

# EDUCATION

Widens the gap



between the sexes



# Introduction

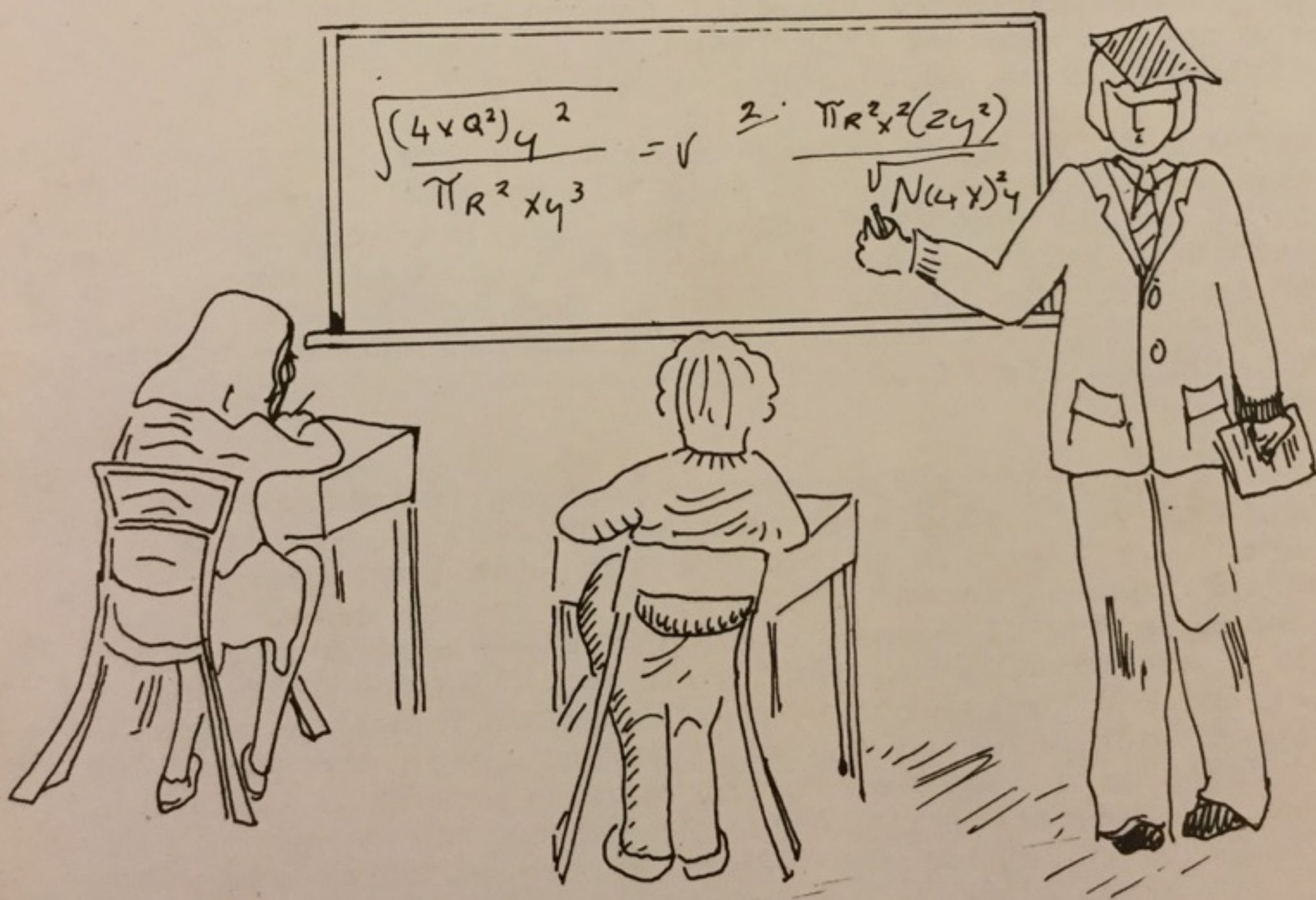
It is an indisputable fact that there exists a gap between the opportunities available to women and men. Generally speaking people do not find this a disturbing fact, but on the contrary, have come to accept it both as a natural and even a desirable one. It is also generally accepted that men are entitled to better privileges in terms of pay, employment prospects, sport/recreational facilities, and educational opportunities. We feel disturbed about all of the inequalities in our society which help to maintain the inferior status of women, but for the purposes of this research are particularly disturbed about educational inequality.

Since most of these inequalities are perpetuated by men and women conditioned into stereotyped sex-roles it is argued that they will only be eliminated by a younger generation unsullied by such conditioning or sex-rolled behaviour patterns. But how is such a generation to arise in homes where parents re-inforce sex appropriate behaviour and display sexual inequality as the norm?

