Radical Feminism

edited by Anne Koedt • Ellen Levine • Anita Rapone

An anthology of radical feminist writings from the current women's movement. Forty-five articles ranging from the personal to the theoretical and drawn largely from the feminist annual NOTES.
The Building of the Gilded Cage

by Jo Freeman

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Hidden somewhere in the byways of social science is an occasionally discussed, seldom studied, frequently employed and rarely questioned field generally referred to as social control. We have so thoroughly absorbed our national ideology about living in a “free society” that whatever else we may question, as radicals or academicians, we are reluctant to admit that all societies, ours included, do an awful lot of controlling of everyone’s lives. We are even more reluctant to face the often subtle ways that our own attitude and our own lives are being controlled by that same society.

This is why it has been so difficult for materially well-off, educated whites—women as well as men—to accept the idea that women are oppressed. “Women can have a career (or do something else) if they really want to” is the oft-heard refrain. “Women are where they are because they like it” is another. There are many more. “Women are their own worst enemies.” “Women prefer to be wives and mothers rather than compete in the hard, aggressive male world.” “Women enjoy being feminine. They like to be treated like ladies.” These are just variations on the same “freedom of choice”

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argument which maintains that women are free (don’t forget, we are living in a free society) to do what they want and never question why they think they want what they say they want.

But what people think they want is precisely what society must control if it is to maintain the status quo. As the Bems put it, “We overlook the fact that the society that has spent twenty years carefully marking the woman’s ballot for her has nothing to lose in that twenty-first year by pretending to let her cast it for the alternative of her choice. Society has controlled not her alternatives but her motivation to choose any but one of those alternatives.”

There are many mechanisms of social control and some are more subtle than others. The socialization process, the climate of opinion in which people live, the group ideology (political or religious), the kind of social structures available, the legal system, and the police are just some of the means society has at its disposal to channel people into the roles it finds necessary for its maintenance. They are all worthy of study, but here we are going to look only at two of them—one overt and one covert—to see what they can tell us about women.

The easiest place to start when trying to determine the position of any group of people is with the legal system. This may strike us as a little strange since our national ideology also says that “all men are equal under the law” until we remember that the ideology is absolutely correct in its restriction of this promise to “men.” Now there are three groups who have never been accorded the status and the rights of manhood—blacks, children (minors) and women. Children at least are considered to be in their inferior, dependent status only temporarily because some of them (white males) eventually graduate to become men. Blacks (the 47% who are male) have “been denied their manhood” since they were kidnapped from Africa and are currently demanding it back. But women (51% of the population, black and white)—how can a woman have manhood?

This paradox illustrates the problem very well: because there is a longstanding legal tradition, reaching back to early Roman law, which says that women are perpetual children and the only adults are men. This tradition, known as the “Perpetual Tutelage of Women” has had its ups and downs, been more or less enforced, but the definition of women as minors who never grow up, who
therefore must always be under the guidance of a male (father, brother, husband or son), has been carried down in modified form to the present day and vestiges of it can still be seen in our legal system.

Even Roman law was an improvement over Greek society. In that cradle of democracy only men could be citizens in the polis. In fact most women were slaves, and most slaves were women. In ancient Rome both the status of women and slaves improved slightly as they were incorporated into the family under the rule of patria potestas or Power of the Father. This term designated not so much a familial relationship as a property relationship. All land was owned by families, not individuals, and was under the control of the oldest male. Women and slaves could not assume proprietorship and in fact frequently were considered to be forms of property. The woman in particular had to turn any income she might receive over to the head of the household and had no rights to her own children, to divorce, or to any life outside the family. The relationship of woman to man was designated by the concept of manus (hand) under which the woman stood. Women had no rights under law—not even legal recognition. In any civil or criminal case she had to be represented by the pater who accepted legal judgment on himself and in turn judged her according to his whims. Unlike slaves, women could not be emancipated (removed from under the hand). She could only go from under one hand to another. This was the nature of the marital relationship. (From which comes our modern practice of asking a woman’s father for her hand in marriage.) At marriage a woman was “born again” into the household of the bridegroom’s family and became the “daughter of her husband.”

Although later practice of Roman Law was much less severe than the ancient rules, some of the most stringent aspects were incorporated into Canon Law and from there passed to the English Common Law. Interpretation and spread of Roman Law varied throughout Europe, but it was through the English Common Law that it was brought to this country and made part of our own legal tradition.

