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THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN
REDUCING SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an examination of the role of the teacher in reducing sex role stereotyping. I aim to discover to what extent my own behaviour in the classroom can reinforce sex role stereotypes and exaggerate sex differences. I will also discuss ways in which sex role stereotyping is developed in the family and the school. The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the urgent need for changes to be made in education, particularly in relation to the type of education received by boys and girls and to the often unconscious differential treatment of male and female pupils in the classroom.

Chapter 1 contains a discussion on the changing role of women in education and society, the link between education, the labour market and the increasing inclusion of women in the labour market is examined. The aims of education in relation to the provision of equality of opportunity will be examined and the role of education in aiding social reform looked at.

In Chapter 2, the early stages in the process of socialisation will be looked at in more detail. The development of sex role stereotyping will be traced so that ways to reduce such stereotyping can be identified. Ways in which stereotyping are reinforced in both the family and in the school will be looked at. As well as looking at how sex role stereotyping begins, the damaging effects of it will be discussed, the implications of this for teachers will also be given.

In Chapter 3, my own research in the classroom will be introduced. The aims of my research will be given and the way in which this research is to be carried out will be presented. My aims are to observe my own behaviour and the interaction between myself and pupils of both sexes in the classroom over a number of weeks. Any differential treatment of male and female pupils by myself and other patterns of behaviour will be noted, analysed and examined in detail. I plan to discover ways in which I can reduce sex role stereotyping through altering my own behaviour.

In Chapter 4, the results of my participant observation will be presented and discussed. I intend to look at the number of questions asked to male and female pupils, praise and rewards given to pupils, disciplinary interventions received by pupils, tasks allocated to pupils, questions asked by pupils and demands made and interruptions caused by pupils.

In the final chapter, conclusions will be drawn from the results and findings of the research project. Useful and practical ways to reduce sex role stereotyping and sex differences in the school will be given. These recommendations will hopefully be ones which can be put into practice immediately and which aid the restructuring and shaping of attitudes which are the cause of the wastage of talent and the prevention of full development of people of both sexes.

CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

We live in a society in which there is substantial inequality and some of this inequality is gender related. There is evidence to suggest that there is systematic inequality between men and women in education, the labour market, social welfare and politics. (1)

In this chapter the function of education will be examined and the case for equality of educational opportunity in relation to gender proposed. As one of the main agents of socialisation, the school plays a major role in bringing about reform in society. Schools must actively participate in reducing sex role stereotyping if there is to be a reduction of sexism in society. Many schools still gear girls education to preparing them for traditional adult roles such as wife and mother (2) even though women are now participating increasingly in the paid labour force as well as remaining there for longer periods than they were twenty years ago (3). If one of the functions of the school is to prepare children for their future roles and careers there is a serious need for change in light of the changing roles of women.

Inequality and Education

The functions and aims of education. According to the 1969 Department of Education Document "Ar nDaltin Uile: All Our Children

> .... every child, without exception .... will receive the best possible
> education suited to his or her individual talents. (4)

In other words, one of the main aims of education is to give everyone equal opportunity to develop to their full potential and to make the most of their talents regardless of sex, race or social class. As Sheelagh Drudy and Kathleen Lynch put it:

> the task of education is to make sure that every member of society has a
> an equal chance to be unequal and can move according to skill and effort
> into the social position most appropriate to their talents. (5)

Meritocracy and the Utilisation of Talent

The notion of educational opportunity is based on a meritocratic ideology which suggests that those who have the ability and who work hard should be rewarded in society. M. Young equates it that "IQ. + Effort = Merit". (6) The rewards or merits would be the social positions in the occupational structure but as Kathleen Lynch points out, there simply are not enough jobs for all those who are suitably skilled. (7) This is one of the main problems with the meritocratic ideal.

I do, however, believe that those with the ability and the determination should be given the opportunity to capitalise on their ability and to develop fully as individuals regardless of sex, race or social class. If everyone is able to develop fully and to make the most of their talents and ability, there will be more people making valuable contributions to society. As a result of the low participation in education by certain social groups, talent which is needed by the economy is being wasted. There has to be greater participation in education if talents which are vital to society are to be realised and secured.

The School and Society

Socialisation

Drudy and Lynch say that:

> socialisation refers to all the learning we do in order to become
> competent and functioning members of our social group, community,
> society. It is a process that starts the moment we are born, and
> continues until we die. It is achieved through interaction with others,
> and involves a variety of processes, including observation and invitation
> of others, identification with and internalisation of behaviour patterns
> and values, social control of the behaviour of individuals by group
> members, the manipulation of symbols and language and formal learning.
> (8)

Measor and Sikes point out that these patterns of thought and behaviour considered acceptable in society vary tremendously in different regions, classes and nations. They have also varied throughout history. (9)

Socialisation can be divided into three stages: the first stage is the socialisation of the young child in the family. This is where children learn what behaviours are appropriate and where models for these behaviours are provided. The second stage involves the school and the third stage is adult socialisation, this is when the person enters roles for which earlier socialisation may not have prepared them fully, for example, becoming an employee or parent. (10)

The school, next to the family, is one of the main agents of socialisation. It is in school that children interact with others of their own age and where they come into contact with a wider range of values than those learned in the home. Children learn that appropriate behaviour is rewarded, and hence reinforced, while inappropriate behaviour is discouraged and therefore avoided. The process works well for sex role learning as it does for other kinds of socialisation.

People are not just victims, they "eagerly participate" in the process of socialisation because of the desire to fit in and to be like other people in their world. It is this process that prepares children to play the roles that society expects of them, particularly those which are expected because of their sex. (11) Because schools are so important in the socialising of the young they are believed to be powerful forces for social improvement. (12) So it is no surprise to find that those who wish to change society frequently look to schools to prevent things like alcohol and drug abuse, racial prejudice and sexism. The women's movement has sought the co-operation of teachers, administrators and textbook publishers in their campaign to change "the subtle elements of schooling that promotes attitudes, behaviours and practices that create sex roles". (13)

These elements within schooling that promote sex stereotyping will be discussed more thoroughly at a later stage. For now it is important to realise the role that education plays in shaping society which is why it is necessary to discover how schools reinforce sex role stereotypes and how to change this. Another role that education plays, is that of selecting and allocating pupils to a particular track or stream that is deemed appropriate to their future position in the labour force. (14)

Women, Education and Society

Education and the Labour Market

"Schools", say Hannan and Breen, "have come to play the central sorting and labelling role as credential-giving institutions, in labour market placement". (16) In their study Schooling and Sex Roles Hannan and Breen discovered that the

kind of education received by girls is geared toward preparing them for the traditional roles of wife and mother or for the traditional areas of female employment. (15) It is because the labour market is so highly gender-differentiated that schools treat girls education differently. The differences between the educational experiences of girls and boys is linked to the differences between the sexes in economic, social and political power. As we have seen schools and education can be used to bring about social change. Things, however, have changed immensely over the last few decades as Mary Cullen says "Women have entered big business, the professions and the market place". (17) The type of education received by girls will have to change if education is supposed to prepare them for future roles. At present many girls are still receiving education geared towards preparing them for the traditional roles of wife and mother.

Women and the Labour Market

Historically, the exclusion of women from public life was paralleled by their exclusion from public school. In nineteenth century Ireland women were excluded from participation in political decision making (they did not have a vote), from universities and professions. Marriage and domestic life was seen as the natural destination of the woman yet men had complete control over the wife, children and the wife's property. (18) The notion that all women will marry, look after homes and raise children was considered the norm up until quite recently, indeed it still exists today.

Hannan and Breen refer to a "structural shift" that appears to be occurring in economic and social life in Ireland and in many other Western countries:

What had become a 'normal' expectation of improving living standards and changing lifestyles can no longer be taken for granted, and what had become a common-sense view of our particular division of labour and authority relationships in work and family life is no longer so commonsensical. (19)

They point out that the most obvious changes that have occurred are in adult gender roles. There has been rapid change in family and work role patterns for younger married couples, a very fast decline in birth rates within marriages and in the age of completion of childbearing and childrearing, and a decrease in the stability of marriage and the course of parental life. (20) This has resulted in a greater participation of women in the paid labour force after marriage. In 1971 married women comprised only 13.6 per cent of the female paid labour force, in 1981 it was 30.2 per cent and in 1991 it was 44 per cent. (21) Thus, according to this evidence married women have become almost four times more likely to remain at work after marriage now than they were twenty years ago. (See Table 1). Times are definitely changing, and if one of the tasks of education is to provide the economy with skilled and able workers, it is vital that womens education is adapted to fulfil the needs of society.

TABLE 1

CHANGES IN WOMEN'S PAID LABOUR FORCE

PARTICIPATION , 1971-1991

Paid Labour Force *	1971	1981	1991
Total +	1,125,400	1,272,000	1,333,500
Total Women	289,300	370,000	429,100
Women as percent. of total	25.7	29.1	32.2
Married Women ++ in paid labour force			
Total	39,200	112,000	190,700
As percent. of female paid labour force	13.6	30.2	44.4

*   The term 'paid labour force' is used to alert readers to the fact that while most women work-at home - only a minority are in paid employment.
What is currently defined as the 'labour force' does not include people on 'home duties,' 99 per cent of whom are women.

\+   Figures are rounded.

\++   Includes separated and divorced women. In 1991, 11,500 (2.7%) of the total of 429, 100 women in the paid labour force were separated or divorced.

SOURCE: J. Blackwell, <u>Women in the Labour Force</u>, (Dublin: Employment Equality Agency, 1989), table 3.1; Central Statistics Office, <u>Labour Force Survey, 1991</u>, (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1992), table 11 cited in Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p.169.

Conclusion

With declining employment opportunities, competition for jobs at all levels is now far more intense. In a society where educational performance and credentials are vital for employment it is crucial that education provides equality of educational opportunity. (22)

Girls are more likely to stay on to complete second level education than their male counterparts. For example, in 1988/90, 52.2 per cent of 17 and 18 year olds in second level education were girls. (23) They also have attained higher aggregate grades than boys in major public examinations. (24) (See Table 2). But when it comes to third level education boys slightly outnumber girls and greatly outnumber them in the expanding technological sector of higher education. (25) Men's higher degrees give them a competitive labour market edge which is crucial for getting employment.

This chapter has served as an introduction in that I have presented the reasons as to why there should be greater change within the education system (and society) in relation to gender issues. I feel that changes in attitudes and behaviour can and will be brought about through schools and education. I believe that it is because of sex role stereotyping that girls are "underachieving" in that they are not being encouraged to develop to their full potential.

TABLE 2

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE AMONG CANDIDATES TAKING THE FULL LEAVING CERTIFICATE FOR THE FIRST TIME, 1991

Percentage obtaining each grade (all examinations combined)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	A+B
Higher-Level Papers								
Girls	5.0	21.0	39.0	29.0	5.0	1.0	0	27.0
Boys	5.0	20.0	36.0	31.0	6.0	6.0	0	26.0
Ordinary-Level Papers								
Girls	4.0	17.0	33.0	32.0	9.0	4.0	1.0	21.0
Boys	4.0	15.0	30.0	32.0	11.0	6.0	2.0	18.0

SOURCE: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, The 1991 Leaving Certificate Examination: a Review of Results, (Dublin: NCCA, 1991) tables 34, 48 cited in Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society in Ireland, p. 181.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

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3. Sheelagh Drudy and Kathleen Lynch, Schools and Society in Ireland (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1993), p. 168.

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7. Ibid., p.33.

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11. Van Scotter et al., <u>Social Foundations of Education</u> 3rd Ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), p. 213.