One of the major influences in forming the values and ideas of young people is that of education. In this paper we illustrate that education, far from being an influential factor in helping to create a new consciousness of equal status for women and men or girls and boys, is in fact a major influence in maintaining and re-inforcing existing sexual inequalities. Through our research and discussion, we in the education workshop of Irishwomen United have reached the conclusion that our education system is in no way our agent of change in the roles and opportunities it makes available to girls and boys. We have come to the realisation that education widens the gap between the sexes and discriminates severely against girls both in the actual availability of subjects and courses, and in the oppressive attitudes it portrays concerning women and the role of women and girls in society.



# The facts of sexual inequality



THE GIRLS DON'T HAVE TO LEARN THIS  
ITS ON THE HONOURS COURSE



## THE FACTS OF SEXUAL INEQUALITY

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In the light of the government's treatment of pre-school education as a charitable institution, rather than an important means of child development, it is not surprising that this service is practically non-existent in this country. Thus an early opportunity to allow a child to develop her/his natural potential in an atmosphere which is free from sex-stereotyping, is lost. Also, women who have young children find it difficult to continue working, while women contemplating having a child find that they may have to break their career for a number of years, so, often times, deterring them from the pursuit of a career which requires a long period of training.

At primary school (which is compulsory for children over 6 years of age), the differences in education are to be found more in the emphasis placed on subjects than in the curriculum; girls schools tend to emphasise music and domestic science, while boys do elementary woodwork, sport and/or spend more on academic subjects. By the time they have completed primary school, girls and boys have already been directed towards very different spheres of education.

A survey done for the European Seminar on Vocational Guidance and Training of Women Workers (1974), shows that in the past, 40.7% of girls as opposed to 36.4% of boys left school without any educational cert. In addition to these a further 20.9% of girls and 26% of boys left full-time education with only a Primary Cert. The lower their educational standard, the less chance an early school-leaver has of finding any work other than in the unskilled and manual areas. Work in these areas for women is generally limited to factory, hotel and shops - work which offer few prospects of advancement and have very low rates of pay.

Of those who do continue full-time education after primary school there is a choice of Vocational or Academic training.

Voc. Although the number of boys far outweighs the number of girls in vocational and comprehensive schools even within these institutions, girls take many of the typically female subjects, virtually none of them taking wood or metalwork, but being channelled instead into bookkeeping and domestic science. Because of this, girls are not qualified to enter most apprenticeships after



the Group Cert. and must spend an extra year at school and pass Science A or B in order to qualify. So we find that while 1.7% of girls and 4.8% of boys leave school on obtaining the group, 12.3% of girls and 9.4% of boys terminate their education on passing the Inter. Cert.

The type of opportunities for people leaving school at this stage are mainly in designated apprenticeships, ie. Printer, Carpenter, Plumber, Builder, etc.; Training with C.E.R.T. for the hotel and catering industry, Apprentice/Learnerships, Shorthand and typing courses or unskilled work.

AnCO is the body responsible for the registration and supervision of apprentices in designated trades. AnCO has no women in Higher Admin. positions and has 5 women to 156 men on its industrial training committees (1974).

Of the 2,189 designated apprentices who registered in 1975 only 5 were women indicating that even when women satisfy entry requirements, they still have a number of other barriers to overcome. Until 1974 only boys could enter designated apprenticeships, even yet, girls are not encouraged to enter these male preserves, employers do not want girl apprentices, AnCO try to dissuade women from their courses because of employers attitudes, girls themselves, having had it dictated to them all their lives, often believe that in doing so they would become "unfeminine" and lose chance of happiness in life. On top of all this apprenticeships are structured in a way that further deters women. Preference is given by employers to the younger of those employees who have worked for some years but have no qualifications, ie. usually those in the 17 to 19 age bracket - an age when many women are contemplating marriage and do not want to commit themselves for a 5 year period of training. If remuneration to trainee apprentices was improved, more women might be able to enroll under their own steam, if AnCO put more effort into placing women apprentices in jobs and if the time structure was made more flexible, women might at least have a starting chance.

The Apprenticeship Act gives AnCO permission to insist that a firm which has facilities to train an apprentice must take any person that AnCO judges to be suitably qualified. Why don't they use this power to facilitate the placement of women apprentices.



7% OF CERT HIGHER ADMIN. STAFF ARE WOMEN

CERT supervises the training of employees in the hotel and catering industry. Although about 2/3 of its apprentices are girls it only registers about 500 people at a time.

Both CERT and AnCO maintain and pay apprentices while in training and are themselves maintained out of public funds. Yet it is the non-maintained sector which trains by far the greater percentage of women.

APPRENTICE/LEARNSHIPS

It is estimated that there are about 3,000 Apprentice/Learners in non-designated trades in this country. These are mainly in service and distribution trades ie. hairdressing, butchery, textiles, retailing, etc. They account for about half of apprentice recruitment and the individual trades themselves supervise the training and regulate their own standards. 85% of apprentice/learners are women.

