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This Issue of intWOJDE is dedicated to
Ioanna KUCURADI

CONTENTS

Dear intWOJDE Readers,

Welcome to the Volume 4 Number: 2 of intWOJDE;

This issue of intWOJDE dedicated to Ioanna KUCURADI who is the pioneer of the women philosopher in Turkey. She is a Turkish philosopher. She is currently the president of Philosophical Society of Turkey.

In this issue, 3 articles of 3 authors from 3 different countries around the world have been published. These published articles are arrived to the intWOJDE from Canada, India and Nigeria. 3 reprint articles or reports which are previously they had appeared in the literature for informing you. In addition again we placed a "success Stories" column from Japan dealth with Ms. Masuko FUJIKI'S Story in this issue.

The 1st article is sent by Christine VASKOVICS who is M.Ed Student Athabasca University, Canada, titled as "WOMEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: The Challenges". She mentioned in her article that Distance education has the ability to reach anyone anywhere and thus is widely accepted as a method of educating large populations of people in developing countries. The women in particular, are able to reap the benefits distance education has to offer by overcoming many of the barriers faced through conventional methods of learning.

The Internet is said to increase access to education, and no doubt the developing world has seen an influx of Internet based distance learning opportunities. Few will argue, this mode of learning can offer unparalleled, up to date educational opportunities and at a reasonable cost to the user. Unfortunately, there exists a huge gender gap in Internet access in developing countries. Will the increase in Internet accessed learning widen the gender disparity in higher education in the developing world? If this gender gap does not change, the women will miss out on quality and affordable learning opportunities. 'Strongly Agree' and 'strongly disagree' as anchoring points are used for main items.

In the 2nd article titled as "EDUSAT AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN STUDENT: Teachers of B.Ed. In Distance Education at ANNAMALAI University", written by R. SIVAKUMAR, from Education Wing-DDE, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. The present study aims at investigating the EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University. Survey method was adopted for the present study. A sample of 500 Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University were chosen by using simple random sampling technique. The data were subjected to descriptive and differential analysis for verifying null hypotheses. The result revealed that the EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers is not adequate.

The 3rd article is join study from Nigeria, on "OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION: A Needful Empowerment Strategy for Nigerian Women", written by Famade Oladiran AFOLAYAN from Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, Abuja, NIGERIA He mentions and stresses in her paper that Open and Distance Education (ODE) has offered access to many people who would have previously been denied access to educational opportunities based on where they live or work, poor-economic circumstances, social status etc. In the past, the African female child had always been denied formal education due to various cultural and social prejudices. Distance education (DE) has also been employed by numerous women, who had earlier been deprived, to bridge the educational gap between males and females in the country. Thus, the need for Women emancipation through empowerment all over the world is at its peak and Nigerians generally are not left out. Therefore, an attempt to make sure that women's voices are heard, given their right places in the scheme of things, and also the educational

attainment of women considering the low level of girls' education in Nigeria which is at a negative variance to attaining women position since certain educational attainments are required for optimal functionality in the various available organs; work place, group or committees of local or international standing.

Dear intWOJDE readers, as we indicate before, the aim and function of "Reprinted Materials" column to inform you and younger generation about what was published in the literature as article, report or presented papers are in the previous conferences. So that, we published for 4 reprinted materials here as an article or report in this issue which are published, in some where.

The 1st republished material is written by Kramarae, CHERIS, on "Third Shift: Women Learning Online" which is published by the institution The American Association of University, Women Educational Foundation, Washington, DC., USA in 2001.

The article was the first in a series on women as professionals and students in 21st-century higher education, this report is based on interview and questionnaire responses from more than 500 women and men from many occupations, as well as a review of published research on distance learning.

It examines the convergence of two major trends: the growth of technology and distance education in the college and university setting, and the demographic shift toward a predominantly female population of non-traditional-age college students.

The report focuses on understanding why women pursue online education, what constraints they may face in doing so, and how they perceive online culture, social identity, and communications. Following an introduction, the report's sections are:

- **(1)"Why Women Go Online: Educational Plans, Preferences, and Aspirations";**
- **(2)"The Digital Divide: Gaps and Bridges";**
- **(3)"Look Who's Talking: Gender Identity**
- **(4) Culture Online"; and**
- **(5)"Conclusions and Recommendations." Appendices discuss the methodology and researcher (Contains approximately 120 references).**

The 2nd document is report which published by CEMCA on "WOMEN'S LITERACY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES: Lessons That Experience Has Taught Us", prepared by Anita DIGHE and Usha Vyasulu REDDI, published in November 2006 via ISBN 81-88770-05-1 by Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia.

The report giving information on critical importance of gender and of the inclusion of women and girls in the process of development is one such theme. Without the inclusion of women and girls, no development effort will pay dividends. The second theme relates to the importance of using information and communication technologies (ICTs) in accelerating the development process.

The enormous complexity and diversity in perspective when we examine gender as an issue is always apparent. Debates and perspectives range from an engagement with feminist theory and dialogue to policy dimensions and to specific applications of communication in the field for the improvement of the lives of women and girls.

Those of us who have witnessed intergovernmental discussions and debates also know that gender means different things in different societies. While in some of the developing countries, this is largely a concern relating to women and girls; in other parts of the same

developing world, it can often mean the "mainstreaming of men and young boys" in society.

Gender as a critical issue in human development is not restricted only to developing societies. It is there even in the highly developed societies, taking on a very different yet familiar face of domestic abuse, gender harassment at the workplace, and property rights.

A similar kind of complexity is found when we turn our attention to debates in the relationship between communication, media and gender. There is confusion even in the definition of terms:-what do we mean by communication: processes or products; technologies or societies. The confusion gets compounded when we begin our discussions - is it at policy levels; is it at looking at the interface between media and society; is it at a study of the portrayal of women in the media; is it at the analysis of content and its underpinnings; is it by examining the way in which the intervention of communication has altered or not changed our lives.

The third one is UNESCO's report on "MASS MEDIA: The Image, Role, and Social Conditions of Women A collection and analysis of research materials", published in 1979 which prepared by Mieke CEULEMANS and Guido FAUCONNIER from the Department of Communication Science, Catholic University of Leuven, BELGIUM with[B.IO] CC,79/XVI1/84A] code.

This report was on women and mass media has focused predominantly on the portrayal of sex-roles in various mass media and different types of messages disseminated by the mass media. Content –analysis is the most commonly used approach in the study of media images of women.

How women are represented in radio, television, the press, and film, as documented in such studies, will be discussed at length in the first section of this report.

Because advertising is considered particularly influential in determining images of women projected in media, which are economically dependent on its support, research results pertaining to sex-role portrayal in advertisements will be grouped under a separate heading.

Dear intWOJDE readers to receive further information and to send your suggests and recommendations and remarks, or to submit articles for consideration, please contact intWOJDE Secretariat at the below address or e-mail to us at intwojde@gmail.com

Hope to stay in touch and wishing to meet in our next Issue on 1st of July, 2015.
International Women Online Journal of Distance Education, Volume: 4 Issue: 3.

Cordially,
Prof. Dr. Emine DEMIRAY
Editor-in-Chief of intWOJDE

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WOMEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: The Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Distance education has the ability to reach anyone anywhere and thus is widely accepted as a method of educating large populations of people in developing countries. The women in particular, are able to reap the benefits distance education has to offer by overcoming many of the barriers faced through conventional methods of learning.

The Internet is said to increase access to education, and no doubt the developing world has seen an influx of Internet based distance learning opportunities. Few will argue, this mode of learning can offer unparalleled, up to date educational opportunities and at a reasonable cost to the user. Unfortunately, there exists a huge gender gap in Internet access in developing countries. Will the increase in Internet accessed learning widen the gender disparity in higher education in the developing world? If this gender gap does not change, the women will miss out on quality and affordable learning opportunities.

Keywords: Distance education, women in developing countries, Internet gender gap.

INTRODUCTION

It is accepted by many that distance education is an excellent mode to reach adult learners who, for various reasons, are unable to attend classes in traditional face to face classrooms (Bates, 2005; Moore and Kearsley, 2005). It can be concluded therefore, that distance education is a catalyst to higher education for those faced with barriers of time, geography and economics in the pursuit of their education.

Distance education is not without its obstacles, however, there are technical and cost considerations faced by all adults when considering distance learning opportunities. In developing countries, women can be seen to be especially challenged to overcome not only technical and cost barriers, but also cultural norms. Even with these additional barriers faced by women in developing countries, there are research studies (Kanwar and Taplin, 2003; Temitayo, 2012; Zuhairi et al, 2008) evaluating the role distance education has played in women's education in developing countries. Ultimately the studies support the claim: distance education has helped women in developing countries overcome barriers to higher education.

In developed as well as developing countries, distance education has evolved considerably over the past twenty years and correspondence classes utilizing postal services to deliver all course materials is fast becoming a distant memory. It is said that the Internet has expanded access to learning (Pena-Bandalaria, 2007; Osang, 2012) and, increasingly, the Internet is the means by which distance education courses are delivered (Wagner et al., 2008; Osang, 2012).

As the means to develop distance learning opportunities progresses, what is the outlook for generating enhanced learning opportunities for women in developing countries? Has

the influx of Internet accessed learning opportunities created new barriers to education for women in developing countries?

DISTANCE EDUCATION: A Method For Reaching All?

Distance education is said to be an excellent mode of learning which is able to meet the education needs of all students, regardless of location, class or gender, specifically for those students unable to attend traditional face to face classes (Kanwar and Taplin). Distance education can offer a wide variety of formal and non-formal courses and programs of study utilizing print, radio, television, audio and video cassettes, CDs , and Internet based technologies (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001; Spronk, 2001; Usman, 2001; Bates, 2005; Pena-Bandalaria, 2007).

In addition to the constraints of geographical location, limited available time and financial resources, women in developing countries face additional obstacles to furthering their education that their male counterparts do not. Misogyny is a term used to describe a group, most often men, who display negative, demeaning and oppressive behaviours towards women (Stalker, 2001). Many women in developing countries who do endeavour to further their learning are faced with misogynistic responses from both male relatives and their society, which makes their pursuit of learning extremely difficult.

According to research studies, (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001; Sultana and Kamal, 2002; Mhehe, 2001; Usman, 2001; Zuhairi and Zabadah, 2008) women in developing countries face many obstacles to furthering their education:

- **their families preferred to send the male members of the family to school;**
- **they were not allowed to travel outside the immediate neighbourhood without a male escort;**
- **they needed their husbands consent to access education;**
- **having a university degree would be a threat to the male authority;**
- **they had to do all the housework and child rearing, consequently did not have any free time for studies or were too tired at the end of the day;**
- **they were not allowed to leave their families and children, which made attending classes or tutorials impossible;**
- **they did not want to start a course because they felt their family responsibilities and/or work responsibilities would prevent them from completing the course.**

Regardless of the obstacles women in developing countries face in the pursuit of furthering their education, there are various research studies that purport distance education does indeed reduce the barriers these women face and it does afford many women an education they wouldn't otherwise be able to achieve.

For example Kanwar and Taplin's (2001) *Brave New Women of Asia: How Distance Education Changed Their Lives,* is a book of case studies examining women's experiences with distance education in China, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The case studies aim to encourage women to further their education by demonstrating that most of their doubts concerning the furtherance of their education are unfounded (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001). The case studies assert that higher education is achievable by women in Asia through distance learning because: "they do not have to leave their multiple commitments to attend classes, thus presenting the argument that distance learning may be an ideal way for them to access education since it potentially enables them to do most of their studying from home if they wish to do so, thus reducing the need to conflict with social or cultural requirements (p.7)."

Another research study conducted by Hussain (2008) titled, *Distance Education as a Strategy for Eliminating Gender Disparity in Pakistan*, examines the role of distance education and how it addresses the issue of gender disparity in Pakistan. The study concludes that distance education provides equal opportunities to all in the society and it is possible for women to access education, particularly those women who are culturally restricted.

And yet in another research article titled, *Does Open and Distance Learning Allow for Reaching the Unreached: Assessing Women Education in Nigeria,* the author, Olowola Temitayo, (2012) presents a similar conclusion: the advantages of distance education for women in Nigeria are infinite. Consequently, Nigerian women are able to further their education using distance learning methods.

Accessing Learning Using the Internet

According to Bates (2008) in, *What is Distance Education*?, Taylor (1999) identifies five stages of distance education:

- **print-based correspondence education;**
- **integrated use of multiple, one-way media such as print, broadcasting or recorded media such as video-cassettes;**
- **two-way, synchronous tele-learning using audio or video-conferencing**
- **flexible learning based on asynchronous online learning combined with online interactive multimedia;**
- **intelligent flexible learning, which adds a high degree of automation and student control to asynchronous online learning and interactive multimedia (http://www.tonybates.ca).**

Until recently, developing countries did not have the required infrastructure to support online learning. In recent years, however, this has changed and Internet accessibility in developing countries is rapidly increasing. There exists a steady expansion of broadband access as well as a drop in user cost, both of which have led to increased accessibility (Women and the Web, 2012).

Additionally, there is an upsurge of mobile telephone use in developing countries and cell towers supporting mobile voice, SMS, and 3G Internet now cover most areas (Women and the Web, 2012). Mobile Internet requires less additional investment than broadband Internet and most Internet enabled mobile phones are less expensive than computers or tablets (Women and the Web, 2012).

It is true that distance education is delivered using print based correspondence, one-way media such as print, broadcasting and recorded media in developing countries today; however, the use of the Internet for online learning is growing at a rapid rate (Osang, 2012; Pena-Bandalaria, 2008). There are quality, state -of- the art, low cost online distance learning opportunities available to anyone anywhere providing they have Internet access, and it is widely expected that these learning opportunities will promote growth in the developing world (Mulder, 2013).

Through the Internet, students in developing countries have access to not only affordable and quality learning opportunities within their respective countries, they also have access to tuition free, top-quality online learning opportunities outside of their home countries. For example, The Open Education Consortium provides free and open access to education and knowledge. It is "a worldwide community of hundreds of higher

education institutions and associated organizations committed to advancing open education and its impact on global education" (http://www.oeconsortium.org/about-oec/). Carnegie Mellon University's Open Learning Initiative is another source where one can find free quality online courses (http://oli.cmu.edu).

Also, students with English language skills can obtain a university degree tuition-free from University of the People, which is the world's first non profit, tuition-free, accredited online university (http://uopeople.edu/groups/online-education).

Additionally, there is Kepler, which is a new non-profit university designed for the developing world. Kepler currently has a pilot campus in Rwanda which combines online academic learning with face to face instruction to deliver American accredited degrees:

We combine the best of online learning and an American competency-based degree program with in-person seminars and intensive education-to-employment support. Kepler's pilot campus opened in Rwanda in 2013, and our goal is to create a global network of universities that deliver the skills that emerging economies need for a price that our students can afford. For that, we're setting an ambitious target: provide an American-accredited degree, a world class education, and a clear path to good jobs for thousands of students for around $1,000 tuition per year (http://kepler.org).

THE INTERNET GENDER GAP

Using the Internet to access education in developing countries of course can be challenging; (Osang, 2012; Pena-Bandalaria, 2007) however, accessibility to the Internet in developing countries is quickly expanding and, as such, it will become less of an issue. There are other challenges such as being able to obtain the required technology to access the Internet, to overcome, which, of course, can also be problematic for many households (Reshef, 2011; Osang, 2012).

Regardless, there are increasing numbers of households that do overcome these challenges, but will the women in these households access the Internet? Will overt gender roles get in the way?

At the turn of the 21st century, Barbara Spronk (2001es is not the same as their male counterparts in both the developed and developing countries; women lag behind. Today perhaps the situation is better in developed countries; however, this is not the case for developing countries.

There is a substantial gender gap when it comes to Internet use in developing countries. According to the research report, *Women and the Web* (2012): "On average across the developing world, nearly 25 percent fewer women than men have access to the Internet, and the gender gap soars to nearly 45 percent in regions like sub-Saharan Africa.

Even in rapidly growing economies the gap is enormous. Nearly 35 percent fewer women than men in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa have Internet access, and nearly 30 percent in parts of Europe and across Central Asia (p. 10)."

The report cites gender based barriers for the disparity in Internet access: lack of awareness, lack of perceived ability and cultural norms (Women and the Web, 2012).

The report also provides many startling statistics such as: "1/3 of non-users have a desktop in their homes and 90 percent have a mobile phone in their home (p.13). 40% of

women who do not use the Internet cite lack of familiarity or comfort with technology as a reason (p.13)."

If this gender gap in Internet access persists, women will miss out on current and affordable learning opportunities. The disparity in higher education will widen rather than decrease as time progresses.

CONCLUSION

Distance education has the ability to reach anyone anywhere and thus is widely accepted as a form of educating large populations of people in both developed and developing countries.

Internet based distance learning continues to grow and can offer unparalleled, up to date educational opportunities at a reasonable cost to the user.

The Internet is expected to bring education to all people all over the world. It is expected to widen access to learning and thus provide equal opportunity for all.

Accessing these opportunities will require leaps over the hurdles of acquiring technology and, most importantly, moving beyond the cultural limitations found in most developing countries. If the Internet gender gap does not change, women in developing countries will miss out on quality and affordable learning opportunities, and the gender disparity in education will widen rather than decrease as time progresses.

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Christine VASKOVICS is a student of Athabasca University's Master of Education in Distance Education (MEd). She graduated from Athabasca University's Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations in 2009 and from Athabasca University's Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Distance Education Technology in 2012. Distance education has enabled Christine, a single parent, to participate in tertiary education. Christine is also a serving member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

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EDUSAT AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN STUDENT: Teachers of B.Ed. In Distance Education At ANNAMALAI University

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at investigating the EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University. Survey method was adopted for the present study. A sample of 500 Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University were chosen by using simple random sampling technique.

The data were subjected to descriptive and differential analysis for verifying null hypotheses. The result revealed that the EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers is not adequate.

Keyword: EDUSAT awareness, Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed., Distance Education and Annamalai University.

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing rapidly and the growth of knowledge is phenomenal. To cope up with this rapid change need for a change in the present system of education, as yesterday's education system will not meet today's need, and even less, the needs of tomorrow. As education is the key to national prosperity and welfare, it is essential that it should change rapidly.

In the field of education, Educational Technology emerged and has come to stay. Due to multi - dimensional development of Educational Technology, it has made the teacher capable of communicating the knowledge and facts with the taught in the process of imparting education within shorter time, than he could do before. Science and Technology has provided a momentum to the process of educating the people.

They are not merely AV aids. They include the Tape recorder, Slides projector, Over Head Projector, Film projector, Television, Video, Computer, Internet, Teleconferencing, Video Conferencing, Online and EDUSAT. These are outstanding devices, which present new dimensions on communication technology especially in providing classroom instructions.

EDUSAT

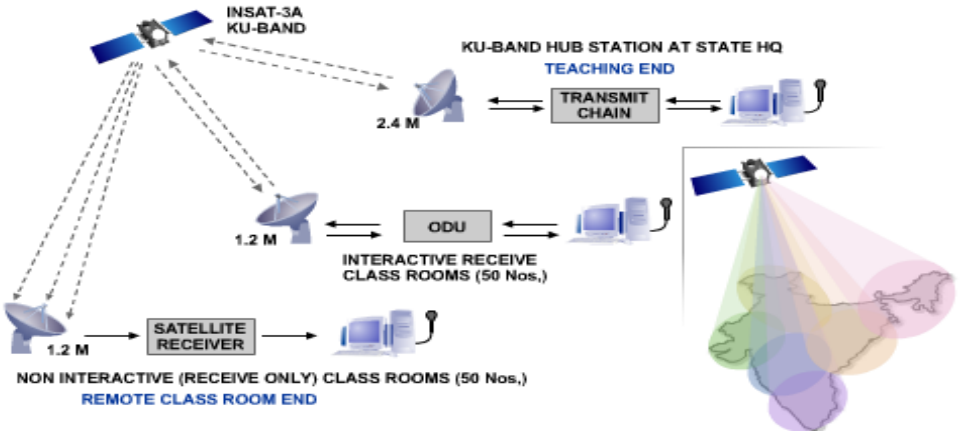
EDUSAT is the first Indian satellite built exclusively for serving the educational sector and it was launched successfully by GSLV-F01 on 20-9-2004. It is mainly intended to meet the demand for an interactive satellite based distance education system for the country. It strongly reflects India's commitment to use space technology for national development, especially for the development of the population in remote and rural locations.

EDUSAT in DISTANCE EDUCATION

EDUSAT is primarily meant for providing connectivity to school, college and higher levels of education and also to support non-formal education including developmental communication. The quantity and quality of the content would ultimately decide the success of EDUSAT System. Satellites can establish the connectivity between urban educational institutions with adequate infrastructure imparting quality education and the large number of rural and semi-urban educational institutions that lack the necessary infrastructure. Besides supporting formal education, a satellite system can facilitate the dissemination of knowledge to the rural and remote population about important aspects like health, hygiene and personality development and allow professionals to update their knowledge base as well. Thus, in spite of limited trained and skilled teachers, the aspirations of the growing student population at all levels can be met through the concept of tele-education.

EDUSAT in EDUCATION

EDUSAT is a powerful communication tool for emulating virtual classroom in an effective manner. EDUSAT makes it possible to conduct virtual classes in remotes places in parallel. The teacher at the transmission end virtually becomes available to all the receiving end virtual classrooms. This process can help in overcoming the shortage of trained teachers by providing in service training to the existing teachers at block level, in a time bound program. It seems the most economic may to achieve the benefits of EDUSAT.



EDUSAT can provide virtual class rooms in a multi class and studio environments with two way interactions between the teachers and students in a collaborative framework. It can provide one to one, one to many connectivity, through the broadcasting network in a multicasting mode of delivery. It can enable a remote teacher to become a teacher to all the students in a session, and the teacher to take the student to a live virtual tour of the subject. This can provide a cost effective solution for interactive content delivery.

ADVANTAGES OF USING EDUSAT IN EDUCATION

EDUSAT can provide education without face to face meetings but through on line setup. The following uses can be effected age, region and time:

- **It covers all geographical area inside the country**
- **It can provide interactive and cost effective education**
- **It can provide consistency to information**

- **The spot beams used in the EDUSAT are more powerful and signals can be received with a smaller satellite dish**
- **It is a satellite, fully dedicated to the cause of education**
- **It can provide audio visual medium and interactive multimedia facility.**
- **It can open up many possibilities like on line teaching, video conferencing etc.**
- **It can be used at all levels of education from primary schools to professional courses.**
- **It can provide live lecture sessions from the best and expert teachers. Before establishing the EDUSAT quality classes and classes handled by experts benefited only urban students. But with the working of the EDUSAT rural students also can enjoy its benefit.**
- **Students will get the facility to see what they read in their textbooks and to do experiments with the help of multimedia technologies.**
- **Providing opportunity beyond age, region and time**
- **Provide life time education**
- **Equaling regional education**
- **Being flexible**
- **Lowering the educational expenses with high effect**
- **Extending the educational facilities**
- **Upgrading educational materials**
- **Avoiding psychological tension.**

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Modern technologies have several stages and sequences in the earlier decades. Teacher should be exposed to modern technology in the designing and use of instructional systems appropriate to classroom situations.

The Student - Teachers create many programs and software to achieve learning objectives. It implies the application of Psychological, Sociological and Scientific Principles. Students interact with experts, when they learn the subject through the EDUSAT programme.

It motivates the Student to watch the programme. EDUSAT programme provides better teaching -learning performance and relate the learning to suit their cognitive potentials. EDUSAT awareness is very essential to the Student- Teachers in Teacher Education.

Educational Technology as an elective/optional paper in the B.Ed. courses, finds justification in view of the role of Educational Technology for effective, classroom instruction. The teacher trainee in Educational Technology should not only be aware of different hardware, but also must know how to use them effectively. Practice in the use of over head projector, projector slides, epidiascope, film projector, radio, television, video, computer, internet, online, teleconferencing, videoconferencing and EDUSAT is a must. Some researches concentrated on general education but adequate research has not been conducted so deeply for the Student - Teachers, especially in the area of Student - Teacher's EDUSAT awareness. So, the investigator selected a topic for research to find out the EDUSAT awareness among the Student-Teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the present study:

- **To find out the EDUSAT awareness among Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University.**

- **To find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers who are below 25 years and above 25 years.**
- **To find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness between the Women Student-Teachers with Under-graduate and Post-graduate qualification.**
- **To find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness between the Rural and Urban Women Student-Teachers.**
- **To find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness between Arts and Science Women Student-Teachers.**
- **To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness among the Women Student-Teachers of various groups, based on their Father's Educational Qualifications.**

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The hypotheses of the present study are formulated as follows:

- **EDUSAT awareness among Women Student-Teachers is not adequate.**
- **There is no significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers who are below 25 years and above 25 years.**
- **There is no significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness between the Women Student-Teachers with Under-graduate and Post-graduate qualification.**
- **There is no significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT awareness between the Rural and Urban Women Student-Teachers.**
- **There is no significant difference between the mean scores of EDUSAT Awareness between Arts and Science Women Student-Teachers.**
- **There is no significant relationship between Women Student-Teachers' EDUSAT Awareness with reference to Father's Educational Qualification (Illiterate, Upto Higher Secondary, Degree holder).**

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The investigator followed the "Survey" method for the present study. The Questionnaire was developed and administered to the Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University. The Student-Teachers have responded to the questionnaire. The data thus collected were put into appropriate statistical analysis.

Sample for the Study

***Random* sampling technique was adopted for the present study. The investigator decided to collect data from Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University. 500 Women Student-Teachers are the sample for this study.**

Tools Used for the Study

Effectiveness of evaluation largely depends upon the accuracy of measurement. Accuracy of measurement in turn depends on the precision of the instrument. The tool is of many types. The investigator had selected the questionnaire form. The tool had 20 items. Each item was in the form of multiple choices. The correct response of every item carried *one* point score. The Questionnaire prepared and developed by the investigator was used to collect the data in this study. The reliability and validity of the tool were established.

- **A blank bio-data (For Women Student-Teachers)**
- **EDUSAT Awareness Inventory**

Statistical Techniques Used

Statistical Techniques serve the fundamental purpose of the description and inferential analysis. The following statistical techniques were used in the study.

- **'t' test for determining the significance of difference between means of two variables.**
- **f' test is used to find out the significance of difference between two sub - group variables.**

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The hypotheses formulated for the present study were tested by applying statistical techniques. Descriptive and inferential analyses were used.

Table: 1
Mean Score of EDUSAT awareness among Women Student-Teachers

S. No.	Women Student-Teachers	N	Mean	S.D.
1.	Entire Sample	50	9.38	3.01

From the above table it was found that the Student-Teachers had EDUSAT Awareness of 9.38 out of 20 (46.9 per cent).

This null hypothesis was accepted because the mean scores of EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers were not significant (50 per cent).

It was declared that the Student-Teachers of Colleges of Education do not have adequate EDUSAT Awareness as the mean awareness score was less than fifty per cent.

Table: 2
Significance of difference between means of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers for Age-wise sub group

No.	Age	N	Mean	S.D.	t' value	Level of Significance
2.	Below 25 years	26	7.7	1.6	16.2	Significant at 0.01 level
	Above 25 years	24	11.3	3.2		

The calculated t' value 16.2 is greater than the table value 2.59 at 0.01 level. This implies that the relationship between the variables under study is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

It was found that the Women Student-Teachers who are Below 25 years have less awareness of EDUSAT than those who are Above 25 years.

Table: 3
Significance of difference between means of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers for Qualification-wise sub group

S. No.	Qualification	N	Mean	SD.	t' value	Level of Significanc
3.	Under-Graduate	291	8.1	2.2	12.9	Significant at 0.01 level
	Post-Graduate	209	11.2	3.1		

The calculated t' value 12.9 is greater than the table value 2.59 at 0.01 level. This implies that the relationship between the variables under study is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

It was found that the Under-Graduate Women Student-Teachers have less awareness of EDUSAT than Post-Graduate Women Student-Teachers.

Table: 4
Significance of difference between means of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers for Subject-wise sub group

S. No.	Subject	N	Mean	S.D.	t' value	Level of Significance
4.	Arts	187	9.9	3.1	2.7	Significant at 0.01 level
	Science	313	9.1	3		

The calculated t' value 2.7 is greater than the table value 2.59 at 0.01 level. This implies that the relationship between the variables under study is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

It was found that the Science Subject Women Student - Teachers have less awareness of EDUSAT than Arts Subject Women Student-Teachers.

Table: 5
Significance of difference between means of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers for Locale-wise sub group

S. No.	Locale	N	Mean	S.D.	t' value	Level of Significance
5.	Rural	259	8.4	2.5	7.6	Significant at 0.01 level
	Urban	241	10.4	3.2		

The calculated t' value 7.6 is greater than the table value 2.59 at 0.01 level. This implies that the relationship between the variables under study is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

It was found that the Rural Area Women Student-Teachers have less awareness of EDUSAT than Urban Area Women Student-Teachers.

Table: 5
Significance of difference between means of EDUSAT awareness of Women Student-Teachers for Locale-wise sub group

S. No.	Locale	Categories	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean	F' value	Level of Significance
6.	Father's Educational Qualification	Between Group	1315.545	2	657.773	101.9	Significant at 0.01 level
		Within Group	3208.727	497	6.456		
		Total	4524.272	499			

The calculated F value 101.9 is greater than the table value 4.65 at 0.01 level. This implies that the relationship between the sub group variables under study is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

It was found that the Women Student-Teachers whose Fathers are Degree holder have more EDUSAT Awareness than those of the remaining two viz. Up to Higher secondary and Illiterate.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that there was no adequate EDUSAT Awareness among Women Student-Teachers of B.Ed. in Distance Education at Annamalai University. However, Women Student-Teachers who are Above 25 years, Post-Graduate, Science Subject, Urban have EDUSAT Awareness. The Student - Teachers whose Father's Qualification is Degree holder have EDUSAT Awareness.

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OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION: A Needful Empowerment Strategy for Nigerian Women

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ABSTRACT

Open and Distance Education (ODE) has offered access to many people who would have previously been denied access to educational opportunities based on where they live or work, poor-economic circumstances, social status etc. In the past, the African female child had always been denied formal education due to various cultural and social prejudices.

Distance education (DE) has also been employed by numerous women, who had earlier been deprived, to bridge the educational gap between males and females in the country. Thus, the need for Women emancipation through empowerment all over the world is at its peak and Nigerians generally are not left out. Therefore, an attempt to make sure that women's voices are heard, given their right places in the scheme of things, and also the educational attainment of women considering the low level of girls' education in Nigeria which is at a negative variance to attaining women position since certain educational attainments are required for optimal functionality in the various available organs; work place, group or committees of local or international standing.

This paper therefore stresses the use of open and distance learning as an avenue to attain knowledge and education that would put Nigerian women in a better footpath toward achieving their desired aspirations in Life.

Keywords: **Distance Education (DE), Distance Learning (DL, Open and Distance Learning (ODL).**

INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades, there have been considerable developments in open and distance learning in many developing countries. The African continent has the oldest institutional provision for distance higher and further education in the globe.

The spurge in the open schooling system is a phenomenon of the last part of the twentieth century (Daniel, 2010), and considerable progress has been made in respect of open schooling and open basic education in the African continent at school level and higher education.

Nigeria like other African countries is also striving towards expanding educational opportunities through distance education. In recent years, there has been remarkable progress in Nigeria towards these promises; yet, growing evidence indicates that the conventional education remains ill-positioned to respond to this challenge.

This is even worrisome when we consider the intricate link between accessible education, poverty and empowerment of the marginalized groups, since women have since independence in Nigeria, remained marginal beneficiaries of educational programmes. Not surprisingly, their high poverty status has deepened, especially, with

the introduction of structural adjustments in the 1980s. Despite its free education policy (FGN, 2013) at all levels of basic schooling, access to education for all remained unattainable, more so for girls and women (UNICEF, 2002).

In some Nigerian administrative states like Sokoto and Zamfara, the female literacy rate is as low as 12 percent when compared to 59% for boys (UNESCO, 2003). The statistics indicated a wider gender disparity with 65.5% of males being literate as against 39.5% literate females. The same period revealed that of the nearly 7.3 million children of primary school age not in school about 62% were girls. This stark reality is confirmed by Ofoegbu (2009:47), who argues that in fact only about 33% and 28% of female children respectively attend primary and secondary schools in sub Saharan Africa. This could be generally as a result of negative challenges which include ineffective and inefficient implementation of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) and reforms in the Nigerian education system, poor economy, poor management of scare resources, poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, culture and religious issues, gender bias in content, teaching and learning process.

There has however, never been any period in human history, more now than ever, that the provision of education to women is been championed. Various efforts include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where the international covenants in arts. 7-9, 11 & 13 mentioned that through the right to education, human beings are oriented to 'the full development of human personality and a sense of dignity'; UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1999), the 1981 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1990 Jomitien Declaration on Education for All (EFA), and the 2000 World Forum on Education For All, especially the EFA 2015 goal commitment of: "eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girl's full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality (World Education Forum, 2002). Though much progress has been made, it is however ironic and sad, that this is 2015, the target date, and yet this goal is far from been realized. The inability of many women to attend regular institutes of higher learning and acquire degree certificates due to lack of time had given to the establishment of distance learning in Nigeria.

Now, the open distance learning has come a long way to include learners from along the length and breadth of the world into its ambit. it has also gives a rare privileges to working women, *house wives*, even prisoners, individuals doing "*Mickey Mouse*" jobs and immigrants to Nigeria other than students and professionals that were the targets of distance learning.

It is an important part of the national development project undertaken by the Nigerian government. The cost of distance learning courses does no weigh heavy on the budget of learners especially the women. It is against this backdrop that Open and Distance Learning (ODE) has been identified as the panacea to the perennial educational challenges of equitable access to learning, equality of basic educational opportunities as well as providing a second chance for women and girls who had never been or had once been in the system but had to dropout for one reason or another.

Even though this mode of education may not be the *magic wind* in solving all our educational ills, Pityana (2009:9) argues that, if properly conceived, could be the long-term strategy for national renaissance, since higher education, not withstanding the social circumstances, remains an engine of development, knowledge and its development and dissemination can transcend the confines of social deprivation. In Nigeria though, distance learning is still on the way to multiply its potentiality as an alternative education option

Historical antecedence of Distance Learning in Nigeria

Distance education is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. In Nigeria, the emergence of Distance learning in dates back to the colonial time. Owoeye (2004) opines that since the colonial period, correspondence colleges from United Kingdom have provided intermediate and advanced level training to a number of qualified Nigerians via correspondence courses. Distance studies in Nigeria started around the 60s. The first official recognition of distance education by the Nigerian government came in 1959 during a prelude towards independence; the Federal Ministry of Education inaugurated the Ashby Commission.

The Ashby Report submitted in 1960, recommended the establishment of University of Lagos with a department for correspondence courses. The launching of the Universal Primary Education in 1976 led to further recognition of the distance learning mode as a veritable means of promoting teacher education. Towards this end, National Teachers Institute (NTI) was established by the Federal Government in 1976 as the first institution providing distance education courses designed to upgrade under-qualified and unqualified teachers. Later on, some universities such as University of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University were providing extension services to their catchment areas. The Ahmadu Bello University Institute of Education also introduced the Teacher In Service Education Programme to raise the quantity and quality of teachers in Northern Nigeria. According to Adegbite and Oyekanmi (2010), the University of Ibadan also inaugurated distance education in 1988 in an attempt to meet the needs of the ever increasing applicants for university education through distance learning programme.

When the National Council of Education ruled that the National Certificate of Education (NCE) should be the minimum qualification for teaching at primary school level, the Ahmadu Bello University Institute of Education, started the NCE through correspondence programme. This important point of training and recruitment of more teachers point was encapsulated in a 2009 report by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (USIS), *Projecting the Global Demand for Teachers: Meeting the Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015*.

According to the report, 10.3 million teachers will be needed worldwide by 2015 if universal primary education is to be attained. Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria Inclusive) faces the most severe teacher shortfalls. The USIS report (2009, p. 15) observed that: "Of the 10.3 million teachers needed, 8.1 million will be deployed to maintain the current capacity of education systems (i.e compensate for attrition).

About 2.2 million recruits will be needed to expand education systems in order to achieve UPE (Universal Primary Education) In other words, one in five teachers that need to be hired by 2015 will be part of global efforts toward EFA.

This reflects the massive investment which is required by governments. This perspective highlights the dramatic burden for sub-saharan Africa (Nigeria Inclusive). The region needs to recruit and train about 1.1 million teachers to maintain the current situation in the classroom, which already falls short in terms of education quality. But to attain UPE, these countries must recruit an additional 1.3 million teachers, bringing the total to 2.4 million. In short they will need to recruit almost as many teachers in just eight years as are currently teaching in classrooms across the region." This huge need for teachers in Africa and other developing countries is alarming as viewed in the context of the limited capacity of teacher education institutions to address it while simultaneously upgrading the large proportion of untrained or unqualified teachers

already in the system and providing adequate opportunities for teachers' continuing professional development.

Hence Distance education brought about the training of more teachers through the National Teachers institute (NTI).This also brought an attempt to establish an Open University in Abuja which was earlier truncated and was replaced with a dual-mode institution established as the University of Abuja. At the University of Abuja, the Centre for Distance Learning and Continuing Education (CDLCE) was set up and mandated to provide distance education component of every programme that the University would provides. The sandwich programmes were established in the mid 80s and run by some Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education. The sandwich programmes were originally designed and run during the school long vacations to create opportunities for participation by workers, especially teachers.

These programmes are open to all categories of learners with varied entry qualifications ranging from Primary School Certificate, attempted School Certificate, School Certificate holders, TCII teachers, NCE and first degree holders. More women enrolled in this programme. This was to create access for those who are not able to make it to the conventional schools because of time and other factors.

Although Open and Distance learning was introduced to the university education system in Nigeria in 1983, Through The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) which was first launched in 1983 but suspended in 1985 by the military government. President Olusegun Obasanjo re-launched it in 2001 and NOUN now provides instruction for over 60,000 students as at 2002 (UNESCO, 2002).

The reestablishment of National Open University of Nigeria in 2001 was to prove that open and distance learning is not only cost- effective, but is also a most appropriate avenue for widening access to education, which has helped to produce a better skilled workforce, which in turn has led to the growth and development of both local and national economies. Typically, graduates of distance education programmes find it easier to participate in the economic mainstream. NOUN is the first full-fledged university that operates in an exclusively open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education.

The university focuses mainly on a distance teaching and learning system, and delivers its course materials via print in conjunction with information and communication technology (ICT). The practice of ODL in Nigeria takes various forms, which include correspondence study education, distance learning (Sandwich programmes), Part-Time Teacher Training Programme (PTTP), Open University, weekend programmes, adult literacy education programmes, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and e-learning.

From the beginning of correspondence courses during the first half of the 19th century to the modern conception of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), students have been provided with useful knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. The programme provides access to young, elderly and disadvantaged groups who are interested in the acquisition of university education, anytime and anywhere. Open and distance education is flexible, and learner friendly.

Multi-perspective approaches to learning are adopted in order to ascertain the quality of instruction. The emergence of the system of ODL is an inevitable and unparalleled advancement in the history of educational development in Nigeria and internationally. Unlike the formal system of education which has its inherent limitations with regards to expansion, provision of access, equity and cost- effectiveness, the growth of open and distance mode of education has now made education flexible by providing

increased educational opportunities to a larger population in different situations and needs.

Thus, we are moving gradually from the exclusive, closed system mode of '' privileged'' access to education, towards a more inclusive educational model, which supports and is reflective of UNESCO's goal of Education for All for the 21st century. Through various initiatives, such as those undertaken by UNESCO, COL, the British Council, the Literacy Enhancement Assistance Program, and others, the gap between education and world of work that many developing countries have experienced in the past is being narrowed.

Distance learning has great potential in the developing countries (Nigerian Inclusive), by offering a powerful channel for bringing education to groups that have previously been excluded. This brought about the uniqueness of ODL on the following premise;

- **There is separation of learner and teacher in time and space.**
- **There is flexibility in the use of multimedia devices and entry requirements for increased access and equity.**
- **There is availability of programmes to learners at their chosen locations.**
- **It is learner-cantered.**
- **There is openness with regards to access, duration, age, sex, goals and knowledge delivery technique.**
- **It allows students to combine education with work.**
- **It allows for a two-way communication between the teacher and the learners.**

Generally, open and distance learning has been used to give students a second chance at education, and this seems to have been particularly the case in teacher development programmes in Africa (Holmberg, 1995; De Wolf, 1994; Rumble, 1992).

THE CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Open Distance Education (ODE) and Open Distance Learning (ODL)

There are several approaches to defining the term Distance Education (DE), Kaufman, Watkins and Guerra (2000), defines distance education as the delivery of useful learning opportunities at convenient place and time for learners, irrespective of institution providing the learning opportunity. Distance education aims at increasing access to education for those who have difficulty in accessing it within the mainstream such as the poor, illiterate, women, marginalized and those living in remote areas.

To Dhanarajan, (2008), Distance education is the means by which the teacher is taken literally to the student. It is a teaching and learning process in which students are separated from the teachers by a physical distance which is often bridged by communications technologies.

Wikipedia defines Distance education or distance learning as a mode of delivering education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. Distance learning provides "access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both. Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason (excluding taking examinations) have been referred to as hybrid or blended courses of study.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs), aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web or other network technologies, are a recent development in distance education It is an educational process in which a significant proportion of

the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner. Distance learning according to Frederick B. King, Michael F. et. al. (2007) is improved capabilities in knowledge and/or behaviors as a result of mediated experiences that are constrained by time and/or distance such that the learner does not share the same situation with what is being learned. From this definition of distance learning flows our definition of distance education.

Distance education is formalized instructional learning where the time/geographic situation constrains learning by not affording in-person contact between student and instructor. Open Distance Learning is an organized educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which constraints on study are minimized in terms either of access, or of time and place, pace, method of study, or any combination of these. Open and Distance learning is a type of learning whereby opportunity is given to people (young and elderly) who have passed the ages of admission into regular universities to continue their education. It is also directed at youngsters beyond school age, who are qualified and desire to earn a university degree.

Adebayo (2007) defined open and distance learning as the type of education that takes place outside the conventional school system; it is imparted without necessarily having personal interaction with students or learners. Creed (2001) sees distance learning as 'an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone far removed in space and /or time from the learners.

According to UNESCO (2002), ODL is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web presenting approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners.

The Federal Ministry of education (2002) defines ODL as any form of learning in which the provider enables individual learners to exercise choices over any one or more of a number of aspects of learning and distance learning as an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/ or in time from the learner.

Alaezi (2005) refers to open and distance learning as educational patterns, approaches and strategies that permit people to learn with no barriers in respect of time and space, age and previous educational qualification –no entry qualification, no age limit, no regard to sex, race, tribe, state of origin etc. On the other hand, Dodds (2005) in his argument against the concept defines open learning as an approach which combines the principles of learner centeredness, lifelong learning, flexibility of learner provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learner support, the construction of learning programmes in the expectation that learners can succeed and the maintenance of rigorous quality assurance over the design of learning materials and support systems. Open learning therefore is the policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender or time constraints and with recognition of prior learning (Glen, 2005).

Generally, open and distance learning education courses are made up of a number of course components or learning materials which can include any of the following: teaching texts, study guides, course guides, readers or anthologies, assignments (with or without an accompanying tutor guide), television broadcasts or videotapes, radio broadcasts or audiotapes, software or online information and data, CD-ROMS,

textbooks and laboratory materials, the telephone, computer conferencing, teleconferencing a webinar based approach which facilitates learning. Tuition materials are sent with questions to be answered, it could be recorded electronic materials and the students do this at their spare time. In addition, some students support may be provided, either through personal communication at local universities or through online student tutors. Both the media used for open and distance learning and the student support arrangements affect the possible level of interaction in open and distance learning courses. It can be deduced from these definitions that open and distance learning provides educational opportunities needed by anyone, anywhere and at anytime. It provides increased educational opportunities to a larger population in different situations and needs. Both students and employees with distance problems can benefit because it is more flexible in terms of time and can be delivered anywhere. Therefore it's a second chance approach to get educated for those that could not complete a certain level of education at a particular time because of varying level of conditions.

Women Empowerment

The extensive use and popularity of the term women empowerment by many international scholars over the years leaves one to think that there is a commonly shared perspective on what it means, but its many different existing definitions and interpretations prove that the opposite is true. In fact, there is no straightforward definition of women empowerment, simply because the concept of power is such a societal contextually dependent concept that it cannot be streamlined internationally.

Nevertheless, research on women empowerment has shown some definitional and interpretational similarities that are interesting to look into when trying to define women empowerment. Empowerment implies that an individual or a group hitherto lacked power or authority by circumstances, denial or default. The issue of women empowerment has become a part of popular debate (Olakunlehin and Ojo, 2006:272). One of the similarities in the literature defining women empowerment is captured in the concept of women's decision-making power as an indicator of women empowerment.

Stressing the dimension of resources, the dimension of decision-making agency reflects the capabilities women have to shape their live according to their own desires (Kabeer, 1999: 438). All definitions of empowerment pointing towards decision-making power share the characteristic that it is about women having individual control over their lives, either economically, socially or psychologically. Another way in which empowerment is conceptualised is by referring to the importance of social inclusion (Malhotra, et al., 2002: 4). Here, empowerment is to be obtained by the participation of women in society and by, as Malhotra, et al., 2002:4 states it: "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them." Connected to the concept of social inclusion is the dimension of political and social awareness of women which explains part of the empowerment process.

Saraswathy, et al. (2008:190) moreover pointed out that women empowerment is a result of a process of women "identifying their inner strength, opportunities for growth, and their role in reshaping their own destiny". Finally, women empowerment has frequently been termed a process of women gaining more access to a steady income and economic power or security (Malhotra, et al., 2002). These definitions are not essentially exclusive, but refer to different components of empowerment. For this study, we follow Alcoff (1988:432), who defines empowerment as a process which women come to believe in their ability "to construct, and take on and [their] choices".

Powerlessness, in contrast, we see as the continuing subordination of women by men in public and private spheres, supported by cultural messages of devaluation internalised, in varying degrees, by women. These messages form the basis for women's doubts about their power to shape their lives.

Accessible Education

The purpose of adopting ODL as a policy option is ostensibly to increase access to higher education especially by non-traditional learners. Access implies the facilitation of people, in this case women, to get education, the opportunity for enrolment as well as the facilitation and the encouragement of sustaining enrolment by learners in appropriate education programmes. UNESCO (2002) equally stated that ODL represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering learning opportunities to individuals and group of learners.

In Nigeria, women are discriminated against in access to education for social and economic reasons.

The Human *Development Report 2002* puts the statistics of illiterate women at 57 percent as against 43 percent for males. As seemingly insignificant this difference may appear, it is completely unacceptable, if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved.

In Nigeria, girls and women comprise about 49.69 percent of the total population. Incidentally, about 61 percent of the total female population reported to be illiterates against 37.7 percent of the male population.

Thus, the objective of ODL in Nigeria is to enhance the opportunities that support education for all and life-long learning and at the same time provide avenues for the acquisition of qualitative education for all categories of learners especially women.

As Calvert (1986) notes, ODL helps extend the market for education to clientele who have not been previously served. In developing countries, particularly in Africa, this clientele has continued to increase in geometric proportion.

Poverty Alleviation

Definitions of poverty are as varied as poverty itself. We do not intend to reconcile them here, as this is done elsewhere. However, based on our respondents, poverty is best captured in the basic needs approach. Aluko (1975) refers to poverty as "a lack of command over basic consumption needs, which mean, in other words, that there is an inadequate level of consumption giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and/or shelter, and moreover the lack of certain capacities, such as being able to participate with dignity in society. Poverty has been defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living (World Bank Report, 1990).

In Nigeria, the prevalence of both relative and absolute poverty is duly recognised and even mentioned in various National Developments Plans and Conferences of the Nigerian Economic Society. Poverty has a gendered face, and any attempt at its alleviation must take cognizance of this fact. We have favoured a basic needs framework of poverty.

Ogwumike and Ekpenyong (1995) see poverty as a household's inability to provide sufficient income to satisfy its need for food, shelter, education, clothing and

transportation. Minimum standards for food are based on nutritional requirements in terms of calories and protein consumption habit and customs are also allowed for in the selection of the food items to give the required national stock.

Shelter and education, the number of person per room and the number of children attending school (and the level of schooling) respectively, are adopted as minimum standard.

However, the problem of defining minimum standard for clothing and transportation has persisted. Poverty specifically has traditionally warranted significant attention by all governments and civil society if only because it's most fundamental characteristic is deprivation, which denies the people and communities the options necessary to exercise choices about their lives.

Such deprivation is strongly linked to a host of risk factors, identified by the World Bank to include "low level of nutrition, illness, and the inability to access information or to take advantage of educational opportunities at the primary and secondary level" tend to exclude its victims from the enjoyment of any developmental gains seen in the macro economy.

The World Bank has also pointed to a reasonably strong correlation between poverty and illiteracy in Nigeria, and has confirmed the dearth of human capital among the poor in the country. However, it remains to be added that the foundation of poverty eradication and women empowerment is ensuring that the vast majority of the people are equipped to participate in the knowledge economy of the 21st century, especially through programmes that would encourage their enrolment in large numbers, in a wide swathe of courses for educational and skills development. Training in this case includes social skills, introduction to entrepreneurship, and workplace etiquette. Distance education qualifies to be a feasible vehicle for making such training programmes available and accessible to women

BENEFITS OF ODE TO WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Accessible Education for Women in Nigeria

Olakulehin and Ojo (2006) argue that the only effective way to meaningfully contribute to the emancipation of women in the Nigerian society is to widen the access of women and girls to quality education. Since the conventional structures of education have not been able to adequately meet the demands of female education in Nigeria, on a research study conducted by Terhemba (2011) ODL readily fills in this void, she maintained that respondents agreed that this mode of delivery has afforded them the opportunity to benefit from education, which they would not otherwise had the opportunity. According to her, a respondent in Benue explained;

> ***I got my National Certificate of Education before my colleagues, who in the first place considered the NTI programme I was enrolled in a second class. It was called various derogatory names, especially Torfam (referring to its seasonal nature). By the time I was certified, they had just gotten admission to a conventional College of Education. I have not stopped from there; I am now taken a BA (Ed) in Early Childhood at the NOUN.***

Another respondent in Kogi affirmed the way ODE has transformed the educational landscape in Nigeria. She graphically informed that:

If you know the challenge we women have in combining domestic work and studies, you would agree with the double work women perform. I never had a slight idea that it was possible for me to look after my children, go to work at the Local government Council, and at the same time attend a University. NOUN has literally and figuratively carried education to our doorsteps.

UNESCO and other United Nations agencies have identified access as one of the ways of reducing gender inequality in the society. Reviewing the submission from the literature, three reasons have been identified as being germane for equality of opportunity and access in education:

- **equal access for individuals regardless of social circumstances**
- **equal chances to take part or share in the system**
- **equal educational results: equal gains.**

Poverty Alleviation for Women in Nigeria

Olakulehin and Ojo (2006:273) suggested that ODL will increase the income-earning potential and development of women. Kanwar and Taplin (2001) citing Le Vine (1982) also suggest that educated women would afford to buy goods and services for their children and have a greater chance of helping them to find employment through their contacts.

Furthermore, educated women have demonstrated a better ability to keep control of their husband's expenditures and to maintain their own economic independence, to improve household management, and be more able to save money and generally contribute more to the family income pool (Chaudry, 1995).

Then the question is "What impact has ODE had on poverty reduction of women in Nigeria? The answers may be diverse, but one common theme, however, was the fact that, at the initial enrolment into the programme, it appeared that the women were becoming poor and poorer.

However, after the painful challenges of completing the programme, their living standards and those of their families increased. Terhemba (2011) reported One commercial farmer in Nassarawa saying:

...they were times I decided enough was enough. We had three children in the secondary school and the fourth had written matriculation examinations for university admission. I could see that my husband was not supportive of my part-time progamme again. Allah be blessed, I have since completed my studies, and with connections and the knowledge from my course, had gotten a small loan. I can say now that my husband collects enough money from me, as I collected from him during my studies.

On this study, Terhemba (2011) concluded that, a large proportion of the respondents were in agreement that with the completion of the programme, they were now able to provide sufficient income to satisfy the basic necessities of life, including the need for food, shelter, education, clothing and transportation. This is obvious when women are not confined to the four wall of the house alone with the primitive believe of just bearing children and cook, getting them empowered and gainfully employed will at least reduce the financial burden of the man if not totally eradicated.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE IN NIGERIA

Since accessible education, leads to poverty reduction, it is believed that there is a continuum between access, poverty reduction and empowerment of women. Chaudry (1995) has aptly demonstrated that women who attended adult education classes became more confident, which in turn equipped them with better mobility, expression, understanding and ability to make decisions and accept responsibility. There were benefits not only for the women themselves, but for their husbands, children, families and communities. For example, it has been found that educated mothers are able to contribute more effectively to the quality of their children's education (Raj, 1982; Chaudry, 1995).According to a research conducted by Terhemba (2011) she came out with a tabulated analysis showing the Empowerment score percentages as demonstrated by women, see below

Table: 1
Empowerment score percentages as demonstrated by women

	Average Empowerment Score per Indicator	
Activity	Empowered	Not Empowered
Mobility	88.3	12.7
Economic security	56.9	43.1
Ability to make large and small purchases	84.4	15.6
Involvement in major decisions	56.6	43.4
Relative freedom from family	86.7	13.3
Political and legal awareness	44.0	56.0
Public participation/protests/campaigning	92.0	8.0
Aggregated Percent	72.7	28.3

Although it is not easy presenting data on women empowerment in quantitative terms based on the subjective component of empowerment. However, the table above attempts this.

The conclusion she drawn from the field study analysis is that ODE overall leads to higher women empowerment if women empowerment is measured by all seven indicators (mobility, economic security, the ability to make small and large purchases, involvement in major decisions, relative freedom from domination by the family, political and legal awareness and participation in public protests and campaigning) together. Looking at the effects of ODL on the empowerment indicators as separate dimensions, it can be said that ODL leads more substantially to public participation, mobility, ability to make purchases, and relative freedom from domination by the family. About 72.7 percent of the female respondents agreed that these programmes have empowered them compared to 28.3 percent that think otherwise (Tehemba, 2011)

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN PARTICIPATING ODE PROGRAMMES

Despite remarkable progress made in empowering women in Nigeria, there are still considerable obstacles to this feat. Poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, culture and religious issues, and gender bias in content, teaching and learning process are still a hindrance. There is still a pervading expectation that education is more important for males than for females (Tremaine and Owen, 1984), especially since after marriage women leave to join their husbands' families and, hence, are not regarded as being useful to their own families in the long term. An outcome of this attitude can be

lack of emotional and financial support or even demonstrated hostility concerning studies (Lunneborg, 1994). Yet for those who have scaled these first hurdles, there are fundamental challenges of timely receipt of instructional materials, access to the internet, inappropriate technology and power failure. These and many more frustrate women's effort to participate in ODL programmes. Other challenges as explained by Morayo (2013) Includes;

Power Supply

The problem of power instability in Nigeria is perennial and has been a major setback for our technological development. Most DE students that reside in cities and towns are faced with the problem of epileptic supply of power. Worse still, majority of them live in rural areas that are not connected to the national grid Lack of skills in Designing Course-wares: Instructional delivery in ODL is greatly affected by some facilitators' lack of knowledge and skills in designing and delivering courses in electronic format. This scenario is a fall out of the Non ICT-compliant status of the facilitators.

Poverty and Poor ICT Penetration

Statistics reveal that many Nigerians live in poverty. The result of this is that the cost of computers and other ICT resources are far beyond their reach. Therefore, like most African countries basic ICT infrastructures are inadequate. There is still low level of computer literacy among the Nigerians. Internet connectivity: Statistics has shown that there is low level of internet connectivity in Nigeria. The cost of accessing internet is still very high in West Africa. Most ODL students make use of Cyber Café where they are made to pay so much on hourly basis despite the poor services and slow rate of the servers. To make both students and teachers computer literate, the government should make projects that promote information and communications technology a priority.

Low Teledensity

Another major challenge to open and distance learning programme delivery is teledensity. Access to unhindered use of ICT tools such as telephone and internet has been very low (Asogwa, 2007).

Despite the advent of the Global System of Mobile (GSM) telecommunication, the use of ICT resources for educational purposes in general and open and distance learning in particular is still very low.

Technophobia

Most of the ODL students have no computer education background; hence they are afraid of using one. Some of them go to the extent of hiring experts at a cost to fill their admission, registration and other documents meant for them to fill online. However, the very few who have access to the computers do not know how to use it and take full advantage of its usage.

School Curriculum

Most of the students admitted have no information technology/computer education knowledge because it was not entrenched in the curriculum at their elementary and secondary education level. Not until recently when computer education is been introduced at elementary level and it is not yet a compulsory subject at the secondary level of our education.

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, its evident that there is no end to the various advantages accrued to Distance education as an empowerment strategy for women. Distance Education is important because it makes education accessible and reduces cost while maintaining quality. The use of distance education makes for equity of educational opportunities and services. The impact of gender disparity underlies the UNDP statement that 'for too long, it was assumed that development was a process that lifts all boats, that its benefits trickled down to all income classes- and that it was gender neutral in its impact (Akubue, 2001).

Open and Distance Learning, evidence shows, a better approach in Nigeria in democratizing education, poverty alleviation and the empowerment of the marginalized groups, especially women. Many of the difficulties and concerns experienced by women, particularly those in rural or low-income areas, point to the fact that distance education may be an ideal way for them to access education, since it potentially enables them to do most of their studying from home if they wish to do so, thus reducing the need to conflict with social or cultural requirements (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001:7).

In the context of Nigeria, women themselves allude to this benefit. Though most women are yet to utilize this window of rare opportunity to enhance their participation in the global economy, and to play a tangible role in their families, society and the nation at large.

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ABSTRACT

The first in a series on women as professionals and students in 21st-century higher education, this report is based on interview and questionnaire responses from more than 500 women and men from many occupations, as well as a review of published research on distance learning. It examines the convergence of two major trends: the growth of technology and distance education in the college and university setting, and the demographic shift toward a predominantly female population of non-traditional-age college students. The report focuses on understanding why women pursue online education, what constraints they may face in doing so, and how they perceive online culture, social identity, and communications. Following an introduction, the report's sections are: (1) "Why Women Go Online: Educational Plans, Preferences, and Aspirations"; (2) "The Digital Divide: Gaps and Bridges"; (3) "Look Who's Talking: Gender Identity and Culture Online"; and (5) "Conclusions and Recommendations." Appendices discuss the methodology and researcher. (Contains approximately 120 references.) (EV)

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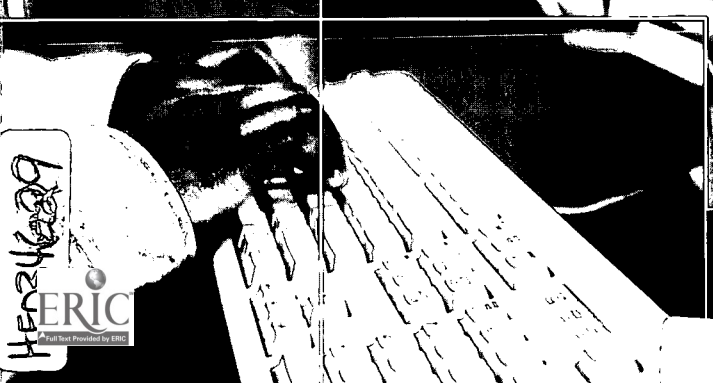
The Third Shift

Women Learning Online



By Cheris Kramarae

1999-2000 AAUW Educational Foundation
Scholar-in-Residence

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Acknowledgments

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Higher education in the United States is undergoing dramatic changes. University students in most courses now use the web either to fulfill course requirements or to supplement assignments. Furthermore, the growth in courses developed entirely for online delivery has risen sharply in the last few years. This report highlights problems, possibilities, and concerns raised by hundreds of the women and men who are participating in the vast changes in continuing education.

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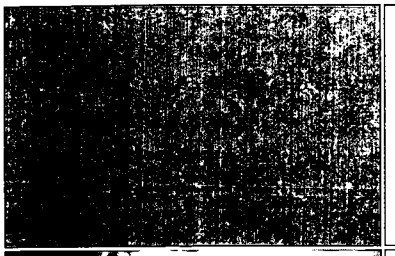
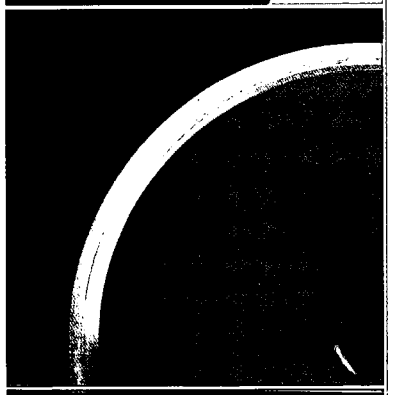
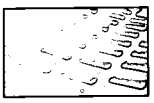
—Cheris Kramarae



Part 1



Introduction



Universities in the United States are undergoing dramatic changes as they respond to a competitive global economy, stunning new technological opportunities, and the increased need for and interest in continuing education courses and programs. At the same time, higher education has become more market-oriented and, according to some critics, more hostile to the development of inclusive education in universities. Computer technology has been at the heart of many of the changes, and it has transformed the delivery of education, the development and dissemination of knowledge, and communications between students and scholars. While some administrators and educators predict that bits and bytes will replace brick and mortar in the high-tech college of the 21st century, others are dubious that technology has or will change the fundamentals of education and university learning—for better or worse.

The Third Shift

In 1989 sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild published a landmark study of work and family conflicts in which she introduced the metaphor of a "second shift" for women in the home. Most women, she explains, "work one shift at the office or factory and a 'second shift' at home," culminating in the equivalent of an extra month of work over the course of a year. One interviewee explained that although she resisted the idea that homemaking was a "shift," she did feel that "you're on duty at work. You come home, and you're on duty. Then you go back to work and you're on duty." As Hochschild concludes, "Her home life *felt* like a second shift."

This report elaborates Hochschild's still-timely metaphor of work and family life. It adds education to the equation as a third shift—in addition to paid work and work in the home—for many female students. As lifelong learning and knowledge become ever more important to economic well-being, women and men find they juggle not only work and family, but also demands of further schooling and education throughout their lives. In this report, women students describe how they grapple individually, often in isolation, with time constraints so they can unobtrusively squeeze distance learning into their already packed work and family lives. Through distance education, technology offers new opportunities for many women to achieve educational goals. This report explores why women pursue the third shift; how they manage to balance work, family, and education; and what would make distance learning easier for them.

Coming to Terms: What Is Distance Education?

The terms "online education" and "distance learning" refer to a system and process of connecting students, teachers, and learning resources when they are not in the same location. (Distance education has been tied to communication technologies for many years in the United States, initially after the establishment of an efficient postal system.) In the past several decades, the format of distance education has changed from primarily paper-based instruction to integrated multimedia (such as the delivery of courses via TV programs) to the use of networked computers (the Internet) and the World Wide Web—a part of the Internet that consists of "pages" (documents, which can include pictures and sounds) linked to each other. Internet-based distance education is becoming the major delivery method in the United States and often is referred to as online education, distance learning, web-based learning, computer-based training, distributed learning, or e-learning. Australia and some European countries also use the terms "flexible learning," "managed learning," and "open learning."

What was once a division between online education and e-learning is becoming blurred as universities form partnerships with businesses and each other to better compete in a greatly expanded global market for students. Some people in business talk about continuing or adult education primarily in terms of modules that can be taken when new skills are needed for particular tasks. Most study respondents believe, however, that providing skill training, while necessary for many people and businesses, is not the same as helping prepare students for long-term effective functioning in a variety of situations in a diverse society.