Even here history played tricks on women. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tremendous liberalizations were taking place in the Common Law attitude toward women. This was particularly true in the American colonies where rapidly accelerat-
ing commercial expansion often made it profitable to ignore the old social rules. In particular, the development of property other than land facilitated this process as women had always been held to have some right in movable property while only male heirs could inherit the family lands.⁵

But when Blackstone wrote his soon-to-be-famous Commentaries on the Laws of England, he chose to ignore these new trends in favor of codifying the old Common Law rules. Published in 1765, his work was used in Britain as a textbook. But in the Colonies and new Republic it became a legal Bible. Concise and readable, it was frequently the only book to be found in law libraries in the United States up until the middle of the nineteenth century, and incipient lawyers rarely delved past its pages when seeking the roots of legal tradition.⁶ Thus when Edward Mansfield wrote the first major analysis of The Legal Rights, Liabilities and Duties of Women in 1845, he still found it necessary to pay homage to the Blackstone doctrine that “the husband and wife are as one and that one is the husband.” As he saw it three years before the Seneca Falls Convention would write the Woman’s Declaration of Independence “it appears that the husband’s control over the person of his wife is so complete that he may claim her society altogether; that he may reclaim her if she goes away or is detained by others; that he may maintain suits for injuries to her person; that she cannot sue alone; and that she cannot execute a deed or valid conveyance without the concurrence of her husband. In most respects she loses the power of personal independence, and altogether that of separate action in legal matters.”⁷ The husband also had almost total control over all the wife’s real and personal property or income.

Legal traditions die hard even when they are mythical ones. So the bulk of the activities of feminists in the nineteenth century were spent chipping away at the legal nonexistence that Blackstone had defined for married women. Despite the passage of Married Women’s Property Acts and much other legislative relief during the nineteenth century, the core idea of the Common Law that husbands and wives have reciprocal—not equal—rights and duties remains. The husband must support the wife and children, and she in return must render services to the husband. Thus the woman is legally required to do the domestic chores, to provide marital companionship and sexual consortium. Her first obligation is to him. If he moves
out of town, she cannot get unemployment compensation if she quits her job to follow him, but he can divorce her on grounds of desertion if she doesn’t. Likewise, unless there has been a legal separation, she cannot deny him access to their house even if she has good reason to believe that his entry on a particular occasion would result in physical abuse to her and her children. He must maintain her, but the amount of support beyond subsistence is at his discretion. She has no claim for direct compensation for any of the services rendered.\(^8\)

Crozier commented on this distribution of obligations: “... Clearly, that economic relationship between A and B whereby A has an original ownership of B’s labor, with the consequent necessity of providing B’s maintenance, is the economic relationship between an owner and his property rather than that between two free persons. It was the economic relationship between a person and his domesticated animal. In the English Common Law the wife was, in economic relationship to the husband, his property. The financial plan of marriage law was founded upon the economic relationship of owner and property.”\(^9\)

This basic relationship still remains in force today. The “domesticated animal” has acquired a longer leash, but the legal chains have yet to be broken. Common Law practices, assumptions, and attitudes still dominate the law. The property, real and personal, brought by the woman to the marriage now remains her separate estate, but such is not always the case for property acquired during the marriage.

There are two types of property systems in the United States—common law and community. In the nine community property states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Washington), all property or income acquired by either husband or wife is community property and is equally divided upon divorce. However “the general rule is that the husband is the head of the ‘community’ and the duty is his to manage the property for the benefit of his wife and family. Usually, as long as the husband is capable of managing the community, the wife has no power of control over it and acting alone, cannot contract debts chargeable against it.”\(^10\) Included in the property is the income of a working wife which, under the law, is managed by the husband with the wife having no legal right to a say in how it shall be spent.
In common law states each spouse has a right to manage his own income and property. However, unlike community property states, this principle does not recognize the contribution made by a wife who works only in the home. Although the wife generally contributes domestic labor to the maintenance of the home far in excess of that of her husband, she has no right to an allowance, wages or an income of any sort. Nor can she claim joint ownership upon divorce.\textsuperscript{11}

Marriage incurs a few other disabilities as well. A married woman cannot contract on the same basis as her husband or a single woman in most states. In only five states does she have the same right to her own domicile. In many states a married woman can now live separately from her husband but his domicile is still her address for purposes of taxation, voting, jury service, etc.\textsuperscript{12}

Along with the domicile regulations, those concerning names are most symbolic of the theory of the husband's and wife's legal unity. Legally, every married woman's surname is that of her husband and no court will uphold her right to go by a different name. Pragmatically, she can use another name only so long as her husband does not object. If he were legally to change his name, hers would automatically change too, though such would not necessarily be the case for the children. "In a very real sense, the loss of a woman's surname represents the destruction of an important part of her personality and its submersion in that of her husband."\textsuperscript{13}

