those women also went out to work. I saw no sign that the increased participation of boys in domestic science in schools was related in anyone's mind with these dual facts. In the course of preparation for the Schools Commission's report *Schooling for 15 and 16 Year Olds*, I visited a large number of schools around the country. I talked with many boys happily engaged in cooking. Yes, they enjoyed the classes. Why were they learning to cook? Because they might be batching for a period before they married, because women were sometimes away from home, because they might become chefs. This neatly illustrates that the mere removal of differences even if it were fully achieved (and it is as yet by no means fully achieved) does not of itself promote the social understandings which often consti-

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

tute part of the justification for doing it. Nor do approaches which set up the situation merely in terms of broadening individual options.

The variety of family formations existing in the society also largely remain outside the compass of study and reflection. Being married to the father of a child no longer constitutes a life-long meal ticket for women. Girls need to know that and to have some exposure to the experience of older women whose life patterns have taken varying forms. Understanding that large numbers of women officially pensioned off to a meagre existence as widows are in fact discarded partners without the training or experience which would give them the possibility of decent earnings is part of this picture. So also is the life pattern of women who have in fact found their major life satisfactions in a domestic role, and of others who have re-entered education and work after a period of fulltime child care. So also is information about the double burden which constrains the ambition and achievement of so many women in paid work. So also is an understanding of what paid work is like in its full variety- ot just in 'careers'.

In place of such understandings, what is offered in most schools is 'career education' in which individual interests, strengths and weaknesses are matched against the requirements and orientations of a range of paid occupations. This perspective is fundamental to most secondary schooling. It operates to exclude from the agenda the understandings and reflections which might be truly useful in approaching work, technological change and sex roles. In it, individuals confront their worlds alone, without benefit of the recognition of common fates and within a framework of knowledge selection and organisation which impedes coming to grips with major issues of the social world. This approach to schooling derives from its selective function. The mass of students within this perspective are turned out into the world at the earliest opportunity as people unsuited to the prevocational preparation for the professions which upper secondary schooling is. This individual emphasis in which losers are necessary to the definition of winners is the basic feature of schooling which prevents it being useful to people reflecting on their own realities and on how the world presents to people like them.

To raise such issues draws attention to the fact that the curricular changes which are really significant to sex role understanding have not yet begun to happen. It also exposes the inadequacy of sex role socialisation theory as an approach to educational action. In concentrating on socialisation it addresses itself too much to influences operating at the unconscious level. It tends to be deterministic, stressing the significance of early influences and under-playing the capacity of people to change and to engage in rational analysis. The emphasis on early formations distracts attention from what should be happening in schooling at adolescence, which I have already argued is the most crucial stage for the development of understandings as distinct from socialisation. It fails to take account of social class and other differences in gender formation, suggesting a homogeneity which may turn attention away from the fact that the potential doctor and engineer among girls in school faces a very different future construction than do the mass of girls who do not expect the paid work they will do will be either well paid or high in intrinsic interest. These expectations about the future compound the differences in upbringing to suggest that it is not quite true that to be female is to be female. Most importantly, for purposes of the present discussion, sex role socialisation theory of itself gives no guide to what a good education might look like and

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

confines thinking about that within the old frame of selectivity and achievement which allows some individuals to escape the least desirable jobs.

The kinds of action originally identified as being important to the development of more open options for both sexes remain important. But we also need to recognise that some model of a good human being and of a good society must underlie this freeing up, so that gender questions often merge into general educational and social questions and are not a substitute for them. Too great a preoccupation with individual options may preclude necessary understandings about how groups of people—including the sexes—share to a degree common fates and can only change them by collective action. It also strengthens meritocratic and individualistic ideologies at a time when the threat of nuclear war and other menacing social developments may overwhelm us all while individuals concentrate on houses and boats. In a no growth economy, co-operation and sharing may become social and individual survival skills.

There has as yet been singularly little development of curriculum materials introducing into normal school subjects the findings of feminist scholars about women in history, society, literature and science. School activity seriously needs the assistance of scholars in doing this. Relying on pictures of women changing car tyres and men changing nappies is not good enough. Such presentations are often singularly out of phase with the realities which young people see around them and could be seen as attempts to manipulate attitudes rather than providing evidence and perspectives which can assist both sexes to appreciate the oppression of women and the relationship between 'public' and 'private' spheres in that oppression. Much of what is taught about recent changes in social roles lacks the historical perspective which would move increased participation of women in paid work out of the realm of the extraordinary and which would place women back in the human race.

Paid work is important in people's lives. Underlying many of the subject choice and achievement issues now attracting serious attention is the failure of so many girls really to appreciate that. Thus, Fennema (1981), after reviewing the various explanations being explored in the attempt to identify action which might be helpful in improving girls' mathematical achievement, ends by giving prominence to explanations which rest on the fact that girls do not see maths as being so important to the kinds of things they want to do as do boys. Secondary schools could be much more helpful than they are in promoting understandings relating to work and in helping young people, and especially girls, to work through the kinds of decisions about their future lives which concern them deeply at secondary level.

Schooling helpful to young people thinking about the pattern of their lives is the kind of schooling which allows equal discourse to take place. Much school activity is inevitably not of this kind, but is concerned with instruction and transmission. This makes it the more important that extended opportunities should be made available which recognise that knowledge is generated by people reflecting on and sharing experience and taking decisions about how they will conduct their individual and social lives, as well as being drawn from systematised ways of proceeding. Students need to be encouraged to talk about how they see the world and to check that out with the experience of others, with a variety of frameworks drawn from accumulated knowledge and the arts, and with how the world is. In the social sciences and the humanities, such patterns of dis-

course are developing in some schools. They run counter to much established practice defining the relationship of teacher and learner both to knowledge and to each other. If we regard such developments as crucial to schooling which is more helpful to young people, we will need to ask some questions about what is involved in an emphasis on increased mathematical competence for girls. The first question concerns the maths curriculum itself, and its applicability to a wide range of activities and forms of reasoning. The second involves reassurance that more emphasis on maths will not maintain and solidify attitudes towards teaching and learning which are inimical to the development of more equal discourse about human affairs and at the cost of reduced attention to the humanities and reconstructed social science. The basic issue is that schooling is not centrally concerned with understandings and competencies necessary to act on the world or with the development of the kind of sociological imagination which turns private troubles into social issues. Perhaps it is altogether too subversive an idea to suggest that it should assist students to examine the realities of their own lives and of those of people like them, and to place that analysis within a framework which gave access to major explanations drawn from social theory. To do so would be to take much liberal rhetoric about schooling seriously, moving it away from indoctrination. Non-sexist education is good education. That is really what the argument is about.

Transition education, to the degree that it has the potential to connect with actualities in these ways could be valuable. Some curricular developments taking place within it do in fact move in this direction. Most, however, do not, being preoccupied with individualised career choices and with assignment to specific skills training rather than with some overall understanding of the workings of the economy and of major social issues. No comprehensive Australia wide information about what is happening in the program either in schools or in TAFE for the young unemployed is available. I have seen something of the operation of the program in South Australia and would guess that some of the achievements and problems at least are similar elsewhere.

Serious problems arise from the concentration of effort on students in years 11 and 12 in the schools. It is well established that students likely to face the most serious and longstanding problems have already gone at that stage. Unless something is done which would reduce alienation from school in earlier years, the diversification of upper secondary offerings can have limited effect. I believe it is particularly important that schools should be transformed in ways which would attract more early leaving girls to stay longer. More girls than boys now complete full secondary schooling and a majority of entrants to universities and CAEs are now women. Only some 15 per cent of girls move from school into higher education. The higher retention of girls than of boys in school is not explained by higher occupational aspirations. Eaton (1980) has suggested that one reason is the greater occupational indecisiveness of girls as compared with boys. King (1980) points to the fact that earlier leaving boys move so much more strongly into vocational training than do girls. This latter difference is so great as to suggest that school retention favouring girls would have to be a great deal more pronounced than it yet is to take up the slack presented by the fact that only six per cent of apprentices are girls. Unless and until girls participate equally with boys in vocational training in TAFE, higher school retention seems important.

Serious vocational training barely exists for women. Strenuous efforts

are being made in Victoria, N.S.W. and Tasmania to attract into and support girls in apprenticeships which have traditionally been male, and some modest successes are being achieved. Nevertheless, it is also the case that industrial apprenticeships are likely to become increasingly a less significant mode of training as employment patterns continue to move away from the kinds of employments with which they are associated.

New patterns of training are developing, and it may be more important to attract girls into newly developing non-apprenticeable fields than to see non-traditional apprenticeships as a major answer to the training void existing for girls who do not complete secondary schooling. The area is fluid and link courses made available in TAFE institutions for girls still in school could perform a major service if they developed in directions which pointed towards new training avenues. Much that is happening in transition, both at school and within TAFE encompass some of the aspects of opportunities for women courses designed for women re-entering the 'public' world after a domestic break. These courses could provide an alternative to continuing in school for some girls so fed up that they can't stay there. Unfortunately, they are usually open only to those who already have experienced unemployment, and perhaps have to be kept separate from schooling in this way because their students can draw the dole, which those in school cannot. This points to the overwhelming weakness of the Transition Program—that it pretends to be a policy for youth, which it is not. The attempt to sketch out what such a policy might look like from the point of view of girls could be a useful outcome from this conference.

There can be no doubt that the drive towards vocational education exposes the fact that from the point of view of girls there is very little of it outside higher education. Many of the problems encountered in trying to get link and pre-vocational courses for girls going within the Transition Education program relate to the male bias of TAFE itself and to similar bias in the kinds of courses it offers having serious vocational significance. The extension of fulltime prevocational training within TAFE is one of the most significant developments now taking place in the field of education and training. If we look at TAFE as it stands, it is difficult to talk with any precision about the degree of under-representation of women in it. Many others have gone through the various 'streams' and coming up with figures of enrolment percentages. I do not intend to follow them. The fact is that the statistical collections of TAFE are largely meaningless once we move outside the areas of apprenticeship and the small number of fulltime enrolments where we may have some reasonable expectations about what an 'enrolment' means. An 'enrolment' may refer to attendance at a week-end refresher course, participation in a certificate course lasting three weeks, a significant number of hours a week over a number of years, or two hours a week for a term. Statistical collections are being reorganised and suggestions that they be reorganised in ways which would enable some sensible statement to be made about how well the sector serves women are very much on order.