12. Sara Delamont, <u>Sex Roles and the School</u>, (London: Methuen, 1980) p. 3.

13. Van Scotter et al., <u>Social Foundations of Education</u>, p. 221.

14. Measor and Sikes, <u>Gender and Schools</u>, p. 2.

15. Hannan and Breen, "Schools and Gender Roles" in <u>Girls Don't Do Honours</u>, p. 101.

16. Idem, <u>Schooling and Sex Roles: Sex Differences in Subject Provision and Student Choice in Irish Post-primary Schools</u>, (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, 1983).

17. Mary Cullen, <u>Girls Don't Do Honours</u>, p. 3.

18. Ibid., p.4.

19. Hannan and Breen, "Schools and Gender Roles," in <u>Girls Don't Do Honours</u>, p. 100.

20. Ibid.

21. Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 168.

22. Hannan and Breen, "Schools and Gender Roles" in <u>Girls Don't Do Honours</u>, p. 100.

23. Department of Education, <u>Statistical Report, 1990/91</u> (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1992), cited in   Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 167.

24. Idem, <u>Leaving Certificate Examination Results</u> (Athlone: Department of Education, 1983), cited in Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 167.

25. Patrick Clancy, <u>Who Goes to College?: a Second National Survey of Participation in Higher Education</u>, (Dublin: Higher Education Authority, 1988) cited in Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 167.

CHAPTER 2

THE CIRCLE OF SEXISM

Inge Broverman and several associates analysed perceptions of "typical" masculine and feminine traits. They found considerable unanimity of opinion amongst people of both sexes, all ages and all types of backgrounds: men are pictured as competent, rational and assertive while women are thought of as warm and expressive. (1)

The evidence concerning which characteristics are genetically determined and which are socially determined is not conclusive. The variability in sex roles (the patterns of behaviour and characteristics associated with being male or female) across cultures, suggest that much of what is thought of as masculine or feminine is culturally determined. War and weapon-making are the only tasks which all primitive societies seem to have reserved for men. While being pregnant and giving birth are obviously a women's work, Sara Delamont points out that child rearing is not a woman's task universally, but is often left to children of both sexes, or to the elderly. (2)

In western society roles assigned to men and women have gone well beyond those connected with reproduction. A division of labour along lines of gender has prescribed that most of the caretaking tasks in society are assigned to women and most of the external, public, and production-related tasks are given to men. (3)

Some writers have suggested that the division of labour and other differences between the sexes go back to the days when people lived a hunter-gathering existence and that the division of labour then was essential for survival. (4) The theory is then extended to say that these characteristics are built into the

physiology of the two sexes and are genetically determined. Rita Bornstein provides a description of what she calls the "circle of sexism" (see figure 1) which helps to illuminate the connection between what is perceived and what is actual. (5)

In order to break this circle of sexism Sue Sharpe says that "what we should do is understand how and where artificial differences have been created, exaggerated and exploited, and to change this process in its totality". (6) One solution would be to change the way in which parents raise their children.

Sex Role Socialisation and the Family

The first stage of the process of socialisation, where we learn the patterns of thought and behaviours considered acceptable in society, is in the family. Among the behaviours that are expected of children are those that are expected because of the child's gender and according to Lee and Gropper, parents, in most cases, play a very direct role in shaping their children's acceptable gender identification. (7)

Although developmental psychologists report few differences in the behaviour of infant girls and boys (8) parents tend to interact with and treat differently male and female children. From the moment children are born they are described and talked about differently.

Baby girls are softer, smaller and daintier than baby boys who are described as bigger, harder and stronger. This is only the tip of the iceberg, the beginning of a lifetime of differential and sometimes unfair treatment.

FIGURE 2.1

CIRCLE OF SEXISM

2. Differential treatment of
   males and females

1. Assumptions about
   appropriate sex roles,
   jobs, behaviour.

3. Loss of
   individuality
   potential between
   males and females.

4. Actual differences in
   male and female roles,
   jobs and behaviours.
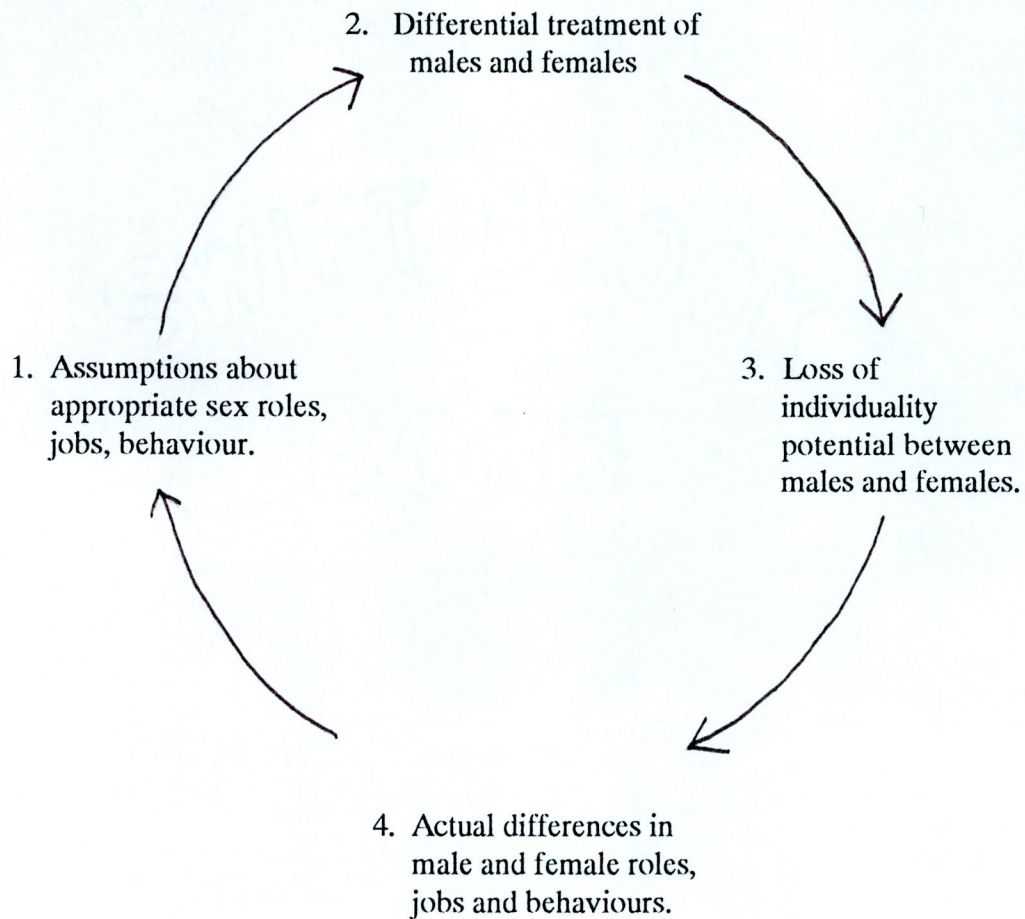
SOURCE: Rita Bornstein, "Sexism in Education," in <u>Sex Equity Handbook
            for Schools</u>, Myra Pollock Sadker and David Miller Sadker, eds.,
            (New York: Longman, 1982) cited in Van Scotter et al., <u>Social
            Foundations of Education</u>, p.217.

According to Sue Sharpe,

> the basic distinctions between male and female are laid down within the family, and children learn these in a number of ways. The initial unconscious process of identification and assimilation is built on by the operation of social learning or conditioning, in which the 'right' behaviour is reinforced through a system of rewards and punishments and become 'generalised' out on to many other situations. (9)

Among the distinctions between the sexes are the distinctions between the types of toys given to young boys and girls. Toys reflect children's supposed interests, skills and future roles. Toys given to boys tend to be more active and technical, they include cars, trains, aeroplanes, guns, 'action-men' and chemistry sets. Toys given to girl's, on the other hand, include dolls, doll's houses and prams, cuddly toys, miniature pots, pans and ovens. Although there is usually a selection of both types of toys in families with boys and girls, Sue Sharpie says that "children soon become able to distinguish between girl's toys and boy's toys." (10)

From the start children are being told indirectly what their interests are, or what they should be, according to their gender and they see that these are different from those of their siblings of the opposite sex. Girls are expected to be more fragile than boys and are treated more protectively. They are less likely to be given independence and support training at an early age. (11) In general they receive more affection, more controls and greater restrictions. They are not encouraged to be dependent but the relative lack of encouragement or opportunity for independence has the same effects. (12) Parents, particularly fathers, emphasise achievement and exploration more for boys than girls and girls tend to be kept under closer supervision and given more help in solving problems. As a result, they are more likely than boys to ask for help. (13)

Nancy Romer in "The Sex Role Cycle" says that:

> by the time children enter elementary school they most likely think of themselves as members of their own sex, behave in sex-typical ways, want to be like members of their own sex and feel committed to this point of view. (14)

So, before children even go to school they have very clear ideas about what is acceptable masculine and feminine behaviour. Unfortunately, Beverly Fagot (1978) found that parents of preschoolers often are not aware that they are responding differently to boys and girls. (15) Biehler and Snowman say that it is possible that although contemporary parents may think that they have rejected traditional conceptions of sex roles, they are still encouraging girls to be dependent and passive and boys to be independent and active. (16)

Sex Role Socialisation and the School

It has already been noted that the school, next to the family, is one of the main agents of socialisation. Just as the school often acts to transmit the traditional values of the larger culture in general, it also transmits society's version of the sex role. What the child has learned in the home about sex-appropriate behaviour is usually reinforced in the school.

Van Scotter and his colleagues have identified a variety of ways within schools through which messages about sex roles can be communicated:

- The selection of the curriculum is one of the most obvious.
- The language used in the classroom is a "subtle but critical" element of socialisation.

- The hiring practices in schools can also reflect sex biases.

- The timetabling of subjects so that sex-specific classes are offered at the same time discourages boys from taking traditionally female subjects like home economics and girls from taking traditionally male subjects like woodwork and metalwork.

- The guidance counselling in schools which helps students make choices about subject choices, careers and further education can also have an impact on sex roles. (17)

Teacher's behaviour can reflect sex roles as well. There is substantial evidence to suggest that teachers interact differently with their male and female pupils. As with parents, teachers who believe they are treating pupils of both sexes equally are not in fact doing so and, according to Drudy and Lynch, "this operates to the disadvantage of female pupils." (18) It is the part that teachers play in developing and reinforcing sex role stereotyping that will be examined in more detail later in this dissertation.

The differential treatment of girls that hinders their education begins in preschool and continues through to post-graduate education. Observations in classrooms reveal that boys are up to eight times more likely to receive (and demand) attention. (19) The same study revealed that even when girls were spoken to by teachers they did not get the same kind of feedback or response as the boys. The reaction to boys was often "dynamic, precise and effective", whereas the reaction to girls was often" bland and diffuse". (20) Work done by Ni Charthaigh and Harrison in Ireland with second-level student teachers indicates similar tendencies. They found that boys were asked significantly more questions than girls. (21) As a result of this girls were being less intellectually challenged than boys. This same study also found that when group

questions were asked boys monopolised the responses unless teachers specified the pupils they wanted to answer the questions. (22)

Other, seemingly innocent and unintentional behaviours can promote sex stereotyped distinctions. For example, a consistent pattern of asking girls to water flowers and boys to run the projector can communicate expectations regarding gender.

As was pointed out earlier, many teachers do not realise that they are giving boys more attention (23) and are even doing so when they feel girls are dominating the classroom. Teachers often have different expectations of boys' and girls' behaviour and achievement; and these are major factors in reinforcing sex role stereotyping.

The Effects of Sex Role Stereotyping

What is Stereotyping?

In the Oxford Paperback Dictionary a stereotype is:

> An idea or character, etc. that is standardised in a conventional form without individuality (24).