The growth of distance education resulted from many factors, including the following:

- Decreases in government subsidies of the public institutions of higher education
- Increases in costs of higher education at both public and private institutions
- Increases in the number of employed women
- Reductions in secure, long-term jobs
- Increases in credential requirements for entry to and continuing work in many jobs
- Rapid changes in information technologies
- Increases in online business
- Increases in venture capital funding in knowledge enterprises
- Increases in college enrollments
- Increases in attention to lifelong education
- Increases in competition among institutions for education dollars
- Increases in the globalization of competitiveness and commerce
- Shifts to the use of web-based training for workers
- Shifts by the U.S. Army to distance learning via laptop computers

In 2000, students who could afford distance education had their choices of more than 6,000 accredited courses on the web. While 710,000 students enrolled in distance learning courses in 1998, more than 2 million students are expected to enroll in 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, Web-Based Education Commission, 2000, p. 77). According to a recent government document, the average distance learning student is 34 years old, employed part-time, has previous college credit—and is a woman (U.S. Senate, 2001).

Some call what is happening an educational revolution—the first major change in higher education in seven centuries (Cookson, 2000, p. 79). Those who argue that higher education has remained basically the same for many centuries ignore what, for women, has been a revolutionary change during the last century and half: The admission of women into colleges and universities has evolved from a statistical rarity to women slightly outnumbering men overall in undergraduate programs.

Online education should offer important new options and opportunities for women and men interested in higher education, courses, or degrees. Many promoters of web-based courses promise increased and improved educational opportunities, especially for the educationally disadvantaged, which can include adult students, single parents, and others who are unable to attend courses on campuses because of job and family responsibilities, health and physical limitations, or incarceration. However, technology-based changes in higher education programs will not automatically bring increased equality to everyone interested in and deserving of university courses and degrees. In fact, our technological history shows that, at least initially, the uses of new media mimic existing methodologies and disciplines (Brown, 2000, p. 12).

This report examines the convergence of two major trends: the growth of technology and distance education in the college and university setting, and the demographic shift toward a predominantly female population of non-traditional-age college students (60 percent of students over the age of 25 are women). It focuses on understanding why women pursue online education, what constraints

they may face in doing so, and how they perceive online culture, social identity, and communications.

Why Ask Women About Distance Education?

In this study of gender and online education, we attempt to remedy the lack of attention paid to women's interests and involvement with online education by paying special attention to women's assessments of their experiences and concerns.

Why is attention to women's perspectives needed in distance education? First, women are the primary users of online education, yet they are dramatically underrepresented in the high-tech sectors charged with producing technological solutions and designing technological delivery systems, software, and educational packages. They are also underrepresented among college and university faculty and administrators currently shaping distance education.

Second, many women returning to college classes face significant barriers not usually experienced by men, or at least not experienced to the same degree. Many women balance job, community, and heavy family responsibilities against their academic work. They often have serious financial burdens. Traditionally they have grappled with these difficulties while also facing inflexible class schedules and academic policies, inadequate childcare, lack of appropriate housing, and lack of reliable transportation (Furst-Bowe, 2000). Can distance learning programs possibly alleviate some of these difficulties?

Finally, adult women often have been—and are today—targeted as a primary constituency for online learning. In the past century, women constituted the majority of students in correspondence courses. Educators usually thought of these women, if they were thought of at all, as education consumers working on the sidelines of higher education to fulfill individual goals. Now that distance education programs have evolved technologically and, under various social pressures, moved to the center of many university programs (at least in terms of long-range plans), universities are searching not only for successful, cost-efficient online courses and programs, but also for additional students to take the courses. Adult women are recruited (although evidently not as consumers of computer science and post-graduate business courses and programs*), yet we know little about how these students and potential students feel about education or about how distance education may or may not increase their access to education.

Many of the women who participated in this study described themselves as having problems (e.g., not enough money to continue their education, many family responsibilities) that require them to improvise individual and often extremely difficult solutions. While their individual situations differ, the number of women currently working to complete courses and degrees online represents a social phenomenon. Awareness of women's problems and action to help overcome the problems are needed to increase the success of women and online programs.

A Brief Description of Methodology

This report is based on a study of interview and questionnaire responses from more than 500 women and men from many occupations, as well as a review of published research on distance learning (see the Appendix for a more complete description of methodology).

Given the increasing commitments of universities and individuals to the development of educational technology infrastructures and the relatively little information about gendered uses of technologies, we asked broad questions about the social and economic aspects of information and communication technologies in higher education. We expanded the discussion by listening to the ideas

*Advertising for some courses seems to be aimed at men. For example, a recent advertisement announcing a new online master's degree in business administration features a photo of a young **man** in a business suit carrying a baby and groceries. The text reads, "So you can get that degree you need to advance your career, without putting the rest of your life on hold" (*Smart Money*, Feb. 2001, p. 151).

and concerns of those *avoiding* distance technologies, as well as those profitably employing them.

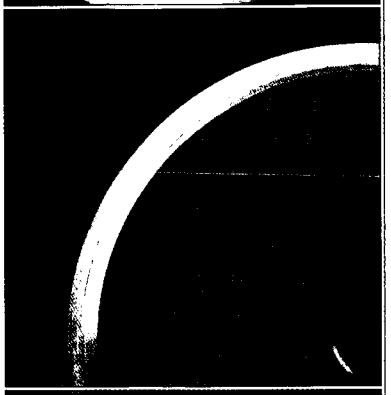
Data were collected over a 16-month period using in-depth interviewing and an online questionnaire. Information was gathered from a total of 534 people (481 women and 53 men), including many women reentering academia, potential online students, and teachers and administrators interested in the possibilities and problems of online learning. The interview protocol and online questionnaire included questions about access to resources needed for online learning, learning styles, best and worst educational experiences, and experiences, worries, and successes regarding online education.

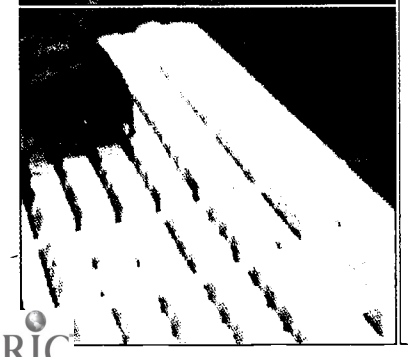
We conducted interviews in a variety of places, including homes, businesses, and schools. We collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed data concurrently to develop theory, additional questions, and key observations as they emerged. Secondary sources provided information about related historical and contemporary actions and about research findings regarding gender and distance learning.

Because many of the most critical issues for women in online education are only now being recognized —and because our sample is, in part, self-selected rather than the product of a random-selection procedure—this study is not an appropriate candidate for quantitative (statistical) analysis. The focus in this study is on researching perspectives and recurring themes expressed by the respondents.

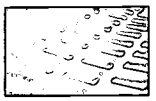
One caveat: any report dealing with computers and Internet use must recognize that statistics about online education change rapidly. Technological change is inevitable. While we recognize that there is always change, we also need to remind ourselves that early designs and decisions about structure and delivery can have long-lasting consequences. The emphasis in this study is, therefore, on long-term issues that have been largely ignored in research and on discussions about attitudes and practices on the Internet and in online education.

Part 2





Why Women Go Online:
Educational Plans, Preferences, and Aspirations



Contrary to a perception that most online students pursue discrete skills-oriented courses for career or other pragmatic ends, women in this study reveal a wide range of motivations and goals for their online experience. Indeed most respondents are pursuing degrees and emphasize the personal enrichment of the experience as well as its utility. A smaller number pursue courses to meet career needs, while others take courses simply for the enjoyment of learning.

Educational Plans

Although women have varied backgrounds, most have clear visions of what courses and degrees they want and for what purposes. The surprise is, perhaps, how focused they are despite a dearth of clear information about accredited online courses and programs in comparison to traditional programs.

Summaries and examples of respondents' plans follow, beginning with the types of responses given most frequently by the 375 women answering the question about their reasons for taking online courses.

The degree-seekers

More than a third of the respondents are working on or plan to work toward a specific degree online. An almost equal number of these degree-seekers are working on associate, bachelor's, or graduate degrees. Many women underscore, however, that they value not only the credential, but also the personal enrichment and knowledge they acquire through online classes. They view personal and professional advancement as intertwined.

Some women seeking an associate degree define it as an intermediate step in a longer process of educational and occupational preparation. A 32-year-old rural carrier, for example, sees the associate degree as a means to "take out a business loan and open a retail store in a nearby location."

> ***I am going to take advantage of courses through the U.S. Coast Guard. (I am the spouse of a member.) I plan to obtain my associate's degree, so that I can attend a state university. I would like to finish my master's degree by the time my children are in high school.***
>
> —Homemaker and freelance writer, 24, married, children at home

Several women seeking bachelor's degrees aspire to complete the entire degree online. "Distance ed will be part of my life," a flight instructor predicts. "I am already earning my bachelor's online and will try to do my master's the same way." A 37-year-old domestic engineer also wants to complete her bachelor's degree through distance education: "I want to have a home-based business, and set up programs in the community to help kids and their families."

Contrary to popular belief, students do not limit their online course-taking to specific vocational or training goals. Many women in this survey are completing or want to complete bachelor's and advanced degrees through distance learning, including a trainer who for years has been researching how to do her doctoral program online.

I would love to get a degree at some point, and every course I take, onsite or online, is toward that end. If I could complete my undergraduate education online, I would. [Taking classes] is for both personal and career gains, intertwined.

—Self-employed seamstress, 31, married, children at home

The pragmatists

Respondents in the second-largest group report that they are taking online classes, because they must do so to advance or develop their careers. These women generally offer briefer and less varied explanations than do the degree seekers described above. "I am using distance education right now to obtain a degree for career advancement. I don't think I could ever call this pleasure," a 49-year-old alumni director summarizes.

The reluctant users

Women in the third largest category indicate that they do not plan to take a distance education course, are not sure whether they would, or plan to use distance learning seldom or only under extenuating circumstances. "I would prefer not to but if I didn't have a choice I would try it," explains an outdoor educator. A grant writer emphasizes that she might pursue an online course "if the opportunity presented itself from a reputable university."

I am planning on going to a tech school located 5 minutes down the street from my home [rather than take online courses]. ... It is away from home and it is close enough so I can still be available to my family but without having the distractions (sibling rivalry, household chores, phones ringing, etc.).

—Social worker, children at home

The lifelong learners

The fourth largest category includes women who pursue online courses primarily because they aspire to be lifelong learners, although, as one woman notes, "the outcome will also advance my career." Some state that they have obtained as many degrees as they want or need, and they enjoy online courses simply to satisfy their pleasure in learning. A technical instructor with distance learning experience explains: "I have my degree—but I hope to continue learning and growing as a person. Distance learning helps provide opportunities for education without tying me to a fixed location every week."

Although I only have a BA (in elementary education), I have no interest in further degrees. I am always thirsty for more understanding, knowledge, pleasure.

—Caregiver for grandchild and retired state legislator, 62

The interested poor

Some women are interested but "too poor right now to even consider" online classes, as a "divorced, poor, and stressed" woman describes herself. Others in this category specify that they cannot afford the computer and other course materials required for online learning.

Some women who had identified online programs of interest indicate that distance learning may solve time constraints but not financial constraints. A single, 55-year-old consultant survey designer states: "Online courses are usually overpriced given the relative cost of providing such instruction compared to onsite instruction. I resent the charges currently asked by many programs. ... I had hoped that the Internet would provide a more economical means of acquiring 'higher' education."

The career changers

Some women taking or interested in taking online course want to make their lives better for themselves or for themselves and their children. For some this goal means using distance learning to change career paths. A 22-year-old bartender plans "to use the education to become something—basically to get

away from what I am doing. I do not want my mind to rot and I am ready for a career." Other women cite a desire to move toward a career that satisfies "monetary needs as well as emotional needs," as a medical radiology transcriptionist who feels "empty in my current field" explains.

The disappointed

More than a dozen women want to obtain a degree online but cannot find courses in their fields. "I already used online courses to finish my bachelor's degree," a 40-year-old executive assistant comments, "and I would use it again to get my master's degree. However, there is still a very limited number of degrees that you can get totally online/distance right now."

Preferences

Adult online students came of age in traditional classrooms—rooms with desks in rows facing a teacher's desk or a dais on an elevated platform. Even now, institutionally drab campus rooms are used in 50-minute sequences and are equipped with bells that begin and end the time that teachers and students spend together. Increasingly classrooms, at least in better-endowed colleges, are equipped with electronic teaching aids such as overhead projectors and connections for computers. While classrooms offer a place for students and teachers to meet on a regular basis with the possibility of stimulating conversations and challenging lectures, some students may experience the classroom and its rhythm and structure as confining, tedious, or unduly regimented.

Now that distance learning has created new means of delivery for education, we asked respondents whether they would prefer online or traditional classes.

Online courses

Almost half of the approximately 350 women who responded to this question opt for online courses, the vast majority for pragmatic reasons involving their current work and family situations. (Women responding to the online survey may be more likely to favor distance learning than a representative sample of women in school might be.) Dozens of women praise the flexibility of online courses, and many others cite the ability to control of their time and schedules. A much smaller number explain that they actually prefer the online learning experience itself.

Having flexibility

Flexibility—the ability to control their time and coordinate work, school, and home responsibilities —is a watchword for women who prefer online education and is a particularly strong selling point for adult women students who typically bear the brunt of family and work responsibilities. When it comes to education, time may be a more precious commodity than money for some of these women. A community college program director who has taken both types of classes prefers distance learning because it "allowed me to work on classwork on my schedule. ... I could take my laptop on business trips and work on classwork in hotels or work early morning hours or on the weekend. [I was] not locked into a specific class time/place."

> ***The flexibility of submitting papers at midnight is critical to my accomplishment. Because I own my own business and am a wife and mother, I would have a more difficult time attending an on-campus class regularly and promptly.***
>
> —Marketing consultant, 40, married, child at home

Women who mention flexibility state that distance learning allows them to fit education into their work and family schedules, rather than trying to fit their lives into the schedules of traditional education. "I work full-time and have a family," a 43-year-old associate faculty member describes. "I must find courses in my doctoral program that fit my schedule. Pretty impossible at times!"

Learning at their own pace

Some women appreciate the flexibility of the online learning process itself and the ability to study at their own pace without schedule restrictions.

Explains a survey design consultant: "I like to learn at my own pace (fast) and at odd (to other people) hours. ... I often remain at the computer learning new software for 10+ hours at a stretch and prefer such intensive immersions vs. classrooms broken into hourly learning sessions." A 51-year-old director of communications similarly values the completion of courses "at a pace that is comfortable for me. I do not appreciate micromanagement either at work or in an academic situation."

> ***Distance education, please! My own time, my own pace. I can go to my son's football games, I can see my daughter play basketball for the first time in her life. ... I can spend much-needed time with my husband. I can do my own thing, when I choose to do it—and still work ten hours a day! What more can you ask for!***
>
> —Air Force civilian, 37, married, children at home

Minimizing commuting costs and time

Some women prefer online education to save the time, costs, and hassle of commuting to colleges many miles away. A single, 38-year-old speech pathologist reports that with distance education she can spend more time studying rather than traveling 200 miles to the nearest college offering the courses she needs. A 35-year-old South Dakotan says that blizzards and hazardous conditions can make traveling 90 miles to the nearest college impractical.

Enjoying online courses

While most fans of online courses give pragmatic reasons, a much smaller number indicate that they substantively prefer online classes, some emphatically so. A teacher's aide praises the relaxed atmosphere of distance education, and an instructor with children at home prefers distance learning because she loves using the Internet. Other women value interaction with diverse students, including a teacher's assistant who has "contact with students from the West Indies, Japan, and Saudi Arabia" in her distance learning class.

Minimizing childcare costs

Many women mention that distance education helps them control childcare and travel costs, and some list these indirect costs as the primary reason for their online preference. "If I could cut my two-hour per day commute to classes, my life would be so much easier," explains a single mother who lives at home. "I pay $500 per month in day care fees so that I can go to school."

Meeting special needs

Women who wrote about physical problems and psychological characteristics in traditional classrooms also indicate in follow-up conversations that their special needs are rarely understood. Working online often alleviates problems of access associated with physical disabilities.

Traditional classroom

While women who have taken only traditional courses usually say that they prefer traditional education, many of them also say that they are interested in trying distance education courses. Many women who have taken both say they prefer traditional classes, but their situations make it impossible or difficult for them to take such courses. Women prefer traditional methods of instruction, in descending order of prevalence, for face-to-face interaction, the structured pace of the traditional classroom, better learning and retention, and immediate feedback from teachers and fellow students.

> ***I prefer traditional ... but I did like certain aspects of distance learning because 1) it's at my pace, 2) I can zap off e-mail to the professor, and 3) Convenience and time savings in commuting. ... However, one disadvantage of distance learning is lack of interaction with professors and other students, and missing the classroom dialogue.***
>
> —Reference librarian, 52

Enjoying the interaction and social aspects of the classroom

Most women who prefer the traditional classroom point to its social atmosphere and face-to-face encounters. Significantly, these women view interaction online as a less satisfying, immediate, or authentic form of human contact than face-to-face contact. "I prefer being with live people over sitting in front of a computer alone," a high school English teacher comments. Another woman states that online instruction would not make her feel like a student. As an account executive says: "I recently had to choose between the two. I chose traditional because I would miss the human contact."

Many women who prefer the social aspects of the traditional classroom elaborate that they like to see facial expressions and other nonverbal responses and cues of classmates and instructors. "Traditional is best because you maintain face-to-face rapport with your instructor and classmates," says a 48-year-old teacher, who is working on a master's degree through distance learning. Another woman echoes, "Interactions with students and [seeing their] facial expressions can teach you a thing or two." A 39-year-old billing clerk characterizes distance learning as "very solitary, and much discipline is needed to keep yourself on track." She prefers traditional classes because they are "MUCH easier. You see the instructor face-to-face; you can freely ask questions, and you can listen to the questions raised by other students. [You can hear] ideas and thoughts you may not have envisioned on your own."

Needing the structure and pacing of the classroom

Just as some women prefer distance learning for the autonomy and self-pacing they feel it allows them, other women prefer the traditional classroom for its structure. A driving instructor admits that she "needs a structured environment and attention," and another respondent observes that she tends "not to do my best in distance education (just enough to get by)." A few of these women feel that the traditional classroom is a sterner taskmaster than the Internet, where they can "'blow off' the ... courses ... too easily," as a 42-year-old woman describes. A teacher confirms, "Traditional classroom makes more demands on my efforts. Keeps me more on track."

Learning and retaining more through traditional classroom instruction

Some women feel that traditional instruction benefits them as "visual learners" and provides a "hands-on atmosphere [that] assists in material retention," as a computer lab technician elaborates. An office assistant notes that she has a learning disability that necessitates "hear[ing] and see[ing] instruction."

Wanting the possibility of immediate feedback and tutoring

Some women prefer the traditional classroom because they want immediate feedback. While distance learning may offer instant feedback, these women "feel more comfortable when I can ask questions or get clarification," as a technology coordinator summarizes. An airline employee writes, "[The] traditional method allows for immediate feedback and less time spent writing."

> ***I took a distance course before, but I just prefer to have a body there giving instructions.***
>
> —High school counselor, 30, single, child at home

Combination of traditional and online methods

Respondents know that people learn in a variety of ways, and many refer to their own learning styles when they indicate whether they prefer traditional or online formats. Many state that they would most like a combination of formats. A 32-year-old woman prefers "traditional and would like this to be supplemented with an online component." This hybrid of traditional and online is increasingly what on-campus students experience today, as many of their classes use communication and information-gathering technologies via the Internet. A 46-year-old flight attendant and graduate student seeks "the input of peers in a conference table setting," yet feels that "distance education would certainly make life easier for me."

> ***I prefer a combination of both. I live in a rural area ... the nearest college is one hour away. And I am a snowbird in the winter. With distance learning I could experience uninterrupted instruction—but it's nice to listen to a live person once in a while.***
>
> —Retired English-as-a-second-language teacher, 61

Several dozen women say that the preference for traditional or online learning would depend on the specific course. They argue that certain subjects may be more amenable to one or the other method. Some women prefer a traditional classroom if the subject is more technical, such as computer programming, but prefer distance education for a class such as English or math. A facility planner and manager prefers "distance education for all of my liberal arts/general education requirements," with traditional delivery for courses related to her field. A temporary employee and registered nurse says: "A course that involved theory, math problem solving, etc., I could learn with only occasional answers online. If it involved a 'hands on' subject like computer architecture, I would prefer traditional delivery." These comments challenge the perception that online education is valuable primarily for technical, non-liberal arts, skills-based subject matter.

A few others said that their preference would depend upon the skills and charisma of the teacher offering the courses. Many others stress that to even talk about the kind of instructional delivery and interaction they prefer is irrelevant, because they have no choice.

Comments

Most respondents who have taken online courses are generally enthusiastic about computer-based learning. This enthusiasm reflects that of students in a study done in the United Kingdom by Dewhurst, Macleod, and Norris (2000). Sixty-two students (76 percent of them women) in an undergraduate human physiology class used computer modules with color graphics and animation—tools that encouraged interactivity by, for example, requiring students to drag labels from a list and drop them in the correct places on diagrams and to perform such calculations as pulse and vessel resistance. In general, students liked the flexibility offered by the computer-based program, which enabled them to study at their own pace and where and when they wanted. Another recent U.K. study found that most adult students taking part in (different-sized) online forums found the experiences positive (Hammond, 2000).

Other studies comparing online courses to traditional courses with similar content indicate that students can be equally satisfied with different methods of learning. One recent study found, however, that traditional students perceived that they had more interaction than did online students, even when a collaborative group project was included to promote online interaction. The online students indicated that they missed the face-to-face contact they would typically have in a traditional course, but the convenience of not having to drive long distances was more important than the contact (Card & Horton, 2000, pp. 241-242).

Many recent studies are primarily case studies with small sample sizes. They are also limited in that students typically prefer the course delivery method in which they participate. The studies indicate that while delivery methods differ, many students can be satisfied with each. A major lingering concern, however, is that many students do not feel they have a choice about the educational delivery method.

Regardless of what they most want, many women report that they must take online courses to successfully manage their other responsibilities. They repeatedly report the need to be close to home for family obligations. Some men also report that because of employment obligations they want to take courses online, and several remark that they cannot leave their families to travel to or stay on the campuses that have the desired degrees.

A 31-year-old salesclerk and part-time student gave a fairly typical response when she said: "I really prefer to learn through discussions, but right now

we need to save money, and I need to stay home with my children. My husband would be in favor of distance education since I would be able to care for my children instead of putting them in day care."

An Education of Last Resort?

Participants were asked if they thought that distance education is a good alternative study method when it is the only way to take a course. Not surprisingly, almost all responded with at least an initial "yes." More than half stated that distance learning provides excellent opportunities for women who have children, heavy work responsibilities, disabilities, or tight schedules, or who reside in geographically isolated areas. "Internet learning is a dream come true for women like me with families and full-time jobs," a computer lab technician responds. A high school English teacher recommends distance learning because it "allows the caregiver to access a class at her/his convenience. For example, the quiet times for myself are after 11 p.m. when everyone is asleep. It is at this time I can concentrate."

Other respondents similarly characterize online learning as the educational option of last resort for some students who "may not have another chance to further their education," as a 34-year-old housewife describes. A 30-year-old with a child at home notes, "If the classes I took weren't online last semester, I would have dropped out of school for sure."

> ***[Distance learning] allows us the option to continue growth during what could be inhibiting years.***
>
> —Program consultant, 52, married, child at home

Some women say that online programs are not only a viable last resort for women with tight schedules, but, even more explicitly, they also provide equal opportunities. "To deny an online education would be to deny education to someone based on a handicap. The handicap may be lack of transportation, childcare, or even a 'handicap' on the part of an institution [with] a limited number of faculty, courses, and programs," opines a 51-year-old director of communications.

Best and Worst Experiences

Knowing what students think of as their best and worst educational experiences is an important basis for thinking about any major changes in higher education. What do women—or men—want from their education? What delivery methods, classroom styles, curricula, or other characteristics stand out in their minds as especially positive or negative? Hundreds of women were asked to assess their educational experiences and, significantly, most describe an online course as their best experience. Their recent educational experiences and the stated focus of this study undoubtedly produced more examples of online courses as best experiences than we would otherwise find. See the sidebar on pages 16 and 17 for the comments.

Learning Styles

Online courses use a variety of teaching and learning styles, and options will increase in the future, at least for those who can afford and wish to use computer microphones and cameras. Most respondents list more than one way when asked how they learned. Yet the highest number choose independent work because they have very tight schedules and they will receive grades based primarily on their individual work. The responses are listed from most to least frequently mentioned.

> ***There are very few studies that look at the process of learning in online and distance education contexts, let alone the perspectives of the tutors and students involved.***
>
> —Vice president of education in a company that provides online tutoring and learning support, 38

Independent study is preferred

Challenging assumptions that women prefer to work in collaborative group settings, the majority of women indicate that they prefer independent

Educational Experiences Summary Statements

The following categories are listed from those given most frequently to those listed least often.

BEST

Individuals often indicate satisfaction with a combination of factors (e.g., teacher and teaching methods).

Experiences in online courses

"I am able to really spend time on any problems that I come across, and I have always been able to reach my professors by email, and they respond immediately."

—Early childhood educator, 34

"I am able to pursue my career and work full-time. I also have the opportunity to learn new technology."

—Registered nurse, 25

"The university people do their best to work with the soldier's hectic schedules. I was able to successfully complete the [online] course without the stress of [missing classes]."

—Educational counselor, 35, single

"One of the best classes I have taken. ... I had to go to the high school where the computer lab was networked [to the university]. You could see the teacher ... and she could interact with you. The atmosphere was relaxed and enjoyable."

—Teacher's aide/student, 32, married, children at home

Teachers

"My best educational experience was in college when an instructor allowed me into a class I didn't actually meet the requirements for but really wanted to take. He proved to me that I was not only a better artist/student/person than I had thought—but his faith in my strength and ability completely changed my perspective on life and molded the direction my future was to take."

—Technical instructor, single, distance learning experience

"My best experiences have always been associated with an open and caring instructor. ... Getting students involved and offering mutual respect always makes the experience valuable."

—Professor, 49, single, child at home, distance learning experience as teacher and student

"He was very active, candid, enthusiastic, and inspirational. ... This experience made me more aware of the need [in my own teaching] for demonstrations, labs, and hands-on experiences for the students."

—High school science teacher, 29, married

Subject matter

"Best experience—taking the leap of faith to leave a high-profile city job to follow my passion—that of herbs and herbal medicine. I began by taking a correspondence course and am now a third-year student at an herb school."

—Herbalist/nutritional consultant, 35, single, distance learning experience

Connections with other students

"For the last year I have been educated in teacher training by online distance learning and most of my fellow classmates are from various part of the world. Great discussion and brainstorming!"

—Part-time student/full-time office administrative worker, 44, single, distance learning experience

Teaching method and delivery

"I thought my education would suffer by taking classes outside the classroom. I was wrong. I've learned far more in my Internet courses than I had at many classes I took on campus. It's a lot of work and takes self-discipline, but I really enjoy being able to study and learn in the comfort of my own home and by my schedule."

—Accountant, single, distance learning experience

Personal Successes
"Acquiring my bachelor's degree at the tender age of 54 was intense but the day I was finally able to walk into graduate school was unimagined bliss. distance learning is a great boost to higher education, especially for women who still carry the duties of work as well as household. When we can use cable TV for a class, or, better yet, the Internet for a class, it is a real privilege."

—Salvation Army program director, 56, married, recent degree, distance learning experience

"[In the classroom] we were graded on pronunciation and the ability to captivate the class. I was granted the speech award for the year. Speech class taught me how to be expressive and free with my thoughts and emotions. A valuable lesson indeed."

—Homemaker, child at home, plans to work on master's online

WORST

Teachers
"I had a teacher (in graduate school!) who believed that it was his way or the highway and told us all that we couldn't possibly know anything about the subject except what we learned from him. It was the worst class I ever took."

—Conferences and events planner, 31, married

"I was an 'A' student in high school chemistry. ... No matter how much I enjoyed the study of [college] chemistry itself, I could not grasp anything that this man was teaching. ... I approached him after class with questions about what he had just covered and he would often reply with 'I just covered this in class.' After being humiliated so many times by him, someone who is supposed to offer support and assistance to the students, I gave up on chemistry altogether."

—Program aide in mental health, 24, single

"The professor who would effusively praise the one white male for anything he said and would discount any other comments from others in the class. It was discouraging."

—Associate professor, 42, married, children at home, has taught interactive TV course

Distance learning courses
"Worst, our online class. ... Our final project was a term paper and the due date had been posted. Somehow my instructor cut the class 5 days short. The problem was that everyone in the class got on the website only once a week. When he put on the site that the last quiz and the term paper were due 5 days early, at least half the class didn't see this posting until after the class had ended! He offered incompletes, but I need government reimbursement so I needed the grade that semester. He gave me my grade, but it was a lot of stress, and I received no apology."

—Student, 30, single, child at home

Costs
"I sometimes feel very punished for not wanting to be on welfare and making an active choice to seek and accomplish my education."

—Radiographer, 38

Boredom
"I never learn much when the instructor micromanages the class and has every assignment and project mapped out completely."

—Former software developer

Harassment and hostility in classes
"I was taking algebra and a classmate informed me that the instructor wanted to ask me out on a date. I decided to drop the class."

—Sales associate for luxury eyewear, single

Age
"I have found it very difficult to adjust to students' somewhat high school mentality such as grades for attendance."

—Sales/student, 31, married, children at home

study. Many had recently taken online courses, and online students may be more likely to prefer independent study. Older women may prefer different learning methods than do younger women, and technology and new communications methods may have changed students' expectations and preferences for education or make collaborative work more difficult.

While more than half list independent study as their first choice, many of them say they learn best by first reading, researching, and writing and then participating in group discussions to hear other opinions and ideas. "Independent work gets the knowledge available, the discussions implant it," a 22-year-old flight instructor explains.

> ***I would choose a little of each, but if I had to rank them, I would put independent work first, followed by discussion, then group work. In group work, I tend not to be as self-assured as I should be. If someone in the group is pushy (even if they are not so competent), I will let them take over. I just do not enjoy the friction.***
>
> —Salvation Army program director, 56, married, recent degree, distance learning experience

Many women prefer independent study because they can count on themselves more than anyone else, an important factor for people with tight schedules. "I think the mature learner is usually on a mission, and independent work is fine," summarizes a high school guidance counselor taking an online course.

The best learning comes from a combination

Many women indicate that they learn equally, in integrated ways, from all three methods (group, independent, and a mix of both)—a "totality of elements," as an administrative assistant describes. A 30-year-old teacher states that she learns best from a combination: "We share ideas and expand our thinking through discussions. I go into deeper thinking and organize my comprehension through independent work. In group work, we check our understanding and help fill each others' gaps." A 62-year-old retired state legislator reports that she relies on a variety of experiences: "I read, I listen, I ask, I feel, I experience; I need both group work and time to let ideas settle, sift."

> ***I learn through discussion, independent [work], and group work. In any class you have independent work. The chat room discussions were just like being in a class situation (my typing is improving), and our study group via e-mail and chat room was a great learning tool.***
>
> —Educator, 52, married, finishing master's degree online except for field project

Group discussion is important

A smaller number of women indicate that they learn primarily through group work, because they are team players, accommodating-style learners, or socially outgoing. A grant writer, 62, for example, reports that she gets sidetracked easily, so discussions are usually the most efficient way to learn. She particularly likes short, intensive, focused workshops and seminars where teacher/student roles are flexible and interchangeable.

No group work, please!

Echoing women who express a preference for independent study, many women state that they loathe group work. Their reasons usually have to do with the difficulty of fairly allocating and sharing work. "I am a fairly organized, reliable, punctual person and I get upset easily with people who are laid back," comments a 28-year-old homemaker with children at home. A computer lab technician finds group work "fun but it can also be stressful if I am teamed with students who are not responsible."

> ***Partners are notorious for letting people down; in my case I'd rather do it myself.***
>
> —Unemployed, 51, married, uses a wheelchair

Women also dislike group work because of the difficulty in agreeing on tasks and methods, logistical problems, pressure to go along with decisions made by the most powerful of the group, dislike of the indecisiveness and politics that can be involved in group work, and the relatively slow speed of group work. Many women reported enjoying group discussion but not group work.

Teachers are more likely than students to be interested in including group work in their courses.

The E-Student: Who Is Most Suited for Online Education?

Published guides for successful distance learning include the following student indicators for success in online courses: highly motivated, independent, active learners who have good organizational and time management skills, study without external reminds, and adapt well to new learning environments (see, for example, *The Distance Learners Guide* [1999]). Women's descriptions of the ideal e-student confirm many of these characteristics.

Women responding to questions about the people most suited for online education mention both the pull factor (being interested in online learning because of the particular attractions of this method of studying) and the push factor (barriers to access to other methods of studying). Many note that success online depends on motivation, time-management skills, maturity, and, according to a smaller number of women, the ability to work late at night or early in the morning. Many of the respondents said that online courses are more likely to be a good fit for older women who are more focused on goals and less on social interaction.

Desirable student characteristics

Dozens of women believe that many students are well-suited for distance learning courses. Some argue that all classes should be available through distance education. The following characteristics are listed from the most to the least stressed. Summary statements describing which students are best suited for distance learning are included in the sidebar.

Students Best Suited for Distance Learning

"Those who work full-time and want to spend more time in their home environment. Those who are not confident about contributing in a classroom environment. Students with transportation challenges. Students who feel their family members can [support] them ... people who travel a lot and would miss too many classes, but who have access to a portable computer. Students who are homebound with young children. Students who have medical problems. ... Students who require privacy. Students who live in areas that have harsh winters ... etc., etc., etc."

—Executive secretary, 56, married, distance learning experience

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"Those who are not afraid of computers. ... Those who enjoy learning. ... Women who have families but don't want to put their educational pursuits on hold until children have reached maturity. Minority students. ... Students who write well and can do independent research."

—Psychologist, 41, married, children at home, distance learning experience

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"Those who are independent, highly motivated, have ideas of his/her own, are curious, willing to be open about life experiences and perceptions that may be counter-culture, or maybe someone who is isolated (social, emotional, familial, geographic) who wants to explore new options."

—Grant writer, 62, married

Highly motivated

Many women describe difficult situations in their lives where they saw education as the only way out. Distance learning provides a no-frills, direct route to an educational goal for the student who has "set her mind to doing it," a 43-year-old student observes. "I was just looking to the goal" of finishing a bachelor's degree, comments a 40-year-old executive, "not to the social interaction of it."

> ***I was a run-away wife; I left a bad situation, with my daughter and my son. There's definitely a need for distance learning because there are a lot of other women of color like myself. I was living in St. Croix. After a major hurricane, the island was really crippled. I had a computer but no electricity. So for three months, I borrowed a generator in order to type my dissertation. It was a challenge, but I really wanted the degree.***
>
> —University teacher, 45

According to a 22-year-old flight instructor, highly motivated students are fed up with the traditional discriminatory attitudes of the standard classroom or don't have time to sit in a classroom learning materials that have no relevance to their daily or future life.

Women emphasize that primary caregivers may have special incentives to excel at distance learning. A nail technician and single mother taking two online classes believes that distance learning is best suited to "people like me who have no choice but to work to make ends meet but want to go to school so they won't have to struggle for the rest of their lives."

Independent

Most of the women taking online courses think of themselves as being or becoming independent students and stress the importance of this trait for online success. Significantly, although most online courses include chat rooms or forums for discussion, respondents often characterize online education as solitary pursuits that reward "a person who is comfortable working alone, not needing direct social contact with others," as a 28-year-old student observes. A 36-year-old paralegal suggests that the student most suited for online courses "does not thrive on being with people all the time."

Older, more mature students or non-traditional-age students

Some women mention maturity and view older, more experienced students or non-traditional-age students as beneficiaries of online courses. A 52-year-old program consultant talks about how many women of her era are experiencing the four Ds—death, downsizing, drug and alcohol abuse, and divorce. But, she notes, these women are also using technology to support themselves through these otherwise isolating changes. If done right, she says, online courses can be exciting—and students can feel like there is a campus. Some women suggest that older students who took courses in a traditional classroom years ago may now have economic or physical reasons to consider distance learning.

> ***What kind of student benefits the most from online learning? Probably people like me who are older. I would not feel as comfortable in a classroom of all young people.***
>
> —Unemployed, 49, married, no distance learning experience

Conversely, a few women mentioned that distance education might work well for high school students who wish to take courses not offered in their schools or who are academically ready for college but not ready for the college "experience."

Good computer skills

Some respondents mention the need for good computer skills.

> ***What student is best suited? The visually oriented student because you need to be doing hands-on work, interactive with the computer.***
>
> —Teacher, 39, married, children at home, taking graduate courses online

Ambitious

Some women stressed the importance of drive, focus, and a passion for learning, all closely related to motivation. For example, an environmental technician feels that the distance learning student "needs to have a serious education goal in mind ... and not just [be interested] because he/she won't have to get up and attend a traditional class at 8 a.m."

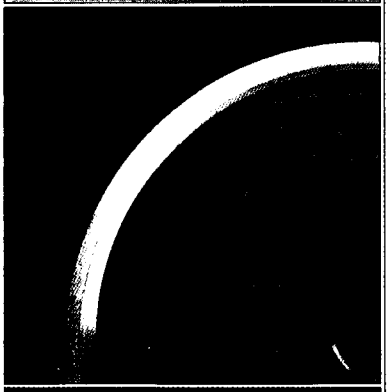
> ***Ambitious, goal-oriented, independent thinkers who will seek out the resources needed to complete assignments.***
>
> —Former software developer/graduate student, 33, married, child at home

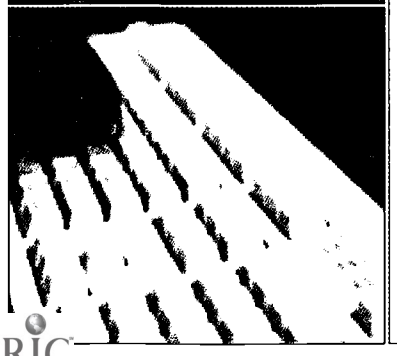
Other characteristics

The student most suited for distance learning has financial and emotional support from others at home; the desire for material relevant to the student's daily or future life; a willingness to embrace challenges; good communications skills; good typing skills; an enjoyment of written communications, perhaps even over the spoken word; a willingness to work harder than students taking courses in the classroom; a lack of access to traditional classroom courses; and physical disabilities that make classroom attendance difficult.

Comments

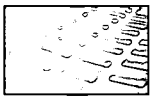
We asked the respondents to focus on the attributes of individual students. We could also, with benefit, have asked what characteristics an online program must have to make it possible for students to study effectively and finish courses successfully. Based on the information in this report, one possible response is the ideal educational experience provides students with a variety of different learning opportunities (an integrated system of online time, lectures, collaborative sessions, one-on-one interactions with a peer or professor), considers employment and family responsibilities, and offers courses at a cost that reflects not only institutional costs but also the resources of students.





Part 3

The Digital Divide:
Gaps and Bridges



Increasingly, distance learning or online education means accessing educational material through the Internet, so research on how various social and economic groups use the Internet is relevant to any study of online education.

> ***There's "an information caste society" —a two-tiered system, a wired population and a population that isn't. The reason the caste metaphor fits is that the division is highly self-perpetuating. For example, people who are online know which programming languages are still important for jobs. People who aren't online are making decisions based on outdated information.***
>
> —Nicholas Burbules, university professor and educational technology researcher

The initial euphoria over the Internet resulted from its democratic potential and environment. This electronic space did not see race, sex, socioeconomic class, or age, and thus admitted everyone as equals. Studies in the 1990s, however, sounded cautionary notes that access to and use of computers varied greatly depending upon class, age, nationality, race, and native languages. These studies led educators and policy-makers to recognize a digital divide in education and online culture.

Yet in searching for factors that distinguish and explain the digital divide, researchers often ignore gender and focus exclusively on race/ethnicity, class, or region. In many digital divide discussions little mention is made of the differences between women and men overall or in any racial or ethnic group.

In addition, most surveys do not seek information about gender differences within households. We know that "family" resources often are not evenly divided among males and females in a household, so studies that treat the family as one unit of analysis do not give us information about computer ownership and use *within* the family.

Most surveys of Internet users pay attention to the socioeconomic and employment status of the users but do not ask the women and men respondents questions about, for example, work and family responsibilities—and thus about time and financial factors that may be centrally responsible for the purchase, maintenance, and use of computers.

This section will explore potential obstacles that women identify to online participation.

Student Costs

Students and prospective students discussed costs of education more than any other topic. Many people remain convinced that distance learning eventually will be a relatively inexpensive mode of education. Many women with difficult economic situations express keen interest in taking courses; however, at the moment distance learning is used disproportionately by the relatively well-resourced. Some poorer students may take a course and then temporarily drop out of the program to earn and save money to pay for the next course, trying to earn a degree even if it takes many years.

Understanding the full costs of education also requires understanding indirect costs and, for women, inequalities of power, resources, and access

in families. For example, respondents indicate that the cost of childcare usually is added to women's lists of expenses but not to men's. Successful students report that family members support them. But many report heavy home demands, which often make it difficult for them to take and complete distance education courses.

> ***[Money is] always the issue. My husband lost his business at 52, and at 59 sees the company he is working with going under. I have been looking for funding but have no good leads. I had to borrow from family for my last two classes. I feel like quitting because I'm adding such a burden with money we don't have.***
>
> —Elementary school teacher, 56, married, distance learning experience

Tuition

Most students report paying approximately the same tuition for online classes as they do for traditional courses. The debate about institutional costs for different delivery methods continues, with some recent reports indicating that online instruction is usually more expensive than in-person instruction, at least for courses without many sections (Carr, 2001).

In the past, only those students taking at least 12 hours of traditional courses a week could be considered full-time and apply for federal full-time financial aid. (This regulation was enacted in part to prohibit federal financial aid to mail order diplomas or diploma mills.) Financial aid is not a major concern for working men and women whose companies cover their educational expenses, but it is a huge concern for millions of single parents with low incomes and no other financial resources. More than one third of college students attend classes part-time; more than half of these students take fewer than six credit hours each term (Wolff, 2001).

Funding for distance learning may be more limited or restricted than for traditional courses. Several women comment that restrictions on funding and loans for distance learning impede their participation. "I have a child and a job and I looked at the possibility of taking online courses, but the main reason that I did not ... was because the financial aid ... would not cover any costs, and I just did not have that kind of money," observes a graduate student and online tutor in her 20s.

While their specific situations and accounts vary, single women without children often mention that they can afford to take a course because they are single. They speculate that they would not have as much financial freedom or time if they had complex family responsibilities.

> ***If I wanted to take a distance-learning course, I'm sure my agency would find a way to pay for it. Or, I would not have much of a problem affording a class myself, from time to time. My lifestyle is not constrained by demands of a family, work schedule, and financial well-being.***
>
> —Family transportation specialist, 23, single

In this study women who responded to the questions about online education do not represent a random sampling of U.S. women. They do, however, come from an impressive variety of occupations, experiences, and economic situations. Many of them report difficult financial situations even as they strategize to find ways to take online courses. In this they are similar to the women in a number of other studies that found the cost of education, including distance education, a particularly difficult barrier for women to overcome (Blum, 1998).

> ***Cost is the most important factor. I am a homemaker. My husband is not very supportive of my pursuing a degree. I currently have no income of my own. ... Most agencies do not seem to provide grants to individuals seeking education via distance learning.***
>
> —Homemaker/former financial director, married, children at home

In some cases distance education may be more expensive than traditional courses. "The cost of some of the online courses I have researched has prevented me from taking advantage of them," comments a 40-year-old single woman with children at home. "I've found distance education courses more expensive than traditional. By the time I complete my degree, I will have paid the same amount of money as a student who went to a four-year college with housing, books, and tuition." This woman also flags a potential indirect cost if an online course is not approved or cannot be applied toward her degree program, thus necessitating further courses and tuition costs.

Computer-related costs

Some respondents either do not own a computer or own a computer that is inadequate for online courses. Conflicts among family members over computer use usually do not appear in studies that assess household use of computers. For example, a guidance counselor explains that to take an online course, "We might need a new computer at home. We all use it so much I would have to 'fight for time' on the machine."

Students point out that for online courses they are expected not only to know how to use computers, but also to have Internet access (Selfe, 2000, April). While not all of them own a computer, most manage some access to the Internet. Some have access to computers, e-mail, and the Internet through their workplace and do not pay direct costs; others use community freenets or commercial services that charge a standard monthly or hourly rate. These costs and resources need to be considered in addition to tuition when thinking about who has access to online learning.

Students also face unique financial and technological pressure with upgrades and improvements to their computer systems.

> ***Constantly, it seems, there are new [software] versions. And then if you don't purchase this or don't upgrade to that, then you have other things that you find on the Internet that won't run because you need the newer versions. ... Plus the computer itself seems to [be outdated] in about two years. Not only do you have to figure out how to get money for new ones, you have to figure out what to do with the old ones.***
>
> —Teacher, 34

Students using online resources may find that tuition and access to computer equipment are not the only expenses. For example, several companies offer fee-based online access to books and journals to help students write papers more quickly without trips to the library. (Much of the material most useful for research papers, including book texts, may not be available through such services, raising other pedagogical issues.) Some faculty are concerned that this situation will perpetuate a division of have and have-not users, and faculty consequently encourage these companies to promote institution-wide site licenses to give all students access to the services (Blumenstyk, 2000).

Childcare expenses

Some mothers state that they save money overall by taking online courses and avoiding childcare costs, which offset the higher or comparable tuition costs of online courses. An instructional assistant found online and on-campus tuition costs comparable, but she has a "special needs child at home and [doesn't] have many childcare options" and, therefore, chose the online course.

Global concerns

Women in other countries list many of the same problems mentioned by women in the United States. Tuition was the central concern for almost all. Additional major problems were difficulty of access to computers and to the Internet, unreliable electrical sources, difficulty finding good online programs in their own culture or language, and difficulty obtaining academic journals and books in nearby libraries.

Age as a Classroom Issue

The ages of typical undergraduate and graduate students have been rising. In recent years, adult undergraduates 24 years of age or older represented between 40 and 45 percent of college students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997). Just 16 percent of college students now fit the traditional college student profile: 18-22 years old, attending school full time, and living on campus (U.S. Department of Education, Web-Based Education Commission, 2000, p. 4).

A large percentage of adult students (65 to 70 percent) are women (Donaldson, Graham, Martindill, & Bradley, 2000, p. 9), however, many older women students perceive themselves to be anomalous or different on campus. Many respondents indicate that because they are older than the typical college student, they feel more comfortable online than on campus.

> ***Because of my age (31), compared to the average college student (18-19), I feel I don't need the social aspect as much as someone younger may feel they need it. In fact, on some levels, I'm happy not to have to deal with other students.***
>
> —Legal secretary, 31, distance learning experience

Some women note that they are more comfortable asking questions and conversing online with women closer to their own age because they relate emotionally. "The young teachers are just as willing to help, but it makes me feel old and stupid," says a 56-year-old.

Similarly, a number of women list age-related experiences in the traditional classroom as factors in their worst educational experiences. For example, a 59-year-old high school teacher describes her worst experience in a core math course where she was unable to follow the lessons quickly: "I would not question anything because I was embarrassed because I was probably the oldest student in the class and felt that I should have been able to keep up."

A self-employed seamstress who attended traditional courses at a university finds herself frustrated: "I don't have the open exchange of ideas and general fellowship with other students that I felt right out of high school. There is a lack of commonality and empathy that I feel is a barrier in classrooms of mixed ages. I wish it could work. In an ideal world it would, but in my personal experiences, it just hasn't."

> ***At 37 years of age, a mother [of seven children], a wife, a career woman, I am not worried about what I am missing in a classroom. ... In fact, I'd be reluctant to attend an on-campus class today, especially considering my age.***
>
> —Air Force billing clerk, 39, single, child at home, distance learning experience

Some older women welcome the relative anonymity of online culture: "Because we could not visually see each other ... we did not have preconceived ideas about backgrounds [or] abilities. I found that to be interesting. ... Most did not know that I was 55+ unless I told them."

Age issues in the future

Several administrators predict that evaluations of online and traditional courses will change as U.S. children, raised with TVs and computers in their homes and in their classrooms, enter universities

and colleges. Administrators, teachers, and students who participated in the study agree that by the time today's elementary school students are eligible for college and university, they will be comfortable using computers as educational tools. Some of the teachers indicate that college-age men who are accustomed to computer action games find text-based online courses slow and dull.

> ***One of the evaluations that came back had one of our instructors as being more effective over video than when he was live. ... I expect that among younger learners that this [video-conferencing] would be a more natural way to learn because they've all grown up with television, and computers are such a big part of their lives.***
>
> —Senior information technology adviser, male, 26

The silent online majority?

Older women who report being comfortable with computers and interested in online courses are surprised to hear about similar students. But how would they know? Not through media images, which rarely show older women competently using computers. In TV commercials, for example, female computer users are rarely over 40, and girls are seen much less often than boys. When women are shown using computers, it is usually for routine, unremarkable activities, while men are more likely to be shown embracing the technology for more enjoyable activities, such as playing games (White & Kinnick, 2000, p. 406).

Respondents suggest that they worry about being old or older students at remarkably young ages. Students in their late 20s think of themselves as being unusually old. Not only do women outnumber men among older students, research suggests that women worry about age differences in the classroom to a much greater extent than older male students (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1999). While we hear of a lot about the importance of lifelong learning, universities have not actively demonstrated that students of all ages are welcome on campus and online. People of different ages will, of course, have somewhat different needs and concerns, so welcoming students of all ages will require changes in some programs.

Time Demands

The refrain that distance learning is a good option —or compromise—for women with children and little free time runs throughout this study. A few men also mention the value of distance learning for men with family responsibilities, but male and female respondents note that women, in particular, face time pressures when seeking education.

Women enrolled in online courses have even less time to call their own than do most students in traditional learning environments. Many of them serve a first shift at work outside the home and a second shift as primary caretakers of family members. The only way they can accomplish a third shift—their education—is to fit it in when and where they can. Women, especially those with children, have less free time to be away from their family responsibilities and other work. Distance learning allows them to study at home (at least in the evenings or when off work) while still performing home duties and being available when needed.

Institutions historically have been more concerned with separating the public, linear, formal work world than integrating the traditionally repetitive, multi-tasking, "feminine" world and its rituals of the household, childrearing, and the private sphere. (If institutional concerns were different, we long ago would have set up educational systems with schedules, costs, and provisions that more equally served workers with diverse demands.) While this view is admittedly overly dichotomized (most public leaders must also be available for many tasks at the same time), men and women who want to advance in their careers usually must demonstrate their commitment to their jobs through autonomy from their personal responsibilities (Woodward & Lyon, 2000).

The need to hide private responsibilities is particularly important for women who want to advance in their careers by taking courses and degrees while still maintaining familial relationships. Distance learning courses can be particularly valuable for women who can thus more easily pass the availability tests at work and at home.

As they discuss trade-offs they make in carrying out (often enjoying, sometimes resenting) family responsibilities and pursuing career goals, many women respondents express satisfaction that distance learning allows them to do several tasks at once.

Student time

Many online students mention enjoying online discussions but fervently wish to do assignments independently.

> ***I am pretty busy just like my classmates and I really want to do the work [on my own] and not keep track of my group members.***
>
> —32-year-old social worker, distance learning experience

Most mothers study during late evening hours, or, less frequently, very early morning hours. Given that most of these women also have part- or full-time jobs, their preference to set their own study schedules does not seem surprising. One study found, however, that men in online courses usually study from 4 to 8 p.m., while most women studied later, presumably fitting in their course work after fulfilling other commitments (Richardson & French, 2000, p. 305).

While students praise the flexibility of distance learning, some studies show that students often find electronic course discussions time-consuming, especially those students who also meet face-to-face on campus during regularly scheduled times. Online courses may also accelerate the student's expectations about access to a professor's time and instant responses to questions. One study found that students appreciated their e-mail communication with an instructor who promised to return all messages within 24 hours (Chapman, 1998).

Most students who have taken online courses mention receiving quick e-mail responses from their professors, but some perceive a trade-off between speed and quality. "The only shortcoming I feel with my online classes was the lack of specific feedback from the instructor on assignments," complains a 59-year-old registered nurse. "I missed the instructor's comments in the margin. ... Feedback in the distance format seemed to be more global in nature. But this situation can change as instructors get more feedback from the students, and learn more about what technology has to offer."

One interviewee, a journalist who specializes in online education, notes that he had talked to many students who were frustrated because "there was never a classroom where they could get a quick answer."

Faculty time

The administrator of an accredited and very successful (in terms of retention and student satisfaction rates) online graduate degree program states that faculty in the program are given a full term (with no other courses to teach) to develop a new online course and are responsible for only one course the first term they teach it. Another online network administrator indicates that because online faculty at his university spend so much time supporting and advising students, they earn an extra thousand dollars per course. He also suggested that if online programs do not adequately support faculty, "nobody will want to teach these courses, because they're just too labor intensive."

Coordinating collaborative web-based courses is time-consuming for faculty members, particularly if they try to monitor the interaction in small group discussions that are a part of many web-based courses. Their continual involvement seems to discourage harassment (especially in undergraduate courses) and help guide and support discussions. These factors suggest that web-based courses need to be much smaller than many of the large lecture courses now offered in traditional programs. One

study of the value of collaborative learning online for a master's in business administration program suggests that unless a college is prepared to commit substantial new resources to online programs, developing web-based courses and programs is not a good idea (Arbaugh, 2000, p. 508).

Comments

Most respondents emphasize that time is a critical issue for almost everyone involved in online learning. Students can overload teachers and vice versa. Students may expect very quick electronic responses to their individual requests and may create huge volumes of text in electronic discussions. Teachers can (too) easily, with a few keystrokes, send massive amounts of reading material to students (Hawisher & Moran, 1997). As one administrator for a center for new designs in learning and teaching warns, some teachers are "including a bunch of technological stuff but not taking anything out of the course to make room for it." Students may find themselves working more with the technology than with the professor or the subject material.

Family Factors

Online courses and programs are sometimes presented as the ideal higher education delivery methods for women, who are often assigned or take on most of the responsibilities for childcare and domestic work. In the United States, women still perform 70 to 80 percent of childcare, which, of course, affects how much time they can spend on paid work and education (Williams, 2000). The mismatch between the realities of family life and images of the ideal worker and student is a widespread social dilemma that, in Williams' words, is "bad for men, worse for women, and worst for children," with important implications for everyone in our country. Because it is seldom discussed as such, however, women are left to work out individual solutions.

> ***We are made to feel guilty if we go to school when we "should" be taking care of children. Our government is not really interested in children or in education. If there was real interest, then the officials will begin by asking what is best for all human beings? What systems do we need to make things work the best? We would not start by saying, "Oh, online education is great for women who have to take care of children." Listen to the assumptions behind that statement.***
>
> —Graduate student, 40s, children at home

Lack of family support for online education may come in the form of increasing demands for attention and help, destroying course materials, guilt-tripping, denying childcare assistance, refusing to set aside time or space in the home for study, and refusing to spend family finances on women's education (Kirkup & von Prümmer, 1997; Campbell, 1999/2000, p. 32). Although some spouses at least verbally approve of course-taking, even this support often diminishes as women's study demands increase. (See Home [1998] for a discussion of role strain among women students.)

Few researchers have studied the ways women handle the multiple responsibilities of income provider, parent, and student. A Canadian study asked women re-entering college about their uses of institutional support such as distance education, day care, assignment date flexibility (during times of family crisis), study skills workshops, teacher accessibility, part-time study, study leave, access to computers at work, and employer reimbursement of educational expenses. Distance education was the institutional support most likely to reduce women's susceptibility to strain and overload (Home, 1998).

Other studies found that mothers often felt that they needed to reassure their families that their studies would have minimal impact on family life and that

they felt guilt about not performing their domestic roles as well as before (Maynard & Pearsall, 1994). In a small qualitative research study in New Zealand, women participating in adult education kept evidence of their learning hidden from others in their families so the home was undisturbed by their student lives (Stalker, 1997). Because women receive little social or institutional support for taking courses once they have home and childcare responsibilities, women generally place higher demands on themselves to compensate for perceived selfishness when they pursue educational goals (Campbell, 1999/2000, p. 32).

In this study, women with spouses and children indicate that they would need, or want, to talk with their partners about taking an online course because of the costs and the time involved. Many men also indicate that they would want to talk with their partners before signing up for an online course. Most men with families, however, consider family responsibilities to be at their discretion.

> ***My wife could[n't] care less if I decided to go back to school. ... However, I try to take into consideration that she has the baby full time and in the evenings plus the weekends. She needs a break, so I would consider planning around her schedule. Besides, I want to be a parent, too, and not leave it all to her.***
>
> —Computer programmer, 25

On the other hand, when asked whether they felt guilty or would feel guilty taking courses when there was other work at home, approximately half the women respond that they do not or would not feel guilty, even though many of them admit that their family responsibilities come first. Many try to do their course work while other family members are sleeping, or they postpone taking courses until their children are older and more independent. Other women couch their responses in terms of family interests, indicating that their continuing education work is as important as other responsibilities, not only for themselves but also for other family members.

Some women report that because of circumstances beyond their control (such as a child's serious illness), they sometimes are unable to finish a course even though they are doing well. To them the term "drop out" (which they feel implies a failure on the part of the student) does not indicate the varying reasons a student may not complete a course in the allotted time. They argue that they may be *required* to leave their courses, because online programs and teachers usually have specific and restrictive deadlines for completion of all work, regardless of what may be happening in the students' lives.

Below are some of the women's responses to the question about whether they have felt or would feel guilty taking online courses. These responses make it clear that setting educational goals and priorities is a complex, continually changing task, especially for women with children and partners. The responses are listed from most to least frequently mentioned.

Guilty or not

As one might expect, children, especially young children, are the greatest impediment and heaviest responsibility for female distance learners. "No guilt," a counselor responds. " I have had to put off doing work at home ... to finish my coursework. My time is mostly my own and my daughter's." In contrast, a married woman responds: "I wouldn't feel guilty, but my husband would think differently. If he could see the direct connection in future income ... but he's under so much personal stress right now. I go home and [study] and he freaks out because he wants to sell the house and it needs cleaning."

A few women retort that they don't feel guilty because other family members and children can and should take on some family responsibilities. "Two other people live here, and they are not disabled in any way," notes a 44-year-old purchasing agent.

A police dispatcher similarly responds, "My son is old enough to handle some things on his own."

> ***It's not a problem for me because I'm a single parent and my youngest child will graduate from high school in a few years and is very busy with her own activities. [Things were different] ten years ago when I had young children and a husband to deal with.***
>
> —Kitchen designer, 49, single

A 52-year-old disability specialist whose adult daughter is a new mother with health problems reports feeling "guilty if I pursue my own needs, and she feels guilty because assisting her prevents me from doing so." A technology coordinator who would feel guilty about taking a course says, "I would have to discuss it with my husband and son, as doing this would [require me to] rely on their help with my daughter."

Fitting in online education

Most single women and women with partners but no children say that they have more freedom than other women do. A human resources representative who is single explains, "I'm not obsessed with dust bunnies and at this point I don't have kids."

Typically, women report feeling more conflicted about neglecting time with their children than ignoring household tasks or chores, since in one woman's terms, "pursuit of my degree ranks higher in importance" than laundry. Single mothers feel less guilty about neglecting housework than do married women.

Others know that taking online courses would be especially difficult because of expectations that family members have about how women spend their time at home. For example, a 38-year-old substitute teacher says: "My husband and kids did make me feel guilty, because every time they turned around I was studying. When your child says, 'but you're ALWAYS studying,' it doesn't feel good."

Many women avoid guilt by making sometimes quite heroic efforts to slot schoolwork unobtrusively into their family and work schedules or by foregoing leisure time to accommodate their families and jobs. A single mother studies at midnight because she can't study with home responsibilities lingering. A 32-year-old social worker "studies after [she has] put the kids to bed ... [they] come first." Says a student with children at home, "I have learned to map out time either early in the morning or late at night." A self-described night owl enjoys online courses because they are "conducive to late-night study habits ... and I can spend quality time with my family before the children's bedtime." And a 39-year-old billing clerk feels guilty when "I am unable (or too tired) to complete assignments when my son sleeps."

> ***I set aside two to three hours nightly to "catch up" on work and school-work so as not to interfere with my family life.***
>
> —Nursing recruiter/coordinator, 27, married, children at home

Many women indicate that the third shift of student life occurs late at night or early in the morning. While distance learning allows women to squeeze their studies around the seemingly immovable barriers of family and work life, this evades any general social discussion of how time and responsibilities, both in the work force and the home, might be reconfigured to make fulfillment of educational goals a more humane and less taxing process. Instead, women make individual compromises and choices—as family members, workers, and students—to fit all of these activities into short days. While an insomniac lauds late-night studying as "the beauty of online education," other women accustomed to more regular hours report that the third shift of education cuts into their already-scarce hours of leisure or sleep time.

Sticking to the schedule

In a related set of responses, women discuss the importance of self-discipline and family schedules as a corrective to guilt or feeling overwhelmed. Ostensibly distance education, which can occur within the household, should alleviate family-school tension and schedule conflicts. Yet women make clear that in some ways online learning requires more self-discipline and scheduling to maintain a space within the household for studying and learning. Since this space is not clearly demarcated by a specific class time and location on campus that requires a student's physical presence, women may find it harder to maintain a study schedule with distance learning, or at least may not find it substantially easier.

> ***I am having trouble juggling all my work and school. In distance learning, you have to set aside the time you would normally be in the classroom, and devote it to your schoolwork.***
>
> —Single parent, 35

A few responses reveal fault lines in the allocation of tasks within the household, as women try to avoid relying on spouses and kids to carve out long, uninterrupted personal work times. Several women describe the importance of learning to budget time and knowing how to "get [housework] done in record time ... to give myself more time for my school work," as a 24-year-old homemaker describes.

A few women in this group maintain family schedules that everyone upholds. Says a 31-year-old legal secretary with a child at home: "I go by a schedule and check off things as they are done. I include home, work, and school deadlines. You must also prioritize."

Online learning: a family affair

Since distance education in effect brings the classroom into the home, it can involve family members in a variety of ways. Several dozen women note the importance of receiving active support and encouragement from partners and children, and several mention that they receive technical help from their partners as well.

Even when other family members are supportive, however, women indicate that they remain the person primarily responsible for household and family-related tasks. A 42-year-old woman describes her husband's household contribution, for example, as pitching in when needed. "My husband is very supportive of anything that I want to do. There would be no complaining from him if the laundry weren't done or the dishes were stacked up," says a 51-year-old director of communications. A part-time career counselor enjoys similar support from her husband who "helps me and very seldom complains about my classes, as he wants to take an online class" as well. A 25-year-old sometimes feels guilty about her class but notes, "My husband encourages me to go to school, so he has taken on anything that I don't have time to do."

> ***My family rates above schoolwork, but they do understand if I need some extra time. My sons and I do homework together.***
>
> —Early childhood educator, 34, married, children at home, distance learning experience

A number of respondents report receiving passive support from spouses, for example, not being interrupted a lot while they are studying or not being made to feel guilty. "I feel no guilt because [my husband] does not present any," declares a 26-year-old distance learning student.

A matter of priorities

Several dozen women state that their children are their highest priority. But these women sometimes modify their statements by adding an assurance that classes are most important—after their family's needs. "Being head of the household I always have responsibilities at home," explains a retail manager. "It's a matter of discipline (which I must admit I haven't fully mastered) to set schooling as a higher priority than other work. My children's needs come first. ... Having a specific time every day to study helps, preferably when they're at school."

While most women with children at home prioritize attention to the family over coursework, some women list family as their first or only concern when asked whether they felt guilt. "I wouldn't feel bad because I would finish my family duties first," comments a 28-year-old married woman.

For the good of the family

Women who respond that they view education as something that advances their family's well-being typically do not feel guilty about pursuing online classes. They reconcile time away from the family by recognizing that further education may serve a family's long-term interests. "My guilt works the other way," responds a 30-year-old administrative assistant and single mom, who reports feeling guilty when, as the head of the household, she does "other things when I know that I have assignments to complete." An executive assistant sees distance learning as providing a "compromise for the ambitious, yet responsible family member" who wants to spend time at home.