We have, however, now reached the point where merely setting up the world in terms of men and women in opposition is not enough. Promoting a female elite within patterns set by men can hardly command much of our enthusiasm. A neutron bomb made by women is no better than one made by men. An environment despoiled by female operators does not thereby become less despoiled. Much technological advance constitutes a frivolous use of resources in a world where millions starve, whoever designs and makes the new devices. Men and women can equally be killed,

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

equally share unemployment and starvation, but it seems a strange perspective which would put the equality above the condition. Much of the thinking on which we have operated was the product of unprecedented and unrepeatable rates of economic growth when full employment and detente between great powers tended to be taken for granted as perpetual aspects of life. We tended to look at gender formation too exclusively from the point of view of the dependence and incompetence it generated in women. Although we were conscious also of the limitations placed on men, and laid much stress on the freeing up of options on an individual basis unconstrained by biological sex, that approach provided no answer to more important questions about humanly desirable traits and the kind of society in which they might better be more highly valued and more freely be exercised. Now it seems that we need to do that, and that the need is urgent. In doing so, issues relating to sex equality retain their importance, but they need to be formulated within a new context which recognises the inseparability of the fates of women and men and which operates on the belief that a world which was better for women would be better for men and for children too. That would be a world of more equal sharing and relationships, but it would also be one in which the meeting of fundamental human needs, including the reproduction of the species and its protection from destruction had high priority. Although we would no longer want to formulate it in those terms, it would involve a higher valuing of many of those traits and activities which in our culture have been assisted with women rather than men, and a downplaying of violence, of dominance, and of acquisitiveness—not because they are male, but because they are humanly less valuable, and in present circumstances a threat to the human race. Getting women onto some technological escalator may only be defended in very limited terms. When we press to be equal, we want to know what we are being equal about and how that moves the world in more humane directions.

References

Bruselid, Lena (1980), 'Women, class and state', in Boreham and Dow (eds) *Work and Inequality, Vol. 1.* Macmillan.

Committee of Inquiry into Technological Change in Australia (1980), *Technological Change in Australia*, AGPS, Canberra.

Fennema, Elizabeth (1981), 'Girls, women and mathematics: An overview', paper presented to 'Expanding the Options' Conference, Sydney, August 1981.

King, S.E. (1980). 'Some reactions to Professor Karmel's 1979 Radford Memorial Lecture on youth, education and employment', in paper presented to the 1980 Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Armidale CAE.

Smith, J. Selby (1980), 'Developments in microelectronic technology and their impact on women in paid employment', Australian Quarterly, Summer.

Women's Advisers in State and Commonwealth Education Systems (1980), *Sex Differences in Secondary Subject Choice*, June issue.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

6

Countering sexism the single-sex way: A flawed proposition

Jane Kenway & Sue Willis

Source This is an earlier version of Jane Kenway & Sue Willis, 'Feminist single-sex strategies: Some theoretical flaws and practical fallacies', *Discourse* (in press)

Abstract

A commonsense consensus has developed amongst many of those concerned about the effects of sexist educational practice upon girls. This is that single-sex schooling in one form or another is the *obvious* solution to the problems of such practice. One consequence of this consensus is that the drawing power of private schools for girls has been enhanced. In this paper we seek to do two things. First we highlight a number of the theoretical premises upon which the single-sex solution is based, and in the process we reveal the theoretical superficiality and naivety of the approach. This inadequate theory, we argue, leads the proponents of the 'solution' to promote an approach which can only have restricted benefits, and consequently we *suggest* alternatives which offer greater promise. A second purpose of the paper is to ask: given that private schools for girls are single-sex, do they provide nonsexist schooling? We answer this question by drawing on field work conducted in one such school. We argue that this school and probably others of similar nature do, in fact, produce class-specific gendered subjectivities.

Feminist critiques have produced a wealth of material showing ways in which education at all levels disadvantages girls and women and locks them into gender constrained futures. Such work can be classified as liberal, socialist or radical depending, in a large part, upon the feminist theoretical premises from which it draws. Such premises provide a world-view and an approach to sexual politics which informs the investigation of girls' and women's education and the proposed strategies for countering its sexist aspects.[1] Single-sex schooling is often promoted as one way around many of the dilemmas of schooling for girls. As a feminist strategy it encompasses a spectrum of traditions and forms, some of which offer considerable potential for counter-sexist work, while others are, in many senses, profoundly conservative.[2] Currently the most popular and visible single-sex strategy (hence forth referred to as the SSS) is the liberal feminist version. It is this version which tends to find support in the popular press and in government sponsorship and policy. It is ironical that this movement is beginning to grow in Australia just as two major reports in the United Kingdom[3] and other smaller studies[4] are casting

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

doubt upon many of its basic premises. Nevertheless, the media's version of the SSS has led to an almost commonsense consensus that *any* single-sex educational setting will benefit girls more than any co-educational arrangement. Given that few single-sex arrangements exist in the state system, the drawing power of private schools for girls has been considerably enhanced.

Our major purpose here is to justify the following proposition: that the liberal feminist SSS is a very limited means of countering sexist schooling and sexist society; that it is flawed at the level of theory *and* practice; and that, via its indirect endorsement of private single-sex schooling, it reinforces a mode of education which, in many ways, confirms class and sex-based social divisions. The paper will take the following form. Firstly, we will offer a very condensed discussion of the various sources and modes of the SSS. Readers interested in a fuller discussion and critique of each are referred to our other work on the topic.[5] Secondly, we will discuss the theoretical problems and the socio-political implications of the liberal feminist version; then, through the example of a private, high status girls' school we will show how limited their version is in its scope and possibilities. In the process we will suggest some counter-sexist strategies with greater potential.

Sources of the SSS

Australian versions of the SSS appear to be informed by three separate and distinct sources. The history and academic achievements of private schools for middle-class girls provides one source. Such schools, it is said, sowed the seeds of an academic education for girls in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century their high retention rates, the success of their products in external examinations and tertiary entrance, and the number of leading women in various fields who have passed through such schools are often used as anecdotal evidence of the value of single-sex schooling. Such evidence is both simplistic and misleading, ignoring as it does the effects of social class. As we explain in detail elsewhere, there is now convincing evidence to show the limited effects of single-sex schooling on academic achievement or subject choice. Further, as we will show later, like their nineteenth-century counterparts, they are involved in producing gendered subjects appropriate to their class. A second source of the SSS is the separatist consciousness-raising movement of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. (More on that shortly.) A third source is the mass of evidence which documents the power relationships between the sexes in co-educational settings and the effects such relationships are seen to have on girls' academic and social development.[6]

Certainly there is much evidence to show how sexist the practices in co-educational classes and schools *can be*, but we have been able to find NO compelling evidence which shows that education in single-sex schools or classes *is not* sexist or that it is potentially more counter-sexist than co-education. It is our contention that the arguments in support of SSSs are based more upon wishful thinking, assumption and assertion than upon empirical evidence of any quality. The following summary of the usual arguments indicates the type of logic often brought to bear upon the topic. This logic operates at the subtextual level of many critiques of co-education and in many media reports on the topic (cf. earlier citations 2 & 6). While it draws on different strands of feminism, it primarily reflects liberal feminist thinking.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Premises

What, then, are the usual arguments? These commonly take an 'as . . . then' form. We begin with the claims made for single-sex classes. AS, in co-educational classes, girls are subjected to teacher neglect, sexual stereotyping and harassment by both teachers and boys, and AS girls learn to fail in order to enhance their attractiveness to their male school fellows, THEN, when we put them in classes by themselves where such negative forces are absent, they will perform more in accordance with their abilities and less in accordance with their socially constructed roles. AS adequate science and mathematics backgrounds cannot be gained in co-educational classes, THEN when we separate girls into single-sex classes in these 'crucial' areas, more girls will be inclined to continue, and therefore more girls will be more successful in these subjects, and eventually these areas of knowledge, as well as the careers they lead to, will be as much female as male terrains. AS girls in single-sex mathematics and science classes are to be taught by women scientists and women mathematicians, THEN these women will not only provide role models for the girls to emulate, they will also help to show that these areas of knowledge are not male terrains and will therefore provide a more positive learning environment. AS a class consisting only of girls will not be polluted by individualistic and aggressively competitive male values, it will be mutually supportive and encouraging, and girls' self-esteem will be enhanced.

The feminist arguments employed endorsing single-sex schools rather than single-sex classes incorporate most of the above but widen their scope. Single-sex schools are seen to have an atmosphere almost entirly unpolluted by males and therefore male values. Role models of independent, career-minded and powerful women are believed to exist in abundance including, most importantly, models of women leaders, mathematicians and scientists. In the world of the single-sex school it is pointed out that girls do not ever have to compete with boys for teachers' attention, for leadership positions, for places in top classes—in mathematics and science classes—and, as a consequence, the girls can gain experiences denied them in co-educational schools while broadening their perceptions of their possible futures. Neither are girls in the position to compete with each other *for* boys. An absence of boys is seen to make for less distraction and to allow girls to preserve their 'purity' for longer. It is also sometimes argued that, as single-sex schools usually offer *less* subject choice, they are better able to direct girls into the 'male domains'. Consequently these girls are less likely to become victims of a gender-based division of knowledge.