Sex role stereotypes are therefore roles, behaviours and characteristics that are standardised and which lack individuality. As can be seen in the "circle of sexism" it is very difficult to separate actual differences from cultural differences. Sue Sharpe considers that there are as many variations within the sexes as between them, and, "the sweeping generalisations embodied in

stereotypes obviously conceal the broad boundaries and overlaps of characteristics between and within each sex". (25)

Many women may be subjective, dependent and passive but this is quite likely to be because of the differential treatment they receive at home, in school and in the media. Assigning social roles based on sex is not in itself a problem but problems do occur when role assignments are seen to be unreasonable or unjust.

Self Esteem

In the first chapter sexism and sex role stereotyping was shown to prevent children from developing to their full potential. It was also shown to result in talent being wasted which is needed by the economy. It is the stereotypical image of the woman being the parent who raises children and who works at home, that has caused girls to receive an education that is designed to prepare them for such a role. This role is one that more women these days are postponing or not opting for at all.

The fact that boys get most attention from teachers shows that girls are neglected and must suffer as a result. If they are constantly ignored, or not given the same quality of attention as boys are, it seems reasonable to assume that they must believe that they are not as good as boys.

It has been argued by V. Morgan that inequalities in teacher-pupil interactions can adversely affect girls' self-images and expectations. (26) As a result they tend to set lower goals for themselves and to fail to reach their full potential. Ultimately sex role stereotyping can result in women being low in self-esteem; ambivalent about success, power, and achievement; intellectually

underdeveloped; unassertive; over-educated for their jobs; under prepared for traditionally male career opportunities; and at the bottom of the ladder in employment, status, pay, and opportunities for advancement. (27)

In the 1992 Green Paper on Education it is stated that:

> Education ... must contribute to the breaking down of stereotypes, the opening up of opportunities and the growth and self-esteem of all, irrespective of sex. (28)

Breaking the Circle

Hannan and Breen believe that:

> Although differentiated sex role socialisation has been proceeding since childhood it may be a mistake to assume that - even where such differentiated primary socialisation has crystallised into rather clear-cut sex role identities by age 12/13 - the constituents of sex role identity (particularly the extent to which essentially sexist beliefs underlie it) have become so crystallised by secondary school age it is not open to change. (29)

Sue Sharpe also agrees that they are not "predetermined and unchangeable". (30) Mary Lewis and Thomas Kellaghan note that the findings of recent research suggest that :

> pre-adolescent children, given an environment in which gender rules are reduced, are less rigid than younger children both in their application and adoption of stereotypes. (31)

This implies that the latter years of primary schooling and the early ones of secondary schooling could be more important in relation to the development of sex-stereotyping than those at the beginning and middle of primary education.

So it is crucial that second-level teachers do not assume that it is too late but must take active steps toward combating stereotyped images of boys and girls. Teachers should be made aware of the subtle ways in which they can reinforce traditional stereotypes and should make a point of treating boys and girls equally. Arnot suggests that genuine equality of the sexes has not yet become an educational goal. If it is now to become one, she argues, there must be changes in teacher education and in-service programmes to reshape teacher education and in-service programmes to reshape teachers' classroom practices, the redesign of curricula's, the rewriting of textbooks, and re-education of parents and employers. (32) Schools should not be developing and reinforcing sex segregations and stereotypes which exaggerate the negative aspects of sex roles when they could be trying to alleviate them.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

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3. Van Scotter et al., <u>Social Foundations of Education</u>, p. 214.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p.216.

6. Sue Sharpe, <u>Just Like A Girl</u>, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 87.

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17. Van Scotter et al., Social Foundations of Education, p. 221.

18. Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society in Ireland, p. 198.

19. Van Scotter et al., Social Foundations of Education, p. 223.

20. Ibid.

21. D. Ni Charthaigh and R. Harrison, "A Training Instrument for Use in Pre-service Microteaching Courses Designed to Promote Equity in the Quality of Teacher Interaction with Boys and Girls" in P. Hibner (ed.), Teacher Education and Training in Europe: Present Challenges and Future Strategies, (Berlin: Free University, 1988) cited in Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society, p. 200.

22. Ibid.

23. M. Stanworth, Gender and Schooling, (London: Hutchinson, 1983) cited in Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society, p. 199.

24. Joyce M. Hawkins, The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983),
p. 659.

25. Sharpe, Just Like a Girl, p. 70.

26. V. Morgan, "Gender Differentiation in Primary Schools: a Northern View", (Coleraine: Faculty of Education University of Ulster, 1991, cited in Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society, p. 199.

27. Van Scotter et al., Social Foundations of Education, p. 224.

28. Department of Education, Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education, (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1992), p. 68 cited in Mary Lewis and Thomas Kellaghan, Exploring the Gender Gap in Primary Schools, (Dublin: St. Patrick's College Educational Research Centre, 1993), p. 15.

29. Hannan and Breen, <u>Schooling and Sex Roles</u>, p. 19.

30. Sharpe, <u>Just Like a Girl</u>, p. 87.

31. L.A. Serbin, K. Powlishta, and J. Gulhoo, "The Development of Sex Typing in Middle Childhood" in <u>Manographs of the Society for Research in Child Development</u>, 1993, (2, Serial No. 232), cited in Lewis and Kellagher, <u>Exploring the Gender Gap in Primary Schools</u>, p. 9.

32. M. Arnot, "A Cloud Over Co-Education: an Analysis of the Forms and Transmission of Class and Gender Relations" in S. Walker and L. Barton (eds.), <u>Gender, Class and Education</u>, (Lewes: Falmer, 1983) cited in Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society</u>, p. 202.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the Research Project

Drudy and Lynch have found that there is substantial evidence to suggest that "teachers - even those well disposed to the provision of equal opportunities - interact differentially with their male and female pupils". (1)

Through carrying out my own research, I intend to establish the extent to which this information is true of myself as a teacher of both male and female pupils. Therefore, I decided to focus on interaction in the classroom so as to discover how I personally as a teacher, can create a non-sexist environment in the future on an everyday basis.

Teacher's behaviour is considered to be one of the main elements within schooling that can reinforce and develop sex role stereotyping. Therefore, the opposite should also be true - that teacher's behaviour can reduce and alleviate sex role stereotyping. Changes within the classroom are easier to implement than changes within educational systems. The reforms that I hope to be able to proposed will be ones that can be put into effect immediately and will be of practical use to all teachers.

Above all, I aim to discover, if in fact, I do treat male and female pupils differentially and, if I do, to what extent I do so. I will establish which group gains most of my attention and how much of this attention is initiated by myself and how much is initiated by the pupils. The type of attention received by both girls and boys will also be examined. In other words, which group receives the most praise or positive attention and which receives most negative attention. I

wish to discover whether certain behaviour is considered acceptable from one group and not the other. The types of tasks given to pupils will be looked at and also the frequency with which they are distributed. The number of male and female pupils taking each subject in first and fifth year will be examined and any gender differences noted. Any other pattern of behaviour that are relevant to this study will be noted as well.

Participant Observation

My research will be carried out through doing "participant observation." It is called this because the observer talks to and participates in activities with the people he or she is studying. Sara Delamont describes it as "studying a situation by immersing oneself in them." (2) Four 80 minute classes, with one particular group were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed. The pupils were aware of the fact that the class was being taped, but were purposely not told exactly what it was that was being studied. I believe that the presence of the dictaphone did not alter my teaching or the behaviour of the pupils in any way. It was quickly forgotten about after the initial shock. I am confident that the classes taped were typical of the classes I normally have with these particular pupils. I feel that they are a true and accurate representation of the way in which I interact with pupils.

Background Information on the School

Pobalscoil Isolde is a co-educational community school situated in Palmerstown, south-west Dublin. There are 520 pupils attending the day school (56 people attend night and post-leaving certificate courses), 227 of these are

girls and 293 boys and their ages range from 12 to 18. There are approximately 34 teachers (including part-time teachers), 25 of which are female and only 9 are male. Both the Principal and Vice-Principal are male.

The school opened 12 years ago in 1982. It was established to meet the needs of all the young people in the Palmerstown / Chapelized area and is a non-fee paying school. Applicants from other areas are considered and many pupils come from the neighbouring areas of Ballyfermot and Clondalkin. It offers a wide variety of subjects to its pupils entering the school in first year. Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography, French, Religion and Pastoral Care are compulsory and there are options of Science, Art, Woodwork, Metalwork, Mechanical Drawing, Business Studies, Home Economics, German and Music. As with all community schools, there are a range of both academic and practical subjects and pupils are prepared for the major public examinations as well as other work experience certificate programmes.

The class with which I carried out my research are First Years and are all between the ages of 13 and 14. There are 24 pupils in the class, 18 girls and 6 boys - three times more girls than boys. The pupils are of mixed ability, most are very active with low concentration spans.
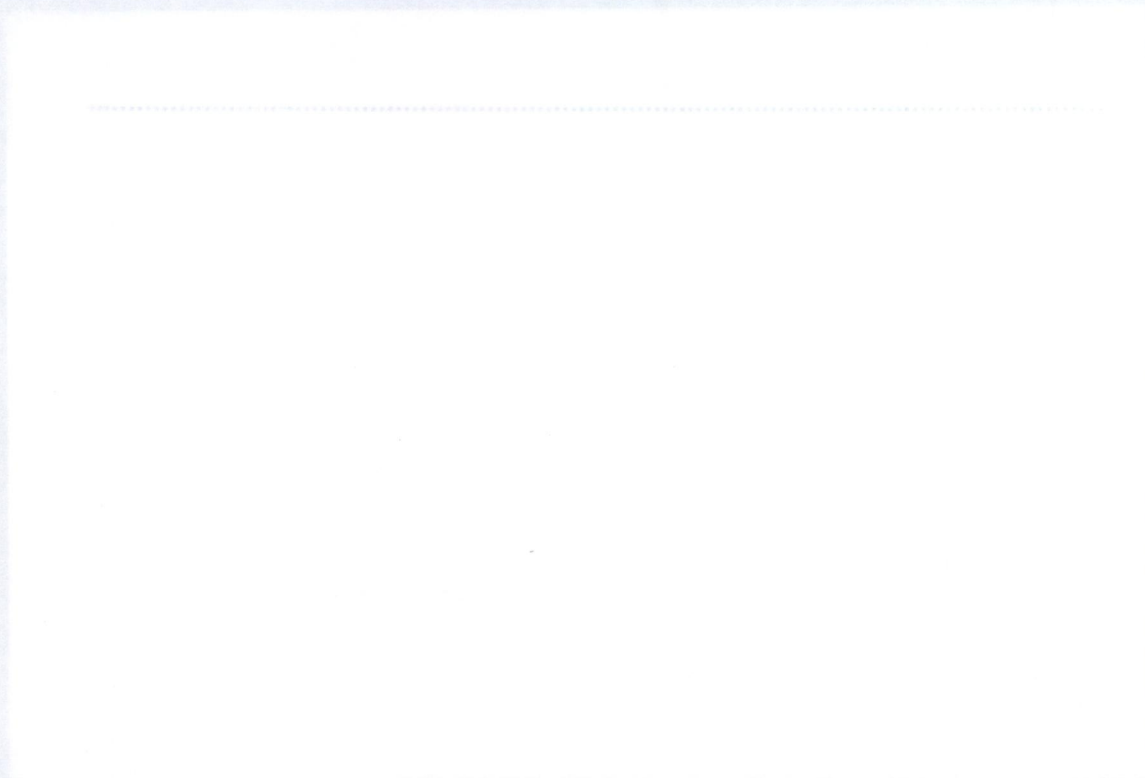
FIGURE 3.1

Pobalscoil Isolde, Palmerstown

FIGURE 3.2

Palmerstown

The Art Department

There is one art room in the school, situated amongst the other practical subject rooms. There is one art teacher who has been teaching in the school since it opened and who holds other posts in the school including organising work experience for pupils and teaching photography as part of a Journalism Course. Art is not a compulsory subject and is available to pupils of all abilities. Out of the 520 pupils in the school, 152 do art. Table 3 shows the number of pupils in each art class from First to Fifth year. It also shows the number of boys and girls who chose Art in each class.