> ***I do not feel guilty about taking a home study course. It has helped me by giving me more time at home. I no longer spend two hours in traffic. I have meals ready for my children. I can help them study more.***
>
> —Health consultant, 37, married, children at home

A supportive boss

A few women wrote that they don't have to feel guilty about studying at home because they are able to do some course work while on the job.

> ***My boss ... allows me time at work to take on my course assignments. At 53 she is also returning to school for her doctorate. The program she is involved in is completely online. We are both homebodies who treasure the time we have at home. ... We take that seriously.***
>
> —Project assistant, distance learning experience

Accreditation

Not all distance education programs are accredited, which means that not all programs have received a comprehensive inspection by reputable accrediting agencies, are declared to have "high standards" (which usually means standards similar to those required of traditional courses and programs), or have a record of delivering what they promise. Bear and Bear (2001) count almost 500 fraudulent college programs—often called degree mills—some of which invent agencies to give accreditation to their schools.

> ***In my experience [in a low-income housing project], some people are getting acceptance into bad deals [non-accredited online programs]. Then they take out student loans and they're paying them back and they end up getting nothing for it.***
>
> —Social worker

Many recent studies on the effectiveness of distance learning have asked whether online learning is as effective as traditional learning. But this may be much too limited a focus for an assessment of online learning. Growing numbers of students and programs have increased the demand for high-quality distance learning institutions with clear goals and standards and explicit statements about transferring credits. Attention to gender equity issues (discussed in Part 4 of this report) should be a part of new accreditation standards and practices if federal financial assistance to students or institutions is involved and if these programs are to meet high educational goals for all students and faculty.

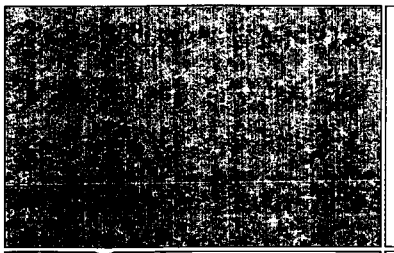
Comments

Most women who are going (or, in many cases, returning) to college have multiple responsibilities. Many single parents care for young children, many are the sole provider or co-contributor to their family's income, and some care for aging or ill parents. Some respondents write about their right to continue their education or about the importance

to their own careers and to their family income of continuing their education. Others write about the tension between their wish to take courses and their need to fulfill family responsibilities. Most respondents mention income problems. These answers open a window on the ways that women, pulled in these cases by the three shifts of work, family, and school, attempt to reconcile competing demands on their time and energy—often with little institutional, financial, or even emotional support from co-workers, employers, schools, spouses, or children.

The family is, of course, shaped by cultural influences. Women in so-called traditional families constantly allude to their assumptions of their responsibilities to their spouses and children. These mothers feel that their primary responsibility is to meet many of the home, educational, emotional, and medical needs of the others in the home. A few point out that while this is a socially constructed situation, women must deal with the resulting heavy work loads not through social programs that would provide childcare and financial support, but through individual solutions.

Teachers and institutions could help in a number of ways. Recognizing some of the pressures that women, especially, might be experiencing, institutions should consider building more flexibility into their schedules and setting up rent-to-own, leasing, or interest-free loan programs for required equipment. Institutions should interview students who drop out to see if more flexible options would have made a difference in their ability to finish courses.



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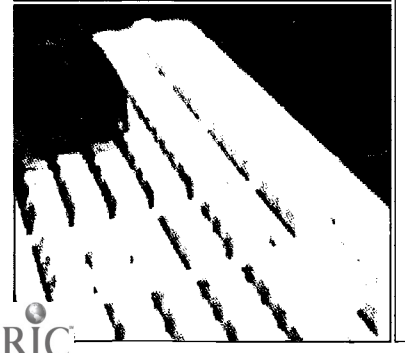
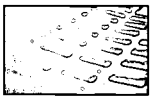


Look Who's Talking:

Gender Identity and Culture Online



Synchronous or same-time computer-mediated communication differs from asynchronous forms of communication such as e-mail, which do not require that participants be at their computers at the same time. Computer-mediated communication receives a lot of attention from educators and students interested in replacing, perhaps improving on, the kinds of interactions possible in classrooms. Programs such as the Internet Relay Chat enable students and teachers to exchange information in real time. Other text-based programs, such as MUDs (Multi-User Domain) and MOOs (MUD, Object Oriented), allow learners to interact in a virtual world. (In these programs, participants using synchronous discussions create and describe characters, places, objects, and events. MUDs are usually used for role-playing games, while MOOs are usually used for social interaction, including exploration of ideas.) Still other programs allow chats with graphical backgrounds, visible characters associated with each participant, controlled movement of one's character, and other elements intended to make the interaction more interesting and realistic. Ingram, Hathorn, and Evans (2000) discuss some of the opportunities and pitfalls of these programs.

Computer-mediated programs used for social, role-playing, and educational electronic communication will continue to evolve as the use of computer video and audio equipment becomes more functional and widespread. Today educational chat rooms usually show messages in the order participants send them. Students see a list of messages on their screens as messages are posted. When they want to contribute their own messages, they compose their comments on a message window and then send the messages to be included in the electronic discussion. In large classes students often are divided into several smaller groups, which allows for multiple, independent discussions.

Students differ in their interest in participating in online forums, recognizing some of the advantages and drawbacks of the major features of the forums: messages are permanent (they can be read and reread but cannot be undone), messages are public (students can address everyone in the course quickly, which means that there is wide exposure), communication is asynchronous (messages can be written and read when students like, but forums lack visual cues and fluid discussion), and messages can be edited before being sent (students can rewrite to clarify and structure ideas, but composing a text is a discipline) (Hammond, 2000, p. 253). In addition, messages can be written and sent without fear of interruption; therefore, students can claim all the space they want, but their text can be ignored even more easily in an online discussion than can their comments in an oral discussion.

Technology and the Virtual Classroom: The Great Equalizers?

Representing a still common notion about the freedom and equality of online interaction, an Internet expert writes, "One of the best features about life in digital space is that your skin color, race, sex, size, religion or age does not matter; neither [do] academic degrees you have" (Damer, 1998). Others have suggested that when we enter online interaction we can, if we wish, leave behind cultural labels and expectations. Some initially heralded these new forms of communication as open, inclusive, and democratic. The fantasy was that we could readily become who we wanted to be online, regardless of our true backgrounds and experiences, and interact as disembodied equals.

For example, Turkle (1995, p. 178) wrote about how we can each build a new self by cycling through many selves online.

This now appears to be an overly optimistic generalization. We see evidence that, as one critic puts it, "the Internet does not introduce totally new ethnic dynamics, but rather magnifies those that already exist" (Warschauer, 2000, p. 167). Several professors and instructors, for example, describe undergraduate class chat room or discussion list interactions that went astray or got out of hand, resulting in some students dropping out of classes and other students feeling that they were not wanted in class. One professor talked about an "online racial name-calling event that moved from the online discussion space and became a sit-in in front of the administration building."

> ***I was advised not to incorporate a chat room in the graduate courses I taught online, as it would be too easy to lose control of the discussion and there would be too much digression.***
>
> —Part-time graduate student, 51

Conversational Styles

In the past two decades, many studies examined patterns of unequal classroom participation between male and female students, yet research on distance learning has rarely explored these themes. This section will review the existing research literature on conversational styles in the online classroom and discussion forum. Contrary to earlier claims that gender, along with race and social class, is invisible in mixed-sex, computer-mediated interaction (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), recent research indicates that gender asymmetry exists in both synchronous and asynchronous interaction.

Verbosity: who's talking?

In mixed-sex discussion groups, men contribute more turns and more words online than do women (Kramarae & Taylor, 1993; Wolfe, 2000), who are less likely to continue posting when their messages receive no response (Herring, n.d.). When women do persist, their messages receive fewer responses. (For a discussion of these issues, see Herring, n.d.; Herring, Johnson, & DiBenedetto, 1992, 1995; Hert, 1997).

Researchers studying interaction in an online graduate class in the United Kingdom discovered, to their surprise, that far from increasing women's contribution, participation by men increased. Men typically made more—and longer—contributions than women. Women were more likely to be interactive (their messages contained more references to previous contributions). Further, researchers discovered that participants were unaware of gender-typed behavior, having little to say about possible male/female discourse differences until they were shown the analyses of their discussions (Barrett & Lally, 1999).

Most computer-mediated communication studies have not looked at conversational differences between women and men of different ethnic backgrounds, even though previous communication studies indicate, for example, that the conversational factors that silence white women are different from those that silence students of color. Furthermore, the conversational traits of some cultures may conflict with the conversational styles that electronic conversations encourage. For example, Hispanic students are often described as using more physical gestures in their conversations, being reluctant to disagree with others, and being less competitive, so text-based electronic conversations may present a particular barrier for participation by Hispanics.

Joanna Wolfe (2000) studied the interaction of computer-mediated and traditional class discussions in undergraduate English classes. She found that Hispanic women participated more than Hispanic men and white women in the traditional environment; Hispanic women reported disliking computer-mediated conversation and participated less in that environment. White males were most verbal in face-to-face discussions. They decreased their participation in the computer-mediated setting, but they did not report feeling shut out by either of these conversational environments. Asian-American

students were the least vocal. Although they increased their participation in the computer-mediated setting, none of the Asian-American students expressed a preference for computer-mediated conversations.

In an interview, a male university professor describes additional differences in technological experience by race/ethnicity and sex:

> A lot of women are extremely comfortable with technology. The issues I have to watch out for are more when people are doing face-to-face collaborative group work to make sure that the men don't dominate, because oftentimes that can happen. ... I realize I was immediately just thinking of all the women [who] have been really, really active in my classes or really gotten into the technology, but they were basically all white. Of course [this university] is mostly white. ... If there's [another] dividing line, it's trying to get faculty of color to be involved with thinking about technology, because they tend to have so many other demands on them on campus. For the use of technology, especially among faculty, I don't see a gender line as much as I see a color line.

Specific cultural differences in the communication of various ethnic groups may affect the ways that students participate in course discussion. What is appropriate conversational behavior for some students, including the right amount of talk, may be uncomfortable or inappropriate for others.

Politeness/rudeness

Research by Wolfe (2000) shows that women in computer-mediated discussions are just as likely as men to initiate disagreements, but they tend to use more agreement terms (which can encourage and promote the participation of others) and tend to drop out of conversations rather than continue to defend their ideas when challenged.

A study by Smith, McLaughlin, and Osborne (1997) concludes that women are more likely to thank others, show appreciation, apologize, and be concerned about rudeness. They are more likely to challenge people who seem to be violating rules of politeness.

> ***When I talk with my male colleagues about e-mail messages, I find that they just don't answer a lot of their e-mail messages. For example, some of them say that when they get calls for help—requests for articles or information about their research—from students not in their classes, they just delete those messages. I don't enjoy answering those requests, but I always try to give some help. My husband tells me that when I do that, as a reward I just increase the number of e-mails I get.***
>
> —University professor, 50s

Some studies indicate that women participate more actively and with more influence in asynchronous online environments that include a moderator who maintains order and focus (Korenman & Wyatt, 1996). Studies of online classroom interaction have found women participating more (sometimes even more than the male students) when the teacher, regardless of gender, moderates the interaction (Herring, 1999; Herring & Nix, 1997). The presence of an acknowledged leader with the responsibility for ensuring an environment free of incivility or harassment may create a freer atmosphere for women. Although we need further research on online communication patterns, the possibility that women participate more actively in moderated online classrooms has important implications for online education programs. Teachers might think that setting up self-regulating online class discussions is a more democratic policy; however, in effect such a laissez-faire approach allows the most aggressive individuals to dominate the conversation.

Abruptness

Many women worry that their electronic messages might be too abrupt. Research on students' messages from a college-based electronic forum reflects some gender-related differences. Men posted proportionately more messages, and the content of their messages was likely to be more certain and abstract. (For example, a man might reply to a request for advice, "You need a C program. L programs do not work well," while a woman might say, "I had more luck using a C than an L program. Hope this helps. Let me know.") Women's messages were more likely to include polite or soothing words, acknowledge the original sender, and add qualifiers. Further, the women students seemed to prefer learning from other students rather than from more formal channels (Blum, 1999).

This study finds similar concern among some women for tone and style. A divorced graduate student with a child at home recalls "numerous situations with male professors where I've gotten sort of gruff e-mail from them and I think that they are being tough with me but then when I meet with them in person, they're fine and it's not a problem."

> ***I respond to dozens of e-mails every day from students, from colleagues who want advice or a citation for an article, from people who need letters of recommendation, and on it goes. I seldom have time to reread the messages I send in reply but when I do I see that I sound too brusque, not pleasant enough. I feel bad about that. But otherwise just answering e-mails would take all day.***
>
> —Professor

Flaming

Anecdotal information on flaming (the sending of contentious, challenging, insulting messages that may demean an interest or concern of an individual or a group of people) has been available for a decade, yet again, there is little formal or systematic research on extreme behaviors online. While some studies (for example, Bell & de La Rue [n.d.]) found that males are more likely to use rude, derogatory language, this subject requires further research.

> ***In some electronic communities I am involved in (esp. mailing lists), I've experienced really disgusting behavior by male participants/subscribers. Arrogance, up to hard-core sexism, the whole scale.***
>
> —University professor, 50s

Because of their experience with behaviors online, some women have established women-only online discussion groups (there are relatively few consciously men-only groups). Even when women organize women-only groups, men sometimes ignore the request that they stay out. Researchers have documented a number of cases in which repeated hostile interference by men has forced women-centered online groups to disband, move to another online site, or set up strict rules for online behavior (Collins-Jarvis, 1997; Ebben, 1994; Reid 1994). Since teacher-directed plans for most online classes do not encourage or allow gender-segregated discussion groups, setting clear regulations regarding acceptable participant conduct and monitoring discussions becomes even more important.

Topic control

When using asynchronous communication, many participants can talk at once, without concerns about interrupting or being interrupted. Students no longer have to wait for a teacher to call on them, and students who have trouble articulating their thoughts orally can take their time to think and compose. Hence some researchers and teachers have talked about the advantages of such online discussions for students who are marked by visible cues such as gender, race, and physical disability in traditional courses. However, while such participants *could* write at length without interruption, in actuality women whose comments are not noticed by others often *decrease* their level of participation.

Some research finds that in online discussions, women's topics tend to receive fewer responses from others, both females and males. Women do not usually control the topics of discussion except in groups where women are a clear majority (Herring, n.d.; Hert, 1997).

Silence

What is not said and by whom depends upon not just what kinds of repressive mechanisms are used but also upon cultural ideas of appropriate conversational behavior and upon the coping strategies students use when experiencing sexism and racism. For example, studies of African American adult students indicate that one of the coping responses to obstacles in classes (such as attending discussions that ignore relevant social and cultural experiences) is silence (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996; Ross-Gordon & Brown-Haywood, 2000).

Students whose native language is not English may have to distort their interests and experiences to participate in online English discussions, where the conversations have an organization, form, and tradition unlike the forms and traditions to which such students are accustomed. For example, members of several Native American tribes (e.g., Apache, Navajo, and Papago) tend to be silent in social situations when the role expectations or the social status of the participants is unclear. Asking them to participate in online conversations with those they do not know or with whom they do not have a defined social relationship may be asking them to commit gross social acts. Also Native American students who must translate from their native languages may have problems expressing themselves quickly in computer-mediated systems (Baldwin, 1995, p. 119). Add to this the social convention of "appropriate silence" (to show respect to elders, for example), and the silence of some Native Americans in online discussions becomes not just something to solve, but something to be understood by other students and teachers.

Some educators extol the relative anonymity of computer-mediated communication networks. The age, social class, ethnicity, and sometimes gender of each of the participants are, at least at times, unknown by others. Now we also need to pay attention to different cultures and our own assumptions about what an online conversation should look like.

Gender

Prior to this study, many participants had not thought about their experience with gender online. Nonetheless, a substantial number say that they see gender differences in both synchronous and asynchronous interaction.

Haven't thought about this/do not have enough experience to know

Approximately one-third of the women respondents in this study cannot answer the question about whether gender-related differences are present in Internet discussions. Most say they do not yet have any or much experience with web-based discussions or they have not thought about whether such differences exist. Some indicate that they are in predominately female online classes. Many know that women and men interact in somewhat different ways in traditional classes and in other settings, but respondents are not sure what is happening online. A 34-year-old teacher notes that in the traditional classroom "women discuss the hows and whys, men want to know where we are going with this. Online, I don't know."

> ***I teach writing classes, and I can see how women enjoy exchanging confidences and finding out personal things about their classmates, such as number of children. Men ask more surface questions such as courses taken. But online—I am not sure, although research says women and men interact in different ways.***
>
> —Professor, 46, married

Computer-mediated communication does not help equalize male/female interactions

Approximately one-fourth of female participants say that computer-mediated communication is not neutral and that women and men interact in different ways in Internet classes. Many argue that men want to connect on a more abstract, solution-based level, while women have more diverse interests (including family, career, philosophy) and want to discuss more and work together. "Women are more prone to handle situations in groups and men want to solve it now. Women discuss a lot more. I've seen men just state opinions, but together both can be very effective," says a self-employed 33-year-old. Others observe the typical differences found in other social settings. As a 22-year-old musician comments, "Men are usually more outspoken, and women speak less [frequently] and more thoughtfully."

> ***Most male students are quite skilled at putting up a facade of confidence and self-assurance even if they haven't grasped the content of a lecture. Women tend not to ask questions in mixed-gender groups for fear of appearing stupid, thinking that everyone else (every male?) has understood the subject matter.***
>
> —Research assistant/lecturer, 42, married

A systems analyst provides a detailed analysis of distance learning interaction:

> I know that they differ! Being a graduate from a predominantly female college, I found that whenever a man was introduced into the stream of talk, we have them trying to out-speak, out-do or out-talk in order to best the females. Women open topics, not to score but to discover the intricacies of the topic and learn other viewpoints. With a man "that is the way it is" and to challenge him is to insult him, when education should enlighten! Online the ability to create a pseudo persona is great, but one can find the feminine and masculine traits by the very word choice of the writer and the aggression in their text.

Computer-mediated communication makes discussions more equitable

A smaller number of women see few or no gender-related differences in the ways women and men interact in online courses. These responses emphasize that the lack of visual cues equalizes online students. A 56-year-old program director notes: "Internet discussions seem to put both women and men on an equal level. We cannot see the other person and therefore we are not so conscious of gender." A 40-year-old says online classrooms "level the playing field" because visual cues to identity are not available and "only the personality shows through online."

Other respondents suggest that the equalization of gender relations occurs because of factors inherent in the structure of distance learning. "After all, it really is just typing," notes an itinerant worker. "One has no idea if the 'male' or 'female' is [really of that] specific gender. That is the anonymity of the Internet." Another who attends classes online argues, "Women don't feel the need to defer or be quiet," because only first initials and last names are used for login, and hence gender is masked. These answers assume that gender identity is communicated or revealed primarily through visual presence and is, therefore, not evident in other mannerisms or characteristics online.

Most differences are individual or cultural, not gender-based

A smaller number respond that other factors are more important than gender in determining why people interact as they do online. Some reference age and maturity as more salient features of online discussions and interaction patterns. A high school English teacher says, "It is not so much between men and women as it is between cultures as well as ages." A 28-year-old research associate taking an online course puts more weight on "personality/character over gender."

Other responses

Dozens of the women mention that in online discourse women and men are more open, honest, laid-back, and free. A 27-year-old student writes, "Women feel less apprehensive during Internet discussions." A mental health worker who earned her bachelor's degree through distance learning says, "The Internet provides a certain amount of security since it is not a face-to-face discussion where one can place a face with the opinion." A 40-year-old director of an English language institute states, "Online and in writing, it is easier to be bold and forthright, something difficult for many women to do in person."

> ***I have noticed that I react to women and men differently and my Internet discussions have brought this to light. At times when there is no obvious way of knowing whether your cyber-classmate is male or female, or you have discovered that they are the opposite sex of what you guessed, I [think about] my prior conversations with them to ascertain if I have committed any social faux pas.***
>
> —Nurse, 49, single, children at home

Because they do not need to worry about what others might think about them, younger women admit that they change their behavior when taking online courses. A nail technician writes: "No matter what is said, appearances count. If you are at home in your PJs, you're more likely to be paying attention to work rather than to who is paying attention to you."

Student Identity and Gender Dynamics

Distance learning makes access to higher education possible to a great number of previously excluded people. But the increased access involves not just numbers of students, but also diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, class, income, and work and family situations that once limited participation (Herman & Mandell, 1999, p. 17). As a consequence, many other assumptions about higher education (including curriculum) and the process of education must be entertained. Online courses offer special opportunities for working on stereotypes—if institutions support this work.

Social context cues

In face-to-face conversations we make assumptions based on how people appear (including age, skin color, gender, hair styles, clothing, and speech). We guess, for example, about people's intelligence, social status, and ability to do well in university classes. Many of these cues are missing in text-based online discussions. However, what many view as a deficiency of computer-mediated communication, others (including many women in this survey) find a virtue.

Women taking online courses are optimistic about technology as a corrective to subtle—and sometimes not-so-subtle—bias or discrimination in the traditional classroom. More than half the respondents say that online classes without video present less or no possibility of racism, sexism, or homophobia, since students and teachers cannot see or hear each other. Answering a question about whether online classes minimized or eliminated sexism and racism, one respondent illustrates the enthusiasm for online classes as equalizers: "If you never see who you are dealing with, how do you know unless they tell you? Prior to this question, did you know I was African American? Would you have known even with this question if I did not tell you? I think not."

Many people writing about the virtues of the Internet have suggested that its "blindness" reduces racism and sexism and promotes greater freedom of expression and equal exchange among people of different groups. (See, for example, Graham [1999, pp. 141-145].) Online anonymity, a much-touted and in many respects tantalizing feature of the computer culture and the virtual classroom, warrants closer examination: How do missing context cues—facial expressions, sex, skin color, or appearance—change our educational conversations for better or worse?

Gender-bending online?

The possibility that gender online is more malleable than gender in face-to-face interaction has enticed sociologists and observers of life online. With synchronous MOOs, participants can invent new names (nicks) and personalities (characters), hiding their real identities. These gender experiments, however, have received more attention than their relatively small number seems to justify (Headlam, 2000). In a recent study, participants in several social and educational MOOs were asked whether they had ever used a MOO gender other than their biological designation, and, if so, whether they had done so within the last month. Most participants did not gender-switch as part of their online presentation, and, in fact, most of the participants in the social MOOs had never engaged in gender switching. In role-playing MOOs, the majority were either currently switching genders or had switched genders previously (Roberts & Parks, 1999).

In recreational chat rooms, participants often ask the gender of other participants, and they display their own chosen gender through nicknames, message content, and the use of third-person pronouns to describe their actions. One study finds female characters more likely to use affectionate verbs (such as "hugs") and male characters more violent verbs (such as "kills") (Herring, 1998).

While the majority of participants in most chat modes are male, females who participate often receive a lot of attention, much of it sexual in nature (Bruckman, 1993; Herring, 1998, 1999; Rodino, 1997). (In an episode that riveted participants, a character in a social MOO performed a textually enacted rape on a member of their online community. The other characters tried to figure out the relationship of a virtual rape and a physical rape and determine what punishment the attacking character, who operated under a nickname, should receive.) Even among chatters interested in exploring what gender could or should be, many online behaviors are rooted in the old conceptions of gender divisions and hierarchy.

In environments other than games (in education chat rooms, for example), gender is more transparent, because the people enrolled in the courses use their names, which often reveal their gender, and because many view gender-switching as ethically dubious and counter to the expectation that people will be honest.

Even when people play with gender roles, users who present maleness online (whether or not they are male) generally have more power than those who present femaleness (Rodino, 1997). This indicates that while people might briefly change gender online, some of the dominant features remain in action. What would be revolutionary would be new ways for women and men to interact online altogether.

Out of sight, out of mind?

Women and men had a lot to say about whether the new technology used in online courses could help eliminate biases. Since teachers and students cannot see each other, many respondents believe that problems with stereotypes should disappear. For example, a business administration graduate student, 40, taking online courses, states that online (and therefore unseen) students who have experienced discrimination before may have fewer difficulties: "I have had [classroom] experiences where, as an American Indian, I could see others who were non-Indian treated better. I was not given as much time or consideration when I asked questions. ... [In online courses] I can excel in my course work without ... having to compete with the others in my class." A 52-year-old who finished her master's degree online was surprised to discover that her "faculty adviser turned out to be 27 ... while my one study buddy was a great-grandmother. [Initially] I didn't have any idea; I thought we were all about the same age."

> ***Online distance education can help eliminate those biases. If all students kept that information to themselves, perhaps then it would eliminate the biases completely (another great social-psychology research question!!).***
>
> —Research associate, 28, single, taking online courses

Old wine, new bottles

Several dozen respondents state that old bases for judgment and bias may be replaced with new cues, especially those of writing style and content:

- A 52-year-old bartender with a learning disability writes, "Things communicated in writing tell much about an individual and a bias can be formed from almost any prejudice."
- A 48-year-old college professor predicts, "Different ways of determining [race, gender, age] may arise; e.g., language use, references, etc. Even if they are wrong, these assumptions will still color people's interactions."
- A 24-year-old graduate student similarly cautions from an instructor's perspective: "In most cases I can tell the gender of a person who wrote an essay because males and females tend to have different perspectives and voices. ... Teachers will in general know what gender they are dealing with, so bias will not be eliminated. Perhaps it will be harder to tell with race and age, but again, there are often tell-tale cultural signs."
- A biology teacher reports: "People were very careful about what they wrote concerning race. Most people identified their age by way of chitchat or by way of relating personal experience. And the male/female status was perhaps the very first thing you established in statements such as 'my husband,' and with names like 'Ann' or 'David,' etc."

> ***If a participant is given a number, maybe, but from a linguistic point of view, biases can be detected. You can't wipe out a person's thought processes that include sex/race/age. Go on a chat line and you can clearly see this!***
>
> —Psychologist, 52, single

Others comment that distance learning may create new types of bias around writing or even typing skills. A manager of a technology group responds, "There is a new bias [involving] technology literacy." A 47-year-old social worker writes that because Native Americans on reservations have less access to technology, they are likely to reveal their inexperience in an online course and may, as a result, experience some discrimination.

> ***[Personal] characteristics can be masked via distance learning if students are required to select a name that does not indicate sex, age, etc. I often use "quay" for that reason. It signifies bridge (which ... subconsciously suggests my desire to be accessible and to communicate).***
>
> —Survey design consultant, 55, single

Even more women point out that teachers usually have some personal information about students and always have students' names, which often carry gender and ethnicity information. Respondents suggest that biases could be avoided if numbers were used instead of names and if no personal information were given.

Eliminate bias, not difference

Many responses assume that avoiding any indications or mention of racism and sexism would be the best possible situation in online education. Does this mean that students should be ready to hide their experiences relevant to the course materials and discussions and those that come from their age, ethnicity/race, gender, and sexual orientation? Is this desirable pedagogically?

To the contrary, some educators reject the color-blind or sex-blind ideal and believe that exploration of the connections (gender, age, race, and class) between students and themes of privilege and oppression should be a concern of all education (see, for example, Tisdell [1998]).

While most women in this survey applaud the success or potential success of distance learning in minimizing negative biases, many do not necessarily believe that online courses can mask differences among students, nor do they endorse this as a desirable goal. Respondents value explicit identification of differences in online discussions and courses for a variety of reasons. Some feel that avoidance of differences and potential bias will not make the problem go away. Similarly, a few respondents write that it is a valuable part of the educational process for students to confront their own assumptions about others and to challenge others' biases. "Online education just masks reality and minority students' opportunities to take on prejudice head-on," writes a 24-year-old doctoral candidate. A male data entry contractor notes, as well, that distance education "could have the unintended effect of preserving people's biases by protecting them from personal experience with people who disprove their stereotypes."

> ***Yes, [distance education] could help weed out sex/race/age biases on the part of the teacher and other students. But I also think that some learning is lost in the process. I guess I would rather put more money into classes in middle schools and high schools in the spirit of preventive medicine than shield sex/race/age biases from happening to women later on.***
>
> —Family transportation specialist

Others underscore that anonymity or disguised identities threaten to "take away ... the essence of a person," as a 42-year-old professor describes. A flight attendant agrees: "I do not like to see gender removed. Women and men have different perspectives that are very valuable to teach different segments of society."

> ***If we want to eliminate [students' personal characteristics], we'd have to become really impersonal. ... As courses become more impersonal and remote from human interaction and knowing who we are, it would be more difficult for [them] to succeed.***
>
> —Technology coordinator, 45, married, two children at home, distance learning experience

Face-to-Face Contact

Face-to-face contact in the classroom has many functions. For example, many teachers rely on eye contact as affirmation that a student is paying attention (although in some cultures it would be viewed as staring and a cultural taboo [Spring, 1995]), and students may signal their lack of interest in or understanding of material by avoiding eye contact or sleeping.

When asked whether seeing the reactions of others in a classroom is important, most U.S. teachers reply that it is very important. Several add that while it is vital to them as teachers, it is less important to them when they are students themselves. A former computer science teacher comments: "As a teacher it is through eye contact, especially with women, that I get the feeling if the class understands the lecture or if they are totally confused. However ... as a student it is not really that important to me. ... In a pure lecture environment, it is distracting to have others physically in the same room. [And] if you make your opinions known and someone bristles, then you fear the hostility in the classroom, where it should be freedom of expression."

However, most student respondents indicate that making contact and seeing the reactions of others, especially of teachers, are very important or at least important in some situations.

Contact is important

Nearly one-third of respondents find face-to-face contact important for a variety of reasons. They

include camaraderie ("Life and learning is a social event," explains a 40-year-old outdoor guide, and another respondent wants more than "book sense" out of her education), the motivation that can come from hearing the experiences of others, increased professional contacts, and social interaction with other adults (the latter may be especially important for single parents). Others cite the stimulation that can result from friction and disagreement in the classroom and the problems they have faced trying to deal with disagreement online. A graduate student finds: "Not having eye contact can lead to misunderstandings. I've had my share of cyber fights with people because of misinterpreting something. And once the words are written, you can't go back and erase them, versus when you are in person when someone says something, you can explain it away a little easier."

Other women note the value of hearing sarcasm, jokes, and subtleties of tone. "Looking at others is particularly important for women," says a computer programmer. "If I get upset in a conversation I just look at the person I like and ignore the others. ... There is something visceral about the importance of attention in the classroom." Some stress that students express themselves and learn in ways other than through words. Many state that interaction with others is the primary way they learn—that teaching and learning are relational processes best achieved in face-to-face settings.

> ***I still want to see somebody. I haven't turned into an online shopper, because I still want to touch and feel whatever I'm buying. ... But I guess I'm sort of old school.***
>
> —Video producer, 29

No, getting the course credit is more important

Dozens of women respond negatively when asked if seeing the reactions of others in a classroom is important to them. Many women reply that what is most important right now is the degree itself, however it can be obtained. A few women cite logistical problems and subordinate issues of contact or social interaction to convenience. "I don't feel I have the option," comments a marketing consultant. "Online, I can finish my senior year no matter where my husband's job takes us." These answers imply that women may view contact as a social or expendable component of the educational experience. As a 25-year-old registered nurse explains, "Contact and reactions is not my priority ... I am all about learning and progressing to another level."

Several draw an age distinction and say that physical interaction is no longer their priority. A 31-year-old seamstress says contact is less important than it used to be: "With the social element ... eliminated, it is all about the learning for me now. I have friends and a full life. I am looking to expand my knowledge base for both financial gains and personal growth." An instructor of biology similarly notes that face-to-face contact matters less at this point than it did during his earlier college years.

Having contact with others is important in some situations

For many respondents, seeing and reacting with others is valuable, but only part of the time. Contact is "an extra bonus ... but not a needed requirement," a 46-year-old computer system support analyst states. Many say that being able to see others is not essential for a rewarding educational experience, but it is an added perk. "Sometimes it is nice to know if I'm not the only one not getting it," a 24-year-old layout engineer comments.

Some students in online courses think that making contact with other students is more important for some courses than others. Contact is deemed important for people-oriented courses and visual courses such as psychology and art but not so important for math and science courses.

Contact is particularly valuable at the beginning of a course

Online graduate students who are required to spend some time together on campus believe the experience is critical to the success of subsequent online discussions. One Latina, who writes that her online classmates are a very diverse and mature group including white, Latina, and black women,

a Lebanese woman, and two men in their late 30s, says: "The time we spent together was like 'boot camp' because if we weren't in class we were studying [together]. ... During class a lot of issues came out (race, gender, etc.) and we discussed our individual viewpoints; it was a little messy in the beginning, but ... we accepted each other's viewpoints and now we can discuss online more freely."

Technology *does* allow for contact

Several dozen women argue that contact is important and that distance learning classes accomplish this goal. They point out that they can still get reactions through writing and chat room conversations rather than through primarily visual cues. A 33-year-old single mother writes, "When I was online I made 'the speaker' aware I was listening by adding my opinions when asked." Some women clarify that contact online is just as meaningful as face-to-face but may require the development of new social competencies and skills. An academic adviser explains, "Contact can be simulated in a distance learning environment, it just takes a little more effort." A flight instructor notes the importance of experience, "Once you are online and actively participating in discussions, you learn the reactions and make contacts just as easily as face-to-face."

Others add that new and future technology will allow for greater visual and even tactile learning online. "Facial expressions are an important part of some interactions," comments a single mother returning to school online, "so a camera onsite and at home would fix that, but there's a lot to be said about the safety of anonymity."

> ***Visual/tactile learning is important, especially with challenged learners; however, with today's technology, we have 2D visuals, sound, and graphics. [On the other hand,] I cannot [understand chemistry experiments] without feeling, seeing or smelling the reactions in some way.***
>
> —Help desk/systems analyst, children at home

Some respondents note that an online global student body can provide diversity and a cultural richness that is otherwise nearly impossible to represent in a traditional course. They note that this is only true, however, if student expertise and understandings are considered a part of the course material. Now studying in the United States, a young Fulbright scholar from Russia suggests that effective global education "can only come from knowing about other cultures." She recommends that teachers from several countries jointly develop courses and points out that foreign students studying in the United States often find that professors "ignore what isn't immediate to them."

Learning is easier when we are by ourselves

Several dozen women give primacy to the importance of *not* having face-to-face contact. Most of them focus on the pleasure of being able to spend more time thinking about possible answers and the best ways of phrasing them. Others indicate that unless they know classmates well, they are unlikely to read reactions accurately in any case. A 19-year-old au pair argues, "People can become either inhibited or encouraged [by others' nonverbal reactions], depending on how they perceive themselves in relation to other students. For example, if you believe that you are not as competent and knowledgeable, you're most likely to side with the [dominant] discussion and not express your opinions. In an online setting, people generally feel freed of such pressures."

More than a dozen women value privacy and the chance to work alone more than interaction with students. A paralegal explains, "I like working alone or with a small group of people I trust, like, and respect. You can't always find that in a classroom."

Comments

Given their choice, most students and teachers would prefer to have face-to-face contact in their courses. At present most online courses do not provide a good video approximation of what people can see in a classroom. Students who *need* online courses are willing to forego the advantages of face-to-face interaction for the greater advantage of being able to complete their courses and programs. Some

point out that we can learn to read reactions of others more accurately through their written responses. A favored solution to some of the problems of online learning is to have some face-to-face sessions during a course.

Online Isolation: Lonely or Alone Online?

Popular wisdom holds that women value interactive experiences in education, personal relationships with advisers and counselors, and collaborative learning. With these assumptions in mind, does online learning make women feel *less* connected to students or lonelier in their education? Some of the major primary considerations are listed below from most frequent responses to least. Many replies reject a strict division between being connected and being lonely.

Most women who have experience with online education are more positive about the social and educational possibilities of web-based education than those who do not have that experience, which indicates that perhaps women have preconceived ideas that online learning will be more isolating than those who pursue it actually experience it to be.

I am as connected as most on-campus students are, but in different ways

Most respondents who had experienced some online learning write about ways that they feel *more* connected online than they did in on-campus courses. Many write that initially they felt isolated (one woman writes that she felt as if she were functioning in a sensory deprivation tank), especially since they had always gauged the impact of their words by watching facial and physical reactions. They learned new ways of making connections, however, and discovered that while online they were "only an e-mail away" from teachers, advisers, and other students. Some women feel *more* connected to their advisers and teachers because of the possible immediacy of e-mail.

Many women emphasize that a distance learning student can, in one woman's terms, be "as connected as [she] want[s] to be, and after log-off, we can each focus on our families or partners for social needs." Others distinguish between being lonely and alone. "I wouldn't say I was lonely, more like alone," a paralegal clarifies. "I feel connected enough that when I need my mentors, I can reach them." Similarly, a retired student describes distance learning as independent rather than lonely and "connected to information but not to other people."

Course structure and student preferences in large measure determine the ease and level of interaction among students. In this respect online courses resemble any traditional classroom course. Notes a housing developer: "In a previous online course, I didn't like it because of the non-interaction. My current class is completely different. We have e-mail discussions and mandatory online chat room weekly. We can also set up a chat without the instructor being present. ... All these factors provide a feeling of classroom without the faces."

Other students focus on the adjustments teachers and students make to facilitate online connections. "I have to dazzle others with my writing skills as opposed to my dynamic personality," explains a 30-year-old teacher. Another teacher states: "I feel connected, but I chose my words wisely since you can't see my smile. I am wordy, mainly because I don't want to come across as cross or short with anyone; that is very important to me since most classmates have never met me face-to-face. I write in a lot of lowercase letters so I don't come across as haughty and I use ... [ellipses] to show natural pauses I would take if I talked with people."

> ***I learned to be more precise in my delivery, to use humor a lot less or explain my humor a lot more. Now I would say I feel like a viable member of my classes.***
>
> —Psychologist, 41, married, children at home, distance learning experience

Who needs more social life!

Teachers, more than online students, stress the importance of learning as a social activity. For example, a 65-year-old university teacher argues that she has to "see and hear my students. The stimulation you get from other students, and from the environment, and from the teacher—I think it's healthy." As adults with jobs or careers or families, however, most student respondents do not feel as impassioned about the traditional collegiate culture. They have a firm allegiance to their roles as students but also to their roles as workers, parents, partners, or spouses. In this they are similar to on-campus adult undergraduate students. (Donaldson, et al., 2000, p. 8).

Social aspect of distance learning? Who cares? There is a bar on the corner.

—Industrial technical educator, 32, single

Age emerges once again as a critical issue, with older students likely to minimize the importance of social experiences or interaction in the classroom, which, in one woman's terms, are "traditionally more important to the younger student." "I am an older student," a 30-year-old single mother explains. "Younger students will benefit more from the traditional mode of educational pursuits and their funders (parents) would surely prefer them to be on campus where they are more secure and supervised. However, it is the nontraditional audience that distance education will cater to and benefit." Indeed, a 40-year-old professor predicts that online classes could "connect better than even traditional, especially for older students. What I like is the possibility of working with others who have rich experience that you may not get in a regional traditional college. However, if there is no chance for online discussion ... it can be very lonely (just like a traditional class)."

Other women experience traditional classes as lonely and isolating, especially if they commute to campus. "I was not able to connect with other students because of the commute," a doctoral candidate recalls. "Working during the day did not allow me to take off to ... meet with peers. ... I think it would be great for once if the class could come to me whether in the office or at home." Others answer the question about whether online education might be isolating by pointing out that they feel less intimidated talking online than they do talking in the classroom. One 31-year-old student and substitute teacher says that in her traditional classes, most students rarely talk to each other, unless they know each other outside class. In her online class, in which there is less social anxiety, students get to know each other much better.

Distance learning is isolating

The third most frequent response is that women feel isolated in online classes and miss the personal interaction of a classroom. As an accountant explains, "I also know that my instructor knows nothing about me except for the few bits of information I gave at the introductory section of the course." Others complain about a lack of body language to help interpret what is being said.

A university instructor (and author of a book based primarily on responses of on-campus returning women) thinks that women should not so readily accept their designation as prime candidates for distance education. She stresses what she thought of as especially important for women who are single parents:

> The last thing that single moms need is continued distance from the campus. Women should not be bullied into believing that distance learning is the same as a campus education. Women in distance learning are isolated. Women should not be "siphoned off" into distance learning, which doesn't have the same prestige as regular campus degrees, anyway. Women taking distance learning courses are very credit-hour focused, very family-oriented. Education is on the margin. They are eating the chicken wing ... taking what's left over. Many often actually have more options. ... Women should have information about the free tuition available to seniors at some state colleges and universities, and other funding available for single moms returning to university.

Loneliness depends upon the needs of the student

Some students report that they "work best without distractions, and other students are sometimes a distraction," in the words of a bartender. Alternately, they speculate that a social person may feel cheated online. As a manager states, "If a person is apt to make friends, they are apt to do so [despite] the circumstances."

> ***Persons in a wheelchair are most often persona non grata. They are mostly considered in the way. So distance education would not bother me at all.***
>
> —Unemployed, 51, married, uses a wheelchair

Online is best when combined with on-campus interaction

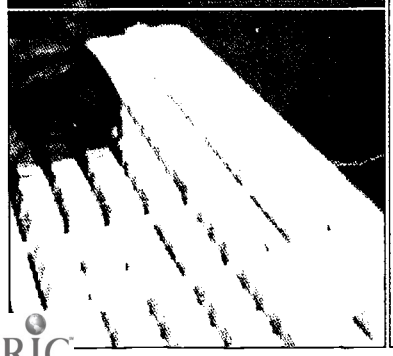
Many programs require periodic on-campus attendance, and some respondents think on-campus attendance should be required for distance learning courses. They favor a hybrid approach that includes "time at intervals to meet with faculty and fellow students," as a social worker describes.

> ***It can get tiresome to be on the PC for too long. The social aspect is needed for a complete learning experience. Although sometimes I can interact with others via e-mail to share and confirm what I believe, I still seek a warm body to sit and have conversations with about [my classes]. As a woman in the field of computer technology, I find it even more important to do this.***
>
> —Computer system support analyst, 46, married, children at home

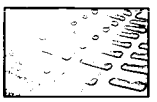
Other perspectives

A few women believe that as more people become comfortable with the changing computer-based ways of communication, more students will feel positive about online education. This study indicates that this is already happening, and those who have considerable computer or online experience are more positive about the possibilities of online education.

Part 5



Conclusions and Recommendations



In the past, distance learning courses in the United States have been closely associated with off-campus women and "practical needs" courses—courses isolated from regular higher education and removed from academic excellence. Today university administrators and education businesses are becoming increasingly interested in ways of using new information technologies to promote and integrate online learning as part of their traditional programs and, in some cases, as for-profit parallel programs.

Who will produce and deliver the learning materials? Who will decide what kinds of programs are offered and the content of courses? What efforts will be made, and by whom, to ensure that uses made of the new technologies do not reinforce social disparity and limited theories of pedagogy?

The following recommendations will help ensure positive changes.

Recommendations for College/University Policy

- **Treat distance learning students as responsible and intelligent beings, not as passive educational consumers.** This should be a guiding principle for all planning and policy.

- **Recognize that older students using distance education are a less homogenous group than on-campus students.** A major difficulty in planning for older students' educational concerns is the lack of information about their situations and strategies. This report describes some of these differences.

- **Involve women administrators, students, and teachers as active participants and advisers in the planning process for online courses.** Given the heavy participation of women in distance learning courses and programs, they, especially, should be encouraged to evaluate their situations and needs and make recommendations. In the past they have been the primary, albeit invisible, receivers of distance learning; in the future they could serve as primary evaluators and planners of online courses and programs.

- **Make explicit the institution's mission statements regarding distance-learning plans.** What are the goals? To allow students to increase their ability to understand their place in their society? To serve a greater number of students in the region? To increase students' ability to find employment? To secure a place in the distance learning market? To increase institutional profits? To try to recoup the (often heavy) expenses of distance education? All these and more? Making clear the relationship of the various goals of the institution will help everyone involved—administrators, staff, teachers, and students.

> ***Most universities don't really feel that they're accountable to their customers/students for the product delivered. They think they're accountable to lots of other constituencies—professors, parents, alums, boards of directors, donors.***
>
> —Administrator/professor/director of a communications program, 47

- **Find suitable mechanisms for the continual evaluation of online programs,** including student and teacher involvement.

- **Establish places for online students to talk face to face, when possible.** A technology consultant for a low-income housing project cautions that even if it were possible to put a computer into every apartment, it is also

important to have a computer lab in the building —a place for people to congregate in person, discuss course work, learn together, and get technological support if needed.

- **Find ways to make older women students feel welcome online.** Well-planned online programs already include learner support services such as counseling. However, even students who are no older than the average university student but who have children or are working full time feel that they are too old to return to classes. Many women who do not have institutional support for their continuing education worry about whether they will be successful in their return to higher education classes. Attention to their concerns will raise their enrollment and success rate. Some programs have special buddy systems, with successful older students acting as guides and mentors for the incoming students.

- **Combine efforts across programs, colleges, and universities to make political leaders and policy-makers aware of problems (including financial) that adult women, especially, face when trying to continue their formal education**. Bring pressure on government to ensure that students admitted to accredited online programs can receive scholarships and loans.

- **Broadly disseminate information on scholarships and loans for online programs.** Many of the students most interested in online courses suffer from limited funds, and many do not have life styles that bring them in contact with standard bulletin boards and educational journals that ordinarily post information about funding. In some cases, traditional grants and loans do not cover the costs of online education.

- **Explore and publicize the hidden costs of not investing in women's online education.** Adult women's education has not been a major political priority, although women's participation in the workplace has been recognized as critical for the national good.

- **Provide teachers of distance learning courses with consolidated material, such as contained in this report, on the many social and equality issues involved with distance learning.** Research based on conventional classroom arrangements may not translate to the online learning context.

- **Interview students who drop out,** to see if more flexible options would have helped them complete courses.

- **Consider rent-to-own leasing or interest-free loan programs for required equipment.**

Recommendations for Presentation of Course Materials Online

- **Ensure that promotional materials for online education, as well as courses themselves, provide information and guidance relevant to women and other underrepresented groups.**

- **Develop policies for respecting others and codes of conduct online, and make them available as part of the course materials.**

- **Encourage teachers to become informed about computer-mediated communication research and serve as moderators of online class discussions.** A laissez-faire approach allows the most aggressive individuals to have the most freedom. While single-sex groups might not be feasible or even permitted in many online courses, the knowledge that women in single-sex groups are more supportive of each other and more understanding of the kinds of difficulties many women experience when they have young families may help teachers and students find ways to encourage supportive behavior, even in mixed-sex groups.

Recommendations for Teachers and Instructors

- **Clarify for everyone—administrators, students, and teachers—the learning needs that are addressed by the new technology in each program.** Tell students why specific methods (such as requiring participation in chat rooms) are being used. An administrator of one distance teaching university states that tension exists over which takes priority: the technology or the learning needs of students.

- **Recognize different learning methods, and diversify approaches and methodologies used in online education.** Students have distinctive learning systems based on cultural learning processes.

- **Make positive pluralism one of the goals of all online programs.** Create opportunities for every student to participate as fully as possible in online classroom discussions.

Recommendations for Government and National Policies

- **Provide loans for students currently unable to qualify because they are taking low course loads.**

- **Consider what groups of potential online students are likely to be ignored by online programs.** Children of migrant workers are entitled to access to education and training and may benefit from online courses. Online courses could be a great resource for individuals who have to move for political or economic reasons or for prison inmates who have legal rights to the public educational system. Policy-makers must take into account the wide variety of social contexts and needs of online students. One course does not fit all, contrary to recent discussions about the possibility of a set lesson plan cheaply distributed to many.

Recommendations for Research

Universities can play a large role in establishing new research programs to examine small- and large-scale social applications of online learning and culture. This is critical if universities are going to continue to be a base for research and educational policies. Otherwise, industry is likely to fill this role—and industry's questions and concerns often are different from those of people concerned about social equality and intellectual vigor. A caveat, however, is that researchers in colleges and universities are notoriously ready to study and critique institutions and behaviors other than their own. In this time of rapid changes in higher education, everyone will benefit from reflective, open evaluations of online courses and programs.

The following research questions could provide important analyses of online education policy and practice.

Online conversation

- Can gender differences in computer-mediated conversations in online courses be generalized across computer program formats, assignments, and course topics?

- Does participation in online discussion change depending upon whether the teacher is female or male and depending upon the ratio of women and men in the class? This study reports that online conversations are often not equitable. For teachers and students to know how to best prepare for, organize, and participate equitably online, more research on the specifics of conversations and satisfaction levels is needed.

Structure of distance learning programs

- How can distance learning work best for women (and men) with family and career responsibilities and plans? If we want distance learning to work for people with many time demands and other pressures, we will sponsor more research about how women and men actually try to fulfill their (often competing) family wishes and their career wishes and how distance learning can be best structured to work with their goals, rather than

simply assume that distance learning (in whatever form) is a good (or the only) option for women with children.

- What pedagogical and economic goals of teachers, students, administrators, and investors can the broad application of the new technologies help achieve?

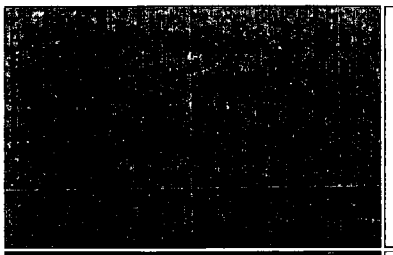
- Why are many potential learners not participating in distance learning courses? What valuable information can be gathered from students who do not finish online courses and programs?

Access to distance learning courses

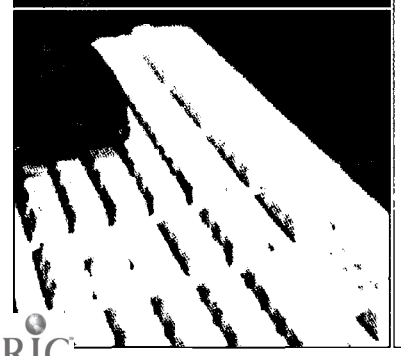
- What access do students have to computers?

- What kind of equipment is available at home and at work, and when can it be used for online courses?

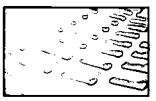
- How are computer time and work space allocated within households?



Appendices



Methodology



Many traditional research methods were not appropriate for this study. First, the process under consideration —online education—is changing so rapidly that focusing on the description and statistics of any one moment or month or year would make the study a historical rather than an analytical contribution to a volatile issue. Second, since the people potentially involved in online education include most literate adults in the United States, any random sample would require a very large number of respondents; otherwise, little could be reliably concluded about women or men of any age, race, ethnic group, geographical location, education level, or occupation. Higher education students are becoming less uniform; therefore, listening as people describe their needs, educational goals, and experiences is becoming more important.

We decided to gather as many viewpoints as possible through structured but flexible interviews and open-ended questionnaires. While news reports have provided information about the online education plans of many businesses and some online administrators, we knew little about the concerns and plans of present and potential students and teachers. We interviewed women and men of many ages, occupations, and economic levels; some respondents were taking online courses and some were not. College and university administrators, librarians, teachers, business executives, and computer specialists were also interviewed.

We conducted a series of pilot interviews to test the questions the interviewers planned to use. We then revised the questions using insights from related studies. Since little research exists about women and online higher education in the United States, we emphasized qualitative rather than quantitative methods.

Tools

Focus groups

Interviewers met with six focus groups, which were homogenous by occupation. The focus groups included a total of 27 people.

Individual in-depth interviews

We interviewed 64 women and 36 men, including students, administrators, teachers, potential students, former students, business executives, and online education researchers. Ninety-six interviewees live in the United States. Fourteen interviews were conducted by telephone.

The interviews were conducted by the author (a white female professor with more than two dozen years of researching and teaching about technology and gender issues) or a graduate student who was an AAUW intern (either a white man who has done research on society and new technologies or a woman of color—a university staff member—who interviewed people in her community and place of employment). The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to more than two hours and were conducted in classrooms, homes, offices, coffee shops—wherever the person or the situation suggested.

Almost everyone asked to participate in a face-to-face interview agreed. Interviewees were not offered a cash award for their participation. Many knew about previous AAUW research and quickly indicated their willingness to talk about this topic.

Interviewees came from diverse social classes, race and ethnic groups, age groups, and occupations. We used a questionnaire; however, during each interview, we further developed questions in step with the interests and concerns of the interviewees.

We transcribed all interviews, with some transcripts running more than 30 pages.

Online survey questionnaires
Respondents completed 410 online questionnaires between June 2000 and February 2001, and interviewers followed up by e-mail or telephone. Respondents, who found the survey through Internet-based networks, Internet searches, or the AAUW website, included 398 women (350 from the United States) and 12 men (10 from the United States). Clients at an agency helping low-income women were told about the site and encouraged to complete the questionnaire.

Respondents all had some access to the Internet through computers at home, work, libraries, or the homes of friends and relatives. Many were engaged in a course of study or research or were interested in returning to college or university. Participants in the online survey were eligible for a drawing of a $100 honorarium.

All respondents supplied information about their occupations. Almost all the respondents supplied names, e-mail addresses, and mailing addresses, as well as information regarding age, marital status, and number of children at home. Almost all who were asked follow-up questions were willing to cooperate further, and in some cases respondents continued to send e-mail messages for months.

Mann and Stewart (2000) outlined the advantages of online questionnaires (including the possibility of more leisured, considered responses to questions) and the disadvantages (including the possibility that respondents may more readily decline to answer some of the questions or quit halfway through). In this study, most of the respondents answered all or nearly all of the questions.

Additional sources of information
The researchers also used the following information:

- Notes taken in classrooms and in homes where people were working on courses online
- Notes from classrooms where teachers and students were giving presentations about their online work
- Notes from conferences where company representatives were exhibiting software programs and educators were giving presentations
- Notes from discussions with academic colleagues about the theoretical, pedagogical, and social underpinnings of the debates about distance education
- Relevant materials (including surveys) from university administrators, business people, educational foundations, research libraries, and the Internet

About the Respondents

Respondents supplied the brief descriptions following the feature quotes in this report. Initially we collected information on class status, but most people found that designation difficult (often describing several changes in their class status during their lives), so the class description is not included. Descriptions of race/ethnicity were gathered in the interviews but are used here only when the respondents themselves call attention to it. In general, those in the majority group (white) spoke of their race/ethnicity only when prompted.

Respondents listed a wide variety of occupations and fields including, for example, academia (student, vice president of distance learning, dean of education, alumni director), health (herbalist, psychologist, medical receptionist), military (soldier, Army intelligence officer), business (financial consultant, mortgage banker), technology (webmaster, programmer, hardware company executive), publishing (writer, editor), law (attorney, legal assistant, police officer), politics (retired state legislator), religion (parish priest), music (trumpet player), and services (baby-sitter, bartender, flight attendant).

Questions Asked

Interviews and questionnaires dealt with the following general areas: Who is using the new media and under what conditions? What do people see as potential inequalities? What do they see as factors that will affect their opportunities to use the new technologies for their educational interests?

The questions and responses fell into five major categories: aspirations and needs; ideas about the future of higher education; experiences, worries, and successes; access; and connections and caring.

In-depth interview questions

In-depth questions were designed to encourage participants to reflect upon their educational experiences and expectations, focusing particularly on the possibilities and problems of online education. We wanted to capture concerns and interests that may have been ignored in surveys about technology and education, especially women's concerns and interests. See the protocol on page 66.

Online survey questions

Recognizing that people who use computers and are interested in obtaining a higher education degree or in returning to course work might have particularly relevant ideas about online education, we posted an online questionnaire. (Lee [2000, p. 118] and other researchers suggest that investigating the uses of the Internet might be an especially appropriate way of using the Internet as an information resource.) Computer users were asked about their involvement and interest in higher education, both online and on campus. The first 10 respondents were asked how long they spent answering the questions; their responses ranged from 15 to 40 minutes. The online questionnaire, with questions based on the stories and insights gleaned in the interviews and other research documents, is included on page 67.

Face-to-Face Interview Protocol

Name City
Occupation Full or part time
Age Sex Race
Class/socioeconomic group In childhood Now
How did you finance/are you financing education?
What post-secondary education have you received?
Married or with a partner Children

1. Aspirations, needs
   - What are your educational goals?
   - What kinds of learning do you need for what you want to do in the next five years?
     - For vocation or career purposes?
     - Academic purposes?
     - Personal knowledge and pleasure?
   - What do you anticipate needing later in life?
   - When you make decisions about your life, do you have to consider a spouse or partner and family matters?

2. Ideas about the future of higher education
   - What technological changes do you anticipate in higher education instruction that will affect your plans?
   - Think of your ideal education process.
     - What are the elements?
     - What does it look like?
     - How does it work?
   - How do you think you'd like to use the new technologies to make things work better for you?
   - If you were designing the courses and the technology, what would you want them to do? How would you want them to work?
   - Did you enjoy being on campus? Would you want to return?

3. Experiences, worries, successes
   - What have been your best education experiences?
   - Describe the best teacher you ever had. What made her or him the best?
   - Describe your worst teacher. What happened? What would you have done to correct this if you could?
   - What kinds of classes have you liked the best?
   - How do you most enjoy learning?
   - What would you change to make college/adult education courses work better for you?
   - If you have used DL
     - Was taking a DL course your first choice (over taking a course in a traditional classroom)?
     - Has taking a DL course allowed you to do something you wouldn't have been able to do otherwise? If so, what?
     - What was the best class you ever had in DL? Worst? Why?
     - How did you receive materials and instruction? Voice mail, video-conference, web courses, e-mail, audio conference? Other?
     - Which was highly effective? Which not?
     - What did you expect the experience to be? Did you have any expectations, fears, anxieties, or excitement going in? If so, what were they?
     - How did your experience differ from your expectations?
     - Did you have any or much interaction with teachers and other students?
     - Do you think DL is an improvement or a liability over traditional classrooms?
     - Can you share a story about your dealings with DL when things worked? When things didn't work?
     - Do you say, write, think or do things in the DL environments that you wouldn't do in a classroom?
     - Is it easier or harder in a DL course to feel that you've communicated your points?
     - Does DL make the juggling of multiple responsibilities (work, family, etc.) easier or more difficult?

4. Access
   - What information technologies (telephone, cell phone, answering machine, TV, satellite, cable, VCR, CD player, personal computer, laptop, e-mail programs, Internet access) do you have? At home? At work? For which of these have you made the purchase?
   - What technologies do you most want?
   - If you were creating the technologies, what would you create to make your life better?
   - What time restrictions do you have?
     - If married or living with a partner, do you have more restrictions than they have?
   - When taking classes, how do you handle demands on your time from family, job, other?
   - Who has first computer rights at home?
   - What kind of technical training/interest/resources do you have?
   - When you need technical help to whom do you go?
     - Do you get help?
   - Are you able to use a car for study-related purposes (such as driving to a study center)?
   - What are your financial constraints? Do you consider costs when deciding what courses to take and when and where to take them?

5. Connections, caring
   - Do you enjoy studying with others? What, if anything, do you value about face-to-face meetings in class?
   - What do you miss about the traditional classroom, if anything? What would you miss about the DL experience if you were in a traditional classroom?
   - Do you enjoy classroom discussions? Participate in them?
   - Would you be more or less likely to participate in discussions held via computers? How about interactional video hookups?
   - Is it important to feel that you are connected to the teacher and/or other students? If so, what kinds of connections make you most satisfied with your course experience?
   - To whom would you recommend distance learning?
     - What kind of person or student?
     - Why?
     - Who would dislike it?
   - Do you think that women and men have (or will have) similar experiences in DL classes?
   - What has been the gender composition of the courses you've taken, either traditional or DL?
   - In your classroom experience (traditional or online), who contributes the most—women or men?
   - Does the type of classroom (traditional and DL) change the power dynamics in any way?
   - What makes you participate more often? What makes you participate less often?
   - When you feel uncomfortable participating much, what is the environment like? What makes you uncomfortable?
   - What kind of instructor helps you participate?

Online Survey Questionnaire

Male or Female
Occupation?
Age
Single __ Married __ Other ___
Number of children under 18 living at home

When was the last time you took a course for credit or toward a degree?

Do you have your own computer at home or access to someone else's computer at home? In what rooms?

Do you have access to a home computer whenever you want to use it?

Do you have access to a computer at work that you could use for distance education purposes? Please explain.

Please briefly describe one of your best educational experiences (regardless of whether any special technologies were involved).

Please briefly describe one of your worst educational experiences (regardless of whether any special technologies were involved).

Could you take a distance education course if you decided to, without consultation with other family members? Is time, or cost, an important consideration? Please explain.

Would you prefer a traditional instructional delivery method or distance education if you had a choice? Please explain.

Do you think that distance education is a good alternative to classroom study when it is the only way to take a course? Please explain.

How do you feel about the social aspect of distance education? Connected? Lonely? Please explain.

Do you feel that you have enough technical support to take a distance education course? Would concerns about technological support prevent you from taking distance education courses? Please explain.

Do you think that women and men interact in different ways from each other in traditional classrooms? Please explain.

Do you think that women and men interact in different ways from each other in Internet discussions? Please explain.

Is making contact and seeing the reactions of others in a classroom important to you? Please explain.

Would you feel guilty taking distance education courses at home when there was other work at home to do? Is your time at home basically yours to decide how to use? Please explain.

Do you plan to use distance education courses in the future to obtain a degree? For personal knowledge and pleasure? For career advancement? Please explain.

Do you learn primarily through discussions, through independent work, or through group work? Please explain.

Do you think that distance education can weed out sex/race/age biases on the part of the teacher and other students? Please explain.

What kind of student do you think is most suited to taking distance education courses?

About the Researcher

Cheris Kramarae is the author, editor, or co-editor of more than 70 articles and 10 books on gender, language, technology, and education. Her edited books include *For Alma Mater: Theory and Practice in Feminist Scholarship* (with Paula Treichler and Beth Stafford); *Knowledge Explosion: Generations of Feminist Scholarship* (with Dale Spender); *Women, Information Technology, and Scholarship* (with H. Jeane Taylor and Maureen Ebben); and *Technology and Women's Voices*. Her most recent publication is the four-volume *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge* (co-edited with Dale Spender).

Former director of women's studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Kramarae has taught in universities in a number of countries, including China, the Netherlands, England, and South Africa. In 1999-2000 she was an international dean at the International Women's University (Internationale Frauenuniversität) in Germany as well as project director for the courses "The Future of Education," and "The Construction of Gender on the Internet" during the 2000 session. She is now a visiting researcher at the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon.

Kramarae's teaching has included hybrid university courses, which combine face-to-face and online interaction. She was a co-organizer of the WITS (Women, Information Technology, and Scholarship) work and study group and participated in the early stages of task force innovations in the use of computer technology in university courses at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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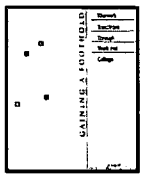

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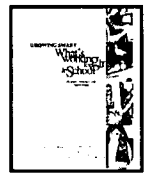

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WOMEN'S LITERACY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:

LESSONS THAT EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US

Anita Dighe
Usha Vyasulu Reddi

WOMEN'S LITERACY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES: LESSONS THAT EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US

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Usha Vyasulu Reddi

This monograph was prepared by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, (CEMCA) which is an agency created by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to serve the needs of Commonwealth Asia.

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Contents

Prologue

At the dawn of decolonization in the mid 1900s, the newly independent countries had great hopes and visions for the social and economic development of their citizens. Much of these hopes depended on the provision of education, including literacy, for their vast populations. Six decades later, there have been great strides made and some of these countries have developed and have become powerful. However, the more things have changed, the more they have remained much the same for the poor and the illiterate. In the face of all the efforts by governments and civil society organizations, there is the harsh reality that the largest number of poor and illiterate still resides in South Asia, in conditions not very different from those of their forefathers. .

At the same time, information and communication technologies (ICTs), both old and new, have also been around for much of the 20th century. Countries like Canada have exploited these technologies successfully for the development of their remote and hard to reach communities. Taking a cue from their experience, the developing countries have used these technologies, with varying degrees of success. Many of us are both witness and participants to the exploitation of ICTs to further the goals of development

In an all out effort to address the inequities of development, the global community of governments, scientific and research organizations, donor agencies, civil society organizations and private sector institutions has accepted the Millennium Development Goals and the targets that have been set to bring about a qualitative and quantitative difference in the life of the global poor. To a large extent, ICTs are seen as vital tools to trigger this revolutionary change and women and girls have been singled out as the focus of the global effort.