Versions of the SSS

Predictably, feminist SSSs take many forms. They vary in their purpose, content, composition (on dimensions other than sex), predicted length of existence and relationship to the rest of the school.[7] They also vary in the extent to which they are capable of challenging sexist education, let alone sexist society. At the radical feminist end of the spectrum are approaches such as the feminist academy implicit in the work of Spender et al. and Rich.[8] Faithful to such a vision but less ambitious are single-sex consciousness-raising classes. While there is a tendency to offer them only to girls in co-educational schools, they can be offered to their male counterparts and in single-sex schools. They can be conducted for staff

as well as students. To us, such groups offer the greatest potential for change if they exist dialectically with other aspects of the school rather than being marginal to it—as many are. The SSS is also suggested for developing girls' self-esteem, for career counselling, assertiveness training, extra-curricula clubs, pastoral care and in the provision of electives and space. Such offerings can vary in their theoretical underpinning. At the liberal feminist end of the spectrum the SSS is used to involve girls in those areas of knowledge which they tend to opt out of or not to achieve well in. These are such 'male domains' as trades, c· puters, technology, mathematics and science. Here again approaches vary. Some change the curriculum to allow for girls' interests and aptitudes and anxieties, others offer 'gender-inclusive' curriculum, while some seek simply to provide an atmosphere of support. The most common approach, however, is simply to separate boys and girls, to give them a female teacher 'role model' and to carry on largely as before, thus creating a gendered competition over the same curriculum.

Theoretical problems and social implications

We believe that there are a number of important areas of blindness and contradiction in the liberal feminist SSS and that these arise from the ways in which girls, society, social change and knowledge are viewed. Theorising a world-view is seldom part of the surface text, but it is possible to discern certain perspectives in the various sub-texts of their claims. The most significant social division is seen to be between male and female; all woman-kind is characterised as oppressed by all mankind The problems of their analysis of gender issues, and of the solutions they offer, arise partly from this *uni-dimensional* theoretical focus, a focus which is unidimensional in two important overlapping ways: the first, its view of females; the second, its view of society. We will consider these first, then go on to show how social change and knowledge appear to be viewed.

I Girls

Much of the liberal feminist literature on girls and co-education from which their SSS arises paints a bland unconvincing picture of all girls as over-socialised victims. While we acknowledge that this picture contains elements of truth, its stereotypifying aspects must also be recognised. Feminists are constantly opposing the ideology that girls and women are unintelligent, submissive, dependent creatures, and many girls in single-sex AND co-educational schools are a powerful testimony *against* this ideology. It is a strange irony that much of this particular body of literature reinforces rather than challenges this stereotype. The literature (perhaps in the interests of rhetoric) fails to differentiate *between* girls, and to acknowledge and, more importantly, to account for difference and exceptions; in short it fails to theorise oppositional behaviour or agency.[9] For example, how might the crude socialisation model account for the rise of feminist consciousness in defiance of patriarchal socialisation? The blunt theory and methodology which revealed the more obvious aspects of gender oppression in schools will require much greater refinement before they are able to detect the great subtleties of the process AND offer *adequate* solutions.

II Society

Much of this liberal feminist literature on girls and schooling offers an equally monolithic view of society. Males oppress females, end of story!

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

However, as Hester Eisenstein says:

> In the early years feminists made extravagant claims about the universality and identical characteristics of the oppression of women at all times and all places. More recently there has been something of a retreat from universalism and an acknowledgement of the diversity of women's experience and situation with respect to race, class, nationality, religion and other specificities.[10]

Socialist feminist and *certain* radical feminist studies of females and their education are increasingly pointing to the reductionism of the theoretical premises of the liberal feminist literature on girls and schooling.[11] Despite this, the SSS enthusiasts continue to draw upon this inadequate literature and therefore ignore the complex ways in which the dynamics of gender, class, race, religion, ethnicity and even age intersect. Further, the theoretical reductionism which underpins the SSS leads its advocates to ignore the contradictions which exist *between* such social specificities as gender and class or gender and ethnicity.[12] For example, will those women who—as owners or managers—achieve full (rather than de facto) membership of society's ruling class refrain from adopting practices which oppress working-class women or men? Under capitalism is such restraint ever possible?

A second limitation in the SSS proponents' views of society arises from a refusal to recognise the complex dynamics of society's operations. There is no acknowledgement in either their rationale *or* their SSS that oppression arises from the interaction between oppressed and oppressors in a variety of intersecting and overlapping social sites and practices. The school, the family, male-female relationships, the labour and consumer markets, the media and the political process do not and cannot operate separately.[13] Each has a bearing upon the others and ALL contribute to a sexist society. To focus primarily within the school and on the school's connection with the labour market, as many SSS proponents do, is to ignore other processes and practices which are central to the maintenance of patriarchy. It is these processes which would ultimately detract from the solution envisaged by this particular perspective (more on this point shortly).

III Social change

The SSS advocates and those liberal feminists who inspire them have views of society very similar to social stratification theorists, who view the world in terms of occupational hierarchy and positional slots and who advocate social change through social mobility.[14] Equalising educational opportunity through single-sex schooling is defined as offering girls an education which will permit them to compete equally with men in the workforce. Working-class girls, for example, can compete for *jobs* such as mechanics or boiler makers, middle-class girls can compete for prestigious *careers* in areas such as medicine or law, and those whose mathematical and scientific talents are adequately tapped can enter the career worlds to which those without such talents are denied access. 'Getting there' in an individualistic, competitive and stratified system is the object. The attitudinal baggage to be upacked upon arrival is peripheral and includes *no* challenge to a system whose injustices extend far beyond those based on gender. Some SSS enthusiasts exhibit a disturbing tendency to concentrate on the 'upper stratum' of girlhood—the 'bright girls' (usually seen to be potential mathematicians and scientists)—the potential leaders

ERIC

and role models. Extending the logic of their arguments there seems to be a suggestion that if SOME women achieve positions of power and authority—particularly in terrains previously denied them—then gender oppressions will be minimised generally and hence eventually we will have a more just society. Why is it assumed that women who succeed in the public sphere, and particularly in the more prestigious male occupations, will either provide positive role models or be *actively* sympathetic to the different sorts of gender oppressions which are experienced across classes? There is a danger that such successful women will either under-play the barriers to success or simply take action against those forms of oppressive gender relationships most relevant to their own class experience while having little real understanding of or empathy for, gender oppressions in other social groupings. Achieving power is one thing, using it in the interests of women is another.

Should all independent, career-oriented, powerful women automatically be perceived as role models even if they think, behave and teach in ways which may actually subvert the feminist cause? Do such women necessarily recognise the sexist aspects of society? Can they understand such constraints as race and class? One obvious fallacy of the role model argument is its failure to distinguish *between* women. In drawing the battle lines simply between all men and all women it is forced into conclusions which cannot be sustained. Of course it is important to have female leaders and role models, but it is equally important to have the right sort—as the example of Margaret Thatcher, among many, demonstrates. Does the SSS solution ensure that the right sorts of women achieve power? And what are the right sort, anyway? Will those who 'make it' necessarily be accepted as role models? Society bombards girls with messages about what constitutes valued womanhood and the SSS offers them no protective shield. It is highly likely therefore that girls will continue to model themselves upon those images which constantly confront their consciousness via the media[15] and particularly the youth culture industry.[16]

A more balanced sex distribution in the workforce appears to be the end of this SSS social engineering enterprise. However, career mobility for some does not make a social revolution. The movement of more women and girls into the workforce, into 'male occupations' and positions of power does not *necessarily* have much impact on the various other oppressive aspects of the lives of women and girls. Certainly it would widen the opportunities contained in girls' futures and it *would* lessen women's economic dependence upon men. Both are crucial steps towards bringing about gender justice, but to focus almost exclusively on the school-workforce connection, is, as we mentioned earlier, to neglect other oppressive social processes. Firstly it ignores those general social features which certain feminists have defined as 'masculine culture' and others have called 'technocratic rationality'. These are characterised, as Adrienne Rich points out, by

> depersonalisation, fragmentation, waste, artificial scarcity and emotional shallowness, not to mention its suicidal obsession with power and technology as ends rather than means.[17]

Secondly it neglects many social processes which are particularly oppressive for women and girls, for example, aspects of relationships to and with boys and men, the distribution of responsibility within the family, and

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

the cultural emphasis on being frail, feminine and fecund.

The liberal feminist SSS does not offer girls the critical tools to unmask and resist patriarchal ideology or to develop positive alternatives. Its new breed of woman is still likely to rush from work to the second shift at home and it is probable that she will still 'choose' to interrupt her much fought for career to follow her man's or to nurture their children. She will probably still feel both the force of narrow definitions of appropriate and attractive womanhood and the 'need' to appeal and accommodate rather than just to BE. As the labour market contracts and, within it, opportunities for girls diminish even further, the SSS supporters direct their energies more narrowly. One hears less now of assertiveness-training and consciousness-raising groups and more of maths, science and technology groups. Liberal feminist thought has asserted its dominance over radical feminist thought and as we will now show much of the promise which the latter offered girls of today is lost to them.

Consciousness-raising (CR) groups and all-women collectives provided much of the momentum for the most recent wave of feminism. Such groups also provided one model for the SSS. However, although the SSS proponents have maintained the separatist structures, they have lost the moving spirit of such groups. At the same time they have propagated some rather strange mythologies about the *nature* of women and girls. Let us just explore these points.