Figure 3.1. shows a plan of the art room, including the seating arrangements and the basic facilities in the room, such as a kiln, a pottery wheel, 2 sinks, a number of cupboards for storage, a store room, and a desk for the teacher. There is also a slide projector, display screen and a portable blackboard. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show the art room from different view points. The range and amount of materials available are limited. Pupils are expected to provide their own paper and pencils.

Details of the Research Project

As was noted earlier in this chapter, four 80 minute classes were taped in order for my research to be carried out. The classes had to be tape-recorded because of the nature of my research which involved observing both myself and the pupils in the class, therefore, I was both a participant and an observer. Once the classes had been taped, they were transcribed as accurately as possible and patterns of behaviour were noted and recorded. The results were divided into 6 categories:

1. Provision, timetabling and uptake of subjects.

2. Questions asked by the teacher.

3. Rewards and punishments.

4. Tasks given to pupils by the teacher.

5. Questions asked by the pupils.

6. Attention demanded by pupils and interruptions caused in order to gain teacher attention.

The first section examines the types of subjects provided and chosen by male and female pupils in first year and in fifth year. The second three categories or headings deal with things initiated by the teacher and the last two deal with attention which the pupils themselves initiate. Data will be presented in the form of tables and bar charts. The tables will show the numbers for each of the four classes as well as the total number for all of the classes. The bar charts will show the ratios of boys to girls under each heading. There will also be a discussion of the findings under each heading and reasons for the results and ways for improvement will be proposed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have briefly stated the aims of this project and I have outlined the methods that I used to achieve these aims. I have described the class which I have studied and the school in which it was carried out, so as to place this study in its natural context. My main concern is that the results of this study will prove to be both useful and informative to myself and for my teaching in the future.

TABLE 3

**NUMBER OF PUPILS TAKING ART IN
THE SCHOOL, 1993/94**

Year	Group	Total No. of Pupils	No of Boys	No of Girls
1st	1.	24	6	18
	2.	21	13	8
2nd		24	13	11
3rd	1.	21	5	16
	2.	24	15	9
5th		20	10	10
6th		18	9	9
Total		152	71	81

Figure 3.3

PLAN OF ART ROOM

KILN

WHEEL

PRESS

PRESS

DESK

PRESS

BOOKS

DISPLAY AREA

PRESS

PRESS

PRESS

STORE ROOM
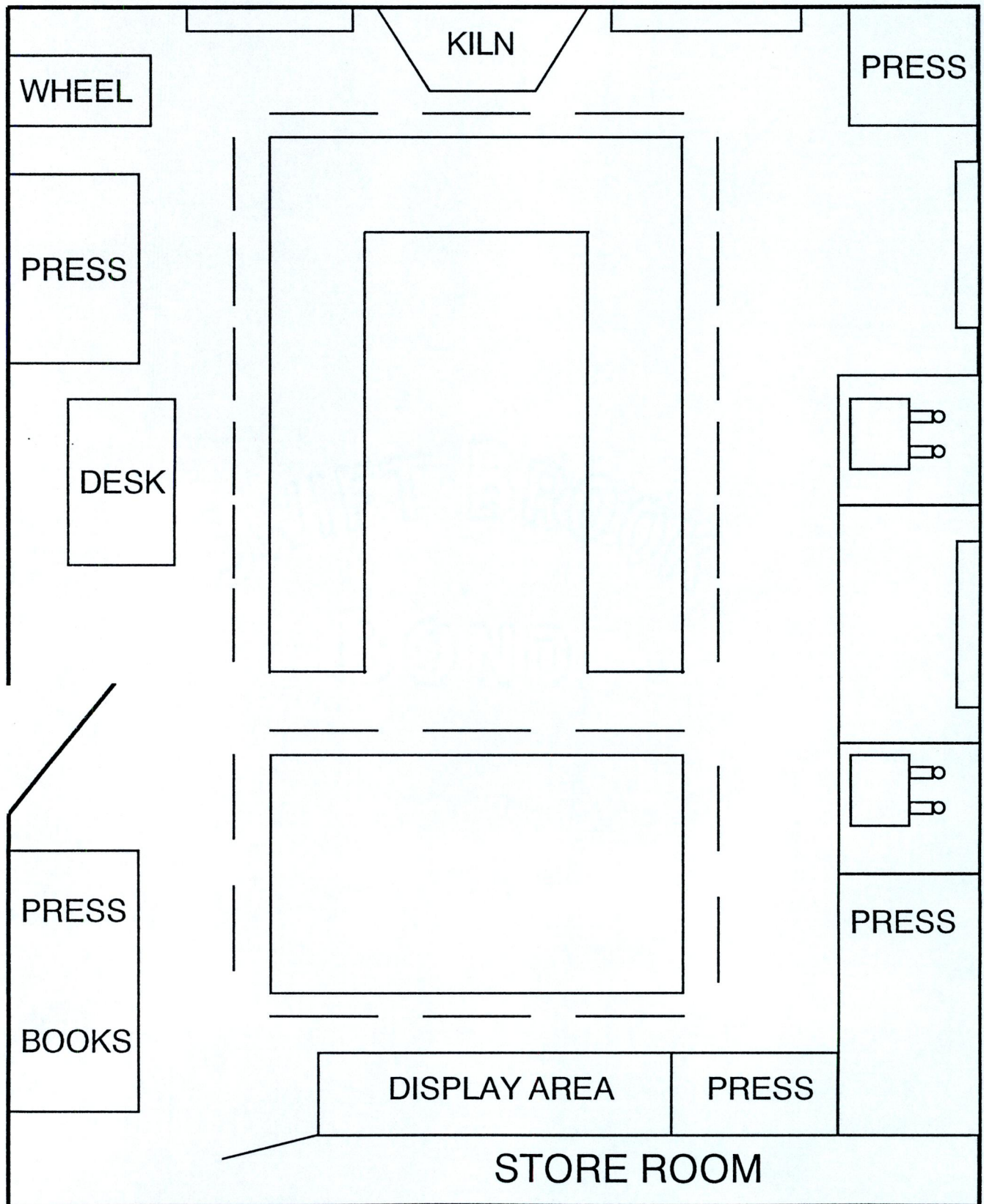
FIGURE 3.4

The Art Room

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

1. Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 198.

2. Sara Delamont, <u>Interaction in the Classroom</u>, (London: Methuen, 1976),
    p. 22.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the results and findings of my participant observation. As already stated in the previous chapter, the results will be discussed under 6 different headings, the first section looks at the provision, timetabling and choice of subjects and the rest deal with interaction in the classroom. The first three of these deal with attention initiated by myself and the latter two with that initiated by the pupils. The overall results from the four classes will be displayed on a bar chart and will show the ratio of boys to girls. These results will be discussed in more detail as well. All of the names of pupils used in this chapter are false. It is only important to know whether the pupil is male or female and the frequency with which they are asked or ask questions, etc.

Subject Provision and Uptake

According to the 1994/95 school prospectus, "all subjects are, subject to vacancies, open to both boys and girls." (1) In the first year, all pupils take Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography and French, Science, Art, Home Economics, German, Technical Graphics, Business Studies, Materials Technology Wood, Metalwork and Music. Religious Education, Pastoral Care and Physical Education are taken by all pupils but are not examined. Table 4 shows the provision and timetabling of subjects for first years in 1993/94. Science was the subject offered the most - four times. Art, Home Economics and Woodwork were all offered twice, the other subjects being offered only

once. This means that if a pupil wanted to do both Art and Music they would not be able to do Woodwork, Metalwork or Technical Graphics. If a pupil wanted to do Metalwork and Technical Graphics, they could not do Woodwork, Art or Music.

Table 5 shows the number of pupils taking each subject and the number of male and female pupils in these classes. In the total number of Science class, there are slightly more boys than girls. In Woodwork, there are twice as many boys as girls. In Technical Graphics, there are 23 boys and only 1 girl in the class. In Music, there are almost three times more girls than boys. In Home Economics, there are 12 times more girls than boys. Only three out of the 56 boys in first year choose this subject, even though it was offered twice. Home Economics could not be chosen if a pupil wanted to do Business Studies or German and Metalwork. In Metalwork, there are only 3 girls out of the 53 in first year, there are 19 boys - 6 times more boys. In German, there is almost an equal amount of boys and girls - 9 boys and the girls. The same applies to Business Studies where the differences are slight, there are 13 boys and 16 girls.

TABLE 4

SUBJECT CHOICES GIVEN TO FIRST

YEAR PUPILS 1993/94

A	B	C
Science	Woodwork	Business Studies
Art	Science	Science (1)
Home Economics	Art	Science (2)
Metalwork	Music	German
Woodwork	Technical Graphics	Home Economics

NOTE: Pupils had to choose one subject from each of the lists (A, B and C). This was the choice given to pupils entering first year in September 1993. The timetable changes each year depending on staff availability and pupil numbers.

TABLE 5

SUBJECT TAKE-UP BY FIRST YEAR PUPILS

A comparision of the amount of male and female pupils in each subject class.

Subject and No. of Classes	Total No. of Pupils Taking the Subject	No. of Boys Taking The Subject	No. of Girls Taking The Subject
Science (4)	86	50	36
Woodwork (2)	47	31	16
Technical Drawing (1)	24	23	1
Music (1)	20	3	17
Home Economics (2)	39	3	36
Metalwork (1)	24	19	3
German (1)	20	9	11
Business Studies (1)	29	13	16
Art (2)	45	17	28

Total number of first year pupils = 111 - 56 Boys and 53 girls.

In both Art classes together there are 17 boys and 28 girls which makes it one of the less gender - differentiated subject. The most obvious sex differences were in Technical Graphics, Music, Metalwork, Home Economics and to a lesser extent, Woodwork.

By way of comparison, the same was done with fifth year subject choices and uptake. According to Hannan and Breen, sex differences and generally greater at senior level than at junior level. In fifth year, Science is divided into three areas - Physics, Chemistry and Biology (which is offered twice). To do any of these subjects, it is almost necessary to have done Science for the Junior Certificate Examination so those, for example, who chose Art, Woodwork and German would not be eligible to take up eight of these subjects in fifth year. Building Constructions and Engineering are also added to the range of subjects available to pupils.

In the Technical Drawing class, there is only one girl and 18 boys. In Engineering, there are 2 girls and 20 boys. In Art, there is an equal amount of boys and girls and in Accounting and History, the differences are slight. In Home Economics, there are over five times as many girls and in German almost four times as many. In Building Construction there are 2 girls and 14 boys - seven times more boys than girls. There is a large difference in Physics - nearly four times more boys and in Chemistry and Geography there are just over twice as many girls. In German, the girls outnumber the boys 3 to 11. Biology, is chosen by exactly three times more girls than boys. The biggest differences therefore, lie in Technical Drawing, Engineering, Physics and Building Construction with boys dominating these subjects. Girls are more dominant in Home Economics, German, Biology, Chemistry and Geography. These facts

would come as no surprise to most people because subjects like Engineering and Technical Drawing would be associated with boys and subjects like Home Economics and languages associated with girls.

There are a number of different reasons why there are such marked differences in subject uptake by male and female pupils, these include:

- Parental pressure
- Peer pressure
- Teacher expectations
- School ethos
- Pupils own ideas about what is suitable for boys and girls
- Pupils view of themselves.