When we move out of the common law and into the statutory law we find an area in which, until recently, the dual legal status of women has increased in the last seventy years. This assault was particularly intense around the turn of the century, but has solidified considerably since then. Some of the earliest sex discriminatory legislation was against prostitutes; but this didn't so much prohibit the practice of their profession as regulate their hours and place of work. The big crackdown against prostitutes didn't come until World War I when there was fear that the soldiers would contract venereal disease.\textsuperscript{14}

There was also a rise in the abortion laws. Originally abortion was illegal only when performed without the husband's consent and the only crime was a "wrong to the husband in depriving him of children."\textsuperscript{15} Prior to passage of the nineteenth century laws which
made it a criminal offense it was largely regarded as a Church offense punishable by religious penalties.¹⁶

The most frequent new laws were sex specific labor legislation. Under common law and in the early years of this country there was very little restrictive legislation on the employment of women. It was not needed. Custom and prejudice alone sufficed to keep the occupations in which women might be gainfully employed limited to domestic servant, factory worker, governess, and prostitute. As women acquired education and professional skills in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, they increasingly sought employment in fields which put them in competition with men. In some instances men gave way totally and the field became dominated by women, losing prestige opportunities for advancement, and pay in the process. The occupation of secretary is the most notable. In most cases men fought back and were quick to make use of economic, ideological, and legal weapons to reduce or eliminate their competition. “They excluded women from trade unions, made contracts with employers to prevent their hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, caricatured working women, and carried on ceaseless propaganda to return women to the home or keep them there.”¹⁷

The restrictive labor laws were the main weapon. Among the earliest were those prohibiting women from practicing certain professions, such as law and medicine. But most were directed toward regulating work conditions in factories. Initially such laws were aimed at protecting both men and women workers from the sweatshop conditions that prevailed during the nineteenth century. The extent to which women, and children, were protected more than men varied from state to state, but in 1905 the heated struggle to get the state to assume responsibility for the welfare of workers received a major setback. The Supreme Court invalidated a New York law that no male or female worker could be required or permitted to work in bakeries more than sixty hours a week and in so doing made all such protective laws unconstitutional.¹⁸

Three years later the court upheld an almost identical Oregon statute that applied to females only, on the grounds that their physical inferiority and their function as “mothers to the race” justified special class legislation.¹⁹ With this decision as a precedent, the
drive for protective legislation became distorted into a push for laws that applied to women only. It made some strange allies, who had totally opposing reasons for supporting such laws. On the one hand social reformers and many feminists were in favor of them on the principle that half a loaf was better than none and the hope that at some time in the future the laws would apply to men as well. Many male union leaders were also in favor of them, but not because they would protect women. As President Strasser of the International Cigarmakers Union expressed it, “We cannot drive the females out of the trade but we can restrict this daily quota of labor through factory laws.”

Strasser soon proved to be right, as the primary use of “protective” laws has been to protect the jobs of men by denying overtime pay, promotions, and employment opportunities to women. The Supreme Court has long since rejected its ruling that prevented protective legislation from applying to men, yet there has been no move by male workers to have the laws extended to them. Most of the real benefits made available by such laws have been obtained through federal law or collective bargaining, while the state restrictive laws have been quoted by unions and employers alike to keep women in an inferior competitive position. The dislike of these laws felt by the women they affect can be seen in the numerous cases challenging their legitimacy that have been filed since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed (prohibiting sex discrimination in employment).

These laws do more than restrict the hours which women may work. An examination of the state labor laws reveals a complex, confusing, inconsistent chaos. As of 1970, before the courts began voiding many sex specific labor laws on the grounds they were in conflict with Title VII, thirteen states had minimum wage laws which applied only to women and minors, and two which applied only to women. Adult women were prohibited from working in specified occupations or under certain working conditions considered hazardous in twenty-six states; in ten of these women could not work in bars.

Laws restricting the number of hours a woman may work—generally to eight per day and forty-eight per week—were found in forty-one states and the District of Columbia. Twenty states prohibited night work and limitations were made in twelve on the amount of weight that could be lifted by a woman. These maximums
ranged from fifteen to thirty-five pounds (the weight of a small child). 23

The "weight and hours" laws have proved to be the most onerous and are the ones usually challenged in the courts. In Mengelkoch et al. v. the Industrial Welfare Commission of California and North American Aviation, Inc., the defending corporation has admitted that the women were denied overtime and promotions to positions requiring overtime, justifying their actions by the California maximum hours law. In Roig v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co., the plaintiffs are protesting that their current job is exempt from the Louisiana maximum hours law but that the higher paying job to which they were denied promotion is not. One major case which challenged the Georgia weight lifting law is Weeks v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph. It received a favorable ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court but the plaintiff has yet to be given the promotion for which she sued.