In his book Development as Freedom, Amartya Sen (1999) argues that in individual freedom lies the capacity for political participation, economic development and social progress. The goal of all development is the enabling of the exercise of such a freedom - the freedom to make a choice, and consequently the empowering of an individual so that he or she is able to make the choices that determine the quality of life. Literacy is the root and without literacy, there can be no empowerment, much more so for women and girls.

However, whenever discussions and debates surrounding the relationship between gender and ICTs take place, one is reminded of the parable of the six blind men and the elephant. Each describes the elephant from his own perception of the creature; none is able to come to terms with the enormous size or complexity of the object being described. Both the contours and the shape change constantly; just as in debates on gender and ICTs.

Even a quick web search of the theme would reveal the many dimensions of the issue and the interchanges when the theme comes up. We would like to tease out, at this stage, some of the common themes that emerge (not necessarily in any order of importance or priority).

The focus of global development agenda has been on two cross cutting themes. The critical importance of gender and

of the inclusion of women and girls in the process of development is one such theme. Without the inclusion of women and girls, no development effort will pay dividends. The second theme relates to the importance of using information and communication technologies (ICTs) in accelerating the development process.

The enormous complexity and diversity in perspective when we examine gender as an issue is always apparent. Debates and perspectives range from an engagement with feminist theory and dialogue to policy dimensions and to specific applications of communication in the field for the improvement of the lives of women and girls. Those of us who have witnessed intergovernmental discussions and debates also know that gender means different things in different societies. While in some of the developing countries, this is largely a concern relating to women and girls; in other parts of the same developing world, it can often mean the "mainstreaming of men and young boys" in society. Gender as a critical issue in human development is not restricted only to developing societies. It is there even in the highly developed societies, taking on a very different yet familiar face of domestic abuse, gender harassment at the workplace, and property rights.

A similar kind of complexity is found when we turn our attention to debates in the relationship between communication, media and gender. There is confusion even in the definition of terms:-what do we mean by communication: processes or products; technologies or societies. The confusion gets compounded when we begin our discussions - is it at policy levels; is it at looking at the interface between media and society; is it at a study of the portrayal of women in the media; is it at the analysis of content and its underpinnings; is it by examining the way in which the intervention of communication has altered or not changed our lives.

Again, within the field of communication, where do we focus? Is it on policy, processes, the tools, the audiences, or the results? Have we as yet made the synergistic connection between policy and applications and how one is critically dependent on the other? And at what level do we begin our analysis?

Many of the questions raised about the effect of technology are multidimensional, reflecting world society in all its diversity and complexity.

If ICTs are seen as the main drivers of contemporary society, then it is expected that these technologies will effectively terminate a social structure based on inequality. These new technologies appear to have an impact upon the economic, political, and social systems existing today.

Protagonists argue that ICTs will remove the tedium from life, giving the individual leisure during which he/she can choose to better his/her life. The social and cultural impact of technology is greater than that of the hardware alone. The use of ICTs refers to the systematic application of collective human rationality to the solution of problems by asserting control over nature and over human processes of all kinds. What is included are not simply machines but the collection of transferred attitudes, values, institutions, social and political structures, new management patterns, new training and human resource deployment requirements as other varied inputs which are required sometimes simply for the use of the technologies. What is clearly evident in the current global scenario is that the new

developments have already increased the already substantial potential for control of information in traditional world centres. These patterns of control have exacerbated, rather than reduced the growing disparity between the 'haves and the have-nots'

The growing disparity was studied in the 1970s by Tichenor and others[1] who called it the “knowledge gap” between those with access to knowledge and those without. Today, it continues to be hotly debated and is called the growing 'digital divide'.

Hamelink (1986) and many others since have argued that the perceived notion of the information society is that it is decentralized, with greater access to information for all segments of the population, and a shift of power structures away from the governing elite to the masses and proponents of the new technologies point to the ways in which the new technologies could encourage and foment the process of democratization of societies. Perhaps this shift took place in earlier social revolutions. There is no indication that such transformations will take place unless there is a paradigm shift in the way in which the technologies are deployed and used.

What has happened is that national boundaries have been reduced to lines drawn on maps, independence has become interdependence and those who have access to knowledge remain the better off as the divide seems to grow rather than narrow.

Agrawal (1986) has argued that there is a differential access to media in developing cultural gaps. Cultural elite are at the apex of a social hierarchy, while the poor are at the bottom. Access to information technology can be represented by an inverted pyramid where, because of the very nature of the technology, elite have greater access to the media than the poor. When the inverted pyramid of technology access is superimposed upon the cultural hierarchy structure, the culture and knowledge gap between the rich and the poor widens, refuting hopes of planners seeking to use the technology for development. Given that women are at the poorest and most discriminated end of the divide, it is they who will be the worst affected in a globalized world where only the fittest will survive.

Twenty years since these discussions took place, the debate still continues. Technological changes and their use for development have grown exponentially since then. But the questions remain. This may be as much because of the ICTs themselves as also in the conditions of their application.

As individuals extensively involved in the use of information and technologies for both general and specific programmes in development in India, we were concerned with the trends that we saw emerging from our own analyses of work. On the one hand, we felt that ICTs definitely had a role to play, and perhaps that ICTs have not been given enough of a chance to be able to demonstrate potential. On the other hand, we repeatedly found two important aspects of the use of ICTs in developmental contexts, one that the conditions and contexts of ICT use were likely to be more important than the technologies themselves and would therefore have to be addressed and second, that many of the projects and programmes we studied and evaluated would have been benefited from inputs and changes in programme planning, design and implementation.

It is for this reason that we commissioned Dr. Anita Dighe, a well known Indian scholar and practitioner with more than three decades of experience to explore the conditions and contexts in which ICTs could be effectively deployed for adult basic education, and more specifically for women's literacy.

We requested her to concentrate on the Indian experience for various reasons. First, India still, in gross numbers, has the largest number of illiterate women in the world. Second, India has been a test-bed for any number of experiments and programmes, successes and failures, in the use of ICTs for development. Third, India presents the most challenging of socio economic, ethnic, cultural, religious, geographic, and language conditions and learnings from the Indian experience would be of value anywhere in the world. And finally, time and resources limited our exploration of contexts and conditions outside this sub continental nation.

This monograph is an outcome of her work as she explores the different dimensions of women's literacy and ICTs, from feminist pedagogy, literacy issues, and ICTs. In the last section of the monograph, Dr. Dighe makes suggestions for the way in which programme planning, design, implementation, and evaluation takes place.

For us, this monograph is by no means the last word. In fact, it is a beginning of work in progress.

Dr. Usha Vyasulu Reddi

Preamble

Policy makers, planners, administrators and researchers hold highly polarized views on the impact of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and their role in promoting objectives such as poverty alleviation, universal education, reduction in mortality and health hazards, sustainable development and in bridging the digital as well as socio-economic divides in the world. Thus, many consider the possibility of technological leapfrogging whereby ICTs would be able to achieve the above mentioned objectives within a short time-frame. The critics and the skeptics, on the other hand, are of the view that ICTs have little value and that they would cause more harm to the less developed world, particularly for populations that are economically and socially disadvantaged.

The debate rages on and has been inconclusive so far. It is important to recognize, however, that due to the significant, interconnected economic, social and technological changes that are taking place, literacy and education have become even more important for personal, social, and national development than ever before. On the one hand, while rapid technological changes are fast creating what is now known as `information society,' on the other, there are an estimated 18% adults or 771 million globally, who are still illiterate[2]. Of these, the majority is women, and nearly all are from the poorest sections of the society.

While ICTs have generated considerable interest, the interconnections between literacy and ICTs are still not well understood by policy makers, planners, administrators, or practitioners around the world. This is true at least in part because those working in developing counties are not necessarily familiar with the manner in which ICTs have been used in other parts of the world. Also, few literacy practitioners are highly trained in new technologies and those professionals who understand technology, are unfamiliar about the potential of ICTs in addressing problems of non-literate adults.

The fact remains that the past decade has witnessed an explosion in projects that have applied ICTs to support socio-economic development. Thus every sector has been involved- government, academia, large corporations, inter-government organizations and NGOs. However, despite tremendous energy and resources having been expended in these projects, documentation and research evidence is still somewhat sparse and inconclusive. It is therefore not possible to firmly establish that ICTs can trigger socio-economic development.

It was keeping this background in mind, that the present study was conceived to ascertain what, if any, has been the impact of ICTs in promoting women's education, particularly women's literacy. Recognizing that women's illiteracy would further exacerbate the already serious problem of `digital divide,' it was felt that a review of literature would help in assessing what new perspectives had emerged during the last few years. It was also felt that field visits to on-going projects in varying settings would help in identifying and validating some core principles of good practice in the use of ICTs in literacy programmes for women.

As the present study got under way, however, it was soon realized that some changes in the original design would have to be effected. It was realized that while on the one hand there were limited experiences in the use of ICTs for women's

literacy in the South Asian region, on the other hand, there was little hard evidence of the transformative potential of ICTs that was envisaged when this study was conceived. What was not clear was reflected in three areas of concern: how were the technology choices made and by whom? What were the conditions under which ICTs were deployed? And finally, why did ICTs not seem to succeed? Was it due to the nature of the educational experience, the social context of gender relations in the country or inherent limitations of the ICTs to deliver results? A wider and a more extensive review of research was therefore considered essential to understand concepts, examine experiences, and highlight policy as well as implementation strategies in the use of ICTs for women's literacy.

A primary focus of this paper is therefore to highlight why the problem of women's illiteracy needs to be addressed, and what experiences exist in using ICTs to address illiteracy. After reviewing what have been some of the salient experiences of running literacy programmes for women in developing countries, material from a broad array of sources and areas are used to support a growing picture of the possible interventions that would have to be made if ICTs have to be meaningfully used for women's literacy. The paper then provides a brief description of the status, trends and problems relating to application of technology to adult literacy in some Third World countries, with a special focus on India. Thereafter, the paper analyses research experience relating to the use of ICTs for women's programmes vis-à-vis women's access to ICTs, use of ICTs for poverty alleviation, and women's empowerment through ICTs, highlighting the lessons learnt.

On the basis of this review, the paper concludes by identifying strategies and planning elements that need to be taken into consideration if ICTs have to be used for women's literacy programmes.

1.0 Context

In a paper written for the World Summit on Information Society, 2005, Gurumurthy and Singh[3] refer to the manner in which the neo-liberal economic policies (favouring free markets, globalization and reduction of the role of the government and the public sector) have successfully pushed the traditional development agenda from the national policy frameworks of many countries by capturing to its advantage, the theoretical space of information society (IS) developments in the South. According to them, at the turn of the 21st century, the neo-liberal agenda was helped by three developments that took place. First, the governments of the South took the new information and communication technologies (ICT) as an economic opportunity for pushing exports and for creating jobs in IT education and in IT-enabled services (ITES) that would give them the boost they needed to propel themselves into the information society. Second, the private sector, mainly the multinational corporations (MNCs), was seen as the leader for providing infrastructure and technology. But thirdly, the development sector, long suspicious of the globalizing potential of the ICT, took a somewhat non-engaging stance to the new possibilities that had been opened up by ICT for development. This development was further aided by a framework that was laid at the global level, for mainstreaming ICT for development, now known as the ICT for development (ICTD) perspective. Once again, this policy framework was dominated mainly by the private sector, mostly MNCs from the North and consisted of euphoric predictions about the transformations ICTs would bring about.

In most developing countries, the ICTD policy is the domain of IT and telecom departments. These departments focus more on business and technology issues and tend to be excessively pro-market and not sufficiently development-oriented. Even where some IT and telecom sectors do concern themselves with development, the approach is generally from the technology, rather than the development end and they often talk about rural connectivity and infrastructure, e-governance, e-delivery and growth, rather than a more need-based improvement of `quality of life.' The development departments, on the other hand, do not have a good ICTD orientation and even if they do, they are not able to influence ICTD policy in any significant way. While the situation is gradually beginning to change, what needs to be understood is that a new theory of ICTD has to be developed so that the unprecedented opportunities for development in using the ICT are not wasted. Gurumurthy and Singh propose that a new paradigm of the IS that serves the developments needs of the South or `IS for the South' needs to be developed. According to them, a beginning of a transition to a comprehensive ICT-based development strategy can be made by setting up a countrywide infrastructure which includes connectivity, access, hardware and software as well as capacity building at individual, community, and institutional /organizational levels. Since markets are not likely to fulfill any of these crucial needs, it is the public sector that has to provide the lead through strong policy interventions and substantial public investments. Such a strong policy intervention has become imperative in view of the outcome of the recent World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) held in Tunis, 2005, at which the neo-liberal paradigm of the IS was once again asserted. In order to ensure that the social and developments aspects of the IS are implemented, it would be incumbent that the basic ICT infrastructure is regarded as a social responsibility of the state and provided as a public service. It is only if this happened, that a beginning can be made for developing a meaningful IS for the South.

2.0 Why Women?

In order to understand what likely impact ICTs would have on women, a look at the history of the feminist discourse that has influenced development thinking is useful. In the 1970s, there was a world-wide awakening that women had been excluded from the development projects in the Third World as the development community began to realize that the `trickle down' approach to development had not been effective. Feminists signaled the origins of the Women in Development (WID) approach by highlighting women's exclusion and invisibility from the development projects. The WID approach therefore advocated that women should be treated on equal terms with men.

Meanwhile, by the second half of the 1970s, the Women and Development (WAD) approach, theoretically influenced by Marxist-feminists, raised some questions about the WID approach. According to the WAD paradigm, while women have always contributed to the development process, it was the dependency of the Third World on the rich countries of the world that was responsible for the exclusion of poor women from development projects. As proposed in the work of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), it was through women's organizations that a change would be brought about in these unequal relationships.

In the mid-1980s, WID shifted its underlying discourse from equity to anti-poverty to efficiency (Bhavnani, Foran, Kurian, 2006). This resulted in the basic needs approach to development with an emphasis on income-generation strategies and skills development for women. The underpinning of the efficiency discourse was to promote economic growth through an efficient use of women's labour.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach is currently the predominant discourse that informs development policies and programmes. GAD aims to `not only integrate women into development, but (to) look for the potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social/gender relations and to empower women(Canadian Council for International Cooperation, 1991).

According to Bhavnani, Foran, and Kurian (2006) all the above three approaches do not take culture adequately into consideration. Building on Raymond Williams' notion of culture as lived experience, they aver that a Women, Culture and Development (WCD) lens brings about women's agency into the foreground and enables a better understanding about how inequalities are reproduced and challenged. Hence, a WCD perspective that would combine culture with development, encompassing the everyday experiences of Third World women, would provide a better understanding of how transformative development takes place.

The importance of these theoretical perspectives cannot be underestimated. However, the translation of these perspectives into policy and implementation plans has left much to be desired and other than in programmes and projects which have started with this ideological premise, implementation plans have left these approaches on the margins. The superimposition of the ICTD agenda, where ICTs are seen as enabling tools has only added to the complexity of the theoretical perspectives, which now have to address newer dimensions of the globalizing and other consequences of the ICTs. The euphoria over the ICTs has overshadowed the critical questions of the theoretical

debates and perspectives raised in the WID, WAD, and GAD debates.

With regard to the impact of technologies on women, there has been a tendency on the part of governments and development agencies to treat technologies as neutral, value-free, without taking into account the social, environmental and economic effects of the technology being introduced. A common assumption with respect to ICTs is that the mere presence of technology itself will improve efficiency and will therefore bring benefits to the community. As a result, IT policy of most governments in Asian countries focuses on growth and on building IT infrastructure, provision of IT education and on improving efficiency. According to Gurumurthy (2004), this focus on efficiency compromises concerns relating to equity. In any case, social equity requires commitment to women's equality. Therefore, women's equality needs to be integrated as a cornerstone of any ICT strategy.

The preparations for the WSIS had led to fresh assessments of the significance and relevance of gender issues in the technology policies of developing countries. The various international fora had stressed the importance of integrating gender equality considerations into ICT policy, programmes, and projects at all levels to promote the social, economic, and political empowerment of women (Huyer and Mitter, 2005)

In addressing the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations Secretary General had stated:

A focus on the gender dimensions of information and communications technologies is essential not only for preventing an adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality or the perpetuation of existing inequalities and discrimination, but also for enhancing women's equitable access to the benefits of information and communication technologies and to ensure that they can become a central tool for the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. Policies, programmes and projects need to ensure that gender differences and inequalities in the access to and use of ICT are identified and fully addressed so that such technologies actively promote gender equality and ensure that gender-based disadvantages are not perpetuated .

As is known, the global community has accepted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the key development targets for the first part of the 21st century. Among the most prominent of these goals are those relating to achieving basic education, building on the Education for All (EFA) initiative begun in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and reaffirmed at the second EFA meeting in Dakar in 2000. The MDGs have gone further in proposing goals that integrate not only education, but also address problems of extreme poverty and hunger, as well as health, gender equity and many other worthy social and economic concerns. Within the final goal there is a reference to the growing and increasingly important area that has seen huge growth over the past decade, namely Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for education.

The argument that the issue of gender should be seriously addressed since supporting women's participation in the information economy would produce a range of benefits, is gradually gaining momentum. There is a realization that the value of information to women is enormous and affects all aspects of their lives. According to Huyer and Mitter (2005) although more research is necessary, currently available evidence indicates that when women do have access

to ICTs, they can substantially improve their lives, and increase their income. They refer to a FAO study that showed that women who are involved in meaningful ICT projects produce results for improved economic and social well being in the community. ICTs can provide women with skills, training, and market information for their small-scale enterprises. For example, information on reproductive health can contribute to women's economic activities by improving health and decreasing the number of children, thereby improving their income-earning ability. And yet there is recognition of the fact that despite the new opportunities that ICTs have offered to women, there is need to be cautiously optimistic. For the digital or knowledge society divide is especially acute with respect to women. As stated at the Women's Forum at the Global Knowledge II Conference (Kuala Lumpur, 2000) the digital divide is not just an issue of the polarization of the information rich vs. the information poor- it is also a divide between women and men everywhere. While the beneficiaries tend to be the young, urban-based, English speaking Internet users who are also overwhelmingly male, majority of women live in rural areas where connectivity is rare or even non-existent.

The number of women Internet users in any case is miniscule in most countries where there is an insignificant amount of Internet access for the entire population. According to the Telecommunications Union (ITU) statistics released in 2002 on female Internet usage, in poorer countries, women represent a much smaller proportion of even this insignificant number of users.

There are other barriers that women face. While accessing the Internet is one thing, owning a computer is another since computer costs are still high in many parts of Asia and Africa. Language is also a determinant of the digital divide. The predominantly English and other European languages in most regions of the world is a barrier to most users globally. Thus, speakers of non-European and indigenous languages- including a large proportion of women- tend to be left out of the information loop (Huyer and Mitter, 2005). The support of local languages and local content for ICTs was therefore identified as a major issue to promote ICT use in developing countries at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and identified as a major block to women's use of ICTs. In India, a great deal of work is being done to develop software in indigenous languages and this initiative has the possibility of improving India's low literacy rate and overcoming any fear of new technology.

In order to address the problem of digital divide, proactive efforts would have to be made to ensure women's active participation in the knowledge society. This would include more than just access to ICTs or to the Internet. Rather, efforts would have to be made to provide information literacy to women. Information literacy has been defined as the ability to access, know where to find, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources. It involves communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (Huyer and Mitter, 2005). In other words, digital divide needs to be understood much more than merely a divide in access to the Internet. Rather, it reflects a divide in the opportunities to develop and use the skills that information literacy would provide. It is therefore imperative to ensure equality in ICT access, knowledge as well as its use.

3.0 Use of ICTs for Women's Literacy: Why is it Important?

According to the latest UNESCO estimates for 2006, there are 771 million illiterate adults globally, or 18% of the world's adult population. Almost all adults who have yet to acquire minimal literacy skills live in developing countries, in particular those in South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, where the literacy rates are about 60%. Women account for 64% of the adults worldwide who cannot read and write with understanding. The problem of illiteracy among women is particularly grave in the South Asia region. Most of the illiterate women are poor, live in rural areas, are older in age and belong to the linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities.

In order to address the enormity of the problem, the United Nations launched the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) in 2003. The aim of the Decade is to bring literacy to all. The overall target for the Literacy Decade is the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) goal of increasing literacy rates by 50% by 2015. The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) is a global strategic framework and key operational mechanism for achieving the goals and purposes of the UN Literacy Decade.

Because of the established relationship between illiteracy and poverty, the achievement of the Literacy Decade Goals is central to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The International Action Plan for implementing the Literacy Decade states that "literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy" (UNESCO, 2002). The Action Plan calls for a renewed vision of literacy that goes beyond the limited view of literacy that has hitherto been dominant. The Plan elaborates, `it has become necessary for all people to learn new literacies and develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in multiple manners." (p. 4)

These developments have come during a time when rapid economic, social and technological changes are taking place globally. Economists acknowledge that increasingly knowledge and technology are playing a significant role in what is termed as `knowledge economy.' A linked development--sometimes called the `information society' is the social transformation that is taking place due to the advent and spread of the information and communication technologies, in varying degrees, through all the countries of the world. The economic, social and technological transformations have significant implications for the skills needed by the workers of the knowledge economy and citizens of the information society. According to Wagner and Kozma (2005), personal participation in such knowledge and technology driven societies begins with literacy. But while it has to be conceded that notions of `knowledge economy' and `information society' characterize changes that are taking place in the developed world presently, the developing countries would need to gear up by providing their citizens with the education and training that they would require to function effectively as workers and citizens in the future.

With rapid expansion of ICTs, while educational applications of technology would be made available to school-based programmes, there is a strong possibility that due to scarce resources, these would exclude the poorest and the marginalized groups. There is thus a danger that with growing importance of ICTs in knowledge-based societies, those groups with little or no literacy will fall even further behind those who are literate. The literacy gap that already exists will therefore grow even wider. Undoubtedly, this would exacerbate the problem of digital divide.

If the United National Literacy Decade goals are to be achieved, efforts would have to focus on reaching those at the very bottom extreme of the literacy divide, and there needs to be consideration of how ICT can contribute to achieving those goals.

3.1 What does it mean to be literate?

Does `being literate' have the same meaning to two different individuals? Maybe not. And yet, the term `literacy' appears to be so commonplace that it seems everybody understands what it means. However, literacy as a concept is complex and dynamic and has evolved over the years. It would therefore be useful to understand the evolution of this concept in order to examine what role ICTs can play in literacy programmes.

There has been much debate in the past 60 years over how to define literacy and therefore how to proceed in terms of literacy learning. Four discrete understandings of literacy have been identified:[4]

- Literacy as an autonomous set of skills: According to this understanding, literacy is a set of tangible skills- particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing- independent of the context in which they are acquired and the background of the person who acquires them

- Literacy as applied practiced and situated: This approach focuses on the application of literacy skills in `relevant' ways, and led to the concept of `functional literacy.' Rather than seeing literacy as a technical skill independent of context, proponents of this approach argue that literacy is a social practice, embedded in social events. Among the key concepts in this view are `literacy events' and `literacy practices.'

- Literacy as a learning process: This understanding views literacy as an active process of learning and is based on the idea that as individuals learn, they become literate. Paulo Freire is perhaps the most famous adult educator who emphasized the importance of bringing the learners' socio-cultural realities into the learning process itself and then using the learning process to challenge the social processes.

- Literacy as text: This approach examines the nature of the texts that are produced and consumed by the literate individuals. The broader policy issue raised by this work is whether the types of existing literacy programmes are relevant to the present and future lives of learners.

These four approaches broadly reflect the evolution of the meaning of literacy and have influenced the international policy discourse in literacy. UNESCO in particular has played a leading role in developing international policies on literacy and in influencing the changing policy discourse among national governments.

At the end of the Second World War, UNESCO had assumed the responsibility for putting literacy on the educational agenda among the stakeholders in the international community. Initially, UNESCO supported the idea of a `fundamental education' that focused mainly on the skills of reading and writing. This was reflected in UNESCO's (1958) statement that a `literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.' Since this narrow understanding of literacy had led to motivational problems for adults, the concept of `functional literacy' was introduced. The functional literacy concept focused on the economic and development potential of literacy and was later put into practice in the form of Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) that was conducted by UNESCO from 1967 to 1973 in eleven experimental projects around the world. The EWLP experience, however, showed that illiteracy still remained a problem with the marginalized groups.

In the 1970s, due to the influence of Paulo Freire, literacy was seen as a strategy for liberation. The aim was to enable the adults not only to read the word but also to `read the world.' Freire's (1970) emphasis on literacy to `liberate' as

opposed to literacy to `domesticate,' captured the imagination of those who started understanding the transformative potential of literacy.

Further developments in the last two decades have helped in viewing literacy as a broader and more complex social construct. Levine (1984) had focused attention on the social dimension of literacy and on the importance of understanding the social context in which literacy was being used. Street (1984, 1995) refers to two models of literacy. These are the autonomous model and the ideological models of literacy. In the former model, there is a distancing of language from the learners. Language is treated `as a thing,' distanced from both the teacher and the learner. External rules and requirements are imposed and the significance of power relations and ideology in the use of language, ignored. In this model, language is conceptualized as a separate, reified set of `neutral' competencies, autonomous of the social context. With regard to schooled literary as well as of most adult literacy programmes, it is the autonomous model of literacy that has generally dominated curriculum and pedagogy.

According to Street (1995) the notion of multiple literacies is crucial in challenging the autonomous model which has promoted the notion of a single literacy, with a big `L' and a single `y.' It is important to recognize that this is only one sub-culture's view and that there are varieties of literacy practices. Street advocates the ideological model of literacy that views literacy practices as being inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in a given context. The work that has been done in the fields of linguistics, anthropology and education suggests for him new directions for literacy research and practice.

In recent years, literacy is increasingly being conceptualized as multiple, socio-cultural, and political. UNESCO (2002) now conceives of literacy in the plural as `literacies' and embedded in a range of life and livelihood situations. Thus, literacy differs according to purposes, content, use, script and institutional framework.

The concept of `multiple literacies,' however is complex. The term multiple literacies has different connotations. Consequently, the pedagogical implications are problematic.

Due to the multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today, it is now contended that the new communications media are reshaping the way we use language today (New London Group, 1996). When technologies of meaning are changing so rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute ends of literacy learning. Multiple literacies are therefore a way to focus on realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness (ibid, 1996).

Recent work of constructivist writers has further enriched our understanding of literacy. According to Wangsatorntanakhun (2001) each individual constructs the concept of literacy individually and as a result of social interactions, and that these interactions are mediated through and by socio-cultural identity, values, and beliefs. Given such an understanding it would mean that it is necessary to understand the multiplicity of literacies individuals face, as they become members of ever expanding groups and communities. Hence each of us could possess varying degrees of proficiency in multiple literacies within different communities of similarly literate persons. Wangsatorntanakhun (2001) re-conceptualises the aims of literacy acquisition to emphasise the following:

- Recognition of the close connection between social, cultural, and political dynamics and literacy practices, including the ways that literacy practices can be transformative,
- Acknowledgement and appreciation of the many diverse ways that people use and understand reading and writing, reflecting the multiple worlds in which they participate,

- An emphasis on the value of family, community, and personal contexts determined by the quality of social relationships,
- An appreciation of what has been called local literacies and the reading and writing done by ordinary people in their everyday lives

It is evident from the above discussion that while at one end of the spectrum, the concept of literacy is narrow, uni-dimensional, limited to technical skills, at the other end is a concept of literacy that is multidimensional, multiple, context-specific. In the countries of the South that face massive problems of adult illiteracy, it is the `autonomous' model of literacy that prevails. This is also the `universal literacy for all' model, which is generally advocated by international agencies.

Despite the growing complexities in the understanding of literacy, there is a widespread recognition that literacy skills are essential in to-day's knowledge societies. This is because there is growing evidence worldwide to show that there are economic, social, political benefits that accrue to individuals, communities, and nations. And yet, literacy was one of the most neglected of the six goals adopted at the World Education Forum held at Dakar in 2000. In a bid to put literacy back on the educational agendas of a large number of developing countries, the recent EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) affirms that literacy is a human right and is at the core of Education for All. The benefits of literacy are spelt out thus in the GMR:

Human Benefits

Self-esteem: Studies on the behavioural changes involved in literacy training indicate that literacy has a positive impact on self-confidence and self-esteem.

Empowerment: Literacy has the potential to empower learners to have more control over their own learning and knowledge development. In addition, literacy can give learners greater control over everyday-life situations including avoiding being cheated.

Enabling communication with family and friends: In a rapidly globalizing world, trans-national migration is taking place on an unprecedented scale. Literacy enables communication with family and friends, whether in the print or electronic medium.

Political Benefits

Literacy can bring about increased political participation by enabling people to participate more fully in community meetings, trade union activities, and national political life.

Cultural Benefits

By providing access to written culture, literacy can enhance cultural awareness and appreciation, and therefore contribute to safeguarding cultural diversity. For example, by teaching minority groups and indigenous peoples how to read and write in their languages, these groups can become empowered to enhance and protect their cultures and rights.

Social Benefits

Literacy can enable people to develop their knowledge and capabilities in a range of areas, such as nutrition and health care. Women have often benefited greatly from literacy programmes. For example, gaining of literacy skills by women has been shown to contribute to improved health (of both women and their children), reduced child mortality (and therefore reduced birth rates), and increased demand for access to education for their children, together with better learning achievements by their children.

Economic Benefits

While there is little evidence to indicate direct links between increased literacy and greater economic returns, there are strong links between illiteracy and poverty.

Nevertheless, it is likely that because literacy can enable individuals to have a wider range of choices in terms of education and skills-development, literacy can lead to greater knowledge and skills, and can therefore lead to increased individual income.

It has been well established that education and development are closely linked. Since literacy constitutes learning how to learn, it is the core of education and is therefore a central element of economic development.

It is evident from the above that literacy has far-reaching benefits in terms of bringing about changes in individuals and societies, and of contributing to improving the quality of life of all.

3.2 Women's Literacy- What does experience show?

Women constitute the largest group among the adult non-literate population in most developing countries, and yet, the problem of women's illiteracy has never received the priority attention it deserves from policy makers and planners, particularly in the South Asian countries. Interestingly, the international as well as the national experience seems to indicate that women participate in large numbers in literacy campaigns/programmes. According to Lind (1992) her experience in many African countries in the 1990's indicated that women represented between 70 to 90 percent of the enrolled literacy learners. In India, evaluation studies of the government-sponsored literacy programmes undertaken by social science research organizations in the country showed phenomenal increase in women's participation in the Total Literacy Campaigns (National Literacy Mission, 1988, Dighe 1995, Ramachandran, 2002). However, sexual division of labour and numerous domestic responsibilities that are imposed on women condition the extent to which their participation can be regular. Women are often heard to complain they cannot come regularly to literacy classes due to work at home, or due to a sick child, or due to lack of time. Then there are the problems of repeated pregnancy, of indifferent health, of physical violence and bodily abuse. Women also have problems of another kind and these relate to a poor self-image and low self-esteem. Limited social interaction leads to the internalization of their subordination so that poor women have been known to feel that they are useless and worthless learners. Most of them even regard their learning disabilities as natural and normal. This has implications for the organization of literacy programmes for women for, in order to overcome this attitude, it will have to be ensured that the learning process is such as to enable women to experience a feeling of self-worth and self-confidence.

Then there are the intangible barriers that precipitate women's dropping out of the literacy classes or non-continuance in any educational programme. These relate to male attitudes, lack of family support, institutional barriers such as lack of support systems (eg. crèche facilities, easy access to water, etc), or an insensitive curriculum or a teaching-learning process that is not conducive for continuing with education. Horsman (1988) refers to the messages that literacy programmes give that can be implicitly damaging for by placing a burden on women by telling them what they should be, such programmes create feelings of inadequacy and incompetency among them. Horsman goes on to state that by placing too great a focus on literacy skills, such programmes play down all the other skills and abilities that women have. What is then offered to women are `safe programmes' which affirm the value of literacy within the context of accepted roles of women.

Another area of concern relates to the level of literacy attained by women. Again, Lind's (1992) experience of the literacy programmes in many African countries showed that the drop out rate was higher and attendance was more irregular among women than among men. Her experience also showed that it took longer time for women than for men to become functionally literate. The research experience of Carron et al (1988) showed that the newly-literate women in Kenya tended to use their newly acquired literacy skills less frequently in their daily lives than men. Stromquist's study (1994) showed the variable levels of literacy acquired by women over a three year longitudinal study and also pointed out that women do read and write in their daily lives but in small and infrequent amounts, patterns that would hardly support the development of literacy habits.

The varying levels of literacy reached by women also has implications for post literacy and continuing education programmes for women. In the literacy programmes of most countries, the basic literacy phase is followed by the post literacy and continuing education programmes that are intended to sustain and consolidate the fragile literacy skills of the neo-literates. Mishra, Ghose, and Bhog (1994) are of the opinion, however, that adult learning and particularly that of poor women should not be related to the classroom-like progression from one grade to another. For their experience of working in Banda, Dungarpur, and Pudddukotai showed how such educational programmes must be linked to their immediate environments. Their action-research project showed that when learners started participating in their own educational development, a spiral of learning got catalyzed and as women became active learners, this became an ever-expanding spiral. Their experience therefore indicated that insofar as poor rural women are concerned, there is no linear progression from literacy to post-literacy to continuing education phases.

3.2.1 Literacy for Women's Empowerment

The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a critical questioning about the kind of education that would be most relevant to the needs of poor women. For it was recognized by feminist scholars and activists that literacy for poor women is not merely an acquisition of skills of reading, writing and numeracy alone. As a matter of fact, there was considerable criticism of the traditional literacy programmes that had focused merely in imparting 3 Rs to women. Thus, it was recognized that literacy for poor women must become a means for acquiring knowledge and skills whereby women can begin to understand and analyze unequal gender relations and the structure of their poverty and exploitation so that they can collectively challenge and change the existing social reality (Anand, 1982; Bhasin 1984, 1985, Ramdas 1990, Stromquist 1992). In other words, literacy had to be perceived as a tool for empowering women in the wider struggle against inequality and injustice in society. Beside unanimity about the multi-faceted nature of the term, there was also a realization that the term `empowerment' was about `power' and about changing the equations of power between men and women at all levels. Essentially, empowerment indicated a movement from a state of powerlessness to one that enabled women to take greater control over their lives and resources (Batliwala, 1994)

As is apparent, the 1990s saw a resurgence and the concept of education for women's empowerment gained momentum among women's activist groups. One of the earliest attempts to build on the experience of women's groups and to provide meaningful education to poor women was made through the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan in India, and subsequently, since 1989, through the Mahila Samakhya Programme (Education for Women's Equality) which is now in operation in more that 10 states in India. In providing the foundation on which Mahila Samakhya was built Batliwala and Ramachandran (1987) elaborate on how these programmes must begin with an investigation of the socio-economic reality by the women themselves, an examination of the problems faced by them and a process of critical analysis, often leading to collective action against the injustices suffered by them in the home, in the workplace and society. Literacy is not imposed on women; rather they are allowed to seek literacy at a point when its meaning and value become evident to them. Literacy is thus not viewed as an end it itself, limited to the teaching of basic reading, writing and numeracy skills, but as part of an overall strategy of empowerment. The educational process must enable women to ask questions, seek answers, act, reflect on actions and raise new questions.

Experience has shown that as women have gradually become empowered at the individual and collective levels, they have been able to address programmes such as access to drinking water, payment of minimum wages, access to health services, ensuring functioning of the village school, and they have taken collective action against domestic and social violence. Every issue taken up by the women has resulted in an educational activity. When the mahila sangha (women's collective) decides to take up an issue for debate or action, it involves a systematic analysis of the problem, collection of necessary information, visits to the `block' or district headquarters, and collective planning on the course of action. Mahila Samakhya has given women a voice in the villages, provided legal and administrative support, and focused systematic efforts to improve women's access to available educational and developmental facilities. In this manner, the Mahila Samakhya approach has become an integral strategy for mobilizing women for participation in development.

Elsewhere in Asia, many NGOs and some government departments and ministries were running educational programmes for women and girls whose stated goal was to empower women. Batliwala (1993) therefore undertook a study to build a conceptual framework of women's empowerment by analyzing different strategies that were being used in the region to empower women. Batliwala's study provides a South Asian perspective, and it was expected that similar initiates would be taken up in other parts of Asia and the Asia Pacific. UNESCO's efforts in this direction also need mention. Various projects were undertaken and seminars organized to grapple with the theoretical base to formulate strategies and indicators of empowerment.

In his foreword to the COL Literacy project report, Rogers (2004) refers to the notion of a `fault line' that is appearing in developing countries as a result of contrasting world views about the purpose and process of adult literacy. On one side of the fault line are those for whom `literacy is like education.' According to this understanding, there is a centralized curriculum that is developed by the so-called experts and is uniformly `delivered' to the learners. On the other side are those who see adult literacy as inextricably linked to social and economic development, with the control of the programme and determination of the content resting with the learners. The emphasis is more on the use, rather than the acquisition of literacy skills. Research evidence with regard to women's literacy is increasingly showing that it is the latter approach that has more relevance to women learners. This is not to suggest that literacy has to be postponed indefinitely. Rather, many NGOs believe that the demand for literacy must come from the women as and when they realize its value and role in their overall empowerment. It is argued that in this strategy, learners are self-motivated and thus become literate faster and retain their literacy and numeracy skills much better.

3.2.2 Feminist pedagogy

Inadequate attention has so far been paid to understanding how women learn and what the barriers to their learning are. The issue of women's lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem in starting or returning to an educational programme is now well known. This lack of self-confidence, however, is endemic to women and cuts across cultural and class barriers. Due to a variety of reasons including social norms and mores as well as the process of acculturation and personal experiences, most women exhibit extreme lack of confidence when they join an educational programme. Coupled with this is what has been described by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) as the phenomenon of `finding their voices.' This is a positive reinforcement and an assurance that women need to know that they are intelligent, that they are capable of learning. The adult education functionaries would therefore have to be trained to give positive and constructive feedback to adult women to ensure that their confidence is enhanced and not eroded.

In feminist pedagogy, there is a commitment to giving voice to those who have been silenced, to the importance of reflection and action. Feminist education theorists who write from the perspective of the liberatory model have been influenced by Paulo Freire's work but they have also been critical of Freire and Marxist education theories. According to them, the primary focus of the latter has been on class-based oppression, but that they have not dealt adequately with oppression based on gender, race or interlocking systems of oppression such as gender and race, or gender and class, or gender, race, and class.

Research is also beginning to show that women seem to do best in learning environments where affective forms or knowledge that come from life experiences are valued (Belenky et al. 1986). In short, they do best in learning environments where there is an effort to relate theoretical concepts to real life experiences. In these environments, women begin to recognize their own ability to think independently, to think critically, and to come to their own conclusions. It is also in these connected teaching-learning situations that many women come to recognize and hear their own voices. Connected teachers, as defined by Belenky et al. (1986) see the teacher as a `midwife.' The teacher's task is to draw students out, to “assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating on it” (p.217), and to support the evolution of the learners' own thinking.

The idea of capitalizing on learners' life experiences and relating theoretical concepts to these experiences is not new in the field of adult education. What is new, however, is the emphasis feminist pedagogy places on the importance of women in particular reclaiming and validating the learning that comes from their life experience as women. Women learners come to an educational programme with specific personal histories, learning styles and expectations that are shaped to varying degrees by their experiences as girls and women in a society characterised by male power and privilege. In addition to barriers posed by sex discrimination, many women are doubly or even triply disadvantaged as members of ethnic minorities, as working class women, or as members of other marginalised groups. In order to provide an educational programme that would be appropriate to women's needs, it would be necessary to understand more about their experiences, their learning needs, the difference and diversity among them so that a women-sensitive approach could be planned and implemented for them.

3.2.3 Content of Literacy Materials

As part of literacy programmes, primers are written for pedagogical purposes. They are developed for the purpose of selection, construction and transmission of valued knowledge and practices that the learners are required to study in order to be certified as literate. Extensive research on school curriculum has been done, particularly in the West, to draw attention to how `the choice of knowledge' presented in the curriculum is part of the process of hegemony.

Research studies on textbooks show that they are ideological message systems for the transmission and reproduction of values and beliefs of some groups, while those of others are invisibilised and marginalized. Apple (1990) has highlighted how class, race and gender inequalities work through schools in the content and organization of the curriculum.

The broad contours of the content of school textbooks closely approximate those of the literacy primers for the adults. Adult literacy curriculum, however, has remained a neglected area of research An analysis of the literacy materials developed by World Education, an international NGO, showed that though Freirean terminology was consistently used, the content of the literacy primers was essentially `pseudo-Freirean'- for it perpetuated dependence and subordination (Kidd and Kumar 1981). This study also revealed how the literacy text can become an important symbolic system for expressing and disseminating economic and technical power and dominance.

An analysis of literacy primers in use in six states of India (Dighe et al, 1996) showed how certain recurring patterns ran through each of the literacy primers in use in different languages. Thus, the overall approach was to treat the adults as those with `empty minds' who had to be sermonized about the manner in which their lives could improve. The basic thrust was `victim blame' and not `system blame' Such individual blaming perspective did not attempt to link the development problems with the structural reality of the poor, perennially plagued with landlessness, lower wages, unemployment and lack of access to basic services and facilities. Development messages and information were communicated mostly either through a monologue or through a very limited conversation between the characters in the text. In general, hardly any dialogue or discussion was initiated to enable the learners to understand divergent points of view on a given topic. Such a top-down approach reinforces the dominance of the viewpoint of the `progressive' protagonist while depicting the learners as passive recipients of development messages. There is therefore a tendency to talk down to the learners as though the illiterate minds are `empty vessels' waiting to be filled by the sagacious advice given in the literacy text. Freire (1985) refers to this phenomenon as the `nutritionist view of knowledge' according to which the illiterates are considered as `undernourished' and have to be `fed' or `filled' in order to know. Pedagogically, such a didactic approach to learning does not recognize the indigenous knowledge of the learners and would neither allow them to think critically nor enable them to raise questions about whatever is learned.

If one considers the issue of gender in literacy curriculum, some of the studies highlight how certain repetitive images and themes characterize the content of the literacy primers. These studies (Bhasin 1984, Patel 1987) have shown that the primers ignored women's role as productive workers and focused exclusively on their roles as wives and mothers. The literacy primers thus generally reinforced traditional definitions of women and propagated the ideal for Indian women as being a person who is passive, submissive and self-sacrificing. There was no attempt to challenge or question the existing sexual division of labour and discriminatory practices against women in society.

Greenberg (2002) quotes what a researcher had to say about the content of an adult literacy textbook in Egypt. “I leafed through the whole textbook looking for pictures of women and found only one, though every story was accompanied by a picture. In this picture, every woman was pregnant or accompanied by small children or both. I asked what the story was about and was told the subject was family planning. The agricultural work Egyptian women undertake, participation in the paid labour force in a variety of capacities, food preparation, household work, beer brewing, and all the other types of work with which women engage, were completely ignored.”

The study by Dighe et al (1996) showed that despite `women's equality' being stated as a goal, it was basically the ideology of domestication that was promoted in the literacy primers. The portrayal of women was stereotypical and did not reflect the reality of everyday lives of poor women.

The experience of Mahila Samakhya as well of various women's NGOs has shown how women can generate their own learning materials on the basis of their lived experiences. Niranter, a feminist NGO in India, developed a curriculum collaboratively with village women on five issues that affect their lives. These included water, forests, land, society and health (Windows to the World, 1997). Niranter has also been successfully bringing out a newsletter called `Pitara' with the participation of the village women in its production and content.

In recent years, in response to increasing awareness that adult education programmes the world over were failing due to stagnation and standardization of literacy methodologies which are characterized by the use of a primer, REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) evolved as an innovative approach. This approach is based on diverse theories and grassroots experiences which include the work of Paulo Freire, PRA techniques, feminism, popular education, empowerment approaches to development and the practical experiences of several organizations in different countries. Central to the practice of a REFLECT process is a `negotiated curriculum' where women actively define and decide the content and direction of their learning. The experience of implementing this project in India has shown how questions of power, participation, gender, inequality, social stratification and the politics of development has formed part of this negotiation process (Girijana, Yakshi & Anthra, 2002)

The role of the teacher in a formal classroom has traditionally been that of a knowledge giver. The relationship between the teacher and the students has been hierarchical and the channel of communication has been one way. Freire had termed this the `banking' concept of education. The importance Freire has given to dialogue by equating it with education, as well as to the non-hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the learners has led to a change in the role of the adult literacy teacher. Such a teacher creates a learning environment, builds on learners' experiences and facilitates social interaction and cooperation. A literacy teacher who makes learners feel comfortable, helps them voice their opinions, encourages them to question, critique, analyse and to arrive at their own decisions would go a long way in facilitating and promoting adult learning. Learner-centred teachers understand that they must find ways to know their individual students and provide a safe and nurturing context to promote learning. Learner-centred teachers also understand that not only is learning a natural lifelong process, but motivation to learn also comes naturally when the learning context is supportive (McCombs 2003).

3.2.4 Literacy and Livelihoods

One of the major problems organizers of literacy programmes for poor women face is that relating to lack of poor women's motivation for literacy. The demand of poor women is invariably for the economic betterment of their lives, rather than a traditional literacy programme. It has therefore been argued that literacy per se means little to poor women unless it leads to a perceptible change in bettering their lives. In other words, the link between literacy and livelihoods has become a central issue.

The concept of livelihoods, however, needs to be unpacked. The report of the Uppingham Seminar on Literacy and Livelihoods Revisited held in June 2002, outlines a continuum of meanings that exist among international and national agencies and development practitioners that range from a very narrow economic definition, stretching to a much broader view of livelihoods as including individual and social well being, health and environment.

A three year project titled `Women's Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development (WELLD)' funded by World Education and in partnership with PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) and state level NGOs in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh in India, showed how a holistic programme that combines the cycle of acquiring and using the basic literacy skills and an economic knowledge base, can be developed. The important and innovative

component of the project was to provide women with the foundation for making their own choices for an improved quality of life. As an `economic education programme' it aimed at helping women acquire the basic knowledge and skills they would need to make informed financial and livelihood decisions. In working with women's self-help groups, it was assumed that once women acquired the skills of reading, writing and numeracy, they would efficiently manage an independent savings and credit group. In other words, the goal of WELLD was to prepare women to master basic literacy skills and make informed decisions about whether and how to expand and improve their current livelihood activities or to take advantage of new livelihood opportunities.

At the end-of-the-project dissemination meeting, the achievements of the project were presented. According to the project document, 50% of the women had acquired literacy skills and were now using their skills to write provision list, read scraps of paper, and other private materials. While actively encouraging their children to go to the school, there was a growing interest in women to attend the literacy classes. They wanted to use their literacy skills to acquire new knowledge. Thus, some of them wanted to know how to read bank passbooks. Women had started improving livelihoods through credit and learning a skill from the NGO partners.

It was evident that the project had been empowering for women. For in many instances they had used their newly acquired skills and confidence in dealing with people in authority. Women in both states were taking up issues of social justice by demanding equal and minimum wages, intervening in village Panchayats (elected body at the village level) and safeguarding citizens' rights.

Most literacy programmes, however, that include a livelihood component, adhere to a rather more restricted economic view of livelihoods that is often labeled as an `income-generation' programme. Interestingly, an analysis of some of the on-going literacy for livelihoods initiatives undertaken mainly in some African countries revealed that those who conceptualized livelihoods in terms of economic benefits seemed to hold a view of literacy that saw it primarily as a pre-requisite for the acquisition of knowledge and practical and vocational skills. In other words, what was noted was that `within many literacy and livelihood programmes, a narrow economist view of livelihoods was coupled with a functional, utilitarian and technicist view of literacy' (Papen, 2002)

A World Bank and IIZ / DVV (Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) study makes a powerful case for providing livelihood skills training for teaching literacy (Oxenham et al, 2002). The study that was undertaken in four African countries concluded that there was evidence to suggest that it would be worthwhile for vocational or livelihood education policy makers to develop livelihood training with literacy-numeracy instruction for very poor non-literate people, most of whom tend to be rural women. Their study showed that the minimum period needed by a non-literate person to attain a degree of literacy and numeracy sufficient to support advancement in a livelihood seems to be about 360 hours of instruction and practice. The other findings were that the success of livelihoods-plus-literacy / numeracy programme can be reinforced if they start from or, at least incorporate, training in savings, credit and business management, along with actual access to credit. The study also showed that two cadres of instructors, one for livelihood and business skills, the other for literacy skills, was more prudent than relying on a lay person to teach both sets of skills.

The policy recommendations that were made in this study included the following:

- Designing the education and training programmes that are participatory and interactive in nature
- Using literacy / numeracy content that comes from livelihood skills and is integrated with training right from the start

- Recognizing that organizations, particularly non-governmental, more concerned with livelihood and other aspects of development, are better at designing and delivering effective combinations of livelihoods and literacy than those with an education focus

- Working with established groups of people with common purposes (self-help women's groups as in the case of WELLD project,), rather than with individuals brought together only for literacy.

A question that is often raised in such programmes is whether to start with literacy or with livelihoods first. In several such projects, literacy is the first area of intervention, as livelihood activities are believed to require at least a minimum of basic reading and writing skills. However, there is no evidence to suggest that some people cannot improve their livelihood without a prior improvement in their literacy skills. As a matter of fact, there are enough examples which show the above assumption to be wrong. Also, experience has shown that improved literacy does not necessarily bring about significant improvements in people's economic situation. As a result, when learners who join such programmes with high expectations, find that nothing much has happened for those who have begun to read and write, they become frustrated and lose their motivation to continue.

As noted in the report on the Uppingham Seminar, there are other issues that need to be addressed. A question that needs to be asked in the context of each intervention or policy is who defines what livelihood means? This raises the question of power. Can the participants of the literacy and livelihoods programmes decide for themselves which income-generating activities they would like to embark upon? Or is it the organizers who decide what would be viable and sustainable economic activities? Similarly, there is need to address the power differentials between different literacies and rather than subscribing to a technicist view of literacy that denies the existence of different literacies, to ask on what basis are some literacies chosen in order to be taught and supported while others are left out.

According to Roger (see Papen, 2002), the problem with the narrow technicist approach to literacy and livelihood programmes is that they do not lead to effective command of literacy skills nor to viable livelihood practices and certainly not to empowerment. It is therefore necessary to address the problems of poverty centrally, as addressing material poverty is certainly among participants' most pressing needs. When poverty becomes the focus of interventions, then an expanded vision of literacy and livelihoods education as part of a system of lifelong learning becomes essential. The expanded vision of literacy and livelihoods has a humanistic and social view of both literacy and livelihoods and extends beyond purely economic considerations. This is elaborated thus by Papen (2002):

Besides technical and vocational skills, it would include economic and cultural literacies, life skills, political empowerment as well as support for local culture and social life. Such an expanded view explicitly addresses questions of language and local knowledge. Furthermore, it defines development in broad terms, acknowledges the politics of development and encourages empowerment from below, aiming to support democratic processes at local, national and international levels.

Considering the diversity of social, political and economic factors that would need to be addressed, it would be difficult to suggest a generic model when planning a literacy and livelihoods strategy. Rather, such programmes would need to be flexible, grounded in the local context and developed with direct input from local people and offer a variety of individual and community-focused solutions. Suitable research and evaluation interventions would need to be planned. A variety of indicators that capture both the economic as well as personal and social changes in people's lives would need to be worked out.

3.2.5 Language and Literacy

The question of the language of instruction is a good example to highlight the centrality of power when talking about literacy. Since literacy primers form the mainstay of most mainstream literacy programmes, the language used in primers is an ideological issue which must be seriously addressed. In the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, language is not only the criterion for ethnic identity but it is also the expression of ethnic consciousness. And yet, language policies that have been inherited from the colonial era have given importance to the colonial language or to the standard language/s and have marginalized the spoken languages or the mother tongue languages of vast sections of people in most Third World countries.

A consideration of the language policy in India will provide insights about the politics of language. The 1961 Census recorded 1652 mother tongue languages in India. The corresponding 1971 and 1981 Census figures for mother tongue languages had shrunk to 221 and 106 respectively. The reason for this was that from 1971 Census onwards, the Census Commissioner was advised to drop listing all those languages that had less than 10,000 speakers. Presently, the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution recognizes 18 languages as standard regional languages with Hindi and English considered being `official' languages.

It is evident that the Eighth Schedule takes no cognizance of the vast majority of Indian languages. While the standard and official languages have power, recognition and prestige, the others are left to languish with such demeaning labels as `dialects,' `tribal languages,' and `minor languages' (Saxena 1997). Education, the judiciary, administration, mainstream trade and commerce, use the standard regional or the official languages for communication purposes, totally ignoring the vast majority of Indians whose mother tongue languages are different. While mainstream literacy programmes tend to ignore the power dynamics involved in the preferred language, a few NGOs have looked at the possibility of an alternate approach. Experiences of two NGOs, viz. Nirantar in Banda district of U.P., and of Rupantar in Chattisgarh have shown that instead of beginning with pre-fabricated methodology and primers, there should be an attempt to evolve context-specific, interactive teaching methods and materials so as to confront the issue of language/dialect from an ideological standpoint.

It is now widely accepted that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction not only for early childhood education but also that the starting point has to be the dialect or the spoken language in the case of non-literate adults. This is particularly important in the case of poor rural women who only speak and understand the local dialect and oftentimes do not even have a smattering of the standard regional language. The need to sensitively handle the issue of transition to the standard regional language is highlighted in the case study by Bhog and Ghose (Ouane, 2003). Their experience showed how in the process of collectively evolving, with neo-literate women, a bi-monthly broadsheet, the latter defined not only the themes and the content of the broadsheet but also engaged in its writing and production. But as the women realized that they needed to have access to Hindi, the standard regional language as it was a language of power and of the powerful, the transition was made in a gradual manner, ensuring a limited fusion between Hindi and Bundeli (the mother tongue). The experience of Bhog and Ghose showed that as women gained greater control over their writing and reading skills, they were in a stronger position to handle the complex process of language integration.

And yet in the concern for making a switchover from the spoken dialect to the standard regional language, an unstated viewpoint persists that only education in the standard language will liberate people from ignorance and bring about national integration. Also, there is an assumption that the spoken `local' languages are likely to encourage fissiparous anti-national tendencies, keeping people enslaved in backwardness. According to Saxena and Mahendroo (1993),

standard languages divide society and control information flow. As such they are effective tools for maintaining regional and national status quo. In the process, people's spoken languages are subdued and marginalized, ensuring the cultural hegemony of the ruling elite.

On the other hand, Mukherjee (2002) is of the view that there is need to engage with the hierarchical social structures embedded in the language-dialect relationship and to think not in terms of appropriation of one in favour of the other, but in terms of creating communication without domination so as to de-hegemonise the importance of the `standard' language.

There is certainly no single solution to the above issues. Decisions need to be taken on the ground or in the light of local conditions and local language practices. Even in the case of literacy and livelihoods programmes, it is important to find out which languages women are most likely to use in the context of their own livelihood activities. It is possible that it is the standard regional language which may be required to deal with individuals and institutions outside the community such as the middlemen, traders, state officials and the like.

3.2.6 Culture and Learning:

Those who regard culture as central to shaping and moulding the educational process contend that the interrelatedness of culture and leaning has been neglected in the study of learning. One way in which insights could be obtained to ascertain the role of culture in learning would be through ethnographic research studies. The case studies presented by Street (2001) under the New Literacy Studies show how the outcome of such research might lead to different curriculum and pedagogy than those in many traditional programmes. The ethnographic approach to literacy research has shown that by being sensitive to local needs, it would be possible to recognize where some local literacy practices are more central to practical `needs.' The value of local literacies is that the everyday uses of literacy by marginalized groups in both rural and urban settings help identify specific literacy skills that are focused on immediate tasks. The pedagogical challenge would be to see how to make the link between the `local' and the `central' and to establish a dynamic relationship between the two so that generic skills could then be transferred to other situations. The ethnographic study done by Dyer and Choksi (Street 2001) on the Rabaris, a nomadic tribe from Gujarat in India, showed that there were substantial differences between their own and Rabaris' perceptions of `literacy.' Their ethnographic study helped in developing a much more substantial set of understandings about the complexity of what Rabaris understood by literacy. The Rabaris' conceptions of knowledge, identity and being influenced their understanding of literacy and hence a literacy programme for the Rabaris would have to provide for such expectations. Studies on folk mathematics have shown the indigenous methods by which adults acquire numeracy skills. A study done by Saraswathi (Rampal, Ramanujam, Saraswathi, 1997) showed how, despite being illiterate, adults in rural Tamil Nadu had acquired sophisticated numeracy skills. These included ability of the elderly to calculate time and seasonal changes on the basis of the length of the Sun's shadow. Or the ability of the village women to count in order to make sophisticated geometrical patterns as part of the cultural practice of making `kolums' (a design made of rice paste and natural colours in front of the house each day as a sign of good omen). Such ethnographic studies present people's perspectives on literacy and would undoubtedly be different from those of programme designers who develop literacy materials, often far removed from the local context. They would thus help design more culturally sensitive literacy programmes that would also have greater relevance and acceptability.

Summing up

As is apparent from the above discussion, there has been considerable experience and learning that has taken place

with regard to literacy programmes for poor women. And yet literacy programmes for adult women have just not taken off. According to Ramachandran (2002):

Barring pockets of innovation, the painstaking process of developing primers, identifying and training teachers, and running literacy classes, camps or information literacy circles, have not been taken up on a priority basis. Here again, the problem may revolve around pedagogic and resource support. Being a women's empowerment programme, the expertise and skills needed to run a serious literacy programme are not available with the project. The project's ability to reach out to resource institutions seems to be limited

As aptly summarized by her, `Literacy activities in the absence of empowerment programmes, and women's empowerment programmes that have not encouraged women to read and write, are both incomplete. The problem lies with organizing a `fit' between the two streams. Thus far, literacy programmes have either focused on traditional skills of reading, writing, and numeracy to the neglect of bringing about women's empowerment or paying attention to livelihood issues. Or else, women's education programmes have focused on `empowerment, 'to the neglect of promoting women's literacy and livelihood skills. Alternatively, women's economic needs have been addressed through income-generating activities but rarely have such programmes paid attention to the other two issues.

Clearly, programmes / projects that use ICTs in women's literacy will have to take cognizance of these experiences and developments.

4.0 What are ICTs?

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are often associated with the most sophisticated and expensive computer-based technologies. But ICTs also encompass the more conventional technologies such as radio, television and telephone technology. While definitions of ICTs are varied, it might be useful to accept the definition provided by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003): `ICTs are basically information-handling tools- a varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information. They include the `old' ICTs of radio, television and telephone, and the `new' ICTs of computers, satellite and wireless technology and the Internet. These different tools are now able to work together, and combine to form our `networked world' a massive infrastructure of interconnected telephone services, standardized computing hardware, the internet, radio and television, which reaches into every corner of the globe'

In earlier decades, the use of the older analogue technologies, i.e. radio and television, for literacy and adult basic education was extensive. The use of these media was predicated on the view that these two mass media transcended the illiteracy barrier and therefore could be used effectively to reach out to illiterates. Potential reach and access were the main drivers for using radio and television. Equally, support from external donor agencies, technical assistance in the form of satellite technology during the SITE experiment, coupled with the strength of India's own technical human resource enabled experimentation with various forms of radio and television to provide adult basic education, including literacy. Later experiences in India included using satellite and terrestrial information and communication technologies in varied fields, from agriculture to health, literacy, women's empowerment, and in-service skill upgradation and training for development staff. [5]

The new ICTs are seen as transformationally different. For the older media such as print, radio and television, regulation, shaping and production of content and the delivery methodologies remained one way media and in public hands. Essentially analogue, they lacked speed of delivery, and were sensitive to geography and distance and costly. The new digital media are potentially more open and can be owned and operated by an individual or social group; i.e. ownership of the media now has shifted to the hands of the person who can control the remote or the mouse or the mobile phone, and therefore, vary the purpose for which the medium is being used while at the same time, defining the medium in terms of one's own needs and wants. This leads to diversity in both form and content; the possibility of localization in terms of language, culture, design, content and use. Because these new media seem to capitalize on these strengths while addressing the weaknesses of older media, they are seen as key tools in the battle against illiteracy and for adult basic education.

ICTs also have differential access and impact patterns for women. The issues that inhibit women's access to education and technology of any kind have been discussed elsewhere in this monograph. Much of the discussion and promotion of ICTs for meeting educational goals today has not accounted for this differential impact and it is perhaps for this reason above all why older technologies did not have the significant impact that they were intended to.

To some extent, the push toward the use of the newer, digital ICTs emerges from both the hope and the hype that current use of the newer computer and web based technologies will yield similar results to the efforts of the past. According to Livingstone (1999), the question that emerges and can be debated is whether these media are really transformationally “new”; what the strengths and limitations of these technologies are and whether the “grammar” of the new media is such that can be exploited in conditions of extreme deprivation, poverty, and illiteracy; along with other conditions that must be met for effectiveness, i.e. reach and access, relevance of content, familiarity and ease of use. An exploration of current use of ICTs in literacy programmes is therefore a precondition to any debate on the digital media's potential, promise and pitfalls.

4.1 Current use of ICTs in Literacy Programmes[6]

In order to understand the use of ICT in literacy programmes, in 2004 UNESCO, Bangkok, commissioned case studies from seven most populous countries of the world that are still faced with the problem of adult illiteracy. These case studies from China, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Mexico and Brazil, examined initiatives that use ICT as a tool in efforts to improve literacy and highlight innovative practices, where applicable.[7]

While these country studies do not necessarily focus on women, they nevertheless provide insights about the common problems faced by them with regard to the use of ICT in literacy programmes.

Thus, the case studies highlight that adult literacy programmes as part of educational policy and practice have generally remained a neglected area for policy makers and planners in most countries. This is particularly so with regard to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. What is evident is that their commitment and investment in adult literacy programmes is not commensurate with the massive problem of adult illiteracy faced by them. Since these countries are far from achieving EFA goals, they are still struggling to expand primary and secondary education and to address quality issues. Consequently, these priorities take precedence over considerations such as those relating to adult illiteracy.

With regard to ICTs, there are problems relating to those of infrastructure. The country studies from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and China refer to a limited telecommunications infrastructure. Problems of bandwidth capacity, non-availability of computers, poor transportation network, including those relating to uninterrupted power supply, have hampered the use of ICT even in school education. Lack of sufficient financial resources is a major constraining factor.

The country study from Egypt realistically assesses the reasons for the non-use of ICT by literacy teachers. These include: (i) financial constraints (ii) scarcity of trained manpower (iii) lack of technical and maintenance personnel (iv) inadequate number of specialists in use of ICT for literacy, and (v) negative attitude of the educational personnel at various levels and their unwillingness to change.

While India's leadership in the application of computer technology is well acknowledged, it has only made sporadic efforts in the use of ICT in adult literacy programmes. This is also true of Bangladesh where even though most innovative work in education has been initiated by NGOs, there is still limited use of ICT in literacy programmes. Also, such initiatives have largely been donor-funded, pilot-based, and small scale. As a result, as pilot projects, they become a major cause for quality initiatives not being sustained.

There are other problems with regard to the use of ICT in literacy programmes. These relate to problems of perception. Thus, there are those countries where ICT are seen as add-ons to the education system. In other words, there is little recognition that ICT can be used to supplement and complement the conventional education delivery system or processes, or that they can be used to improve the quality of teacher training programmes. As a result, few teachers have been provided with training on how to integrate ICT into the teaching/learning process.

4.2 Broad trends in the Use of ICTs in Literacy Programmes

Some broad trends emerge from these country studies with regard to the use of ICTs in literacy programmes. These are:

- Most countries do not use ICTs in literacy programmes. Nor have they formulated policies for integration of ICTs in adult literacy programmes.

