GENDER RELATIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLING

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PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Sex Inequality and Education

There is abundant evidence that inequality between women and men is a very general feature of Western education systems. Differential treatment and differential outcomes for both staff and students have been extensively documented by research over the past decade.[1] In the same period, considerable energy has been spent trying to change it. A stock of nonsexist curriculum materials and teaching aids have been produced, and centers have been set up to disseminate them. In Australia, as in other advanced capitalist countries, there is a campaign to end gender stereotypes in career counselling and subject choice, to get more girls into mathematics, science, and traditionally masculine trades and professions. Sexual harassment is being made an issue in schools and colleges. There are equal-opportunity policies in force in some states, and antidiscrimination laws apply, if unevenly, to education.

Yet the effect of this activity so far has been slight. The resources devoted to it are, at best, painfully small in comparison to the scale of the problem. In New South Wales, for instance, although the funds for the Non-Sexist Education Unit have been maintained in the last year, only a fraction of one teaching consultant's time per region in the public school system has been allocated for nonsexist curriculum development. Moreover, such slender resources are often under threat, both from ideological attacks by the political Right and from cost-cutting campaigns within the bureaucracy.

Furthermore, this work is not always certain of its directions. There is a continuing dilemma about the value of sex-segregated schools or classes. Almost all the educational debate has been about heterosexuals: there is very little serious work on discrimination against homosexuals in the education system. There are problems concerning the mainstream curriculum that are just beginning to emerge; and there are massive, though so far almost undiscussed, problems about how specialists should work with classroom teachers to change sexism in schools.

At this point there is a need not only to renew the campaign for resources for countersexist educational work but also to rethink basic ideas. This article is intended as a contribution to that task. It reports research on gender relations in Australian secondary schools and proposes a line of theoretical analysis that bears on some of the dilemmas of current practice.

The Problems of Sex-Role Analysis

By and large, the discussion of gender and education has been guided by the concept of sex roles. The idea that boys and girls are socialized into different but complementary roles, which then shape their expectations of life and other people's expectations of them, is an appealing one. It fits much common-sense knowledge of how children are treated and provides a language for describing the pressures exerted by parents, peers, mass media, and schools. Perhaps most important, it provides a strategy for change: One must break down the stereotyped expectations and redefine the accepted boundaries of women's and men's respective roles. This, broadly, is the strategy pursued by liberal feminism. It can also be made to work for men, as shown by men's liberation publicists such as Nichols (1975) and Farrell (1974).

There is no doubt that this line of thought has been useful in opening up educational issues. It has provoked a reexamination of the hidden curriculum and the many ways in which schools and teaching materials have reinforced

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[1] Notable examples are the Australian Schools Commission's 1975 report, *Girls, School and Society*, and the 1979–80 special issues of the *Harvard Educational Review* on "Women and Education."

passivity, dependence, and restricted ambition among girls. Thinking about conventional masculinity and femininity in terms of roles points clearly to the social character of behavior and can suggest useful classroom activities, such as role-playing exercises and discussion of the social expectations felt by the students.

Yet there are problems. The sex-role concept is not as commonsensical as it often seems. It was introduced into mainstream social science in the 1930s and 1940s, and it displaced other concepts of gender relations, which had focused more sharply on questions of power and marginality.[2] Talking about gender relations in terms of roles, internalized expectations, attitudes, and traits directs attention away from larger structures and focuses explanations of inequality on what is going on inside the heads of the subordinated group. It is a classic case of blaming the victim. As Franzway and Lowe (1978) point out in an excellent, brief critique, the idea of sex roles exaggerates the importance of individual attitudes and minimizes the importance of the economic and social forces to which those attitudes are a response. For instance, when a working-class family tries to ensure that the husband rather than the wife stays in full-time work, it is a question of rational judgment in the face of economic necessity rather than a matter of role expectations. Given a highly discriminatory labor market, men can generally get higher-paying jobs. If reformers focus just on attitudes and expectations in such situations, attempts at reform will misfire.

Furthermore, schools, operating in their traditional fashion, do not simply reproduce sex stereotypes or confirm girls in subordinate positions. Certainly they do that much of the time. But they have also long been a vehicle for women who reject conventional expectations and wish to construct their own intellectual lives and careers. There is, therefore, a need for a more sophisticated understanding of gender in its relations with education.

The Theory of Gender Relations

Such an account has begun to appear in recent years from two main directions. First, authors such as Game and Pringle (1983) and O'Donnell (1984) have closely analyzed social relations in the workplace and the segregation of the labor market. It has become clear that the sexual division of labor is not a superficial pattern of discrimination that might be cured by employers' change of heart. It is a fundamental structure that is constitutive of industrial and social authority, intricately interwoven with the design and application of technology, and crucial to profitability. Schooling not only reflects this but also helps constitute it. As O'Donnell argues, the development of the schooling system is part of the process that produces a sex-discriminatory labor market.

The second important development has been the attempt to combine the analysis of gender, as a psychological and interpersonal matter, with an understanding of how a social order as a whole reproduces itself. As Burton (1985) argues, this has been one of the key lines of development of feminist social theory in the last decade. Interesting examples of this work are Chodorow's (1978) psychoanalytic sociology of gender, which discusses how the sexual division of labor gets entrenched in the unconscious, and Willis's (1977) account of masculinity among British working-class youth. Arnot (1981, 1982) develops the line of thought in what is now the most sophisticated theoretical analysis of gender and education available.

This work has been important in bringing structures of power and large-scale social dynamics onto center stage. It is clear that role theory underestimated what it was up against. The schools are an arena in which a complex, often contradictory, emotionally and sometimes physically violent politics of gender is worked out. The strength of the reaction against well-meaning minor reforms is understandable.

Yet there are problems with this theoretical framework too. There is a strong tendency towards functionalism in reproduction theory.[3] It is difficult to incorporate the dynamics of historical change into social-reproduction analyses. There is a tendency to treat "male" and "female" as simple categories and to ignore their complexities and internal structuring. Homosexuality, once again, tends to get written out of the discussion of gender.

We argue, then, that the theoretical framework needs to be shifted further. First, we must find ways of talking about large-scale structures without reifying them and about personal practices without losing their large-scale contexts. To some extent this is a general problem of theoretical social science, which requires the development of an adequate theory of practice (cf. Giddens, 1979; Sartre, 1976; Connell, 1983). Second, we must find the right research techniques so that the issue can be worked out in relation to a particular problem. The research reported in this article uses tech-

[2] The history of sex-role theory is reviewed in Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1983), where these other perspectives are described.

[3] This is documented, for the reproduction theory in Althusser, Bourdieu, and Lefebvre, in Connell (1983:Ch. 8).

niques that we hope will allow these connections to be made. We shall return to the theory of gender after considering some of the empirical evidence.

Method

The project reported here was conducted in 1977–78 in twelve Australian secondary schools; the examples to be discussed in this article are drawn from four of them. A sample of one hundred 14- and 15-year-old students was drawn from two contrasting social-class milieux. Fifty came from working-class families, whose children were enrolled in large suburban coeducational comprehensive schools, which in the Australian education systems are provided by the state governments. Fifty came from ruling-class families, who sent their children to high-fee private colleges, mostly single-sex institutions loosely connected with the major churches. Half came from the city of Adelaide, half from Sydney; regional differences turned out to be negligible. Half were girls and half were boys; sex differences were not negligible.

Each student became the starting point for a cluster of interviews. We conducted relatively long, tape-recorded, focused interviews separately with the student, both parents, as many of the student's classroom teachers as possible, and the school principal. All interviews were done by one or other of the four authors. The main topics covered were pupils' current school performance and relationships with teachers; pupils' school history; pupils' occupational plans and ideas about school leaving; pupils' family and peer relationships and influences on the above; parents' working lives and the social relations of work; the families' educational and economic histories; teachers' views and expectations of the pupils; teachers' relations with the families; teachers' practices and views of teaching; teachers' personal and professional backgrounds and views of the schools they had worked in, including the current one; and relations among teachers in the school.

A cluster of interviews then became the basis for a detailed case study of a particular pupil, in which the authors made a collective attempt to understand the person in terms of the whole network of social relations and socioeconomic circumstances in which the relevant family and school found themselves. This is a very time-consuming and labor-intensive process; but we argue that some such step is necessary if researchers are to understand the relation between individual practice and social structure in more than summary or schematic ways. As the file of completed case studies built up (two years of work produced 43 case studies, at which point funds and time were exhausted), analyses of issues and themes across cases became possible. It also became possible to analyze particular schools as institutions and, finally, to analyze the dynamics of class and sex groupings on the larger scale. In a second round of analysis, the procedure was repeated with case studies of teachers (a total of 37 were produced in three years). Material from the other interviews has also been used but in a less intensive way.

We stress that the case-study method was used here to analyze social relations rather than individual psychology, though questions of personal style, emotion, and motivation certainly do come through. Similarly, the sampling was designed to approach certain kinds of relationships, not to define *a priori* categories. Both class and gender are systems of social relations, not systems of categories. These relations have histories on both the large and the small scale; they interweave to form characteristic situations. When we refer to ruling-class families or to working-class schools, we are referring to a particular kind of situation, in which people develop the practices that are the focus of the following discussion.

It is extremely difficult to make a summary report of evidence that has been analyzed in case-study form. Even Freud complained of the problem. We are conscious that the following accounts of teachers, pupils, and families are drastically simplified. There is no way around this in the context of a journal article. All we can do is ask readers to bear in mind that the details given are not isolated anecdotes but extracts from a very much larger body of evidence and analysis. Those interested will find further details of method, field findings, and analysis of results in *Making the Difference* (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, and Dowsett, 1982) and in *Teachers' Work* (Connell, 1985). The theoretical argument on gender relations is developed in the context of social theory and class analysis in Connell (1983); in relation to masculinity and sex-role theory in Carrigan et al. (1983); and in relation to psychoanalysis in Carrigan and Connell (1984).

EXTRACTS FROM FIELDWORK

The material available is very extensive. For this article we thought it more important to illustrate major dynamics than to present either representative cases or especially striking individuals. The first section illustrates an important pattern of interaction between activist teachers and nonacademic kids in a working-class school. Next, we describe gender

dynamics operating at the school level in the contrasting examples of two ruling-class schools. We then look at gender dynamics in families—first those in which the authority of men has been contested or eroded and then those in which it has been successfully asserted. Finally, we return to the schools and discuss the ideas and practices of two teachers who are grappling with the problems created by these dynamics in another working-class school.

Interactions in a Working-Class School: Resistance and Promotion

Arlette Anderson is a young teacher at Rockwell High School, a state comprehensive school in a relatively new, working-class suburb. It was her first appointment after she finished teacher training. When she arrived, she was shocked by the hostility of her pupils. Within a day or two, one of the boys offered her a direct sexual insult: "Why haven't you got a boyfriend? Is there something wrong with you?" This was but one instance of massive resistance by the kids; and in response, she formed an unflattering picture of them. She described the boys as "ocker deluxes"[4] and the girls as "loud-mouthed disco-maniacs."