It was shown in Table 5 that there is only 1 girl and 23 boys in the Technical Graphics class and 3 girls and 19 boys in Metalwork in first year. It must be very difficult for girls to choose to go into these areas knowing that they will be outnumbered greatly by boys, possibly intimidated, particularly at this age, (13 and 14), and not encouraged by teachers, parents or friends. The would apply to boys wishing to choose Home Economics.

TABLE 5

SUBJECT TAKE-UP BY FIRST YEAR PUPILS

A comparision of the amount of male and female pupils in each subject class.

Subject and No. of Classes	Total No. of Pupils Taking the Subject	No. of Boys Taking The Subject	No. of Girls Taking The Subject
Science (4)	86	50	36
Woodwork (2)	47	31	16
Technical Drawing (1)	24	23	1
Music (1)	20	3	17
Home Economics (2)	39	3	36
Metalwork (1)	24	19	3
German (1)	20	9	11
Business Studies (1)	29	13	16
Art (2)	45	17	28

Total number of first year pupils = 111 - 56 Boys and 53 girls.

TABLE 6

SUBJECT CHOICES GIVEN TO FIFTH YEAR PUPILS 1993/94

A	B	C
History	Art	Biology
Physics	Geography	Engineering
Biology	Chemistry	Accounting
Building Construction	Technical Drawing	Home Economics
German		

NOTE: Pupils had to choose one subject from each of the lists (A, B and C). This applied to pupils entering fifth year in September 1993.

TABLE 7

SUBJECT TAKE-UP BY FIFTH YEAR PUPILS

A comparison of the amount of male and female pupils in each subject class.

Subject	Total No. of Pupils Taking the Subject	No. of Boys Taking The Subject	No. of Girls Taking The Subject
Technical Drawing	19	18	1
Engineering	22	20	2
Art	18	10	10
Accounting	22	12	10
Home Economics	19	4	15
Physics	14	11	3
History	25	12	13
Building Construction	16	14	2
German	14	3	11
Biology (1)	13	2	11
(2)	19	6	13
Total	32	8	24
Chemistry	20	6	14
Geography	25	9	16

Total number of pupils = 82 - 42 Boys and 40 girls.

Questions asked by the Teacher

In each of the four classes, I found that girls were asked more questions than boys but this is to be expected because there are three times as many girls as there are boys in the class. When this was taken into consideration, it was discovered that the boys in the class were asked almost twice as many questions as the girls, (see Tables 8 and 9). When questions were asked to the class as a whole, an equal amount of boys and girls were given the opportunity to answer and in many cases, both a girl and a boy were asked to give an answer. These types of questions, open to everyone, were asked mainly at the beginning of the classes during the introduction and in the evaluation at the end. Often when one of the boys answered a question correctly, he tried to dominate the answering of questions for the rest of the introduction or evaluation. The answers given by this pupil were often incorrect and merely a way of giving the attention of the class and the teacher. This pupil was usually asked to answer a question to prevent him from distracting others and as a result dominated a large amount of class time, for example:

Teacher: *Everyone put everything down and give me your full attention. Adam put <u>everything</u> down. Now, last week some of you began making your masks. Is this yours Rebecca? Yes. O.K., will you tell everyone how you went about making this? Adam will you put that down.*

Adam: *I was just looking at it.*

Rebecca: *I just put strips of newspaper over the face I made before.*

TABLE 8

QUESTIONS ASKED TO PUPILS

A comparison of the number of questions asked to male and female pupils in each class.

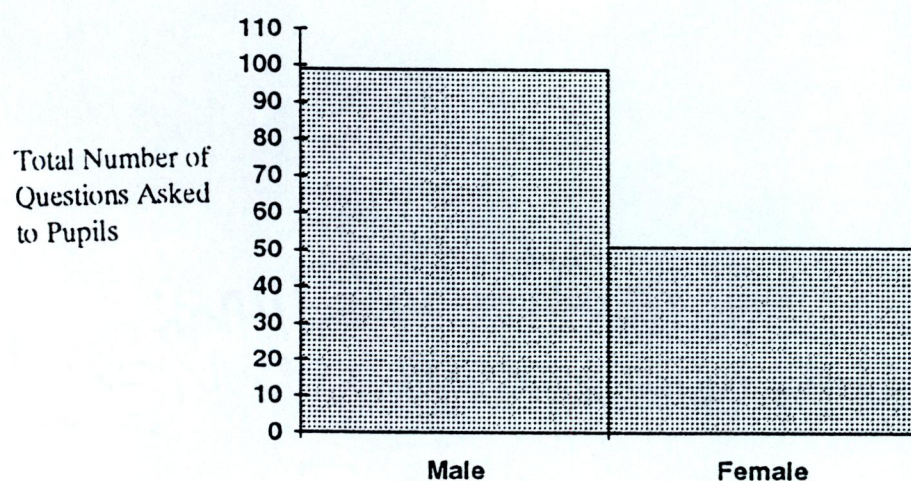| Class	No. of Questions Asked to Male Pupils	No. of Questions Asked to Female Pupils
1.	1 0	13
2.	12	21
3.	3	6
4.	8	11
Total	33	51

NOTE: There are three times more girls than boys in the class. If an equal amount of questions were to be asked to the boys and the girls, the total number of questions should have one third of the total asked to the girls, i.e. 17. Therefore, for every one question asked to a girl in the class, two were asked to a boy.

TABLE 9

RATIO OF QUESTIONS ASKED TO MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS

A comparison of the total number of questions asked to male and female pupils during four 80 minute classes.

NOTE: The chart shows the ratio of questions asked to male and female pupils, i.e. that the boys were asked almost twice as many questions as the girls. To obtain this ratio, the total number of questions asked to boys was multiplied by three.

Teacher:	*Right, so you covered the form of the face with strips of newspaper - small strips - about this size. What did you do with the strips of paper before you put them over the form of the face Rebecca?*
Rebecca:	*You put them into the paste.*
Teacher:	*Right, good. This allows you to smooth the paper over and around the form. First, you cover your papermache face with cling film, then you paste strips of newspaper over it. What will this give you when you've covered the form of the face? Can you look up here please and you can tell us the answer?*
Adam:	*It makes a mask.*
Teacher:	*A mask, yes. How would you describe a mask?*
Mary:	*Covers your face and has two holes for the eyes and one for the mouth.*
Teacher:	*Do all masks have these holes?*
Adam:	*Just some of them.*
Teacher:	*Well, can you tell me what the function of a mask is? or why people wear masks?*
Adam:	*To hide their face.*
Teacher:	*To hide their face. So it's something that goes over your face, it hides it - it's a covering for your face. Masks don't necessarily cover all of the face. I've got some examples here in this book which I'll show you in a minute. There are masks that protect you. Can you think of any examples?*
Mary:	*Gas masks.*
Adam:	*Gas masks.*
Teacher:	*Yes, very good. Also, the type that a surgeon would wear in an operating theatre.*
Adam:	*Yeah.*

Louise: *Halloween masks.*

Teacher: *What do they do?*

Adam: *Scare people.*

It is obvious from this short extract that one particular boy is dominating the whole discussion whether he is distracting people, answering a question or agreeing vocally with another answer. He is one of the most demanding pupils in the class with very low concentration span. Therefore, he is kept involved in the discussion constantly so as to keep his attention to prevent him from distracting others. When I looked at the dialogue in all of the classes, the same thing happened over and over again and most of the attention received by him was negative, in the form of chastisement or punishment.

There are in fact three boys who gain most attention and the main reason for this, is that they are the most disruptive and therefore demand attention or get asked more questions in an attempt to prevent them from being disruptive. Throughout these four classes, I noted that after correcting someone for talking or distracting others, they were usually asked a question to try to get their attention. While being a good idea, it might be that pupils realise that they can receive both positive and negative attention by being disruptive. Ni Charthaigh and Harrison also found in their work with second-level trainee teachers that boys were asked significantly more questions than girls. (2)

Praise and Punishment

There have been many studies carried out which suggest that boys of all ages receive more praise from both female and male teachers. (3) According to A. Windass:

It is male pupils who are most likely to be praised by teachers, are most likely to be criticised by teachers and are more likely to be punished by teachers. (4)

I, however, found that while the boys received more disciplinary interventions they definitely did not receive more praise. (See Tables 10 and 11). The girls, in fact, received twice as much praise and rewards for good work and behaviour than the boys did. Good work was praised a lot more than good behaviour. This I feel, should really be rewarded more in order to encourage others to follow good example. I found that girls and boys received different qualities of praise, for example:

Teacher: *That has really come on, it has improved a lot.*

Jane: *From last week?*

Teacher: *Yes, well done. That's very good Brian, it is very solid, it certainly won't break easily.*

Colin: (Interrupting):

Come here, Miss, look at this.

Teacher: (To other pupils - ignoring interruption):

You need to make that paste a bit thicker, ad some of the white stuff in the yellow bag, stir for a minute, leave it for 2 minutes and then you can use it.

Colin: (Interrupting):

Miss, I'm finished, look, look at, Miss.

Teacher: *O.K. Colin, you're next. What do you think will happen to this when it dries?*

Colin: *I don't know Miss, I wasn't here last week.*

TABLE 10

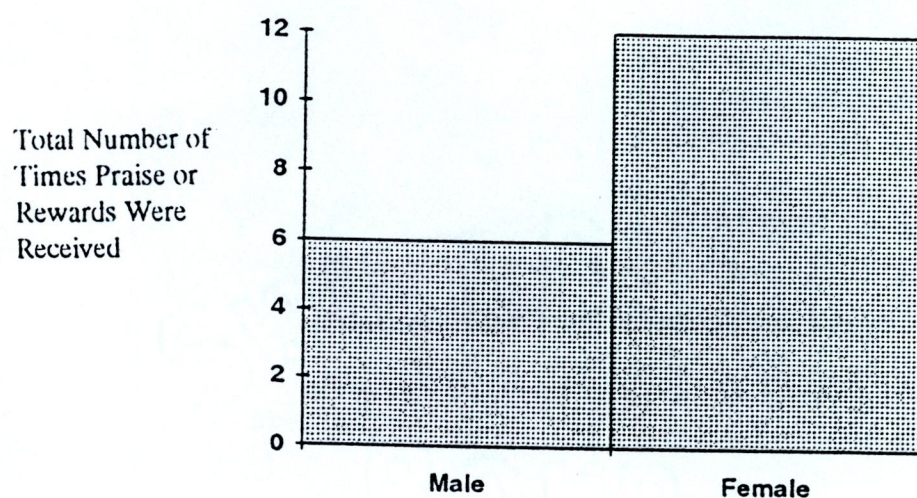**PRAISE AND REWARDS GIVEN TO PUPILS**

A comparison of the number of times males and females received praise or rewards in each class.

Class	No. of Times Male Pupils were Praised or Rewarded	No. of Times Female Pupils were Praised or Rewarded
1.	2	5
2.	-	4
3.	-	2
4.	-	1
Total	2	12

NOTE: There are three times more girls than boys in the class. If boys and girls were to receive the same amount of praise, the total number of rewards or praise received by the boys should be one third the total received by the girls, i.e. 4. The total, however, was half that. Therefore, for the amount of boys and girls in the class, the girls received praise twice as many times as the boys.

TABLE 11

RATIO OF PRAISE AND REWARDS GIVEN TO MALE AND

FEMALE PUPILS

NOTE: The chart shows the ratio of praise and rewards received by male and female pupils, i.e. that girls received twice as much praise as boys for the amount of boys and girls in the class. To obtain this ratio, the total number of praise and rewards received by boys was multiplied by three.