CR groups sought to embody both knowledge *and* action. Sharing (in a non-judgemental and egalitarian atmosphere) one's experiences of being female was to lead to the knowledge that one's personal experiences reflected the structural features of a gender-divided society. Subsequent action was to include a challenge to those male behaviours and accounts of the world which devalued women; it was to assert the merit and authority of women and women's accounts.[18] Some radical feminists have taken the theory and practice further and have developed totally separate women's cultures. The theory for these separate cultures is that certain negative characteristics of this society such as individualism, aggression, competition and hierarchy are *male* characteristics. Rather than being part of a world which embodies such values it is argued that women, who by nature are sharers and carers, should remove themselves from it to develop and promote their own culture. Here, separatism involves a retreat from the political. Nature, it seems, concentrated all vice in men and all virtue in women.[19]

The SSS draws selectively from the above and in the process loses almost everything of value. It separates girls from boys in order that girls may *better* learn male accounts of the world. (We will elaborate on this point shortly.) It offers them neither a critique of current knowledge and social practice nor the opportunity of reflecting upon their own experiences and creating new personal knowledge. In seeking to *prepare* girls for social mobility in a male-dominated society it implicitly blames the victim. It then re-educates the 'victim' group without re-educating the victor group and again without challenging the oppressive mechanisms of society. It neglects the contradictory social messages which girls receive, absorb, translate and replay about what to be and what to value and instead draws upon the notion of the inherent virtue of womanhood. No significantly different teaching and learning mode is required because *any* all-female group is believed to be mutually supportive, warm, non-competitive and ego-enhancing. We do not wish to deny that *some* all-female groups are

ERIC

this way, but it must be recognised that this is not a *natural* phenomenon. It will not occur simply because girls come together to learn. This ideal is achieved through commitment to such goals, through struggle, constant vigilance and high levels of personal and group growth and awareness. Gatherings of all women, all girls and even all feminists are often subject to the same sorts of tensions and divisions which split society. Personal ambition, opportunism, game playing, class divisions, envy, arrogance, racism, uncertainty, aggression. cliquishness, sex stereotyping, etc. do not automatically disappear when men and boys walk out of the door. They go when people *learn* to let them go. Simply gathering girls together to learn will not teach them to be less competitive, insensitive, individualistic and so on. Of course, in truth, this is not what the SSS either wishes them to be or seeks to teach them. It seeks to *prepare* them to be highly competitive and individualistic in a male world while drawing on a separatist radical feminist model which demands an attitudinal reversal and defies the male world. What an unwitting deception and perverse contradiction!

IV Knowledge

An understanding of feminist critiques of what has come to be accepted as knowledge is crucial for those seeking to end sexist education. Dale Spender[20], Mary O'Brien[21] and many others[22] have shown how this knowledge is usually constructed for, by and about certain men and how it ignores or diminishes the experiences, skills, aptitudes, interests and even learning styles of women. Even those subjects commonly held to be gender neutral, such as maths and science, are being exposed as 'masculist' knowledge forms.[23] Also, as a consequence of their claims of impartiality and objectivity, they are increasingly recognised as playing a legitimating role in securing various other forms of social privilege.[24]

Theories of ideology have helped feminists to understand the part knowledge, as it is currently organised in schools, plays in developing an image of womanhood and in seeking to construct girls and boys as gendered 'subjects'. Although many feminists have drawn heavily on theories of ideology in critically unmasking the sex/gender interests which permeate school knowledge, theories of hegemony have largely been ignored, particularly in Australia. Patti Lather and Mary O'Brien are two significant exceptions[25]. Hegemonic theory considers the *process* by which the ideological aspects of knowledge become part of the commonsense knowledge and behaviour of the 'subjects'. It shows how such ideology is received partly through collaboration or consent (participation in one's own oppression) and partly through an active process of re-articulation to alternative and oppositional ideas. It acknowledges agency and intentionality. The knowledge which girls learn at school must, therefore, not simply be conceived of as passively absorbed in the manner in which it is delivered. The acts of reception and *rearticulation* must also be studied and theorised.

Not only do sexist values permeate school knowledge, they also permeate what is perceived of as *valued* knowledge. Powerful men have developed a hierarchy of knowledges in which certain forms are seen to be of greater merit. This hierarchy is presented as natural, beneficient and immutable. Currently those fields of knowledge deemed to be 'hard', 'objective', 'scientific' and 'pure' and to demand the greatest cognitive skill are most valued.[26] Co-incidentally, perhaps, these fields involve least

women. In fact women who succeed in these fields are likely to find themselves regarded as sexual AND intellectual aberrations. Many histories of the changing status of knowledge (and work for that matter) have revealed that once large numbers of women succeed in a field, that field diminishes in esteem and rewards. For example, Doyle's article 'The Hidden History of English Studies' shows both how the status of English was threatened by the increasing involvement of women and how the men in the field sought to adopt certain 'scientific' practices in order to preserve the esteem of their discipline.[27]

Liberal feminist devotees of the SSS seem content for girls to be exposed to current bodies of knowledge providing that the exposure occurs in all-girl classes. Further, in their almost fanatical emphasis upon mathematical and scientific skills as important assets for social advancement, they endorse a hierarchical division of knowledge, ignore the sexist aspects of such knowledge AND adopt an uncritical and purely instrumental view of these subjects. They also ignore the fact that although girls and women may numerically dominate the humanities, the arts and the social sciences, they only dominate at the level of delivery and consumption. That the 'soft' subjects are equally in need of a feminist deconstruction is too often unspoken.[28] Almost all knowledge is still *primarily* produced, controlled and administered by males—at the level of research, research funding and publication, and in the selection and control of teaching and teachers. The rare exceptions tend to be in areas dubbed female domains such as early childhood education or home economics, or where feminists have taken control of the production and delivery of their own knowledge through their own research, journals, publishing companies, and so on.

Challenging the style and content of ALL the curriculum should be the central plank of any solution to sexist education. Adrienne Rich has called this

> re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction.[29]

A critical reappraisal of the language, form, content and mode of delivery of the overt *and* covert knowledge offered in our schools is crucial. As Jean Blackburn so persuasively asserts, it is equally crucial that boys as well as girls are not offered sexist curricula.[30] However, bringing about gender balanced school knowledge is only part of a much larger task for feminist educators. This task may best be described as counter-hegemonic work, and it includes exploring ways in which schools and school knowledge may be involved in the production of liberating and transformative practice. According to Lather, counter-hegemonic work seeks to 'stymie consensus, to present alternative conceptions of reality' and includes the

> development of counter institutions, ideologies and cultures that provide an ethical alternative to the dominant hegemony, a lived experience of how the world can be different.[31]

There are many examples of such work from within and outside the feminist movement. Feminism has caused a vital, energetic and inspiring anti-patriarchal women's culture to blossom in fields ranging from art, music and theatre to book stores, health centres and businesses.[32] This separate women's culture, women's studies in educational institutions[33] and consciousness-raising groups[34] may be regarded as emancipatory social practice because they involve a defiance of accepted meanings, they

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

provide the opportunity for people to re-think their individual and group experiences and they affirm the right of women to produce their own meanings, and to practice their own politics.

From *outside* feminism there exists a wide range of counter-hegemonic social theories, research strategies and teaching approaches from which opponents of sexist schooling may both draw inspiration and find new directions. This range includes critical social theory—particularly critical curriculum theory[35], advocacy research[36], action research[37] and critical pedagogy.[38] Although there is not the space here to explore the contributions each area could make in the struggle to bring about nonsexist schooling we strongly believe that such an exploration would be extremely fruitful. Certainly it would be more fruitful than pursuing the liberal feminist SSS, which diverts feminist energies to naive, partial, usually voluntary, short-lived and easily dismantled solutions. It allows the central core of a sexist system to remain while nibbling feebly at its boundaries. Further, it permits boys' and many teachers' gender consciousness and sexist behaviour to flourish unchecked, unchallenged. It should be vigorously refuted.

The liberal feminist SSS as exemplified in high-status private schools for girls: How nonsexist?

Despite the fallaciousness of much of the liberal feminists' polemic in support of single-sex schooling, and despite the deficiencies of the particular strategies which they promote, both have gained considerable popular credence.[39] A number of feminist educators are experimenting with the strategy in the state system in Australia and we have more to say about the inherent dangers of such experimentation elsewhere. A second consequence of this SSS is that *private* schools for girls have been offered a new justification for their existence. Increasingly one hears of parents who have enrolled their daughters in such schools specifically (or so they claim) in order that *their* girls don't suffer the effects of a sexist education. According to the logic of the claims outlined earlier, such a belief is warranted, and given that this SSS is largely unconcerned about other social disparities, such behaviour is justified. The schools which have benefited most from this wave of parental concern are the high-fee, high-status schools for girls. Such schools can, in fact, be seen as a good example of the liberal feminist SSS in operation and as such, we believe, they illustrate the weaknesses of the approach. We offer the following case in order to show two things. Firstly that the liberal feminist SSS is flawed feminist strategy when its implications are worked out in practice. Secondly that those parents who support such schools in the hope that their daughters will receive a nonsexist education hope in vain.

We will address these issues by asking a number of questions which usually are not asked and by relating the theoretical points made earlier to actual social practices in Western Australia (WA). Some of the following material arises from field work conducted by Jane Kenway in two high-status, high-fee private schools, one for boys and the other for girls.[40] We believe that much of what we say about these schools in WA could be said about the vast majority of similar schools in Australia. The works of Connell et al. and Connell, all of which dealt with a wide number of such schools in Adelaide and Sydney, support our belief.[41] We will now examine specific social practice within and around what we will call the Ladies' School of Perth (LSP). We begin with a consideration of parent

power and teachers' practices, then move to look at both the overt and covert curriculum. The girls' attitudes to, and relationships with, boys are then outlined and we conclude by revealing the divisions which exist within this all-girl population. Our argument is that this school contributes to the production of class-specific gender subjectivities.

I Parent power

Connell et al. have shown that private schools' clients have a certain amount of power over the school via the forces of the private school market. They showed that the school will both direct its activities in accordance with the demands of the market and that it will also contribute to the forces operating within the market. As a consequence of the schools' need to attract and retain its clients, school staff are expected to pay reasonable heed to and even to anticipate parents' wishes.[42] In any discussion of the nonsexist possibilities of girls' private schools it is therefore crucial to assess the parents' perspectives on the issue and the extent to which their perspectives have any force within the school.

Although private school clients often exert pressure upon the school at an individual parent and child level, the client voice is usually at its most audible via the various associations which form part of what is often called the school 'family'. At the LSP the most active and vocal parents belong to either the Parents' Association, the Mothers' Committee or the Old Girls' Association. These groups provide an avenue for the direct collective expression to the headmistress of a point of view on issues beyond those relating to the individual. Interviews with members of such associations[43] and attendance at various group functions have led Kenway to the following generalisations.