Shorthand and Typing: In 1974 (Feb.), out of a total of 6,363 girls in 2nd level vocational training, other than govt. funded organisations, 5,724 were taking secretarial courses, while a further 168 were studying Domestic Economy. Their male counterparts, 1477 in all, were scattered mainly through the fields of Radio, Nautical, Agriculture, Religion, under the Dept. of Defence or "in other technical training".

In 1975 the following estimations of people in training were made based on Labour Court figures where no other source was available.

	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
No. of Apprentices and Apprentice/learners in training	4,000 approx	2,800 approx
No. aided or sponsored by AnCO, CERT, or the Dept of Agriculture	3,400	250

Because the lot of women apprentices is so bad ie. social and economic punishment, it is not surprising that girls opt for a more academic education. Yet, even here,



girls are offered domestic science, languages and art in preference to maths and the sciences, as is illustrated in the figures of those who sat the leaving cert. in 1974 (5)

Leaving Cert. Honours papers 1974:

	<u>GIRLS</u>	<u>BOYS</u>
PHYSICS	220	1514
CHEMISTRY	770	2057
MATHS	468	2046
FRENCH	4096	2345
ART	1654	795
HOME ECONOMICS	3020	1

Most of those women who leave school after leaving cert. and do not do further professional training enter executive and higher clerical grades in the Civil Service and Semi-state bodies or bank clerkships or else the other routine office work generally done by women ie typing, receptionist and telephonist. In the former areas they compete with boys for entry but find it difficult to get promotion and extra training at the same rate as boys. The latter area ie. routine office work is an almost exclusively female employment which is rarely unionised, generally ill-defined and often very badly paid. (Note that 1/3 of the people who take typing/shorthand courses, do so at their own expense).

Another field into which women are encouraged to move, (in fact, practically the only numerically woman-dominated professional apprenticeship), is nursing. 1500-2000 trainee nurses, mainly women are recruited to Irish hospitals every year. About one to two hundred men are recruited to psychiatric hospitals yearly. It is interesting to note that the general hospital training schools charge a fee while psychiatric hospitals do not.

The state-sponsored body which is responsible for the examination, registration and general supervision of training for nurses, An Bord Altranais has 12 male and 13 female members, which is fairly typical of the general situation in which women do not occupy decision-making positions in proportion to their numbers in particular fields and in society generally.



Despite the fact that only 16.1% of boys as compared to 20.1% of girls pass the leaving cert. and that girls generally obtain the better results, almost twice as many boys than girls enter university and while women dominate in the area of primary teacher-training, they are outnumbered 4:1 in the rest of 3rd level vocational training.

The segregation of subjects at second level cuts women off from careers in engineering, electronics and specialised professions and trades which are outside the traditional female areas of employment. Hence we find that where women are in third level education, they are mainly confined to the fields of Arts and Social Science, the "caring" and notably lower paid professions which offer little opportunity of advancement without further training. Again men are more likely to be the ones who do further degrees. Of the 16.1% of men and 12.1% of women with a B.A. only .5% of women compared with 1.7% of men had an M.A. while .5% of men and only .2% of women had a Ph.D.

In third level vocational training, students are concentrated mainly in teacher training, Regional Technical Colleges, and Technological/Vocational colleges. Men and women were in 1974 represented as follows:

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Teacher training	586	1261
R.T.C.s	1248	352
Tech/Voc	2156	751

#### AnCO retraining courses for adults

	1973/74	1974 (9 months)
Men	2,430	2,756
Women	18	494

Re-training courses are becoming more popular with women but they still tend to opt for the typically female areas of crafts etc. This same trend is also to be found in the adult education courses provided by the V.E.C.s - a trend which is very much influenced by the attitude of the teachers as by the women themselves.



In the light of the discrimination against women and girls in educational opportunity, it is both interesting and ironical to note that Ireland voted with the general assembly of the U.N. on 7th November 1967 to adopt resolution number 2263. This is a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women.

"All appropriate measures should be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular

- a) equal conditions of access to study in institutions educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;
- b) the same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality whether the institutions are co-educational or not;
- c) equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
- d) equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes, and
- e) access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well-being of families."