- Most countries have problems with regard to financial resources and lack of technological infrastructure
- There is one characteristic that is common to almost all countries. The ICTs used are typically basic ones- radio and television. When computers or the Internet are involved, they are for restricted, targeted users.
- There is much greater use of ICTs, particularly in school education. The use of ICTs in community learning centers, is still limited.
- Most ICT projects for adult literacy are pilot projects and are often funded by foreign/international agencies. They suffer from problems of sustainability.
- Not much attention has been paid to gender issues. There is no effort to address issues of access, content, impact of technology insofar as women are concerned.

4.3 Literacy projects using ICTs in the South Asian Region

As mentioned earlier, a few NGOs have been using ICTs for adult literacy in Bangladesh.[8] One of the innovative experiences is that of Dhaka Ahsania Mission. This NGO has set up Ganokendras or the Community Learning Centres wherein ICTs are used for improving the quality of life of the community, including developing ICT materials for literacy.

An innovative project in Bangladesh has been run by Bangla Innovation through Open Source (BIOS). BIOS has been developing multi-media materials for teachers and for school students. It has been attempting to popularize Mathematics and Science through the use of ICTs. BIOS has been receiving a positive feedback for this initiative from schools.

The country study from Pakistan[9] has highlighted that it has had experience in the use of educational radio and television over the years. The services of Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) and of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) have been utilized for various educational projects. The first ETV pilot project was started in 1975 and was a functional literacy project to cover 24,000 adults. The Adult Basic Education Society, along with PTV, worked on a literacy programme that also made use of video cassettes. The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) took the initiative to start a Functional Education Project for Rural Areas (FEPRA) and used the AV van, audio cassettes and flipcharts, along with a primer, for the purpose. On the basis of positive experience, the Institute of Educational Technology of AIOU started producing radio and television programmes which are now being transmitted on the national broadcasting network and the non-broadcast media are used for small group interaction and individual study. The Computer Science department of AIOU has been developing multi-media materials for capacity building purposes.

In India too there have been experiments in using radio, television, video cassettes for educational and instructional purposes. But there has been no consistent use of technology in adult literacy programmes.

Three pilot projects in India titled `Khilti Kaliyan,' PREAL' and Chauraha' attempted to use television and radio for teaching literacy to adults, particularly adult women. While these were innovative initiatives and highlight the potential of media in addressing the problem of adult illiteracy, the fact remains that these initiatives were thwarted due to lack of political and administrative commitment, inadequate planning and management effort and lack of concerted coordination at various levels..

Box - 1

Khilti Kaliyan

This 24-part serial aimed at women in the age group of 15-35 years was made with the intention of encouraging them to recognize the need for literacy and the changes that literacy would initiate in their lives. The serial was based on an experimental literacy primer by the same name. It was developed for women learners, and dealt with themes and issues pertaining to the lives of rural women. In the course of its effort to complement the primer, the TV serial established a link with the real problems of social, economic and political deprivation and oppression faced by women. Thus, the narrative of Khilti Kaliyan forced the audience to consider the position of women in society and the reasons for their unequal status.

Although made with the two main objectives of attracting women learners to adult education centres and enriching the learning process, Khilti Kaliyan went beyond that in its potential `as a radical new effort to draw women into the mainstream by transforming education into a real tool of development and change.' The TV serial was telecast by Delhi Doordarshan Kendra once a week over 24 weeks. However, it was telecast without adequate preparation to ensure that adequate TV viewing facilities, or even the literacy primer, were available at the adult education centres. Nor were the adult education instructors trained in using the films in conjunction with the primer being taught in class.

Source : Avik Ghosh,Communication Technology and Human Development,2006

Box - 2

PREAL (Project in Radio Education for Adult Literacy)

PREAL was operational in 16 selected districts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Weekly programmes under the title Nai Pahal was broadcast from eight AIR (All India Radio) stations that covered these districts. The objective of PREAL was to study the effectiveness of using radio lessons to enrich the learning experience of women learners in adult education centres (AECs) and thereby sustaining their interest in attending the classes regularly and achieving the prescribed literacy norms. Particular emphasis was laid on reinforcement of reading ability through a planned and systematically graded reading drill that was inducted into every lesson that was broadcast. The instructional content was in standard Hindi but the spoken dialect of the particular region was also used to enrich programme content, vocabulary and cultural specificity. In tribal districts, however, literacy was initiated in the local tribal language and vocabulary and then gradually built up to standard Hindi. Five hundred AECs in non-tribal districts and 300 AECs in tribal districts were identified for each AIR station, making a total of 3,800 AECs.

PREAL encountered several problems. The AECs did not function regularly. Sometimes, the literacy instructor was not present and at other times, the learners were not there or the two-in-one sets had problems or the batteries were weak. The organization and management of listening sessions at the AEC were also poor and therefore exposure to PREAL broadcasts was not regular. Consequently, the effectiveness of PREAL in terms of reinforcing reading ability was limited. In conclusion, it can be said that the management of PREAL was weak in comparison to the magnitude and complexity of the project. The decision-makers in the government, both at the Centre and at the state levels, did not fully appreciate the scale of significance of the project.

Source : Avik Ghosh,Communication Technology and Human Development,2006

Chauraha- an instructional TV serial

Box - 3

Chauraha was an ambitious project of the National Literacy Mission. This TV serial attempted to teach reading and writing the Devnagari (Hindi) script. It was based on the belief the instruction through a powerful audio-visual medium like television would quicken the pace of learning and adults could be made literate in a shorter span of time. Chauraha was a set of 40 15-minute TV film episodes that, for the first time in India, used sophisticated computer animation techniques to teach Hindi writing within the overall framework of a narrative storyline. The technique was to show an easily identifiable image from daily life (or a graphic representation) and then superimpose a letter that could be associated with it.

The storyline of Chauraha followed the pattern of a TV serial filled with emotional content as the main characters went through their travails in life. Its theme was woven around the value of education. Chauraha combined direct instruction with awareness on various development issues and did so in an entertaining and enjoyable manner.

The lesson from the Chauraha experience was that planning and developing good quality materials were not sufficient for cost-effective application of communication technology using a sophisticated medium like television. Preparing the ground, ensuring availability of the hard ware, sustaining learner motivation, providing supplementary print materials, training the instructors to use the materials and design other learning activities had to be an integral part of the planning process.

Source : Avik Ghosh,Communication Technology and Human Development,2006

The Tata Computer-based Literacy programme (CBFL), uses a mix of methods, including computer software, animated graphics, multimedia presentations and flashcards, to teach reading skills.[10]

The Tata Computer-based Functional Literacy Programme

Box - 4

In this programme, computers deliver the lessons in multi-media form, but these are supplemented with textbooks. Audio voiceovers explain how letters combine to give structure and meaning to various words and pronounce the words.

The emphasis is on words rather than alphabets. Lessons are designed to be visually stimulating and entertaining, using elements such as puppets. The lessons are based on material developed by the National Literacy Mission. The lessons focus on different languages, even dialects

Under the project, a number of learning centres have been established. Each centre has a computer and an instructor. Because the project relies on computer programmes, it has less need for highly trained teachers, which is an advantage in areas which lack teachers. A typical class has between 15 to 20 people and is held in the evening hours.

Source: http://www.totalliteracy.com

Bridges to the Future Initiative (BFI) was designed to improve basic skills of literacy and vocational skills of youth and young adults, in poor communities. It uses innovative ICT tools and methodologies to promote adult learning.

Box - 5

Bridges to the Future Initiative (BFI)

While great strides in India education have been made, it is now clear that many schools are able to offer only inadequate quality of instruction, leading to a primary school drop-out rate of between 35-50% across the poorest states of India, including in Andhra Pradesh where the BFI has been operating since 2003. Thus, the main target are the tens of millions of disadvantaged youth (ages 9-20 years) who are at risk of never getting a good job, performing poorly in trades that are education-dependent (especially those that change with the knowledge economy), and suffering a variety of health consequences due to poor education and income. Many of these youth (especially girls and young women) have had some schooling, but often too poor in quality for these individuals to achieve a functional literacy ability.

The BFI model is designed to take advantage of already-existing ICT infrastructure, largely in secondary schools, and create content to which such out-of-school youth have access. The instructional model builds on the oral competence of the learners in their mother-tongue, Telugu, the majority language in the state. As part of the BFI, a major impact assessment- a longitudinal study- has been undertaken to follow BFI out-of-school youth, and other youth in control groups, to measure skills and knowledge acquisition. Up to March 2005, over 200 youth (age 10-20 years, about 60% girls) participated in the BFI programme. Results indicate that the participating youth are learning literacy skills at an accelerated pace and show greatly enhanced motivation and retention. Further, results suggest that those youth with least schooling- especially girls- show the most gain in performance, and many of these have left the BFI programme to return to complete their primary schooling. The BFI in India (along with a companion project in South Africa) was designed to demonstrate that cost-effective solutions can and should be developed for the most challenging situations.

Source: Daniel Wagner, ed. Monitoring and Evaluation of ICT in Education Projects: A Handbook for Developing Countries, p. 96

The Commonwealth of Learning Literacy project that was undertaken on pilot basis in two sites each in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Tamilnadu, highlighted how ICTs can play an enabling role in literacy programmes.

Box - 6

Commonwealth of Learning Literacy (COLLIT) Project

Commonwealth of Learning (COL) received support from British Department of International Development (DFID) to undertake a pilot project in India and Ghana to explore ways by which literacy programmes might be enhanced through the use of appropriate technologies. The three year pilot project which began in July 1999 was implemented through the `technology-based community learning centre' model. The concept of a community-based learning centre, where various types of ICT equipment could be deployed, managed and accessed by members of the community, where learning could be facilitated and where locally relevant learning materials could be developed, was a central ingredient in the COLLIT project. The impact of the project was most visible on the people involved in operating the learning centres, most of whom had no prior exposure to computers and other ICTs. By the end of the project, the facilitators and staff at the learning centre, in both countries, emerged as well-respected ICT-trained literacy instructors with experience in using the equipment to develop locally relevant instructional materials. The COLLIT project also demonstrated that given the opportunity, learners are quite capable of using ICTs in ways that not only help them achieve educational goals, but that are also remarkably motivating and applicable to other facets of their lives

Source: Glen Farrell ed. ICT and Literacy: Who Benefits? Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, 2004

In Same Language Sub-titling (SLS), the lyrics of film songs shown on television appear as sub-titles in the same language as the audio, on the television screen. Capitalizing on the insatiable appetite most adults and children have for film-based entertainment, SLS ensures that the nascent reading skills of those who are barely literate or semi-literate, are reinforced in even the remotest villages of India.

The M.S. Swaminathan Village Knowledge Centres project is an innovative project in India that has a pro-nature, pro-poor, pro-women and pro-livelihood orientation. The project has shown how learners can develop locally relevant content with the use of technology.

Box - 7

Village Knowledge Centre in Madurai district

Implemented by the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) through the UNESCO Bangkok office, the `ICT Applications for Non-Formal Education' project supports the use of ICT in non-formal education, so as to enable learners to expand their livelihood opportunities and assist them in improving their quality of life.

The project supports the development of Community Learning Centres (CLC) and Village Knowledge Centres (VKC), and encourages equipping these centres with appropriate ICT. The project also supports the provision by these centres of literacy and basic education courses which utilize relevant ICTs

The literacy course offered in the Madurai VKC begins with a lesson on how to use a digital camera. Participants photograph people and objects in their daily lives, including family, household items and surroundings. In the next lesson, participants learn how to put their photographs into slide presentations and how to store them on CD-ROMs, using the computers in the VKC. Then, with the help of the trainer, learners pair each photograph with a letter of the alphabet. The slides are used as learning material in literacy courses and print-outs are also prepared so as to enable learners to practice and build their literacy skills outside the VKC.

Source: www.unescobkk.org/education/ict/nfe

4.4. Role of ICTs in Promoting Literacy

On the basis of the country studies that highlight best practices in the use of ICTs for literacy programmes, as well as other experiences around the world, particularly in school education, it is averred that ICTs have the potential to play the following specific roles in promoting literacy.[11]

1. Enhancing Learning: ICT can be used as a tool for acquisition of literacy skills. For example, radio, when used in combination with printed course material, can make literacy lessons more true-to-life and interesting. Also, this combination of audio and visual stimuli is more effective than visual stimuli alone in enhancing vocabulary and sentence construction skills and can aid information processing and memory.

2. Broadening access to literacy education: Access to literacy education may be limited, or may be denied, for a number of reasons. These include social, cultural, political and geographical factors, as well as lack of time to attend classes, lack of qualified teachers, lack of literacy materials in local languages, and issues such as delay in receipt of feedback and results.

3. Creating local content: ICTs can enable the rapid and cost-effective creation and distribution of socially, culturally and linguistically appropriate learning content. For example, word processing software can be used to modify literacy education material that has been developed elsewhere to make it available in local languages and on locally relevant subjects.

4. Professional Development of Teachers: Qualified and trained teachers represent the key to quality teaching and learner motivation. However, in many countries professional expertise is limited and thinly distributed particularly for the provision of non-formal literacy education. While ICTs cannot be substitute for teachers, ICTs can supplement and support teachers by reducing their workload and enhancing their lessons.

5. Cultivating a literacy conducive environment: For literacy to become widespread in a society, written material should also be readily available in daily life and accessible to all. Such environment cultivates opportunities for coming into contact with, and creating, written material and thereby reinforces and promotes the development of literacy skills.

5.0 Women and ICTs: Salient Research Experiences

Within the last decade, particularly in the last few years, considerable field experience is now available internationally on the impact of ICTs on the lives of people. While not all studies necessarily pay attention to gender issues, it is still evident that the volume of available materials, including state-of-the art and literature review studies, are on the rise, Since it would not be possible to attempt an exhaustive review of studies, an attempt is still made to undertake an overview and to identify broad themes and issues that are highlighted by studies that focus on women and ICTs.

There are three broad areas in which considerable documentation is now available. These areas include:

1. Barriers to Women's Access to ICTs
2. ICTs and Poverty Alleviation
3. Women's Empowerment through ICTs

An attempt is made below to highlight salient issues that are raised as a result of the review of studies / reports as well as significant lessons learnt.

5.1 Barriers to Women's Access to ICTs

An area of interest with regard to women and ICTs is that of access and of identifying barriers that impede women's access to technology.

During the period from 1998 to 2001, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), commissioned a series of research reports and held regional expert group meetings to address the issue of barriers that women experience in using information and communication technologies (ICTs) for open and distance learning (ODL). The reports examined the situation in Commonwealth countries in four regions: Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Expert meetings were then held for each of these regions. Subsequently, a concise synthesis report was prepared on the detailed information that was generated by the research process in order to ensure that women have equal access to technology and are able to contribute to their full potential (Green, 2002). While the main focus of the report was on the open and distance learning, it would still be useful to present the highlights of this comprehensive study in order to understand the various barriers that women face in accessing technology.

Many of the barriers women face in accessing ICTs are the same ones they face when accessing education of any kind. Thus, illiteracy was raised as the major barrier to women's education for most Commonwealth African and Asian countries. The challenge of illiteracy has to be overcome before women can benefit from ICT, though use of audio and video technology have been known to overcome the problem of women's illiteracy to a limited extent. Poverty and lack of economic power are known to affect women more than they affect men. Women's inability to spare time to learn because of heavy domestic responsibilities is now well known. In the African and Asian countries, it is the broader socio-cultural factors that perpetuate women's inequality in society, and hence undervalue their need for education. The lack of women teachers / trainers is another major barrier to women's education.

A combination of the impact of all these factors- illiteracy, poverty, time famine and socio-cultural factors can severely restrict a woman's mobility. This lack of mobility can hamper women's ability to benefit from educational opportunities if she needs to travel some distance to access the educational programmes or if the venue of the programme is either unsafe or is at a culturally inappropriate place or if the time is inconvenient.

In addition to the above, there are barriers to women's access to ICTs which can be summed up in three major categories: those of relevancy, availability and usage. The major barrier to the use of ICTs for women is its lack of relevancy to their lives. `Women encounter barriers to the use of ICTs when the learning content is not directly relevant to their livelihood, and when it does not value their knowledge, wisdom and experience. If the instructional design and learning strategies are not gender-appropriate, women fail to reap the potential benefits of ICTs (Green, 2002). Unless the content delivered by ICT has a direct impact on women's lives, they will not perceive the need and benefits of ICTs. More research studies have corroborated the above research findings. Thus, Huyer and Mitter (2005) refer to the use of language and how the predominance of English and other European languages in most regions of the world is a barrier for most users globally. Speakers of non-European and indigenous languages, including a large proportion of women, tend to be left out of the information loop.

Then there are barriers to availability of technology. While such barriers affect both men and women, it is the rural women who are more adversely affected. In order to ensure availability of technology, it is necessary to provide access to equipment, access to an adequate communications infrastructure, electricity access, Internet access and access to technical support that will ensure that repair services are provided and technical information is provided to women.

The study highlighted that the barrier of access emerged as the number one barrier to the use of technology-supported learning. It was realized that for women learners to access the necessary technology, several conditions have to be in place: the equipment appropriate for the task has to be physically available (Access-Technology); cost has to be within reach (Access-Costs); the learners have to have the skills to use the technology (Access-Skills); the learners have to be aware of the service (Access-Information); and the socio-cultural conditions have to permit, if not encourage the learners access (Access-Socio-cultural).

Public and community access sites (including telecentres and cyber cafes) can be a solution for the problem of access. But according to Huyer and Mitter (2005), the few evaluations done to date indicate that women do not have the same rate of access as men. Public access is sometimes located in an environment where women do not feel comfortable or in locations women have difficulty traveling to. An evaluative study of the Jhabua Development Communications Project (JDCP) had highlighted the social, cultural and psychological barriers women faced in accessing a community site where community television sets were installed.[12]

In substance, there is a differential access to and consequently impact of the use of ICTs for women, especially the poor as the conditions and contexts of their lives are vastly different from those of men.

In order to overcome the barriers to women's access and use of ICTs, the INSTRAW Collaborative Project on Gender and ICTs held four Virtual Seminars during 2002, and identified four approaches (Huyer and Sikosha, 2003). These included:

- ensuring a gender perspective in ICT-based projects: It was considered necessary to integrate gender perspective in the overall project cycle as a means of ensuring that structural barriers to women's access to and use of ICTs are diminished, if not completely removed;

- ensuring adequate and sustainable technology transfer: The tele-centres must explicitly address the needs of women and operate on the basis of a careful needs assessment or feasibility study and follow a well-developed project plan to achieve sustainability . Adequate transfer of know-how must accompany technology transfer. Several low-cost strategies such as use of audio and video technologies, use of local language, and presenting information in an entertaining and engaging way,

could facilitate this;

- designing technologies appropriate to women's needs: Women should define their own agendas for the whole range of ICTs that include not just the sophisticated technologies but also the community networks, including the traditional media. Women must develop a sense of ownership of technology if the barriers to women's access to and use of ICTs have to be overcome;

- ensuring gender-sensitive ICT policy and regulation: In order to overcome persistent barriers to women's access to and use of ICTs, there is need for an adequate policy-making and regulation of the ICT sector development.

5.2 ICTs and Poverty Alleviation: Lessons Learnt thus far

During the 1990s the goals of poverty reduction gained prominence in international development policy. This was because there was growing realization that the earlier strategies of the 60s, 70s, 80s, which had focused on liberal economic and structural adjustment policies to prompt economic growth were failing to achieve expected goals (Huyer and Mitter, 2005). As a result, during 1990, `pro-poor growth,' `human-centred approach to growth and development' became part of the agenda of most major international and bilateral agencies which adopted poverty reduction as an overarching goal. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 grew out of these developments. Of the eight MDGs, the first goal relates to that of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. It was envisaged that ICTs would contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

As a result of this development, the last decade or so has seen a plethora of ICT projects funded largely by international and bilateral agencies whose stated goal was poverty reduction or poverty alleviation in developing countries of African, Asian and Latin American regions. Review studies on the potential of ICTs in poverty reduction have shown that in the earlier phase, there was a tendency to either romanticize the potential of ICTs in poverty alleviation or to use ICTs as `toys' often in impractical, unaffordable and unsustainable ways.[13]

Yet another problem was that in the rush to provide technology to developing countries, little attention was paid to conceptual frameworks or to following any guidelines on ICT utilization. As a result, while there were some successes, there were also a large number of failures. There was, however, a tendency to not acknowledge failures by disguising failures through the use of the phrase `lessons learnt.' Thus for example, the `lessons learnt,' in rural projects have related to those of high illiteracy in rural areas, poor telecommunications and physical infrastructure, erratic power supply, etc.- constraints that were known and therefore should have been taken care of in the planning stage of the project itself.

Presently, there is a vast amount of literature that is available on ICTs and poverty reduction. While it would be impossible to follow all the developments in the field, the various reviews that were undertaken have acknowledged that empirical studies are still limited and have highlighted the anecdotal nature of studies that show how ICTs have worked in specific contexts in poverty alleviation. However, a significant shift has now taken place in understanding the potential of ICTs in poverty alleviation. For, there is a growing realization that ICTs do not create transformation in society by themselves. Hence, they are not an end in themselves, but rather, they are tools, a means for achieving development goals, and for poverty alleviation. This realistic and pragmatic orientation has been a significant lesson learnt by development practitioners and technology experts during the last decade.

An analysis of the studies also reveals that unlike the earlier phase, there is growing recognition that poverty is multi-dimensional, complex, has multiple causes and that ICTs cannot solve the political and social problems that are often the root causes of poverty. Thus, there have been a large number of ICT projects that have focused on access to markets, and have an income-based approach to poverty eradication. The potential use of ICTs for growth in such projects is as marketing tools, providing access to markets (eg. information on prices, promoting goods) and increasing demand. This has worked well for small entrepreneurs who have used the internet to gain access to wider markets.

There are now other approaches to poverty alleviation. These include the sustainable livelihood approach and rights-based approach. These approaches put people first and advocate bottom-up strategies (Gerster and Zimmermann, 2003). The sustainable livelihood approach emphasizes the importance of identifying varying needs of people as well as identifying crucial information that will have a significant impact on the quality of lives of people. Local content is the basis of this strategy. The rights-based approach insists on participation and local ownership as well as the need for people to have access to decision-making processes and to organize themselves in order to bring about change. In other words, there is a growing awareness that rather than only promoting economic well being of the poor, there is a need to use ICTs to facilitate their empowerment, to enhance their overall personal and social well being

According to a SIDA study (2005), there are a number of areas where ICTs have helped to alleviate poverty. Among the sectors in which ICTs have been used with some measure of success are (i) all sectors of education, from the primary, secondary, to university education, as well as vocational and skills-based education. The use of ICTs in education, however, is sparse and erratic. An important pre-requisite is that of trained people, including teacher training and the need for widespread deployment of technology, (ii) enhancing traditional livelihoods eg. providing farmers with weather forecasts, crop information, information about market prices, etc. and promoting new livelihoods that include web-based business and tele-marketing (iii) for delivering healthcare through tele-medicine and educating people on health issues, as well as in collecting, storing and retrieving data, (iv) through e-governance by computerizing government operations and processes so as to ensure transparency and openness.

The case of Grameen Bank is often quoted to highlight how ICTs have been successfully used for poverty alleviation.

Box - 8

The experience of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh

The most oft-cited example of a success story is that of the Grameen Bank. It has been highly discussed in the popular press and research papers. The story is how members of the Grameen Bank (GB) of Bangladesh, the village-based micro-finance institution, have changed their lives with access to the telephone. Grameen Bank's members form the backbone of Grameen Telecom, with women in villages being offered loans to buy cellular phones at taka 18,100 a piece (385 dollars). They are then able to rent the sets out to other villagers on a commercial basis. The GB refers to these phones as `Village Pay Phones' (VPs). The effects of VPPs are assessed from two angles; sellers of services (telephone lessees/owners) and buyers of services (villagers). Grameen Telecom moved in where the monopoly public telephone company had failed in rural Bangladesh.

Source: Catherine Nyaki Adeya, `ICTs and Poverty; a Literature Review.'

According to Mitter (2005), the major advantages of this type of IT-enabled enterprise are minimal educational requirements (just some basic mechanical aptitude), and the small amount of capital needed, which can be supplied by micro-credit schemes. The operators resell the mobile phone service to fellow villagers, earning an average of

annual income of $ 300 as against the national per capita income of $ 286. Such schemes are particularly useful for rural development where access to telecommunications and internet technology is limited.

UNESCO's work (2003) through development of Ethnographic Action Research Methodology focuses on the innovative use of ICTs related to poverty alleviation..

Box - 9

Namma Dhwani Local ICT Network (Budikote, Kolar district, Karnataka, India)

Namma Dhwani Local ICT Network combines a radio studio, an audio cable network that delivers radio to local households, and a telecentre with computers, internet connectivity and other multimedia tools. It is run by and centred on a network of women's self-help groups (SHG) and linked to a government school and a local development resource centre. Daily community radio programming addresses local information and communication needs, drawing on a variety of multimedia resources, like websites and CD-ROMs.

Box -10

Empowering Resource Poor Women to use ICT (Chennai, Kancheepuram and Cuddalore, Tamilnadu, India) has put computers with internet connectivity into the homes of women's self-help group (SHG) members. In rural, urban and semi-urban areas, women and their SHG networks are using ICTs in familiar, empowering spaces with content developed specifically to meet their needs. Particular attention is given to income generating activities and the need for innovative product development and marketing.

Box - 11

ICT Learning Centre for Women (Seelampur, New Delhi,) is an open learning centre for girls and women located at an inner-city madarsa (Islamic school) in a high-density, low-income area of New Delhi. Interactive multimedia content is developed and used to support vocational and life-skills training, to provide rights-based information to poor girls and women and to build their awareness of health issues and livelihood opportunities.

Source: Ethnographic Action Research, UNESCO, New Delhi,

The manner in which ICTs can enhance income from a traditional occupation is highlighted by the following case study.

Box - 12

Smart card by milk collectors in Rajasthan

A successful example of an ICT-enabling business which has access to the internet and a micro financing component is the use of smart cards by women milk collectors in Rajasthan. The smart cards are used to record the quality, fat content, and sale of milk to distributors and also serve as a bank book, allowing them to make decisions on spending and increasing their profits through the elimination of middle-men called dudhwalas

Source: Swasti Mitter, `Globalisation and ICT; Employment Opportunities for Women'

There are examples of the manner in which ICTs have been used to respond to the needs of the agricultural communities

Box - 13

Use of ICTs in agriculture

From Asia, UNDP (2002) gives examples on how information technologies have been used in poverty eradication, especially in connection with the needs of women farmers. These range from information concerning agronomic practices and farming methods, to information on how to access and use new technologies, or market news and agricultural commodity prices. Other information is on weather predictions and rainfall patterns, recommended crops for the season as well as information on meetings and workshops on relevant issues

Significantly, while women constitute a major constituency among the marginalized groups and, as is apparent from the above cases, participate in fairly large numbers in poverty alleviation programmes, most ICT projects have focused on the `poor' as a general category without necessarily paying attention to issues of gender. However, significant lessons have been learnt in the implementation of ICT projects for poverty alleviation in recent years. While this learning is still inconclusive, it would be useful to distill some of this learning so that suitable strategies for using ICTs for poverty alleviation among poor women can be evolved.

An attempt is made below to highlight significant lessons learnt from a review of some existing materials in the use of ICTs in poverty alleviation.[14]

- ICTS have to be people-driven and not technology-driven

  There has been a tendency to make investments in technology without making a parallel investment in people. According to Reddi (2004), `the bulk of the investment in any project generally goes toward overhead costs and few resources are left for project activities. A parallel investment in people- in good quality social research and community mobilization and involvement rarely takes place.' What is also important to recognize is that people take time to understand and get acculturated to new technology. A process of de-mystification of technology has therefore to take place so that poor people can begin to understand how the technology functions and are made aware of the possibilities that ICTs offer. This process cannot be rushed or hurried and people's pace of learning has to be respected. This has particular relevance for women as they would first need to get over the mind set that technology is for men and not for them. It would be necessary for women to feel comfortable with technology, for women are likely to be hesitant in adopting new technology unless strategies are developed to deliberately include them.

  Impact of ICTs also depends on attitudes, expectations, on organizational climate and management styles. It is possible that intermediary organizations that are implementing the ICT projects are hierarchical and bureaucratic in their style of functioning. Any hands-on experience in the use of technology can become a major hurdle in such organizations. Overcoming resistance and negative attitudes becomes a challenge that has to be overcome.

  It has to be recognized that the focus of ICT projects has to be on people, organizations and processes, and not just on technology.

- ICTs must put the needs of the poor at the center and must be demand-driven

  ICTs have the capacity to be exclusive. It is therefore imperative that before introducing ICTs, an attempt is made to understand existing information systems of the poor. There is need to understand how ICTs and culture intersect, for cultural factors can be a hindrance to adoption of ICTs in rural areas. This is particularly relevant insofar as women are concerned. Ethnographic action research has been found to be useful in understanding information needs of the poor in specific contexts.

- Importance of holistic planning

  To date, enough lessons have been learnt about the need and importance to plan holistically for ICT projects. Hence there is need to take stock first of availability of existing infrastructure, including internet access in rural areas, and to then plan for hardware and software possibilities. Issues relating to connectivity, affordability, and capability need to be addressed. Planning for acquisition of ICT skills as well as for human resource development, must take place.

- ICT projects must ensure community participation

  ICT projects, like any rural development project, must ensure sustained and ongoing consultations with members of the community, particularly the poor members, so that they take crucial decisions relating to physical location, timing and use of ICTs. The poor benefit from ICTs when they know and control both technology and related know-how. Beside providing access to information, there would be need to increase the `voice' and participation of the poor in various decision-making processes. It is important for the poor to use ICTs to share knowledge and to build networks.

- ICT projects must use participatory communication and participatory training methodologies

  Participatory processes can enhance community interest. Learning by doing de-mystifies technology for the poor and ensures that they have practical knowledge about ICTs so that they develop basic skills in operating them. User skills relate to technological skills as well as literacy skills. These requirements highlight concerns of gender equality as women are among the most disadvantaged sections in many developing countries.

- Importance of appropriate ICTs

  While ICTs have great merit, it is not always that the newer technologies are best suited to address poverty-related issues. Emphasis should not be just on expansion of telecommunication systems but on consideration of which technology is appropriate in which context. An important role played by ICTs is that of information exchange and information dissemination. However, technologies such as radio and mobile telephony have been found to perform these functions very effectively in a large number of developing countries. These technologies are comparatively cheap, are flexible, can overcome barriers of infrastructure, as well as those requiring literacy and other skills. Due to high levels of illiteracy among poor rural women, these technologies are particularly appropriate for them. Experience has also shown how women have responded positively to these technologies and have

used them in creative combinations with traditional media such as folk songs, dance, and theatre, for self-expression and communication.

Selection of appropriate ICTs is crucial to ensure their use

- Ensuring ICT access

As a deliberate step to ensure access of rural communities to ICTs, community tele-centres have been regarded as a viable strategy. However, the community tele-centres have met with varying successes. Some have made a major positive impact, some have fallen into disuse. There is a need to spend more resources in opening up access to marginalized communities in innovative and cost-effective ways or else they can further perpetuate inequalities. Women's access to ICTs is a major problem. An important lesson learnt is that ICTs should be located in local institutions to which poor women have open and socially and psychologically unhindered access.

- Planning for sustainability

Donor agencies and government departments are often seen to support the view that initiatives and projects in development must become financially self sustaining over time and that it is necessary to have a business model to ensure such sustainability up front. While self sufficiency is perhaps an end goal, this should not absolve the funding agency, especially the government and public bodies from becoming the most important stakeholders in ICT projects. It is poverty that has created women's existing economic and social condition in the first place and until their economic and social empowerment takes place; poor women will be unable to pay for user fees for services or to develop their own sustainability model. Help has to come from outside and it is imperative that the donor or the government agency put a sustainability plan in place and to implement it gradually until such time as the project becomes self sustaining in every respect of the term. Given the very nature of poverty and illiteracy, it cannot be assumed that a set time frame for sustainability will work - thus, agencies have to be very careful in terms of their definitions and understanding of sustainability, and equally realistic and meticulous when planning project durations for achieving the sustainability objectives

- Importance of capacity building and training

In order to ensure that poor people can use ICTs effectively, it would be necessary to provide skills training programmes of various kinds. Such training programmes would have to be organized on an on-going basis to ensure operational use of ICTs as well as their maintenance and upkeep by the members of the community. This would gradually instill a sense of ownership among the community.

- Importance of relevant content

Empirical evidence about modern ICTs, mainly the internet, is still limited. The added value of the internet for poverty alleviation among the poorest has to be conclusively demonstrated. However, basic lessons related to the use of internet are (i) those who live in poverty must define their information needs themselves, (ii) information provided should be in local language and even better, originate from local sources

Local content is a key issue in knowledge creation. The advantage of local content is that it would be locally owned and adopted by the community

- Need for inter-disciplinary research and empirical studies

  Presently there are not many empirical studies on ICTs and poverty reduction. What is available in large measure, are descriptive and anecdotal accounts that are often self-laudatory in tone and content. Clearly, there is need to undertake an honest stock-taking of what worked and what did not work, and for what reasons. Evaluative studies- formative as well as summative- would be necessary to identify the problems, the stumbling blocks, and the importance of timely mid-course corrections that would be necessary for ensuring that the objectives of the ICT projects are met. Considering the multi-dimensionality of the concept of poverty, it would be necessary to undertake inter-disciplinary research in order to ensure that all aspects of poverty measurement are adequately addressed.

- Need for multi stake-holder partnerships

  Poverty alleviation programmes require strong political will and commitment. There is need for a clearly stated policy as well as for various regulatory mechanisms to be put in place. For ICT initiatives to be used for the benefit of the poor, partnerships of various kinds would be necessary. A multi stake-holder partnership between the government, NGOs, and the private sector, with the role and the responsibility of each partner, clearly delineated, would be necessary. Such a partnership would be required at the national and international levels.

5.3 Women's Empowerment through ICTs

An area that has received much attention in recent years is that of the potential of ICTs in empowering the poor, particularly women. In order to understand the empowering potential of ICTs, it might be useful to examine the recent feminist thinking on this issue. The definition of empowerment builds on the gender and development literature which has been referred to earlier. Empowerment is itself a form of power. In feminist literature, `power' is disaggregated into `power over' (domination), `power to' (capacity), `power within' (inner strength), and `power with' (achieved through cooperation and alliance). In feminist use of empowerment, the emphasis is clearly on `power to' and capabilities, and not on `power over' (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2006).

The process of empowerment can be top down or bottom up. If women are considered powerless, then the idea of `empowering' women can imply a top-down approach. On the other hand, if it is argued that despite patriarchal considerations, women have power; then empowerment would be perceived as a bottom-up process. An important distinction further made by INSTRAW research on ICTs and their potential draws a distinction between empowerment as capacity-building to cope with the requirements of life as opposed to capacity building to transform the conditions of life and assert alternative gender roles. Making such a conceptual distinction is necessary since the use of ICTs to become a tool for the transformatory empowerment of women would require very different policy and advocacy approaches (Huyer and Sikosha, 2003).

Two major approaches to women's empowerment through ICTs have prevailed. One is based on the empowerment of individual women and the other, on the empowerment of organized groups of women. Although these approaches can be perceived as different, they are complementary and not mutually exclusive. Women's activities often involve a combination of both approaches.

Box - 14

The Deccan Development Society (DDS) has trained poor dalit (the Indian social classification for the poorest and untouchables in the caste system) women in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh at use the video to represent their lives and redefine their status. Community radio has become a popular media for women and can play an important role for empowerment and the right to information for poor women. DDS has also set up a community radio station in Machnoor village, with a 100-watt FM transmitter having a 30-kilometer radius reach. Supported by UNESCO, a small team of dalit women have recorded over 300 hours of programming on issues related to women's empowerment, agricultural needs of semi-arid regions, public health and hygiene, indigenous knowledge systems, biodiversity, food security and also local song and drama. Using multiple digital technologies among the communities have proved to be very successful in initiating women to use new technologies and empowering them

Source: Case Study in EduComm Asia, Vol 11, No. 2, December 2005

Box - 15

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has used the video as a tool of women's empowerment from the mid-80s onwards. SEWA's cooperative, `Video SEWA,' has produced video footage on many issues including livelihoods of poor women. It has used the medium to share information with their own members and also as a tool for training and teaching new skills, and to reach policy makers. Also, SEWA's satellite technology programme has enabled the organization working in over 10 districts of Gujarat, to provide information on topics like Panchayati Raj (village governance institutions), nursery raising and forestry management, savings and credit through the use of satellite cable. Since a number of women farmers and skilled workers in rural areas are unlettered, they prefer to learn about the new methods and market information through the video, phone, radio.

The above two case studies show how ICTs can become a tool for the transformatory empowerment of women at a collective level.

Gurumurthy's study (2003) analyzed the ICT initiatives that have focused on women's economic empowerment in the South Asian region. While these initiatives have been few and far between, according to her, the following gains for women have been made possible through the use of ICTs.

(i) Connectivity and access to information for livelihoods and enterprises: Connectivity through networks can support access to information, covering technical information on sustainable agricultural practices and innovation, market news and agricultural commodity process, weather predictions and rainfall patterns, recommended crops for the season and information on institutions that provide expertise and training;

(ii) Data Management: Information technologies can create systems to store, retrieve and manage information which can help enhance operational efficiency and accuracy in financial transactions, something that organizations that work with poor women, can benefit from;

(iii) Creation of Data Repositories: ICTs can help to reclaim women's agricultural knowledge base and can facilitate the systematic recording and dissemination of knowledge about agricultural practices;

(iv) Mobilization and education of women workers: ICTs can bring about political empowerment of women by furthering their demands, needs and rights as workers. Also, ICTs can facilitate interactive training and building of alliances;

(v) Linking of women producers to global markets: Although not an easy avenue, ICTs can enable women producers to benefit from e-commerce by linking them to global markets. Several experiences have shown how this is feasible;

(vi) Efficient communication for micro-enterprises of poor women: For those poor women who are involved in micro enterprises, ICTs can enable building of a network with customers, suppliers, banks, etc, thus facilitating timely access to people and resources and thereby providing better business opportunities;

(vii) Opportunities for skill-building and employment: It is possible that disadvantaged women with handicaps in education and training, can still benefit from opportunities in the IT labour market. This can happen if they can master basic aspects of computer use and maintenance. There are some organizations that are attempting to explore such possibilities;

(viii) Opportunities for self-employment: Self employment through ICTs is another area that can become an income-earning possibility for the poor. Since ICTs offer business opportunities, the scope for such enterprises for women has to be exploited. Beside the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, women's self-help groups have set up kiosks and have become kiosk operators, thus running a successful micro-enterprise.

Gurumurthy presents case studies to show how ICTs have aided micro credit activities, while others have found markets for goods produced by women through the internet, while still others have sought to improve the production processes.

At a recent regional meeting,[15] as a run up to the WSIS, feminists averred that rather than making blanket claims for the empowering potential of technology, there was need to be more discerning and to ascertain if the use if ICTs was empowering to all women or to just a cross section and under what conditions. Such a nuanced understanding was considered necessary to ascertain whether the ICT projects were truly empowering the poor women or whether they were missing the mark by catering to the needs of the better-off sections among women. The meeting also resulted in an important understanding that if gender equality was at all to be achieved, policies, programmes, and legislation had to be designed from a gender perspective, with women's empowerment as the pivotal core.

Experiences of implementing ICT for development and specifically for promoting gender equality are varied and context specific. However, Primo (2005) outlines the main lessons that have been learnt:

- Having women as ICT trainers, being aware of the potential barriers that women and girl learners face in relation to technology, accommodating these issues into the training methodology generates the best learning outcomes for women learners.

- Providing women or girl-only spaces backed up with gender-friendly usage policies and guidelines in schools and public access points creates safe spaces where women and girl learners can work best

- Involving local women and girls in content development around their own issues and information needs- turning women and girls into content producers rather than consumers only-provides a strong motivation for them to continue using and benefiting from ICT. As long as women see a change in their livelihoods, they will be more likely to continue engaging with the initiative and the technology.

6. Policy and Planning: Strategies for Consideration in the Use of ICTs for Women's Literacy

The review attempted thus far has highlighted that most developing countries in the region do not presently appear to have a clearly stated policy for the use of ICTs for adult literacy programmes. Furthermore, the existing IT policies are mostly gender-neutral and do not necessarily take a pro-poor stand. A critical part of the problem is the lack of understanding among governments and policy makers of the intersection of gender policy and information and communication policy. Much of the research done in the lead up to the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) provided evidence that showed that policy making in the ICT field had often ignored the needs, requirements, and aspirations of women, and had not included a gender equality perspective. Most governments assume that there is no need to focus on how policy will impact differently on men and women. As a result, most national ICT policies and strategies are gender-blind (Ramilo, 2005). If the MDG and literacy goals have to be met, an appropriate policy would have to be formulated.

Global experiences show that while many countries have gender equity built into their constitutions in one way or another, there is a wide gap between these constitutional provisions and actual practice when ministries begin to develop their own policy and implementation plans. For instance, an agricultural ministry may have been developing an agricultural policy and plan for the country; but gender is assumed and subsumed in the policy and the importance of gender considerations bypassed with perhaps a sentence or two of mention.

Our contention is that it is necessary to recognize gender issues as a major part of every developmental policy since all programmes affect women differently and are impacted by the gender factor in major ways. It is therefore, necessary, that macro level policies integrate and mainstream gender,specifically women and girls in the context of Asia.

The overall macro level policy must have two elements: the vision and the road map. In other words, while laying out the broader vision at a macro level, care should be taken to ensure that women's needs are prioritized. The vision statement must also be followed by a mission declaration which indicates, in unequivocal terms, who the beneficiaries are expected to be and what impacts, outcomes, and outputs are expected within a given time frame. The road map must delineate the strategy and the tools that will be used to reach the vision, specifying who the partners in the process would be and how they would be brought in as partners and stakeholders into the translation of the vision into concrete implementation plans.

It is very important that wide consultations with various stakeholders, and especially with women beneficiaries precede policy formulation and that there is a 'buy in" by all partners and stakeholders so that they accept the policy and road map as their own.

Similar issues and questions can be raised about the introduction and integration of ICTs in women's literacy initiatives. In addition, there are other detailed elements of a strategy in efforts that use ICTs for women's literacy and these are described in the sections that follow.

6.1 Formulation of a policy that is `gender-exclusive' as well as `gender `inclusive' within a gender equality framework:

With regard to literacy, there are two aspects that the policy would have to address:

1. A rights-based approach to literacy: Education for All cannot be guaranteed until right to literacy becomes a fundamental right of all citizens- women and men. This would have major implications insofar as women's literacy programmes are concerned. With a rights-based approach, the thrust in a women's literacy programme, would be on women's empowerment, organization-building, and forming alliances with like-minded groups

2. Addressing the problem of poverty centrally: Since the problem of illiteracy is inextricably linked to that of poverty, it would be necessary to deal with the problem of poverty centrally if women's illiteracy has to be addressed. If poverty becomes the main focus of intervention, then an expanded vision of literacy and livelihoods education, in the overall process of lifelong learning, would become critical. It is equally important that the policy be clear about the relationships between literacy programmes and other sectors. Women's literacy programmes have to be embedded as part of a larger effort towards social, economic and political empowerment. This important policy perspective will determine the way in which gender and literacy programmes will be implemented and the manner in which ICTs would be integrated in such programmes.

Due to the differential impact of ICTs on women, it would be necessary for a policy to have a `gender exclusive' focus. This would ensure that programmes/projects are designed exclusively for women. Alongside this, however, `gender inclusive' approaches would be necessary to ensure that gender concerns are addressed in all stages/phases of programme/project within the larger gender equality perspective.

Specifically, this would entail formulation of a policy that states specific gender outcomes and defines specific targets which can be translated into implementable and measurable outcomes. The policy would need a clear indication of what budgets are earmarked exclusively for gender-specific projects. If at the macro level there are a defined set of targets which can be translated into implementable and measurable outcomes, at the project management level, it would become possible to specify targets as well as possible implementable outcomes.

6.2 Gender Considerations in Project Cycle

Literacy projects that use ICTs must take into account gender-based constraints that women face and the factors that limit their participation in planning, project design, implementation, and evaluation. Gender considerations in a project cycle require a planning process that promotes the well being and empowerment of both poor women and poor men.

The common instrument for implementing a policy and for channelizing resources to achieve specific objectives, is a given project. Projects have specific phases, identified as planning, design, implementation and evaluation and are collectively termed the project cycle.

Gender should be mainstreamed at the earliest point in the project or programme cycle, as it can fundamentally affect or alter the entire project/programme concept and structure. It is not a one time exercise during the project or programme planning phase. On the contrary, it is an integral part of the entire planning and implementation process and continues throughout the life of the project or programme.

6.3 Planning Considerations

There are several planning aspects that need to be taken into consideration. These are specified below:

6.3.1 Ensure multi stake-holder partnerships :

Since ICT projects require huge financial investments for setting up technological infrastructure; it is possible that in the order of priorities for most governments of South Asian countries, the claims of poor women to participate in the information economy, would get short-changed. A strong political commitment would therefore be critical to ensure that women's share in the gains from ICTs is accorded primacy. It is possible that partnerships between government, NGOs and private sector would be necessary so that the respective strengths of each player can be leveraged. The principal role of the government, however, would be to facilitate the creation as well as equitable diffusion of infrastructure and the adaptation and up scaling of successful pilot projects. The private sector could play an important role in supporting development of content and applications in local languages relevant to women's concerns. NGOs could partner with the government for enabling participation of poor women in the various initiatives and also facilitate capacity building of women. Specifically, in the area of e-governance, there exist immense possibilities for various stakeholders to bring in their resources and capabilities (Gurumurthy, 2003).

6.3.2 Ensure that ICTs projects are process-oriented and not duration-specific or merely target-driven:

One of the problems with most development projects, more so if they are donor-funded, is that they operate with certain time-frames and lay down specific targets that have to be met. While these are planning constraints, it also has to be recognized that if ICT s have to be used effectively as learning tools, they have to be used in a long-term sustained manner. It is the user or the learner, not the content producer or delivery agency, who has to determine the extent and nature of benefit she or he will derive from technology. One of the strengths of the Mahila Samakhya project in India has been that it has respected women's pace of learning and has not rushed or hurried that process in order to meet deadlines or targets determined and fixed by external funding agencies, policy makers and planners. If poor women have to understand technology so that they can begin to exercise control over its content and use, it is they who would have to be involved in critical decision-making in order to ensure that ICTs work for their benefit and advantage.

It is possible that considerable time and energy is required to overcome resistance and negative attitudes to the use of technology. It has therefore to be recognized that the focus of ICT projects has to be on people, organizations, and processes and not just on technology.

6.3.3 Provide Infrastructure and appropriate technology:

The most effective way to ensure access by women to ICTs is to use appropriate technology that is learner-centred and learner-friendly. Selection of ICTs could be based on an assessment of learner needs, taking into account the desired knowledge and skills, as well as the broader technical environment. Many effective strategies use a multi-media approach, sometimes combining the

traditional with the modern. Women are known to prefer such a blended or a mixed mode of learning.

There is need first to take stock of availability of existing infrastructure, including Internet access in rural areas, and to then plan for hardware and software possibilities. Issues relating to connectivity, affordability, capability need to be addressed.

Equally important are questions that determine how technology choices are being made as part of project design. Some of these would include:

Is the technology easily available? Are the physical conditions appropriate to the technology choice existing, e.g. electricity

What steps are being taken to ensure access? Where is the technology based learning centre located? Is it location physically and socially suitable and safe for women to come and go without much effort and without disruption to their many responsibilities?

Who owns and controls access to the technology? Do women exercise control over technology?

What is the cost of the technology being deployed in terms of funding and effort for the agency and for the user? What are the opportunity costs?

How easy or complex is the technology to use?

Is the technology interactive? How is interactivity built in?

Is the technology portable? Can it be used anytime, anywhere or is it fixed in time and space, for instance like television

How easy is it to install, maintain, correct, modify and update the technology? Whose responsibility is it to undertake these tasks?

6.2.4 Enhance women's access to ICTs:

The concept of tele-centres to provide access to ICTs is now almost universally endorsed. The concept of a shared community resource that can act as a community-based information centre has tremendous value for the under-served and physically inaccessible areas. However, the tele-centre model has currently not taken sufficient cognizance and addressed women's priorities and constraints. Some of these constraints have been effectively highlighted by Reddi (2004)

Often the choice of location of the technology is determined by questions of `safety.' not accessibility. Where the technology is placed in a community setting also determines the social issues that underpin access. If the technology is located in a local government office or school, what opportunities do the poor, often living on the marginalized fringes of the village, have to access it? Can women and girls come as comfortably to the venue at any time convenient to them? If there is a custodian or facilitator identified to manage the location and use of the technology, what power roles does the custodian play? If control and operation is placed in the hands of government employee or school teacher, how will that affect

access to the marginalized? If the community centre is open at times when women's household duties take precedence, access is denied.'

Considering the dangers that benefits of connectivity and information will not reach women, Gurumurthy (2003) makes a plea that bringing women into the net of beneficiaries in community-based projects is a challenge that needs to be addressed continuously. It requires careful planning and on-going commitment to address and deal ingeniously with gendered barriers to access.

6.2.5 Plan for sustainability:

The problem with a large number of ICT projects is that since running costs are high, they tend to close down as soon as the project funds are over. It is therefore necessary to address the problem of sustainability at the planning stage itself. The `user pays' principle is often advocated and followed in order to make the community learning centres financially and technically viable and also to instill a sense of ownership. Experience, however, has shown that user fees tend to exclude the poor, particularly women. Partnerships between stakeholders so as to draw on the strengths and assets of various groups, as well as coordination of efforts with various institutions, ministries and organizations will ensure that this problem is addressed

6.3 Programme/Project Design:

6.3.1 Work through women's organizations/NGOs/civil society groups:

Any ICT project specifically for women, as in the case of any literacy programme for women, must work through women's organizations. The advantage of working through such organizations is that they would be able to provide resource support and organize training programmes for women. A shared understanding, a common vision relating to ICTs, women's literacy and women's empowerment would serve to enhance the value of such organizations. Since partners come from different organizational and individual backgrounds, skills, styles of functioning, it is essential that all partners coming together for an ICT in women's literacy project are clear about and share the project vision, goals, and specific objectives. The development of such a shared vision can come about through regular stakeholder meetings where issues are discussed and debated and problems thrashed out, collaborations and responsibilities assigned and accepted; budgets identified and earmarked and accountability ensured. Women and girls who will benefit should form an important part of the stakeholders, thereby making possible community partnership, involvement, and ownership of the effort. Some non-negotiable principles for identifying like-minded women's organizations and civil society groups and working with such partners, could be laid down. This would ensure that certain basic understanding relating to women's empowerment, is not compromised or diluted.

Likewise, partnerships with organizations would become necessary for providing resource support for organizing ICT training programmes and in the preparation of literacy materials that are suitable to the needs of poor women. Feminist resource organizations would be of great value for the purpose.

6.3.2 Use ICTs to develop literacy programmes that are learner-centred:

Research experience has shown that literacy initiatives must consider the cultural context and must be based on learners' needs. When the learners are given an opportunity to express their views and literacy needs, there is an increased interest and motivation to participate and learn. This is particularly relevant insofar as women are concerned as they are known to have low motivation for a traditional literacy programme that is imposed on them.

In addition, literacy teachers should utilize learner-centred teaching methodologies to ensure that learners remain interested and motivated. This requires that teachers should be trained in learner-centred methodologies as well as how to integrate the use of ICTs into teaching and learning.

6.3.3 Ensure that ICT projects encourage community participation

ICT projects, like any rural development project, must ensure sustained and ongoing consultations with members of the community, particularly the poor members, and women among them, so that they take crucial decisions relating to physical location, timing and use of ICTs. The poor benefit from ICTs when they know and control both technology and related know-how. Beside providing access to information, there would be need to increase the `voice' and participation of the poor, particularly women, in various decision-making processes. It is important for the poor to use ICTs to share knowledge and to build networks.

6.4 Implementation Strategies:

6.4.1 Address skill needs and ensure capacity building

In order to ensure that women and girls have access to ICTs, suitable training programmes would have to be organized. Training programmes would also need to be organized to raise gender awareness among poor women so that they begin to understand the commonality of oppression faced by them whether at home, in the community or at the work place and take collective action to change the existing social reality. Women trainers have been found to be effective in training other women. By training women to train others, they pass along skills and, at the same time, serve as role models. Learning by doing would de-mystify technology for women and ensure that they develop basic skills in operating them. Women's acquisition of skills can progress from use of simple technologies such as the use of digital camera, or audio recording, to more complex technologies. But more importantly, women would have to be trained not just as users of ICTs. They would have to be trained in both hardware and software skills, as content developers and as providers of user support and technical support.

The training programmes would have to be sensitive to gender issues and use language and materials that are based on women's experiences. Women can use technology to develop learner-generated literacy materials.

6.4.2 Develop relevant content:

In order to ensure content relevancy of ICTs, it would be necessary to focus on valuing women's

knowledge, wisdom and experience. Learning strategies would have to be gender-appropriate and built on traditional communication methods. Participatory methods can be effectively used to design and develop the learning content. Local language content can be developed as basic literacy materials, relating to women's daily lives and about their most pressing needs. A variety of materials could thus be developed. These could include areas such as reproductive health, legal issues, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc. Such materials would be of particular value to those women who have acquired basic literacy skills and need reading materials so that they do not relapse into illiteracy.

A common complaint heard about existing programmes is that the content is not relevant or suitable for use by women. For this reason, some hard questions must be asked about the content. For instance

Who are the women and what are their needs; i.e. what is the user profile; their learning needs, levels and styles?

Who is the content suited for?

What biases-social, cultural, economic, religious, linguistic, and gender-- does the content address?

Is the content realistic in terms of women's experiences? Is it relevant in terms of the women's experiences? Is it locally developed? And what share do the women have in developing their own content?

How is the content organized?

Is the content meeting information needs, accurate, up to date?

How has the technology been modified to make it easy for the women and girls to use, hear, and understand?

Is individual and group learning built in and encouraged?

Does the content encourage, promote, and facilitate interactivity and feedback?

What support systems, such as ground level facilitators and learning materials have been included and made available?

What mechanisms are in place for correction and modification of the content?

What mechanisms and content are in place to promote a continuous learning process that takes the women beyond literacy?

6.4.3 Ensure usability of ICTs

In order to address cultural barriers to women's access to ICTs, it would be necessary to adopt some

proactive measures to ensure that women and girls begin to use ICTs on a regular basis. Thus, several affirmative action initiatives might be necessary. Initially, women and girls could have access to ICTs free of charge. Special information campaigns could be carried out to help women understand what technology could do for them. Tele-centres that provide e-governance services can focus on development, gender and livelihood issues so that women can begin to value the importance of accessing information that has relevance to their lives. The sustainability issue would also need to be addressed. While there is no uniform model that can be applied, increasingly there is a recognition of the need for multi stake-holder partnerships to address this issue.

6.4.4 Ensure that ICT projects promote information literacy:.

There would be a need to use ICTs to develop information literacy among poor women. This is defined as the ability to access, know where to find, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources. This would involve communication, critical thinking and problems solving skills, and has been referred to as the `literacy plus approach' by Wagner and Kozma (2005).

6.4.5 Ensure professional development of functionaries at all levels:

The professional development of functionaries at all levels is critical for improvement of literacy programmes. ICTs can be effectively used for distance learning, materials creation, information and knowledge sharing and networking. The potential of ICTs can be meaningfully used for professional growth and development of literacy and development personnel, planners, administrators, educators.

7. Promote research and evaluation studies:

Gender-specific research on women learners and the barriers they face in accessing learning, including ICTs, remains a neglected area of study. Research studies are needed on the information needs of women in varying contexts. There is need to have gender-specific databases about technology use at all levels- local, national and regional. In order to understand the empowering potential of ICTs, it would be necessary to assess if ICTs really improve women's lives and gender relations as well as promote positive change at the individual, community and broader societal levels. Likewise, it would be necessary to ascertain if women have acquired sufficient literacy skills through the use of ICTs and whether they have access to information that is relevant to their individual, social and livelihood needs.

8. To sum up

ICT projects, by definition, have to be partnerships between agencies with different sets of skills and competencies from project management skills, to subject expertise, communication and media skills, media production abilities, knowledge of delivery technology and social scientists with gender, and grass roots experience with the women themselves. No single agency can integrate all of these skills and plan and execute an effort in a field as complex as women's literacy, which in turn is embedded in inequities of economic, social, ethnic, religious dimensions and to try to do so will only ensure that results from the effort will be minimal, if any

Therefore, there are hard questions that have to be asked and addressed meticulously and these relate specifically to ICT driven or ICT integrated projects and programmes and can be divided into policy and planning, content, and technology choices.

To conclude, technology integration into an effort such as women's literacy is no small task. To achieve a reasonable level of success, the effort has to be long term and sustained. Since technology based initiatives generally have very high start up and maintenance costs and since women's literacy is by and large a problem of the poor, it is imperative that the major stakeholder in the effort is the government whose constitutional obligation it is to provide education to every citizen, whether rich or poor, male or female, adult or child. It is not in the technology itself, but by the manner of its design and application that we can make a difference. Making a difference quickly is what technology promises, subject of course to our ability to use it wisely, meaningfully, and appropriately.

9. Beyond Literacy

In today's fast changing complex world, it would not be enough to acquire the traditional skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Developments in technology are taking place so rapidly that the perceptions about what it means to be a literate person are also changing. As use of ICTs grows, it would be necessary for people, women particularly, to go beyond literacy to develop the skills that would be necessary to utilize the new technologies effectively and productively for their own empowerment. The challenge for the educationists would be to constantly anticipate and to plan educational programmes that would enable adult women to cope with and take advantage of the rapid advances made possible by technology for the betterment of their lives and conditions.

Epilogue

Both the authors of this monograph have been involved in the planning and implementation of a large number of projects in the use of ICTs for development. We had always taken a broad view of the definition of ICTs and had started with the fundamental premise that ICTs were tools available to us for deployment in the various programmes and projects. As evaluators of an equally large number of efforts, we were getting increasingly concerned that despite the best of intentions, there were little or no visible results in improving the 'quality of life' of the marginalized, i.e. the primary identified beneficiaries of the efforts. Nor could one question the commitment or the efforts of the agencies involved; they were champions for the use of technologies for development and we knew them to be passionate about and deeply committed to their work. Equally thorough apparently was the process of planning and design.

We knew the ICTs could, if effectively used, make the critical difference. There is enough global evidence of the potential of ICTs to bring about transformative changes and these have been reported in global literature. While such literature very often commended the potential, it is difficult to tell whether these instances of success could be replicated and upscaled across time, space, and socio cultural settings. We felt that the experiences could be upscaled and replicated, provided that ICTs were given enough opportunity to demonstrate their potential. We felt that they had not been given enough of a chance. It was with this assumption that we set out on this exploration of trying to understand “what works, what doesn't and why”. Moving from a broad perspective of ICTs and development, to ICTs and adult education and finally, we narrowed our focus to women and women's literacy. After all, women would have to be key players if there was to be a sufficient return on the huge investments made.

What we found surprised us. Instead of being central to the process, women were often identified as prime beneficiaries, but conveniently forgotten when planning and implementation seriously got underway. We also found that despite the best intentions, ICTs were used as an afterthought, if the “opportunity arose”, or because their use was financially supported by a donor agency. Rarely, if ever, was the use of ICTs based on an in depth understanding of their strengths and weaknesses; and when ICTs had been used, there were serious gaps in partnerships and shared vision among the various stakeholders. Often the strength of organizations using ICTs was in the technology end; missing was the pedagogical link. Where pedagogy was a strength, an understanding of ICTs was inadequate- invariably an either/or situation. We also did not find any successes or failures, mostly there were lessons learned, and many of these lessons should really have been inputs in the planning and implementation process.

As we sharpened our focus to women and to the issue of literacy for women, the debates became even more confused. The enormous complexity and varied dimension of the women and development issues are often not addressed as we approach the theme from the perspectives of our own individual disciplinary backgrounds. Depending on our own disciplines, we tend to examine data from the perspective of our own training and specialization. For instance, agricultural scientists talk of food security, self sufficiency, livelihoods and growth in agricultural production. Economists study development in terms of growth rates, and incomes, GNP, GDP, and per capita income. Economists talk of international trade and the WTO and GATS; the changing dimension of societies from industrial to service based economies. Psychologists have always examined development from the perspective of the modernizing of the individualthe changing patterns of thought and behaviour that are both an impetus to and consequence of change in any society. Sociologists study group behaviour and how groups influence change. Political scientists look at development as a movement toward a more political participative civil society. Communication scholars study media and their development and role in a developing country. Health specialists look at improving health in societies.

Environmentalists are among the most vocal protagonists of “sustainable development' and educators generally tend

to examine literacy and educational indicators such as gross and net enrolment ratios. Gender specialists look at disaggregating gender data and the role of women in a society. Philosophers and others will argue for an increase and improvement in values in society. IT specialists examine the potential of digital technologies to bring about social change. Even the GID, GAD, and WCD perspectives (discussed earlier in this monograph) applied their own lenses. Consequently, depending on the perspective, a view of women and development today is also changing.

We have not taken an instrumentalist view, i.e. that literacy is an instrument in the process of women's growth as individuals. Ours is a rights based approach. We rooted our work in a strong belief that education is a fundamental and non negotiable right for women and that their path to this attainment of this right is through literacy. Literacy is at the core with all the perspectives pouring in like spokes in a wheel and it is the contexts and conditions that underpin our efforts, rather than the ICTs themselves, that are at the heart of the issue.

In this monograph, we have placed women at the centre of the debate and have tried to summarize the relationship of women and poverty, empowerment, literacy and education, and have examined a few cases of the use of ICTs for women's literacy. Our basic argument is not with the perspective from which one approaches the theme; but that it is necessary to take a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and multi-dimensional approach and to address the conditions and contexts which will then form the underpinning upon which efforts at the integration of ICTs into a programme should be based. We have also argued that ICTs in turn have their own dynamics, grammar, strengths, and weaknesses which must be understood if they are to be deployed effectively. There can be no piece- meal approach; the issue of using ICTs has to be taken in totality as part of an overall policy, plan, implementation and evaluation. Since much is already known about project cycles and about the inclusion of gender issues in the project cycle, we concluded by asking that all policy makers and programme managers address a set of questions that we have posed to help guide ICT decisions.

In conclusion, we request our readers not to look at any individual segment or section, but to look at the totality of our effort, which as mentioned in the prologue is work in progress and then to critique and add to this body of work, so that all of us together, can make a meaningful difference to the quality of women's lives among the poorest of the poor. Because no one can be as disempowered or disadvantaged as a poor, illiterate woman is.

Notes

1. This was referred to by Tichenor et al in their paper and subsequently also reiterated by Shingi et al (1982

2. UNESCO brings out the Global Monitoring Report each year that serves as a monitoring mechanism for Education for All initiative world-wide. While these vary each year, the latest report for 2006 has focused on Literacy. The literacy estimates are provided in this report.

3. For a more detailed discussion see their paper titled `Political Economy of the Information Society: a Southern view' WSIS Papers. www.Choike.org

4. For a fuller discussion see the Global Monitoring Report on Literacy for Life, 2006

5. Avik Ghosh has undertaken a detailed analysis of India's use of technology for social and human development in his book, Communication Technology and Human Development: Recent Experiences in the Indian Social Sector. New Delhi: Sage. 2006

6. This section is based on part of the text written by the first author for the publication Using ICT to Develop Literacy, UNESCO, Bangkok, 2006.

7. These country case studies included the following;
   (i) Zafar Iqbal M (2004) A study on best practices in ICT based education in Pakistan
   (ii) Ali M., A. Akbar, S. Alam (2004) Study on best practices in Bangladesh, UNESCO, Dhaka
   (iii) Jose de Almeida (2004) A Brazilian study about the best educational practices in basic education giving priority to the teaching of reading which uses information and communication technologies, UNESCO, Brasilia
   (iv) Zhang Z and L Zhao (2004) ICT-based illiteracy elimination and technological training in China's western countryside, UNESCO, Beijing
   (v) Abdul Samie m (2005) Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in illiteracy eradication in Egypt (Reality and Aspirations), UNESCO, Cairo
   (vi) Study of best practices in education based on ICT (2004), UNESCO, Mexico
   (vii) Chatterjee Bhasker (2004) ICT for basic education and literacy: country study for India, UNESCO, New Delhi

8. This is based on the country study on Bangladesh titled `Study on best practices on ICT based education in Bangladesh'

9. This is based on the country study from Pakistan titled `A Study on best practices in ICT based education in Pakistan

10. The country study on India by B.Chatterjee has a description of the various ICT projects for basic education and literacy.