The majority of the active and vocal parents are mothers and the majority of them express considerable suspicion about the feminist movement.[44] While a few are apologetically 'mild' feminist', the majority hold quite conservative views of women's place in society, and some are quite vehemently hostile. There is a similarity between the views expressed by these women and those expressed by the anti-feminist backlash movement comprised of Women Who Want to be Women.[45] Ironically there is also a certain similarity to elements of some recent restatements of radical feminism, those which Judity Stacey calls 'the new conservative feminism'.[46] What these three groups have in common is an emphasis upon female difference from men, and a celebration of the 'uniquely' female capacities for intimacy, sensitivity and nurturing centred in the private sphere. Their stance is pro-family and opposed to sexual politics. The feminist movement is seen as a denigration of women's roles as mothers and homemakers and as a threat to the social fabric.

For these clients of the LSP the school is valued for seemingly contradictory reasons. One is that the very existence of the school and much of its practice is a celebration of young womanhood. That it deals with girls is central to its cultural, social and educational functioning. Equally central is that it is a school which caters for and helps to produce 'young ladies'. The school seeks to sculpt its students into a model of girlhood which receives much approval from the parent bodies; it is that 'extra something' for which parents pay high fees. The model is self-assured, 'well' spoken, 'well' mannered and 'well' presented; preferably too, it has refined cultural tastes, high levels of academic achievement and aspirations towards some sort of prestigious career via tertiary study. However,

ERIC

for many of the mothers, finding an esteemed place in the paid labour force should either precede or run parallel with the model's more 'natural' future as wife, mother and home-maker. While there is pressure from the clients of the LSP for the students to achieve academic success and tertiary entrance and thereby to achieve career status and mobility, there is *no* visible pressure for nonsexist schooling.

Given the outlook of the more vocal parents such pressure is unlikely to occur. This is not to say that certain parents would not welcome a less gender-based approach to their daughters' schooling, but their voice is muted if heard at all. The few parents who claimed to choose the LSP as a means towards achieving a nonsexist education for their girls were largely satisfied with the school's capacity to help produce many academically successful, culturally cultivated and socially confident young women. Their aspirations were for their daughters to succeed *within* the current status quo and the SSS was more a means towards that end than a challenge to the sex/gender system of society.

II Teachers

Given that the pressure for nonsexist schooling in girls' private schools is unlikely to come from the parents, is the school staff likely to move the school in that direction? In the case of the LSP the answer is no. The school's governing body, as with the governing bodies of most girls' schools, is comprised almost entirely of males. The management of the school is not concerned with such issues and will not therefore include them in either forward planning or the distribution of finances. Neither would this school council be likely to appoint a consciously feminist school Head. In the LSP, as again in other private schools, it is the Head who is responsible for devising employment criteria for staff. At the LSP these emphasise a commitment to the 'values and aims of the school'. The primary emphases herein are upon religion, academic study and extra-curricula activities. A feminist perspective is neither demanded nor expected by the employer and neither is it a particular reason why the teachers whom Kenway interviewed chose to teach here. Certainly some teachers had sympathy with aspects of feminist thought and a smaller number still went so far as to keep such thought in mind when teaching. However, to most, nonsexist schooling was a non-issue. And of course when sexism is a non-issue then the teachers are unlikely to recognise or worry about the sexism which is implicit in the knowledge which they seek to impart. A full complement of such a teacher's time and attention, undistracted by boys, will still not result in nonsexist teaching and learning. The value system of the teacher is crucial. Those teachers at the LSP who were sympathetic, operated very much within a liberal feminist mode. Given the nature of the client population this is the only form of feminism which the school could accommodate, incorporating as it does the bourgeois ethic of individualism, free will, stratification and meritocracy. Hence when feminism appears, it is in a very moderate and muted form, deprived of its cutting edge.

Role model theorists[47] may argue that a consciously feminist approach to schooling is less important than the modelling effect. They would claim that despite an absence of overt feminism at the LSP the girls would still benefit from seeing women engaged in careers and occupying positions of power. We believe, however, that despite the feminist assertions about the importance of role models, very little is known about the effects of

such models upon girls' consciousness. If they engaged in gender stereotypifying practices, such models can deliver a very contradictory and confusing set of messages. Kenway's discussions with a range of girls at the LSP reveal that the impact of the model is determined by a very sexist set of values. These arise partly from the peer and youth culture to which the girls belong and from the youth culture industry which is a powerful force in the girls' lives.

Women who are perceived by the girls as out of touch, 'spinsterish', old-fashioned, or even as trying too hard to relate or to remain young, may actually provide negative role models: 'If one has to be like that to get there—who wants to?'. If girls associate power, ambition and occupational success with women who lack the attributes the girls have been structured to admire, then the role model argument loses much of its force. Possibly the teachers who have the most impact upon the girls' consciousness are those who confirm many gender stereotypes. This is not to deny that positive role models may be important. However, it is to assert the equal importance of interrupting the sexist value system which undermines their effectiveness. This can only be done consciously and explicitly as part of the teaching–learning practice of the school. There is no such interruption at the LSP.

Finally any discussion of the value of role models in girls' schools must contend with the dilemma that power, success and authority is achieved in an almost all-female environment. Given that a sexist value system determines girls' responses to the model, it is likely that such success would be perceived as limited and partial and therefore the modelling effect may be lessened. And of course, in a sense, such perceptions are right: such success *is* limited, although presumably no more limited than success in an all-male environment. For many reasons single-sex schools, whether for girls or for boys, do not attract nor seek the widest possible range of job applicants and so success therein is not achieved in full and open competition. However, the dilemma for women and girls who succeed in a single-sex environment is that society ascribes such success a lower status than that achieved in competition with men or boys.

III Knowledge

Let us now consider the extent to which the curriculum in the LSP offers nonsexist forms of knowledge. Despite the much-vaunted 'independence' of private schools such as the LSP, few are so independent that they develop their own 'core subject' curriculum. Almost without exception they adopt or adapt the kindergarten to Year 10 syllabi which are centrally by the education department of the state government. Most upper school 'core subjects' are also devised centrally by bodies which include representatives from the education department and tertiary and other institutions. Private schools tend to be over-represented on those bodies. In effect the form, content and modes of assessment of most private school syllabi are established by central bodies *outside* the private schools. These bodies devise syllabi for most schools, hence the lower secondary core subjects and the upper secondary tertiary entrance subjects are taught and assessed in the LSP in a fashion *similar* to that in co-educational state schools. In fact, given the high upper secondary retention rates and the importance of tertiary entrance exams, it should be acknowledged that the high-fee and high-status private schools are likely to be *more* attached to the central academic curriculum than are many state schools. Their reputations are built upon their retention and tertiary entrance rates and their external examination results and conse-

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

quently the private school market permits them little curricular flexibility. As we pointed out earlier, it is increasingly acknowledged that all school knowledge, even the seemingly neutral maths and science, is gender biased. Not unexpectedly the knowledge devised for WA schools is no exception and therefore it must also be acknowledged that the curriculum in the LSP is no exception either. These girls are being taught and examined on 'male stream'[48] curricula. Given the school staff's feelings of accountability concerning achievement, particularly in tertiary entrance subjects, and given many teachers' limited concern about sexist schooling, it is unlikely that modifications of the curriculum occur in the classroom. Kenway's classroom observations support this belief.

As do many schools, state and private, the LSP offers a number of 'elective' subjects, some compulsory for certain year levels, others from which the girls may select. Although such subjects are considered outside the core subject mainstream of school knowledge, and although some form part of the 'extra-curriculum', they play a significant role in the class and gender functioning of the school. The choice of subjects which the school offers within this 'elective' category is revealing, as is the extent to which the school funds and encourages certain subjects in constrast with others. The primary emphasis at the LSP is upon the arts (we include languages here), and upon high rather than popular culture. While the school makes certain concessions to modern forms and offers media studies and jazz ballet, what it celebrates is its art, drama, languages (including speech-making and debating) and particularly its music—its choir, orchestra and band.

This emphasis upon high cultural forms is important for the individual girls, the school and for the class group which the school primarily serves. For the girls, participation in such cultural forms contributes to the formation of particular aesthetic dispositions and social values. It also develops a familiarity with the codes implicit therein and with the social contexts and conventions of behaviour associated with such forms. This easy familiarity is what Bourdieu has called 'cultural capital', the possession of which, he argues, assists in educational advancement and status group solidarity.[49] Both he and Weber[50], amongst others, have argued that possession of the styles and competence associated with high culture also provide mechanisms for individuals and groups to affirm their social status or to assist their social mobility. Such 'cultural capital' therefore also becomes a 'screening' device through which the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups may occur.[51] In helping girls to acquire such 'cultural capital' and in providing for its intergenerational transfer, the school ensures its own legitimacy. Its attachment to such cultural endeavours helps the school to maintain an image as apart from and above the cultural *and* social mainstream. In offering refined cultural accomplishment as part of the curriculum the LSP can justify its claims to produce 'ladies' well suited for participation in the life of elite status groups.

The range of other electives illustrates other class and gender biases. The only two 'practical' subjects which hold any sort of significant position within the school are computer studies and home economics. There has been a strong push from the parents for the school to develop the girls' competence concerning computers. Some computer courses for girls simply update a secretarial course to ensure competence with the word processor. This is not so with the LSP computer studies course, which seeks to ensure that the girls' career path is not blocked by ignorance of computer technology. Despite computer studies, an emphasis upon

sport (under-funded in terms of facilities) and careers programs (mentioned shortly), the girls are nevertheless still directed towards a gender constrained future. They are steered quite firmly towards a particular notion of womanhood via grooming and deportment, parenting and home economics courses, none of which embodies an even liberal feminist perspective. For example, the home economics course, run along education department lines, does not provide any home maintenance skills beyond cooking, sewing and budgeting. The girls are, it seems, to remain dependent in the home if, for example, a fuse blows, a tap washer requires changing or if a hole needs drilling.