# Attitudes on the inferiority of women transmitted through education





## ATTITUDES ON THE INFERIORITY OF WOMEN TRANSMITTED THROUGH EDUCATION

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### Sex roles are culturally imposed

How the newborn infant will behave as an adult is greatly influenced by the society into which she or he is born. In our culture we assume that men are naturally different in temperament and ability from women. If men are inherently more aggressive, competitive, dominant and less emotional than women, we should expect to see these traits in every society. There is strong evidence both from psychology and anthropology to prove that these traits are learned and differ from culture to culture. In her book "Sex and Temperament in three Primitive Societies", Margaret Mead illustrates that the roles of men and women in these cultures differ radically from those in our culture. One of the New Guinean Cultures she describes is the Tchambuli tribe. The Tchambuli are lake dwellers and have ample food. The men are sensitive and artistic. Their feelings are easily hurt, they like to gossip and decorate themselves. Food-getting is women's work - the women are tolerant of the gossip and encourage the men's artistic creativity. From Mead's work we can see that all societies do not have identical sex-typed behaviour. In many primitive (e.g. Tchambuli) as well as so-called civilised societies sex is the basis for assigning social roles. Those roles are a deeply rooted part of a culture, so pervasive that we fail to recognise that they are learned rather than inherited. We wrongly assume sex-appropriate roles to be an inescapable part of human nature.

Long before children go to school they have become acutely aware of their sex, and of the behaviour expected in conformity with the role of that sex. Very early children hear such comments as "little girls don't fight" or "little boys don't play with dolls, only girls do that". Once children discover the norms of their sex in sex-roled behaviour in most cases they will strive to meet their norms. Children around the school-starting age have strong needs for security and strive to conform, and satisfy their cultural teachers (parents or school-teachers). The last thing a child wants, is to be odd or different, so even a child entering school with a less stereotyped upbringing in the first four



years at home, will experience and meet with sexism in all its glory in the infant classroom.

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### THE ROLE OF EDUCATION:

"Education" coming from the Latin "educare" means to "lead out" - leading out of the natural abilities and interests of the individual. We have already established that sex-appropriate behaviour is not part of the natural endowment of any individual, and therefore it is not the place of the education system to encourage and expect this type of behaviour. Schools and other educational institutions should provide a framework in which individuals can develop to their full potential in those areas where they show most ability. However, education in our culture has taken a degraded position in its rigid enforcement of sex appropriate behaviour and preferential treatment, both in opportunity and training for boys and men. The Educational System is highly sexist in its institutions and practice, girls and women are given inferior self-expectations and possibilities as a result of having gone through the education system rather than a full development of their natural endowments.

### SEX-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

The first year in school is extremely important since during this time the child builds up her/his concepts of what school and education are all about - e.g. the attitudes and roles of teachers, a positive or negative assessment of self in relation to the school experience, and a feeling of success or failure. Just as social and cultural behaviour is learned at a very early age, and is the foundation upon which later learning is built, so school behaviour is learned early in the school going experience.

The Primary School child is confronted with pressure to behave in a manner considered appropriate to her/his sex. This pressure is exerted through the subject-curriculum and the hidden-curriculum. The subject-curriculum consists of the actual content taught in schools, including books and equipment. The hidden-curriculum consists of attitudes, expectancies, discipline, behaviour norms and other underlying factors existing in the school structure.

In the Primary School Curriculum (Handbook for Teachers) there are numerous suggestions concerning the need for different approaches, books, materials and activities



for girls and boys, e.g. in the section dealing with the teaching of P.E. the following advice is given to teachers, etc. "In classes V-VI separate arrangements may be made for boys and girls. Boys can now acquire a wide variety of skills and techniques, and girls often become more aware of style and grace" (p. 310 part II). This type of sexism denies development of the full potential of either sex for all possible skills and presents a half world for each sex. (10)

The Subject Curriculum oppresses girls:

The subject-curriculum in primary school is centred mainly around reading books, text books, teacher prepared material, films, slides, tapes and records. Reading is the basic skill essential to all further learning in school. It has been realised that "readers" teach more than reading, their content has a psychological effect in that it influences the way children view themselves and the world.

Reading schemes are often a child's first contact with the written word and formal learning. They are important because they appear within the context of the classroom, and hence within the context of authority, and most children are compelled to read them. Children model their own behaviour and goals on that of the models like themselves who they read about in the schemes. Girls will tend to model themselves on the girls in the schemes, and boys on the boys in the schemes. Some researchers<sup>1</sup> in the field of children's literature have found the following trends in the content of six of the most widely used reading schemes (a) there are far more male-centred than female-centred stories, (b) the activities of the two sexes are rigidly differentiated, they all show a world where mum stays at home cooking and washing, daughter plays with dolls and helps mum. Dad goes to work and does handiwork at home, son help dad or plays with mechanical toys, is more adventurous and has more fun than daughter. They show a world much more rigidly patriarchal than the one we have at present - they are in fact vastly out of date and unreal. To-day many women do work out of the home, and boys and girls are in policy supposed to learn the same crafts in school. However, these reading-scheme people are portrayed as "proper girls" and "proper boys". The implication the child readers will draw, is that the sexes are and should be different. Such schemes therefore do not just teach children to read but convey a subtle and pernicious



message that females are inferior and they do untold (11)  
psycho-damage to the self-evaluation of girls  
particularly. There is a new reader called "links"  
which is currently being promoted as "good literature"  
for 4th - 6th classes, by the educational company.  
In Links 2 - used in both girls and boys national  
schools - there is only one extract out of approximately  
thirty five which features girls or women as the  
main characters.