Teacher: *Well it needs to be tight, you need to push it all together (papermache pulp). It's too loose, it will just fall apart when it dries ...*

It can be seen from this piece of dialogue that Colin was obviously looking for attention which I refused to give him until I was ready. He was looking for praise which I did not give him. He is one of the disruptive pupils in the class, who is rarely attends school and I think it is because of this that I was reluctant to give him some praise. In hindsight, I think even a little praise here could have done a lot of good.

I also note from this extract that the praise I gave Jane was very vague, I gave no indication as to how her work had improved from the last week and she probably did not know what it was that was good about it. Brian, on the other hand, would have been perfectly clear about what he was being praised for. This is a very relevant point because if a reason isn't given for something being good or successful, pupils may feel that they are being praised merely for the sake of it. When praising any pupils work, the successful aspects of the work should be stated to make the praise valid, in other words, there must be a reason given for something being good. Another point in relation to praise, is that it should be used wherever it is deserved (and only when it is deserved), good work or behaviour must be acknowledged and rewarded.

I also found that boys were 'given out' to or punished six times more often than girls were again, this figure was gained by taking into consideration that there are three times as many girls as there are boys in the class. (See Tables 12 and 13). These findings confirm the popular notion that boys are the major source of classroom misbehaviour. In the classes that were recorded, any punishment given or reprimand made was justly deserved. Perhaps boys are aware of the

popular notions of them being less manageable and more disruptive and are living up to teacher expectations by being just that.

If boys feel they have to be macho and troublesome because that's what boys are supposed to be, then they too can be and most likely are limited by sex role stereotyping. I noted that boys also received chastisements from girls on a number of occasions, for example:

Teacher: *Put everything down for a few minutes. Adam, don't touch anything that doesn't belong to you.*

Adam: *I only pointed at it.*

Clare: *Don't be cheeky.*

Boys were usually punished by the teacher for not paying attention during introductions and evaluations, for interrupting and distracting others, for being out of their place and for being rude. Girls were mostly give out to for talking. This however was on a much smaller scale. I did not find that behaviour acceptable from one group and was not acceptable from the other; if a girl interrupted me while I was talking or was rude, she would receive the same type of punishment as a boy would for behaving in the same way.

Teachers use a pupils journal to inform the Class Tutor and the pupils parents of any misbehaviour. The journal is a diary of a student's work and conducts during the year, and is seen in the school as "the vital link between students, parents and teachers". (5)

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TABLE 12

PUNISHMENTS OR SANCTIONS GIVEN TO PUPILS

A comparison of the number of times male and female pupils were punished or cautioned in each class.

Class	No. of Times Male Pupils were Punished or Cautioned	No. of Times Female Pupils were Punished or Cautioned
1.	13	6
2.	11	6
3.	12	7
4.	9	2
Total	45	21

NOTE: If an equal amount of disciplinary interventions were received by boys and girls, the total number received by boys would be one third of the total number received by girls i.e. 7. Therefore, boys received punishment or cautions over six times more than girls for the number of boys and girls in the class.

TABLE 13

RATIO OF PUNISHMENT OR SANCTIONS GIVEN TO MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS

Total Number of
Punishments or
Cautions Given
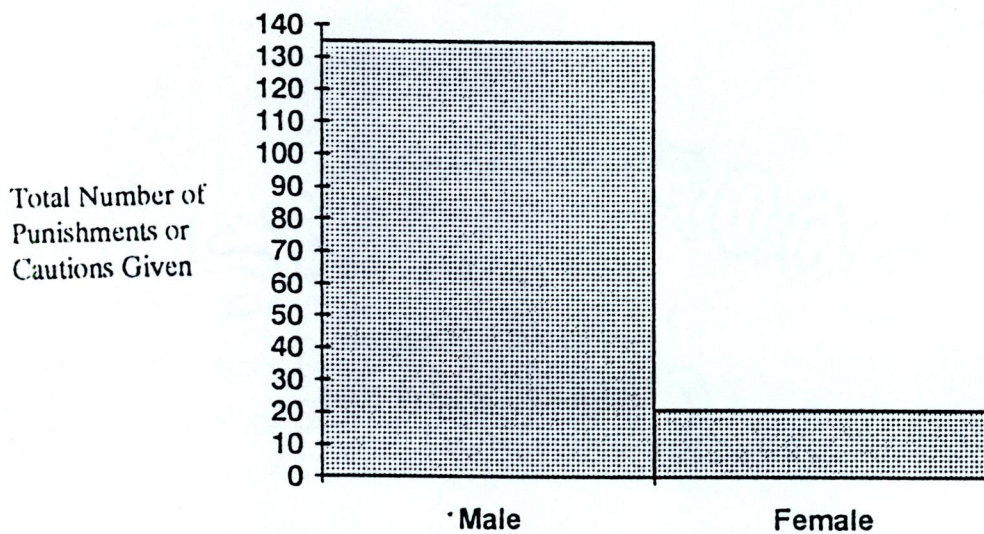
NOTE: The chart shows the ratio of disciplinary interventions received by male and female pupils, i.e. that the boys were punished or disciplined over six times as much as the girls. The ratio was obtained by multiplying the total number of interventions received by the boys by three.

Norman and Richard Sprinthall say that:

> Schools have typically created an ideal 'pupil role'. The ideal pupils is conforming, docile, dependant and manageable - that is, the pupil exhibits traits that have traditionally defined the female role. By more easily adopting this role, girls learn to be more receptive than active. Boys, in contract, have more difficulty in conforming to this ideal-pupil image and thus often find school to be a stressful and alienating experience. (6)

The interaction observed in my classes would certainly confirm this theory. Because girls are, in general in my class, quieter and less demanding, they are often neglected. Girls it would seem, prefer praise and positive attention, while boys appear to crave attention of any sort.

Allocation of Tasks to Pupils

Guidelines published in Britain on eliminating gender discussions in the classroom often stress the importance of assigning the same kinds of tasks to boys and girls. (7) This, according to Lewis and Kellaghan, "is to counteract a tendency that is believed to exist to assign caring tasks to girls while tasks involving physical strength and getting themselves dirty, are given to boys." (8) Tasks like carrying tables and chairs, emptying the bin or operating the slide projector or a video recorder would be ones allocated to boys while clearing the blackboard and tidying the classroom would be tasks expected to be done by girls. During the taping of these four classes, the tasks below are ones pupils were asked to do:

1. Distributing materials.
2. Collecting homework.

3. Running the slide projector.

4. Lifting down heavy boards from high shelves.

5. Cleaning sink areas.

6. Sweeping classroom.

Boys were asked to give out materials more often than girls and were asked all times to lift and put away heavy boards. This was because they were seated beside the shelves but could communicate a certain message about teacher expectations in relation to sex roles. One girl ran the slide projector both times it was in use, this was because she asked to do it otherwise I would have done it myself. When it came to cleaning and tidying at the end of class, both boys and girls were involved equally although girls on the whole were more obliging and willing to help. Again, conforming to stereotypes is obvious - most girls willing to help with the tidying and cleaning, while boys make a point of not wanting to do such things. Remarks like "that's a girls job" were said on more than one occasion and while often said jokingly, the point is made and the underlying opinion obvious. It is up to teachers to ensure that pupils of both sexes partake in all kinds of tasks and that those like cleaning and tidying are not left to the girls. Each pupil should be responsible for their own mess and turns can be taken to sweep the class, clean the sinks and empty the bins.

Questions asked by Pupils

My findings reveal that for the amount of boys in the class, they asked four times as many questions as girls. (See Tables 14 and 15). So, not only were they asked twice as many questions as girls by the teacher, but they asked four times as many questions. Most of the questions asked by girls were things like "what will I do now?", "Is this alright?" and "will I do this?". The girls were

TABLE 14

QUESTIONS ASKED BY PUPILS

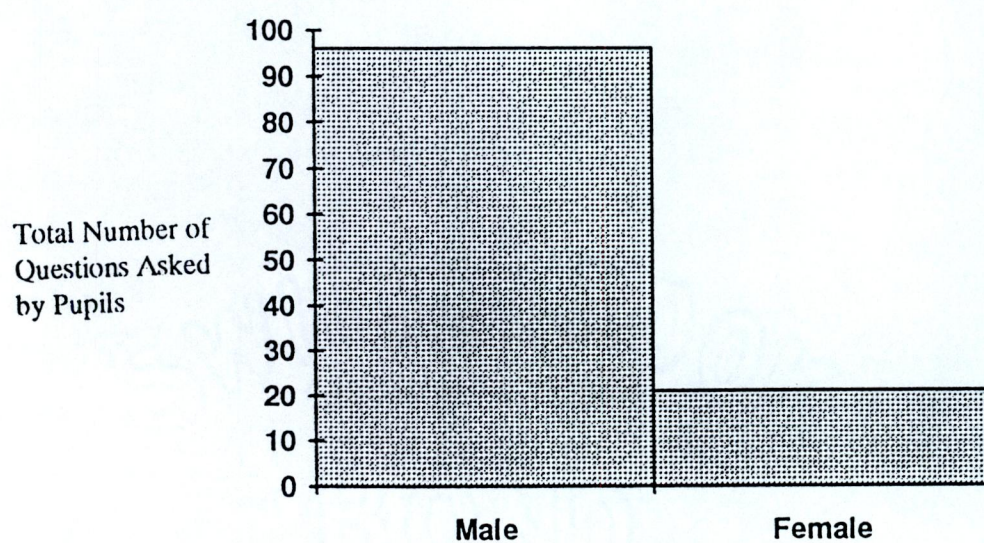A comparision of the number of questions asked by male and female pupils in each class.

Class	No. of Questions Asked by Male Pupils	No. of Questions Asked by Female Pupils
1.	19	7
2.	7	10
3.	4	2
4.	2	2
Total	32	21

NOTE: If an equal amount of questions were to be asked by male and female pupils the total number of questions asked by boys would be one third of the total asked by girls, i.e. 7. Therefore, the boys asked over four times as many questions as the girls.

TABLE 15

RATIO OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS

NOTE: The chart shows the ratio of questions asked by male and female pupils, i.e. that the boys asked over four times as many questions as the girls. To obtain this ratio, the total number of questions asked by the boys was multiplied by three.

usually seeking advice and approval often asking the teacher to make decisions for them. In chapter 2, it was pointed out that in the family, girls are given less independence than boys, that they are offered and given more help in solving problems and tend to be kept under closer supervision. (9) If this is the case, it could explain why girls are more likely to ask for help and to seek approval before continuing with an exercise.

Boys, on the other hand, appeared to ask questions in order to gain attention. The questions asked were mostly irrelevant to the discussion and often intended to distract and amuse the class, which they more often than not, succeeded in doing. Through questioning the teacher, the pupils can gain the teachers attention. They can also gain attention by demanding it and by interrupting the teacher during introductions and evaluations.

Demands and Interruptions

Yet again, we find boys dominating this area of classroom interaction. Boys, I found, demanded attention and interrupted the class a startling seven times more than girls. (See Tables 16 and 17). Many of these interruptions were in the form of repeating instructions or answers to questions aloud, or answering a question when someone else was specifically asked. Most of the demands and interruptions from the boys were calling the teacher to look at their work when the teacher was talking to another pupil, here is just one example:

Colin: *Miss, what do I do now?*

Gary: *Come here, Miss, and look at this.*

TABLE 16

## DEMANDS AND INTERRUPTIONS MADE BY PUPILS

A comparison of the number of demands made and interruptions caused by male and female in each class.

Class	No. of Demands and Interruptions From Male Pupils	No. of Demands and Interruptions From Female Pupils
1.	13	8
2.	5	4
3.	6	2
4.	6	1
Total	35	15

NOTE: If an equal amount of demands and interruptions were to be made by the male and female pupils, the total for the boys would be one third of the total for the girls, i.e. 5. Therefore, this shows that the boys demanded attention and interrupted the class seven times more than the girls did.