Arlette is nobody's doormat, and she bounced back, confronting the kids with their sexism. She tells them what she thinks the boys will be like in ten years: beer-bellied, boozing at the RSL club, totally lacking respect for women. They laugh. In a Year 8 class she organized a debate about the role of women; universal opinion among the boys was that women should stay home and have babies. The boys shy away from classes like Domestic Science: "I'm not doing that; my Dad says sewing's sissy." The girls, meanwhile, learn by the end of their first year in high school that having a boyfriend is a matter of status, and they jeer at those who have missed out. "They don't seem to have any idea of sisterhood at all," Arlette concludes, depressed. The girls agree with the boys that the proper business of a woman is to be a mother. Arlette has pleaded with them. Aren't they interested in even a small career? "Oh no, I want to be a mother."

Bill Poulos, at first sight, might be thought of as a classic example of the "ocker deluxes." He has a contemptuous attitude towards women. He has begun to establish sexual relations with girls in the neighborhood and treats his girlfriend in a decidedly exploitative way. He is in with the "smoking crowd," as a teacher notes, and turned up drunk at a school dance. He is a tough proposition for his teachers—hard to control and very difficult to teach.

Bill is not just bored with school; he is actively angry with it. He feels that he was unjustly put in a bottom class when he came up to the high school, that he has been stigmatized as a result, and that most of the teachers do not give him credit when he does try with his work. However, he has a good relationship with one teacher, who gives him extra attention. He is resentful of the arbitrary authority and petty injustices of school life and has a rich fund of examples: a teacher who screamed at him—he walked out of the class and did not come back; inexplicable decisions by the school authorities, such as stopping competitive football; undeserved canings and detentions; and so forth. He wants to leave school and start an apprenticeship, against his father's advice.

There are some painful experiences, strong emotions, and more than a touch of self-doubt behind Bill's stroppiness towards his teachers. Yet there is also a logic to the combination of aggressive masculinity and resistance to school. Bill's claim to masculinity is reinforced by a tough, don't-push-me-around stance toward school authorities and by petty delinquencies like smoking and drinking. Conversely, his resistance to the school is stiffened by a need to protect a bruised sense of self and to assert his masculine claims to authority and personal space.

The situation is different for girls. Heather Arlott seems to be one of the "disco-maniacs." Though from a different ethnic group, she comes from an economic background similar to Bill Poulos's: Her father is a contract laborer and her mother is a packer in a factory. Most of the time her teachers find her as difficult as Bill; maybe more difficult. When a teacher yelled at Bill, he walked out; when teachers yell at Heather, she yells right back. She will not do what she is told unless she wants to. She laughs out loud, stirs the class and, like Bill, has a fund of stories about teachers' injustices. "Hell to teach" is the staffroom consensus about her. The exception is on the sports field. Heather is an excellent athlete and appreciates the coaching she gets from her teachers.

Heather's resistance to school is quite like the boys', but the situation in which she does it, and therefore its effect, is very different. While resistance among boys confirms and even exaggerates their masculinity, the same behavior among girls violates conventional femininity. The convention is that proper girls

[4] *Ocker* is an untranslatable term with overtones of macho masculinity, working-class slovenliness, aggressive Australian nationalism, and expertise in the national sport—beer drinking. The RSL (veterans' club), mentioned in the next paragraph, is by general repute the epitomy of ockerdom.

should be controlled, polite, and biddable; swearing, smoking, yelling at teachers, and truanting are more like protests against femininity than confirmations of it. Heather is a strong person, not just in the physical sense. She is not going to be put down by the Arlette Andersons of this world, nor by the Bill Pouloses. The school resistance of young women like this is a genuine challenge to their subordination as women.

Yet Heather is by no means masculine in style or outlook. She is a keen dancer and often goes with her friends to the local disco. Though she has not thought much about getting married, she has no particular objection to the idea. Indeed it is very likely that she will have to. Working-class girls leaving school early because of conflict with the school are thrown into the least secure part of the labor market. Youth unemployment currently runs up to 35 percent in areas like Rockwell. Within a few years, Heather's best chance of economic security will probably be to attach herself to a husband. Even then, given the decline in real wages, she will have to hold a job to keep a family much above the poverty line.

Much of this is not known very clearly in the Rockwell High staffrooms. The conditions of teachers' work make it difficult for most of them to learn much about their pupils' personal backgrounds; and Heather's own responses inevitably antagonize the teachers, because she makes their work more difficult. Though Heather really needs help from teachers like Arlette Anderson in understanding this difficult and contradictory aspect of her life, and though Arlette really has something to give students like Heather by way of a new understanding, in practice they stand off from each other across a barrier of mistrust and incomprehension.

The girls who are different, in Arlette's eyes, are the "bright" ones in the upper streams, those selected for academic success and headed—some of them at least—for matriculation. It is these girls who are finding something useful in Arlette's feminist ideas. We interviewed a number of girls in the "A stream" at Rockwell High. While they express a good deal of tension and uncertainty about their futures, it is clear that they are contemplating patterns of work and marriage that are very different from those open to girls like Heather Arlott. For many of them, the sympathetic support of teachers like Arlette Anderson is the key to their project of constructing a career.

In Two Ruling-Class Schools: Change and Reaction

What is an uncertain prospect to the A stream at Rockwell High is a vivid reality to their counterparts at Auburn College, a prestigious and expensive private school for young ladies. While less than 30 percent of Rockwell High's pupils go through to the Year 12 Matriculation exams, about 90 percent of Auburn College's pupils do; and they do to some purpose. Auburn's pupils are consistently carrying off high honors in the hard sciences (math, physics, and chemistry) and winning entry to the professional faculties at universities.

This school has, in fact, recently undergone a renovation of staff and curriculum, caused partly by changed ideas about careers for women among its clientele, augmented by feminist ideas among its staff.[5] Formerly, the school's main concern was to produce young women properly fitted out for marriage, motherhood, and ruling-class social networks. Its main concern now is to equip the girls for academic competition and entry into the professions. The social set among the girls has lost its place in the sun to the academic high-flyers; and the consequences for relationships with the men of their class are already being registered, a little apprehensively, by their parents. Fathers contemplate their daughters' possible impact on the business world; mothers wonder if they will reject the traditional model of femininity-in-marriage.

We see here a shift towards a model of femininity in which marriage is expected to be integrated with professional careers, and the simple subordination of women's work to husbands' careers is challenged. No corresponding change has occurred in the ruling-class boys' schools.

Nevertheless, in boys' schools too, the school is an active maker of gender, in this case masculinity. A major focus is sport and the emotions surrounding it. This is very clear at Milton College, a boys' private school whose clientele is similar to Auburn's—i.e., mainly business and professional families. Every Saturday in the season, the boys play football against age-grade teams from similar schools under the eyes of their teachers (the coaches) and their parents, who come to shout encouragement, praise, and criticism. Winning the match matters to all three groups. Demotion to a lesser team can be deeply distressing to the boys. One boy we interviewed, small for his age, actually suffered concussion more than once before a teacher could persuade him and his father that he should play in a lighter grade.

Is this a cult of healthy bodies and school spirit slightly overdone? No, there is something much more systematic here. Football at

[5] We have discussed the transformation of this school in detail in another article (Connell et al., 1981).

Milton College is, above all, a medium for the construction of a particular kind of masculinity. It celebrates toughness and endurance, relentlessly promotes competitiveness and fear of losing, and connects a sense of maleness with a taste for violence and confrontation. Moreover, because the game has an honored place in this school, the kind of masculinity it promotes, the tough and macho kind, subordinates other kinds of masculinity. The boys who for reasons of physique, capacity, or preference have been relegated to study, nonviolent games, debating, and the like are condemned by the football heroes to be known as "the Cyrils," a term indicating effeminacy.

Three Families: Patriarchy Eroded

At the top end of the labor market, formal education has plainly been important as a route leading women into the professions. But this has not always worked smoothly, as is shown in the life of Dr. Somerset, the mother of one of the girls at Auburn College. Sally Somerset, who is working very hard at school and doing well, is headed for the university and one of the professions; she is still undecided which. Dr. Somerset went to a private girls' school herself and was its first graduate to become a doctor. But her promising career was cut short when its demands conflicted with her husband's. She was forced to give up the job and has not practiced for nearly twenty years. That was a bitter experience, and it shaped her view of women's place in the world in ways that have influenced her daughter's schooling. It is one important pressure behind Sally's trajectory towards the professions and a new model of marriage.

Of course theirs is a very privileged situation. But there is pressure for change in working-class families too; married women in these families have taken jobs as office cleaners, chicken packers, checkout operators, sandwich makers, label stickers, and so on. It was clear in many of our interviews with parents that wives who earned a wage did have an important resource in the internal politics of the marriage. Heather Arlott's mother, for example, works in a boring and low-paying job, but she is an equal partner in the family and vigorously resists any attempt to impose authority on her from any quarter, including the school.

In some cases the independence goes further. Mrs. McArthur, who works as a clerk in a small firm, has no particular belief in solidarity among women. In fact she finds most women at her office small-minded and irritating and prefers dealing with men. Yet men's pretensions infuriate her. She is sharply conscious of managers' prejudice against women and of the limits therefore set to her own prospects; she is one of those women who run a business from behind the scenes while the men take most of the profits and all the prestige. She walked out of a first marriage, which she found unsatisfying. She is now without question the dominant partner in her second marriage, and the authority figure in her family as well as its main earner.

In situations like this, there is a real and conscious shift from earlier models of womanhood. This is often conveyed to daughters, just as Dr. Somerset's views on independent womanhood have been. In Sally Somerset's case this led to an embrace of the academic curriculum, an enthusiastic endorsement of the educational goals of her school; but in working-class life it is very likely to lead to conflict with the school. That is true, for instance, of Mrs. McArthur's daughter Kate. We have mentioned the state of war between Heather Arlott and Rockwell High. With Kate McArthur it is, if anything, worse. She is stubborn, opinionated, and regarded as a troublemaker. Like Bill Poulos, she is angry at the school for having shoved her into a low stream. She is fighting every authority in sight, her mother and the teachers equally. The teachers' picture of Kate is almost wholly negative. She is demanding to leave school so she can go on the dole—an ambition her mother is scathing about.

It is easy to see here that a strong and unconventional mother has conveyed some of those qualities to her eldest daughter. It is also understandable that the teachers, confronted with angry resistance, fail to see Kate's vulnerability and need. The education that working-class mothers got in their own childhood gave them no resources for understanding and working through the complex changes that are occurring in gender relations. It seems that the schools are proving no more useful to many of their daughters.