The content of most other primary school books is  
similarly sexist in that the assumption of male  
supremacy is portrayed in all of them. In geography  
books men till the fields and feed the animals. In  
history books men make the tools and fight the battles.  
The importance of the work done by women, or of their  
position in the societies under discussion is totally  
ignored. The craft and individualistic contributions  
of women are not considered worthy of note in historical  
accounts or geographical descriptions.

Thus by the time the child has finished in the primary  
school she/he has had an undiluted diet of the  
patriarchal family stuffed down her/his throat in  
Irish and English readers. She/he has already accepted  
that girls will never have the same opportunities as  
boys or will rarely do anything either as exiting  
or adventurous in life.

The Hidden Curriculum oppresses girls:

The Hidden Curriculum has the effect of enforcing a  
disposition towards certain forms of behaviour and  
puts a premium in certain form of achievement. The  
existence of the hidden curriculum is conveyed by  
an assortment of methods.

One of the messages most clearly received is that  
which tells a child of her/his status within the class  
or school. These messages are often non-verbal and  
confusing but a child quickly comes to discern types  
of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. The attitude  
of the teacher is of prime importance in the type of  
behaviour expected and atmosphere created. Children  
at primary school are extremely impressionable and  
are experiencing their first real brush with society  
outside the family. Girls are already socialised  
into cultural oppression and generally find further  
oppression in the tools and attitudes of the school.  
The control of religious orders and parish priests on  
primary schools (despite Boards of Management) does  
little to provide much hope for future elimination of



sexism let alone present elimination. Catholicism is particularly oppressive in its treatment of girls and women e.g. little girls cannot serve at the altar, its present anti-contraception campaign.

(12)

While attitudes among primary school teachers remain locked by belief in the natural division of the sexes, stereotyped roles for girls and boys, and domination by religious traditions, there is little hope that girls entering second level education will have a high opinion of themselves or members of the oppressed 50% of the population.

#### Teacher Training:

Most teachers are themselves victims of sexist oppression and since more women than men enter the profession it is no surprise that the oppression continues.

Teacher Training Institutions in Ireland for primary or second level education make no attempt to discover methods of eliminating sexism in education. Their training quite often sets up different standards and methods for girls and boys especially at second level. Their non-activity represents a positive acceptance and continuance of the oppression of girl and women pupils.

#### Sex roles in adolescence:

By the time they reach adolescence, individuals tends to move away from home support towards a definite peer-group support. The "gang" and peers generally, exert a strong influence on girls and boys in sex appropriate ways e.g. physical strength and aggression among boys, femininity and passive acceptance among girls.

Many psychologists have neatly classified the sex-typed behaviour of girls and boys into "developmental phases" e.g. the 10-13 year old is going through the "natural antipathy phase" and "the homosexual phase". These phases are seen to fit in with the general principles of maturation. In the so-called homosexual phase girls and boys have strong desires for friends of the same sex - these friends are later dropped to an extent in favour of heterosexual relationships. Psychologists do not consider that much of this behaviour may be influenced not by maturational influences but by social and cultural pressure towards particular norms of behaviour. Many girls in adolescence feel that they are expected to become interested in boys and vice-versa.



Sexism in second level Education:

Our educational system in the second level (especially religious run schools) has typical double-bind effects operating. On one hand it segregates girls and boys giving disapproval of relationships with the opposite sex, while on the other hand it reinforces the cultural bias by laying great stress on the future role of girls as housewives and boys as bread-winners.

Girls and boys rarely meet except in dance-halls or on the street, and have no contact in everyday learning activities. They are aware of each other in relation to the roles they play in the relationship game expected of them. The system of single-sex schools is a large contributing factor to the cultural continuity of male dominance. As we have shown in Part I many girls' schools are afforded little or no access to certain professions and training courses, due to inadequate teaching and subject-choice. The academic expectations of teachers in many female classes are very low in that it is assumed most pupils will need or want to work only for a short period before marriage. However, the setting-up of co-educational schools does not necessarily eliminate sexism. The mixed classroom changes nothing if the attitudes of teachers do not change. In fact co-educational schools can foster more sexist attitudes than single-sex schools, if badly run. For example in many co-educational schools if there are desks to be moved the boys will do it, if there are floors to be swept the girls will do that. In a single sex school the girls or boys would have to do both. Also some girls schools with good academic reputations encourage and sometimes over-stress academic success. If girls and boys are to become equal in their perceptions of each other co-educational schools are essential, but the attitudes transmitted by teachers must change and they must actively fight to eliminate sexist reactions both in themselves and their pupils. Having been conditioned through socialisation and education at primary school into second rate individuals, it would demand extremely strong-minded teachers to provide girls with positive attitudes towards job prospects and further education in any but traditionally female areas.