But perhaps most illustrative of all is an Indiana case, 24 in which the company tried to establish maximum weight lifting restrictions even though its plant and the plaintiffs were located in a state which did not have such laws. By company policy, women were restricted to jobs whose highest pay rate was identical with the lowest pay rate for men. Many of the women, including the defendants, were laid off while men with less seniority were kept on, on the grounds that the women could not lift over thirty-five pounds. This policy resulted in such anomalies as women having to lift seventeen and a half tons of products a day in separate ten-pound loads while the male supervisors sat at the head of the assembly line handling the controls and lifting one forty-pound box of caps each hour. "In a number of other instances, women were doing hard manual labor until the operations were automated; then they were relieved of their duties, and men were employed to perform the easier and more pleasant jobs." 25 In its defense, the company claimed it reached this policy in accordance with the union's wishes, but the Seventh Circuit Court unanimously ruled against it anyway. This is only one of many instances in which corporations and unions have taken advantage of "protective" legislation to protect themselves from giving women equal job opportunities and equal pay.

With the passage of Title VII, the restrictive labor legislation is slowly being dissolven by the courts. But these laws are just vestiges of what has been an entirely separate legal system applicable par-
particularly to women. At their base lies the fact that the position of women under the Constitution is not the same as that of men. The Supreme Court has ruled several times that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits any arbitrary class legislation, except that based on sex. The last case was decided in 1961, but the most important was in 1874. In *Minor v. Happerset* (88 U.S. 21 Wall, 162 1873), the court first defined the concept of “second-class citizenship” by saying that some citizens could be denied rights which others had. The “equal protection” clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not give women equal rights with men.

Other groups in society have also had special bodies of law created for them as a means of social control. Thus an examination of the statutes can clearly delineate those groups which society feels it necessary to control.

The statutes do not necessarily indicate *all* of the groups which a particular society excludes from full participation, but they do show those which it most adamantly excludes. In virtually every society that has existed, the caste cleavages, as distinct from the class lines, have been imbedded in the law. Differentiating between class and caste is often difficult as the two differ in degree that only at the extremes is seen as a difference in kind. It is made more difficult by our refusal to acknowledge that castes exist in our society. Here too we have allowed our thinking to be subverted by our national ideology. Our belief in the potentiality, if not the current existence, of high social mobility determined only by the individual’s talents, leads us to believe that mobility is hampered by one’s socio-economic origins but not that it is made impossible if one comes from the wrong caste. Only recently have we reluctantly begun to face the reality of the “color line” as a caste boundary. Our consciousness of the caste nature of the other boundaries, particularly that of sex, is not yet this high.

The law not only shows the caste boundaries, it also gives a fairly good history of the changes in boundaries. If the rigidity of caste lines fades into more permeable class lines, the legislation usually changes with it. The Middle Ages saw separate application of the law to the separate estates. In the early years of this country certain rights were reserved to those possessing a minimum amount of property. Today, nobility of birth or amount of income may affect the treatment one receives from the courts, but it is not expressed in
the law itself. For the past 150 years, the major caste divisions have been along the lines of age, sex, and ethnic origin; these have been the categories for which special legislation has existed.

The law further indicates when restricted castes are seen to be most threatening and the ways in which they are felt to be threatening. If members of a group will restrict their own activities, or these activities are inconsequential, law is unnecessary. No law need be made to keep people out of places they never considered going. It is when certain prerogatives are threatened by an outgroup that it must be made illegal to violate them. Thus Jim Crow laws were not necessary during slavery and restrictive labor legislation was not extensively sought for until women entered the job market in rapidly accelerating numbers at the end of the nineteenth century.

Frequently, members of the lower castes are lumped together and the same body of special law applied to all. Most of the labor legislation discussed earlier applies to "women and minors." The state of New York once worded its franchise law to include everyone but "women, minors, convicts and idiots." When a legal status had to be found for Negro slaves in the seventeenth century, the "nearest and most natural analogy was the status of women." But the clearest analogy of all was stated by the Southern slave-owning class when trying to defend the system prior to the Civil War. One of the most widely read rationalizations was that of George Fitzhugh, who wrote in his 1854 Sociology for the South that "The kind of slavery is adapted to the men enslave. Wives and apprentices are slaves, not in theory only, but often in fact. Children are slaves to their parents, guardian and teachers. Imprisoned culprits are slaves. Lunatics and idiots are slaves also."

The progress of "out castes," particularly those of the wrong race and sex, also have been parallel. The language of the Nineteenth Amendment was borrowed directly from that of the Fifteenth. The "sex" provision of Title VII (only the second piece of corrective legislation pertaining to women that has been passed) was stuck into the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a joke by octogenarian representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia.