Yet conflict with the school is not the inevitable outcome of these changes. Elaine Markham is a member of the A stream at Rockwell High, in fact one of the school's academic stars. Her mother is a person quite like Mrs. McArthur—equally the source of strength in the family and conscious of prejudice against women. Mrs. Markham had wanted to become a journalist but was bitterly disappointed when forced to leave school early because *her* mother could see no point in education for women. Having fought free of a dominating mother, she is determined that her girls will not repeat her frustration and has pushed them hard at school. Elaine has taken over this project, internalized it, and become competitive at school. Like her mother, she is contemptuous

of "the little housewife" and of her schoolmates who are growing up in that image. Though she will not go as far as "Women's Libbists," burning bras and demonstrating in the street, she firmly supports the overall idea of women being equal. But all this has not come easily. She sometimes comes home from school in tears, caused by tension and frustration. She talks of the school as a "dead" place. She is thinking about leaving early despite her academic success.

The corollary of Mrs. Markham's strength is Mr. Markham's marginality. Elaine's father is a storeman and earns below average wages, which is why his wife had to take a job. He came from a very poor family, left school at age 15, and has held a range of jobs. He gets pushed around a good deal at work, and while he is antagonistic toward unions, he is angry at his bosses for not giving him recognition and a better wage. He finds that their pressure for profit erodes the service his unit can give and offends his pride in workmanship. The work situation, in short, constantly erodes his self-esteem. He tried to assert patriarchal rights in the family; for example, he refused to take on a share of the housework when his wife took a job. But the main consequence has been that he has become increasingly marginal in the household. The women have concluded that he has failed as a husband and father; and he too, rather wistfully, now accepts that opinion of himself.

Two Families: Patriarchy Affirmed

Such situations of contested or eroded patriarchy are not found in the majority of families. The pressures experienced by Mr. Markham are common, but the outcome is often different.

For example, Mr. Poulos, Bill's father, has faced pressures at work possibly more severe than Mr. Markham's, including a serious industrial accident, loss of his job, and a permanent loss of earning power. But he has successfully asserted patriarchal authority at home; his wife has accepted a subordinate place. Mr. Poulos's male-supremacist attitudes—"Thank heaven I haven't got a daughter," "I'm boss here"—go unchallenged. Bill's masculinity has been formed against this background, and it is plain that he has absorbed much of his father's outlook. Some hypermasculine interests, notably boxing, have been passed on. More importantly, Bill is beginning to reproduce the same pattern of relationships with women, treating his girlfriends the way he has seen his father treat his mother.

Because it is frequently assumed that the successful reproduction of such patterns in the younger generation is a smooth and easy process, it is worth dwelling for a moment on the difficulty and pain that is really involved. The economic and personal stresses on Mr. Poulos have been severe. His masculinity, especially the way his sense of self is bound up with being a head of family and a good provider, has been sustained only at the cost of harsh struggle, which has left its mark in his attitudes toward women. Bill's relationship with his father is tense. He was severely beaten in childhood; after all, being beaten "made a man of me," says Mr. Poulos. Bill is resentful of his father now, especially over the issue of school leaving.

Bill's self-esteem is also under attack, not only from most of the teachers, who would be glad to see the back of him, but also from many of the other kids, who insult him because he is Greek. His family derides his enthusiasm for surfing. Another enthusiasm, music-making, is pursued entirely outside the school, since the music curriculum there is exotic and academic by turns. Bill is frustrated at the point where he really does want to make contact with the school. It is clear that his masculinity is being constructed in the context of a great deal of conflict, anxiety, and frustration. That he is in no sense an isolate—he has plenty of friends of both sexes and gets on well with his mother—perhaps makes this point even more significant.

The amount of effort that goes into apparently straightforward role modelling or social reproduction can also be seen in the Prince family. Here, things are a good deal more comfortable. The family revolves around the work and leisure of Mr. Prince, who holds a steady job as a maintenance worker for a public authority and is a leading figure in the local junior football league. Mrs. Prince is a nearly full-time secretary and a full-time mother. They have a comfortable and well-equipped home, which they built themselves in one of the older and more secluded streets of Rockwell.

Delia, their 15-year-old, is everyone's picture of a nice girl. She is quiet and pleasant, a shade diffident, and cooperative with her teachers. She would like to be a veterinarian, but if she does not get the necessary grades, she will take a clerical job, as her mother and older sister have. She then expects to marry at age 20 and have her children.

It all looks effortless. Not so. The central place that Mr. Prince's work and interests hold in the family was achieved at the cost of Mrs. Prince's ambition to become a nurse. He did not like the hours, so she gave it up. She got a job in a bank but, in accordance with its policy, was sacked when she married.

Mrs. Prince did not stay at home when the kids were little, because she was working to pay off the block of land they built their house on. She now feels guilty about having neglected them and is running herself into the ground trying to be the perfect mother as well as a wage earner. Delia's peer relations are very carefully supervised; her parents even introduced her boyfriend to her! Her mother made her abandon a peer group who smoked and got drunk on weekends. In short, the production of Delia's conventional femininity has involved a lot of work and anxiety on all sides.

Two Teachers: Working on Gender

In gender relations in the school, as in so much else, teachers are central. The teachers do the main work of maintaining the conservative gender regimes of ruling-class schools like Milton College; and teachers were central to the remaking of the gender regime at Auburn College.

The teachers in state schools with working-class clientele face more complicated gender issues, and their responses are varied. In the course of our interviews we met a wide spectrum of attitudes. Some are antifeminist. Some are complacent. Some are grappling with the issues but more or less in the dark; for example, some are struggling with working-class kids' resistance to school without seeing the gender dynamics involved, usually because of lack of knowledge of the families. Others like Arlette Anderson are consciously addressing issues of sexism.

What this last group are doing is itself very diverse. We have described Arlette's attempt to attach at least some of her charges to a project of academic advancement. Let us briefly introduce two other teachers, who are working in another school with a similar catchment, which we call Greenway High.

Margaret Atwill, in her fifties when we interviewed her, is one of the few women in her generation who approached teaching as a full-scale career from the start. She has risen through the ranks, has done her country service,[6] has been a department head and a subject consultant, and is currently deputy principal in a large working-class school. Women of her generation characteristically faced a conflict between conventional femininity and a career. Margaret has not married; but she has not abandoned what she values in femininity. Kindness, gentleness, and nurturance have remained leading features of her personal style and have specially flavored her relations with girls.

Yet she is not a home science teacher or even a humanities teacher. On the contrary; she is a science teacher and has made a career as a specialist and curriculum consultant in what is regarded as an exceptionally hard-edged and rigorous subject. It is possible that this made the career/femininity issue even harder for her. At all events, she is determined not to become a bluestocking, not to become tough, and she does not regard herself as a feminist.

Nevertheless, what she is doing has a great deal to do with the problems created by sexism. She is the only woman among the senior staff of her school. Consequently, she has been made the school's de facto expert in "problems that involve girls": truancies, family traumas, emotional crises, pregnancies, conflicts with male staff, and so on. Her position is somewhere between the old post "Mistress in Charge of Girls" and an informal troubleshooter for the rest of the administration—the men hand over these problems to her with an almost audible sigh of relief. Because her position is informally defined, her responsibilities are open-ended and endless. Lately, for instance, there has been increasing harassment of the girls at bus stops after school. Margaret has instituted a patrol to try and stop it, and she has had to do it herself.

By contrast, Mary Coleman's classroom career has just begun. She is a humanities teacher and is now in her second school, just a few years out from an honors Arts degree and a very frustrating teacher-training course. Unlike Arlette Anderson, she is teaching in a mainstream academic area. She labors to convince her somewhat skeptical students of the importance of general ideas.

Like Margaret Atwill, she does not see herself as a feminist. But she is very much aware of sexism in the school. She notes that the principal, a man, does not like women and has "as little to do with them as he possibly can." She notes the underrepresentation of women in the upper levels of the school and the extra burden of work that falls on those who are there, notably Margaret.

Like Arlette Anderson, she is conscious of sexism among the boys. Of a particular ethnic group she remarks, "They're treated like little gods; they're brought up to think they're definitely superior to women," and notes how that carries over into their relationships with women teachers. But she attributes the origin of this to the family, not to the school.

She is content if the school treats boys and

[6] Teachers in the Australian state systems, especially those seeking promotion, are normally required to spend some time teaching in small rural schools. This is a key means by which women have been disadvantaged in the promotion structure.

girls with formal equality; and she cannot see any overt discrimination in what her school is currently doing: "I haven't seen in this school any evidence that girls are treated worse than boys or that girls are told they're girls and therefore they're going to be bad at maths and science or whatever." The boys can do home economics, the girls can do metalwork; but it does not bother Mary that very few do. Her critique of sexism is directed to staff meetings, not to the classroom.

INTERPRETATION

Rethinking Gender and Schooling

Most discussions of sexism in education have assumed that the school produces sex-role conformity in one way or another. Thus, the important 1975 Australian Schools Commission report summarized its argument by saying that "throughout its curriculum and organisation the school differentiates between male and female students in ways which reinforce sex-stereotyped expectations" (Australian Schools Commission, 1975:78).

It is true that there are many ways in which schools mark out conventional gender differences. Girls' uniforms are skirts and dresses, boys' are slacks and suits. On sports days, girls are put in netball teams, boys in football. Timetables force choices between metalwork and cookery; because it is assumed that girls will become secretaries and boys draughtsmen, it is difficult for either to be the reverse.

The argument about stereotyped expectations is correct up to a point but does not catch the full force of this. The school is actively engaged in constructing gender. In this light we can see the cult of football at Milton College as a powerful masculinizing practice, quite consciously designed to that end. At Auburn College, the school is actively engaged in *re*constructing gender. Rockwell High, whose progressive headmaster has just abolished competitive sport, is trying, in a less systematic way, to do the same.

The stereotype argument is more seriously wrong in assuming that the school tends to impose just one sex-role pattern on its boys and one pattern on its girls. This is plainly not the case in either ruling-class or working-class schools. Even Milton College produces both the football heroes *and* "the Cyrils." Rockwell High produces Bill Poulos *and* the A-stream boys. Auburn College produces both the new professionals *and* the socialites, who have lost their preeminent position.

What the school is mainly doing here is arbitrating among different kinds of masculinity and femininity. Perhaps we should say that since much of this occurs outside the scope of any conscious policy, the school provides a setting in which one kind or another becomes hegemonic. The cult of football, for instance, does not and cannot obliterate all other kinds of masculinity. Indeed, Milton College needs boys whose character allows them to focus on academic work, because their high results in public examinations sustain the school's leading position in the marketplace. Therefore, it produces other masculinities but marginalizes them, while giving most honor and admiration to a tough and dominant virility.

We may summarize these observations by saying that the school as an institution is characterized at any given time by a particular *gender regime*. This may be defined as the pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labor within the institution. The gender regime is a state of play rather than a permanent condition. It can be changed, deliberately or otherwise, but it is no less powerful in its effects on the pupils for that. It confronts them as a social fact, which they have to come to terms with somehow.