Glaringly absent in the school's elective offerings are any manual skills courses such as wood- or metalwork, technical drawing, 'motors and machines' or electronics. This limited range of electives suggests a limited definition of acceptable womanhood. It also not only restricts the girls' career choices at all levels and sustains various forms of dependence upon 'male' skills, but reaffirms for a group of middle-class girls the distinction between manual and mental labour. When focussing on careers the school primarily directs the girls towards mental labour. It is generally expected that they will take up middle-class occupations in either the helping professions (including law and medicine) or the arts. Only a small number of girls aspire to 'lesser' careers and most choose conventional paths to typing or hairdressing. The neglect of practical manual skills, as with other parts of the curriculum, helps to direct the girls at the LSP to a particular class/gender future.

IV Relationships with boys

So far we have argued that an absence of boys does not necessarily make teaching practices or the curriculum less sexist. We have shown, through the example of the LSP, that in fact it can make the curriculum more restrictive. This is not to deny that the girls gain some benefits from an absence of boys. Certainly in each others' company girls may not downplay their intelligence, or suffer such gender discriminatory practices as sexual harassment. Certainly they do not have to compete with boys for time, attention, funds, class placement or leadership roles. The absence of boys may therefore make for more ready school success. However it does not mean that the girls shed attitudes which lead them to participate in their own oppression. In fact quite the reverse may happen. Without the ordinary everyday unromantic presence of boys, the girls tend to develop an image of boys which is unfortunate in its consequences.

For many of the girls at the LSP, boys are an absent presence—romanticised and glamorised. Dramatic reversals of behaviour occur in their company. Life is frequently held to be incomplete without a boyfriend and much out-of-school energy is spent in male-directed and male-attracting behaviour.[52] *Due* to their single-sex schooling the girls have not learnt to interact with boys in a natural unaffected manner. Certainly they may not learn to fail at school in order to be more attractive, but they have learnt or devised a restrictive code of behaviour to be brought forth when interacting with males. In all likelihood this code persists through their post-school lives unless unexpected circumstances arise to confront it. The boys or men in their lives are unlikely to provide such an interruption because the males that girls from such single-sex schools tend to mix with, and later marry, are those from private boys' schools. Such schools are often regarded as producing a form of arrogant macho chauvinism which is almost unequalled elsewhere.[53] Kenway's research at what we will call Perth Boys' Grammar (PBG) supports this conten-

tion. The gender implication of the meaning-making practices of PBG will be examined elsewhere.[54] Suffice it to say here that much of the school's ideology is sexist. For many of these boys, a 'girl' is either a failure on the football field, a sexual object, a fantasy or status figure, a topic of sniggering locker-room talk or, at best, a frivolous being, less comfortable to be with than one's 'mates'. A major deficiency in the single-sex school argument is that it only tackles part of the problem. When girls are taught separately, then boys' education in this area is neglected and the problems of *their* sexist attitudes and behaviour remain. The 'oppressor' must be liberated too[55], and, as we have suggested elsewhere, a co-educational setting has the greatest *potential* for the liberation of both sexes.[56] Meanwhile, girls from such single-sex schools as the LSP are offered a very limited liberation. The patriarchal ideology which pervades interactions between the sexes in a whole array of cultural and social sites and situations, while potentially challengable in theory within the school, cannot, precisely because it *is* a single-sex school, be challenged in practice. Educational success and meritocratic careers *alone* will not liberate these girls—although they may help them achieve financial independence and an identity of their own (commendable achievements). It is likely, as Beswick et al. point out, that in later life these girls' tertiary studies and career opportunities will be deemed and treated as less important than those of their male counterparts.[57] As with many of their 'old girl' mothers, uncritically, if at times reluctantly, being a wife and mother will come first.

V Sisterhood?

It is simple-minded in the extreme to imagine that private all-girls' schools can be likened to the ideal form of a feminist group presented earlier. Certainly 'old girls' from the LSP form strong—often life-long—bonds and the current students have a powerful sense of collective identity (which nevertheless is rent by divisions which we will discuss shortly). Yet the sources of such bonding do not auger well for a sense of sisterhood beyond the school and elite private school system. One source of such intra-class female bonding is the constant exhortation from a number of staff members that the school is special, that attendance at it is a privilege, because the school provides 'its girls' with distinctive extra qualities which will be of advantage in later life. The collective solidarity then arises from a sense of difference from, not solidarity with, the rest. A second way the bonds are forged is through intra-school and inter-private school competition and rivalry. Girls' private schools, partly because of their class nature, are competitive in almost every area of the curriculum, the academic, the sporting, and sometimes even the cultural (art and drama competitions and prizes) and the charitable (the 'see who can raise the most money for charity' syndrome). Girls compete as individuals (speech nights are largely prize nights), house battles against house, team against team or school against school. The LSP is also unlike the ideal feminist group in that it is hierarchically organised. Status and responsibility are most often awarded late in the girls' school careers. The much vaunted leadership experiences in private schools for girls occur only in their last year or two and then only for a selected few (elitism again). In addition this is a restricted leadership experience as it does not equip the girls to exercise power over males, particularly those who are affronted by the prospect of females 'on top'. How well does the skill learned within single-sex, middle-class, ethnically limited groupings transfer into the different

dynamics of mixed-sex, mixed-class and mixed-ethnic groupings, particularly when these are accompanied by the immature sexuality mentioned earlier?

A small number of girls *do* come from backgrounds which are atypical of the Protestant, White, Anglo-Saxon middle-class range for which the school primarily caters. Consequently, divisions occur along religious, racial and class lines. These divisions are not as obvious as one might expect, because they are filtered through two primary value systems, that of the school and that of the school's and district's youth culture, the latter being a local derivative of the youth culture and youth leisure industries. Although there is not sufficient space here to consider all the implications of the class, racial and religious divisions which exist within the LSP we will focus on one force of particular power, that of *image*.

Within the school and its client population there is an oppressive emphasis upon appearances. In the affluent suburbs within which the school is located, this takes the form of either conspicuous or 'tasteful' and restrained displays of wealth and comfort and includes the consumption of luxury household, fashion and leisure goods. In the school this emphasis on appearances manifests itself in exacting requirements regarding the wearing of school uniform and in a line of reasoning which promotes the idea that surface appearances provide the most significant indicator of value. For example, the girls are constantly told that the public judges the school by the manner in which the girls appear in the street. Translated into the schoolgirl culture this comes to mean that the girls judge each other and outsiders very much on the basis of style. Much of the style which is valued is determined by the fashion industry. In general, popularity is awarded on the basis of a style which includes a somewhat extraverted form of confidence, good looks and a fashionable appearance. Academic and/or sporting competence and/or cultural talent are an accepted base line. The dominant image, the image to be strived for, is copied from without but set within by the older girls, and finds its slavish followers from among the young. If the older girls are trying to make their uniforms fashionable by wearing hair combs, ribbons and rolled down socks, then it is not long before the 12 and 13 year-olds are doing the same. Without the resources for 'trendy' clothes, for appropriate leisure-time activities (be they pub crawling, video viewing, or party giving and going) and without family freedom and suburban accessibility, full membership of the school's 'trendite' cliques is not possible. Tender adolescent hearts break as often in the LSP as anywhere else when certain party invitations are not forthcoming, when the family budget does not permit the purchase of the latest look, when cliques close to exclude. Asian students often cluster protectively together, uninterested, unable or unwilling to adapt to the cultures of the school and peer group. In this school may be found pockets of girls rejected because of their religious commitments, their appearance, their grammar or manners, their lack of social sophistication: in short, their difference from the images towards which the majority strives. Isolates or 'rejects' operate alone while the cruel momentum of conformity leads many girls to repress their uniqueness, their uncertainties and vulnerability and to restrain their socially critical powers. Many of the girls compete for each others' approval within a highly sexist schoolgirl culture.

VI Social class

Finally let us look at a very significant silence in the work of the advocates of the single-sex school solution. In Australia most single-sex schools

ERIC

for girls are private church schools and the most prestigious of these charge quite substantial fees. This limits their clientele to a restricted sector of the population—the affluent, the relatively affluent (those who can afford to make 'sacrifices') and the odd scholarship exception. Obviously the class nature of the clientele must be a central factor in any studies focussing on retention rates, exam success or tertiary entrance. The fact that our education system, private AND state, operates in favour of the privileged, powerful classes is widely recognised and blatantly apparent.[58] One might well argue that the educational 'success' of these girls has less to do with their single-sex schools and more to do with their class background. However, the argument must not stop there. In endorsing the single-sex solution many feminists are encouraging, possibly unwittingly, a form of education which divides society along class lines. While the private schools may define themselves as simply 'different from' state schools, much of their ideology defines them as 'better than'.

This not only permeates the attitudes of parents and employers but, as Kenway's field work has shown, encourages many of the schools' students and products to see themselves as both different from and superior to the students and products of all state schools except those which most closely resemble the private schools in catchment, academic values and achievement. Even then the private school students see themselves as having some indefinable extra quality. The SSS as it manifests itself in middle-class support for prestigious private schools is an instance of the incorporation of a feminist discourse within a class logic. As a consequence we see the daughters of society's ruling groups accumulating further class advantage and greater social mobility, while their parents, and 'feminist' parents must be included here, in effect, *abandon* the daughters of the working class to a social system in which many of them will remain on the unemployment scrap-heap. If the example of the LSP is any indication, girls from our private single-sex schools may well have sisterly feelings for each other but these do not usually extend to their sisters among the working class who, when they are regarded at all, are regarded with polite contempt. When our private-school girls move into the world of work, possibly they will provide role models for girls within their own class groupings, but how likely it is—whether they become feminists or not—that they will recognise, empathise with or be prepared to help assuage the multiple oppressions experienced by working-class women and girls? The radical feminists' claim that, because all women share certain forms of gender-based oppression, this unites them across class lines is naive and narrow and should be strenuously opposed. Class separates women as much (if differently) as it separates men. Gender oppressions take on a different form, find alternative expression, and, most importantly, have different implications and ramifications across class lines. The private single-sex school is no solution at all to this problem. Neither is a solution to the problems of a sexist education. As we have shown, high-status, high-fee private schools for girls prepare their students to occupy a woman's place within the privileged classes.