Mary of the same people were involved in both movements as well. Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass were staunch feminists. Douglass urged the first Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848
to demand the franchise when many of the women were reluctant to do so. Similarly, the early feminists were ardent abolitionists. The consciousness of two of the most active is dated from the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were compelled to sit in the galleries rather than participate in the convention. Many of today's new feminists also come out of an active background in the civil rights and other social movements. Almost without exception, when one of the lower castes in our society begins to revolt, the others quickly perceive the similarities to their own condition and start the battle on their own grounds.

Thus it is not surprising that these groups quickly find that they have more in common than a similar legal situation. All of them, when comparing themselves to the culture of the middle-aged white male, find that they are distinctly in the minority position. This minority position involves a good deal more than laws and a good deal more than economic and social discrimination. Discrimination per se is only one aspect of oppression and not always the most significant one. There are many other social and psychological aspects. Likewise, being subject to separate laws and having poorer access to the socio-economic system are only some of the characteristics of being in a minority group. This point has been well explored by Hacker, who has shown the similarities in the caste-like status of women and blacks.

The Negro analogy has been challenged many times on the grounds that women do not suffer from the same overt segregation as blacks. This point is well noted. But it is important to realize that blatant discrimination is just one mechanism of social control. There are many more subtle ones employed long before such coercion becomes necessary. It is only when these other methods fail to keep a minority group in its place that harsher means must be found. Given that a particular society needs the subservience of several different groups of people, it will use its techniques to a different degree with each of them depending on what is available and what they are most susceptible to. It is a measure of the blacks' resistance to the definition which white society has tried to impose on them that such violent extremes have had to be used to keep the caste lines intact.

Women, however, have not needed such stringent social chains.
Their bodies can be left free because their minds are chained long before they become functioning adults. Most women have so thoroughly internalized the social definitions which tell them that their only significant role is to serve men as wives and raise the next generation of men and their servants that no laws are necessary to enforce this.

The result is that women, even more than other minority groups, have their identities derived first as members of a group and only second, if at all, as unique persons. "Consider the following—When a boy is born, it is difficult to predict what he will be doing twenty-five years later. We cannot say whether he will be an artist or a doctor or a college professor because he will be permitted to develop and fulfill his own identity. But if the newborn child is a girl, we can predict with almost complete certainty how she will be spending her time twenty-five years later. Her individuality does not have to be considered; it is irrelevant." 134

Yet until very recently, most women have refused to recognize their own oppression. They have openly accepted the social definition of who and what they are. They have refused to be conscious of the fact that they are seen and treated, before anything else, as women. Many still do. This very refusal is significant because no group is so oppressed as one which will not recognize its own oppression. Women's denial that they must deal with their oppression is a reflection of just how far they still have to go.

There are many reasons why covert mechanisms of social control have been so much more successful with women than with most other minority groups. More than most they have been denied any history. Their tradition of subjection is long and even this history is purged from the books so that women cannot compare the similarities of their current condition with that of the past. In a not-so-subtle way both men and women are told that only men make history and women are not important enough to study.

Further, the agents of social control are much nearer to hand than those of any other group. No other minority lives in the same household with its master, separated totally from its peers and urged to compete with them for the privilege of serving the majority group. No other minority so thoroughly accepts the standards of the dominant group as its own and interprets any deviance from those values as a sign of degeneracy. No other minority so readily argues
for the maintenance of its own position as one that is merely “dif-
ferent” without questioning whether one must be the “same” to be
equal.

Women reach this condition, this acceptance of their secondary
role as right and just, through the most insidious mechanism of
social control yet devised—the socialization process. That is the
mechanism that we want to analyze now.

To understand how most women are socialized we must first
understand how they see themselves and are seen by others. Several
studies have been done on this. Quoting one of them, McClelland
stated that “the female image is characterized as small, weak, soft
and light. In the United States it is also dull, peaceful, relaxed, cold,
rounded, passive and slow.”35 A more thorough study which asked
men and women to choose out of a long list of adjectives those which
most clearly applied to themselves showed that women strongly felt
themselves to be such things as uncertain, anxious, nervous, hasty,
careless, fearful, dull, childish, helpless, sorry, timid, clumsy, stupid,
silly, and domestic. On a more positive side women felt they were:
understanding, tender, sympathetic, pure, generous, affectionate,
loving, moral, kind, grateful and patient.36

This is not a very favorable self-image but it does correspond
fairly well with the social myths about what women are like. The
image has some nice qualities, but they are not the ones normally
required for that kind of achievement to which society gives its
highest social rewards. Now one can justifiably question both the
idea of achievement and the qualities necessary for it, but this is
not the place to do so. Rather, because the current standards are
the ones which women have been told they do not meet, the purpose
here will be to look at the socialization process as a mechanism to
keep them from doing so. We will also need to analyze some of the
social expectations about women and about what they define as a
successful woman (not a successful person) because they are inex-
tricably bound up with the socialization process. All people are
socialized to meet the social expectations held for them and it is
only when this process fails to do so (as is currently happening on
several fronts) that it is at all questioned.