A great deal of what happens in schools is outside the immediate view of the school authorities. There is an unofficial school, constructed by the kids themselves, that exists in the gaps and crannies of the official institution. It is in this informal peer-group life that much of the politics of gender is worked out. It is here, for instance, that pressure to compete in sexual attractiveness to boys becomes a reality for the girls, a major source of the divisiveness that Arlette Anderson observed. The gender regime of the school includes the relationship between these processes and the policies of the authorities. Some teachers deliberately try to intervene in the kids' peer relationships. Arlette is one; Margaret Atwill is another. Other teachers do not intervene; and the contradictions between different teachers' strategies are fruitful sources of difficulty for the school.

A major reason the gender regimes of schools have proved difficult to analyze is that some of the most important effects are indirect, involving mechanisms that do not at first glance appear to be related to sex and gender. One such mechanism is the process of academic selection. In working-class high schools, selection in the form of "streaming" or "setting" and differential drop-out after the legal leaving age split off a relatively small group of boys and girls and define them as winners: the A stream at Rockwell High, for example. The process encourages in this group a kind of masculinity oriented to competitive achieve-

ment and a kind of femininity directed towards careers. The difficulties encountered have already been discussed in the case of Elaine Markham. More efficiently, the system of academic competition constructs a group of losers, such as Bill Poulos and Kate McArthur, and shapes sexual identities for them, as these cases suggest and as the research by Samuel (1983) and others on school resisters confirms.

At a deeper level, the academic curriculum itself, the core of the knowledge that the secondary school offers, is connected to the power relations of gender in the larger society. This issue is as yet poorly understood, but we can glimpse some of its main dimensions. First, the academic curriculum is constructed on a principle of authority: What is taught in schools is guaranteed by the authority of university disciplines. This authority is overwhelmingly in the hands of men, notably senior academics. Thus, the academic curriculum is based on knowledge that reflects practices and institutions controlled by men.

Second, the academic curriculum depends on clear-cut distinctions between right and wrong and between relevant and irrelevant. It has little room for ambiguity, for multiple layerings of truth and meaning, or for open-ended explorations. Some recent feminist research suggests that such a perspective on knowledge and such forms of expression are characteristic of masculine thinking. We qualify this and suggest that it is associated with a particular kind of masculinity that is currently hegemonic. Subordinated groups have a more decentered ego and a less single perspective on the world. Thus, the academic curriculum expresses the perspective of the dominant group in the dominant sex.

Third, the curriculum is divided into compartments, or subjects, that reflect the priorities of the dominant group. This organization of knowledge does not correspond to the needs of subordinate groups. For example, unemployed inner-city youth need survival science, not geography and chemistry. There have been some attempts to respond to these needs—for example, in "transition education" programs for working-class youth in Australia, and in women's self-education resources, such as *Our Bodies, Our Selves* (Boston Women's Health Collective, 1975). But such efforts remain marginalized in the schools.

Finally, the singleness of knowledge in each subject area finds expression in a technical language. "Learning the subject" means mastering its technical terms and adopting its special style. A good deal of feminist research suggests that femininity does not find expression this way (Eisenstein and Jardine, 1980; Marks and de Courtivron, 1981). Rather, its expression is likely to be oblique and discontinuous—such as the kind of expression stigmatized by men as "women's gossip"—and may even occur in the silences, rather than in what is explicitly said. Gay consciousness, too, has often found oblique and muted expression. The academic curriculum expresses a relation between knowledge and language that arises mainly from hegemonic masculinity.

The character of the curriculum in turn raises questions about the people who teach it. It is curious that much progressive writing on education has ignored teachers—their aspirations and ideas about what they are doing, their personal histories and emotional make-up, their work histories, industrial situations, and unions. The same is true of discussions of sexism in education, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Sexton, 1969). It is important to note that sexism in schools affects teachers as well as pupils. This is not just a matter of discrimination against women teachers, though that is real enough. Arlette Anderson is not joking when she calls her principal a male chauvinist; and Mary Coleman is sincere in her sympathy for Margaret Atwill, the only woman in a heavily masculine school executive.

It is also important to examine the teachers' relations with their pupils. The whole system of gender relations is a major source of the tensions and difficulties teachers face in working-class schools. These range from drastic problems of discipline with rebellious kids like Heather Arlott and Bill Poulos, to the more subtle problems of student motivation or the hidden injuries of gender suffered by Elaine Markham and Delia Prince.

Teaching inevitably involves emotional relationships. How these issues are handled thus depends on the construction of masculinity and femininity in the teachers' own lives. The families sketched in this article produced the current generation of kids; families very much like them produced most of their teachers. The teachers have also been through a specific kind of training; many of the younger teachers in the schools encountered feminism in the universities and colleges and have reinterpreted their own lives in its light. Finally, as career teachers, their masculinities and femininities are worked out further as they deal with problems of authority and discipline, the curriculum, their own careers, and the complex emotions involved in caring for kids. To understand the gender regime of a school, one must understand the way gender relations impinge on different groups of teachers, the responses they make, and the strategies they try to follow.

It is clear that a patriarchal gender regime is embedded, at a number of levels, in virtually

every recess of the Australian education system. There is every reason to think the same is true in other, comparable countries. This may appear to be a pessimistic conclusion, and in relation to the high hopes of liberal feminists and sex-role theorists it probably is. But if this conclusion forces us to see the whole structure as much more massive and intricate, that is not all on the debit side of the ledger. We can also see more of the tensions and incoherencies of the structure and hence the possibilities of structural change. It is the task of theory to try to make those clear.

Implications for Theory

The biological basis of gender has been one of the most difficult issues to grasp in discussions of sexism. In some way, the social relations of gender are built on the physical differences between males and females and on their different ways of participating in the reproduction of the species. But how is that to be recognized without falling back on the discredited doctrine that gender is the social expression of male and female biology? The evidence on schooling suggests a very different relationship. In the process of growing up—and this is very clearly shown in the experience of puberty—the bodily process becomes an object of social practice. The social relations of gender become embodied, quite literally, in the construction of masculinity and femininity. The gender regime of a high school is not an expression of sexual biology so much as a social means of dealing with it. In many respects it contradicts, rather than expresses, the biological statute. The result is a dialectic of biosocial development rather than an expressive relationship.

The evidence from education also points to some fundamental features of the social relations involved in gender. The literature on sexual equality often takes "men" and "women" as unproblematic, fixed categories. This is reasonable for first-approximation statistical studies, but it is disastrous if taken as a basis of theoretical analysis. Gender is a complex social structure, not a simple one. It involves a range of institutions, from the family to the state, together with their interactions. It involves different levels of personality, a very wide range of types of social interaction, and it produces a complex differentiation of people around the axes of masculinity and femininity. Even apparently very simple examples of conventional masculinity and femininity prove to be underpinned by a complicated network of social practices. Delia Prince is worth recalling—one of the "great gray mass in the middle" (as they often appear to teachers), who never attract much attention or do anything very surprising. It is easy to think, therefore, that there is no stress, drama, or contradiction in their lives. That would be a serious mistake.

One aspect of the complexity of gender that is very clear in the material already presented is the diversity within masculinity and femininity. The biological processes producing male and female bodies interact with a whole range of different family patterns, courses of growth, institutional pressures, and personal choices. The dialectic issues in many kinds of emotional attachment, different personality traits, and different ways of participating in social life. Delia Prince, Elaine Markham and Heather Arlott illustrate the diversity within the one milieu: they all live within a few blocks of each other.

Yet this variation is not random. Particular kinds of behavior, particular ways of being, are culturally dominant. These are the ones that come to be seen as the pattern of masculinity or femininity in general and are often assumed to be the natural characteristics of each sex. Other kinds of behavior and character are defined as deviant or inferior and attract derision, hostility, and sometimes violence. We have come to refer to the dominant patterns as "hegemonic masculinity" and "emphasized femininity." Their hegemony within particular institutions is defined by the gender regimes discussed above in relation to schools. It is clear that the pattern that is hegemonic in one institution is not automatically so in another.

To call them "hegemonic" and "emphasized" is to stress that they are not necessarily the *most common* patterns—the mistaken assumption made by most sex-role theorists. Not many men or boys really are the strong, cool, fit, competent, macho types who populate cigarette ads and other such daydreams, though most men's lives are still affected by the presence and potency of that image. What is hegemonic at any given time depends on how the relations among different kinds of masculinity and femininity have been worked out. That negotiation is one of the key roles of the school.

Negotiation is perhaps too mild a word for a process that involves unequal resources and a considerable amount of coercion. Part of this is a matter of direct control and force. We have referred to the bullying of "the Cyrils" by the football heroes at Milton College, the muted violence that the school permits. Girls at ruling-class schools are mostly protected from such treatment, but working-class girls are much more exposed to it. Physical intimidation of women by young men in the streets of Rockwell was mentioned by several of the

mothers we spoke to and is one of the reasons they place more restrictions on the movements of their daughters after dark than on their sons. The sexual harassment of girls by boys is one of the issues Margaret Atwill has to deal with at Greenway High. Force is also a component of patriarchal authority within many families, as the case of Bill Poulos illustrates. Studies of domestic violence (Johnson, 1981; Craney and O'Donnell, 1982) demonstrate that this is far from an isolated case.

In other families, such as the Markhams, an internal struggle for power occurs and is resolved by other means. Who wins out in such circumstances largely depends on the resources that can be mobilized. A number of forces have caused women as a group to have less economic resources than men, often a great deal less. These include the way the labor market has generally assigned women to low-paying or part-time jobs; the way the education system has excluded women from most trade and professional training; and the way the relationship between jobs and families has made women rather than men leave jobs (like Mrs. Prince) to take on child care, thus losing seniority, skills, experience, and confidence.

To generalize, one of the key dimensions of gender relations is power. Analysis shows that the power dimension of gender regimes exists inside families as well as schools. The schools, in turn, connect to the larger structure of the state and are part of the sense in which we must understand the state as a patriarchal institution, constituted by sexual politics as well as by class dynamics.

In none of these cases is the pattern of power or the sexual division of labor completely fixed, as we have seen in working-class mothers' return to the labor market. The gender regimes of schools are capable of being changed, as Auburn College illustrates. The consciousness of groups of participants alters, as the emergence of feminism among teachers shows. The character of sexuality itself changes. The pattern of sexual relationships found among the kids in contemporary high schools has altered from what it was a generation ago; the students now are sexual beings in a much more open and obvious way, a change especially important for girls.

Gender relations, then, are historical. The pattern they assume in any society is produced by its particular history and is always in a process of transformation. Even when change is slow to the point of being invisible, the principle should be kept in mind, because it directs attention to the ways in which the patterns of gender are constantly being produced in everyday life. An awareness of the tensions and contradictions of that production process, the difficulties it encounters, and the resistance it arouses, is vital in understanding the way the structure changes as a whole.