### Choosing a Career:

Many boys from adolescence have decided what job they would like, others think the world is their oyster - all are convinced of their right and need to work or study. Girls have a much more lazy view of their future ranging from a total blank spot to filling in a few years before marriage. Attitudes create more difficulties than training or training deficiencies among career guidance teachers - the belief that a "woman's place is in the home" influences the school curriculum and the teachers perceptions of their pupils' future.

Career options for girls are generally limited to traditional female strongholds and depending on social class they will be encouraged to work or study in these areas, e.g. clothing factories, catering work, secretarial courses, teaching, nursing or banking. In the choice of career for girls social class is a very important factor in that girls from middle or upper class homes are given career information at home, and are often encouraged to choose medical, academic or legal qualifications. Working class girls are dependent on the career information they receive from teachers or vocational guidance officers, and the tendency among those teachers is to see the future of their pupils in terms of traditional female roles and occupations. There is a vicious circle operating which will continue to push girls out from school into a stopgap job and then into the kitchen, unless some link in the circle is broken, in the education of girls.

In most aptitude batteries there is on the answer sheet a demand for the sex of the testee. In some of the job inventory tests used in schools, the girls receive a pink form and boys a blue one, each with different job preference choices. Such highlighting of biological gender makes schoolgoers see sexual segregation as a natural phenomenon.

### Third Level - the lucky few:

Most girls who make it into third level education are middle or upper class. They have financial and cultural backing from their homes. Girls from the working classes must have a higher attainment level at Leaving Cert to avail of the grants system.



Many parents view a university career as a waste of time for a girl, or perhaps a place for her to prepare for a teaching career. For boys it is seen as an opportunity for the broadening of their minds and a preparation for a good professional career which will pay them well enough to support a family. As in the other levels of education the attitudes, to a large extent have not changed - education seems to be the backbone in reinforcing traditional cultural norms of sex-appropriate behaviour. Despite this girls who get to university or any third level institution are lucky in that many of them come into contact with people and ideas which shake the traditional foundations of their self-concept. In most third level institutions girls are not treated significantly less well in terms of course availability or instruction than boys, but they have been highly conditioned by their education at first and second levels to see themselves as the inferior sex with inferior modes of behaviour. As we will illustrate in Part 3 of this pamphlet third level education is in need of vast changes in terms of course content to balance the male preference inherent in the courses also important at this level is the need for women students to change their attitudes towards themselves and the possibilities open to them.

Education does not encourage the full development of every individual - we believe that if women are ever to free themselves from male-dominance, they must struggle through the auto womens movement, for major changes in attitudes of educationalist and educational institutions.



# The framework of course criticism





## THE FRAMEWORK OF COURSE CRITICISM

Any definition of scientific knowledge must begin by understanding the essence or true nature of the context within which it works and must avoid the pitfalls of apologetics or of taking present limitations as immutable. When we examine the way in which women are depicted (or ignored) in education today, it becomes clear that most of the Western World's leading intellectuals not only accept but indeed reinforce the unequal position of women in society. This intellectual paralysis stems on the one hand from their exclusion of the possibility of the establishment of a society in which women would fulfill their full potential (i.e. for ideological reasons) and on the other hand because of their own sexist life-styles and attitudes (i.e. for subjective reasons). It is particularly important therefore, for those of us who are not happy with women's oppression in society not to react merely by passive alienation, a state which reinforces the status quo, we must develop a critique not only of the authoritarian structures of presentday learning, but we must also recognise the ideas promulgated in education as both causes and effects of our subordination. For the purposes of brevity it is obviously impossible in this short pamphlet to cover all the courses available in Irish third-level education, similarly we would not pretentiously claim to pin-point definitively the extent of sexism in college courses. We shall merely attempt to begin a process whereby no textbook lecturer or teacher need expect to meet with passivity in face of his/her prejudices regarding one half of the human race.

By virtue of the limited educational experience of the present author, the following article will centre on two subjects in the arts/humanities courses of Irish universities (the virtual exclusion of women from most technological and 'higher professional' courses make this choice far from coincidental or irrational). They are politics and english.

### Politics and Apologetics

One of the greatest complaints of women studying politics is the almost total exclusion of women from political texts. Yet when we examine the references to women, particularly in American political science texts, we can only be thankful for having been ignored so much, and for being excluded from the myopic prejudice of these writers.

Take for an initial example Lane who writes, in



"working girls and career women and women who insistently serve the community, and women with extra-curricular interests of an absorbing kind or often borrowing their time and attention and capacity for relaxed play and love from their children to whom it rightfully belongs. As Kardiner points out, the rise in juvenile delinquency (and, he says, homosexuality) is partly to be attributed to the feminist movement and what it did to the American mother" (our emphasis).