First, let us further examine the effects on women of minority
group status. Here, another interesting parallel emerges, but it is
one fraught with more heresy than any previously observed. When
we look at the results of female socialization we find a strong similarity between what our society labels, even extols, as the typical "feminine" character structure and that of oppressed peoples in this country and elsewhere.

In his classic study *The Nature of Prejudice* Allport devotes a chapter to "Traits Due to Victimization." Included are such personality characteristics as sensitivity, submission, fantasies of power, desire for protection, indirectness, ingratiations, petty revenge and sabotage, sympathy, extremes of both self and group hatred and self and group glorification, display of flashy status symbols, compassion for the underprivileged, identification with the dominant group's norms, and passivity. Allport was primarily concerned with Jews and Negroes but compare his characterization with the very thorough review of the literature on sex differences among young children made by Terman and Tyler. For girls, they listed such traits as: sensitivity, conformity to social pressures, response to environment, ease of social control, ingratiating, sympathy, low levels of aspiration, compassion for the underprivileged, and anxiety. They found that girls, compared to boys, were more nervous, unstable, neurotic, socially dependent, submissive, had less self-confidence, lower opinions of themselves and of girls in general, and were more timid, emotional, ministrative, fearful, and passive. These are also the kinds of traits found in the Indians when under British rule, in the Algerians under the French, and elsewhere.

Two of the most essential aspects of this "minority group character structure" are the extent to which one's perceptions are distorted and one's group is denigrated. These two things in and of themselves are very effective means of social control. If one can be led to believe in one's own inferiority then one is much less likely to resist the status that goes with the inferiority.

When we look at women's opinions of women we find the notion that they are inferior very prevalent. Young girls get off to a very good start. They begin speaking, reading, and counting sooner. They articulate more clearly and put words into sentences earlier. They have fewer reading and stuttering problems. Girls are even better in math in the early school years. They also make a lot better grades than boys do until late high school. But when they are asked to compare their achievements with those of boys, they rate boys higher in virtually every respect. Despite factual evidence to the
contrary, girls’ opinion of girls grows progressively worse with age while their opinion of boys and boys’ abilities grows better. Boys, likewise, have an increasingly better opinion of themselves and worse opinion of girls as they grow older.  

These distortions become so gross that, according to Goldberg, by the time girls reach college they have become prejudiced against women. Goldberg gave college girls sets of booklets containing six identical professional articles in traditional male, female and neutral fields. The articles were identical, but the names of the authors were not. For example, an article in one set would bear the name “John T. McKay” and in another set the same article would be authored by “Joan T. McKay.” Questions at the end of each article asked the students to rate the articles on value, persuasiveness, and profundity and the authors for writing style and competence. The male authors fared better in every field, even in such “feminine” areas as art history and dietetics. Goldberg concluded that “Women are prejudiced against female professionals and, regardless of the actual accomplishments of these professionals, will firmly refuse to recognize them as the equals of their male colleagues.”

But these unconscious assumptions about women can be very subtle and cannot help but to support the myth that women do not produce high-quality professional work. If the Goldberg findings hold in other situations, and the likelihood is great that they do, it explains why women’s work must be of a much higher quality than that of men to be acknowledged as merely equal. People in our society simply refuse to believe that a woman can cross the caste lines and be competent in a “man’s world.”

However, most women rarely get to the point of writing professional articles or doing other things which put them in competition with men. They seem to lack what psychologists call the “achievement motive.” When we look at the little research that has been done we can see why this is the case. Horner’s recent study of undergraduates at the University of Michigan showed that 65% of the women but only 10% of the men associated academic success with having negative consequences. Further research showed that these college women had what Horner termed a “motive to avoid success” because they perceived it as leading to social rejection and role conflict with their concept of “femininity.” Lipinski has also shown that women students associate success in the usual sense as
something which is achieved by men, but not by women.\textsuperscript{45} Pierce suggested that girls did in fact have achievement motivation but that they had different criteria for achievement than did boys. He went on to show that high achievement motivation in high school women correlates much more strongly with early marriage than it does with success in school.\textsuperscript{46}

Some immediate precedents for the idea that women should not achieve too much academically can be seen in high school, for it is here that the performance of girls begins to drop drastically. It is also at this time that peer group pressures on sex role behavior increase and conceptions of what is “properly feminine” or “masculine” become more narrow.\textsuperscript{47} One need only recall Asch’s experiments to see how peer group pressures, coupled with our rigid ideas about “femininity” and “masculinity,” could lead to the results found by Horner, Lipinski, and Pierce. Asch found that some 33\% of his subjects would go contrary to the evidence of their own senses about something as tangible as the comparative length of two lines when their judgments were at variance with those made by the other group members.\textsuperscript{48} All but a handful of the other 67\% experienced tremendous trauma in trying to stick to their correct perceptions.