It is a safe generalization that power is never exerted without arousing some kind of resistance. Women's liberation and gay liberation are the most organized and visible forms of resistance to patriarchal power at present, but they are not the only forms. Mrs. McArthur, Mrs. Markham, their daughters, and Heather Arlott embody a working-class feminism connected with the very large changes in women's employment and the power balance inside families. It is a feminism without banners, with a flavor and set of concerns different from those of the intellectuals' feminism, but nonetheless involving a real challenge to men's power and to the restriction of women's lives. The same is true among teachers. There are many who, like Margaret Atwill and Mary Coleman, would not call themselves feminists but who are nevertheless confronting the same issues and trying, in a variety of ways, to do something constructive about them. There are others, like Arlette Anderson, who have a well-developed conception of the issues.

Countersexist programs in the schools, then, do not face a scene of total desolation. There is a widespread, though inchoate, concern with sexuality, sexism, and discrimination; and there is reason to think this grows out of some structural changes and can be mobilized to produce more. If the resources and ideas were widely available, a lot of people would use them. It is time to consider who and how.

Implications for Practice

The main current approach to the reform of sex inequalities in education is the equal-opportunity strategy. Its central idea is the elimination of all obstacles to advancement by talent—i.e., the prejudices, self-doubts, and extra burdens that hold women back from advancement through education. The forms it takes are campaigns to get girls into new areas such as trades and mathematics; elimination of sexist stereotypes from teaching materials; struggles for equal promotion rights for women teachers; and so on.

Given that the resources already committed to reforming sexism are slender, one is reluctant to be critical of anyone who is seriously trying. Yet our evidence argues strongly that there are serious weaknesses in this approach. First, the equal-opportunity strategy assumes that the institutions in which advancement is sought are more or less neutral. That is far from the truth: Not only is the education system mainly controlled by men, but it actively constructs gender and actively produces

women's subordination. Second, the knowledge that is sought is not neutral. When the culture makes an equation between masculinity and technical expertise, not only do competence and expertise become part of the definition of masculinity, but masculinity also comes to define valued expertise. Women pursuing expertise may find it being redefined as they reach for it. Third, equal-opportunity programs have almost nothing to say to boys that might affect their part in the construction of gender relations. Fourth, by taking the categories "men" and "women" for granted and by focusing on the goal of access, such strategies deemphasize the question of gender construction and hence tend to ignore the oppression of homosexuals in the educational system. Finally, equal-opportunity strategies are usually deliberately class-blind in a way that makes them liable to be class-biased. A program that encourages girls to enter professional or semiprofessional careers by stressing academic advancement has an entirely different effect in a working-class school like Rockwell High than it has in a ruling-class school like Auburn College. In the former, such a program can only reach a minority. It separates them from the bulk of girls, who are defined as failures and frequently pushed into opposition to the school's program. In such circumstances equal-opportunity strategies are likely to defeat themselves.

We argue, then, that what is good in equal-opportunity programs has to be placed in a new context and in various ways given new aims. In broad terms, it is a question of directly addressing the issues that equal-opportunity strategies take for granted. The aims should be to empower subordinated groups, rather than give selective access to existing hierarchies; to democratize the curriculum by reorganizing knowledge to advantage the disadvantaged; and to mobilize support for democratization of the schools in relation to gender, as much as other structures of power.

In this kind of program the curriculum is strategic, and it is important that there are already movements and resources for democratic curriculum change in the schools. The academic curriculum may be hegemonic, but it is not the only one available. Craft teaching, for instance, embodies a different organization of knowledge and often involves very different teacher-pupil relations. The academic curriculum also contains contradictions. The claim to universality that it makes—the attempt to embody the best in human culture is one of the admirable things about it—is plainly at odds with the way it functions to exclude the majority of students from full participation in the culture. That kind of contradiction gives teachers room to move.

Reform means reconstructing the relationships among the four main groups who are immediate actors in the sexual politics of schools: the teachers, girls, boys, and parents. In helping girls change their situation in gender relations, it is necessary to develop their personal strength and confidence. There is a risk, when this is converted into schemes of assertiveness training and the like, of substituting issues of personal style for issues of substance. Girls like Heather Arlott and Kate McArthur are already angry and aggressive enough: that is part of their strife with the school. Girls like Delia Prince, however, might benefit from programs to develop girls' self-confidence.

What all of these girls mainly need are real sources of power: marketable skills, much more knowledge of what is happening to them, solidarity with others in their situation,and the chance to get decent jobs. Any program that is a point of entry to those questions is worthwhile. The key thing is the substance of competence and control over their own lives.

In winning that, the relationships girls are able to form with their teachers are important. We have already seen how much they vary. Arlette Anderson had reached a stand-off with the nonacademic girls but was getting on famously in classes with the A stream. Margaret Atwill was succeeding with the nonacademic girls but mainly outside the classroom. The teachers at Auburn College were practically being swept along by the pressures for academic achievement and professional training among their elite clientele. But none of them seem to have made much progress with the issue of resistance to school among girls. This is a crucial problem for countersexist strategy, for it is both a point of opportunity—as we noted with Heather Arlott, resistance to school often involves resistance to subordination as women—and a point of peculiar difficulty, because the girls are in conflict with the institution through which most educational programs have to operate. There are models for teachers working with school resisters (see Hawkins, 1982); we have documented one remarkable case from this study, a teacher working mainly with boys, in another article (Connell et al., 1984). Changes must be made in teachers' working conditions and in the labor process before they can work effectively with girls who are resisting school.

Given that gender relations are constantly being produced afresh in everyday life, boys must also be considered important clients for countersexist education. They tend to stay out

at present, partly because they are not addressed and partly because they are easily made antagonistic. If, as they are told, women's liberation means women on top, what can it mean for them except the loss of masculinity, which is something they have been strenuously taught to fear?

Yet there is something more positive to build on. We talked to a good many boys who were not threatened by the *idea* of equality for women; some of them firmly supported it. Their difficulty was in seeing how it related to them in practice. Adolescent boys' desire to understand the changes going on in their own lives, as well as the changes in the world around, provide strong motives for exploration and learning, which teachers can employ. Men teachers have a particular responsibility and opportunity here, because what they say and do influences what kind of masculinity is hegemonic in the school. Countersexist programs can speak directly to boys about forms of masculinity that do not involve aggression and dominance over women.

Finally, the relationship between teachers and parents demands attention. Parents are often seen as the villains of the piece, full of reactionary attitudes and suspicion of teachers. There have certainly been some hair-raising episodes when the political Right has mobilized, claiming to speak for parents, to block new curricula and sex-education programs, such as the occasion in 1978 when new social science curricula were banned in Queensland (Smith and Knight, 1981). But our strong impression is that in such cases, the Right speaks mainly for itself. The parents we interviewed were concerned not so much that the school should keep out of this area, but that what it did should be done responsively and well.

More than this, the schools can find significant resources among parents for work on these questions. Mothers like Dr. Somerset are strongly behind the program of schools like Auburn College. The experience, outlook, and energy that we have spoken of as "working-class feminism" could likewise be an important resource for schools like Rockwell High. The difficulty is in tapping it, for it is also characteristic of working-class schools that there is a great gulf between the teachers and most of the parents, a product of the class relations that operate in mass education. Yet it can be crossed, even on issues of sex and gender. Many parents will be receptive to well-thought-out initiatives from the schools, because they are very much aware that things have been altering in this area of life. They sense the historical changes, and they sense their importance for the kids, though they often do not know what to make of them or what to do about them. There is space here for work by teachers. One of the most constructive moves for the sexual politics of education would be to make it possible for teachers in general to use it.

There is no guarantee that these uncertainties and possibilities will be resolved in a progressive direction, that is, one that actually diminishes sex inequality and gender-related oppression. There is a formidable resistance, some dimensions of which this article has suggested. Change is not always for the good: new forms of sex discrimination and exploitation have emerged in recent years along with moves towards equality. Yet the central fact, perhaps the most important point our interviews have demonstrated, is that the complex of gender inequality and patriarchal ideology is not a smoothly functioning machine. It is a mass of tensions, contradictions, and complexities that always have the potential for change. While there is that potential, there is also the possibility of constructive educational work.

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COURSE ENROLLMENT IN THE HIGH SCHOOL: THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORKING-CLASS FEMALES

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This article argues for a new approach to the study of tracking in the high school, an approach that emphasizes the active and knowledgeable role students play. In addition to the more frequently studied issue of class segregation in school tracking, the article examines the often overlooked phenomenon of gender segregation. Interviews with girls who selected business courses are used to illustrate how students' knowledge of the school and of the society produces course choices that in turn tend to reproduce class and gender categories.

One way that schools create differences among students is by enrolling them in different courses. This process of differentiation sets students on different paths towards adulthood. Academic courses prepare students for the university and for professional and managerial jobs. Industrial arts courses orient students towards blue-collar work. Math and science courses allow them to enter technological fields. Business courses teach them what is involved in secretarial or sales jobs. Home economics courses prepare them for domestic tasks. In a very concrete organizational form, one can see the genesis of the divisions that shape adult life.

There is a good deal of evidence that class, ethnicity, race, and gender are related to the courses students take (Breton, 1970; Heyns, 1974; Porter, Porter, and Blishen, 1982). Working-class students and students from minority ethnic and racial groups are less likely to take academic courses. Girls are more likely to take home economics courses and courses that prepare them for clerical and secretarial jobs. Boys are more likely to take industrial arts courses. Course enrollment is thus one

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way the categories of gender, class, and race are reproduced in the school and are linked to adult social position. Despite its key place in the production of the existing social order, course enrollment has been neglected by educational theorists interested in reproduction; instead, they stress ideology and socialization in the school (e.g., Apple, 1982).

The question of how differential course enrollment comes about needs much more careful empirical and theoretical attention. In the academic literature, terms such as "placed in," "selected," "decided on," "chose," "channelled into," "assigned to," and the noncommittal "end up in" can all be found and are usually assumed, not explored. Ability grouping, which is done solely by the teacher, has been equated with curriculum differentiation (Persell, 1977). In general, the sociological literature assumes that course enrollment patterns are produced by the school, not by the students. It explores the criteria the school uses to sort students (Heyns, 1974; Davis and Haller, 1981) and the role school records and counsellors play in placing students in different tracks (Clark, 1960; Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Rosenbaum, 1976). There is, however, a psychological literature that uses models emphasizing students' choices and the importance of students' attitudes, perceptions, self-concepts, and psychological traits (Meece et al., 1982).