As a man's time and attention would be "merely his own were he not working, serving the community becomes a necessity for him. The implications of the above for both sexes is frightening, but the attitude it portrays regarding women is shocking. The political scientist shows his own presumptions and expectations when, for example, Barber (in *Citizen Politics*) states that "women who score high on citizen duty questions may simply mean that their husbands ought to be more active citizens" May they now?! or take the book "Social Trends and Electoral Behaviour" (Abrauis) which reads: "since a claimed interest in politics is largely concentrated among men we have in the rest of this account of the survey restricted ourselves to the replies from the men in the sample". This "large concentration" among the men was 60% interested or very interested in politics, as against 43% of the women! Two leading proponents of "democratic theory", Dahl (Preface to *Democratic Theory*) and Sartori (*Democratic Theory*) find that the exclusion of women from voting would not mean that that state was not democratic.

The emphasis which these 'scientists' put on empirical evidence in all other hypotheses gives way to blatant prejudice. Duverger's claim (in "The Political Role of Women") that "while women have, legally, ceased to be minors, they still have the mentality of minors in many fields and particularly in politics ..." is not substantiated by statistical data (perhaps this is because, in his own words, he "tended to regard (the reports) purpose as a secondary one of no intrinsic importance.") and look at this for an example of making the facts fit the attitude of the writer;



"Fathers however have had much more to do with the partisanship of their children since their own partisanship was so much more likely to have been visible ... when the mother was partisan, and agreed with the father she strongly reinforced his influence on the child ... when she was partisan and disagreed with the father, she was, if anything, a little more likely to carry the child with her".

(Butler & Stokes: Political Change in Britain).

What the facts state is very different from what the author implies. In fact the mother wins the battle of political partisanship in the event of conflict. Where the parents agree it could therefore be stated that the father reinforces the mother's influence, and not vice versa. These same unfounded assumptions are found in Lazarfeld's "The People's Choice" (1968) "The almost perfect agreement between husband and wife comes about as a result of male dominance in political situations" and again, "the dominance of the male in political matters" reproduces itself in "the relationships between father and daughter" and between "brother and sister".

Nordlinger's study of "Working Class Tories" is a series of interviews with men only. He claims it is a balanced sample since "in many instances the women's political attitudes are simply those of their husbands as reflected in a female mirror". Again, often two quite different statements (one prejudiced, one factual) are made on the basis of certain evidence, e.g. "a good deal of solid evidence still suggests that wives follow their husbands lead in politics (sometimes vice versa) or at least that husband and wife tend to support the same parties and candidates" (Political Participation - Milbraith). While the latter statement merely tells a fact the former creates an image of woman as a political invalid - an image which obviously tallies with the author's feelings on the subject.

It is a frequently accepted truism in political science that women are more conservative than men. If this be true (and the evidence is far from unanimous, with more women than men in the U.S. opposed to the Vietnam war, nuclear armament, racial and discrimination and capital punishment and more school girls than boys recognising the influence of 'rich people' on government policies) we should expect a more deep-going analysis of why this is so than Lane's contention in Political life that the answer lies in our "femininity". Being a socialist would denote a "confusion of sex role" and many "women with sexual confusion" to adopt traditionally male roles! (The same process according to Lane allows homosexual men to "slough off the masculine role of an independent and responsible (family) leader"!)



Women are criticised both for changing political party preferences and for remaining "loyal" to a party in face of changed support. While the latter traditionalism in men is seen as a demonstration of "the male bond" (Men in Groups, Tiger) in women it is described as a tendency "to reject innovation deviation and conflict" (Sears "Political Behaviour"), and women's political 'fickleness' is exemplified by Rose's example of an "accidental reason" for voting Conservative - "a woman because a nice young conservative had offered her a ride on the polls"! Even the briefest feminist look at present day "political science" shows it to be not scientific but ideological in its form, content assumptions and conclusions.

Literature - who killed these women:

If we look at a few examples of 19 century literature in the period when adventuristic individualism was very much in vogue for the male, we see a clear unonymity on the fate of the woman who sets out in search of a new life style, education, adventure or whatever. Madame Bovary, written by Flaubert in France, was a woman who was torn apart by her own idealistic dreams and the actuality of her married situation. "Charles" (her husband) conversation was as flat as a street pavement, on which everybody's ideas trudged past in their workaday dress, provoking no emotion, no laughter, no dreams". This chasm between the apparent ease of her life and its emptiness leads Emma Bovary to commit suicide by swallowing rat poison.