These experiments are suggestive of how powerful a group can be in imposing its own definition of a situation and suppressing the resistance of individual deviants. When we move to something as intangible as sex role behavior and to social sanctions far greater than simply the displeasure of a group of unknown experimental stooges, we can get an idea of how stifling social expectations can be. It is not surprising, in light of our cultural norm that a girl should not appear too smart or surpass boys in anything, that those pressures to conform, so prevalent in adolescence, prompt girls to believe that the development of their minds will have only negative results.

But this process begins long before puberty. It begins with the kind of toys young children are given to play with, with the roles they see their parents in, with the stories in their early reading books, and the kind of ambitions they express or actions they engage in that receive rewards from their parents and other adults. Some of the early differentiation along these lines is obvious to us from looking at young children and reminiscing about our own lives. But
some of it is not so obvious, even when we engage in it ourselves. It consists of little actions which parents and teachers do every day that are not even noticed but can profoundly affect the style and quality of a child’s developing mind.

Adequate research has not yet been done which irrefutably links up child-rearing practices with the eventual adult mind, but there is evidence to support some hypotheses. Let us take a look at one area where strong sex differences show up relatively early: mathematical reasoning ability. No one has been able to define exactly what this ability is, but it has been linked up with number ability and special perception or the ability to visualize objects out of their context. As on other tests, girls score higher on number ability until late high school, but such is not the case with analytic and special perception tests. These tests indicate that boys perceive more analytically while girls are more contextual—although the ability to “break set” or be “field independent” also does not seem to appear until after the fourth or fifth year.\(^{49}\)

According to Maccoby, this contextual mode of perception common to women is a distinct disadvantage for scientific production. “Girls on the average develop a somewhat different way of handling incoming information—their thinking is less analytic, more global, and more perseverative—and this kind of thinking may serve very well for many kinds of functioning but it is not the kind of thinking most conducive to high-level intellectual productivity, especially in science.”\(^{50}\)

Several social psychologists have postulated that the key developmental characteristic of analytic thinking is what is called early “independence and mastery training,” or “whether and how soon a child is encouraged to assume initiative, to take responsibility for himself, and to solve problems by himself, rather than rely on others for the direction of his activities.”\(^{51}\) In other words, analytically inclined children are those who have not been subject to what Bronfenbrenner calls “over-socialization,”\(^{52}\) and there is a good deal of indirect evidence that such is the case. Levy has observed that “overprotected” boys tend to develop intellectually like girls.\(^{53}\) Bing found that those girls who were good at special tasks were those whose mothers left them alone to solve the problems by themselves while the mothers of verbally inclined daughters insisted on helping them.\(^{54}\) Witkin similarly found that mothers of analytic children had encouraged their initiative while mothers of non-analytic children
had encouraged dependence and discouraged self-assertion. One writer commented on these studies that "this is to be expected, for the independent child is less likely to accept superficial appearances of objects without exploring them for himself, while the dependent child will be afraid to reach out on his own and will accept appearances without question. In other words, the independent child is likely to be more active, not only psychologically but physically, and the physically active child will naturally have more kinesthetic experience with spatial relationships in his environment."

When we turn to specific child-rearing practices we find that the pattern repeats itself according to the sex of the child. Although comparative studies of parental treatment of boys and girls are not extensive, those that have been made indicate that the traditional practices applied to girls are very different from those applied to boys. Girls receive more affection, more protectiveness, more control, and more restrictions. Boys are subjected to more achievement demands and higher expectations. In short, while girls are not always encouraged to be dependent per se, they are usually not encouraged to be independent and physically active. "Such findings indicate that the differential treatment of the two sexes reflects in part a difference in goals. With sons, socialization seems to focus primarily on directing and constraining the boys' impact on the environment. With daughters, the aim is rather to protect the girl from the impact of environment. The boy is being prepared to mold his world, the girl to be molded by it."