11. For details see ICTs to develop literacy,UNESCO,2006

12. While the Jhabua Development Communications Project was lauded for the use of ICTs for training and development, an evaluation study undertaken by Reddi et al highlighted the various barriers the poor, especially women, faced in accessing technology

13. This has been highlighted by ICTs and Poverty: A literature Review, SIDA

14. This section attempts a synthesis of the lessons learnt on the basis of a review of several documents. Prominent among them are Alexander Flor: ICT are Poverty: the indisputable link;' Miria Pigato: information and Communication Technology, Poverty and Development in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia;Alan Greenberg: ICTs for Poverty Alleviation, Basic Tools and Enabling Sector;' Richard Gerster and ' Sonia Zimmermann: Information and Communication Technologies for Poverty Reduction?'; Catherine Nyaki Adeya: ICTs and Poverty: a Literature Review'

15. To examine gender in the information society, a meeting was organized by WSIS Gender Caucus, IT for Change, UNDP Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme, UNDP Asia Pacific Development Information Programme in partnerships with IDRC and UNIFEM, South Asia in Bangkok in March 2005

16. For a fuller discussion see Gender and Women in Agriculture and Rural Development in Asia , FAO

17. A number of examples are quoted in the publication `Using ICTs for Literacy Development'

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Mass Media: The Image, Role, and Social Conditions of Women

A collection and analysis of research materials

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NOTE TO THE READER

The publications marked X in the body of the text (e.g.: X, Report National Advertising Review Board (NARB), 1975) are listed below.

Advertising and Women. A Report on Advertising Portraying or Directed to Women, New York: the National Advertising Review Board (NARB), 1975.

A Report on the Way Women View Their Portrayal in Today's Television and Magazine Advertising, unpublished advertising study, New York: Foote, Cone and Belding Marketing Information Service, November 1972.

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Contents

Introduction

The question of mass media as mirror vs. creator of culture undoubtedly remains one of the most debated issues in the scientific exploration of the relationship between mass media and society. The controversy between critical media sociologists, who emphasize the value-producing function of mass media, and empirics, who are foremost interested in demonstrating how social reality is reflected in mass media, seems to have subsided in recent years, resulting in a compromise integrating both approaches. Much of the empirical research of the past decade points indeed in the direction of a creative, reinforcing or transforming cultural impact of mass media.

The subject of the study which we conducted at the invitation of Unesco serves as a nearly perfect illustration of the diverging conceptions underlying mass communication research.

A preliminary examination of the literature documentating the image, role and social conditions of women in mass media confronted us with another typical problem pervading mass communication research and social studies in general: a research field in a continuous state of flux, and the absence of accurate research methods to analyse the interdependence of its components. The image of women in mass media and women's participation in the production of messages disseminated by the mass media cannot be studied in isolation from the broad socio-economic, political, and cultural context at a specific point in time. How women are represented in mass media ultimately results from an interplay of forces which mould social reality. One of these social forces is the mass media. The communication media produce message systems and symbols which create or structure prevailing images of social reality, thus affecting the process of social change. Therefore, hardware, software and social development are inextricably linked. That such a perspective of the interrelationship between mass communication and society has far-reaching implications, particularly with respect to the developing nations, needs no further argument.

How this complex process operates with respect to one increasingly relevant social problem of our time is the focus of the present study. Its specific purpose is to systematize, analyse and evaluate our knowledge about the interrelationship between mass media and women's status on the basis of the literature which is currently available in this area of study. From this overview and critical analysis, we hope to assess which aspects of women's media roles have been a frequent or neglected focus of research, which continents and countries show concern with the issue, what major conclusions may be drawn from the available evidence and, finally, what research and policy implications ensue from this information. The extent to which we have been successful in meeting these objectives has depended partly on the barriers we encountered in the course of our investigation. Apart from the obvious limitations of time, distance and finance, cultural and language barriers hindered access to potentially relevant materials. The shortcomings of this mass communication study are partly owing to ... communication problems, though not to the lack of co-operation from the individuals and organizations we contacted. We are particularly indebted to Unesco as well as to the various documentation centres for communication research forming part of the international network promoted by Unesco.

The processing of this diversified mass of research materials presented us with the difficult problem of classifying and analysing the relevant documentation. A crucial decision involved the delineation of our research field. The definition of the term "mass media" in the literature on mass communication theory covers a wide spectrum. For the purposes of this study, we opted for an operational definition which corresponds with the use of the term in popular speech. Mass media can then be defined as means or instruments serving as carriers of messages from a communicator to a mass audience. For the same practical reasons, we have restricted our analysis to the four principal mass media: radio, television, film,

press, thus leaving many and equally important means of communication entirely unexplored.(1)

Despite the many shortcomings of this report, of which no one is more aware than the authors, we hope to have contributed to a better understanding of the interrelationship between mass media and society and their potential impact on the lives of at least half of the world population.

The author (or institution) is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book, and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and do not engage the responsibility of the Organization.

1. 15 May 1978 was set as the closing date for processing materials. Documents which became available after this deadline could not be included in this survey.

I. The image of Women in mass media

Research on women and mass media has focused predominantly on the portrayal of sex-roles in various mass media and different types of messages disseminated by the mass media. Content-analysis is the most commonly used approach in the study of media images of women. How women are represented in radio, television, the press, and film, as documented in such studies, will be discussed at length in the first section of this report. Because advertising is considered particularly influential in determining images of women projected in media, which are economically dependent on its support, research results pertaining to sex-role portrayal in advertisements will be grouped under a separate heading.

1. Images of women in advertising

Advertising has been a prime target of attack and scrutiny (Deckard, 1975, 380). The basic explanation for the critical focus on sex-role portrayal in advertising lies in the close relationship which exists between advertising, the consumer goods industry, and the crucial economic role of women as consumers. As a result, a large portion of commercial messages envisage women as their primary target audience (Faulder, 1977, 37). Advertising effectiveness largely depends on the manipulation of the consumer's self-image (Weibel, 1977, 142). Since women are perceived as the major consumers, advertising manipulates the female image in order to persuade women to buy. The major vehicles for advertising consumer products include commercial television and magazines, particularly those addressing a female audience. Other media carrying advertising, such as newspapers, radio, billboards, etc., have so far escaped the attention of researchers and critics. Since mass advertising plays a key role in every consumer-based economy, research on portrayal of women in advertising is concentrated in industrialized consumer societies, particularly in the U.S.A., as reflected in the following discussion.

(a) North-America

Critics of female images in advertising are not concerned with the quantity of women appearing in advertisements. Research indicates that women are visible in advertising at least on an equal basis with men (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1974 - O'Donnell and O'Donnell, 1978), as opposed to the severe under-representation of females in other types of media content (cfr. infra). The qualitative representation of this highly visible female is considered far more alarming. Recurrent sexist charges focus on three aspects of the female image in advertising: as employed woman, as housewife, as sex-object (X, Report National Advertising Review Board (NARB), 1975). To document the extent to which women are stereotyped in advertising, two measures will be used:

- content-analysis of female portrayal in print and broadcast advertisements. The majority of research materials come in this category.
- women's recognition of and reaction to the way they are represented in advertising.

1. The portrayal of the employed woman, woman as housewife, woman as sex-object. A review of content-analytical studies

1.1. The representation of the employed woman

Participation of women, single and married, in the labour force has expanded significantly since 1947 (Ferris, 1971, 85-87). In 1973, more than half of American women between 18 and 64 were gainfully employed (X, NARB report, 1975). The number of women in professional occupation has also grown substantially. During the 1960's, the number of women earning $10,000 or more increased sevenfold (X, NARB report, 1975). Compared to the actual female employment status, working women are under-represented in both print and broadcast advertisements. Cantor (1972) found that women in TV-commercials were mostly represented in domestic roles, while men were more likely

to be portrayed in occupational roles or non-domestic activities. Occupationally portrayed women rarely held high-status jobs. In prime time TV-commercials (Miles, 1975), working males outnumbered working females by 2 to 1. Women appeared mostly as housewives or, if employed, in traditionally female occupations. Courtney and Whipple (1974) compared the results of four studies on female portrayal in TV-advertising covering a two-year time span. The over-representation of women in home/family roles, and of men in media/celebrity and business management occupations was apparent. Women were further shown in a limited variety of occupational roles, not reflective of their real-life activities. The range of occupations males were portrayed in was much wider than that of females, although the imbalance seemed to be changing. In an analysis of commercials aired during the 1975 season on KDKA-TV, Pittsburgh (Women's Advisory Council to KDKA-TV, 1975), males still held a much greater variety of occupations than females (70 vs. 17). As revealed in other studies, the majority of females (72%) were portrayed in domestic roles. Only 28% of the portrayed women were employed and almost invariably in traditionally female occupations. 54% of the males were in occupations, frequently of high status. The female images projected in magazine advertisements follow the same pattern as revealed for TV-commercials. However, Sexton and Haberman (1974) noted some increase from 1951 to 1971 in the number of working women, although strictly in traditional jobs. A 1976 study (Culley and Bennett, 1976) provided an evolutionary perspective of the portrayal of women in both print and television advertising from 1970 to 1974. While women were still more likely than men to be shown in domestic roles, the gap between the sexes had narrowed significantly with respect to occupational representation. However, the study observed that roles that are not depicted are as indicative as those that are. No women were shown as lawyers, doctors, judges, or scientists. Even occupationally portrayed women were seldom shown at work. Few advertisements were directed to working women.

1.2. The portrayal of woman as housewife

The issue of housework occupies a special place in feminist criticism of sexual role divisions (X, NARB, 1975). Housework is considered women's special burden, and the routine and drudgery involved in the performance of domestic tasks are perceived as a waste of women's time, energy and talents. The portrayal of women in household-related roles, mostly in advertisements for household products, is a cause of concern, particularly because of the repetitiousness of the housewife image. Showing women performing domestic tasks and using household products in their homes is not objectionable per se. The endless repetition of such portrayal suggests however that women's place is only in the home (X, NARB, 1975). Culley and Bennett's follow-up study (1976) revealed that in TV-commercials aired in 1974 as well as in 1971 the largest role category for women was the housewife/mother role. The percentage of housewives had decreased however from 56% in 1971 to 45% in 1974. In magazine advertisements, the housewife/mother role also remained predominant for women in 1974 as in 1970. Although most studies report the overwhelming representation of women in household roles, the trend appears to be on the decline in magazine as well as in TV-advertising. Sexton and Haberman (1974) found a substantial decrease in the housewife image of women in magazine advertisements from 1951 to 1971. Another study covering the 1959 to 1971 period in magazine advertising confirmed this downward trend (Venkatesan and Losco, 1975).

While in terms of quantity, the portrayal of women as housewives appears to be changing for the better, the quality of the housewife image shows less sign of improvement. Housewives are often shown as stupid, incapable of performing simple tasks, and dependent on male advice (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1970). One significant indication of the authority position of men with regard to women is the off-camera voice-over, which is used in many TV-commercials to summarize the virtues of the advertised product. All studies of role portrayal in TV-advertising unanimously report an overwhelming predominance of male voice-overs (cfr. X, Screen Actors Guild, 1974 - Miles, 1975 - Verna, 1975 - WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975 - O'Donnell and O'Donnell, 1978). Marecek e.a. (1978) noted a subtle change in the portrayal of males vs. females as authority figures in TV-commercials from 1972 to 1974. While the representation of women both as authoritative voice-overs and as on-screen experts in advertisements without voice-overs remained virtually unchanged over the 3-year period, the proportion of female experts in commericals using an authoritative, mostly male voice-over had increased. However, this increase was restricted to commercials for "women's" products such as household-related and personal-care products. A further description of the male-female relationship of authority/dependency was given in a comparative study by Courtney and Whipple (1974). Two of the four studies they reviewed analysed the tasks and activities of product representatives in advertisements. Females were usually shown performing domestic tasks related to the product. Male product representatives were mostly depicted demonstrating the product or giving advice and instructions, but never using it. Men were also shown as the beneficiaries in 54% of the food advertisements and in 81% of the cleaning products advertisements. The product categories featuring females in their advertising are also indicative of the advertiser's view of women's capacities. An update of Courtney and Lockeretz' 1970 analysis of magazine advertisements (Culley and Bennett, 1976) revealed that

females predominated in advertisements for personal and home-related products, while advertisements for non-household products featured either women and men together or males only. In TV-commercials men were also more likely to represent non-domestic products, while female representatives were more likely to appear in advertisements for household-related products (O'Donnell and O'Donnell, 1978). According to Culley and Bennett, the implication inherent in this practice is that women do not operate independently in other than inexpensive and household-related purchases. Besides defining the relationship between the sexes as one of female dependency and male authority, many advertisements reflect unflattering portrayals of women in domestic roles (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975). The housewife appears as a person obsessed with cleanliness and embarrassed or guilty about dirt. She is frequently shown as either envious of other women's achievements or boastful about her own cooking or cleaning accomplishments. While the number of women in household roles has decreased in recent years, advertising continues to show housewives as dependent on male advice and assistance in the purchase and the use of products, which often include those associated with the performance of tasks traditionally considered female (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975). The frequent unflattering depiction of housewives as being over-achieving because of guilt feelings, embarrassment or envy, further defines the already narrow image of her as a person with a distorted sense of values (X, NARB report, 1975).

1.3. The depiction of woman as sex-object

Women are resentful of the exploitative use of the female body in advertising (X, NARB, 1975). They feel that the use of the female body as a mere decoration or as an attention-getting device diminishes women's self-esteem and ignores other aspects of women's personality and their human potential. The effect of the sexual-sell advertising on male-female relationships and on children's sense of values is perceived as potentially harmful. The concern about the impact on children of advertising sex-role portrayal is particularly relevant in view of the finding that advertising directed to children appears to be more sexist than adult-oriented advertisements (O'Kelly and Bloomquist, 1976 - Verna, 1975 - WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975).

Dispenza (1975) suggests that women are primarily used by advertisers to sell products to both women and men on the basis of their sexual appeal to men. Depending on the sex of the target group, the strategies vary. In female-oriented advertisements, women are invited to identify with the female product representative who is offered the ultimate reward, i.e. success with males, as a result of using the product. In male-oriented advertisements, male consumers are promised the portrayed female as the bonus that comes with the product. Venkatesan and Losco (1975) found that the female roles most frequently represented over the 13-year period from 1959 to 1971 were woman as sex-object and woman as physically beautiful. The portrayal of woman as sex-object, although overall on the decline, was most pronounced in men's (53% of the portrayed females) and general audience magazines (65%). The changes in female portrayal occurring over the 13-year time span were mostly attributable to the shift of emphasis in women's magazines. While only 12% of the females in women's magazines advertisements were coded as sex-objects, the emphasis had shifted to "woman as physically beautiful", the most frequently portrayed role category (61%) in the women's press. The predominance of sex-object/decoration images of women in men's magazines was also revealed in a 1976 study conducted by Pingree, Hawkins, Butler and Paisley. This team of researchers developed a 5-level ordinal consciousness scale to measure the degree rather than the quantity of sexism in magazine advertising. Although the entire sample, including "Ms. Magazine", "Playboy", "Time" and "Newsweek", contained overall a significant number of Level 1 advertisements, i.e. those depicting women as sexual objects, as decorations or as persons dependent on man, "Playboy" topped all other magazines in the sample with no less than 54% of the female advertising characters as sexual or decorative objects.

Poe (1976) examined the representation of active women, defined as women engaged in physical activities or sports, in a sample of women's and general magazine advertisements of 1928, 1956 and 1972. Besides a general decrease in the presence of active women and the emphasis on recreation rather than competition, the analysis revealed that sports advertisements frequently had a sexual rather than an athletic implication.

Although the exploitation of women as sexual objects seems to be receding in both magazine and television advertising (Culley and Bennett, 1976), the use of the female body for its sexual appeal is still a well-established advertising practice, particularly in male-oriented media. The decrease in sex-object images of women is further compensated by an increased emphasis on female physical beauty. Sexton and Haberman (1974) found that the depiction of women with obviously alluring physiques had substantially increased in 1974 as compared with 1971 in three of the five product categories examined. Only home and office equipment advertisements featured no decorative or alluring women.

The profile of women in advertisements outlined by Sexton and Haberman (1974) on the basis of their research results, encompasses the general trends indicated by content-analysis. The overall conclusion is that advertising continues to present narrow images of women. Women are mostly depicted as social people appearing in a predictable environment. Although the emphasis on women as alluring, decorative or traditional, varied according to the product category, at least one of these traits was prevalent in advertisements for all products. Advertising's contribution to broadening the perspective of women is limited to a substantial decrease in the number of housewife/

mother images. Although working women are appearing more frequently in advertising, they remain restricted to traditionally female occupations. Research thus appears to provide ample evidence corroborating continuing criticism of the way advertising portrays both white and minority women (X, NARB report, 1975).

2. Women's perception of and attitudes towards female images in advertising

Despite indications that women find the image of woman as comprising an inferior class derogatory (X, NARB report, 1975), and feminist campaigns protesting against insulting and degrading portrayals of women in advertisements (Deckard, 1975, 379-380), little research has been conducted on how women view their portrayal in advertising (Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977). An advertising agency (X, Foote, Cone and Belding, 1972) interviewed a representative sample of women about their reactions to the way they are represented in television and magazine advertising. Only about 15% of the respondents were genuinely satisfied. Most respondents (about 50%) had mixed feelings, but were more negative than positive in their reactions. About 20% of the interviewees were extremely resentful of female portrayals in advertisements. Although only a minority of female respondents was highly critical, this group was more articulate in voicing objections and reasons for dissatisfaction than the satisfied or mixed group. Furthermore, the strongest critics tended to be better educated and financially better off than the non- or mild critics, and thus more likely to be influential opinion-leaders. 15% of the respondents had no opinion. They tended to be older and more down-scale than women in the other opinion groups.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in a survey conducted by Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia (1977) provide further evidence for the finding that better-educated and more affluent people tend to be more critical of sex-role portrayal in advertising. More women than men responded to the questionnaire the researchers mailed to a sample of Dallas and Denver residents. Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia interpret the higher response rate of women as indicative of a higher interest level among women than among men. The responses came mostly from younger, better-educated persons with a higher socio-economic status than the average resident of these cities. This suggests that the young, the educated and upper-classes tend to be more concerned with advertising images of people than the average person. Since the response rate was biased in favour of upper-level people, the survey results were not generalizable to the entire population.

The study revealed that women, more than men, increasingly found that advertising suggests that women don't do important things, portrays women in a manner that is offensive, and implies that woman's place is in the home. Females were less likely than males to agree with the statements that advertising gives a realistic picture of men, and that it depicts women as sex-objects. The survey also examined the relationship between perceptions of sex-role portrayal and (1) company image, and (2) buying intentions. The attitudes towards the company image showed significant differences between the sexes. Women were more likely than men to believe that companies using offensive advertisements practised discrimination in employment, and that role portrayals in advertising were merely an extension of the company's view of women's place in society. However, with respect to buying intentions, both women and men tended to continue purchasing products, even if they were advertised in a way they considered offensive. Although overall women were more sensitive to sexual role portrayal than men, their attitudes were not excessively critical. Consistency in women's attitudes was found with respect to the statements that (1) neither men nor women were accurately portrayed in advertising, (2) that current portrayal of women in advertising is improving. As predictable from the response rates, the strongest critics were better-educated, younger, upper-status women, who had rejected traditional role concepts. On the basis of these data, the researchers suggest that the strongest critics of sex-role images in advertising may include those women who are most articulate and most influential.

One characteristic of the critical female consumer, i.e. non-traditional role orientation, was further explored in a study conducted by Wortzel and Frisbie (1974). In order to examine advertising effectiveness, Wortzel and Frisbie surveyed a demographically diversified and representative sample of mostly young (i.e. more likely to be less tradition-oriented) women with regard to their sex-role portrayal preferences. The subjects participating in the experiment were measured for their attitudes towards women's liberation. It was found that sex-role portrayal preference was based on the advertised product's function rather than on ideology. Lull, Hanson and Marx (1977) explored the degree to which college women and college men were sensitive to sex-role stereotyping in TV-commercials. The hypothesis that college women would be more sensitive than their male counterparts was strongly supported. The research data also provided some evidence that identification with women's liberation is positively associated with recognition of female sex-role stereotypes in TV-advertising, but less than expected. Recognition of sexual stereotypes to some extent depended on the degree to which the stereotype was the focal point in the advertisement.

The research conducted so far reveals the following trends in attitudes towards sex-role portrayal in advertising:

- sensitivity to sexual stereotyping in advertising is not as widespread as feminists might hope;

- women are more critical than men;
- awareness of female stereotypes is positively related to high socio-economic status and educational level, and to some extent to identification with the women's movement;
- strong critics tend to be more articulate than mild or non-critics. The group of upper-status and articulate women who are alienated by current advertising images of women represents an influential and potentially growing segment of the population.

Although research on female images in advertising and the way women perceive them has focused primarily on television and magazines, objectionable advertising does not seem to be confined to these media. The pervasiveness of offensive advertisements both with respect to media and the range of products, was the most striking result of a survey conducted in Ontario, Canada (Aaron, 1975). The fact that out of 1,017 returns to the questionnaire only one expressed satisfaction with sex-role portrayal in advertising supports the overall finding that critics are more articulate in voicing their objections than non-critics in expressing their support.

(b) Western Europe

The European literature on portrayal of women in advertising is generally less concerned with statistics and numerical data. It is rather descriptive and often polemical, using empirical data - not always methodologically verifiable - to illustrate the underlying rationale. This approach is reducible to the argument that the effectiveness of advertising depends on women's identification with the images it projects. The essential function of advertising is of the economic order. Everything, including sex-role images, is conceived in function of this commercial goal. "The general idea of advertising being in the forefront of change and development is misconceived. It embraces change in the technological sense alone - not as a step towards human betterment or social justice, but as an increase in efficiency and productivity." (Millum, 1975, 181). Corroborating evidence is often borrowed from American studies, as data on the European situation are still lacking (Scott, 1976). Since the American advertising industry appears to be the major trendsetter in the way advertisements are conceived and produced (Lorée, 1977), advertising messages distributed in Europe reflect a striking resemblance to the American model. Therefore, the profile of the advertising woman outlined by Scott (1976) is applicable to the European situation, even though it relies heavily on data relevant to the American cultural context. This profile is described in terms of basic assumptions about woman's role and woman's place which underlie female images in advertising. The resulting female stereotype is one which defines woman with respect to the bi-polar sphere of the home and her relationship to man.

1. A woman's goal in life is to attract and attain a man

Manifestations of this view of femininity are manifold:

- women in advertising are always young and attractive;
- they are frequently depicted as sexual objects;
- advertising restricts woman to the home and isolates her from other women. Outside the home, man is her favourite companion;
- women in advertising seldom appear as competent or intelligent people. Intelligence is presented as a masculine trait. Intelligent women are therefore "unfeminine" and disliked by men.

Emphasis on woman's physical appearance pervades advertisements directed to both male and female consumers. Female-oriented advertisements appeal to women's fear of being rejected by men because of body odour, bad breath, excessive body hair, dry or oily skin, etc. Male-oriented advertisements feature beautiful, sexy women as the ultimate reward for using the advertised product (Lorée, 1977 - Warren, 1978). The seductive woman is an object of pleasure for and consumption by males (Rocard, 1968). In exchange for beauty and youth, women are rewarded with security and status, love and romance (Adams and Laurikietis, 1976). As in America, the flagrant exploitation of female sex-appeal in advertising is receding (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976 - Gravesteyn, 1975). This, however, does not imply that female beauty has lost significance for the concept of femininity as defined in advertising. On the contrary, emphasis on the attractive female physique is actually increasing (Ceulemans, 1977 - Van De Maele, 1978). The beautiful woman who is primarily concerned with the effect of her physical appearance on men was the most frequently found female image in a study of advertisements in British women's magazines (Millum, 1975). To the familiar image of woman who is concerned with the way she looks in order to attract male attention and attain social success, advertising has added the image of the narcissistic woman who is equally sensual and aware of her feminine beauty, but concerned only with her own personal feelings about herself. Lorée interprets this development as reflecting advertising's response to the feminist re-definition of woman's identify and role. The narcissistic or auto-erotic woman represents the commercial version of the liberated woman (cfr. Warren, 1978). No truly liberated images of woman are to be found in advertising, according to Lorée (1977). The emphasis on female beauty in the pictorial message is amplified by the accompanying advertising copy. Investigation into the interrelationship between the visual and textual advertising language in the persuasive process revealed that the three key words associated with sex-role portrayal were naturalness, beauty and uniqueness (Vorlat, 1976). For

women, being natural and beautiful was presented as the essence of femininity. Being unique appeared to be more important to a man than to a woman.

Advertising thus defines woman's relationship to man primarily in terms of the appeal feminine attractiveness has for man. The male-oriented image of woman is also implicit in the depiction of woman secluded from the world outside her domestic environment and from other women (Scott, 1976). A recent analysis of advertisements in the Belgian women's press provided corroborating evidence for the contention that women tend to be portrayed alone and confined to the home (Van de Maele, 1978). The home is actually increasingly stressed as woman's natural environment and serves more and more as decor for her interactions with both males and females (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976 - Van De Maele, 1978). While women are more frequently paired with male partners both in and outside the home, the number of advertisements showing women in each other's company has increased over the past decade (Van De Maele, 1978). While women tend to be less often portrayed alone, they favour men to keep them company in, and a fortiori outside, the home (Ceulemans, 1977). Women and men are depicted as equal partners in social situations only. With respect to household, professional, technical or complicated matters, man functions as the authority, the expert, the adviser, while woman executes (Ceulemans, 1977 - Van De Maele, 1978 - De Keyser, undated).

Research thus provides ample evidence for the contention that woman's role in life as defined in advertising is to attract a man by means of her appealing physique, and to keep him by being deferential and subservient to him. In recent years, the emphasis on the beautiful woman as an object of pleasure has increased, while the portrayal of woman as an incapable, dependent person to be dominated by man has decreased. If this development is to be interpreted as a reflection of the changing social climate, it indicates that advertising is not committed to changing woman's image. It merely adapts to social change by updating the traditional image.

2. Women are ultimately and naturally housewives, wives and mothers

Domesticity is the second pole of the two-dimensional image of femininity in advertising (cfr. Flick, 1977). That woman is essentially a domestic person is expressed in various ways (Scott, 1976):

- Women do not work outside the home

Occupational portrayal of women is rare and certainly not commensurate with the actual number of females in the labour force (Ceulemans, 1977 - Van De Maele, 1978 - Millum, 1975). While some studies indicate a more or less substantial increase in the proportion of working women in advertising of the past 10 to 15 years (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976 - Lorée, 1977), other surveys observed no such development (Ceulemans, 1977 - Millum, 1975 - Van De Maele, 1978).

- Women are not successful in work outside the home: they do not do male jobs

Even if more working women appear in advertisements, they have not moved out of the traditionally female service occupations (Lorée, 1977 - Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976 - Ceulemans, 1977). Content-analysis further suggests that the increasing frequency of employed women is largely product-related, and not attributable to a conscious effort on the part of advertisers to close the void between image and social reality (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976). In particular advertisements for vacations and travel, which have significantly grown in recent years, are accountable for the change, as they use women in service occupations to attract (male) interest (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976). The rising vacation/leisure/travel industry also appeals to female consumers, including those who are gainfully employed, by offering them a temporary return to true femininity, i.e. youth, beauty, sex-appeal, Lorée observes. Advertisements for household products are also beginning to envisage and portray working women. Efficiency in terms of performance and time are stressed here, in order to reduce guilt feelings women might (and should!) experience when pursuing a (strictly female) career. According to Lorée (1977), this change of strategy merely implies that advertising is willing to tolerate women's professional aspirations, provided that they do not interfere with their marital and maternal obligations. Women in advertising, even if they are working, still have to carry the burden of housework. Double work is the price women have to pay for having, or wanting, to work outside the home.

- Men and women have strictly delineated sex-roles and household tasks

All content-analyses indicate that advertising divides the world into male and female spheres: woman's place is in the home, the world of work is man's territory. This becomes apparent from the preponderance of housewife roles for women and the high frequency of occupational roles for men (cfr. Flick, 1977). The male position of authority in the professional world is evident: women are seldom employed and, if they are, they remain in the service and subordinate positions traditionally reserved for them. Even within the home, the respective tasks of men and women are clearly circumscribed. The association of cleaning products, detergents and baby-care products with female usage, and of more expensive or larger purchases with male expertise and decision-making describes the female vs. male position within the

family unit (Ceulemans, 1977). Henstra and Pinckaers (1976) attribute the diminished emphasis on the housewife role, which they observed in Netherlands magazine advertisements, to the transfer of advertisements for cleaning products and detergents to television. While parental roles are on the increase for both males and females (Henstra and Pinckaers, 1976 - Van De Maele, 1978), the mother-child and father-child relationships differ significantly. Childcare is woman's work (cfr. Netherlands opinion poll cited by Flick, 1977). Men occasionally spend some time with their children. Usually parents appear together in a family context, usually around the dinner table, where all enjoy mother's cooking (Van De Maele, 1978). With respect to employment, marriage and parenthood, women seem to have clearly delineated roles. That sex-roles are complementary rather than interchangeable also appears from the association of the qualities products are imbued with: beauty, softness, dependency, tenderness, carefulness are *feminine traits; expertise, strength, ambition,* dominance are associated with masculinity (Ceulemans, 1977). This supports Scott's conclusion that "advertising denies everything which is appositely sexual: strength in the woman, compassion and sensitivity in the man." Henstra and Pinckaers (1976) approached the question of sex-role polarization in advertising from a different perspective. They used a three-dimensional scale to identify the characteristics demonstrated by the male(s) and female(s) appearing in each advertisement as "feminine", "masculine" or "neutral". Traits which are culturally defined as "feminine" predominated for females, although the proportion of women with a decidedly "feminine" psychological profile had decreased in 1975 as compared with 1965. The trend towards depolarization of sex-roles and sex-role attributes was more pronounced with respect to male advertising models. While in 1965 half the male population in advertisements demonstrated a clear "masculine" profile, the proportion of "masculine" males had decreased to 39% in 1975, while the percentage of "neutral" personality profiles had risen from 36% to 41.5%.

- Women like housework. It is fulfilling

According to Scott (1976), advertising gets around the contradiction between emphasizing women's domestic role and the obvious fact that housework is boring, unpleasant and menial by suggesting the opposite. Therefore, housewives in advertising derive great satisfaction from their cooking and cleaning accomplishments. What makes life worthwhile is soft laundry, shiny floors and sparkling clean dishes. It is particularly the implication inherent in this unflattering portrayal, i.e. that women have a warped sense of values (cfr. Scott, 5), which advertising critics find offensive. However, up until now few objective data have been presented to substantiate this widely-held contention, which is frequently stated matter-of-factly.

- Little girls grow up to be housekeepers, wives and mothers

The assignment of traditional sex-roles to children would be a significant indication that advertising is primarily concerned with preserving and reinforcing the status quo. According to Scott (1976), that advertising channels children into sex-stereotyped roles is clearly evidenced by its depiction of children's interactions with their parents, their peers and with toys. The research materials we consulted analysed adult roles only, thus leaving this important research area entirely unexplored.

(c) Latin America

The participants in the seminar on "Mass Media and Their Influence on the Image of Women", held in the summer of 1977 in Santo Domingo and attended by 20 member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), did not overlook the role of advertising. The resolution, released by the Inter-American Commission on Women of the OAS (CIM, 1977), stressed the importance of advertising as the primary means by which communications media sustain themselves. Its relevance to the study of the interrelationship between mass media and images of woman was further demonstrated from the double perspective of women's role as major consumers and as principal elements of persuasion. Advertising envisages female consumers as the principal audience for its messages. Women are further utilized in the persuasion process as attention-getting devices via the exploitation of their sexual appeal. To this end, advertising depicts women as sexual and decoration objectives. The resolution did not digress on other aspects of the female image, which implies that the portrayal of woman as sex-object is considered the dominant image of woman projected in advertising.

Conclusion

The significance of advertising in the assessment of how mass media affect the social position of women needs no further argument. Advertising is of vital importance to the continued functioning of mass communication media which are financially dependent on it. Advertisers revert to mass media in order to maximize marketing potential for their products. Women feature in this process in two capacities: as most sollicited consumers and as instruments of persuasion. It is the latter role which we have documented extensively above. The evidence indicates that woman is utilized in advertising to sell products to both male and female consumers by virtue of her two-dimensional role: her role as housewife/mother/wife and her function as a decorative and sexual object. The fact that the concept of woman's role, underlying these dominant images, has remained virtually unchanged

over the past decades indicates that advertising is indeed not to be perceived as a vanguard of social development. Its impact on the process of social change is restraining rather than progressive (cfr. Flick, 1977). Only for the purpose of increased efficiency does advertising embrace change (cfr. Millum, 1975). It is in this light that developments in the way advertising portrays women are to be interpreted.

Two trends suggest some adaptation to changing social conditions: the substantial decrease in the number of housewives appearing in advertisements, and the increasing emphasis on the physical appearance of women. While the former may be considered a truly positive evolution, the latter nullifies any expectations one might have as to advertisers' commitment to the improvement of woman's condition. Changes in the way advertising depicts women merely reflect that advertisers have become sensitive to the fact that continued emphasis on the domestic image of woman no longer serves their commercial interests. To capitalize on women's new self-image, advertising has turned to manipulating one aspect of the new woman, i.e. her sexuality. Under the guise of sexual liberation, advertising continues to exploit the traditional image of woman as sex-symbol. Other dimensions of woman's personality and the numerous ways in which she participates in all spheres of contemporary life are as absent from advertising images as ever.

2. Broadcasting

A. Images of women in radio

Research conducted to date on women's images projected in broadcasting is heavily balanced in favour of television. Because of the absence of, or limited accessibility to, and as a result the narrow impact of, a well-developed broadcasting system in many countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the broadcasting media have generated little interest as potential hindrances or contributors to the improvement of women's status in these countries. The bulk of available research documents originates in the U.S.A., where television has secured a powerful position as the primary family entertainment medium. While radio has suffered both in status and functional diversity from the advent of television, it nevertheless remains an omnipresent medium in many societies with great potential for stimulating public awareness of women's social position. That awareness of this potential is growing is demonstrated by feminist pressure on radio stations, particularly in the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom, for obtaining more broadcast time for women and women's issues. Awareness of the function broadcasting, and particularly radio, can perform in the education of Third World women and in general development is also growing. While this growing consciousness has resulted in increased efforts to document the potential application of broadcasting for developmental purposes (cfr. research sponsored by Unesco), systematic studies of how radio presents women today, or how it may contribute to a positive portrayal of women in the future have yet to be undertaken.

(a) North America

Despite successful attempts to use radio as an outlet for feminist ideas (Hole and Levine, 1971, 275-276), no effort has been made to evaluate qualitatively the images of women reflected in radio. Research from both academic and feminist sources does not reach beyond a quantitative assessment of radio air time devoted to "women's programming". The precise implication of the term "women's programmes" was a focal point of a 1975 survey of public radio stations conducted by Michele Casanave and published in (X, Media Report to Women, Oct. 1976). Public, rather than commercial, radio stations were surveyed, because, by its own definition, public radio should serve the needs and interests of audience groups insufficiently catered for by commercial radio. The responses from local radio stations (58% of the sample responded) showed women-related subject matter and the intention to reach a female audience as the most essential ingredients for a women's radio programme. Using this criterion, Casanave examined air time, production mode and staff, and programming budget as indicators of a radio station's concern for women. The results indicated a lack of commitment to women's programming. More than one-third of the responding stations did not broadcast women's programmes. Those that did, devoted approximately 1.4% of their total weekly broadcast time to this type of programme, and spent an average of 1 to 3% of their total programming budget on women's programmes. Most stations relied predominantly on female staff for production, almost half of whom consisted of part-time employees or community volunteers. However, the study - at least as reported in Media Report to Women - failed to content-analyse the thus defined women's programmes. Neither was the relevance of radio content specifically aimed at women evaluated, as has been the case for other media (cfr. infra - the women's section in newspapers). Many producers as well as non-producers of women's programmes responding to the survey questionnaire objected to a female-male categorization of radio programming, on the basis that all areas of interest appeal, or should appeal, to both women and men. This rejection of sex-segregated radio programming corresponds with feminist criticism of the delineation of male vs. female spheres of interest in the media.

Whether or not labelling women-related radio content "women's programmes" is relevant, at least one group of women has expressed the need for more radio programmes focusing on women's issues and women's music. (X, Media Report to Women, Nov. 1977). The group, "Women Engaged

in Broadcasting", found that none of the commercial or public radio stations in the Boston area devoted more than 1% of their air time to programmes for and about women. Since the remaining 99% of programming restricts women to the roles of selling products or singing love songs, radio largely fails to reflect the interests of its female audience, the group argues. According to its study report, serving women's interests requires a reflection of their participation in society and its culture. Women's culture is virtually excluded from radio, and other media as well, the report observes. The awareness of this cultural void is growing among women and opening a new field of study, focusing on the position and portrayal of women in popular music and the arts (cfr. Reinartz, 1975-Goddard, 1977-Meade, 1972-RAT Staff, 1972-Brown, 1975-Billboard, Feb. 25, 1978).

(b) Western Europe

The position and portrayal of women in radio remains also largely unexplored in Europe. A recent attempt to document the position of women in British media by the "Women in Media" group included a comprehensive survey of radio (Ross, 1977). The study focuses primarily on the four BBC national networks. The author observes that women account for approximately two-thirds of Great Britain's radio audience, and that they generally listen more to the radio than men. This is reflected in the stations' programming content and policies, according to Ross. The survey revealed that broadcasters define the role of radio primarily as background company and as a link with the outside world for housewives, their major audience, whom they perceive as a separate stratum. Because it is generally believed that women prefer to be talked to by men - a belief which has remained virtually unchallenged - daytime radio voices are almost invariably male. Ross compares the function of the male radio disc-jockey with that of the female pin-up in tabloid newspapers, observing that both result from what she calls "the sexual-sell advertising". She traces this philosophy back to the influence of the commercial pirate stations. Advertising and marketing people perceive radio as a medium for selling household products to women as consumers. They claim that women cannot sell to other women, because of the "lack of conviction" of the female voice. According to Ross, this rationale is used by the male radio hierarchy to preserve the status quo. To support her explanation, she refers to recent developments in radio news reporting which show that women are as acceptable as men as reporters on "serious" issues. On the other hand, since daytime sound broadcasting strictly adheres to the established format of trivial man-to-woman talk interspersed with music, no alternatives have been allowed to challenge the belief that female listeners would reject being talked to by women and about other than trivial matters. This male-biased view of women's place, i. e. as a captive audience, is most persistent on Radio One, which is the most popular channel with young people. Ross notes some progress in recent years on Radio Four, but it has by-passed the mass-audience pop stations. The argument that women's voices lack authority has been used in the past to keep women out of news-reading and reporting. Due to pressure on the BBC to end sex-discrimination, a few women were appointed in news reporting and management at Radio Four. However, Ross is inclined to believe that these appointments merely amount to tokens, particularly in view of the fact that the top-rate prestige programmes are still presented by men.

In radio talk shows, women also function as tokens. An all-female talk show could present a valuable alternative to the overall male viewpoint, but the BBC all-women show does not meet the requirements, according to Ross. Only one current daytime programme for women deals with a broad range of issues of concern to contemporary women, in the author's opinion. Its weekend edition aimed at both men and women shows that broadcasters are beginning to realize that traditionally female concerns such as childcare, cooking etc. can also be of interest to men. In the author's opinion, no real progress will be made in reflecting women's roles in society until there are more women in policy-making jobs. In this respect local stations, both BBC and commercial radio, appear to be more progressive. They employ more female broadcasters and producers. Their daytime programmes cover a wider spectrum of issues, including "minority interests" such as the women's movement. Nevertheless, the pressure from "Women in Media" on independent radio to end male bias by bringing more women into the industry has only met with limited success. According to the author, the persistance of male-biased radio programming stems from the industry's refusal to facilitate women's entrance in radio. The study conducted by Ross (1977) represents the only comprehensive study of radio portrayal of women in Europe and elsewhere. Some observations in French radio's response to women's growing self-awareness and their changing position in society are included in an analysis of women's magazines by Benoît (1973). However, Benoît's brief discussion of new dimensions in sound broadcasting for women is merely intended to illustrate the trends she noted in women's magazines (cfr. infra, I.4.B) and not as an autonomous survey based on systematic monitoring. She detects the introduction of new themes, such as general social and legal issues, in traditional women's programmes which in the past were devoted entirely to advice on domestic and sentimental matters. But more important and more illustrative of the new trends in the women's press is a new style of sound broadcasting, of which Ménie Grégoire's programme on Radio Television Luxembourg (R.T.L.) is the most prominent example. This particular programme is not

specifically for women, but approximately two-thirds of its audience and the large majority of its letter-writing listeners are female. A socio-demographic audience profile shows that radio is more successful than the women's press in penetrating into the less culturally privileged social classes. The major innovation, in comparison with conventional advice programmes and parallelling the women's magazine content re-styling, is the prominence of the sexuality theme. As in Elle and Marie-Claire, the French magazines examined in the study, Benoît observes a process in Grégoire's programme which translates personal problems into general issues. However, the process of revealing the social nature of women's problems, i.e. the evolution towards feminism, is not brought to completion. Radio thus demonstrates the same ambivalence towards women's liberation as the women's press. Benoît fails to interpret radio's unwillingness or incapacity to reflect the growing social awareness of its audience, which is increasingly becoming articulate in correspondence from listeners to Grégoire's programme.

(c) Africa

The potential of radio for improving women's status as an integral part of the development of African nations remains largely unexplored. Yet radio represents the most promising mass communication medium in this respect. The high illiteracy rates among African people (in some countries, the percentage of women who do not read or write is over 90% (X, Media Report to Women, Sept. 1977) makes broadcasting media more accessible than other media requiring reading skills. Of the broadcasting media, the physical availability of radio surpasses that of television, which seldom penetrates rural areas where the majority of the population lives. However, the transfer of professionalization, organizational structures and technology of broadcasting from industrialized to developing countries, as examined for Algeria and Senegal by O'Brien (1977), has precluded the creation of a broadcasting system adapted to the needs and interests of the majority of its audience and the realization of its potential. O'Brien calls for the utilization of local resources and talent. The training of media people, including women, is considered of essential importance to the functional utilization of radio in social development.

(d) Asia

As in Africa, the role of radio in changing women's status in developing areas of Asia is considered of prime importance, especially in view of the limited physical reach of television. A survey conducted in India (Press Institute of India, 1976) revealed that only 20% of the women respondents in rural areas had radios, as compared to 72% of the urban women. The level of exposure to radio, as well as to newspapers, among rural women was found to be only marginal. An examination of audience's evaluations of radio programmes showed that only entertainment-oriented broadcasts were appreciated. Educational programmes, which account for 43% of the total output, appeared to evoke little interest. The seminar report attributes this general disinterest to the fact that the educational background, information needs and the comprehension level of the target audience are not taken into account. This finding tends to support O'Brien's observation (1977) that broadcasting in developing areas largely fails to reflect and respond to the particular needs and interests of its major audience.

(e) Latin America

The Interamerican Commission of Women (CIM) document reporting on the 1977 seminar on "Mass Communication Media and Their Influence on the Image of Women" identifies radio as the medium with the largest quantitative scope (CIM, 1977). Since the report only presents the conference's general conclusions, no detailed information regarding the penetration level of radio broadcasting in the various member states of the OAS (which includes the U.S.A. as well as Central and South American nations) is available. Women are represented in radio primarily in soap-operas, songs, and programmes aimed at women. The former two types of content generally portray women as subservient and fatalistic, the latter type presents distinctly traditional images of women, the report concludes.

Conclusion

The scarcity of research on radio's representation of women as compared with the abundance of television surveys (cfr. infra) is indicative of the position of radio within the media hierarchy in the television age. It further suggests that media critics and researchers have to date been unappreciative of the ways in which radio can contribute to the improvement of women's status in societies at various stages of development. In industrialized societies, a male-biased view of women persists in radio, as demonstrated by both the quantity and quality of radio programming directed to women. In developing nations, the utilization of the medium for educational and developmental purposes has been largely ineffective or insufficient, due to the discrepancy between the elitist values and views of broadcasting professionals on the one hand, and the socio-economic status, educational level and information needs of the radio audience on the other.

B. Images of women in television

Most of the research on the portrayal of women in all types of TV-programming originates in the U.S.A. The dominant role of television in the propagation of ideas to the American public warrants serious and extensive examination of the images and concepts of sex-roles it projects in information and entertainment programmes. Few studies have explored the precise impact of exposure to television on the viewing audience's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. The lack of effect studies is primarily due to the difficulty of isolating television influences from the effects produced by other sources of information about the world. The omnipresence of television in American households makes it virtually impossible to find research subjects who have never been exposed to television to serve as a control for TV influence (X, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). However, research has indicated that children learn from television, and sometimes model their behaviour after examples observed on TV (Miles, 1975). In some instances, it has been demonstrated that television can alter children's real life perceptions (Miller and Reeves, 1976). These and other findings suggest that television is a potentially powerful socializing force.

Since the bulk of research materials focuses on American television, the following discussion will deal primarily with results reflecting conditions prevailing in American society in general, and the structure and functioning of American television in particular. To a certain extent, the discussion is relevant for other parts of the world as well, since a large portion of TV programming produced in the U.S.A. is exported for broadcasting abroad, to Australia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, etc. No research has been reported on television's portrayal of sex-roles in Africa and Asia, largely owing to the absence of a well-established broadcasting system accessible to a majority of the population in many countries on those continents. To the extent that Western broadcasting technology and organization have been transposed cross-culturally (cfr. Contreras, 1976), and influence broadcasting structures and professionals in developing countries (cfr. O'Brien, 1977), the ideas and values that are communicated reflect the Western influence and depart from the socio-cultural conditions and the needs experienced by the majority of the population. The resulting discrepancy between the professional elite of broadcasters and the relevance of their messages to the needs and interests of their audiences constitutes a major obstacle in utilizing radio and television's potential for purposes of national development.

(a) North America

1. News broadcasts

Studies of the representation of women in television news programmes generally analyse three components, which together present a significant indication of the status of women reflected in television news. We will elaborate here on the appearance of women as news-makers and on the coverage of women's issues. The third component, women as reporters, will be discussed later (cfr. II, 2. B). A further distinction needs to be made between network news and local news broadcasts. Five studies are available, two of which analysed news programmes originated by one of the three commercial networks. Of the remaining three surveys, two focused on both network and locally originated news shows. The fifth study does not specify the origin of the news programmes analysed. Although sampling and data gathering methods varied in degrees of representational significance and reliability, the research results reveal that women are greatly underrepresented in news-maker and reporting roles and that women's issues are rarely covered.

An analysis of a sample of evening news programmes broadcast on NBC, CBS and ABC in 1974-1975 (X, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977) revealed that white males predominated in news-maker roles with a share of 78.7% of the total. In comparison with ethnic and racial minority people, both male and female, white women fared better, occupying 9.9% of the news-maker roles. Non-white females rarely made the news (3.5%), while 7.8% of the news-makers were non-white males. The limited visibility of women as spokespersons was also reported by the Women's Advisory Council. (X, WNBC News Monitoring, 1976). Its report concluded that women tend to be either invisible or the silent presence in news programmes. Nearly complete omission in news programmes of women, their views, abilities and accomplishments, was the most common criticism of all the monitors who participated in a study of newscasts on a network-affiliated station in Sacramento, Ca. (X, AAUW survey, 1974). The Women's Advisory Council to KDKA-TV, Pittsburgh (1975) compared female visibility on network and local news. Local news programmes represented women relatively more frequently (23%) than network-produced shows (15.5%), Cantor (1973) reports a 10% share of women in news-maker roles on WRC-TV, Washington, D.C.

The capacity in which women make the news was examined in three instances, but data comparison is hampered by the diverging classification categories used. Women considered newsworthy by WNBC-TV (X, WAC, 1976) were mostly criminals, victims, entertainers, or relatives of famous men. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights document (1977) reports a predominance of white

female news-makers appearing as wives and mothers. The AAUW survey (1974) concluded that TV news programmes generally presented two stereotyped images of women: the helpless victim and the opinion-less, supportive wife/mother. This trend to show women in a limited number of role categories also emerges from studies of newspaper portrayal of women (cfr. chapter 14A). That such representation distorts reality was demonstrated in one survey (X, WAC-WNBC, 1976), which compiled a list of women's activities occurring during the monitoring period, none of which was covered in the news.

The second pattern in the representation of women in news broadcasts is the disproportionate treatment of issues related to women in comparison with other news topics. Cantor (1973) concluded that women are not considered news on the basis that, out of 21 news categories, women's rights and women's changing role were least emphasized. Less than 1% of news broadcasting time was devoted to women's issues. Another source (X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977) reports that only 1.3% of the news stories in the sample dealt with women's issues. No news reports focused on individual women's achievements or accomplishments. The basic issue underlying the treatment of women in news broadcasts is television journalism's concept of newsworthiness. The above findings indicate that, to the extent that television furnishes information about relevant issues and confers status upon important people, women are considered neither important nor significant.

2. Dramatic programming

Drama is a tried and true form of television entertainment. It represents a major ingredient of television programming during both daytime and evening broadcasting. The following discussion will focus on family-oriented programmes aired during evening and prime-time slots. Soap-operas, which are aimed at a daytime and predominantly female audience, and programmes for children will be dealt with separately.

A substantive body of research materials documents the representation of women in TV-drama. Comparative evaluation of research results is seriously hindered by differences in sampling and data collection methods, research focus, spectrum of selected programmes, date and time span of the survey, etc. In order to systematize our approach, a 7-point critique outlines and tested by McNeil (1975, 259-271) will be used as a basic frame of reference. The hypotheses to be examined are:

- Female characters are fewer in number and less central to the plot.
- Marriage and parenthood are considered more important to a woman's than to a man's life.
- Television portrays the traditional division of labour in marriage.
- Employed women are shown in traditionally female occupations, as subordinates to men and with little status or power.
- TV-women are more personally- and less professionally-oriented than TV-men.
- Female characters are more passive than male characters.
- Television dramatic programming ignores the existence of the women's movement.

This pattern is more pronounced in adventure-action drama than in comedy.

Television portrays women less frequently and less often in central roles than men.

Tedesco (1974) reports a gross underrepresentation of women as compared to men in her analysis of prime-time network dramatic programming aired in the 1969 to 1972 seasons. The ratio of men to women in the dramatic programmes shown on one local TV-station in 1972 (Cantor, 1973) supports the claim of women's limited visibility on TV. 70% of the fictional characters were male, 30% female. The percentages reported by Miles (1975) reveal a less pronounced numerical imbalance between male and female characters appearing in dramatic TV-content: 39% females vs. 61% males. The disparity was much greater when adventure-type programmes were isolated from the total sample (only 15% females), while in situation comedies the number of females closely approached that of males. The larger proportion of males, varying according to the dramatic formula, applied to both the total number of appearances and the number of major characters. O'Kelly and Bloomquist (1976) also found a numerical bias in favour of males. Their data (66.5% vs. 33.5%) are not entirely comparable to the above described results, as they pertain to a sample of programmes including both drama and other types of TV-content. They do, however, reveal a similar pattern.

A content-analysis of 1974 dramatic programming on prime-time TV conducted by Miller and Reeves (1976) further corroborates the general pattern. Males far outnumbered females in both major and supporting roles. Female characters more closely approached males in frequency of appearance in family dramas and comedies. A comparison of shows in their first season and re-runs revealed a slight improvement in women's numerical presence, but the difference was not statistically significant. Another study of network prime-time and Saturday children's programmes aired from 1969 to 1974 revealed that males clearly dominated both major and minor roles (X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977). The study categorized dramatic characters by race as well as sex. The representation of non-whites nearly doubled over the 6-year time span. However, the increase in frequency of appearance mostly benefited minority males at the expense of both female and male whites. A comparison of 1971 and 1973 studies of blacks and women in drama on commerical TV

(Northcott e.a., 1975) contradicts this finding. This study reports an increase in the numerical representation of white women, and a reduced visibility of both female and male blacks. The lower frequency of appearance of blacks in the 1973 sample is not necessarily inconsistent with the increase in minority characters noted in 1974, since Northcott e.a. only measured the number of blacks, while the second study includes the presence of other minority groups. According to the most recent study of female and minority portrayal in TV-drama over a five-year period (1971-1975), the 1973 decrease in the portrayal of blacks in favour of white women was reversed in 1973 (Seggar, 1977). Over the five-year period, all sexual/racial groups except non-black minority males gained numerically, but only blacks and whites of both sexes gained proportionately. The predominance of males in all types of dramatic roles was also revealed in a study of programming on KDKA-TV, Pittsburgh (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975). Men outnumbered women greatly in drama, slightly in situation comedy. Weibel's findings (1977) confirm the general trend: males outnumbered females slightly in comedy, 2 to 1 in family drama, and 8 to 1 in drama/adventure. Seggar's conclusion (1975, 273-282) that the representation of women had increased substantially in 1974 as compared with 1971 was refuted by McNeil (1975, 283-288) on the ground that the analytical data from his 1971 and 1974 studies provided no basis for comparison. She further argued that male and female roles as documented in the 1974 study were not comparable, since all female roles but only major male roles were analysed. Finally, she points out that other studies, including her own 1973 analysis, indicate a decrease in female visibility. Whether or not the quantity of female characters has actually decreased in the seventies must remain unresolved here, since methodological differences between the various studies yield non-comparable data precluding definite conclusions. The research results do indicate a severe under-representation of women dramatic programming on commercial television as compared to both the number of male characters and the preponderance of women over men in the actual population figures. Drama on public television appears to follow a similar pattern in female representation as commercial television (Isber and Cantor, 1975).

Marriage and parenthood are considered of greater importance to a woman's life than to a man's life

McNeil found only partial evidence for this hypothesis (McNeil, 1975, 259-271). Women's marital and parental status was far more often clearly indicated than that of men. However, the data provided no conclusive evidence that females tended to be less often single or childless than males. In the analysis conducted by Tedesco (1974), the proportion of TV-characters who could be coded as married comprised more than 50% of the female characters, but less than one-third of the TV-males. This finding tends to support the thesis that marital status is a more crucial factor in identifying women than in identifying men. Seggar (1975, 273-282) also found a significant difference in the portrayal of marital status of males and females performing major roles in 1974 TV-drama. Women were more likely to be shown as married than men. The study reported by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) examined both marital and parental roles for male and female characters in network prime-time dramatic programming of the 1969-1972 period. Less than one-third of all males were portrayed as husbands, while almost half of all female characters were depicted as wives. Neither male nor female adults were frequently portrayed in parental roles. However, women were more often shown as mothers than men appeared as fathers. In dramatic programming on KDKA-TV, a local Pittsburgh station (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975), the appearance of characters in parental roles was also very limited, but the proportion of female and male parental roles was nearly equal. Women were more often coded in housewife roles than men in husband roles (16% vs. 3%). Weibel (1977) also noted a predominant housewife/mother image of women in situation comedy, professional drama, and family drama, while in drama-adventure type shows women were merely transit characters. Although Weibel's discussion does not provide quantitatively and qualitatively comparable data for male and female characters, the emphasis on housewife/mother roles for women vs. occupational and non-domestic roles for men suggests that television considers marriage and motherhood, and the responsibilities associated with them, as more central to a woman's than to a man's life.

Our review of research data provides ample evidence in support of the relatively greater relevance of marital status to TV-women. Data regarding parenthood also tend to support the hypothesis, but the evidence is less extensive and less consistent, and thus inconclusive.

Television depicts the traditional division of work in marriage

Not only were women more often than men portrayed in marital roles in the study conducted by McNeil (1975, 259-271), but the percentage of employed characters differed significantly according to sex. Of the overall male TV-population, almost three-quarters were gainfully employed, while less than half of the females held jobs. Among married characters, the disparity was even greater. Few married women, and fewer mothers were portrayed as employed. Working wives typically appeared in comedies, but their employment status was never substantially portrayed. These findings lead McNeil to conclude that television remains virtually unaffected by the feminist re-examination of marital roles. No other evidence is available either supporting or rejecting the hypothesis. All other studies reveal a

lower frequency of employed females as compared to working males, but the data do not specify marital status. Weibel (1971) observed an increasing number of employed wives in situation comedies of the 1970's, but considers this development irrelevant, since the trend has subsided in recent years, and because women were only shown in job-related situations when personal dilemmas were involved.

Employed women are depicted in traditionally female occupations, as subordinates to men with little status and power

Three sets of data lend support to this hypothesis (McNeil, 1975, 259-271). Men's occupations were concentrated in high-prestige fields such as law enforcement, medicine and business management. Women worked predominantly in traditionally female fields. In the few instances when TV-women held high-prestige positions, they played less important roles and their work activities were not central to the plot. Female characters generally worked under close supervision and had far less authority. No woman in the sample exercised direct authority over an adult male. In a debate with McNeil over the accuracy of their respective research results, procedures and conclusions, Seggar (1975, 289-294) points out the diverging percentages of gainful employment reported in the two studies. He agrees with McNeil that the range of occupational roles of women is limited and stereotyped. However, McNeil's conclusion that females are usually subordinate in work-related activities is contested by Seggar on the basis of insufficient evidence resulting from inaccurate measuring techniques.

The part of McNeil's thesis pertaining to sex-stereotyping of occupational roles and fields in TV-drama is substantially documented and strongly supported by the available research results. Although percentages vary, all studies analysed reveal an underrepresentation of female TV-characters in occupational roles as compared to male characters and in relation to women's actual participation in the labour force. Studies describing female employment in terms of degree of occupational stereotyping and range of occupations indicate a concentration of employed women in a limited number of jobs and in traditionally female fields and roles. Few female dramatic characters held high-level jobs. Three studies examined the evolution of TV-portrayal of women over time. Weibel (1977) observed the introduction in the mid-'70's of policewomen as leading characters in crime drama, which developed into the principal adventure-type dramatic format of the 1970's. A study comparing 1971 with 1973 programming (Northcott e.a., 1975), and a survey of the 1969 to 1974 dramatic programmes (X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977) examined the occupational portrayal of white vs. minority women. The documents show a significant decrease of respectively employed black women and employed minority (mostly black) women. Northcott e.a. (1975) report an increasing frequency of white females both in total number of appearances and in occupational roles traditionally reserved for men. They interpret the decline in visibility and occupational portrayal of blacks, and particularly black females, accompanied by a growing emphasis on white women as a reflection of television's response to the increasing momentum of the women's movement in the 1970's.

The study reported by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) revealed more sexual than racial differences in occupational portrayal. Only two of the occupations portrayed in the 1969 to 1974 dramatic programming showed racial differences: more whites, both male and female, were managers; more non-whites were service workers. Even within these occupational categories underlying sexual differences emerged: women predominated the service roles, men predominated managerial occupations. While no significant change in the occupational portrayal of white women was observed, the number of them appearing in television drama had actually decreased from 1969 to 1974. In this respect, the findings of the two evolutionary studies reveal opposite trends.

The dominance-subordination issue in the TV-portrayal of men and women requires further examination. Turow (1974) studied the pattern of advising and ordering in male-female interactions. Although the data are not directly related to occupational status, they provide additional evidence for the contention that males tend to be dominant in TV-drama. Turow found that in TV-drama characters were selected, occupations assigned and plots developed in such a manner as to minimize the chances enabling women to display superior knowledge with respect to men. When they were given such opportunities, the advice or order regarded traditionally female areas of knowledge. This finding supports the contention that on TV male and female spheres of action and authority are strictly delineated.

All the data reported above pertain to patterns in dramatic programming on commercial television. A sample study of drama on public TV (Isber and Cantor, 1975) indicated that women are equally underrepresented as on commercial TV and similarly cast in female sex-typed occupations.

Women are far more personally- and less professionally-oriented than men

This hypothesis specifies the issues raised in hypothesis 2 and 3, i.e. the confinement of women to the home, family and personal relationships. McNeil (1975, 259-271) used the types of problem women were involved in, the nature of their interactions, and the focus of their activities as indications of their home and family-bound orientation. Women were much more involved in family and romantic conflicts, while men were more frequently faced with problems related to the outside world

and work. Personal relationships accounted for 74% of female interactions vs. 18% of male interactions. Profession- or authority-related interactions constituted only 15% of women's vs. 35% of men's relationships. A much higher proportion of female activities focused on home/family/personal relationships, while male activities more often centered around job or profession. In his discussion with McNeil about their respective research findings, Seggar (1975, 289-294) confirms McNeil's finding that TV-women's activities centre around the home. The general finding that women are numerically better represented in situation comedies than in action drama provides additional support for the personal orientation of TV-women. Comedies tend to focus on interpersonal relationships. Although working women appear in this type of programme, they are only shown at their jobs when interpersonal problems are at stake (Weibel, 1977). The dominant image of women in comedy is that of the housewife concerned with resolving interpersonal conflicts and acting as moderator between family members.

Women on television are far more passive than men

Two manifestations of passivity were measured by McNeil (1975, 259-271): self-concern and problem-solution. It was demonstrated that the focus of men's concerns was more often selfish than that of women's. Men's concerns most often resulted from their professional activities, while women's concerns stemmed more from personal needs. Women often participated in solving their problems, but were more likely than men to leave it entirely up to others. They were portrayed frequently as rather unwilling and less capable of resolving their problems by themselves. These data are interpreted by McNeil as a demonstration of personal orientation and passivity. Seggar (1975, 289-294) questions McNeil's evidence on the basis that it is insufficient to be conclusive. Several studies of male-female portrayal in TV-drama have examined the passive-active dimension of TV-characters' personalities, but using different measures. Women's absence from adventure and action, their likeliness to be victimized in violence-related roles, their dependence on men, their ineffectiveness, are interpreted by Tedesco (1975) as reflecting an image of femininity typified by passivity. Passivity was also observed as a female personality trait in dramatic programming on KDKA-TV (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975). Men were portrayed as the decision-makers and action-takers. Women were conspicuous by their absence in action/adventure programmes. When they did appear, they were predominantly characterized as passive and as victims in need of male rescue and protection. The active control exercised by male characters emerged as the major characteristic distinguishing males from females in TV-drama of 1969-1972 (X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977). Male control, implicit in all portrayals, became most explicit in the depiction of violence. Women were far more likely to be victimized, while men tended to be the aggressors. Weakness and financial, physical and emotional dependency were the female complements of masculine power and strength. Although the report does not describe femininity in terms of passivity, the description of masculinity in terms of action, independence and authority, and of femininity as its counterpart suggests a more passive portrayal of women in TV-drama.

Television dramatic programming does not acknowledge the existence of the women's movement

The sample of dramatic programmes analysed by McNeil (1975, 259-271) did not include a single feminist character. The major issues of feminism were generally absent as themes. When occasionally a feminist issue was dealt with, it was treated in a non-feminist manner. Therefore, McNeil concludes, the traditional images of women projected in the other content elements remain unchallenged, for they are not counteracted by alternative characters and themes. Seggar (1975, 289-294) agrees with McNeil that the feminist movement is largely ignored by television drama. Miles (1975) also reports the limited number of non-stereotyped females appearing in dramatic TV-shows. A descriptive study of the sampled programmes revealed that women were treated as sexual objects, ordered about by men, expected to serve men while being placed on a pedestal, shown in stereotyped housewife roles or portrayed as victims rescued by men. In the few programmes featuring free-thinking, talented women, their personalities and actions were ridiculed. Only two strong and non-stereotyped female characters appeared in the 1973-1974 programming, but their relationships with men rather than their careers were emphasized. Two studies report some progress in television's reflection of the issues raised by the women's movement. Northcott e.a. (1975) observed an increasing visibility and non-traditional occupational portrayal of white women in 1973 as compared to 1971 dramatic TV-content. They attribute this development to television's awareness and response to the increased momentum of feminism in the 1970's. Weibel (1977) uses the same explanation to account for the minor, but mostly positive evolutions in the TV-portrayal of women. As women's liberation became a household word in the early 1970's, women's issues became acceptable as themes of situation comedies, and female characters acquired some individuality and responsibility. However, the trend seems to have declined in the mid-1970's. As the initial ardour of the women's movement subsided in the mid-1970's, the dominant image of women as housewife re-emerged. The general pattern that emerges from research data covering the late 1960's to mid-1970's is a strong emphasis on the traditional roles of women. The minor, though

positive changes observed in the early 1970's did not develop throughout the seventies into a reflection of women's changing lifestyles as a result of the growing strength of the women's movement. These findings suggest that television, at least with respect to its dramatic content, largely fails to acknowledge the existence of the feminist movement and the issues it raises.