The issue is partly empirical and should be studied more carefully. There are important variations between schools and over time in the number and kind of options offered to students and in the relative importance of student choice and school assignment in determining course enrollment. Historically, high schools have moved from a single course of study to a relatively fixed hierarchy of curriculum tracks to a more open system of curriculum options (Boyer, 1983; Porter et al., 1982; Laxer, Traub, and Wayne, 1974). The causes and consequences of these variations need to be explored. It is important to specify the particular arrangements in any school that is being studied. A regression equation that describes the relationships prevailing at one point in time cannot be generalized unless the kinds of institutional arrangements it is describing are known.

There are also variations within schools among different kinds of courses, so it is important to specify which course is being discussed. Bernstein's notions of framing and classification are useful in analyzing these differences (Bernstein, 1975). Enrollment in a tightly framed and classified subject like English is strongly influenced by the school's assessment of ability. Enrollment in art or music classes is more open to student choice. The two may be linked, as in the school Rosenbaum (1976) studied, where ability grouping in core subjects in the junior high school was translated into a wide variety of curriculum options in the senior high.

The question of choice versus placement involves more than empirically sorting out which model applies in any particular case. It involves theoretical issues of the relationship between individual agency and structure. In every case, both the student's orientation and the school's organization are involved. Even in a relatively open system, school staff limit the available choices, shape the way students see themselves and their options, and offer advice, veiled threats, encouragement, and strongly worded suggestions. In a relatively closed system, students must still comply, but preferably, they are made to see that the courses they are taking are in their best interests. The problem, then, is to reconceptualize the issue in a way that incorporates both the orientation of the student, i.e., individual consciousness, and the organization of the school, i.e., social structure. This takes us to the heart of a major problem in social theory. Structural theories and correspondence theories have for too long regarded individual action as an unproblematic reflection of social structure. They have misrepresented the consciousness of the relatively powerless by assuming it can be constituted as an internalization of the dominant ideological messages. Such claims are empirically incorrect. As Giddens (1979:72) points out,

> A good case can be made that only dominant class groups have ever been strongly committed to dominant ideologies . . . all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them.

Structural theories also misrepresent power as an entity residing in powerful people or positions rather than in interactions. This underplays the political importance of relatively powerless groups. In Giddens's words, "Power relationships are always two way; that is to say, however subordinate an actor may be in a relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other. Those in subordinate positions in social systems are frequently adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of those social systems" (Giddens, 1979:6). Teachers are quite aware of this dialectic in the schools. Students must be actively persuaded of the logic of the educational enterprise, and some are never persuaded.

In emphasizing students' choices, it is important to avoid a model that reifies and decontextualizes their attitudes and traits. As Laws (1976) points out in her discussion of women's work aspirations, motivation is dynamic and responsive to the social context, rather than static and individually "owned." For example, an individual may be hardworking in one setting but lazy in another if the one setting provides more incentives and a more congenial atmosphere than the other.

Willis's work (1977, 1981) is an attempt to deal with these complexities. He explains how a group of working-class lads "chose" working-class jobs, and he incorporates a careful structural analysis of the school and the society in which the choices emerged. He concentrates on the lads' choices: "The difficult thing to explain about how working-class kids get working-class jobs is why they let themselves . . . . It is much too facile simply to say that they have no choice. There is no obvious physical coercion and a degree of self-direction" (Willis, 1977:1). He emphasizes their "sense of activity and practice and what feel like (and are to the participants) circumstances creatively met" (Willis, 1977:3).

In this article, I will explore how course enrollment differences arise by adopting this theoretical orientation and by emphasizing students' belief that they choose, while embedding their orientations in a specific institutional context. This approach avoids some of the problems in earlier research on course tracking and points to the need for more case studies of specific tracking practices in specific courses and schools.

METHOD

The data in this study are drawn from a series of interviews with young people in Vancouver, Canada. One hundred male and female students were interviewed in 1976 during their last year of high school. This article is based only on the responses of the 47 girls.

The students interviewed came from three high schools, all of which were in neighborhoods that were below the average attainment levels in the 1971 census. Parents' occupations could not be systematically surveyed, because the school put restrictions on the questions that I could ask. However, none of the students who volunteered this information had professional parents.

I explained to the students that I was interested in the relationship between school and work, and I asked those who were planning to go to work next year to volunteer for an interview. The guidance counsellors supported the study and urged students to participate. They also tried to ensure that a wide variety of students (from their point of view, of course) were included in the resulting sample. This method of selecting students was dictated by the school; therefore, I cannot guarantee that the sample is representative. However, as the schools themselves are not representative of any known population, other selection procedures would not have increased the confidence with which the results can be generalized. As the social and educational context in which these girls' perceptions were generated is specific, I can make no claims that their perceptions are shared widely by high school females. This research must be treated as a particular case study in a particular setting, not as a report on a representative group of female adolescents. More research on other populations is necessary to explore the issues raised in this study.

The interviews covered the courses a student was taking, her reasons for taking the courses, her response to the courses, her work experience, her work plans, and her views of femininity and of gender divisions at school, at work, and in the family. I use terms like "a few" and "most" to describe their responses, because using the exact numbers would suggest a quantitative certainty that is not warranted by the research design. A second interview was carried out a year later, but information from that interview is not included in this article.

The interview format allowed a fairly extensive discussion of school, work, and gender. It was loose enough to allow the students' own categories and assumptions to emerge. The young people were encouraged to describe how their world was structured and what they liked and disliked about it. They were pushed to explain what they took for granted and to consider what was wrong with alternate routes. Their explanations and common sense emerged in the interviews in a way that a questionnaire would not allow. However, the accounts of motivation elicited in the interviews must be regarded as those the students deemed appropriate in an interview with a university researcher. Different accounts might well have been elicited with different audiences in different settings. When discussing schooling with one's children, when reminiscing with one's schoolmates, or when talking to a university-based interviewer, different rules apply and different accounts are appropriate. I have no way of checking how the accounts students gave me differ from or are similar to other accounts. Can we make any statements about what students know or what they believe without specifying the context in which the account is given? Some would say no (Mishler,

1979). However, the value of the interview is in eliciting a public account. These accounts are important because they challenge some of the interpretations of course choice that have been provided in the academic literature. They are also politically important, because they constitute public discourse.

The process of coding and analyzing the interview comments was complex. The interviews were transcribed and read several times. They were then analyzed by sorting comments into categories such as division of labor in the home, bringing up children, and the importance of work for women. Profiles of individual students were also developed in order to understand the interrelationships among attitudes. The original transcripts were often reread by more than one research assistant in order to check for accuracy and relevant additional information.

The Vancouver schools have little ability grouping before grade 10, and curriculum options open up, subject to a complex set of distribution requirements, in grade 11. The options are defined not as ability tracks but as a series of choices in different departments—music, history, business education, French, home economics, and so on. Relatively speaking, the process seems fairly open to student and parent input. The official school-board policy is that enrollment decisions are ultimately the responsibility of the family, although the school has some input. The student handbook states that course decisions are "a joint responsibility shared by students, parents, and staff, to ensure a suitable program is undertaken, but final responsibility rests with the parents." This is different from the school policies described by Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) and Rosenbaum (1976).

Instead of focusing on all course choices, which I assume are handled in the same way, this article focuses on the choice of business courses. There are two reasons this particular choice is important. First, choosing business courses means opting out of the academic, i.e., high-status, stream. This is an important step towards reproducing one's position in the working class. Academic courses prepare students for postsecondary schooling. Professional and managerial jobs are likely to require postsecondary schooling; working-class jobs are not. Much of the concern about curriculum differentiation has arisen from its functions in segregating and channeling working-class children (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Lazerson and Grubb, 1974).

Second, the enrollment in business courses is overwhelmingly female. This gender division in course enrollment corresponds to the sexual segregation of the labor force. Secretarial and sales jobs have all the characteristics of quintessentially female work—little responsibility and power, low pay, and little room for advancement. Thus, the girls in this study chose courses that were likely to reproduce not only their class position but also their subservient gender position.

THE ISSUE OF CHOICE

There is a good deal of evidence that students believe they choose their curriculum track, whatever the coercive practices of the school actually are. Jencks et al. (1972) note that 84 percent of all students surveyed in the Coleman report said they were in the track they chose. Rosenbaum (1976) reports that 87 percent of his noncollege students stated that they chose the track they were in. Davis and Haller (1981) also found a strong relationship between what students chose and where they ended up. They note that two-thirds of those whose choices are discrepant with their placement are in a higher track than the one they chose, which reinforces the importance of understanding what makes nonacademic curricula attractive to students.

The girls interviewed in this study were no different. It was striking that they saw themselves as completely responsible for their curriculum choices: "I did what I wanted. It made sense to me." They provided a variety of reasons for taking the courses they did and rarely mentioned pressure from their parents or the school.

Only a couple of girls directly attributed their course enrollment to the guidance counsellor or the school:

> The counsellors look at your grades. So I took commercial . . . basically because my counsellor told me. She seemed to think I would be better fitted to those courses.

> I wanted to take academics, but they wouldn't let me.

These comments suggest a number of things that have been pointed out in the literature. Grades are important, and curriculum tracks have many features similar to ability tracks. Moreover, counsellors can take an active role that goes beyond formal school policy. But the Vancouver counsellors appeared to have neither the authority, resources, nor respect to play a critical role in course selection.

> The counsellors we've got here are just completely terrible. They don't know what they're doing . . . to tell you the truth, I think [names the school] counsellors just don't get enough training or whatever it takes to become a counsellor.

> There is not enough counsellors. They're having to take care of a whole grade of people. They're spending most of their time running through the papers and there's not much time for them to sit around and rap.

> Counsellors are no good. [They are] just phys. ed. teachers who have been moved to guidance.

Many of the students felt that counsellors could be ignored, and they exercised their power to disregard them.

> The counsellors suggested daycare, but that means one or two more years at Langara [a community college]. I don't want more school.

> The counsellor kept saying you'll never get a job unless you can type. But I just picked what I'd enjoy.

Like guidance counsellors, parents infrequently had a direct influence on course selection. Although they were given the official and legal responsibility for course choices, they were not part of the everyday processes of the school and thus were least likely to be well informed. Few students reported a direct intervention by their parents. Most of the students said that their parents let them do whatever they wanted: "They let me make up my own mind." If advice was offered, it was to include academic courses and to keep open the options for postsecondary education.

> My parents encouraged me to take arts and sciences to go to university and be a teacher.

> My dad advised science. I didn't like science, but I figured he knew better. But now I wish I had taken more business courses. They were what I really liked. I thought they were fun.

These students saw themselves making choices, often creative ones, designed to resolve the dilemmas that arose out of the structure of schooling, femininity, and work. Understanding why they took certain courses thus involves understanding their reasoning, rather than simply understanding the power and interests of parents, teachers, and guidance counsellors. Their assumption of responsibility for course choice was important because it led them to accept the consequences of their choices and to blame themselves for the restricted options they faced later. It affected the organization and morale of the school, because students tended not to blame or feel beholden to the teachers or counsellors on issues of course enrollment. In these ways, the students' consciousness both drew on the existing structures and served as part of the process of recreating those structures.

WHY CHOOSE NONACADEMIC COURSES? THE REPRODUCTION OF CLASS

One of the major divisions among courses is between academic courses, which fulfill the prerequisite for university entrance, and other courses, which do not. Most of the literature on tracking has conceived of a single vertical axis of differentiation with academic courses at the top. The use of this axis arises from and clearly displays the class hierarchy involved in course selection.

The student handbook highlights the importance of the postsecondary/no postsecondary divide by printing the entrance requirements for universities and community colleges. Course descriptions clearly indicate those courses that are designed for postsecondary students:

> This is a valuable course for students in preparation for further English courses at the university.

> This course is required for most universities and technical institutions.

> Feedback from BCIT, Langara and university students indicate this course is of tremendous advantage to biology related courses in their area.

The handbook also indicates the academic ability required for entrance:

> A better than average achievement in English is necessary for success in this course.

> An average or better mark in mathematics correlates well with success.

In emphasizing the relationship between a student's achievement and her choice of academic courses, schools construe class differences as achievement and ability differences. Those who are less bright take vocational courses and get working-class jobs. Such is the IQ ideology (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) or the masking of cultural privilege through an ideology of unequal giftedness (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979).

Was this the perspective of these girls? A few girls did describe their choice of courses in light of some fairly stable notions of their abilities and their personalities, which suggest a hierarchical world in which brains and hard work are rewarded:

> I'm not university material. I don't have that much brains.

> I'm lazy. I wouldn't work unless I have to.

But most of these girls believed that their choices arose not out of their unequal giftedness but out of a quite sensible inability to tolerate the pointlessness and childishness of

school. They did not like school, especially the academic courses, and they did not think that what they could learn there was useful. They suggested that in such an environment, any reasonable person would opt out:

> It was ridiculous. . . . Maybe ten minutes of it you can learn.
>
> School is boring. You can't change it.
>
> I don't like the rigid system—hour after hour—or demanding notes if you are sick or late. I miss classes because I won't be missing anything.
>
> I stared out the window and at my hands, like everyone else.

These girls questioned the justificatory ideology of the school rather than being socialized into it. They located difficulties in the educational environment that confronted them and in the lack of decent opportunities that existed there, instead of in their own abilities and attitudes. But this unmasking of the school's ideological rationale did not lead them to challenge the organization of the school. It led them to find ways around it, to try to pick the best set of courses they could out of a bad lot.

They tried to come up with personal solutions that would minimize the discomfort school caused them. They took courses that were easy (i.e., courses that did not intrude too much into other, more important aspects of life), fun (i.e., courses that involved less time sitting at a desk, more work experience, and more interaction), and useful (i.e., courses that transmitted skills that had some direct utility in the labor market or in leisure activities). These criteria led them far away from an academic program.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) suggest different motives for the selection of vocational courses—motives deduced from structural differences in the schooling and work experiences of working-class and middle-class families. Working-class jobs and vocational courses are more likely to be characterized by alienation, a clear hierarchy of control, and punitiveness (see also Oakes, 1982). Therefore, working-class families prefer stricter, more routinized educational practices. Similarly, "that professional and self-employed parents prefer a more open atmosphere and a greater emphasis on motivational control is a reflection of their position in the division of labour" (Bowles and Gintis, 1976:133). Track assignment, they conclude, springs from working-class students' self-concepts and preferences, which are appropriate to their future position at work.

Such a straightforward correspondence does not characterize the consciousness of the girls in this study. They saw course differences in more substantive terms. They rejected academic schooling not because it was too open but because they believed it was irrelevant. Vocational courses were perceived as less regimented and less confining than academic courses. Other studies suggest that this explains a good deal of the appeal of work/study and career awareness courses (Farrar, De Sanctis, and Cowden, 1980; Watts, 1980).

Willis explains that his lads chose working-class jobs because they valued manual labor over mental labor, they resisted authority, and they wanted diversion and enjoyment. Though these girls were more diverse in their cultural traditions and expressions of disenchantment with mental labor than Willis's lads, there were some common themes in their responses. They were quite able to question the educational paradigm that asserts the fair exchange of cooperation and work for knowledge and moral superiority. They wanted a break from regular schooling and saw practical job skills as more worthwhile than irrelevant academic information.

The girls' accounts construe course divisions as horizontal rather than vertical: Some people like some things, others like different things. However, they live in a world where higher marks and academic pursuits are associated with higher status, more economic opportunities, and more money. In schools, marks are the official currency, and as the course descriptions make clear, high marks go with academic courses. It is hard for an aware participant in the school or the society to ignore completely the vertical nature of the divisions.

These young women produced accounts of course differences that indicate an awareness of the hierarchical nature of school programs. According to these girls, students in academic courses "think they're better." "University is necessary to really get ahead these days." These comments were not offered as easily or as often as other accounts, but the contradictions and diversity they indicate must not be ignored. To some extent, different students produced different emphases in their accounts. A few were more likely to say, in effect, "I am dumb and the bright kids go on to university." Other students were more likely to indicate that school is boring and that anyone sensible would have as little to do with it as possible. But sometimes, one individual gave contradictory accounts. These contradictions suggest, as Sennett and Cobb (1972) have indicated, that there are hidden injuries associated with nonparticipation in academic success, even when cultural forms and an understanding of oppressive relations make alternative

meanings available. These injuries are hidden in that they are not easily elicited in interviews with higher-status persons. They may be produced more often in the kind of in-depth and personal discussions used by Sennett and Cobb.

Does this mean the girls really believed that they were inferior or that the system was unjust? The question is unanswerable in these terms. Both kinds of accounts are real. Different methodologies will reveal more of one than of the other. What is at issue in this study are public, everyday, easily and frequently elicited responses. These have both political and practical significance in the school and in the labor market. The girls discussed the choice of vocational courses as a choice to avoid the worst stresses and irrelevancies of school. The structure and organization of school was critical for them. They suggested that if school work had been more involving or more useful, they might have chosen otherwise. Their acquiescence in the process of selecting themselves out rested on their understanding of the school experience. Their critique of school did not go very far. It focused on individual teachers, counsellors, and specific course content rather than on the organization of the entire venture. It did not lead these girls to suggest much in the way of alternatives except better teachers and more work experience (Gaskell and Lazerson, 1981). They overwhelmingly rejected the value of school and the school's equation of academic performance with merit and deserved power, but they accepted the school's power to create links between academic performance and success in the labor market.

WHY TAKE BUSINESS COURSES? THE REPRODUCTION OF GENDER DIVISIONS

In the high schools I studied, not a single girl took industrial education at the grade 12 level, but almost all the girls who were not planning to continue their schooling took at least one business course. The gender segregation of courses is very large, but its existence has been ignored in the literature on tracking because a single vertical axis has been used to describe the differences among courses: "The use of the terms high, average and low track classes seemed to cut through the terminology differences at the different schools and levels, and identify classes according to their essential characteristics in terms of student classification" (Oakes, 1982:201). Although a unidimensional vertical ranking of courses displays class divisions, it makes gender divisions disappear. Girls are just as likely to be in the high-track, academic courses. Gender divisions appear as horizontal divisions within each track—for example, as language versus science options in the academic track, or as business versus industrial options in the vocational track.

Gender divisions in the school curriculum correspond to divisions in the labor force, just as class divisions do. The correspondence between school tracks and gender divisions must be taken as seriously as the correspondence between school tracks and class divisions. Occupational segregation by gender has influenced the way curriculum options are defined at school, and the organization of this school training has affected the shape of occupational segregation by providing a generous supply of skilled female workers trained at the public's expense for a narrow range of jobs.

Why did the girls choose the business courses and not the industrial courses? There were four factors that were mentioned in their accounts: the advantages of clerical work, the availability of specific skill training in business courses, the lack of opportunities in industrial work, and the impact of domestic labor.

The girls overwhelmingly chose clerical courses in order to prepare themselves for clerical jobs. The course descriptions make clear that this is the purpose of the courses. In the school calendar, the business course descriptions stress usefulness in the labor market, specifically in secretarial work: "as many types of written language projects as are relevant to office work will be included"; "should be capable of handling books in a small business firm"; "qualifies a student for a high standard secretarial position." These are the courses that were most attractive to the girls. Other, more general courses attracted a greater mixture of males and females. These include courses in general business ("investing your money, conditions of employment, home-ownership and mortgages, etc."); accounting, marketing, and distributive education ("to develop in the student personality and skills which will enable him to become an intelligent consumer and achieve success in the field of marketing"); career exploration ("to overcome the tendency of students to drift into careers with the result that they find their jobs largely unfulfilling"); and personal finance ("to enable students to make the best possible use of their income through sound money management").

Why is clerical work attractive? Most importantly, the jobs that are available to women in a competitive labor market are clerical jobs.

> I don't like typing, but it is the easiest way to get a job. It's boring and tedious just sitting there. But if you can get a job you might as well take it.

> The only jobs are for secretaries these days. You might as well get trained.

> [I took commercial courses] because I wanted to be someone's secretary. You know, there is a big demand for secretaries.

This perception, many would argue, is a misguided one. Clerical jobs are disappearing with the introduction of new technology. There are more opportunities for women in other areas of work (Menzies, 1981). But one-third of all employed Canadian women and over half of all employed female high school graduates work in clerical jobs (Statistics Canada, 1980). The girls accurately perceived that there are a large number of clerical jobs of many different types in many different locations. The women they knew who had jobs had clerical jobs. It is difficult for a counsellor or a new economic survey to discount the students' overwhelming experience of where the jobs are.

Moreover, the literature on youth employment shows that youth are twice as likely to be unemployed as adults are and that they tend to take the first job that comes along (Osterman, 1980; Blackburn and Mann, 1979). In a period of economic crisis, this is even more pronounced. Instead of choosing a job, the job chooses them. As one girl put it, "If you can get a job, you might as well take it."

Clerical work has other attractions besides its relative availability. It has higher status than blue-collar work and provides more security and better working conditions. When asked why she took commercial courses, one student responded,

> To fall back on commerce. My mother forced me to. She is a janitoress and she said I could do better than her. She sees all these women working in an office and she said you're going to do better than that.

It provides a setting that is comfortable to work in, where there are likely to be other young working-class women to socialize with. It is attractive because it is a women's occupation.

> Girls together can be funny and dirty. I can be more open with women around.

The organization of training for clerical work also provides an incentive to take commercial courses. The girls pointed out that these courses were directly relevant to finding a job, unlike other courses in the high school. The courses in industrial education prepare students not to enter a trade but to embark on trades training after graduation ("recommended for students going on in engineering or architecture"; "designed to fulfill the requirements for admission to vocational school") or to develop avocational skills ("the skills necessary to repair and maintain his own vehicle"; "constructing a stereo") and sometimes intellectual skills ("to illustrate the fundamental principles of science"). They do not provide the edge in the labor market that commercial skills do. If anything, they have such low status that employers and community colleges prefer academic students. Carpentry courses do not make one a carpenter. One still has to go through an apprenticeship. The same is true for other industrial arts courses and for the home economics courses.

Only commercial courses provide skills that give an immediate advantage in the labor market. If they did not learn to type and understand office work, the girls were running the risk of getting no job at all. In a competitive labor market, taking clerical courses was the best way these young women could prepare themselves for the jobs that they saw as available to them.

This view that business courses are the only sensible option for nonacademic girls was shared even by young women who could provide extremely negative accounts of clerical work and business courses. They regarded these as boring or, at best, "not so bad": "It's always inside and just sitting down at the desk and doing nothing." These girls felt pressed to take the business courses "to fall back on" in case they couldn't find another job. The courses were a safety net, the wisest choice because they were directly relevant to finding a job.

If the advantages of office work and training were not enough to attract a girl, the disadvantages of the male alternative, industrial work, were likely to repel her. Many of the girls felt that the industrial courses and industrial work were difficult, dirty, and uninteresting. The most common response to the question "Why didn't you take industrial education?" was "I'm not interested."

> It's o.k. for girls to do what they want—be carpenters or whatever. But it's not for me. I just don't like it.

They described how socialization had shaped their responses:

> Maybe it's the way I've been brought up.

> We've always been taught to be the soft touch, like the cute sex, just sitting there.

> I was pushed away from it as a little girl—dolls, not hockey and trucks.

They even had plans to change it:

> I think [girls] should be encouraged into other jobs, but not just from our age. I think from elementary school, because you get

dolls and the little guys get trucks. So you're always influenced on that kind of a path.

You've got to be trained from the beginning to make things equal. I'd like to start a camp. I wouldn't tell the kids who were boys and who were girls. No girls' and boys' bathroom. Everyone would be exposed to everything—trucks and dolls.

But given their current interests and achievements, it did not make sense to do industrial work.

Some girls, despite their socialization, were interested in industrial work:

I like to do the jobs men do. I think they are more interesting.

I wish I had taken woodwork. I like working with wood.

It would be exciting to be a truckdriver. But I wouldn't know how to go about it.

Men's jobs pay more.

Thus, the status, activity, money, and even unfamiliarity of male work gave it a certain appeal.

However, their perception of barriers inside and outside the school came into play. Peer and teacher pressure, which often amounted to sexual harassment, made industrial courses a very difficult choice.

When I was going into grade 10, I tried it [auto] but it was a mistake. There were all guys in the class and I felt too stupid.

The second year I was the only girl in the class, and I felt really stupid, so I didn't want to go back.

This year I got into Auto Mechanics 12. It was all guys and when I walked in they thought I was really stupid. You know, "Oh, we got a girl," and they were irate, so I transferred out.

Because I am a girl, and there are only boys taking the courses, I'd get a name in the school. Girls are rowdy who take it.

The teacher is a male and he doesn't encourage females. He gives us mostly written work. We used to complain, and he would say, "Well, the boys can do it for you." He probably thought it [auto class] was dangerous for us.

Barriers in the labor market also seemed to make industrial courses a waste of time:

They wouldn't hire a female. It distracts everyone.

I was thinking of going for an electrician, and then someone said something: "What? You're a girl!"

Furthermore, they felt that the working conditions would be difficult:

Truck drivers are weird people and they would harass her.

You couldn't talk about the same things if men were around—what you did last night, and all that.

Thus, socialization and the perception of opportunities combined to make industrial education a much less favored option. Socialization did not "take" with all the girls; but the perception of opportunities ensured that even those who were not traditional in their interests still chose the traditional options.

A final factor in course selection was the issue of domestic labor. Most of the girls assumed that they would have primary responsibility for the domestic labor in their families (Gaskell, 1983). This by no means arose from a wholesale endorsement of the domestic ideology. Although about a quarter of the girls said domestic work was what they were particularly suited for and wanted to do, most said they would feel trapped at home, wanted the independence provided by a paying job, and said housework was a chore that should be shared. But they wanted husbands and they wanted children, so they felt they would have to do the domestic work for a variety of reasons based in their perception of the world and the opportunities available to them. Men, they said, would not or could not do it.

Sharing the housework would be wonderful. But it is not going to happen. He'd [boyfriend] never help with the floors or the dishes. I know him too well.

Alternate forms of childcare, which could free them for a paying job, were perceived to be inadequate. No man could or would stay home with the kids.

Men aren't used to it and don't want to do it.

Daycares and babysitters are not good for children.

You'll be a better mother if you stay home with the kids and not throw them out with the babysitter . . . because they learn bad habits.

Moreover, as women, they were likely to be contributing less to the family income than their husbands; so they felt they should be the ones to pick up the extra domestic work and, when necessary, give up their paying jobs.

The most practical approach would be the one with the most money would work.

As a result of all these calculations, even those girls who had no particular desire to do domestic labor expected to drop out of the labor force or work part-time when they had small children. Even though many assumed that they would return to work after their children had grown up, their views of this later period were very hazy. What they planned for was largely the next five to ten years. They wanted to get their training over with quickly so that they could get a job and have some independence for a few years. They were less likely than boys to feel that they had years to explore the labor market. This added to the attractiveness of business courses and clerical jobs. They could do their training quickly in high school, and the training would develop a skill that would always be useful and flexible. Furthermore, clerical jobs were relatively available and could be pursued part-time.

What these young women knew about their world produced the obvious choice of business courses. They saw a world in which business courses had many advantages and industrial courses had few. Their knowledge was based in some very tangible structural conditions—the opportunity structure in the labor market, the vocational role of business courses, the existence of sexual harassment in male occupations, and the assumption of family responsibilities by women. These are "penetrations" of the structure, seeing it as it is. The girls sometimes objected to this structure. They did not like sexual harassment in class. They felt that employers should hire women in nontraditional jobs. They did not want to do all the domestic chores in the home. But for all these perceptions of different conditions for men and women and their professed commitment to equality of opportunity, their conscious, rational, self-preserving calculations helped to reproduce gender segregation for themselves and others. They did not see this as a predetermined or imposed fact but as one they actively chose as best for themselves.

There were different routes to the same decisions. Some girls incorporated domestic ideology more fully than others. Some resisted secretarial work more strongly than others. Some found the option of work in male areas more tempting than others. While their choices may not have been made with the sense of elation and confidence that Willis's lads expressed, they were regarded as reasonable, even good solutions to the problems the social structure confronted them with. What is striking is not that some girls resisted, but that despite their resistance, so many of them continued to choose very traditional paths through school, paths that reproduced both class and gender categories.

DISCUSSION

Why is it important to examine the girls' perceptions of the world? It scarcely needs to be pointed out that these girls did not produce adequate analytic accounts of the process of course selection in high schools. Their representations are interpretations, as all accounts are, involving selecting, highlighting, cutting and editing. In their stories, they underplayed some of the things they knew in order to maintain their own dignity. They used the same factors that others used to justify different choices. Their information on labor markets, men, teachers, and so on, was based on specific experiences and particular ideological assumptions.

However, these accounts highlight some aspects of school and work and gender relations that are concealed by other investigations. As Smith (1977:16) points out in a brief history of the development of the women's movement, "Shifts in the women's movement came about in part as women from other spaces than those originating the movement began to be heard and listened to—housewives, for example, who refused to be despised, women who had children or wanted children and could not accept the derogation of motherhood that was important in the early stages. . . . Issues and analyses had to shift and deepen accordingly."

A political process is different from an academic one, but the conception of how new knowledge is developed is useful. Working-class women's knowledge of the world and the questions they ask have not been part of academic discourse. Awareness of their views challenges the silence of social science on some issues and points to the biases inherent in the formulation of others.

These young, white, working-class women stressed their self-direction in selecting courses, challenging academic work that construes them as simply assigned to places by the school. They highlighted the importance of job opportunities and sexual harassment in course choice, issues that have often been overlooked in school-based research. They pointed out the unique role high school business courses play in providing saleable skills, which raises structural and historical questions about why business education was incorporated into the school curriculum in a form that so closely reproduces work relations and skills, while industrial and home economics courses take a form that is much less closely linked to work. Certifiable training for industrial jobs remains outside the high school.

These girls stressed the role of domestic labor in career planning and course choice. They challenged the view that the important

nces between courses can be repre- by one vertical axis of academic re- ility and that vocational courses are ttractive because they are more closely ised. These are all perspectives that o be added to the literature on cur- differentiation in the high school.

nd, an understanding of the perspec- f these girls gives us a more adequate standing of how class and gender ies are reproduced in the school. Re- on education has tended to assume that action occurs when the relatively pow- internalize the views of the powerful. s of schooling have emphasized a pro- socialization to the hidden curriculum, ensures acquiescence and explains stu- consciousness. Analyses of what the s message is—the IQ ideology, the nal gender code—have substituted for s of the students' understanding of messages. This approach produces s of reproduction in which subordinate appear as "cultural dopes," so overso- l into dominant ideologies that they lly behave in ways that counter their perience of the world, as well as their terests. Its factual claims are wrong: do not so completely believe dominant ies. Its political and policy implications profoundly undemocratic. Such an ap- treats subordinate groups as misguided, rds, and conservative rather than as nd self-directed actors in a world that is l against them. It thus suggests that they e little that is useful to say about what s should take place.

limits of socialization and the more natic nature of consent have been in- gly recognized in studies of the labor . and some of the parallels to schooling th noting. From Braverman's (1974) as- n of management's power to control ditions of production, we have moved ies of "contested terrain" (Edwards, "manufacturing consent" (Burawoy, and working-class culture (Palmer, There is also a tradition in feminist ship that has emphasized that women's usness is not simply an internalization forms but contains its own alternate tations, commitments, and connec- Rowbotham, 1973; Olsen, 1978; Rubin, aneway, 1980; Bernard, 1981; Gilligan, Finn and Miles, 1982). The relation n women's consciousness and man's s complex and involves accommoda- sistance, and self-imposed and exter- posed silences. Correspondence does ount for their relationship.

brings the issue of structural change back into an intimate, but dialectical rather than mechanical, relation with consciousness. For these girls, change would have involved a far-reaching shift in their perception of reality. It would have meant new notions of where job opportunities lie, what men are like, and what skills are valued by employers. These beliefs were forged in their daily experiences, and new accounts that contradicted their experience were likely to be found wanting, to be reinterpreted, or to lead to distrust of the source of the new account. They knew, for their own good reasons, what the world was like, and their experience acted as a filter through which any new message was tested, confirmed, rejected, challenged, and reinterpreted. Changing their minds would have meant changing the world they experienced, not simply convincing them of a new set of ideals around equality of opportunity and the desirability of a different world.

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