This relationship holds true cross-culturally even more than it does in our own society. In studying child socialization in 110 non-literate cultures, Barry, Bacon, and Child found that "pressure toward nurturance, obedience, and responsibility is most often stronger for girls, whereas pressure toward achievement and self-reliance is most often stronger for boys." They also found that strong differences in socialization practices were consistent with highly differentiated adult sex roles.

These cross-cultural studies show that dependency training for women is widespread and has results beyond simply curtailing analytic ability. In all these cultures women were in a relatively inferior status position compared to males. In fact, there was a correlation with the degree of rigidity of sex-role socialization, and the subservience of women to men.

In our society also, analytic abilities are not the only ones valued.
Being person-oriented and contextual in perception are very valuable attributes for many fields where, nevertheless, very few women are found. Such characteristics are valuable in the arts and the social sciences where women are found more than in the natural sciences—yet even here their achievement is not deemed equivalent to that of men. One explanation of this, of course, is the repressive effect of role conflict and peer group pressures discussed earlier. But when one looks further it appears that there is an earlier cause here as well.

As several studies have shown, the very same early independence and mastery training which has such a beneficial effect on analytic thinking also determines the extent of one’s achievement orientation—60—that drive which pushes one to excel beyond the need of survival. And it is precisely this kind of training that women fail to receive. They are encouraged to be dependent and passive—to be “feminine.” In that process the shape of their mind is altered and their ambitions are dulled or channeled into the only socially rewarded achievement for a woman—marriage.

Now we have come almost full circle and can begin to see the vicious nature of the trap in which our society places women. When we become conscious of the many subtle mechanisms of social control—peer group pressures, cultural norms, parental training, teachers, role expectations, and negative self concept—it is not hard to see why girls who are better at most everything in childhood do not excel at much of anything as adults.

Only one link remains and that requires taking a brief look at those few women who do manage to slip through a chance loophole. Maccoby provided the best commentary on this when she noted that the girl who does not succumb to overprotection and develop the appropriate personality and behavior for her sex has a major price to pay: the anxiety that comes from crossing the caste lines. Maccoby feels that “it is this anxiety which helps to account for the lack of productivity among those women who do make intellectual careers—because [anxiety] is especially damaging to creative thinking.” The combination of all these factors tells “something of a horror story. It would appear that even when a woman is suitably endowed intellectually and develops the right temperament and habits of thought to make use of her endowment, she must be fleet of foot indeed to scale the hurdles society has erected for her and
to remain a whole and happy person while continuing to follow her intellectual bent.”

The plot behind this horror story should by now be clearly evident. There is more to oppression than discrimination and more to the condition of women than whether or not they want to be free of the home. All societies have many ways to keep people in their places, and we have only discussed a few of the ones used to keep women in theirs. Women have been striving to break free of these bonds for many hundreds of years and once again are gathering their strength for another try. It will take more than a few changes in the legal system to significantly change the condition of women, although those changes will be reflective of more profound changes taking place in society. Unlike blacks, the women’s liberation movement does not have the thicket of Jim Crow laws to cut through. This is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the women’s liberation movement lacks the simple handholds of oppression which the early civil rights movement had; but at the same time it does not have to waste time wading through legal segregation before realizing that the real nature of oppression lies much deeper. It is the more basic means of social control that will have to be attacked as women and men look into their lives and dissect the many factors that made them what they are. The dam of social control now has many cracks in it. It has held women back for years, but it is about to break under the strain.

Footnotes

12 Ibid., p. 39.
20 British feminists always opposed such laws for their country on the grounds that any sex specific laws were fraught with more evil than good.
23 Ibid.
24 Sellers, Moore and Case v. Colgate Palmolive Co. and the International Chemical Workers Union, Local No. 15, 272 Supp. 332; Minn. L. Rev. 52: 1091.
25 *Brief for the Plaintiffs/Appellants in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals*, No. 16, 632, p. 5.
27 George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South* (Richmond, Va.: A. Morris, 1854), p. 86.
28 The first was the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which took 94 years to get through Congress.
30 Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York, Atheneum, 1959), p. 71. They were joined by one white and one black man, William Lloyd Garrison and John Cronan.
32 Myrdal, p. 1073.
33 Hacker, pp. 10–19.
34 Bem and Bem, p. 7.
43 McClelland, passim.
49 Eleanor E. Maccoby, “Sex Differences in Intellectual Functioning,” *The Development of Sex Differences*, ed. by E. Maccoby (Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 26ff. The three most common tests are the Rod and Frame test, which requires the adjustment of a rod to a vertical position regardless of the tilt of a frame around it; the Embedded Figures Test, which determines the ability to perceive a figure embedded in a more complex field; and an analytic test in which one groups a set of objects according to a common element.


Bronfenbrenner, p. 260.