Conclusion

In offering the case of the LSP we have illustrated some of the logical consequences of the liberal feminist SSS. In so doing we have indicated how naive and narrow is its focus on achievement. Along with Connell[59] and Kessler et al.[60] we wonder what this approach has to offer the vast majority of girls who are disaffected and eliminated by the competitive academic curriculum. Those liberal feminists who promote this SSS cannot, it seems,

escape the ideological imprinting of their own histories. Given that the shape of the educational pyramid ensures that only a select few can reach its apex, it is a somewhat irresponsible fantasy to imagine that academic achievement via single-sex strategies within current educational structures will provide a new path to a feminist Utopia. At best all it is likely to achieve is some intra-class restructuring along gender lines while leaving most women's and girls' employment opportunities unaltered and leaving other gender oppressive features of their lives unchallenged.

As we have implied throughout, if SSSs are to have any educational AND social impact they must adopt the 'socially critical' spirit of consciousness-raising groups, they must be conducted for the males as well as the females in the school system and they must respond to and feed into the educational mainstream where the heart of the problem exists. Further they should only be one amongst many strategies in a feminist 'war of position'.[61]

Finally, if counter-sexist work is to have positive effects it must co-opt the concern of teachers and boys as well as girls about the power relationships between the sexes in a multiplicity of economic, cultural and ideological sites. Similarly it must take into account, and work sensitively with regard to, the way in which gender intersects with other social divisions such as class, ethnicity and race. We question the morality of counter-sexist strategies which endorse, directly or indirectly, those educational practices or institutions which produce divisions *between* women and which allow some advancement for some at the expense, rather than to the benefit, of others.

References

1 For an overview of these differing perspectives in education, see:
Middleton, S. (1984), 'The sociology of women's education as a field of academic study', *Discourse* 15(1), 42–62.
Eisenstein, H. (1984), *Contemporary Feminist Thought*, Unwin Paperbacks, Sydney. Provides a useful theoretical context for Middleton's article.

2 Cowell, B. (1981), 'Mixed and single sex groupings in secondary schools' *Oxford Review of Education* 7(2), 165–72.
Cornbleet, A., & Libovitch, S. (1983), 'Anti-sexist initiatives in a mixed comprehensive school: A case study', in A. Wolpe & J. Donald (eds), *Is Anyone Here from Education?*, Pluto Press, London.
Geason, G. (1980), 'Girls lose out in co-education', *National Times* 21 September, 49
M[illegible]llan, M. (1981), 'Education of girls: Reflections of a headmistress', *Journal of Christian Education*, Papers 71, July, 34–43.
Sarah, E., Scott, M., & Spender, D. (1980), 'The education of feminists: The case for single sex schools', in D. Spender & E. Sarah (eds), *Learning to Lose*, Women's Press, London.
Shaw, J. (1982), 'Finishing school: Some implications of sex segregated education', in M. Evans (ed.), *The Women Question*, Fontana, UK.
Smith, S. (1980), 'Should they be kept apart?', *Times Educational Supplement*, 18 July.
St John-Brooks, C. (1982), 'Co-education and single sex?' *Education Today* 6, 14–16.

3 Steedman, J. (1983), *Examination Results in Mixed and Single Sex Schools: Findings from The National Child Development Study.*
Bone, A. (1983), *Girls & Girls Only Schools: A Review of the Evidence*, Reports of the Equal Opportunities Commission of UK, vols.1 and 2.

4 Arnot, M. (1983), 'Cloud Over Coed', in S. Walker & L. Barton (eds), *Gender, Class and Education*, Falmer Press, London.
Wilce, H. (1984), 'Still puzzling over the sexual equation', *Times Educational Supplement*, 17 February.
Barboza, E. (1983), *Coed vs Single Sex: Girls' Intention to Elect Mathematics in Secondary School*, 53rd ANZAAS Congress, Perth, May.

5 Willis, S., & Kenway, J. (1985), 'The single sex "solution": Facts, fallacies and fantasies', *Education Links*, Autumn, 18–22.
Willis, S., & Kenway, J. (1986), 'On overcoming sexism in schools: To marginalise or mainstream', *Australian Journal of Education* (forthcoming).
Kenway, J., & Willis, S. (1986), 'Feminist single-sex education strategies: Some theoretical flaws and practical fallacies', *Discourse* (forthcoming).

6 cf. Mahoney, P. (1985), *Schools for the Boys: Co-education Re-assessed*, Hutchinson, London.

7 For more detail, see Cornbleet & Libovitch, *op. cit.*, and Ballenden, C. et al. (1984), *Better Chances for Girls: A Handbook of Equal Opportunity Strategies for Use in Schools*, VIJE, Melbourne.

8 Sarah, E., Scott, M., & Spender, D. (1980), 'The education of feminists: The case for single sex schools', in D. Spender & E. Sarah (eds), *Learning to Lose*, Women's Press, London.
and
Rich, A. (1980), *Lies, Secrets and Silence*, Virago, London.

9 Articles which do acknowledge this problem include:
Anyon, J. (1984), 'Intersections of gender and class: Accommodation and resistance by working class and affluent females to contradictory sex role ideologies', *Journal of Education*. 166(1), 25–48.
and
Davies, L. (1984), 'Gender, resistance and power', in S. Walker & S. Barton (eds), *Gender, Class and Education*, Falmer Press, Sussex, 39–53.

10 Eisenstein, (1984), p.xvi.

11 For example, see:
Henricksen, H. V. (1982), 'Class and gender: Role model considerations and liberations in advanced capitalism', *Interchange*, 12(2–3), 151–63.

12 One useful example of such contradictions is:
Strintzos, M. (1984), 'To be Greek is to be good', *Cultural Politics, Melbourne Working Papers*, Series 5, 1–37.

13 For example, the following articles variously illustrate the intersections between the school, the family, the labour market, the political process and the media and show the implications for girls' education:
Arnot, M. (1984) 'A feminist perspective on the relationship between family life & school life', *Journal of Education*, 166(1), 1–25.
Tyler, D. (1984), 'For the good of all students, the marginalization of gender disadvantage in recent Victorian educational initiatives', *Cultural Politics, Melbourne Working Papers*, Series 5, 171–219.
Wolpe, A. M. (1978), 'Education and the sexual division of labour' in A. Kuhn & A. M. Wolpe (eds), *Feminism and Materialism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 290–328.

ERIC

Taylor, S. (1983), 'Countdown and the classroom: A preliminary exploration of the production of schoolgirl cultures', paper presented to the Sociology Association of Australia & New Zealand Conference, Melbourne.

14 Connell, R. W., & Irving, T. H. (1981), 'A working paper towards a historical theory of class', in P. Hiller (ed.), *Class and Inequality in Australia: Sociological Perspectives and Research*, Harcourt Brace Javanovich Group, Sydney.

15 The work of many feminist semioticians has illustrated the partriarchal ideology embodied in media and consumer forms. One good example is:

Coward, R. (1984), *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today*, Paladin Books, London.

16 For articles on the youth culture of working-class girls in England, see:

McRobbie, A. (1978), 'Working class girls: The culture of feminity', in *Women Take Issue*, Women's Study Group, CCCS, Hutchinson.

McRobbie, A., Gerber, J. (1975), 'Girls and subcultures', in S. Hall & J. Jefferein (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals*, Hutchinson, London.

A rare Australian example is:

Thomas, C. (1980), 'Girls in counter school culture', *Melbourne Working Papers*, University of Melbourne, 125–56.

The youth sub-cultures of private-school girls in Australia are a neglected research area. However, they are referred to in:

Connell, R. W., Ashenden, D. J., Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G. W. (1982), *Making the Difference: Schools, Famil' s and Social Division*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

17 Rich, A. (1980), *Lies, Secrets and Silence*, Virago, London, 130.

18 Shulman, A. K. (1980), 'Sex and power: Sexual bases of radical feminism', *Signs* 5(4), Summer, 594.

19 Cocks, J. (1984), 'Wordless emotions: Some critical reflections on radical feminism', *Politics and Society* 13(1), 1–26.

20 Spender, D. (1982), *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them*, ARR Paperbacks, London.

21 O'Brien, M. (1981), *The Politics of Reproduction*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

22 Whyld, J. (ed.) (1983), *Sexism in the Secondary Curriculum*, Harper & Row Publishers, London.

23 Keller, E. F. (1982), 'Feminism & Science', in N. O. Keohane, M. Z. Rosaldo & B. C. Gelpi (eds), *Femirist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, Harvester Press, UK.

24 Mazza, K. (1983), 'Feminist perspectives and the reconceptualization of the disciplines', paper presented to American Educational Research Association, 16–20 April, Montreal, Canada. Quoted in Lather, P. (1984), 'Critical theory, curricular transformation and feminist mainstreaming', *Journal of Education* 166(1), 49–62.

25 Lather, P. (1984), 'Critical theory, curricular transformation and feminist mainstreaming', *Journal of Education* 166(1), 49–62.

O'Brien, M. (1984), 'The commatization of women: Patriarchal fetishism in the sociology of education', *Interchange*, 15 February, 43–60.

26 MacDonald, M. (1980), 'Socio-cultural reproduction and women's education', in R. Deem (ed.), *Schooling for Women's Work*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

27 Doyle, B. (1982), 'The hidden history of English studies' in P. Widdowson (ed.), *Re-Reading English*, Methuen, London, 17–32.

28 The following are excellent examples of the problems in English teaching:

'Writing and gender', *The English Magazine* (1982), No. 9, Spring. and

'She's good at English—is English good for her?' *Teaching London Kids*, No. 19, 8–11.

29 Rich, A. (1980), *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*, Virago, London, 35.

30 Blackburn, J. (1982), 'Becoming equally human: Girls and the secondary curriculum', *VISE News*, 31, July/August, 16–22.

31 Lather, P (1984), 55, 45.

32 Ferguson, A. (1979), 'Women as a new revolutionary class' in P. Walker (ed.), *Between Labor & Capital*, South End Press, Boston.