Tolstoy's "Anna Karenin" tries to escape her marital situation, and is plagued for this "crime" by an obsessive alienation from other people. She is at Nizhny station and when men whisper about her, she assumes they are saying "something vile" about her. She describes other people she sees variously as "mis-shapen" "hideous", "grotesque" "repellent" "grimy" and "deformed-looking". She declares that "everything is false and evil - all lies and deceit". Undoubtedly, this alienation is a form of self-hate, and punishment for her "crime" of not fitting in with the role society had prescribed for her. While Tolstoy adequately reflects the impossible situation women were in, his conclusion is totally defeatist.

Eustacia Vye, in Hardy's "Return of the Native", is also driven to suicide by the impossibility of living



a fulfilled life despite her many muddled struggles to achieve it. She still maintains her childhood heroes William the Conqueror and Napoleon, and tries to break out of the straitjacketed position imposed upon Victorian women as she drowns herself, her mind turns to her pathetic lover and her weak husband;

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"Can I go, can I go?" she moaned. "He's not great enough for me to give myself to - he does not suffice for my desire! ... If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte - ah! But to break my marriage vow for him - it is too poor a luxury! ... and I have no money to go alone! and if I could, what comfort to me? I must drag on next year as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before. How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman and how destiny has been against me! ... I do not deserve my lot!" she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. "O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill conceived world! I was capable of much; but I been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control."

Eustacia Vye is a very close equivalent of the male hero of the English novel with this important difference, she fails to conquer and is thus conquered. The moral is even more explicit in Henry James' "Daisy Miller". Daisy, on holiday in Rome, visits the Colosseum by moonlight with a young Italian. This is a complete breach of nonconformist doctrine as she is told in the novel by Mr Winterbourne. Within a day or two she catches malaria and dies of it a week later. God obviously stepped in to punish this most dastardly of crimes.

What Ibsen tries to show us in "Hedda Gabsler" is how a stunted and repressed society cannot produce free human beings. Hedda's fear of causing scandal has got to the point of almost total inactivity although we are given glimpses both of the strength of her personality and of her dissatisfaction. Faced with the reality of her enslavement Hedda shoots herself.

This short selection of literature has not been chosen solely for its depressing and defeatist conclusions. Rather, in taking novels from five different countries and cultures its importance lies in giving us a conception of the global totality of woman's enslavement. Secondly, by taking some of the more enlightened and socially aware novelists of the period rather than the gross and pornographic depictions of women in other literature of the period, we show using novels popular on English courses at 2nd and 3rd level the ignorance



of most novelists as to the capacity of women to overcome their problems and oppression. Thirdly, we show the importance of a social movement as the necessary context for the artist (and, indeed, teacher) to work in, in order for him/her to be able to perceive a way forward from misery and alienation. Without such a movement the artist will reflect the real incapability of any oppressed individual to free her/himself in isolation.

Conclusion: The above examples from third level curricula give an indication of how sexism and male chauvinist attitudes pervade the content of these courses. Such a limited study must of necessity be schematic. Our object is merely to awaken interest in the extent to which Irish education has an ideological bias against women. Other subjects in obvious need of femurist criticism are: (1) Law, a study which still treats married women as chattels of their husbands, (criminal conversation, marital coercion etc.)

2) Economics, a subject whose basic premise is that each economic factor receives an income according to its "marginal productivity". In this context women in the home contribute nothing to economic productivity while women who do equal work to men but receive unequal pay are obviously contributing less to production.

3) Medicine, a subject whose bias can be seen in many doctor's attitudes to female illnesses. Ignorance regarding e.g. period pains, the use of the pill, etc. are examples of the low ranking of women's problems in medical courses.

4) Psychiatry, which prescribes those women who do not conform to society's straitjacket as 'ill', whether sexually (i.e. those who diverge from monogamous heterosexuality) socially (i.e. those who are not passive in relation to men) or economically (i.e. those 'unnatural' women who wish to keep on working after marriage rather than have children).

5) Theology, which imposes the Judaeo-Christian ethos of female impurity and inferiority.



While it is important for women involved in education to work together to fight for the establishment of women's studies programs in all courses and faculties and to work out criticisms of their own particular field of study, we in the Education Workshop of Irishwomen United feel that it is also important for such women to involve themselves in the mainstream of the women's movement. Irishwomen United is a national organisation of women united around the charter printed on the back of this pamphlet. Our day to day work and research is carried out by workshops on topics such as contraception, social welfare, employment, etc. Membership of these workshops is open to those agree with our demands pertaining to the workshop in question (e.g. on education). So if you'd like to criticise this pamphlet find out more about us, or help in the continued research we hope to carry out on the position of women in education, why not drop us a line to

The Education Workshop,  
Irishwomen United,  
12 Lower Pembroke St.  
Dublin 2.





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Now the girls must do their knitting, so they can grow up and knit their husbands and their little children, some nice jumpers and socks.....the boys can play with mala, meccano, or play football in the yard.

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**Title:** Education Widens the Gap Between the Sexes

**Organisation:** Irish Women United

**Date:** 1975 c.

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