TABLE 17

RATIO OF DEMANDS AND INTERRUPTIONS MADE BY

MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS
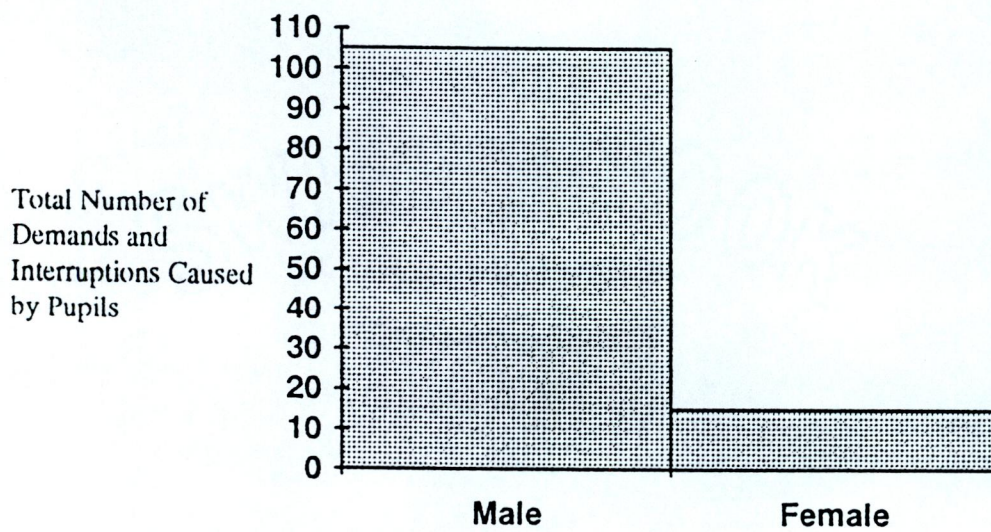
NOTE: The chart shows the ratio of interruptions caused by male and female pupils, i.e. that the boys demanded attention or caused interruptions seven times than the girls.

Teacher:	(To another pupil, continuing conversation, ignoring the demands of the other two): *Remember when you were drawing portraits, what did you do after you had drawn the outline of the face?*
Gary:	(In background): *Look, Miss, look at. Miss, I'm finished.*
Karen:	*Looked at where things go and which parts are higher and lower.*
Teacher:	*Right, so which are the highest parts of the face?*
Karen:	*Nose, forehead, chin and mouth.*
Teacher:	*Yes, O.K., Gary lets see how you're getting on ...*

It can be seen here that Gary is very persistent in trying to gain my attention and doesn't give up until he gets it. While I ignore the interruptions until I am ready to talk to him, I do not tell him he shouldn't interrupt me while I am talking to someone else. Boys, however, were not the only ones to interrupt me while I was dealing with another pupil:

Teacher:	*You have to smooth the papermache pulp over the mound of newspaper so that you have an even covering. You can then build up certain areas like the nose and forehead.*
Louise:	(Interrupting):
	Miss, can I go on now? Miss, will you look at mine?
Teacher:	*Can't you see I am talking to somebody, I'll be with you when I am finished here.*

In this case, the pupil is made aware of the fact that it is rude to interrupt, but again, they are made wait unitl I was finished with the pupil I was talking to.

Conclusion

To finish off this chapter, I would like to summarise briefly the main findings of both my subject choice research and my participant observation. While the provision and timetabling of subjects is associated more with the school rather than with teachers, I feel that it is important to observe the huge sex differences in subject choices that exist today in co-educational schools. Changes in subject choices by pupils can and will only be brought about by changes in attitudes and expectations which is why I considered it suitable for discussion in this dissertation. Changes in teachers behaviour and attitudes can play a major role in aiding changes of attitudes of pupils and society.

The data from my participant observation shows that that boys were asked twice as many questions as girls, that they asked four times as many questions and they demanded attention seven times more than girls. The findings reveal that while boys were reprimanded six times as many times as girls were, girls were praised twice as many times as boys were. Overall, boys received over three times more attention than girls did. Before the difference in numbers of male and female pupils is taken into account, it would appear that both girls and boys receive equal amount of attention but when the fact that there are 18 girls in the class and only 6 boys, it is was obvious that boys were getting far more attention than girls. I was in fact shocked to discover that there were only 6 boys in the class because they are the ones who are most dominant in the class.

It is also very clear that boys received a lot more negative attention because they look for it, because they interrupt more and are not as co-operative as most of the girls. Girls, however, are suffering as a result of being co-operative and quiet. It is the most co-operative pupils in the class that were neglected the most. This fact demands serious attention because it indicates that those who

are being disruptive and less manageable are being rewarded in a sense by being given most of the attention. It is clear to me that good behaviour should be rewarded and praised more, so that others can see it is as a positive way of getting attention. The only way some of the weaker pupils feel they can get attention is by misbehaving, constantly demanding attention or by making jokes. Behaving well is something everyone can do and the more attention this sort of behaviour is given, the more pupils will hopefully behave better and all pupils could receive equal attention.

I would be in agreement with Brophy and Good who have argued that gender differences are more a result of student effects on teachers than teacher effects on students. (10) Because males are more salient and active in the classroom, they are more likely to receive teacher attention to all types of behaviour. Because boys were more disruptive in my classes, I tended to ask them more questions to keep their interest and to prevent them from distracting others. During the class they got more attention again by constantly calling the teacher, by asking questions and by misbehaving. The reason they receive more attention is because they demand it, therefore, the gender differences in my classes I feel, are definitely more a result of student effects on me than my effects on students. If it were female pupils demanding all the attention and asking more questions, I believe they too would gain more attention because it is only a few of the boys that receive most attention and it is those who are most active. I think that it is as a result of sex role stereotyping that girls are more passive and less demanding than boys in the classroom and that it is as a result of gender expectations that boys wish to gain control of classroom interaction. Again, we have another vicious circle which needs to be broken. Figures 4.1 to 4.4 show pupils at work in the class. It also shows the seating arrangement and the position of male and female pupils in the class. Of 6 boys in the class there a

FIGURE 4.1

Pupils At Work - One End Of The Class

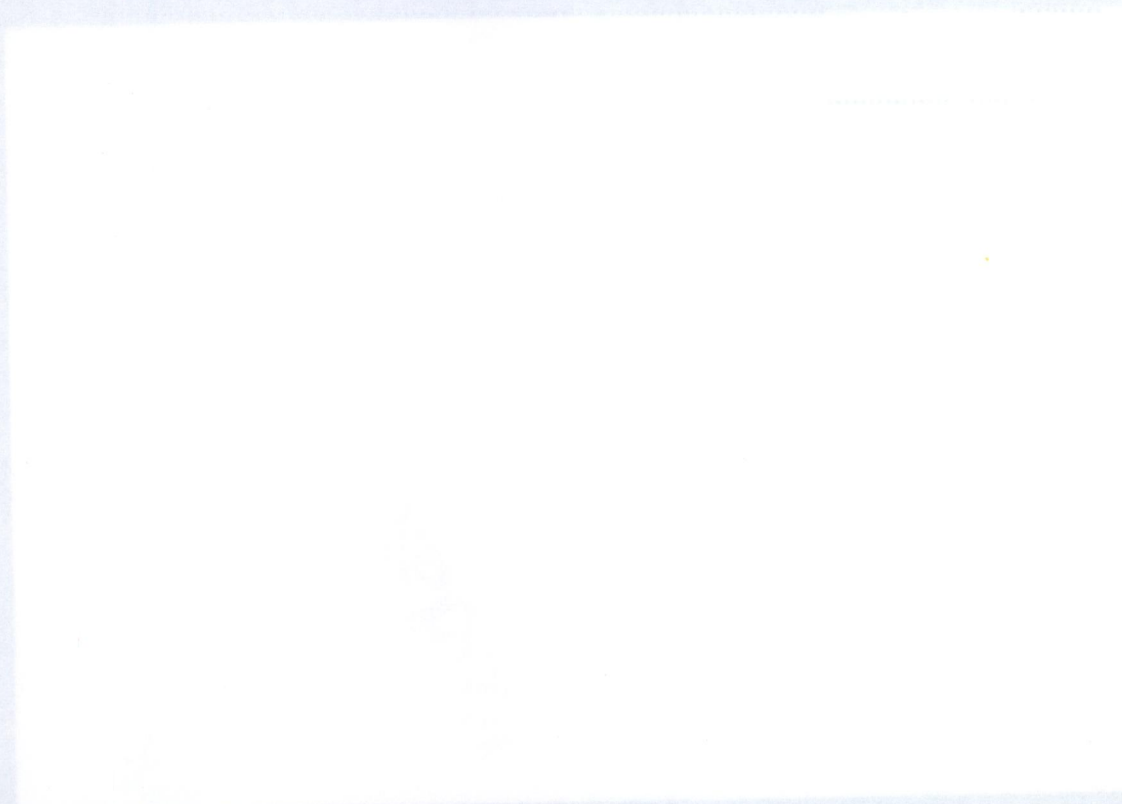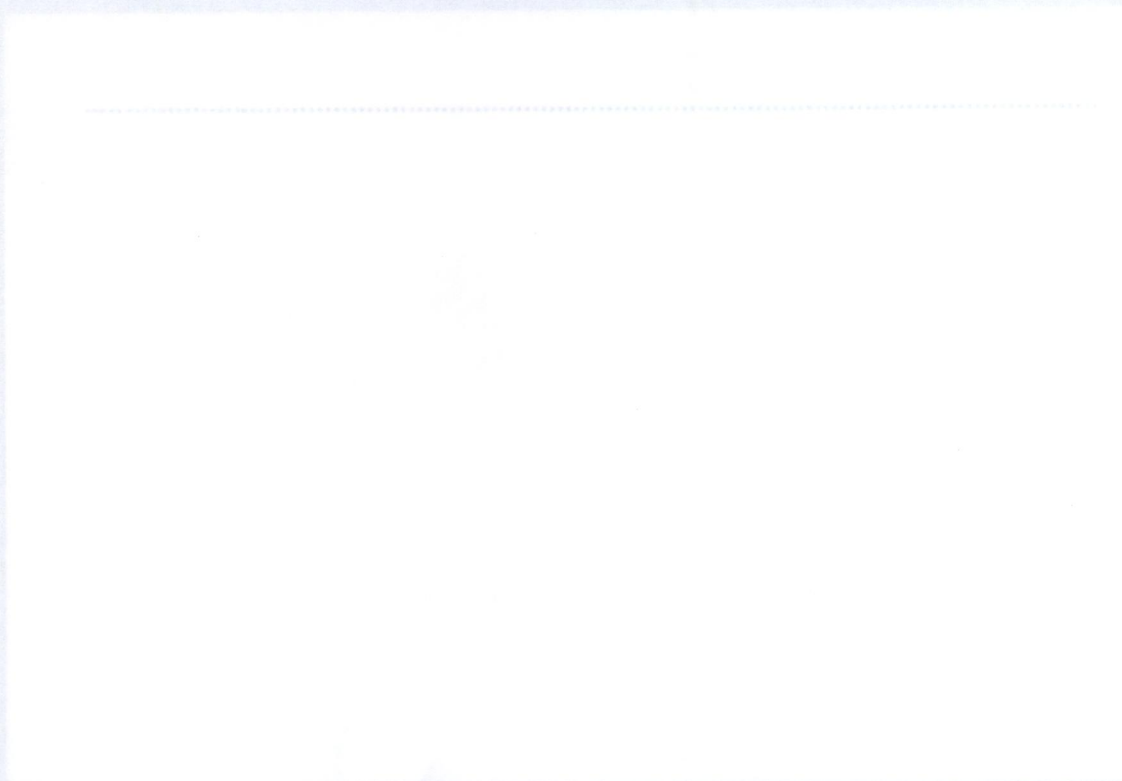

FIGURE 4.2

Pupils At Work - A Corner Of The Class

FIGURE 4.3

FIGURE 4.4

are 2 groups of three who, unless separated by the teacher, always sit together. This, too, can be responsible for reinforcing sex differences.