Taylor, V. (1983), 'The future of feminism in the 1980's: A social movement analysis', in L. Richardson & V. Taylor (eds), *Feminist Frontiers*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass.

33 Lather, P. (1984), *op. cit.*

34 Eisenstein, H., *op. cit.*

35 Giroux, H. (1981), *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, Falmer Press, Sussex.

Kemmis, S., Cole, P., Suggett, D. (1983), *Orientations to Curriculum & Transition: Towards the Socially-Critical School*, Victorian Institute of Secondary Education.

36 Lather, P. (1984a), 'Research as praxis', paper presented at the Sixth Curriculum Theorizing Conference, Bergamo Center, Daylor, Ohio, November.

37 Grundy, S (1982), 'Three modes of action research', *Curriculum Perspectives* 2(3), 23–35.

38 Freire, P. (1973), *Pedogogy of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, New York.

39 Example: 'Co-ed breeds confidence crises among girls' *Sunday Times Magazine*, September 2 1984, M24.

'Sex-role fears for co-ed schoolgirls', *Daily News*, 14 March, 1981.

40 Kenway, J., High status private schooling and the production of meaning: Class and gender ideology, PhD thesis in preparation, Murdoch University, Western Australia.

41 Connell, R. W., Ashenden, D. J., Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G. W. (1982), *Making the Difference: Schools, Families & Social Division*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Connell [illegible] W. et al. (1981), 'Class and gender dynamics in a ruling class sc[illegible]' [illegible] *[illegible]ange* 12(2–3), 102–17.

Conn[illegible] (1985), *Teachers' Work*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

42 Conne[illegible], [illegible]. et al. (1982) *op. cit.*

43 Kenway, J. (1984), 'The ties that bind: Old girls' and old boys' associations, *Discourse* 5(1), October, 1–18.

44 The following paper highlights the significance of the connections between mothers and schools:

Manicom, A. (1984), 'Feminist frameworks and teacher education', *Journal of Education* 166(1), 77–88.

45 See for examples:

Webley, I. (1982) 'V[illegible]en who want to be women', in M. Sawer (ed.), *Australia and t[illegible] New Right*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 135–51.

David, M. (1984), 'Teaching and preaching sexual morality: The new rights' anti-feminism in Britain and the USA', *Journal of Education* 166(1), 63–75.

46 Stacey, J. (1983) 'The new conservative feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 9(3), 558–83.

47 For example, Sampson, S. (1978), 'Socialization into sex models', in F. Hunt, (ed.), *Socialization in Australia*, Melbourne International Press, Melbourne.

48 O'Brien, M. *op. cit.*

49 Bourdieu P. (1968), 'Outline of a sociological theory of art perception', *International Social Science Journal* 20(4), 589-612.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1979), *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relationship to Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

50 Weber, M. (1968) *Economy and Society*, Bedmister Press, New York.

51 Di Maggio, P., & Useem, M. (1982), 'The arts in class reproduction', in M.W. Apple (ed.), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston.

52 For further examples of this point, see Connell (1985), 55.

53 Philips, S. (1979), *Young Australians: The attitudes of our children*, Harper & Row, Sydney.

54 Kenway, J. *op. cit.*, in preparation.

55 Conway, R. (1975), 'On mutual liberation: The need for a liberated and liberalized male', *Education News*, 15(4 & 5).

Connell, R.W. (1983) 'Men's bodies', *Which way is up? Essays on Class, Sex & Culture*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Carrigan, T., Connell, R.W., & Lee, J., *Hard and Heavy Phenomena: The Sociology of Masculinity 1900-1980*, (forthcoming) Macquarie University.

56 Willis, S., & Kenway. J. *op. cit.*

57 For a recent article on tertiary students' responses to the career/family dilemma see:

Beswick, D., Scholieed, H., & Boreham, J. (1983), 'Participation of women in higher education: Signs of progress and regression', paper presented to the 53rd ANZAAS Congress, Perth.

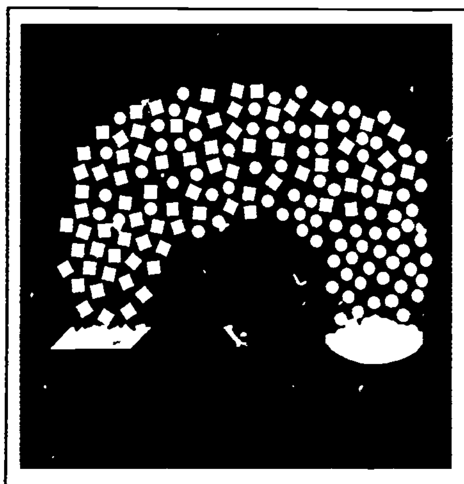
58 Example: Apple, M.W. (ed.) (1982), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education: Essays on Class, Ideology and the State*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

59 Connell *op. cit.*

60 Kessler, S., Ashenden, D.J., Connell, R.W., & Dowsett, G.W. (1985), 'Gender relations in secondary schooling', *Sociology of Education*, 58, Jan., 34-48.

61 Gramsci, A. (1971), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. & G. Smith, Eds. & Trans.), International Publishers, New York.

Annotated bibliography



ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Anyon, J. 'Intersections of gender and class: Accommodation and resistance by working class and affluent females to contradictory sex-role ideologies'. *Journal of Education*, vol. 166, no. 1, 1984, pp. 35–48.
Good article on class and gender.

Arnot, M. 'A feminist perspective on the relationship between family life and school life'. *Journal of Education*, vol. 166, no. 1, 1984, pp. 1–25.
Good article on how gender intersects with family and school.

Barrett, M. *Womens' Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*. Verso, London, 1980.
Classic socialist feminist perspective. Includes exhaustive commentary on other writers.

David, M. E. *The State, the Family and Education*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980.
Traces the historical situation in England.

Delamont, S. *Sex Roles and the School*. Methuen, London, 1980.
Good overall summary of research on sexism in schools.

Eisenstein, H. *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. Unwin Paperbacks, Sydney, 1984.
Good overview of radical feminist theory. ('Radical' differentiated from socialist theory.)

Gilligan, C. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1982.
How men have created our psychological understanding of the world.

Commonwealth Schools Commission Working Party on the Education of Girls. *Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools*, Canberra, 1984.
This report lays out clearly the situation in Australia and Australian research, and makes recommendations on plans of action.

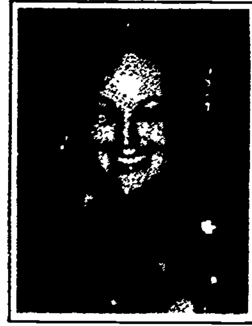
Spender, D. *Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society and Chameleon Editorial Group, London, 1982.
A polemic overview of gender and schooling issues, useful for insights.

Walker, S., & Barton, S. (eds). *Gender, Class and Education*. Falmer Press, Barcombe, Sussex, 1984.
Good collection of articles which are comprehensive and theoretical.

Wolpe, A. M. 'Education and the sexual division of labor'. In A. Kuhn & A. M. Wolpe (eds). *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, pp. 290–328.
Classic account of the social division of labour in the home and workplace, and the role of education in the process.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

About the author



Paige Porter graduated from the University of Missouri in 1966 with a BA degree majoring in history and with a teaching qualification which she subsequently put to use teaching high-school history and social studies in Chicago. Returning to postgraduate study, she completed an MA and PhD at Stanford University in California, focusing on Sociology of Education. In 1972 she came to Australia, where she taught at the University of Western Australia for three years. At present she is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Politics of Education at Murdoch University, where she has been since 1975. In addition to her academic responsibilities, she chaired the W.A. Innovations Committee for the Schools Commission between 1974–1978, and was a member of the National Innovations Committee. She is presently the Chairperson of the Council of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education Her present research is in the area of the relationship between the State, the family and education.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Acknowledgments

I would particularly like to thank my Research Assistant, Linda Barker, for her untiring efforts in all areas on this project. Thanks also to the many colleagues who have commented on various stages of the research, especially Jane Kenway, Jan Currie and Andy Spaull. This paper is part of a large project funded by the Australian Research Grants Committee, and their support is appreciated.

p. 7, quote from Wearing (1984), reprinted by permission of the author.

p. 9, quote from M. Carnoy & H. Levin, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State* (Stanford University Press), reprinted by permission of the publisher.

p. 10, quote. This is an excerpt from "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the 'Women and Power' Conference", originally printed in FEMINIST STUDIES, Volume 5 no. 1 (Spring 1979): 216-227, and reprinted here by permission of the publisher, FEMINIST STUDIES, Inc., c/o Women's Studies Program, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

pp. 18, 20, Tables 1, 2 and 3, Reproduced with permission from STANNAGE, C.T. (Ed.), A NEW HISTORY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (NEDLANDS: UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESS, 1981).

pp. 26-7, quotes reprinted from Education Department, Western Australia, *Report of the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System*, 1938, by courtesy of the Education Department, Western Australia.

pp. 28-9, Table 5, reprinted from Education Department, Western Australia, *A Guide to Occupations for Boys and Girls*, 1936, by courtesy of the Education Department, Western Australia.

p. 31, Table 6, reprinted from Education Department, Western Australia, *Secondary Education in Western Australia* (Dettman Report), 1969, by courtesy of the Education Department, Western Australia.

p. 32, Table 7, reprinted from Education Department, Western Australia, *Education Circular*, 1974, by courtesy of the Education Department, Western Australia.

Reading 1, reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher.

Reading 2, reprinted by permission.

Reading 3, from R. W. Connell, D.J. Ashenden, S. Kessler & G.W. Dowsett, *Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Division*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1982. Reprinted by permission of the authors and the publisher.

Reading 4, Reprinted with permission from "Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools", Commonwealth Schools Commission, May 1984.

Table 1.1, reprinted by permission of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1.2, reprinted by permission of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission.

Reading 5, reprinted by permission of the author.

Reading 6, reprinted by permission of the authors.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC