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ABSTRACT

This report is the first in a series of three executive handbooks designed to help school administrators move toward the goal of sex equality. Findings are presented from some of the studies of sex stereotyping that have been made of the content, illustrations, and language in textbooks and children's trade books. Suggestions are offered to counteract sex stereotyping in educational materials including contacting publishers, establishing guidelines for accepting new materials, and developing materials.
(Author/MLF)

Sex Equality in Educational Materials

Volume IV

AASA Executive Handbook Series

American Association of School Administrators
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This work represents Volume IV in AASA's Executive Handbook Series to be produced in 1974 and 1975 Additional titles in this series are:

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This report from the AASA Advisory Commission on Sex Equality in Education is the first in a series of three executive handbooks designed to be helpful to you and your colleagues as you move toward this goal. This booklet deals with educational materials, the second, with organizational procedures in the school which tend to channel girls and boys into different programs, and the third, with the roles of women and men in educational administration.

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FOREWORD

The American Association of School Administrators has long sought the full development of the human resources of the nation and equal educational opportunities for all. It primary policy document, *The Platform*, states:

"A. As citizens of the United States of America, we believe —

"7. That the strength of the nation and the welfare of humanity will depend upon the conservation and intelligent development of human and natural resources."

and . . . "C. In order that these principles may be realized, we as school administrators propose to work for —

"8. The elimination of barriers that prevent full access to equal educational opportunities for all children and the provision of educational leadership in eliminating discrimination against any segment of our society."

The AASA Executive Committee believes in the AASA platform and must implement programs to achieve the goals it sets forth. Consequently, f the strong policy positions above, the Committee has led the organization to act affirmatively to seek more equity for women and girls in education.

This Executive Handbook is the first of three publications to be issued on the topic. It is designed to:

- Intensify in the administrator an awareness of the problem.
- Describe some current practices that frustrate the full development of human resources and deny equal educational opportunity.
- Identify remedies to correct the condition.
- Suggest administrative action appropriate to eradication of the condition.

American education must be in the forefront of the endeavor to develop all human talent, wherever it is to be found. To fail to do so threatens our very survival. This handbook is part of a serious effort to deal with a deep-seated condition so bound by tradition that to most of us it seems natural.

Salmon's first law is "A problem's no problem unless it's your problem." Our effort here is to make you aware that the problems is *yours* and *you* are uniquely situated to help eradicate it. Let's get it done!

Paul B. Salmon
Executive Director
AASA

INTRODUCTION

Most people in our nation are just beginning to recognize an inequity so deeply rooted that it can seem to be a fact of nature. A decade ago, few people questioned the distribution of authority, earning power, and f eedom to choose work among men and women. Even fewer noticed the similarity between sex discrimination and that suffered by minority groups — Afro-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, American Indians and Asian Americans — or the fact that women in these groups suffered the greatest discrimination of all. Most people took these conditions for granted to such an extent that they went unnoticed until recently.

Women are underrepresented in the occupations which command high incomes — lawyer, doctor, executive — or high prestige — professor, scientist. They are only 3 percent of lawyers, less than 1 percent of engineers, and ½ of 1 percent of senior physicists.[1] As a matter of fact there are few women in occupations that are interesting, varied, or require specialized lengthy training. Most are concentrated in subordinate, supportive positions such as domestic service and clerical work.

Given a wider range of choices, many women would still spend part of their working lives in one of these occupations and many would undoubtedly choose to spend their whole lives as full-time homemakers. All kinds of work are necessary to the society, and making a home for husband and children, in particular, can be a very rewarding career. But labor statistics now tell us that during their lifetimes 90 percent of girls in school today will work outside the home.[2] To continue to prepare them for only subordinate, supportive roles in their paid occupations and to fail to encourage the full development of their abilities is a serious loss of talent.

Women suffer not only from lack of proportional representation in desirable occupations, but also from inability to maintain the status they've had in the past. Between 1955 and 1968, a woman's average earning power fell from almost 64 percent to barely 58 percent of a man's.[3] Since the 1930's, women's share of BA's and MA's has fallen from 2 in 5 to 1 in 3;[4] since the 1940's their share of Ph.D's from 1 in 5 to 1 in 10.[5] In the last century, women have slipped from 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 college teachers.[6]

Women in the United States are also in a worse position in some ways than their sisters in many other countries. Here, they are less than 7 percent of doctors. In Switzerland, they are 15 percent; in Israel, 21 percent, in India, 33 percent.[7] In fact, in only three coun

tries — Spain, Madagascar, and South Vietnam — are women a smaller percentage of doctors.[8]

Men also suffer from these inequities. The most well-known instance is their 3 to 1 hold on the incidence of heart disease.[9] They often drive themselves harder and suppress their emotions. Occupational stereotypes keep many from pursuing artistic interests or staying home with the children. In fact, stereotypes exclude men from many occupations. Perhaps worst of all, many men have been led to believe that they will be considered failures if they dare to let a woman out-think, out-earn, or out-produce them. The truth is that society as well as individuals profit from optimum use of all talents.

In restricting people according to their sex — occupationally or psychologically — our schools reflect our society.

- Society restricts people by putting overt or implied sex labels on jobs and rejecting applicants of the other sex; schools in some places, either expressly or by implication, label courses — home economics, shop, physics, typing — "for boys," "for girls." In many cases, the labels don't need to be expressed; everyone knows them.

- Society restricts imagination and aspiration by example — executives are male, secretaries are female; the schools show students the example of male administrators and prestige-team coaches, female teachers, nurses, librarians, secretaries.

- Society constantly shows — on television, in periodicals and popular fiction — images of men and women that reinforce present conditions, the schools show the same kinds of images in educational materials.

By reflecting the world around them, schools have a great effect on the future pattern of society. They can either perpetuate or help replace those patterns of the present that restrict people unfairly. School administrators are becoming increasingly aware of the exquisite unfairness of current misconceptions about the limitations of women and men. They are also learning more about the extent of waste in talent and productivity such misconceptions cause, about the opportunities for a full and satisfying life too often withheld. More and more, they will want to take steps — indeed many are taking steps — to end sex role stereotyping in their school systems.

The Problem

This report specifically concerns sex stereotyping in textbooks and how to get rid of it. The first question to answer is, "What's wrong with the educational materials now in use, and how do they perpetuate sex discrimination and its effects?"

Many groups of concerned people have examined textbooks and children's trade books, in particular, to determine the extent of sex stereotyping. They have studied three aspects — content, illustrations, and language. All commonly reinforce discriminatory attitudes about men and women, in much the same way as ethnic and racial groups have been misrepresented. Some publishers have improved their treatment of other groups that have suffered the effects of discrimination — but only of the men and boys in those groups. Women remain invisible or stereotyped. Following are the findings from some of the studies that have been made.

LANGUAGE ARTS

One study[10] that analyzed 2,760 stories in 134 readers from 14 major publishers found —

- 5 stories about boys for every 2 about girls
- 3 stories about men for every 1 about women
- 119 biographical stories about 88 men and 27 biographical stories about 17 women
- Men shown in 147 jobs, women in 26 (of which three — witch, circus fat lady, and queen — are either improbable or undesirable)
- Exactly 3 working mothers
- 65 stories that belittle girls and 2 that belittle boys.

The children in these stories have two parents. The mother (except for those three) works in the home, but she presents a discouraging

picture of homemaking and motherhood alike. She is almost always cooking or cleaning or caring for a small or sick child. She is irritable and yells at the children when they are dirty or noisy or make a mess. She's helpless, forever dropping, losing, breaking, or spoiling something — from money to gloves to cakes. When her adventurous son is stuck up a tree, she just waits until Father comes home and gets the ladder. She's also emotional and likely to panic in difficult situations. Often a brave son has to reassure and calm his timorous or terrified mother. Her dreams are limited. When one little girl asks to "do something different," her mother promises to take her to the store to buy T-shirts for her brother.

The great number of children in school who have only one parent who works (or two, both workers) find little to relate to their own lives. In illustrations, Mother is always at home, neatly dressed in a skirt and high-heeled shoes. She usually wears a frilly apron, too, even when she is being unwontedly active — for example, in one text, while fixing a car. She often stands slightly bent forward, her hands clasped before her, gazing attentively at the man or child who is giving her an order. She is frequently shown offering cookies to her homebound school children. She is rarely away from home, when she is, she's probably shopping.

The father, who works outside the home, is a much more attractive figure than his wife. He may travel in his work. When he comes home, he may bring gifts or take the children on an outing or solve some problem for them or their mother. He may play a game with the children or build something or work outdoors. He is always pleasant, except for rare moments of justified anger. He is incompetent, if at all, only in "inconsequential" household matters, "women's work" — like finding his socks. He's treated as a guest in his own home, waited on by the attentive mother.

Small wonder that parents rarely talk to each other and never — in 134 books! — show each other any affection. In fact, they almost never work together on a common family project. How do they spend their time? She may wash dishes while he watches television, or he works in the yard while she watches at the window.

Small wonder, too, that the children take after their parents. Boys solve problems, overcome natural obstacles, have adventures, make things (often their own inventions), earn money. They spend a lot of time outdoors or in physical activity. They help girls and women out of difficulties, comfort, protect, and solve problems for them. They plan exciting careers for the future. They don't show feelings of any kind, except, once in a while, anger.

Girls are younger and smaller than their brothers. They stay indoors most of the time, cooking, sewing, cleaning, or playing with

dolls. They're more likely to play with kittens than with dogs or even grown cats. Like their mothers, they're inept, helpless to cope with the smallest emergency or solve the smallest problem. Girls are very emotional — they cry a lot and give way freely to fear. They fear things like the dark, insects, reptiles, and wild animals — unless a boy is protecting them. They can express happiness more freely than boys can, too. They're preoccupied with their appearance, and overly concerned about getting their dresses dirtied. They plan to get married, keep house, and raise children — exclusively.

Pictures show them often indoors, often sitting down, often watching boys do something active. They're usually neat and clean, if not, they're likely to be distressed about it.

Relations between girls and boys are strained and artificial. Boys are contemptuous of girls and try to keep them away. Their friendships with one another are frank and — well, "manly." Girls try to get boys' attention. A girl who has any initiative, strength, or courage tries to get accepted as "one of the boys." Among themselves, girls are envious, suspicious, and fearful of competition for boys' attention or others' approval. They aren't really good friends with one another; with boys — when they can get their attention — they're dependent, flirtatious, pretentious, and devious.

Readers bombard pupils with these images from the time they start school. Their effect is potent in reinforcing stereotypes and inequalities. One study[11] of 8-year-old children found that boys and girls agree 99 percent on which adjectives apply to which sex. Readers aren't the only language materials that propagate these stereotypes, however. The examples in spelling books have their effects, too. Consider "the ex-stenographer became a stewardess." Why not "the ex-stenographer became a pilot"? Later, when reading and spelling instruction gives way to literature, students encounter anthologies. Here women are almost excluded. in one anthology of works by 175 authors, 6 were female.

In the library, some of the most highly rated books for young people will reinforce their sex stereotypes. The Feminists on Children's Media studied 49 Newbery Prize winners, the American Library Association's Notable Books of 1969, and the Child Study Association's booklist. Among the Newbery winners, books about boys outnumbered those about girls by 3 to 1.[12] Females in these "boys books" are usually too bossy, the boys "have to cut them down to size."

The group found some children's books that they can recommend. Most, however, propaga.e the same derogatory stereotypes of girls and women that the readers do. A female character may enjoy athletics or be enterprising and adventurous — until she reaches teen-

age. Then she achieves femininity, sometimes with great difficulty, sometimes just by curling her hair. She is prepared for her destiny with seemingly only one goal in mind — to attract the male. The boys, on the other hand, are doing the more varied and challenging things *they* will be doing when they grow up. Some publishers say, "Girls will read books about boys, but boys won't read books about girls." If so, it's easy to see why.

PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

Science books generally ignore outstanding female scientists and their work. They don't picture women employed in important research, space exploration, or other challenging scientific work. Similarly, they fail to show girls performing exciting or creative experiments — just the "cookbook" variety. A picture of Marie Curie shows her standing behind two men.

Mathematics texts feature the same cast as the readers. One ninth-grade student analyzed her algebra book and recommended to the principal that its use be discontinued. The things she found are typical of math books. The men in the book spend large sums and do exciting things. The women spend small sums — if they get out of the house at all.

Wherever they are, females in math books are preoccupied exclusively with domestic chores — buying flour or ribbon, perhaps, or measuring the ingredients for a cake. Sometimes they just have physical characteristics — weight, height, age. The males cover distances by various modes of transportation; build things with wood, bricks, and concrete; and compete in sports. They also help out the females, who aren't good at math: "Sally did not know how to. . . so Jim helped her. . . ." In history sections, math books tell about the works of men from Archimedes on. They don't mention algebraist Emmy Noether and her influence on ideal theory — or the work of any other female mathematician.

Illustrations in mathematics texts and worksheets often show sets of female nurses, secretaries, and restaurant or domestic workers and sets of male doctors, business executives, and construction workers. In at least one set of worksheets, some of the men are apparently supposed to be Afro-American or Asian, but all the women are white.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Here is how one scholar describes the typical textbook view of women's part in U.S. history:

> Women arrived in 1619 (a curious choice if meant to be their first acquaintance with the new world). They held the Seneca Falls Convention on Women's Rights in 1848. During the rest of the nineteenth century, they participated in reform movements, chiefly temperance, and were exploited in factories. In 1920 they were given the vote. They joined the armed forces for the first time during the second World War and thereafter have enjoyed the good life in America.[13]

History books are weighted in favor of the political and military, against the economic, social, and cultural. Because of women's virtual exclusion from direct participation in the first two fields (except for Elizabeth I, Joan of Arc, and a few others), they are all too completely excluded from the history books as well. Typically, the only women mentioned in U.S. history are Betsy Ross, Pocahontas, and Eleanor Roosevelt. The long, bitter struggle for woman suffrage, begun by female abolitionists, is made to appear a genteel pasttime rewarded by a chivalrous Congress. In addition, suffrage is presented as the ultimate goal of the women's rights movement. The texts ignore the continuing inequities in areas such as employment, credit, marriage and divorce, and education — as well as the continuing struggle to remove them. Instead, they present a few female writers and artists in isolated sections on cultural background.

Yet it was often women, precisely because they weren't hunters, who developed agriculture — one of the most important steps in human progress.[14] In societies where sustaining life is a difficult and time-consuming task — from the Bush people of South Africa to the Indians and white settlers of North America — women have grown and preserved food, tended livestock, prepared materials and made clothing.[15] Sometimes, as in West Africa, they have carried on the commercial activity of an economy. Yet according to many history and social studies books, women have done little or nothing worth mentioning while male politicians made policies and male military forces made war.

Texts for family living courses, in turn, exert pressure to transform this historical fallacy into the truth of the future. They discuss women's homemaking and childrearing duties, men's financial and recreational responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Textbooks and materials like those described here simply do not reflect society today. Many children find nothing in them to reflect

their own lives. For one thing, more than half of the children in school today have mothers who work. Many are living with only one parent. And women long have done far more than the 26 kinds of work found in the readers, and solved far more than the domestic kinds of problems found in the math books. As for the social science texts, they show a world that never existed, in which women made no important economic contribution and were unaffected by important events.

By failing to present the world as it has been and is, materials like these leave students tragically unready for the world in which they will live their adult lives. Many of them will become parents; many of the girls will choose to stay at home and care for their families as a full-time occupation. Not only do the textbooks misrepresent *them* as lacking intelligence, courage, and imagination, the 90 percent of girls who will at some time, by choice or necessity, work outside the home are even worse served. All the things they can do and be are compressed into few and stereotyped molds.

What Can Be Done?

As an executive of the school system, you can do several things to counteract sex stereotyping in educational materials. Of course, you will need to plan carefully and organize support for your proposals. On this as on any other issue, you may be far ahead of your community. Opposition may be vocal and charged with emotion. But several sources offer help.

- Some of the materials listed in the bibliography of this report may help convince people who are open-minded and willing to approach the issue rationally. This group may eventually supply some of your best allies.

- Your community may have some women's groups — either branches of national groups, like the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Business and Professional Women (BPW), National Organization for Women (NOW), or the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), or state or local groups, like Commissions on the Status of Women — that are interested in eradicating sex role stereotyping from the schools. Such organizations often study conditions in education and publicize their findings, so they can be very effective in mobilizing community opinion behind your efforts for change.

- Parents of individual students and members of parent-teacher groups who are devoted to improving educational opportunities can be staunch advocates.

- Student groups also may be trying to get stereotypes out of the schools. Their efforts may not only help you, but give them valuable experience in research and community action.

- If your textbooks are being analyzed for their ethnic and racial attitudes, you may be able to extend the analysis to sex stereotyping. This can save the district the time and expense of a separate study.

CONTACT PUBLISHERS

As a first step, write to the publishers and producers of the educational media. Let them know how many new textbooks and other materials you'll need during the school year and that you'll be looking for ones that have eliminated stereotypes about women and men. Tell them, too, that you want specific information about the ethnic and sex distribution of pictures and stories in their materials.

ESTABLISH GUIDELINES

Very few acceptable textbooks are on the market now. When you buy new materials, use guidelines to make sure they meet your standards. There are plenty of models. Some of the publishers have established their own guidelines. Women's groups like Women on Words and Images and Feminists on Children's Media also have drawn up standards. In some school systems (Minneapolis, Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo, Michigan, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Highline Public Schools, Seattle, Washington, Jefferson County, Colorado; Montgomery County, Maryland, and Fairfax County, Virginia, are examples) task forces or the school administration have programs of their own. Here are some of the kinds of items they include.

Humanity

- Are people of both sexes shown cooperating with one another on an equal basis?

- Are genuine friendships between the sexes shown?
- Are praiseworthy traits — strength, compassion, initiative, warmth, perceptiveness, resourcefulness, courage — treated as human rather than "masculine" or "feminine"?
- Are women and girls as well as boys and men the leading characters in stories and biographies?
- Are girls sometimes taller, older, and wiser than boys?
- Do the books refrain from ridiculing or insulting either sex?

The Family

- Are single-parent families, families with working mothers, and extended families shown in approximate proportion to their actual occurrence in the population?
- Do single people with satisfying lives and work, including mothers or fathers who may have been widowed or divorced, appear in the stories?
- Are different members of the family shown sharing responsibilities and working together on common problems?
- Are childless couples shown unpatronizingly?
- Are old people presented realistically?

The Female Image

- Are women and girls shown solving problems independent of male assistance?
- Are they shown working and playing together in groups?
- Are they shown doing outdoor work around the house or as an occupation? in strenuous physical situations? travelling?
- Are girls shown earning money? awards and rewards?

- Are mothers and other women shown in positions of authority in addition to those of teacher, nurse, and librarian?
- Are girls shown operating machinery and constructing things?
- Are they sometimes rough or rude — with the understanding that this isn't "unladylike" but unkind and also sometimes natural?

The Male Image

- Are boys sometimes shown enjoying musical instruments, visiting art galleries, maybe stroking a kitten rather than roughhousing with a dog?
- Are males sometimes responsible for housework?
- Are their hobbies sometimes crafts such as weaving and ceramics?
- Do they express feelings — gentle as well as violent ones?
- Are men or older boys often shown caring for children, not just disciplining them?
- Are men shown in nontraditional occupations, such as nurse and primary teacher?
- Are boys sometimes depicted as sensitive and emotional?

Woman's Work

- Is information about women's achievements and the ways events and situations affect women integrated with the same kind of information about men rather than shunted off to a separate section?
- Does the book convey the difficulty of the continuing struggle for women's rights rather than imply that it ended when "Congress gave women the vote"?

- Does it describe the inequities in property and marriage practices, in education, and in the job market that women have long fought to change?

- Does it recognize the importance of women in the development of agriculture, trade, the labor movement?

- Does it discuss matriarchies as well as patriarchies?

Language

The publishers' guidelines, in particular, discuss language in detail. Here are some constructions they and others recommend discarding.

- "Man" or "mankind" to refer to humanity, people, the human race.

- "He" to refer to an abstract person who may be of either sex. "He or she," "she/he," "s/he" are some substitutes; or the sentence can be rewritten to use "they" or eliminate the pronoun altogether.

- "The Egyptians (or farmers) and their wives," or ". . . and their families." Again, substitutes are easy to find — "Egyptian men and women," "farm families," "Egyptians," "farmers."

- The use of "lady" or "woman" in front of an occupation — or a suffix at the end — to indicate that a person in that occupation is female. (Don't say "male nurse," either.) If it's an important piece of information, it can be conveyed by a name, title, or pronoun: "the poet Emily Dickinson," "Ms. Bridges got into the cockpit," "the lawyer looked up from her desk." If necessary, use "female" in front of the occupation.

- Names of occupations ending in "-man" or "-woman." Substitutes are plentiful — "firefighter," "mail carrier," "member of Congress," "sales clerk," "house cleaner."

- References to women's physical characteristics or family connections when the same information either is not relevant or is not given about the men mentioned. Why say "the assistant director, a pert, brown-eyed mother of three," when "the assis-

tant director, a somber, blue-eyed father of one" would be inappropriate? Why say "Marilyn Jones, wife of Benjamin Jones and a noted chemist in her own right" when you could say "noted chemist Marilyn Jones"? Mention Ben only if the context makes it important to know about him.

DEVELOP MATERIALS

It's said to take about 5 years to write and produce a textbook and get it into the hands of students. A few improved textbooks have begun to appear, but your district may not be able to replace your old texts right away. In fact, you may have just bought texts that are more fair to various ethnic groups — or at least to the males in those groups — and you can't simply throw them out.

There are still many things you can do to counteract the sexism in the textbooks now in use. One is to make sure any supplementary materials your system produces are free of sexism. In addition, your system can develop special supplements for history, science, and family living texts. This is one of the projects in which task forces can help you substantially.

NEUTRALIZE SEXIST MATERIALS

Sexist materials themselves can be very valuable in eradicating children's sexism. However, teachers need certain awareness and skills if this is to happen. The school district or a university can offer a workshop or course to give school staff whatever special training they need.

Skilled teachers can use many ways of neutralizing sexist materials in the classroom. Here are a few suggestions.

- Work out guidelines on sexism with the class, so that the students can evaluate the materials they use. This encourages them to think critically and analytically rather than accept every statement at face value.

- Hold class discussions of statements or situations in textbooks: Are they realistic? Why or why not?

- Collect nonsexist supplementary materials — from periodicals, newspapers, library books, paperbacks, government agencies,

private foundations, museums. Use such media as photographs, records, tapes, works of art, films, and videotapes.

- Set aside a time for children's presentations on "Women in the News."

- Ask students to fill in the information missing from history or social studies texts. Reproduce the materials they create.

- Discuss desirable and undesirable human characteristics.

- Ask the class to gather statistics on the occurrence of various family structures — and on mothers' employment outside the home — in the nation or in the community. Compare these with occurrence of these structures in readers, anthologies, library books.

- Ask students to compose descriptions or make collages on the ideal woman and ideal man as presented in communications media . . . on the typical woman and typical man. Discuss whether it's desirable to be like any of these images. Give reasons.

- Ask history or economics students to relate women's social condition in any given time and place to the requirements of the labor market.

- Ask students to analyze sexism in popular songs, jokes, the district's personnel directory, TV cartoons, children's rhymes, nursery stories, and toys and toy packaging.

You and your staff will probably develop many more ideas for classroom use.

Attacking sexism in materials at the source — the publishers — will help spare students the damage sex stereotypes do. Teaching students to use experience and research to weigh the truth of communications helps prepare them to live wisely. By doing both, you give them the chance to become stronger, more responsible human beings.

In Conclusion

Excellence in educational materials is more than the simple, negative elimination of stereotypes. It is related to some of the basic tenets of education — to equality of opportunity, respect for the rights of others, and the unbiased nurturing of dormant creative talent. Good educational materials, then —

- Stir ambitions, stimulate latent capabilities, and guide growing personalities.
- Strengthen ideals and aspirations, and an individual sense of worth and dignity.
- Stretch imagination, encourage investigation, and develop understanding.
- Present to each and every child unimpaired freedom of choice in establishing priorities and in reaching for her/his own hopes and aspirations.

FOOTNOTES

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