The available research to a large extent confirms the hypotheses developed by McNeil (1975, 259-271) with respect to the depiction of women in TV-drama. While this personality profile of TV-women requires further documentation and explicitation, it provides a solid basis for indicating the general trends in the representation of women in evening and prime-time dramatic programming on television.

3. Soap-operas

The audience of soap-operas is overwhelmingly composed of adult women, most of whom are housewives, and thus able to watch TV during daytime hours (Katzman, 1972). Geographic region, degree of urbanization, income level, and family size are related to daytime serial viewing. The typical viewer is a southern or mid-western woman from a large low-income family. The number of minutes of soap-operas broadcast daily has grown steadily since 1967. Since the number of television viewing households has increased as well, the amount of time spent watching daytime serials has also risen.

The world portrayed in soap-operas is populated by male and female adults appearing in almost equal numbers (Katzman, 1972). Males appear mostly in professional roles; females function as their wives/girl friends or secretaries/assistants. The major activity of these characters consists in discussing people in an indoor setting. The main topics of conversation are, in descending order, business and trivialities, family matters, romantic relationships, and health problems. In interactions, men tend to be paired with women. Males are less likely to be, or have been, married than females. The world of soap-opera is one of middle-class people with middle-class values, which is one step above the level of the typical viewer, but not too far removed to preclude identification. The characters and themes tend to be realistic. Because of this realism, soap-operas have high impact potential on viewers' attitudes and behaviour, which largely remains unexplored to date, Katzman concludes.

From this descriptive outline, several patterns emerge with respect to the depiction of women:

- The nearly equal ratio of male to female characters in soap-operas is in sharp contrast with the preponderance of males in drama of the action-adventure type. Situation comedies are comparable to daytime serials in this respect.
- The top-ranking occupation for women is that of housewife, while the majority of male characters are professionals (Katzman, 1972 - Downing, 1974). However, Downing (1974) observed that, in relation to real-life occupational status, daytime serials slightly overrepresent female professionals, but grossly exaggerate the proportion of male professionals. For both men and women, careers and jobs are subordinate to the all-important family life and personal relationships (Weibel, 1977).
- Marriage is a more crucial factor in identifying women than men. Occupational status is more important to men (Katzman, 1972-Downing, '74).
- As for their physical appearance and class status, the large majority of characters are attractive, well-groomed and of middle-class status. According to Downing's findings (1974), women tend to be younger than men, and ageing results in greater deterioration of occupational status for women than for men.
- The major action in soap-operas consists of conversation, mostly between males and females (Katzman, 1972). The topics of discussion deal primarily with romance, interpersonal relationships and personal problems. Since the personal is considered typically women's sphere, the high visibility of women in soap-operas is not surprising.
- Soap-operas portray a sharp dichotomy between "good" and "evil" (Weibel, 1977). Although men as well as women can be either good or bad, "evil" is generally associated with traditionally male traits such as excessive involvement in work, neglect of family, infidelity and selfishness. "Good" is related to conventionally female characteristics such as love, compassion, loyalty to family, willingness to sacrifice oneself for others and to suffer, desire for children, asexuality: (sex is engaged in only when one is in love) (Weibel, 1977). Downing's analysis also revealed that women are generally portrayed as morally good. Woman's goal is the well-being of her family.

On the basis of these traits exhibited by soap-opera females, in addition to their high visibility and their respected position in the family and the social structure, Downing (1974) concludes that soap-operas portray women as real human beings, who are most worthy of emulation among all dramatic characters appearing on TV. While their portrayal in soap-operas seems to reflect more positive attitudes towards women, and more realism than female images projected in other types of TV-content, some dimensions of the daytime serial female continue to reflect conventional concepts of, and expectations from, women. Women in TV-serials are almost always young and attractive. The uniform good looks of TV-women and their immaculate homes, as well as the stronger emphasis on women's marital and men's occupational roles, reveal a persistence of sex-segregated role divisions: women are concerned with their appearance and home-oriented, while the world of work is

reserved for the male. Turow (1974) demonstrated that the fact that women appear in almost equal numbers with men, and that female characters are more central as compared to evening drama does not guarantee the absence of sex-stereotypes, as Downing suggests. An analysis of female-male interactions in terms of advising and ordering between the sexes indicated that in soap-operas as well as in evening drama, men controlled the action. Males issued 56% of all advice and orders in daytime shows. Most of the directives pertained to "neutral", i.e. neither "masculine" (business, crime, law etc.) nor "feminine" (love, family, personal problems, etc.) subjects. The maintenance of male control in the more "feminine" soap-operas was further sustained, besides the predominance of male orders on neutral issues, by the importance of the medical doctor, the most frequently represented male occupation. Medical training seems to entitle men to direct women on typically "feminine" subjects. Doctors gave 70% of the directives by males on "feminine" topics. While in comparison with prime-time drama soap-operas show a shift in the proportion and centrality of women, their sex-role portrayal and stereotyping are not really different, Turow concludes. TV-drama, both in evening and daytime, operates in such a way as to minimize women's opportunities to display superior knowledge with respect to men, and to compartmentalize areas in which women are allowed to be knowledgeable along traditional lines. In this manner, Turow observes, the basic cultural norms remain unchallenged, while the predominantly female audience's desire to see women portrayed in central roles is gratified.

4. Children's programmes

To the extent that television has a socializing influence on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of its audience, studies on sex-role concepts communicated in programmes directed to children are extremely relevant. A comparison of children's shows with other types of TV-content revealed that children's television tended to be more sexist-oriented than the total sample of programmes and commercials analysed (O'Kelly, 1974). Children's TV-programmes heavily favoured (white) males in terms of the number of characters shown (85% male vs. 15% female). Adult males not only appeared more frequently than adult females, but the range of occupations they held was much wider than that of females. Women tended to be portrayed in parental and marital roles more often than men. Male children also appeared more frequently than female children, but less often than adult males and females. On the basis of these findings, O'Kelly (1974) concludes that, despite feminist criticism, television continues to represent women and men in a highly stereotyped manner. Insofar as television influences children's sex-role perceptions, it reinforces the status quo. This basic outline of the female profile reflected in children's programmes indicates a strong resemblance with the trends in female portrayal in dramatic programming:

- Women are numerically underrepresented. Although the reported male to female ratios vary, all available documents dealing with children's programmes on commercial TV reveal a preponderance of male characters. Busby (1974) specifies appearance in terms of role significance. Males outnumbered females in both major and minor roles 2.5 to 1 and 4 to 1 respectively.
- Women appear predominantly in marital and domestic roles. In the sample of children's programmes analysed by Long and Simon (1974), most females were married. None of the married females were shown holding a job outside the home, while most unmarried women were gainfully employed. However, whether married or not, employed or not, women were almost invariably depicted in the roles of home-makers and parents.
- A study of the division of labour within the home revealed that females were responsible for the routine household chores and child care, while males assumed the roles of gardening and the less routine tasks of home maintenance (Busby, 1974). Men also had much more free time, allowing for entertainment, sports and activities with their children. In the sample of children's shows analysed by Long and Simon (1974), all the female characters were responsible for doing all the housework.
- More male than female characters are identified with occupations. Cantor (1973) reports that 25% of the females vs. 60% of the males were employed. Busby (1974) found that the range of occupations held by males covered a much broader spectrum than that held by females, who were mostly in low-status and traditionally female jobs. According to Busby, the occupational portrayal in children's TV does not reflect the actual employment situation of women in terms of quantity and range of occupations, while it closely resembles the real-life employment of men. The study conducted by O'Kelly and Bloomquist (1976) also revealed the portrayal of women in traditionally female occupations.
- Both in the television household and in society, males occupy positions of authority, while women are hardly ever shown in such positions (Busby, 1974). In the programmes examined by Long and Simon (1974), almost all the married females were depicted in positions of deference to their husbands. No women were portrayed in authority positions either at home or at work.
- Women also appear as sex-objects, whose bodies and appearances are subject to evaluation by men (Long and Simon, 1974). Female TV-characters were portrayed as very concerned with the way they themselves looked, as well as their families and their homes. Physical portrayal of women is strikingly uniform, Long and Simon observe:

with few exceptions women appear as young, well-dressed and attractive, as opposed to the wide range of physical appearances of male characters. Busby's analysis (1974) also revealed the uniform sleek and agile physical appearance of women, regardless of marital status. Marriage seemed to affect the physique of men in a different way. Married males were invariably overweight with poorly defined physiques, as opposed to the physically attractive single men and to women.

- Women are depicted as dependent and weak, while men are attributed personality traits generally associated with independence and vigour (Busby, 1974). Three personality profiles emerged from Busby's study: females, heroes (single men), and husbands. The married males differed in physical appearance and personality traits (less intelligent, knowledgeable etc.) from the self-confident, adventurous heroes, but both male groups resembled each other more closely than the group of females. Long and Simon (1974) summarized the overall image of women in children's TV as one defining them as dependent and emotional people.

Commerical TV directed to children thus reflects traditional concepts of women's nature, role and place in society. Women are defined as basically home- and family-oriented, depending on men for security, safety and financial support.

Public television broadcasts educat children's programmes which are highly valued for their quality and progressiveness. However, the concepts underlying sex-role portrayal in public TV appear to be just as outdated as those reflected in commercial TV. A sequence-by-sequence analysis of one randomly selected episode of "Sesame Street" revealed that women's portrayal continued to be stereotyped (Cathey-Calvert). Males dominated the visual and especially the audio portion of the programme. Females were overwhelmingly shown as passive people, whose primary activities were centered around marriage and the home. While the study indicated that "Sesame Street" makes a serious attempt at eliminating ethnic and racial stereotypes, these efforts remain confined to male portrayals. Women of all racial groups continue to be cast in stereotyped behaviours and activities, Cathey-Calvert concludes. The survey conducted by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) Task Force on Women in Public Broadcasting (Cantor, 1976) revealed similar trends in a sample of children's programmes which also included "Sesame Street". Both the number of female characters and the range of occupations in which they were cast failed to reflect the actual participation of women in the labour force. It was therefore concluded that the low frequency of female TV-characters and the narrow range of occupational roles they performed did not provide sufficient positive role models which would encourage female viewers to realize their potential. Dohrman (1975) also found that males - human, animal and non-human - were numerically dominant in children's TV-programmes. They made up three-quarters of the television population. Males further exclusively occupied the lead role of moderator, and the majority of major parts, as well as most off-camera voice-overs. Not only was the ratio of males to females seriously out of proportion, but the behavioural modes assigned to males vs. females also differed significantly. Analysis of the behaviours exhibited by children's TV-characters revealed an overall strong relationship between male gender and active mastery, and between female gender and passive dependency. Male-female interactions generally demonstrated a male subject/female object pattern. A breakdown of characters according to age revealed that the adult male was most visible, followed by the male child and the female adult with almost equal degrees of visibility. The appearance frequency of the female child was the lowest. Women's overall share of characters was 24%. A closer look at male and female representation in the various ethnic/racial groups portrayed in the sampled shows provides a different perspective of women on TV. The female share of characters amounted to a majority only among American Indians, Puerto Ricans and Orientals, who represent the least recognized minority groups in real life, according to Dohrman. The investigator interprets the dominance of females among low-status minorities as reflecting a symbolic equation of femininity with characteristics traditionally associated with these minority groups. The implications of such a gender profile in children's TV-programming, as indicated by Dohrman, apply to both public and commercial TV. Exposure to the persistant dominance and power of male TV-models, both adults and children, socializes the boy viewer into accepting and valuing man's dominant position in society. The girl viewer, who is consistently confronted with female models performing secondary roles and submitting to male power, learns to accept women's diminished societal rank (Dohrman, 1975). The sex-role stereotyping inherent in all television content directed to children is especially influential on educational TV. Because these programmes are acclaimed as the best among children's TV content, an aura of authority underlines the sex-role portrayals they contain, Dohrman concludes.

(b) Western Europe

Only two studies are available on the portrayal of women on German (Federal Republic of Germany) and British television respectively (X, ü. 1. v. Küchenhoff, 1975 - Koerber, 1977). Both are comprehensive surveys analysing various types of programming. While the British study is more descriptive with a narrow empirical base, the German study provides extensive empirical data documenting the general trends in sex-role portrayal on German television.

1. News broadcasts

In comparison with other types of programmes, women are least visible in news shows both as news-reporters and news-makers (X, Küchenhoff, 1975). Women's share of news-maker roles amounted to 5.2% on ARD* and to 6.6% on ZDF**. Respectively 5.9% (ARD) and 3.1% (ZDF) of TV-correspondents were female. The appearance of women was further restricted to traditionally female spheres such as health and family-oriented news stories. The male position of authority in TV-news, which focuses heavily on politics, is an accurate reflection of the male dominance in public life, the report observes. Koerber (1977) only examined female participation in reportage and presentation of news shows. The figures, based on a week's monitoring of news and public affairs programmes on BBC and ITV, indicated a gross underrepresentation of women in these roles.

2. Dramatic programming

The results of the analysis of dramatic programmes broadcast on German TV correspond with the general trends in female portrayal on American TV (X, Küchenhoff, 1975). This consistency is hardly surprising in view of the fact that almost half of German TV-output is imported, with American drama productions constituting the largest portion of imported TV-fare. The recurrent pattern of female invisibility re-emerges in TV-drama. In comparison with males, females were numerically underrepresented, and seldom appeared as central figures. Males overwhelmingly occupied the dominant, active and central character roles. The portrayal of women as housewife/mother was one of two dominant female images. However, it was quantitatively subordinate to the image of the young, single, independent beautiful and sexy woman. Although the researchers interpret this finding as conflicting with the general contention that television depicts women predominantly in domestic and maternal roles, the divergence from other research data is minor and most likely attributable mainly to coding and classification procedures. In American studies, the proportion of females who could be identified as married is situated around 50%. Of all the female dramatic characters on German TV, 35% were married, 45% single and 13% widowed. In addition to the greater specificity of the classification categories with respect to marital status, the German report bases its conclusion on a comparison with actual statistics on the marital status of women in the two age groups comprising the majority of TV-women. In the 19-25 age group, 73% of the female TV-characters were single. Of the 26-35 year old group, 46% were not married. In reality, 85.3% of German women between 19 and 35 are married. While these young and single TV-women were more active and more liberal in their relationships with men, they demonstrated a basic orientation towards marriage as their ultimate goal. A further indication for the secondary importance of the housewife/mother image was the finding that women were seldom depicted actually performing domestic or maternal tasks. On the other hand, women were also rarely shown at their jobs, although 40% of the female characters were identified with occupations. Half of the working women held traditionally female jobs. Few worked as professionals in management or high-status jobs. Married women were less likely to be employed than single females. These data indicate support for McNeil's conclusions (cfr. supra) that (a) employed women are shown in traditionally female occupations with little status or power, (b) TV-women are more personally- and less professionally-oriented.

The German study also revealed that women primarily appear on TV in a narrow social context of interpersonal relationships. Occupational roles were apparently assigned solely for the purpose of identifying women's social status. Since women were not substantially portrayed in either domestic or occupational roles, the investigators conclude that female roles are generally absent from TV-drama. Therefore, women on TV are foremost attractive figures available for adventure and romantic involvements. While Koerber's analysis (1977) revealed that in light entertainment programming, active, adventurous, victorious men dominated over victimized, supportive, laughable or merely token females, TV-drama showed a definite shift in favour of women. More programmes are written by women, feature women, and as a result provide a female perspective of women's lives. The much despised soap-operas particularly are moving towards a more realistic portrayal of women and the problems they face in contemporary society, according to Koerber. "Coronation Street" is cited as an illustration of the new trend. Besides presenting a realistic picture of women and the conflicts between the sexes, this programme, produced by a woman, further deviates from the TV-world stereotype in that it portrays working-class people. TV-programming in general is heavily biased in favour of the middle-class way of life, as demonstrated in the analysis of German TV-drama (X, Küchenhoff, 1975) and other studies discussed above.

3. Quizzes, musical programmes and talk shows

This type of TV-content has generally not been a central focus of study. The portion of the survey of German TV-programming (X, Küchenhoff, 1975) dealing with these types of show indicated a striking

*First Television Programme in the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Second Television Programme in the Federal Republic of Germany.

similarity with the overall findings with regard to sex-role portrayal. Women appeared in limited numbers. They were also qualitatively underrepresented, appearing as assistants/subordinates to men or as mere physical presences. This led the research team to conclude that women merely appear on TV, while men are the actors. The fact that women were mostly passive in verbal interactions with actively participating men reinforces this conclusion. The dominant conversation topics, however, pertained to the traditional female sphere of personal problems, male-female relationships and the feelings they involved. Besides being more active in verbal communication, men tended to seek more physical contact via socially conventional channels than women did. Women's issues, defined as those regarding the social position of women and women's liberation, were not discussed. While the professional activities of men were a frequent conversation topic, the primary action sphere of women, i.e. household and children, was largely ignored. Show programmes thus clearly reflect the basic sex-role divisions prevailing in society. Men appear as leading actors oriented towards the outside world. Women are portrayed as passive, emotional people who serve as assistants to men or as decorations for male eyes. Although the evidence failed to produce a clearly outlined female image, quiz and show programmes definitely portray women differently from men, the report concludes. Koerber (1977) phrases her evaluation of female portrayal in talk shows on British TV in similar terms. Talk shows are moderated by men, who treat female guests differently from male guests. In quizzes and panel games women are featured as attractive personalities, she observes.

4. Magazine-format information programmes

This term subsumes all informative and documentary programmes excluding news and sports broadcasts, as well as reportages on nature and animal life. The analysis of such programmes represents the final part of the comprehensive survey of German TV-programming (X, Küchenhoff, 1975). The research focus was threefold: the treatment of women's issues, the appearance of women as news-makers, and the presence of female reporters/interviewers/narrators/moderators. As in quiz and show programmes, women were foremost portrayed as beautiful objects, exemplified by their preponderance in announcer and advertising model roles, and the infrequency of their appearance as reporters/interviewers and news-makers. In one-quarter of the sampled programmes, women were completely absent from the audio as well as the visual programme portions. Women in news-maker roles were presented as passive victims, in service functions, or as mere decorations. Politicians, experts, knowledgeable people appearing in the news were seldom women. Female reporters and news-makers mostly appeared in programmes dealing with traditionally female issues such as domestic matters, education, nursery and art, which figured at the bottom of the hierarchy of news categories. News stories on women's issues were rare and treated, often by males, in an abstract, isolated and personalized manner. Such treatment, the research team observes, does not enable female viewers to identify with the problems under discussion. Since the impact of television is not limited to what it shows, but extends to what is omitted, television not only reinforces traditional sex-role divisions in society, but also discourages the discussion of women's liberation, the report concludes.

(c) Latin America

The 1977 CIM conference (CIM, 1977) on women and the mass media defined television as the medium with great qualitative, and therefore highly significant impact on the attitudes and conduct of the viewing audience. The conclusions reported in the resolution pertain to women's programmes and soap-operas as TV-content directed specifically to women, and to general television programming. With respect to women's programmes, it was noted that their content was showing progress in projecting an image of women in accordance with reality. Since the evidence on which this observation is based is not described in the resolution, and no additional data are available on women's programming on TV, comparative assessment and verification of this positive development are impossible. The CIM report's evaluation of soap-operas is more decidedly negative than the aggregate body of research materials suggests. While various studies indicate a more positive portrayal of women in daytime serials as compared to other types of programming, the CIM seminar firmly asserted that women in soap-operas are presented as completely alienated beings, which creates false expectations and distorted value scales. General programming on TV is not described in terms of sex-role portrayal, only in terms of its importance in reflecting and producing behavioural norms and patterns with unpredictable effects. This evaluation of the impact potential of television reflects the general awareness underlying the mass of research materials dealing with the television medium, and largely explains the research focus in favour of TV.

Conclusion

Research on sex-role portrayal in television content is primarily motivated by the conviction that television is highly influential in shaping people's perceptions, attitudes and conduct. While behavioural effects have not been conclusively evidenced, television's impact on perceptions of reality has been substantiated, albeit to a limited extent. To the extent that television programming provides information about and mirrors real-life sex-roles, its depiction of women is inaccurate and distorted. Apart from minor positive developments in women's

programming, and already subsiding trends in drama, all types of television programming in varying degrees present a highly stereotyped image of women, which complements an equally stereotyped image of men. News programmes largely ignore women's participation in society, as reflected in women's limited visibility as reporters and newsmakers, and the discriminatory treatment of women's issues. Entertainment programmes in all types of format emphasize the dual image of woman as decorative object and as the home- and marriage-oriented, passive person, secondary to, and dependent on, men for financial, emotional and physical support. This consistent reflection of traditional concepts of female nature and female roles is further reinforced by the virtual absence of alternative role models to counteract the stereotype. The exclusion, or at best token appearance, of alternative female images communicates the message that the dominant traditional image is the appropriate one. This pattern in portrayal of women on television is particularly pronounced in children's programmes, including those considered of the highest quality. Insofar as television affects the sex-role perceptions of its audience, it socializes children into accepting men's dominant and women's secondary position in society at large and the family microcosmos. It teaches adult women and men that the prevailing sex-role division is appropriate and ultimately fulfilling.

3. Images of women in film

The emergence and growth of the women's movement in the last decade have aroused considerable interest from film critics and film historians in past and contemporary images of women in cinema. While the contributions women have made to film-making have been conspicuously absent from the chronicled film history, it is significant that recent attempts to document women's roles in cinema have been made by women. Johnston (Screen, 1975) interprets this phenomenon as a reflection of the increasing intervention women are attempting to make in the motion picture industry. Since film-making and the modes in which film produces pictorial language are dominated by the codes established by Hollywood (Johnston, Screen, 1975), interpretations of women's role in cinema have focused primarily on American film production. The 1960's, however, witnessed a growing interest among film analysts in the European cinema. In the sixties, the Hollywood studio and star system was shaken by the impact of the increasing appeal of television. As a result, the output of Hollywood films was drastically reduced, and with it the number of female roles (Haskell, 1973, 325). While American film directors were increasingly losing interest in portraying women, the European actresses directed by prominent film-makers-authors gained in stature. Images of women projected in the European and American cinema are analysed in three book-length studies published in 1973. Molly Haskell's From Reverence to Rape; The Treatment of Women in the Movies and Popcorn Venus; Women, Movies and the American Dream by Marjorie Rosen document, decade by decade, the roles of women in film history from the pioneering years to the present. The third volume, Joan Mellen's Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film, interprets contemporary cinema's treatment of women. The merits of these three studies have been evaluated in terms of their contributions to the development of a coherent feminist theory of film (Johnston, Screen, 1975 - Place and Burston, 1976). Both Johnston's and Place and Burston's discussions emphasize the need for a systematic feminist approach to film, which, in their opinion, must go beyond an assessment of women's roles in film from a female point of view. Haskell, Mellen and Rosen are credited with an attempt to analyse the relationship between film and society, but they are criticized for failing to provide a basic theory of how film as a medium produces meaningful pictures. The communication of ideology occurs essentially on the formal level, in the visual language of film. Feminist analysis must therefore encompass the visual as well as the narrative styles and the interaction between them. As a uniform vocabulary for describing visual cinematic language is still lacking, and considering the precedence of narrative over visual style in Hollywood cinema (Place and Burston, 1976), the analyses of Haskell, Mellen and Rosen focus on the narrative film language only. Although the above critique would tend to diminish their value, their studies represent major sources of documentation on women's portrayal in films of the past and the present. Two additional studies of female images in the mass media published in 1977 deal with women's roles in cinema, and are included in our discussion (Weibel, 1977 - Brayfield, 1977). A sixth publication reviewed in our survey (Adams and Laurikietis, 1976) is part of a series on sex-role socialization directed to young people and to their parents and teachers.

All of the above cited studies focus on the film industry in Western Europe and North America. Research materials on film images of women in other parts of the world are largely lacking. Documentation on cinema portrayal of women in Africa is confined to one article discussing a highly selective sample of films depicting African women (Hall, 1977). Two documents deal with female images in Asian cinema: Joan Mellen's book-length study of the Japanese cinema (Mellen, 1976), and a seminar report issued by the Press Institute of India (1976) on the status and image of Indian women in film. No research documents were available for examination of film images of women in Latin America, Oceania, Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.

(a) North America and Western Europe

Most of the studies we reviewed present a historical perspective on women's roles in film. With the exception of Adams and Laurikietis (1976), Joan Mellen (1973) is the only author who does not examine successive decades of film production. However, her evaluation of women's representation in contemporary cinema is based on film images of the past. As the title of Molly Haskell's work, From Reverence to Rape, suggests, contemporary images of women are marked by a general decline since the 1940's. The contention that cinema's portrayal of women shows no genuine progress (Mellen, 1973, 27), that in fact the film industry fails to reflect the situation of women in any constructive or analytical way (Rosen, 1973, 341) is shared by all six authors. Both Rosen and Haskell subscribe to a theory of film as a mirror reflecting society's norms and values. In contrast with the growing strength of women in real life, their changing roles, more productive lifestyles, their sexual freedom, the new liberated woman, the strong and independent woman, the working woman are absent from current film roles. Instead, women's roles in American cinema are increasingly trivialized, and woman is progressively relegated to sex-object. Other dimensions of her personality remain unexplored. Films focus primarily on clinical, emotionless, detached and alienated sex. Actually, the idea of sexuality seems less and less related to woman. Instead, eroticism is linked with violence, and female sexuality is equated with psychopathy (Rosen, 1973, 337-338). Molly Haskell maintains a similar view of female images in current cinema. She sees the degeneration of women's film images manifested in the celebration of male power and machismo, coupled with violence against, and the sexual exploitation of, women, and in the cinematic focus on all-male worlds. Women's liberation in film is generally equated with the exposure and sexual responsiveness of women to the men around them. Sexual deprivation is the major source of women's misery in film, but the emphasis on orgasmic sexual fulfillment as the supreme and only form of satisfaction expresses a male view. Besides the emphasis on sex and the orientation towards males, cinema focuses on the young (Rosen, 1973, 345). As a result, older actresses have been forced into virtual retirement.

A parallel phenomenon is the general disdain for marriage and motherhood expressed in modern cinema. Haskell also describes this in her discussion of the male protagonist as created by American and British directors. The central male character in the Anglo-American films of the sixties and seventies is an alienated being, often the director's alter ego, victimized by the cruelties of modern life, which include marriage. Woman is the evil force who tries to bring the hero back into the hypocritical society, which is the very source of the hero's alienation. Even in the more sincere and more sympathetic portrayals of women, they can find no fulfillment in place of romance, marriage and motherhood. Occasionally, women are depicted as strong characters who are able to choose the emptiness of loneliness rather than an unsatisfactory relationship. According to Haskell, this is a more honest reflection of "the spirit of the age" than escapist violence. These films with female protagonists demonstrate that love is still the central theme in the "woman's film", a genre Haskell sees emerging and flourishing in the thirties and forties. On the other hand, they also reveal that woman's concern is different from that of man, thus indicating that the separation between the sexes is more radical than ever before in cinema history. Another modern development is the appearance of the "feminine" hero, the opposite extreme of the super macho-man (Haskell, 1973). From a feminist viewpoint, man taking on characteristics traditionally associated with female behaviour is a positive evolution which counteracts the stereotype. But in cinema, androgyny is solely associated with the male sex, and has actually succeeded in driving women out of the film industry. Both Haskell and Rosen attribute what they perceive as a degeneration of woman's image in film to the impact of television. When television usurped cinema's function as the principal family entertainment medium, the Hollywood film production was severely reduced in size, leaving few opportunities for female actors. According to Rosen (1973), directors and studios were more interested in money-making formulas and products acceptable to the general public. Television also changed the size and composition of the film audience. Cinema responded by shifting its orientation towards young people and males, who became most prominent in the film audience.

Haskell adds another element affecting the portrayal of women in a negative way: the intentionality, and sometimes outright misogyny of male film directors. Since film had become essentially the product of a single creative personality, the (usually male) director-author, the image of woman in film was fundamentally defined by a male perspective. Joan Mellen's work emphasizes a sociopolitical approach to film portrayal of women. The format of the book is a collection of autonomous essays arranged, not around successive decades in film history like Haskell's and Rosen's, but around the work of a particular director, a specific film, or a general theme. The essays are highly subjective and impressionistic, deriving like Rosen's and Haskell's studies from "the dominant tradition of practical criticism based on personal response and subjectivity" (Johnston, Screen, 1975). While the first chapter attempts to integrate the various essays, they remain unrelated, due to the absence of a coherent theoretical and political framework (Place and Burston, 1976). Mellen (1973, 16) agrees with Haskell and Rosen that contemporary cinema presents women as "diminished creatures". Like the other two authors, she places

the cinematic high point in the portrayal of women in the films of the 1940's, when war conditions and "capitalism in crisis" required women to seek a satisfactory way of life independently of, or at least in equal partnership with men. Current cinema, Mellen asserts, does not in general offer images of strong independent women. Although women now appear as tougher and less demure, they are shown as emotionally empty, disintegrated, alienated and unfulfilled. The message communicated by contemporary cinema is that sexual freedom detached from marriage leaves women empty. By portraying sexually liberated, but unfulfilled women, current cinema tries to capitalize on the new awareness of modern women by co-opting it, Mellen argues. At the same time, the stability of the nuclear family and the established values are stressed. Women are defined in relation to the nuclear family, which is the central social institution. This concept applies to both socialist and capitalist societies and cinema, which Mellen claims are equally governed by bourgeois ideas. The officially-controlled cinema of socialist countries continues to depict women in subservient positions. The threat inherent in the portrayal of oppression and exploitation precludes the depiction of liberated women in the cinema of socialist countries. When, exceptionally, socialist films portray women as taking part in the social struggle, the distinction between social and personal/psychological liberation is not made. According to Mellen two images of women are dominant in contemporary cinema: they are either portrayed as domestic, protected, sexless beings, or as sexually liberated persons. She claims that the image of the passive, domestic woman has increasingly been replaced by that of the "loose" woman. This parallels Haskell's and Rosen's observation that women are predominantly shown as sexual symbols. The emphasis on woman as sex-object is most obviously reflected in the highly successful pornographic movies.

European as well as American films continue to present stereotyped images of women as passive, anxious victims, trapped in a culture whose institutions are seldom exposed as the source of women's damaged personalities. The most interesting images of women are found, albeit infrequently, in films that relate women's psychology to the structure of society, which conditions women into believing that they are inferior. Films which portray women as anxious and insecure without linking their personalities to the social structure suggest that such traits are inherent in the female nature. Unlike Mellen, who sees the same myths about women operating in European films, Rosen (1973, 352) claims that directors such as Fellini, Truffaut, Bergman, portray multi-dimensional women instead of the rigidly categorized American types. She appreciates their focusing on women, including women's relationships with each other, and their exploration of the liberated woman who decides her own life and future, even if this choice means loneliness. Rosen maintains nevertheless that images of fulfilled free women are as absent from European as from American films. Haskell attacks the widely-held conception that female images in European cinema are more progressive or more positive than their American counterparts. She perceives two basic types of woman in European films: dissatisfied and tragic vs. stupid and happy. While European films are unable to portray women of action or women without men, their exploration of women's sensual personality is perceived as less superficial than in the American cinema. Essentially though, Haskell sees actresses in what she refers to as the "superior" European films as creations of their directors, who emanate the male directors' visions rather than their own.

The fact that few women are involved in the creative aspects of commerical film-making is perceived by Haskell, Rosen and Mellen as a major factor contributing to distorted portrayal of women in today's cinema. According to Haskell, the only true woman's films are made outside the American film industry, in independent film-making, and to some extent in Europe. Although Mellen also believes that more women should enter all facets of the film industry, it is not her contention that their presence alone will guarantee a more accurate portrayal of women. Even focusing on women and their problems will not result in new images, unless the female personality is related to woman's experiences as a member of a particular social class and of society. All women share in the perceptions prevailing in society, including its view of women, which are enforced through the social and socializing institutions. According to Mellen, even the films directed and written by women depict the subservience of women, since female artists, no less than their male colleagues, are ruled by the prevailing norms in film industry and society. The few women who are working in film industry are able to perceive and depict what society has done to women, but unable to visualize alternatives. The only images of liberated women are to be found in feminist films. However, Mellen dismisses these as "newsreels" and documentaries rather than cinema. In fact, none of the three authors discussed above examines the question of fiction vs. documentary (Johnston, Screen, 1975). All three limit their analysis to the fiction film "on the not always articulated assumption that the fictional mode is a more effective vehicle for the unconscious, the subterranean, the reflective and emergent social and psychic impulse" (Place and Burston, 1976, 55). According to Johnston (Screen, 1975), the flaws of the three documents are most apparent precisely in the views they express on the development of a feminist cinema. Haskell's concept is a return to the films of the 1940's, when truly egalitarian relationships between women and men were depicted. Rosen holds a similar view. For Mellen, new positive images of women will emerge only when films explore the personality of woman as defined and

conditioned by society. According to Johnston (Screen, 1975), the fact that all three authors confine their analysis of women and film to the narrative art film precludes them from developing a coherent feminist approach to film, as well as a perspective on how feminist films are to be realized in the future. Imperfect and incomplete as they are, these studies are to be credited for introducing feminist issues into the practice of film criticism. What is needed most at the present time, according to Johnston, is a feminist meeting point of film criticism and film critique.

The study conducted by Weibel (1977, 91-133) discusses themes and images of women in films of the past and the present in relation to the socio-cultural conditions in general, the state of the film industry in particular, and the impact of television. Her approach emphasizes a view of film as reflector and reinforcer of prevailing social norms and values, a view which coincides with that of Haskell and Rosen. It is implied that the portrayal of women in film will not change until social consciousness about, and social conditions for, women have improved. The evolution she notes in reviewing women's roles in film history is a regressive one. In contrast with images of strong and independent women in films of the past (particularly the 1940's), contemporary cinema is not interested in portraying women. It focuses on themes that exclude women, or else portrays them as sexual or social misfits viewed from a male perspective. The potential of strong actresses remains unexplored, due to the lack of women screen-writers and directors, and to the profit-orientation of the film industry, which perpetuates the production of money-making films focusing on violence, sensationalism, and sex. This explanation of the few and shallow film images of women, as well as the emphasis on the impact of television on the audience, and subsequently on the orientation of cinema, closely approaches Rosen's interpretation. Like Haskell, Weibel argues that, in the rare instances when films focus on women developing their consciousness about their own identify, or about their relationships with men and society, women's real goal is always marriage and monogamy as the only fulfilling mode of life. Weibel does not anticipate the development of new perspectives of women in the American cinema as long as socio-cultural conditions and opportunities for women in the industry do not alter radically. Like Haskell she observes that, while in Europe film directors focus more sympathetically on women, the view of them in film remains male-defined.

Celia Brayfield's discussion (1977) of past and present images of women in films reflects an explicit feminist point of view. She describes cinema as a centre of male influence with a decreasing number of female workers and virtually no women filmmakers (cfr. infra, II, 3). Although she also notes the lack of female roles and the sexual exploitation of women in current films, her evaluation is more ambivalent than that of the other authors under discussion. The explosion of woman-hatred in films of the sixties and seventies is perceived as a reflection of society's and particularly men's anxieties over changing sex-roles. While most films of the last decade express overt misogyny, or celebrate machismo, others have explored woman's identity and have documented the sexual, psychological and social oppression of women. Brayfield also finds the reappraisal of leading women film directors encouraging. Unlike Mellen, Haskell and Rosen, she does not discard feminist attempts at film-making as insignificant. In view of the changed function (from entertainment medium to work of art) and audience of film, the commercial success or the number of people who see a film are no longer measures of its social influence (Brayfield, 1977, 110). The perception of film as a work of art created by its (usually) male director, which gained wide acceptance in the sixties, narrowed cinema's concept of women. Women were essentially viewed through male eyes, and sexually liberated women were seen as a threat to masculinity. Although they disappeared in central roles during this period in film history, and were increasingly portrayed as sex-objects, Brayfield views the more realistic physical portrayal of women as a positive development. Unlike the four other authors discussed above, Brayfield notices a recovery from "sexual paranoia" in the films of the seventies, and a renewed interest in women in search of their identity. She admits that women are assuming central roles again often by virtue only of their sexual relationship with the male protagonist, but they are nevertheless frequently portrayed as whole women rather than mere sexual creatures. More than Mellen, Haskell, Rosen or Weibel, Brayfield is optimistic about new developments in the film industry: the growing recognition of female directors, the creation of new opportunities in film by the women's movement, and, in the United Kingdom, the adoption by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians of guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against women in the film industry (cfr. infra, II, 3).

A 1976 series of books published by the feminist press Virago and directed to young people and their teachers examines sex-role socialization processes operating in society, including the socializing role of mass media (Adams and Laurikietis, 1976). The discussion of cinema is limited to a description of images of women as compared to men projected in various popular film genres. The scarcity of women working as film directors is cited as a major source of the distorted portrayal of women in contemporary film. A review of popular films revealed the following trends:

- female roles in current cinema are very limited in number and highly stereotyped;
- the film perspective of women is essentially a male one, owing to the lack of women directors;
- few films focus on women;

- in the masculine world of westerns, gangsters, espionage, war and violence, women remain in the background of the heroes' lives and are excluded from participation in the central action;
- in "sexy" films women are reduced to sex-symbols and sexual objects;
- some recent films feature women in central parts, although few reflect women's current social status.

The authors expect new positive developments in the film portrayal of sex-roles under impact of the women's movement and women's continued struggle for equal opportunities in the film industry. A list of concrete questions is provided to increase the reader's awareness of sex-role stereotyping in films. While any attempt to increase young people's consciousness about the socializing role of the media is highly commendable, female and male stereotypes in cinema and in media in general cannot be discussed in isolated context. Young people should be given insight into the functioning of the film medium and the film industry, and into the relationship between film and the images it presents and the structure and perception of sex-roles in society. In this respect, Adams and Laurikietis' analysis proves inadequate.

(b) Africa

In comparison with the scope of the literature on images of women in American and European film, the materials on the subject in African films appear to be extremely fragmentary. In a recent article in "Africa Report", Susan Hall (1977) examined a selection of feature and documentary films dealing positively with the position and roles of contemporary women in various African societies. All the films selected for analysis are available for distribution in America. The accessibility to the materials probably determined the size and composition of the survey sample. Accessibility as a selection criterion does not ensure a representative sample. The representative nature of the selection is further obscured by the absence of basic information on the structure and size of the film industry in Africa and on films dealing with African women. The relative importance and potential impact of the selected films remain ambiguous, unless they are placed in the context of the entire film production dealing with African women.

The two feature films which are discussed depict the oppression of young women by their alien environment. The documentaries focus on the lifestyles and ordinary or unusual roles of women of a particular ethnic group, or of individual women. The author concludes that, while dealing with relevant concerns of African women, these films are not comprehensive. She argues that too much emphasis is placed on Western influences on the changing status of women. Instead, the depiction of women's position in African societies should be related to traditional forces affecting women's past and present status. Hall further emphasizes the need for films, not only about, but also by, African women. However, she fails to identify the directors of most of the films she examined by sex and nationality. A discussion and evaluation of opportunities for African women in film industry is also omitted.

(c) Asia

Documents on film images of women in Asia are equally sparse. A seminar held at the Press Institute of India in early 1976 focused on the role of mass media in changing social attitudes and practices towards women. The assessment of female film roles does not go beyond the observation that commercial cinema seldom portrays liberated women. According to the report, women are highly categorized in cinema, but the female types appearing in commercial cinema are not specified. The position of women in the "serious" cinema is described as "somewhat better", but not entirely satisfactory. However, no content description is provided. It was concluded that no improvements are to be expected from commercial cinema, as it necessarily caters for the lowest common denominator, and therefore portrays woman as the masses would like to see her. However, no data are provided concerning the structure and audience of the commercial vs. the alternative film industry, or about the status of women in Indian society and the perception of sex-roles. The position of women in Indian cinema can only be evaluated when placed in a broad socio-cultural context.

In her "Re-introduction of the Japanese cinema to Western audiences" (Mellen, 1976, foreword), which she considers long overdue, Mellen analyses images of the Japanese woman in the films of several leading (male) Japanese directors, who have focused on the position of women in Japanese society. According to Mellen, women are seldom portrayed as independent human beings, which is in accordance with their real-life position. In a society predominated by rules in every aspect of life, including relationships between the sexes, vigorous rules govern the life of the Japanese woman, who belongs to the lowest societal caste. In contemporary patriarchal Japan, the perception of woman as either wife or whore persists, Mellen observes. This dichotomy is reflected in the Japanese cinema. Different standards apply to these two kinds of women. A wife's role as keeper of the home and nurturer of her children is incompatible with that of experiencing love as pleasure. The latter is the privilege of the "loose" woman, whose needs remain nevertheless subordinate to those of man. The basic inequality between the sexes pervades all their interactions. According to Mellen, the most interesting images of women are to be found in the films of directors who oppose the traditional concepts of women's role. However,

in the "magnificent body of Japanese films", she was unable to find one example of a woman "who has carved out a meaningful role for herself as an individual and is valued as such by a man" (Mellen, 1976, 251). Many directors who understand how Japanese patriarchy demeans women have depicted woman's oppression and her arduous struggle to free herself from passivity and submission, which she has been taught to assimilate since childhood. No private solutions are offered for women's plight in the Japanese cinema. Directors who are critical of the social place accorded to women also criticize the feudalism persisting in contemporary Japan, which oppresses both men and women. While women's liberation is linked with human liberation, it is implied that women must fight for freedom independently from Japanese men who are too comfortable with the present patriarchal social order.

Conclusion

A review of the literature on the image of women in film reveals that the cinema generally fails to reflect or deal positively with the changes in sex-role perception and behaviour occurring in contemporary society. It is also apparent that continued research is necessary in the areas of film history, film criticism and film theory in order to enable an accurate appreciation of women's - and men's - roles in cinema, as well as the development of new approaches to the cinematic portrayal of women and men. The impact of the women's movement has aroused considerable academic and feminist interest in the treatment of women in film in North America and Western Europe. Research in other parts of the world, and in other types of society lags far behind. A third point of consensus among researchers is the need for better training and employment opportunities for women in the film industry. The lack of women scenarists and directors is perceived as a major source of the distorted film portrayal of women.

4. The Press

A. Images of women in newspapers

Newspaper portrayal of women has not been the focus of extensive research (Busby, 1975). The available research materials deal with the treatment of women in pictorial, textual and linguistic content of various newspaper sections. Of special interest to our survey are the studies of the newspapers sections aimed specifically at women. Although these have been criticized for perpetuating traditional perspectives, they represent an (at least potentially) important institutionalized vehicle for information about or relating to women (Merritt and Gross, 1977). The very existence of a separate newspaper section for the female reader is perceived as inherently sexist. It implies that all other news areas are exclusively male territory, and that men are not interested in "women's issues" (Hole and Levine, 1971, 250). A second focal point of feminist criticism of newspapers is their coverage of the women's movement and feminist activities, which is claimed to be disproportionately sparse, trivializing and condescending in tone (Hole and Levine, 1971, 266-270). Most of the available documents are content-analyses. Effect studies have been largely neglected, mainly because of difficulty in isolating impact of the media on sex-role development from other socializing influences such as school, church, family etc. (Busby, 1975). In the area of research on the portrayal of women in newspapers, North America has been most productive. The majority of the studies conducted so far have a micro focus in the traditional fashion of America empirical research. In Europe, research in this field is still in its infancy with feminist awareness and growing interest becoming most articulate in the United Kingdom. Feminists in Australia are also starting to focus on the media image of women. Research material is still limited, but the need for systematic study has been acknowledged. Two papers presented to the Asian Consultation on Women and Media deal with the treatment of women in Japanese and Hongkong newspapers. Documents on other parts of Asia, as well as on the entire African continent were unavailable. Also currently unavailable are documents dealing with newspaper treatment of women in Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. The 1977 seminar on "Mass Communication Media and Their Influence on the Image of Women" included a discussion of newspapers, as summarized in the resolution released by the Interamerican Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS which sponsored the conference. It represents the only document available for examination of women's media roles in Latin America.

(a) North America

1. The treatment of women in newspapers

Three studies published in the 1970's analyse images of women in pictorial, linguistic and textual newspaper content.

Miller (1975) analysed the roles of women vs. men portrayed in news photos appearing in The Washington Post and The Los Angles Times, selected because they were among the first newspapers to remodel coverage of contemporary lifestyles and roles. Miller motivates her choice of news photos as analytical units because previous research has primarily concentrated on roles of women in entertainment content. Photos, she argues, are among the first items to attract the readers' attention, and help establish the context in which they interpret the accompanying news story. The study showed that the overall photo coverage of both newspapers was similar. The differences noted were not attributable to editorial policy, but rather to the nature of

the communities served by the papers. Photos of men outnumbered photos of women in all sections except the lifestyle pages. As for female roles, women were primarily portrayed as spouses, socialites and entertainers. The photo coverage of women as sports figures, professionals, activists and politicians was negligible compared to their portrayal in the aforementioned roles. By contrast, men appeared in news photos overwhelmingly as politicians, professionals and sports figures. The lack of news photos of sportswomen is due to the newspapers' pre-occupation with "big money" professional sporting events. However, by excluding coverage of women's athletic events the newspapers perpetuate the relative unpopularity of these sports, Miller observes. News photos also seldom showed women in working roles, although the social and economic impact of female employment warrants news coverage. Miller concludes that the portrayal of women in news photos in both newspapers fails to reflect the roles women occupy in the Washington and Los Angeles communities. The photo coverage conforms to accepted, but increasingly irrelevant, journalistic formulas and concepts of newsworthiness.

A second research area which has been almost totally neglected is the manner in which language is manipulated by journalists (Ward, 1975). Awareness and criticism of discriminatory language are growing. Ward sees criticism verbalized in the "Letters to the Editor" section of newspapers as a relevant indicator of changing language attitudes. However, she does not systematically analyse these sections in a representative sample of print media. She only cites examples of critical commentary on the use of sexist language by journalists, quoting from a wide range of publications to illustrate feminist impact on public language. The merits of Ward's article lie mainly in drawing attention to a research gap rather than contributing to filling it. Her discussion of feminist language theories, as formulated by Miller and Swift (1976) and Lakoff (1976), and their implications for journalism practice and education is illuminating.

While Miller's study revealed differences in female vs. male portrayal in pictorial news, and the article by Ward focused on linguistic discrimination of women, Drew and Miller (1977) designed an experiment using students of journalism to examine the treatment of female vs. male news-makers in news stories. They hypothesized that student reporters would categorize a female news-maker on the basis of sex, and would seek out and include information to support that categorization. The students' assignment consisted in writing a news story about the appointment of a woman and a man to an administrative position in a public school, illustrating it and drawing up interview questions on the basis of supplied materials. An analysis of the stories showed that the reporters were more likely to mention the news-maker's qualifications for the job when he was male. Drew and Miller interpret this as an indication that reporters consider the male more qualified for the job than the female.

More differences in treatment of female vs. male news-makers surfaced in the interview questions. Female newspersons were more likely to be questioned about sex-roles and problems associated with the combination of a career with family responsibilities. They were also more frequently asked factual questions about the job, which probed their responsibilities and limitations. The fact that such questions were less frequently addressed to the male appointee indicates that reporters are less aware of potential role conflicts in men. In general, the picture presented of the male news-maker was more likely to be well-rounded than the portrayal of the female newsperson. Although the blatant stereotyping predicted in the hypothesis was not confirmed, the reporting showed subtle bias based on the sex of the news-maker. Drew and Miller also predict that the more inconsistent a news-item is with the traditional female role, the more journalists will tend to emphasize this inconsistency in place of providing more substantive information. The effect of sex-role socialization and sex-role perceptions of communicators in their treatment of women and men in the news remains a largely unexplored area of study.

2. The "women's section"

Empirical studies of women's sections in newspapers are largely lacking. Merritt and Gross (1977) suggest that this lack of interest may reflect the section's low evaluation within the newspaper hierarchy, and the generally low status of, and as a result the low interest in, women-dominated occupations (cfr. infra. II, 4). Such neglect is indefensible, according to Merritt and Gross, in view of the current evolution in women's roles and the potential of women's pages as a mass forum for information about women.

The recent phenomenon of remodelling traditional women's pages into a general-interest section, designed to attract male as well as female readers, has generated research interest. Miller (1976) and Guenin (1975) analysed the content of the renamed "lifestyle" sections in samples of geographically diversified newspapers as compared with that of women's sections retaining their traditional format.

Guenin content-analysed the women's sections of 6 metropolitan newspapers, three of which had redesigned their section to suit contemporary needs, while the other three maintained the section in its traditional format. She found that traditional content was much higher in traditional than in contemporary sections. However, the updated sections did not meet the criteria suggested by critics. Only half or less of the suggested topics was covered in either broad-interest or traditional sections. The analysis further showed that entertainment stories were replacing traditional content in contemporary sections. The coverage of consumer news was

generally absent. Traditional papers on the other hand did not fail their readers as much as critics believe, since two of the three papers covered topics other than the traditional content at least as well as the upgraded sections, and had good feature content. According to criteria established by critics, the transition from a traditional format to a broad-interest section has not resulted in reporting which reflects the needs of contemporary newspaper readers, Guenin concluded.

The conclusion that the modernization of women's sections merely implies a shift in emphasis towards entertainment parallels Miller's findings. Her 1976 study of redesigned women's sections in major newspapers over a ten-year period also revealed a tendency to replace traditional content with entertainment. Actually coverage, especially of child-rearing and consumer information, had dropped, due to the combination of a change of the section's name and a reduction in the number of pages. The author observes that coverage of child care and consumerism is specifically relevant today, in view of the changing role of women and its effect on child care and domestic responsibilities of both men and women. While the re-styling of women's pages has produced no major changes in the coverage of lifestyles and consumption, Miller concludes that some of the changes have been for the worse.

These research results encouraged Merritt and Gross (1977) to make a further attempt at assessing whether and how women's sections could contribute to the improvement of women's news. They conducted a national survey of a random sample of editors of women's sections in large metropolitan newspapers. Questioned about their perceptions of the normative (what should be) and objective (what actually is) goal of the women's/lifestyle sections, most female and male editors chose the traditional focus, i.e. that related to domestic affairs and social events. The disparity between normative and objective goal perceptions was significantly greater for women than for men. Of those who did not opt for the traditional orientation, women were more likely to emphasize social change, while the male editors tended to choose entertainment as the main objective of the section. Women editors, especially those who believed that increasing the audience's awareness of social change should be the primary goal of the section, devoted more space to the women's movement than men. Since editorship of women's pages is a female-dominated occupation (80% women vs. 20% men in the sample), and considering their greater concern with coverage of the women's movement, Merritt and Gross suggest that their presence may ensure the audience's exposure to non-traditional perspectives of women, at least in the large metropolitan newspapers. They hesitate to conclude that the presence of male editors, who tend to focus more on entertainment and are more ambivalent about women's roles, automatically precludes such perspectives. Men's presence may simply provide fewer opportunities for coverage of issues which increase the audience's awareness of alternative lifestyles and changing sex-roles. On the other hand, the predominance of tradition-oriented editors among women as well as men may overshadow the emphasis on social change or entertainment of the female or male editors who are non-traditional. This conclusion has implications for the feminist position on women's presence in the media. While women tend to be more concerned about women's issues, their presence alone does not automatically guarantee a less traditional orientation.

3. Newspaper coverage of the women's movement

Although the women's sections in newspapers discuss women's issues, coverage of women-related news and the women's movement is not exclusively limited to these pages. Morris (1973) conducted a quantitative study of the overall content of two Los Angeles and twelve British newspapers for their reporting on the women's movement in the early phase of its development. The author started from the hypothesis that one mechanism to control conflict generated by the emergence of a movement which threatens the established societal values is to withhold information about it from the general public in order to minimize its impact. Newspapers rather than other news media were selected for testing this hypothesis on the basis of a 1970 study which indicated that newspapers were the major source of information for the majority of the respondents. The generally sparse coverage of the women's movement in both American and British newspapers at a time when it was sufficiently large and active to warrant press coverage is interpreted by Morris as a confirmation of the hypothesis. Other studies which reveal the lack of coverage given to certain aspects of societal life that might present a threat to the maintenance of the status quo (e.g. poverty, racial minorities) support Morris' conclusion that keeping the public ignorant is a means of social control. Since withholding information in the establishment press did not prevent the movement from growing, Morris predicts that the press will resort to other tactics to limit its impact. On the basis of evidence presented elsewhere, she argues that when society co-opts some of the movement's aims, mass media increasingly present a "respectable" image of the movement by omitting its more radical aspects. This conclusion may seriously limit the potential of the movement to realize a radical restructuring of social relationships. It certainly implies that the establishment press is unlikely to co-operate in increasing the general public's awareness and support of the radical movement aims.

(b) Western Europe

Studies of the treatment of women in the European daily press are generally less systematic than those conducted in America. However, despite their tendency to describe and illustrate rather than analyse, they present a broader perspective than the limited scope of most American research permits.

1. The treatment of women in newspapers

The ISIS report on Women in the Daily Press (X, ISIS, 1976) is based on content-analysis of five newspapers and one news magazine published in Western Europe. The sampling and analysis methods used in the studies are far from uniform, as the report explicitly states. The report makes no claims about the scientific merits of its methodology, but contends that the uniformity of the results compensates for the methodological flaws.

The various publications examined appear to project similar stereotypes of women, who are most often portrayed as victims of natural or fabricated disasters. Their roles as mothers and wives are emphasized and given precedence over their occupational or professional activities. Women's physical appearance is often stressed, even when it bears no relevance to the subject of the news story. Women in the news are further perceived as belonging to a separate category, a different species. This is demonstrated by the existence of a separate woman's page in some publications. The "male-is-the-norm" attitude also surfaces in language practices which implicitly or explicitly exclude women. While the analysis revealed a general underrepresentation of female journalists, it also showed that women reporters were no less prejudiced than their male colleagues in their treatment of women. The survey conducted by Merritt and Gross (cfr. supra, p. 60) also indicated that the mere presence of female journalists would not guarantee alternative perspectives of women.

The above conclusions apply to the different publications in varying degrees. Le Monde and The Times are commended for their straight and accurate reporting in the few articles dealing with women's issues, as well as for their non-sexist images and descriptions of women. La Tribune de Genève, while featuring a woman's page and generally ignoring female news-makers, provided good coverage of women's sports. The International Herald Tribune carried articles on prominent women and feminist events and had expanded its number of female by-lines. Newsweek has adopted the policy of referring to women by their last name only after the initial identification, a policy hitherto only applied to males. The Daily Mirror was the most inconsistent in its portrayal of women. Its main aim is to attract the reader's attention and provide easy reading. To accomplish this, it often resorts to the use of stereotypes. However, the paper is less sexist than a first glance at its numerous pin-up photos would suggest. It occasionally dealt with issues of importance to women and defended individual women against a male-dominated establishment.

The main problem posed by the analysts is whether the newspapers' role is merely to reflect women's position in society, or whether they should influence the direction society is taking. If the newspaper's prime responsibility is to reflect the world as it is, researchers may well inquire if the few references to women found in most newspapers actually reflect women's limited contributions to social, cultural and political life, or whether newspapers and reporters are merely ignoring the contributions women are making. The use of exclusive language is interpreted as evidence in support of the latter view.

A 1977 descriptive study of British newspapers (Barr, 1977) also reveals the use of discriminatory language, implying that for journalists the norm of people seems to be male. While Barr notes that stereotypes of women are slowly being recognized as such by the daily press, they are not yet rejected as invalid and continue to be reinforced. Stereotyping is apparent from the emphasis on female appearance and the description of women, whatever their occupations are, in terms of their marital status and their domestic roles (cfr. the ISIS conclusions supra, p. 61). Family and marital status are deemed irrelevant for the identification of men in British newspapers. As the ISIS report, Barr found no difference between female and male reporters in their treatment of women.

The use of a double standard in the depiction of women vs. men in the news was also revealed in a 1974 analysis of six British newspapers (X, University of Birmingham, 1974). The research team studied the representation of women in nine news categories. The analysis showed that fewer women than men appeared as politicians, professionals, criminals and sports figures. Women were also less likely than men to be perceived as extraordinary or to be assigned elite status. Females were most frequently portrayed as sex-objects and as supportive wives/mothers, i.e. as defined by their relationships to men. The prevalence of this criterion of newsworthiness applied to women reflects the reinforcement of the stereotyped image of women prevailing in society. Even when women are considered news by virtue of their political or professional activities, their newspaper images relate them to their roles as mothers, wives, or sexual beings. In the reporting of female crimes, traditionally feminine behaviour (such as crying in the court-room) is stressed. Women of elite-status are presented in newspapers by virtue of their romantic involvements or in terms of marriage and family. However, descriptions of actual married life are extremely rare and totally unglamorous. The depiction of women as victims of social circumstances or disasters exploits their vulnerability and their inability to act. For men

described in such news stories, passivity and inability to act are not emphasized.

On the basis of these findings, the analysts conclude that male and female spheres are strictly delineated in newspapers. Politics, professions and sports are considered male domains. Marital and domestic affairs are perceived as women's primary responsibilities. Only by stressing women's femininity, as defined by traditional standards, are women allowed to enter the male spheres of politics and sports. Furthermore, love, marriage and the family are often placed in a fantasy context, which presents the female roles of lover, wife and mother as the ultimate fulfillment. Women readers are encouraged to identify with these images, and to evaluate their roles accordingly. The fantasy depiction of motherhood and marriage in newspapers suggests that any less positive experiences female readers might encounter in everyday life are due to personal failure rather than to the inadequacy of the existing social structure. Thus the institutions of marriage and the family as well as traditional female roles are reinforced.

The above discussion attempts to identify the concept of sex-roles which underlies images of women and men in newspapers. The reinforcement of the established values and the existing social structure reflect the newspaper's role as preserver of the status quo (cfr. supra, p. 61-Morris).

2. The "women's section"

The study of British newspapers conducted by Barr (1977) includes a discussion of women's pages, which continue to appear in most papers. Like American newspapers, many British daily papers are dropping the label "for women", although the renamed sections remain largely directed to them. While the author questions the implications of separate pages for women, she supports segregated coverage of subject matter of importance to contemporary women as a temporary measure (cfr. supra, p. 59-Merritt and Gross). However, relabelling this section has not always been accompanied by a shift in orientation from the traditional food, fashion and household focus. On the other hand, female editors of women's sections in such newspapers as The Guardian, The Times, The Observer have provided a forum for the exchange of women's views and for support of feminist pursuits. On the basis of these data, the author concludes that to humanize the news and better serve the interests of both male and female readers, more women journalists are needed.

3. Newspaper coverage of the women's movement

The newspaper coverage of the movement for women's liberation reflects the unflattering and uninformed view that exists in the public mind, according to the study conducted by Barr (1977). The description of feminist groups and their activities is biased. The term "women's liberation" itself is incorrectly used to refer to almost every female pursuit other than homemaking. On the positive side, the study showed that the coverage of issues related to women's position in society is steadily increasing. Unfortunately, the press exploits the growing popularity of the theme by creating movement and anti-movement stars. The press' ambivalence towards women's new consciousness is also demonstrated in the photographs it publishes: pictures of anti-liberationists were found to be generally flattering, while photos of leading feminists tend to be unflattering and aggressive. Such manipulative practices reinforce the stereotype of woman projected in the daily press; women are judged on the basis of their looks rather than their actions.

(c) Oceania

The September 1977 issue of the New Journalist devoted to the position and image of women in Australian media, as analysed and interpreted by the Women Media Workers, includes four articles on newspapers. Specific areas of concern are: the coverage of rape as an act of violence against women, the coverage of women's sports, and the alternative media's reflection of feminist concerns. The articles are reviewed primarily for their exposé value, which compensates for their methodological inaccuracy. Systematic research in this area is still at its infancy in Australia, as acknowledged throughout the issue.

1. The treatment of women in newspapers

One article examines the portrayal of women in the Sydney newspaper Sun (New Journalist, 1976, 5). Its conclusion that the reporting is sexist is supported by illustrative examples rather than systematic content-analysis. According to the unidentified author, the Sun trivializes women. It identifies food and fashion as their sole interests by excluding women from all other news, while neglecting serious coverage of women's issues. Stereotyped portrayal of women appears in sexist cartoons and headlines, in the description of women in terms of their roles as mothers, in the sensationalist coverage of rape, and in billing the consumer news columnist as "The Housewife's Friend". Sex discrimination in the Sun is attributed to the precedence of the commercial interests of its editor over all other concerns. The lack of substantive documentation and the polemical tone of the article restricts however the conclusions that can be drawn.

The article focusing on the reporting of rape (New Journalist, 1976, 7-8) is also sparsely and randomly documented. In the same fashion as in the article discussed above, the anonymous author argues that the ambiguous and "mock horror" reporting of rape is used as a sensationalist attention-

getter to increase newspaper sales. By presenting the victim's shame following the attack as a natural reaction, newspapers reinforce the notion that rape is somehow provoked by the woman.

The analysis of the image of women in the coverage of the 1976 Olympic Games in three newspapers is somewhat more systematic. The composition of the survey sample as well as the monitoring period are indicated. Conclusions are based on practices in the treatment of sportswomen common to all three papers. Three general conclusions are drawn:

- women are treated only according to the narrowest stereotypes;
- the underlying assumption structuring sports reporting is that male precedes female in importance, and therefore pictorially and in copy space;
- sports reporters view "male" as the general norm. Women seem to fit some other second-ranking category (cfr. supra, p. 62-ISIS report).

Data in support of these generalizations include: the use of meaningless married names to identify sportswomen; the fact that professions are listed for male, but not for female athletes; the fact that in multiple item stories male events and results of male competitions are covered first; the practice of referring to female competitors as "girls", while sportsmen are never called "boys". A major factor contributing to the discriminatory treatment of women in sports news is the underrepresentation of female journalists in sports departments. This explanation is substantiated by a comparison of reports from male journalists with those written by the two sole female sports correspondents. The women reporters wrote from a markedly different point of view, which emphasized individuals' achievements. While the reportage of such an unusual and highly publicized event as the Olympic Games may not be representative for everyday sports reporting, it does provide data in support of the widely-held contention that sports reporting is heavily biased against women (cfr. supra, p. 57 - Miller).

2. Newspaper coverage of the women's movement

A fourth article in the New Journalist focuses on the alternative media, including the underground press. According to the author, the press is the most accessible to women among the alternative media in Australia. A gradual change in the underground press from a preoccupation with male issues to the reflection of feminist awareness and the integration of feminist goals into its revolutionary programme is noted. The author relates this evolution in the press to the development of the counterculture movement. From its emergence, the underground movement was male-oriented and male-dominated. Women were relegated to traditional roles and excluded from policy-making. Gradually the underground media, and particularly the press, started responding to feminist consciousness and demands by dealing with women's issues and by employing more women in all phases of production. The author argues that the alternative press is important to feminists, as it provides opportunities to exert influence outside the specifically feminist media. By focusing on the underground press, the article diverges from the dominant trend in media studies of women which generally concentrate on the establishment media. Although this emphasis may be justified on the basis of the mass appeal and the pervasive impact of the established press, the importance of the underground press, along with the feminist press, for the introduction and spread of feminist ideas warrants further research. A comparative analysis of women's movement coverage in the establishment vs. the underground newspapers, and an assessment of their audience and potential impact would be most productive.