As has been noted earlier in this dissertation, it is not too late for teachers to take active steps to reduce sex role stereotyping when pupils enter second-level schooling. The early years of secondary schooling might in fact be the best time to try to do so because it is a stage in childrens life when they are open to change and are often as ready to react against stereotypes as they are to conform to them. In the next chapter, ways in which stereotyping can be reduced will be proposed and conclusions made about the research done throughout this dissertation.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 4

1. Pobalscoil Isolde, <u>School Prospectus 1994/95</u>, p.3.

2. Ni Charthaigh and Harrison in P. Hibner (ed.), <u>Teacher Education and Training in Europe: Present Challenges and Future Strategies</u>, cited in Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society</u>, p. 200.

3. A. Kaiser, 'West Germany' in M. Wilson (ed.), <u>Girls and Young Women in Education: A European Perspective</u>, (Oxford: Pergamon, 1991) cited in Ibid, p. 198.

4. A. Windass, 'Classroom Practices and Organisation' in C. Skelton (ed.), <u>Whatever Happens to Little Women? Gender and Primary Schooling</u>, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), p. 44.

5. Pobalscoil Isolde, Palmerstown, <u>School Journal</u>, p.3.

6. Norman A. and Richard C. Sprinthall, <u>Educational Psychology</u>, 5th Ed., (New York: McGraw - Hill, 1990), p. ...

7. M. Cole (ed.), <u>Education for Equality: Some Guidelines for Good Practice</u>, (London: Routledge, 1989), cited in Lewis and Kellaghan, <u>Exploring the Gender Gap in Primary Schools</u>, p.26.

8. Ibid.

9. Sharpe, <u>Just Like A Girl</u>, p.80.

10. J.E. Brophy and T.L. Good, <u>Teacher - Student Relationships: Causes and Consequences</u>, (New   York: Holt, Rinchart & Winston, 1974) cited in Dembo, <u>Applying Educational Psychology in the Classroom</u>, p. 135.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Some of the ways through which messages about sex roles can be communicated in schools were identified in schools were identified in Chapter 2. These included the section of the curriculum, the time-tabling of subjects, the guidance counselling received by pupils (in relation to making decisions about subject choices and careers) and the hiring practices. Apart from differences in the formal curriculum for boys and girls there are also differences in the hidden curriculum.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Drudy and Lynch say that the hidden curriculum refers to the social norms and values that are implicitly communicated to pupils in schools by the way in which school and classroom life is organised. (1) They also point out that these norms and values are not the publicly declared goals of schools. (2) Many research studies suggest that teachers communicate important messages about sex roles and school achievement to both boys and girls through their actions and assumptions. (3) Many of the daily routines of schools revolve around pupils' gender and it is these routines that are considered the norm and are constant that reinforce sex role stereotyping. The expectations communicated to pupils through things like teachers behaviour are most effective because of their subtlety and invisibility. The fact that teachers are often unaware of how their expectations and behaviours contribute to sex role stereotyping makes it all the more serious. (4) As a result of my findings, I feel that it is very true that teachers are often unaware of their actions and their consequences because I also believed that pupils of both sexes received equal treatment and were given

equal attention in my classes. It is only as a result of looking thoroughly at the interaction that took place in my classes and through examining my behaviour that I discovered that boys demanded and received substantially more attention than girls. While it could be said that each pupil was treated according to their personality, it could also be said that the behaviour displayed in the class could be more a result of sex role stereotyping than individual personalities. Most boys displayed stereotypical male traits and the girls stereotypical female characteristics. It is unfair to let a group of pupils, in this case and in most cases the boys, to monopolise teacher attention if other pupils are suffering as a result. It is also unfair that a pupil receives little or no attention because they are more able or more co-operative. I found that there were a number of "invisible pupils" in my class who for the most part were girls. Not only were these "invisible pupils," the best behaved pupils in the class but they also produced the best work. Because they were more competent and less demanding, they received practically no attention and were neither praised or rewarded, instead they went unnoticed. By paying a lot of attention to disruptive behaviour, teachers are unknowingly reinforcing them as they try to eliminate them.

As was seen in the previous chapter, there are a number of ways within everyday classroom life than can do much to either reinforce sex role stereotyping or to alleviate it. Children can be allowed to develop more desirable attitudes and helped to escape some of the restrictions that sex-typing place on them. I feel it is important to point out at this stage that I believe that boys, as well as girls, suffer as a result of stereotyping. Boys too can be victims of their socialisation and are often put under pressure to prove their masculinity and to hide vulnerability. This, is my opinion, is one of the main causes of disruptive behaviour from boys in the classroom.

WAYS TO REDUCE SEX ROLE STEROTYPING
IN THE CLASSROOM

The ways of reducing sex role stereotyping that I am proposing, aim to be practical and realistic. They are recommendations that are to be taken up at classroom level and can be put into effect immediately by myself. Below are my proposals for creating a non-sexist environment in the classroom and they are based on the findings from my participant observation.

If there is to be equality of educational opportunity, pupils of both sex should receive the same quantity and quality of attention in the classroom. Good behaviour and good work should be acknowledged and praised. Hopefully, as a result, boys will see this as a way of gaining attention which is positive rather than negative, the latter being the type of attention which they appear to be receiving a lot of at present. Praise and encouragement are key elements here: if boys receive more praise (where it is due), they may become less demanding and disruptive. Unacceptable behaviour should be stated to be so and made clear that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated from anyone as it results in some pupils being neglected. Therefore, all pupils are aware of what is acceptable and what is not and that this applies to all pupils regardless of sex. The reasons why certain behaviour is unacceptable should also be made clear. It is extremely important that certain behaviour that is unacceptable from one group, be acceptable from another. Making pupils aware of the inequalities in the classroom could result in everyone making efforts to create a balance. Girls need to be encouraged to feel more free to participate in classroom discussions and all pupils should be given extra space and time to develop public speaking, confidence and skills. For example, at the end of all projects, each pupil could be given three minutes to talk about their work and the progress that they have made. This would ensure that all pupils get accustomed to speaking in front of

a group, it would also mean that each child is given the opportunity to give their opinion and to gain more confidence. If it is found that boys dominate whole-class discussions, as they did in my classes, these discussions could be cut to a minimum and the class divided into smaller groups. The teacher can then spread themselves more evenly amongst the class and would give more pupils the opportunity to contribute to group discussions. It would reduce the likelihood of there being invisible pupils and would facilitate talk and learning with a wider range of pupils.

The most important thing is that teachers are made aware of the extent of their influence on pupils and to use this influence positively. Teachers have to be persuaded that equal opportunities can and should be part of normal curriculum activity. As I discovered, it is not enough to think that you are treating pupils of both sexes equally, but active steps must be taken if this inequality is to be eliminated. A heightening of awareness and more positive attitudes on the part of teachers are essential factors in breaking the circle of sexism.

To summarise all of this:

- Reward all good behaviour and good work.
- Give praise where praise is due.
- Make it clear what behaviour is considered acceptable and what is unacceptable.
- Never punish girls for something boys go unpunished and vice versa.
- Create an awareness among pupils of any inequality that exists.
- Give all pupils space to develop confidence and public speaking skills.
- Cut whole-class discussions to a minimum and divide the class into smaller groups.
- Make other teachers aware of the effects of their behaviour in the classroom.

Regarding the matter of sex-differentiated subjects, I strongly believe that teachers can break down these divisions by changing their own attitudes and in turn, changing the attitudes of pupils. Girls and boys should be encouraged to take non-traditional subjects. A comparison of two co-educational community schools in an urban area, indicates the possibility of improving sex equality through positive intervention programmes. One of the schools pursued a positive action programme to encourage non-traditional subject choices among girls and boys; the other had a subject choice policy that incorporated no specific action either to encourage or discourage non-traditional subject choice. (5) In the school with the positive action programme, it was found that both boys and girls demonstrated significantly less traditional performance in and choice of subjects that pupils in the other school. For example, although girls in the school with a positive action programme were still in a minority in mechanical drawing, woodwork and metalwork classes, they were proportionally as likely as boys to consider these subjects among their best subject - indicating a high degree of confidence in these areas. (6)

In the 1992 Green Paper on Education, "Education for a Changing World" it is stated that:

> It is the fundamental aim of the Irish education system that each person be enabled to achieve her or his potential as a human being. Principles of justice, freedom and democracy demand that no individuals should be handicapped by their sex from self-realisation and full participation in the country's social, cultural and economic life. (7)

Every teacher, as part of their job, must do their best in trying to fulfil this aim.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I hope the effect that teachers behaviour and attitudes can have on the reinforcement and development of sex role stereotyping will be acknowledged. It is clear to me that there is much that teachers can do to reduce sex role stereotyping by making subtle but crucial changes in everyday classroom activities.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, the reasons for making changes in education in relation to gender were examined. The fact that schools play a major role in preparing children for their future roles is extremely important. Up until quite recently, it has been acceptable for schools to prepare girls for the adult roles of wife and mother and boys for that of husband and breadwinner. Today, roles are often reversed with men staying at home to look after the children and women working outside the home to support the family. It is for this reason that the education received by girls and boys, must be changed if it is to prepare them sufficiently for these adult roles. Girls and boys should be encouraged out of making stereotypical subject choices which may not be suited to their individual talents and strengths. In the classroom, all children should receive equal attention and be made feel of equal importance. As was seen in my classes, boys were asked to answer twice as many questions as girls, this could easily imply to children that I, the teacher, feel boys answers and opinions to be more valid than girls. I also believe that many of these much needed changes can be brought about through education and in schools and classroom by changing in particular, attitudes and expectations. Schools have the power to bring about social changes because of the major role they play in the process of socialisation.

In the second chapter, the process of socialisation was looked at in more detail in relation to the development of sex role stereotyping. Although teachers and schools can do much to change things, they do not exist in a vacuum - there are many other influences in a child's life such as family, friends and the media which can also encourage traditional sex stereotyping. There is a "circle of sexism" that exists which must be broken at some point if changes are to be brought about. Parents as well as teachers need to take positive action towards reducing sex role stereotyping and encouraging individuality. Through carrying out my own research in the classroom, I identified ways in which sex role stereotypes can be reinforced in the classroom and discovered inequalities within classroom interaction. It is these subtleties that teachers are often unaware of that I feel are most effective because of their subtlety and consistency and if these classroom constants are changed, much can be achieved leaving people of both sexes to be freer to choose their own way of life.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 5

1. Drudy and Lynch, <u>Schools and Society in Ireland</u>, p. 198.

2. Ibid.

3. Measor and Sikes, <u>Gender and Schools</u>, p.81.

4. Dembo, <u>Applying Educational Psychology in the Classroom</u>, p.135.

5. M. Ni Mhaonaigh, <u>The Effectiveness of a Positive Action Programme in Encouraging Non-Traditional Subject Choice</u>, (MED thesis: University of Dublin, 1991) cited in Drudy and Lynch, Schools and Society in Ireland, p.201.

6. Ibid.

7. <u>Education for a Changing World, Green Paper on Education</u>, (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1992), p.67 cited Lewis and Kellaghan, <u>Exploring the Gender Gap in Primary Schools</u>, p.14.

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