(d) Asia

In view of the vastness of the Asian continent, the disparate levels of socio-economic development and literacy, the varying concepts of the press itself e.g. in communist vs. non-communist nations (cfr. X, World Communication, Unesco, 1975), an assessment of women's roles as reflected in the press is a complicated task (Kulkarni, 1976). At present, a comprehensive survey of sex-role portrayal in Asian newspapers is lacking from the available literature. Two papers presented to the Asian Consultation on Women and Media attempt to narrow the existing research gap. They focus respectively on images of women in Japanese and Hongkong newspapers.

1. The treatment of women in newspapers

The paper presented by Tokiko Fukao (1976) highlights part of the results of an analysis of Japanese newspapers. The conclusions pertain to the newspapers' view of women's role in child-rearing as reflected in news stories on child abandonment and infanticide, and to their concept of women as emerging from the coverage of women's activities. Neither the scope nor the methodology of the study is detailed here. However, the report documents the social conditions in Japan, particularly those related to child care, and the changing status of Japanese women. Against this background the treatment of women in newspapers is evaluated. The author concludes that newspapers reinforce traditional notions about women's roles and femininity, which are in sharp contrast with the redefinition of sex-roles occurring in contemporary Japan. The stereotyped images and descriptions of women reflect a male perspective, according to Fukao. In order to improve women's image, women themselves must exert more influence. Not only is there a need for more female journalists, but the female audience must take action by protesting against the depiction of women in the press and the lack of women

journalists. The treatment of women in the Japanese press thus appears to be no different from the practices prevailing in the press of Western industralized countries.

2. The "women's section"

The paper presented by Kulkarni (1976) attempts to assess the social consciousness of women's roles as reflected in the Asian press on the basis of an analysis of the women's pages in the English-language newspapers of Hongkong. The survey sample is not claimed to be representative of the Asian media. Furthermore, Kulkarni observes that the English-language press is more elitist and more directed to the middle classes than the Asian-language press. On the other hand, the level of literacy is generally low in Asia. Newspaper reading is more common among the middle classes whose ethos can be assumed to be reflected in the English-language press. Finally, the author assumes that the basic mores of the educated middle class of Hongkong roughly correspond with those prevailing elsewhere in non-communist countries of Asia. The results of the content-analysis must be interpreted in view of the above limitations. The women's pages contain an overwhelming number of photographs, mostly of the Hongkong elite's social events and of fashions. The sections are dominated by fashion stories, usually include horoscopes, and regularly feature foods and recipes imported from the West. Ten out of 67 stories in the sample focused on medical or psychological issues, including two items on birth control. Only two of these articles were written by local journalists. About two-thirds of all the news stories in the sample came from outside syndicated services: written by Western journalists, directed to Western audiences and dealing with issues relevant to their societies rather than the Asian socio-cultural context. Since the newspapers in the sample are aimed at the educated middle class, the author argues that the content of their women's pages does not only reflect Asian journalists' prejudices about women's roles and interests, but also those of the audience they serve. Awareness of the aims of the women's movement exists mainly among the middle class, according to Kulkarni, although most literate Asian middle-class women are not activists. In fact, academic research reveals that educated women in Asia still maintain rather traditional concepts of sex-roles.

3. Newspaper coverage of the women's movement

Although leading Asian journalists seem to draw their inspiration from British and American media, they do not emulate the Western model with regard to the women's movement which, according to Kulkarni (1976), has made a serious impact on media in the West. Kulkarni's explanation of this unwillingness to focus on feminism is that "Asian journalists, for reasons of their countries' feudal and colonial past, are products of unegalitarian values in society, and are uncomfortable with the onrush of the feminist movement which challenges the entrenched male positions" (Kulkarni, 1976, 7). As a result, the sparse coverage of the women's movement in Asian newspapers reflects a negative attitude. The Western press' reflection of the growing pains the movement is experiencing reinforces the (predominantly male) Asian editors' view of feminism as irrelevant to Asian conditions. According to the author, the movement to equalize women's status is important to Asia as an integral part of the overall socio-economic development. By concentrating on developmental aspects, with special emphasis on equality between the sexes, the press could play a significant role in the development process. However, Kulkarni is pessimistic about the prospect of the press meeting this challenge. Since the press all over the world has traditionally been at best a catalyst rather than an initiator of social change, the author believes that only a strong social movement will be able to pressure the "lethargic" Asian mass media into shifting their orientation towards these important issues.

(e) Latin America

The CIM Resolution (CIM, 1977) summarizes the portrayal of women in newspapers on the basis of evidence presented at the seminar on mass media and women's images in Santo Domingo. The treatment of women in newspapers falls into two categories.

- Newspapers present images of female newsmakers. These include extraordinary women, i.e. women who are active and successful in traditionally male fields, and women who are considered newsworthy because of the sensationalist nature of the story.
- Certain news stories are specifically aimed at women. Such items are often contained in a separate section labelled "for women", which implies a degree of lowered esteem for women.

The extension of the above conclusion to the entire body of research documents reviewed in the foregoing discussion provides a basic summary of the portrayal of women in newspapers in various continents, cultures and societies.

Conclusion

Newspaper images of woman define her in terms of her relationships to men. They emphasize her maternal and marital roles, and her function as a sexual object for male perusal. Women make news by virtue of their thus defined "femininity", or are assigned traditionally female traits when they appear in the news in non-traditional capacities, e.g. as politician, professional, activist, sports figure, etc. This same concept of female nature and

female roles is reflected in the news aimed specifically at women. The items dominating the women's pages are food, fashion, society news, and entertainment, which are perceived as women's primary interests in accordance with their primary roles. Traditional sex-role concepts and behaviour are thus reinforced. Changing lifestyles and the new roles of women and men emerging in contemporary society are insufficiently reflected in the press. The press' function as preserver of the status quo also appears from the scarcity and the trivializing, ambivalent or distorting tone of its coverage of the feminist movement and the issues it raises. Most research documents attribute the traditional outlook on women prevailing in newspapers to the predominance of men in the newsrooms. The newspaper perspective of women is fundamentally a male perspective. Although research indicates that the presence of women journalists does not automatically guarantee non-stereotyped treatment of women, it also suggests that increasing their number would at least provide more opportunities for new images of women to emerge.

B. Images of women in magazines

Women's magazines are distinguished from other media mainly by the fact that they are directed specifically to, and read primarily by, women. This factor explains feminist concern with the images projected in these publications, precisely because of their potential impact on women's consciousness and self-perceptions. Studies of female images in women's magazines tend to focus on advertising, because the vast majority of advertisements for consumer products are aimed at women. Women's magazines are therefore a highly valued advertising vehicle. The evolution of women's magazines from their original to their present formats historically coincided with the increasing industrialization and the growing economic importance of advertising, as Weibel (1977, 142-154) has demonstrated for the U.S.A. Dependence on advertising revenues has been indicated as one of the major factors determining female images presented in the women's periodical press. Therefore, advertising and editorial content are inextricably linked. Separation of the two in this survey is solely for purposes of analytical clarity. However, strict separation cannot always be maintained, especially in the discussion of European studies which tend to present an overall evaluation in contrast with the more narrowly delineated research focus of American analyses. North America and Western Europe have produced the largest quantity of research materials in this field, with other geographic areas lagging far behind. Thus, the existing research gap between the industrialized consumer societies and other types of society, particularly those in the developing stages, is widened.

(a) North America

1. Non-fiction content

Analysis of non-advertising content in women's magazines has concentrated primarily on fiction, "the weak spot in all mass magazines" (Ray, 1972, 41). In order to determine whether non-fiction suffers from the same cultural lag, Ray content-analysed four magazines directed to and/or read by women. The cultural lag projected by women's magazine fiction is defined as the discrepancy which exists between the cultural ideal, placing women's prime responsibilities in the home, and the reality of contemporary social conditions, which show an increasing employment of married women, mostly in traditionally female jobs and professions which tend to be the less skilled and the less rewarding occupations.

Three women's periodicals were selected for analysis, i.e. McCall's and The Ladies' Home Journal (LHJ) which occupy the leading position in terms of circulation among the family-oriented magazines, and Cosmopolitan, aimed at the 18-24 year-old career women. Playboy, the nation's best-selling men's magazine was also included, on the basis of research indicating that it is the most widely read publication among employed female readers. The study purported to examine which role models the magazines presented, how they reflected social reality, and what their positions were regarding the changing roles of women. Articles dealing with female employment reflect great disparity between McCall's and LHJ. McCall's is ambivalent towards working wives and ignores working mothers. It encourages volunteer work for married women as a culturally acceptable outlet, or suggests part-time work for mothers of grown-up children. The emphasis on traditional roles for women reflects the orientation of the magazine's audience, as appears from readers' correspondence. In contrast with these traditional views, McCall's presents profiles of successful women in a wide variety of fields, including non-traditional occupations. LHJ does not restrict women to their domestic roles. It condones employment, preferably part-time, for married women and mothers, although the majority of its audience was found to favour the role of home-maker. However, its profiles of women do not include the world of work, and vocational information is sparsely provided. Cosmo is a magazine for women, but about men. Its main focus is on how to get a man and keep him. Non-fiction content dealing with female employment focuses on men rather than careers. Work is presented as an opportunity to meet men, and job descriptions tend to be glamourized and romanticized. Occasionally, employment discrimination, job opportunities and successful career women are discussed. Playboy resembles Cosmo in its liberal attitudes towards sex. It also focuses on men, but is written by and for men.

Women appear as sex-objects in photos only. Non-fiction content reflects a general disinterest in women outside sexual relationships.

Male-female relations are a major topic in all four magazines. McCall's and LHJ reflect traditional views of occupational roles and sexual behaviour of women. McCall's supports outright the traditional moral standards with regard to pre- and extra-marital sex, while the majority of its readers are inclined to use a double standard in judging infidelity of men vs. women. LHJ does not encourage pre-marital sex either, but recognizes it as a fact of life, and judges according to the circumstances despite the conservatism of its readership in this respect. Cosmo differs from the two other women's magazines in the survey sample in that it openly advocates equality in sex, although its emphasis on female-male relationships and on marriage is at least equally strong. However, marriage is not seen as a total relationship, but presented as a maximization of sexual opportunity. By emphasizing marriage as the preferable mode of life, it reflects the status of women in American culture, which discriminates against single people. Extra-marital sex is only discussed in Cosmopolitan in terms of men and single women, thus reflecting the double standard at least with regard to married women vs. married men. Playboy, despite its pictorial treatment of women as sexual objects, emphasizes the individual and rejects the double standard in every respect. Pre-marital sex is openly advocated, extra-marital sex is not encouraged for either men or women. Marriage is taken seriously, though not stressed.

As for the position the various magazines take on the women's movement, Cosmopolitan gives precedence to the importance of men in women's lives, and to sexual freedom over psychological, social or political liberation. The "Cosmo-girl" is far from a liberated woman, according to Ray. McCall's has been the most consistent in emphasizing traditional roles for women at least until its new female editor, appointed in 1969, gradually changed its orientation towards support of feminist aims and issues. LHJ has been the most heavily criticized among the women's magazines. In defence of its tradition-oriented content and outlook, its male editor argues that the majority of its readers choose a home-centered life. Playboy is ambivalent towards the liberated women, but only reacts against the anti-male feminist faction. However, female liberation is appreciated primarily for the sexual freedom it implies.

On the basis of these findings, the author concludes that no magazine can yet be labelled feminist in orientation. However, McCall's is definitely moving in that direction, while both Playboy and Cosmopolitan partially reflect women's new sexual freedom. LHJ has responded to feminist criticism by issuing one feminist edition, but has since resumed its more or less traditional pattern. The general ambivalence or hesitant approaches, towards feminism seem to reflect the view of the majority of American women, according to Ray. LHJ reader surveys have shown that the majority of women do not want to be liberated and do not accept other women's non-traditional concepts and behaviour. According to the author, a change in women's concepts of themselves and their roles is needed before changes in sex-roles will be reflected in the women's press.

While the above discussion suggests some deviation from the dominant traditional image of the home-centered and consumption-oriented housewife in Cosmopolitan, Weibel (1977, 135-173) observes that the sexy Cosmo is merely another version of the traditional, passive image of woman. The roots of the emergence of the contemporary Cosmo image are in the sexual revolution of the 1960's, when the advent of the birth-control pill offered new options to single and divorced women. Sex became a matter of personal choice. Woman's sexual freedom is part of her liberation, Weibel observes, but it remains the only link between feminism and Cosmopolitan. She indicates other alternatives emerging in the late sixties which represented more significant changes in women's image in the women's press. Essence, a magazine directed to the black professional and businesswomen, projects images of the self-confident, independent woman without the Cosmo emphasis on the all-importance of catching a man. Ms. magazine finally emerged from the women's liberation movement as a mass-circulation publication with a feminist viewpoint. However, Weibel does not expect the trend away from tradition to escalate. She predicts a partial return to the pre-1960 status and a renewed emphasis on more traditional images of woman.

Weibel's perspective on future developments in women's magazines' response to changing sex-roles may be overly pessimistic. A comparative study of role portrayals in Mademoiselle, Redbook and Ms. (Newkirk, 1977) showed that alternatives to the domestic images of women are being gradually incorporated into the traditional formats of the former two, and exclusively portrayed in Ms. magazine. However, a balanced portrayal of today's "total" woman is absent from all three publications, since even Ms. fails to portray accurately women's domestic roles, the author concludes.

The course of gradual reform women's magazines appear to pursue was briefly interrupted in the summer of 1976 by a highly unusual episode. Following the initiative of one editor, 39 magazines joined together to stimulate national debate on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) issue (Farley, 1978 - Butler and Paisley, 1978). The length of coverage and the extent of support provided for passage of the ERA varied with editorial policy, circulation, and social class of readership. Magazines which frequently discussed controversial issues, had an average circulation of 2 1/2 million and a middle-class readership were more likely to

provide extensive coverage and strong support than publications with a lower circulation, working-class audience and infrequent coverage of controversial issues. However, amount of coverage did not consistently correlate positively with advocacy. All magazines advocated ERA to some extent, with fashion and romance magazines emerging as the strongest supporters. Treatment of various themes such as employment, heterosexual and homosexual marriage, rape, etc. generally expressed a strong pro-ERA position. Although magazine coverage of women's rights definitely rose to a peak in the mid-1970's as compared to previous decades, including the high level reached in the 1920's, the long-term trend in media coverage of issues centering around women is not necessarily encouraging, according to Butler and Paisley (1978).

2. Fictional content

Our discussion of fictional content in the American women's press is based on four studies. Three of these analyse fiction in the so-called "trade" magazines for women. The fourth focuses on romance magazines vs. adventure magazines, their male-oriented counterparts. The term "trade magazine" refers to a consumption-oriented publication which addresses a predominantly middle-class audience. Romance magazines are most widely read among working-class women and focus heavily on fictional entertainment.

The basis of the study conducted by Bailey (1969) is the criticism voiced by Betty Friedan (1963,33-69), whose research revealed deplorable changes in women's magazine fiction. Friedan's analysis showed a sharp decrease in the number of career women featured in fiction from 1939 to 1949. By the end of the 1950's, career women had completely disappeared from women's magazine fiction, and hardly any female characters were employed. Working women were being replaced by younger housewife heroines, whose interests were home- and children-oriented. Bailey's study was designed to test these findings in fiction appearing in McCall's, The Ladies' Home Journal (LHJ) and Good Housekeeping (GH) of 1957 and 1967, and to examine whether the changes in women's status during that decade, such as increasing education and employment, were reflected in the portrayal of women in fiction. Bailey found the dominant image to be that of an attractive married woman, between 26 and 35 years old, with 1 or 2 children, a house in the city, a college education, housewifery as her main occupation, and love as her primary goal. Friedan's findings, which showed a trend towards younger heroines, were generally confirmed. The only exception was McCall's, which significantly increased its representation of older (36-45) women. The analysis further revealed a sharp decrease in the number of female characters with a career. Moreover, career women were mostly portrayed as unsympathetic, "unfeminine", and as threats to other women's marriages. The happy housewife represented the dominant image of women in fiction, and marriage was depicted more frequently as bringing happiness in 1967 as compared to 1957. The only major change noted over the decade pertained to the problems female characters were faced with, which shifted from mostly romantic to predominantly psychological in 1967. Bailey interprets this as a trend towards more realism, although she observes that the problems dealt with in fiction stories were generally not of a serious nature. The author concludes that women's magazines, at least in their fictional content, seem to react against career women by emphasizing conservatism. She predicts that changes in women's lives will have to be more definite before they will be reflected in the fiction stories published in women's magazines (cfr. supra, p. 72 - Ray's conclusion with regard to non-fiction content).

Lugenbeel (1975) analysed a sample of short stories published in Good Housekeeping in 1972-1973. The analysis results support Bailey's findings for the previous decade. The typical heroine is still a young (25-35 years old) woman, whose goals are love-oriented, and whose problems are of a psychological nature. She is portrayed as a wife or mother, who falls victim to circumstances and sacrifices herself for someone else in a situation not of her own making. Lugenbeel suggests that fiction in women's magazines such as Good Housekeeping, which shows women as home- and family-oriented without offering any alternatives, could provoke guilt complexes in female readers who did not choose to sacrifice their careers for the housewife role.

Franzwa (1975) also selected Good Housekeeping, McCall's and The Ladies' Home Journal for her analysis. To indicate the relevance of such studies, she refers to research results which reveal the effect of media images on women's role perceptions. Several studies have demonstrated that:

- women's educational training and career aspirations are affected by their concepts of female roles, which are in turn related to their ideas of what men perceive as the ideal woman;
- the view women have of their roles in life are influenced by images presented in the mass media. Effect studies of children indicate that mass media are more influential in shaping their role concepts than parental examples.

The analysis covered a 25-year period (from 1945 to 1970 at 5-year intervals). It was revealed that women in fiction are generally portrayed as single and looking for a husband, as housewife/mother, as spinster, or as widowed/divorced and soon to remarry. The single factor defining women in each of these categories is their relationship to a man or the absence thereof. Forty-one percent of the female characters in the sample were employed at some time, mainly in low-status jobs.

However, it was made clear that young single women who were employed considered their jobs as temporary occupations until they got married. Few married women were shown as employed, but those who did work almost invariably experienced severe role conflicts. No working women appeared in fiction of the 1955, 1960, 1965 and 1970 samples. This finding tends to support Friedan's and Bailey's observations of a decline in the number of working women in contemporary women's magazine fiction - a trend exactly opposite to that actually taking place in the U.S.A. during the same period.

In comparison with the home-oriented magazines under examination, Franzwa refers to more career-oriented women's periodicals such as Glamour, Mademoiselle, and Cosmopolitan. She rejects Clarke and Esposito's criticism (1966) that the careers focused on in these magazines are esoteric, because they are inaccessible and the average woman does not aspire to them. According to Franzwa, broadening the perspective on female roles in any way is preferable to stressing housewifery and motherhood as women's only roles in life. This observation loses significance in view of Ray's and Weibel's conclusions discussed above (pp. 72-73), which showed Cosmopolitan as basically perpetuating traditional images of women. The only new element in the Cosmo image of woman is her sexual freedom, which is merely an additional female attribute for pleasing men, according to Weibel (1977). Ray's analysis (1972) revealed that Cosmopolitan's concern with careers is not based on any genuine interest in women's economic independence and social liberation. Female jobs are distortedly described in terms of their potential for encountering men, who are the protagonists in Cosmo women's lives.

A study conducted by Smith and Matre (1975) compares sex-roles and social norms reflected in romance magazines, aimed at women, with those in adventure magazines, directed to men. Both types of magazine are most popular among working-class people. The analysis showed significant differences between the two types of magazine in the reflection and support of a set of social norms, which sociological literature documents as being strongly adhered to by the American working class. Only the results pertaining to sex-role concepts and behaviour will be discussed. Men almost invariably featured in romance stories as important characters. Contrastingly, adventure stories often ignored women completely or portrayed them in a casual and temporary sexual relationship with the male hero. Romance stories tended to disapprove of pre- and extra-marital sex, thus adhering to the generally accepted norm, while adventure fiction was more likely to approve. Sexual encounters were only part of the adventure in male-oriented magazines, but were the adventure in romance stories for women. Marriage was a primary goal in life in most romance fiction, while adventure stories seldom dealt with it. Romance characters tended to seek stability and security, while adventure heroes showed no such interests. Another interesting finding concerned the norm that working people tend to perceive themselves as living in a hostile environment. Romance heroines facing hostility experienced feelings of helplessness. By contrast, adventure heroes expected to encounter hostility, and usually succeeded in skillfully mastering the situation. This corresponds with an earlier finding revealed in a study of British newspapers (cfr. supra, p. 63-X, Birmingham, 1974), which showed women as helpless victims of social circumstances and disasters, while men in similar situations were never portrayed as passive or unable to act. The portrayal of sex-roles in both types of magazine tends to stereotype both women and men. Women generally appeared as domestic, passive, emotional and dependent. Male characters tended to be aggressive, strong, confident and protective. However, more adventure stories featured (sexually) aggressive women than romance stories. On the basis of these findings, the analysts conclude that romance stories show women as seeking and finding happiness in conventional roles, while depending for their identity on the men in their lives. Adventure stories portray an escapist world of male prowess, devoid of domestic and moral responsibilities. The normative expectations of males and females as reflected in fiction are thus markedly different and do not contribute to promoting mutually satisfactory male-female relationships between readers. The reinforcement of stereotypes and the depiction of male-female relationships in fiction are not conducive to effecting a better understanding between men and women, the authors conclude.

On the basis of the research results discussed above, it seems that fiction represents "the weak spot" in women's magazines in terms of perpetuating conventional role concepts. While the non-fiction content shows some signs of awareness of the changing position of women, it also remains largely tradition-oriented in depicting them and their roles in society.

(b) Western Europe

Types of content as a basis for classification of studies on women's magazines is a less efficient criterion when discussing research documents on European periodicals. Most documents tend to present an overall assessment, integrating various types of content, socio-demographic audience data and attempts to describe women's magazines in terms of the functions they perform for their readers. While this approach provides valuable sociological perspectives on the position of women's magazines among other media types, it is likely to suffer from methodological imperfections.

1. Fictional content

An analysis of fiction in a sample of British and American women's magazines from the 18th century to the present (Cecil, 1974) shows no major changes in the basic concerns of fiction heroines. Women in fiction have always been in search of romance and true love. The major change in current fiction, according to Cecil, is the introduction of sex as a common ingredient of romance in the new women's periodicals, which are mainly aimed at the young "liberated" woman. The older established women's magazines with middle-class readership have also made some adjustments to the traditional patterns in face of the competition, particularly from television. However, their fiction heroines remain essentially housewives, now faced with divorce and adultery, the latter always having a destructive effect. By incorporating themes like adultery and divorce, they are attempting to achieve a balance between realism and the traditional patterns of romance (cfr. the trend towards realism noted by Bailey (1969) - supra, p. 74). The typical heroines of the fiction of the 1960's appear in the new "liberated" magazines, which respond to the permissive morality of the time by updating old story patterns via the incorporation of sex. However, casual pre-marital sex is not condoned. Although marriage is not always a prerequisite, love is. While adultery, divorce and sex are dealt with in contemporary fiction, the happy-ending romantic story still prevails, Cecil observes. The predominance of traditional patterns leads Cecil to conclude that women's magazine fiction does not seem to be greatly affected by women's changing status, and that escapism remains its primary function.

Providing entertainment via escapist fiction is indicated as one of the basic functions women's periodicals perform for their readers (Wassenaar, 1976). The decline of romance magazines in the United Kingdom, which McClelland (1965) observed in the 1960's and which he attributed to the fierce competition of television, particularly in the area of entertainment, has since been reversed, according to White (1977). The 1970's actually witnessed a substantial increase in the demand for escapist fiction in the United Kingdom both in the general women's press and the specialized fiction periodicals (White, 1977). Wassenaar (1976) notes a recent trend towards realism in fiction appearing in the Netherlands women's press. The enormous success of Story, a new publication aimed at a predominantly female audience, suggests that the romantic formula is by no means losing ground. Story and other newly launched "spin-off" publications exclusively focus on the problemless dream world of romance. However, these magazines do not present a fictional fantasy world, but are dominated by romanticized accounts of the lives of royalty, stars and other news-makers. Love story magazines also continue to be popular with women in Italy (De Claricini, 1965) and France (Lainé, 1974).

Weibel (1977), however, observed that fiction, at least the purely romantic-escapist type, seemed to be decreasing in importance in the American trade magazines. She suggests the social class differences between the audiences of the trade press vs. the romance magazines as the key to explaining this phenomenon. According to Weibel, the TV-soap-opera has largely replaced magazine entertainment for middle-class women. For working-class women, who are the primary readers of romance periodicals, the soap-opera which portrays middle-class people and lifestyles is not competitive with their fiction magazines. According to White (1977), structural factors such as social class, age and income are today losing significance as a basis for social stratification in the United Kingdom. Attitudes, tastes and lifestyles are becoming the crucial factors which increasingly guide the communication strategies of the women's press. A recent analysis of the Dutch-language women's press in Belgium (De Kunst, 1978) also failed to provide evidence for the thesis formulated by Trommsdorff (1969) with respect to the women's periodicals in the Federal Republic of Germany, that the style and content of a particular publication are significantly related to the socio-economic status of its readership. The success formula of all women's magazines, regardless of socio-demographic audience variables, appears to be firmly based on a balance between two major ingredients, i.e. service and entertainment. The emphasis on either one of these elements varies in accordance with readership variables (De Kunst, 1978).

2. Non-fiction content

Content-analyses of women's magazines reveal that the dominant images of women are projected in the advertisements which all magazines contain in large quantities. The economic dependence of the women's press on advertising revenues determines their editorial as well as their advertising content. In fact, the distinction between both has been more and more obscured, and editorial content merely seems to support the household industry and its advertising for which the women's magazines with their homogeneous audience form an excellent vehicle (Wassenaar, 1976). The increasing overlapping of advertising and editorial content produces and promotes images of women which appeal to female readers as consumers in the interest of the profit-oriented established order. Women's magazines thus represent a conservative force. Women are predominantly depicted in domestic roles, i.e. as the major dispenser of the family income. A more recent development is the emergence of the seductive woman (cfr. supra in fiction), who is encouraged to buy beautifying products in order to attract and please men. What both images have in common, besides stimulating female consumption, is that they define women exclusively in terms of their

interactions with men: as their wives/housekeepers/mothers of their children, and as sexual objects. Images of independent or working women, and many other vital images of contemporary women are conspicuously absent (Faulder, 1977, 175).

Benoît (1973) analysed two mass-circulation magazines aimed at predominantly young, educated, middle-class women in France. Her evaluation of the portrayal of women and the image of femininity in Elle and Marie-Claire is based on an examination of the literature on the French women's press combined with content-analysis. The study does not purport to provide a systematized content description on the basis of statistical data, but rather indicates current trends as related to traditional concepts of women and female roles on the one hand, and the new feminist awareness on the other. An evolution from emphasis on conventional concepts of female roles (1945-1956) over an increasing objectification of women as esthetic objects of male pleasure (1958-1968) to finally a first attempt at redefining women's identity and role in life from a female perspective is noted in Elle. Benoît observes that the magazine has redesigned its content in recent years, combining new feminist themes such as sexual liberation and female employment with traditional concerns such as practical advice in moral, sentimental and domestic matters and the esthetic presentation and non-conformist style of its fashion photography. The combination of new female awareness with traditional femininity is a reflection of the ambivalence of its readers, according to Benoît. A 1971 survey is cited as an indication of sex-role concepts among French women. While the majority of the respondents supported the principle of equality between the sexes, marriage was still considered a primary goal in women's lives. Sexual liberation was situated within the husband-wife relationship. Marriage itself was not questioned, and the double standard still prevailed in the judgment of pre- and extra-marital sex. According to Benoît, Elle tends to support equality between the sexes in all spheres, with special emphasis on female employment as a form of liberation from the narrow and limiting domestic roles, and on the redefinition of female sexuality within the marital context. The emphasis on the married couple is stronger in Marie-Claire, which tends to reflect more traditional values. In comparison with Elle, the service and advice function - generally acknowledged as one of the major functions of women's magazines (cfr. Wassenaar, 1976, 80-82) - is stressed more in Marie-Claire. However, Marie-Claire also introduces the major feminist themes of female sexuality and employment. Both magazines have thus evolved into a format which combines the representation of traditional femininity with images reflecting the new female consciousness. The conflicts arising from the combination of domestic and professional roles are reflected in the magazines' growing concern with reforming the societal structure, and an emerging controversy around the marriage institution.

Benoît sees the positive aspect of these recent developments in the women's press primarily in the establishment of a communication link between feminist theorists and the female mass audience. However, a new female mass culture is emerging from the images presented in the women's press and mass media in general, which is producing new myths. These new myths define woman's biological specificity and traditional femininity against stereotyped masculinity. It is here that women's magazines, which are partly responsible for the female mass culture and its "new" mythology, cease to reflect the real concerns of feminism, Benoît concludes.

The study of French women's periodicals conducted by Dardigna (1975) also reveals the ambiguity of woman's image. The survey sample, the size and composition of which are not specified, includes, besides Elle and Marie-Claire, several other "middle-class" magazines such as Vogue, 20 ans, Votre Beauté. The analysis shows the emergence of a double image: woman defined exclusively by her roles of wife and mother vs. the sexually liberated woman. A balanced combination of these two aspects is presented as the female ideal as perceived by men. Male and female roles are strictly delineated: production is man's responsibility, reproduction that of woman. Women's magazines present the biologically determined female nature as opposed to the male nature as the basis for this strict role segregation (cfr. supra Benoît's conclusion). This conservative definition of the female role reflects the position of women in the male-dominated social structure, which rests on the institution of the nuclear family. It conflicts with the reality of (married) women's increasing participation in the labour force. Dardigna does not claim that women's magazines completely ignore the reality of female employment. However, the sole purpose of exposing the exploitation of working women is to encourage women to reappraise their true role in life: that of housewife/mother. Women's marital and maternal roles are presented as essentially secondary and subservient to the needs of husband and children. Failure to find happiness in domesticity and subservience to man is attributed to the individual women, never to the shortcomings of the social structure (cfr. supra, p. 63 the conclusion of a study of newspaper images of women - X, Birmingham, 1974). Problems and conflicts are typically reduced to personal circumstances, while social conditions are never examined as their cause, according to the author. Women's magazines thus reflect and proscribe the traditional image of woman, which reinforces the established socio-economic-political system. To update this traditional image, some degree of liberation and feminist awareness is injected. The incorporation of "liberated" ideas varies according to the magazine's audience. Vogue and Votre Beauté reduce women's liberation to sexual freedom. Far from advocating equality between women

and men, they are in fact counter-revolutionary, and present equality as a threat to masculinity, which they consider an extremely undesirable effect. In Elle, Marie-Claire, 20 ans and Femme Pratique two trends emerge. First, social change is advocated in order to permit women to fulfill their biological destiny of motherhood. However, no attempts are made to question or redefine woman's place in society. The second trend is the emphasis on sexual freedom for women within marriage, but not sexual equality: different standards are applied in evaluating the male vs. the female sexual experience. While Dardigna's generalizations, based on a broader range of publications, show no deviation from the traditional patterns other than an integration of new themes into conventional sex-role concepts, Benoît interpreted the introduction of new themes in the two largest women's periodicals as a positive development. The apparent contradiction between these two interpretations is basically a matter of differing emphasis. Ultimately, Dardigna's interpretation seems to prevail, as demonstrated by Benoît's conclusion (cfr. supra, p. 81), which diminishes the progressive value of the magazines under discussion.

Dardigna also examined two relatively new women's magazines: the French version of Cosmopolitan, and l'Amour, which are aimed at liberated middle-class women. However, instead of presenting new and improved images of women and their relationships with men, liberation is merely presented as an extension of male sexual privileges to women, including exploitation and oppression. These magazines portray both men and women as sexual objects. The main characteristic of the new woman is her seductiveness achieved through orgasmic potential and the consumption of products which increase her sex-appeal. Both sexual capacity and consumption of "sexy" products are cultivated for the pleasure of men. Woman's true nature is still submission to man, her real goal remains marriage, and the ultimate female fulfillment is to be found in motherhood. Despite attempts to modernize woman's image, mainly by co-opting feminist aims with regard to sexuality, the basic perspective has not changed: women are confirmed in their traditional roles of wife and mother, and the basic social institution of the family, and woman's place within it, are reinforced. Women's magazines preclude the liberation of women by defining female nature as sexual-social-economic passivity and subordination, Dardigna concludes.

Lainé (1974) is even firmer in rejecting the role of the women's press in the liberation of women. Because of the economic necessity of catering for the advertisers and the majority of their audience, who, he claims, are satisfied with the proposed models, the sole function of women's magazines is to perpetuate the dominant concept of woman, adapting it to the trends and fashions of the time. The dominant images of woman are those that determine her by her place in the home and her relationship with men: i. e. the housewife/mother (instrument) and the seductive woman (object). To perform these roles efficiently, women have to purchase products to please men in either respect. The working woman is virtually absent, except in glamourized female jobs, although the majority of employed women in France work in factories, in clerical jobs or domestic service. According to Lainé, the emphasis on either of the major attributes of femininity, i. e. sexual attractiveness and efficient domesticity, varies according to the audience which the magazine addresses. Lainé also cites Elle as the most progressive, but observes that the sympathetic presentation of feminist ideas co-exists with the traditional themes of femininity, which remains dominant. The only major change he notes in the contemporary women's press is the integration of woman's sexual liberation into the dominant ideology of the consumer society: the women's press merely eroticizes the life of the woman consumer by enclosing her in the narrow field of objects, instruments and methods of seduction. Women's liberation is identified with sexual liberation as a new instrument to please men, to be attained by the consumption of sexy products (cfr. supra, p. 82-Dardigna and p. 76-Weibel). Lainé's conclusion synthesizes the above discussion of the relation between women's magazines and women's liberation. The role of the women's press is basically of the economic order and no more is to be expected from it.

Wassenaar's study of Netherlands women's magazines (Wassenaar, 1976) reveals the same basic trends as indicated in the French analyses discussed above. Despite the changing position of women in Netherlands society, due to increased leisure and growing participation in the labour force, as well as the onrush of the feminist movement, women's magazines show no major changes. Wassenaar attributes the lack of interest in feminist aims and issues to the precedence of commercial interests, to which feminism and its new perspective on women present a threat. Women's dominant image is that of the housewife/mother. Unmarried women only appear in search for true happiness in marriage, particularly in fiction and advice columns. The married woman's primary role is to please man, the centre of her life. Working women are either absent or depicted in female jobs of the glamorous type. The portrayal of women in the women's press, both editorially and pictorially, thus reinforces a strict role segregation. Only by presupposing and reinforcing women's dependence and oppression are women's magazines able to maintain their position. According to Wassenaar, in a world where women and men participate as equal partners with the same opportunities for personal and social development, women's magazines would be obsolete.

That women's magazines fail to contribute to the liberation of women is also the conclusion of a

content-analysis of the Dutch-language women's press in Belgium (Lavaerts, 1975). The study was restricted to an analysis of editorial content dealing with female employment. None of the examined periodicals devoted more than an average of 2% of their editorial space to the discussion of this theme. The evaluation of the few articles focusing on woman's work was based on two criteria, which represent focal points of feminist media critique: the omission of the political implications of women's status and the reinforcement of traditional concepts of woman's role. In terms of these criteria, three of the four magazines examined (Libelle/Rosita, Mimo, and Ons Volk) could be described as more or less progressive. They exposed the discrimination against female workers, presented the division of work in female vs. male spheres as archaic, and pointed out the responsibilities of government to improve women's status. However, Libelle/Rosita was highly inconsistent, taking a progressive position in its editorials, while expressing a conservative and tradition-oriented viewpoint in its advice columns. Het Rijk der Vrouw, the fourth publication in the sample, was most conservative. It either ignored the issue or refused to take a firm position when the subject was introduced by readers. However, none of the magazines provided a thorough analysis of the issue, and feminist actions related to female employment were generally dismissed as ineffective. On the basis of these data, Lavaerts concludes that the lack of concern with women's roles demonstrated in women's magazines fails to reflect the changing position of contemporary women.

A description of Italian women's weeklies (De Claricini, 1965) confirms the general trends in the European and American women's press of the sixties and seventies. According to De Claricini, political information is virtually absent, which reflects a view of women as either not interested in, or incapable of understanding, politics, although women represent the vast majority of voters in Italy. De Claricini also believes that the link between advertising and the women's press precludes the reflection of issues and concerns of relevance to modern women. Women's magazines in Italy, as elsewhere in Western Europe and North America, merely constitute a prime vehicle for advertising messages directed to women in view of their purchasing power as housewives. Besides consumption, escape in a fantasy world of romance seems to delineate women's sphere as presented in the Italian women's press, De Claricini concludes.

In a recent survey of British women's magazines and their editors, White (1977) noted a slight change in the extent to which the acquisition of consumer goods was supported as a primary goal in life. Until 1970, the promotion of consumption and the presentation of a home-bound and family-oriented picture of woman represented the basic formula to which nearly all women's magazines subscribed, White observes. Today, family- and consumption-oriented magazines remain the largest and most successful sub-group among women's periodicals. Attempts to update content in the early 1970's to suit the interests of the new woman - active, educated, and socially aware - have not been well-received. These developments have nevertheless succeeded in breaking the uniformity in content, according to White. However, despite a more critical attitude towards consumption and the expansion of feature content, contemporary women's magazines continue to purvey a distorted image of the world. Coverage of the world outside the home, the principal indicator of a magazine's position on the traditional-progressive continuum according to White, remains unsatisfactory, particularly with respect to the issues of education and employment. Commercial constraints and the threat of dropping circulations continue to curtail editorial freedom within women's magazine publishing in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in Western Europe and North America.

(c) Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.

The women's press in the socialist countries of Europe does not suffer from the commercial constraints affecting its sister publications in Western Europe, according to Lewartowska (1975). As a result of their economic independence, women's periodicals of Eastern and Central Europe are able to concentrate on education. The author observes two dominant trends in the development of the women's press in Europe. The first is feminist-oriented and focuses on women's issues: the second emphasizes entertainment and incorporates large quantities of commercial messages. The latter trend predominated the evolution in Western Europe with romance magazines emerging as a subgroup aimed at a less educated audience. The feminist-oriented format, which Lewartowska claims all specialized women's periodicals adopted originally, remains until the present day the tradition of the socialist publications, which enjoy continued success in terms of number of titles, circulations and readership. The author links the economic problems women's magazines are faced with in the West and their decreasing circulations with the appearance of socialist periodicals.

Apart from the above summarized study of the development of women's periodicals in Western vs. Eastern/Central Europe, information on the structure, organization and readership, as well as on content and style of the women's press in Central/Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. is lacking. Women's periodicals nevertheless continue to flourish in many of these countries, including the U.S.S.R., where the number of magazines for women, particularly those working in industry and agriculture is steadily growing (X, World Communications, Unesco, 1975, 508). Lack of more detailed documentation obviously precludes a discussion of sex-role portrayal in the women's periodical press of Central and Eastern Europe at the present time.

(d) Asia

The seminar on "The Role of Mass Media in Changing Social Attitudes and Practices towards Women" (Press Institute of India, 1976) focused on the importance of women's magazines for communicating information to the female population of India. An analysis of Hindi periodicals over the past 30 years showed a steady decline in the discussion of women's issues. The educational function of the women's press was strongly stressed in view of the finding that the advent of new women's magazines in the late 1950's had resulted in a growing disinterest of the general press in the position of women. However, women's magazines in India focus almost exclusively on food, fashion and beauty, thus reinforcing the traditional roles of women. Information about relevant socio-economic issues, including the status of women, is largely lacking. The dependence on advertising, which is often blatantly sexist in its depiction of sex-roles, is indicated as one of the major reasons for the perpetuation of traditional female images. In this respect, women's magazines in India do not differ from those published in Western societies. Dependency on advertising support and the resulting consumption-oriented editorial policies are the key to explaining the strong resemblance between women's magazines in two such different types of culture and society. As in the West, Indian women's periodicals address women primarily in their capacity as consumers. In India, only upper and middle-class women, presumed to be primarily housewives, have easy access to both consumer products and the press which promotes the consumer-goods industry to women. As a result, the position of the majority of Indian women, who have always been economically active and increasingly work in unskilled labour, is ignored by the women's press. While the report defines the educational function of women's magazines as broadening their audience's horizon by exposing the social conditions of the mass of Indian women, it fails to indicate whether and how they can promote the education of the majority of the Indian female population, and particularly of the women living in rural areas where illiteracy rates are high.

(e) Latin America

The discussion of women's magazines in the CIM report (1977) of the Santo Domingo conference on women and media confirms the general consistency of the research results discussed above (excluding those pertaining to Eastern and Central Europe). Women as housekeepers, consumers and sexual objects are the dominant images projected. According to the report, the female images and the lifestyles and values women's magazines promote do not correspond with the socio-economic realities of women's lives in most countries of Latin America. The women's press equally fails to reflect the significance of female contributions to the development of their respective nations.

Conclusion

The research documents analysing the portrayal of women in women's magazines, with the exception of those in socialist European countries, are highly consistent in their findings. Because of their economic dependence on advertising, women's magazines reflect and promote images of women which encourage them to conform to the norms of femininity proscribed by the established male-dominated socio-economic system. Domesticity and subservience are presented as the essence of woman's nature and role in society. The efficient performance of either one requires the consumption of products for the improvement of the home and the enhancement of woman's sexual appeal to man, the centre of her existence. The absence of images of independent women and employed women reinforces the strict delineation of women's vs. men's roles. Recent attempts to introduce new images inspired by the emerging changes in woman's identity and social status merely represent adaptations of the conventional concepts which remain fundamental and unquestioned. While studies of the press serving women of India, the U.S.A., various Western European and Latin American countries show no major differences in sex-role portrayals, they do differ in their evaluation of the role of the women's press in social development. In less developed countries, women's magazines are highly valued as important information media for and about women, which can contribute to the improvement of women's status, directly by educating women, and indirectly by highlighting their role in the development of their respective countries. Analysts of women's magazines appearing in the industrialized nations of the West perceive the women's press as a regressive force precluding the improvement of women's social status and their personal liberation, and reject its potential for contributing to such developments in any positive way.

The sole exceptions to the trends identified above are found in the women's press of the socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which focuses on education rather than entertainment and consumption, and is independent of the commercial constraints determining the format of the women's press elsewhere. Due to insufficient evidence, no conclusions can be drawn at present as to how the absence of commercial influences and the emphasis on the educational function affect the portrayal of women in the female-oriented publications of these countries.

II. The professional status of women in mass media

The images of women in the media which have been documented in the foregoing chapter are productions of the people within the media organizations who conceive, create, produce and approve them. It is their ideas, attitudes, feelings and fantasies which ultimately determine how women appear in mass media content. Since there are strong indications that the representation of women in creative and decision-making positions within the media structures is severely imbalanced in relation to that of men, it is reasonable to assume that the perspective of women reflected in messages disseminated by mass media expresses male concepts of woman. Furthermore, as men are influenced in their thinking and acting by the cultural norms prevailing in their social environment, in which women are secondary to men, the chances that male concepts of woman are biased along these culturally defined lines are more than equally divided. To what extent men dominate media structures, and what the barriers are that hinder women's entrance at all levels are the questions which the following analysis attempts to elucidate.

1. The advertising industry

Although sex-role stereotyping is nowhere as consistent and pervasive as in advertising, and criticism of male bias abounds, studies of employment practices with respect to women in the advertising industry have been surprisingly scarce. The difficulty in determining the exact input of advertiser, agency and medium in the development of advertising messages most likely has some bearing on this research void. The central element in this triad is the advertising agency which mediates between the advertiser and the media.

Where are women inside this industry, which is heavily dependent upon the female market? According to statistics on the British situation, they are not to be found at the top. The number of females ranking high in the occupational hierarchy of the top agencies is actually declining (Faulder 1977). The ratio of women to men is somewhat better in small agencies which offer women better opportunities for advancement. Scott (1976) provides other data indicative of the female employment status in advertising. The membership of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising in the United Kingdom was estimated at 2/3 male vs.1/3 female. The majority of the female members were employed in secretarial and administrative capacities. The marketing industry shows a similar pattern: few women at the top, most females in service occupations such as research. Given this unevenly divided male-female ratio, the question arises whether the advertising business is prejudiced against women. An analysis of research on (American) businessmen's attitudes towards women revealed several patterns of discrimination (Scott, 1976). Women in business are perceived and treated by their male colleagues as females first and employees second. In general, the business world is more concerned with a man's career than with a woman's professional advancement. Businessmen tend to be sceptical about women's abilities to balance work and family demands. Their ideas about women's physical and biological potential and its interference with their work capacities proved highly inaccurate. It appeared, however, that men who worked with female subordinates held less favourable attitudes towards women than men who worked with women on an equal footing. This finding suggests that mentality change will not come about until women and men interact on an equal level in the work environment.

When confronted with charges of sexual stereotyping, the advertising industry pleads innocence. Among the defence arguments most frequently brought forward are (Scott, 1976 - Faulder, 1977):

- advertisers' intentions to please the consumer. In this respect, market research is cited as a clear example of their genuine concern with the consumers' interests;
- the conservative role of advertising: advertising is a trend-follower, not a trend-setter. It caters for the commercially most interesting market segment, i.e. woman in her role as housewife,

which is observed as the role most women identify with;
- criticism of advertising is not widespread. Women who protest at sex-role images in advertising are dismissed as consumerists and "women's libbers", who are not representative of the average female consumer.

Whether female images in advertising reflect advertisers' rationalized view of the average female consumer, their conscious efforts to exploit or degrade women, or a subconscious projection of their own fantasies, they clearly reflect a male perspective, as women's status within the industry is devoid of power and influence. That this male perspective is also the culturally biased perspective of women as the inferior sex is sufficiently evidenced by the attitudes of male professionals towards working women and their view of housewifery as women's basic role. By consistently affirming these traditional concepts of woman, advertising reinforces and legitimizes both men's and women's perceptions of their own and each other's place in society.

While women are poorly represented at the decision-making level, they have a significant share in the acting roles in print and broadcast advertisements. Analysis of the interrelationship between the pattern of female role assignment in the production of advertisements and the female image they project provides an interesting and original approach to the employment status of women in the industry. This innovative perspective was introduced by the Screen Actors Guild-New York Branch Women's Conference Committee (X, SAG, 1974) with respect to the making of TV-commercials. The research team examined the status of principal actors, extras and off-camera voice-overs in terms of the financial rewards associated with each role category. The major difference between principal actors and extras is one of salary. Principals are not only paid a higher fee for the shooting of the commerical, but are also entitled to residuals for its airing. As extras do not receive these benefits, the difference in earning potential between these two categories may assume enormous proportions. Off-camera voice-over work is also rewarded with residual earnings, and is actually one of the most lucrative areas of employment in advertising. The fact that the actor remains visually anonymous greatly improves her/his employment opportunities. The content-analysis of a representative sample of commercials for a wide range of products revealed that males dominated both the principal and extra role categories in TV-commercials. Particularly voice-over work was overwhelmingly assigned to males. Since women are underrepresented in all role categories, but severely deprived of roles with the highest earning potential, the employment status and opportunities of women on, as well as behind, the production scene are considerably inferior to those of men.

Conclusion

Although research data on the professional status of women in the advertising industry are extremely limited with respect to both the occupational levels within the industry of a particular country and the geographical spectrum of the available sources, several trends with regard to the female employment situation emerge:

- women are numerically underrepresented, especially in influential, decision-making and financially rewarding positions;
- as men dominate the advertising business at the top levels, it is their view of women which determines female images in advertising;
- as these men have internalized the traditional concepts of sex-roles prevailing in their sociocultural environment in general, and the male world of business in particular, female images in advertising reflect, reinforce and perpetuate conventional ideas about the respective roles of women and men.

The entry of more women into the advertising industry is frequently suggested as the obvious and simple solution. It is generally assumed that an increased female presence at all levels, including the top echelons, will automatically result in a more balanced portrayal of women in advertising. Changing the numerical imbalance would certainly be a positive step towards equalizing women's position in the industry. As to the predicted effect on female imagery, this will not come about unless the improved status of women in the industry is accompanied by significant changes in the structural and cultural conditions with respect to sex-role concepts and conduct in society at large. Advertising images of women, whether the creation of women or men, ultimately reflect the prevailing sociocultural values and norms, to the conditioning influence of which women and men inside as well as outside the advertising industry are subjected. If the guidelines for legal provisions aimed at the elimination of dishonest and misleading advertising recently proposed by the Commission of European Communities may be interpreted as a reflection of the social climate in Europe, awareness of sexual discrimination perpetuated by advertising images is growing. Dishonesty in sex-role portrayal was defined as "a considerable violation of the principle of social, economic and cultural equality between the sexes". The inclusion of the term "considerable" however, reflects a lack of commitment to the strict enforcement of the proposal and severely mitigates its significance and practical value.

2. The broadcasting industry

A. Radio

That television has superseded radio becomes once again apparent when reviewing the literature on the professional status of women in broadcasting. As previously observed with respect to content studies, the position of women in radio has been a secondary consideration in comparison with television. Besides lacking in quantity, the documentation of female presence in sound broadcasting is confined to the North American and Western European socio-cultural contexts. This narrow research focus on the Western mass media structure to the neglect of other cultural regions, particularly the developing world, is deplorable, considering the anticipated potential of radio, rather than TV, for stimulating social development.

Specific areas of concern with regard to female participation in radio production include on-air presence both in information and entertainment programming, and representation in management. The virtual absence, or at best token presence, of women in management positions is regarded as one of the main causes of women's limited involvement in all aspects of radio work, as well as a major factor in perpetuating the male bias in radio programming.

(a) Women on the air

The article on radio included in the documentary sourcebook on British mass media compiled by the "Women in Media" group (Ross, 1977) pointed out that daytime radio voices were all male. According to the author, the fact that no female voices are heard during daytime broadcasts is rooted in broadcasters' belief that women, who largely make up daytime audiences, prefer listening to males. She attributes this misconception, which is responsible for keeping women off the air, to the influence of commercial radio. Because of the "lack of conviction of the female voice", advertisers believe that females are ineffectual in selling products to a female audience. The same argument has been used for years to exclude women from radio news reporting. Despite recent surveys which refute the belief that female voices are unacceptable to the audience (Stone, 1973 - Whittaker and Whittaker, 1976), broadcasters' prejudices against women persist (Marzolf, 1977).

As a result of staunch adherence to this philosophy, the on-air situation has been the hardest for women to break into. According to a recent Billboard article (X, Billboard, Nov. 12, 1977), women are currently crossing this last frontier.

All-music format radio in America grew up almost entirely womanless. Earlier attempts to put female disc-jockeys on the air failed, supposedly because the audience was not ready to accept women (X, Billboard, Nov. 12, 1977). This attitude has been changing since the late 1960's. As a result an increasing number of women are making inroads into format radio. The hiring spree which recent years have witnessed is undoubtedly in no small measure owing to pressure from women's rights groups and to efforts to comply with the Equal Opportunities Act and Affirmative Action provisions. In the light of this motivation for hiring more women, the apprehension that change will not go beyond tokenism does not seem without foundation (Epstein, 1974). Nevertheless, broadcast executives claim that women owe their increasing breakthrough as air personalities exclusively to their talents and the readiness of audiences to accept them (X, Billboard, Nov. 12, 1977). While women disc-jockeys used to be locked into late nighttime slots on the assumption that late at night was the only time (male) listeners appreciated a female voice, they are now moving into morning and afternoon time slots as well. Women on the air appear to appeal to women and men equally, their audience being no different from that of their male counterparts.

The qualifications broadcasting requires in addition to the proper educational background and experience, i.e. the right "radio voice": low, steady and with an air of confidence, appeared to be a major obstacle to women's entry and advancement in radio news reporting (Bowman, 1974). Of the major American news media - newspapers, radio, TV, wire services - the severest exclusion of women from news departments occurred in radio. Less than 5% of the radio news staff were female. It appeared that opportunities for women in broadcasting were largely confined to television news in the larger markets. The inequity in the distribution of women and men in the media hierarchies was the largest in the broadcast sector. Nevertheless, while the broadcast media tended to discriminate more against women at the entry level than the print sector, the schemes of financial rewards were less discriminatory in broadcasting, at least at those levels where women had managed to break through. The position of women in radio and TV news was overall less equitable than in the print sector. Almost no women had risen above the lowest reportorial levels. They were further more likely to be writers and processors of news rather than reporters.

A 1974 study of Sweden's radio and television system cited by Marzolf (1977) also revealed that newscasts were heavily dominated by men. All anchors, commentators and nearly all reporters in the sampled period were male. The same prejudices, i.e. women being considered unsuitable for "hard news" reporting because they lack credibility, appear to have barred women from newscasting positions throughout Western Europe as well as in the U.S.A. (Marzolf, 1977, 284).

(b) Women in radio management

The general absence of women from higher management is considered highly detrimental to overall female representation in broadcasting for two major reasons: it is the top executives who do the hiring, and who are in a position to influence programming (Ross, 1977, 28). The national Radio Four in the United Kingdom has appointed a few women to management positions under pressure from "Women in Media". Apart from these token appointments, no progress has been made by either the BBC or Independent Radio in improving female representation at the policy-making level. Since the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1976, broadcasters are eager to admit that more women should be hired in order to make radio a truly egalitarian medium. However, as a result of BBC's and Independent Radio's neglect to provide opportunities for women, few are available with the proper training and sufficient experience to qualify for creative as well as executive positions. To some extent, the local radio stations, both BBC and commercial, have functioned as a training ground for female presenters, producers, disc-jockeys and newscasters. Station management however is also almost entirely male, Ross observes.

The virtually complete exclusion of women from news management in broadcasting was a striking conclusion of Bowman's 1974 survey of women journalists in the U.S.A. The differences between men's and women's positions in the occupational hierarchy of the news media, while considerable all-over, were most apparent in the broadcast sector. Women were almost completely absent from the managerial and supervisory levels. The inequity remained when the effects of experience and education were removed, which indicated that women were indeed discriminated against and were to be considered an occupational minority. It was concluded that journalism, and broadcast journalism in particular, constitutes a male-dominated and sex-typed occupation, which offered females less chances than males for entering the profession, for professional advancement and financial success. News media, including radio and TV, discriminate against women, Bowman suggests, because the concept of women as lacking the expected characteristics and possessing inappropriate "feminine" traits persists in the minds of the gatekeepers, despite their awareness that many qualified and committed women are available (Bowman, 1974, 213).

Conclusion

While radio remains a largely unexplored field in the study of women's employment status in the media, the limited body of available research materials seems to reveal - with respect to radio systems in Western societies - that:

- women remain severely underrepresented in on-air radio work as well as at the decision-making level, despite recent attempts to hire more women in response to outside pressures.
- women's inferior position in radio is only partly owing to lack of education, training and experience;
- the major causes of discrimination are to be found in structural barriers hindering women's entry, training and advancement on an equal basis with men, and in the persistence of cultural myths about women's capacities in the minds of the men who control employment practices.

Increasing their number in management is considered a priority issue in the efforts to improve the overall representation of women in radio.

B. Television

Television functions as a major source of information and entertainment in societies where a well-developed infrastructure allows for the production, distribution and reception of TV-programmes on a wide scale. Full integration of women at all levels of TV-organizations and in all aspects of TV-operations, particularly in decision-making positions, is regarded as a prerequisite if the medium is to reflect the interests of its female audience. In countries where socio-economic conditions and technological development do not approximate those existing in the technically advanced societies, mass media, including television, are viewed as potentially powerful instruments for education and national development, of which the improvement of women's status is to be an integral part. The study of what the media can do for women in developing countries, and how women can contribute to the effective use of television and other mass media for social progress, has only just begun. As a result, documentation of the professional status of women in television is largely confined to the highly developed broadcasting systems operating in Western Europe and North America. Data on the representation of women in TV-systems of Eastern European countries and the U.S.S.R. are equally lacking, as is extensive research on the position of women in general, owing to the fact that a person's sex is not considered as significant a determinant of her/his social position as elsewhere.

The available literature emphasizes two areas of female presence in TV: the participation of women in the news gathering process, including on-air presentation of news, and female involvement in TV-production and management.

(a) The status of the female TV news staff

Bowman observed in 1974 that the status of women in American news media emerged as "an issue" only in recent years, due to the impact of feminist consciousness raising and to pressures for equal employment opportunities. Sources documenting the position of female journalists in America are in short supply in relation to the numerous

materials on journalism and professional journalists. A review of past research produced the following results (Bowman, 1974, 41-42):

- women represent a minority on the editorial staffs of radio and TV;
- they work at the lowest echelons of the occupational hierarchy within the broadcasting media;
- the majority of female news staff work in the so-called "soft beats", which are not considered relevant experience for advancement. Beat segregation however, is less prevalent in the broadcast sector than in the print media.

Bowman's survey of news personnel revealed that, as of April 1971, women constituted a 10.7% minority in TV and radio/TV-stations combined. This percentage was lower than the proportion of women working in the print news media, though higher than that of female news staff in radio stations (cfr. supra, p. 95). The concentration of women in news media located in smaller cities, which indicates the small size of both the market they serve and the organization that employs them, was evidenced with respect to the print media, but not for the broadcast sector. The highest proportion of women was found in the large cities/markets/organizations, which employed 52% of the women vs. only 18% of the men in the survey sample. Almost 35% of the women in television news departments worked in medium-sized markets. This leads Bowman to conclude that the opportunities for women in broadcasting are largely confined to television news in the larger and medium-sized markets. The presence of women in these major markets has become visible in recent years with an increasing number of female news correspondents appearing on network news programmes and covering a broad range of news topics, including the more prestigious beat assignments. Beat segregation, while still prevailing in the print sector, was found to be occurring less and less in television.

The hierarchical position of women in relation to men on the other hand was less favourable in radio and TV news departments than in the print media. The majority of women worked in low-level editorial jobs, mostly as writers and processors of news rather than reporters. Women were virtually absent from all managerial levels, particularly from high management. When examining educational background and experience, the two major qualification requirements for entry and advancement, women's educational profile was quite similar, though somewhat less favourable, to that of their male counterparts. They did lack experience, however. It is this deficiency which is most likely to have influenced the distributional differences between women and men within the occupational hierarchy of television news: more than 40% of the women interviewed for the survey had entered the news media within five years of the interview date. There were no women in the late stages of their career in the broadcast media, which indicates that no women were allowed in radio and television newsrooms before 1950. However, even when the negative impact of education and experience was neutralized, the inequity remained. The differences between the positions of women and men in the media hierarchies were the largest in the broadcast sector.

Another important indicator of status which Bowman explored was salary. Major determinants of salary are years of experience, which works against women, and size of the market, which tends to benefit women. While at the lower editorial echelons women earned less than men, at the highest reportorial level the average salary of female star reporters was almost twice that of their male counterparts. However, comparison of male and female earnings at this level is irrelevant, since women were severely outnumbered by men (97% vs. 3%). While overall the status of women in TV news is to be viewed as that of an occupational minority with diminished chances for entry and advancement into professionally and financially higher status positions, opportunities for on-air newswomen seem to be improving, particularly in the high-visibility major markets. One such top market where the quantity and quality of broadcasters is relatively high is New York. A sample of 30 female reporters/correspondents working in New York local and network TV-news, along with male executives and news directors, was the subject of a survey conducted by Judith Gelfman in 1973 (Gelfman, 1976). By means of in-depth interviewing and observation of their daily work routine, Gelfman explored women's employment status in television news. With respect to qualifications required of TV-reporters, the majority of both female correspondents and male directors emphasized the importance of experience (cfr. supra Bowman), and preferred a Liberal Arts background. Journalism School was not a prerequisite, but appreciated by many male executives. All of the women in the survey sample had some college training with 87% holding an undergraduate college degree. Most had worked for television as trainees, secretaries, production assistants, or researchers, prior to entering news reporting. Others had moved in directly from jobs in radio or print journalism. Salary inequities between female and male reporters were minimal, owing to the base pay scale set by the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Some women were able to negotiate personal contracts for a higher salary. A factor of prime consideration in monetary negotiations is the reporter's viewer appeal. On-camera newswomen are regarded as "talent" by management. "Talent" or "viewer appeal" is a prerequisite in television news, in addition to the generally recognized journalistic skills acquired through training and experience. Television searches for "air personalities" who are able to develop a distinctive personal style which appeals to the audience, resulting in increased ratings and

revenues. Physical appearance is considered of crucial importance to the image projected by the on-air reporter. All of the New York newswomen, each one of them better-than-average looking and most of them young, acknowledged the emphasis on physical attractiveness, especially for females. While half of them admitted that being female had been a positive factor in hiring (tokenism), they felt that their male environment questioned their professional abilities until they proved that they were "better than men". Eighty percent of the male executives acknowledged the disadvantages of being female in the male-dominated television news world. Prejudices regarding women's professional capacities doubly affected reporters who were both female and members of a racial/ethnic minority, and faced the problem of being perceived as double tokens. Sex was generally not perceived as determining story assignments, although 50% of the male executives were concerned with women's safety on dangerous assignments. The experiences of these women generally support earlier findings:

- women constitute a minority in television news departments;
- opportunities for women to enter TV-news are better in large- than in small-sized markets;
- besides journalistic skills gained through education and especially experience, television requires its on-camera reporters to be "talented". "Talent" is a vaguely defined concept. Major ingredients are physical attractiveness and youth, particularly with respect to women, although the emphasis on physique has decreased in recent years;
- the financial reward scheme is based on the reporter's experience and her/his viewer appeal, not on sex;
- beat segregation, whereby women are channeled into "soft news beats" is less prevalent in TV-news than in print news media;
- the major barrier women are faced with is the prejudices of their male environment regarding women's professional capacities, which is reflective of sex-role concepts and behaviour prevailing in society. However, the increasing strength of the women's movement and FCC (Federal Communication Commission) pressure for equal employment opportunities are resulting in a growing awareness among TV-management of women's changing roles and are creating a more favourable social climate;
- while opportunities for women may be improving at the entry-level, the top jobs both in terms of prestige and money are still a male preserve, as is management. The strong resistance against women invading these last male strongholds was recently demonstrated when Barbara Walters' appointment to co-anchor of the ABC network news evoked scornful comments from the male journalistic establishment about her journalistic credentials, her marketplace value, and her worthiness to take a place among the top four in broadcast journalism (Hennessee, 1976).

Despite the trend towards a greater acceptance of women as reporters, television news - and network news in particular - remains overwhelmingly dominated by males, who also tend to be white. A random sample of network news programmes aired during 1974-1975 revealed that white males accounted for 88.6% of the total correspondent appearances (X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977). Using the position of a story in the newscast as a measure of its newsworthiness, the most important beats were covered by white male reporters. Women and minority males and females, who were outnumbered 9 to 1 by white male correspondents, were mostly assigned stories pertinent to women and minorities. These findings suggest that beat segregation is by no means limited to the print news media. A study comparing the representation of women in local and network news programmes (WAC to KDKA-TV, 1975) indicated however, that the practice of reserving prestigious news beats for male reporters was less prevalent in local news than in network newscasts. Local TV also appeared to be more flexible in opening the high-status reportorial jobs to women: 4 out of the 10 anchors appearing on local newscasts were female, while network anchors were all male. The presentation of editorials remained exclusively male territory both in local and network news, indicating that no women had attained the high-level executive rank required of KDKA-TV commentators.

While women are still far from fully integrated in American television newsrooms, the picture presented by Western European television is even gloomier. As of November 1975, BBC news employed no female reporters and only one female newsreader (Koerber, 1977). The British commercial network had no female newscasters and only one rarely seen female reporter. Current affairs and documentary programming offered slightly better opportunities for women: 37% of the presenters/reporters of such programmes on ITV were female; 31% of the BBC presenter/reporter staff were female, but none of its editors were women. Directing and producing current affairs programmes remained largely a male preserve: women accounted for 14.7% of the personnel in this category at ITV, and for about 10% at the BBC.

In Belgium, women comprised only 7.3% of the news staff of the Dutch-language broadcasting system (Tielens, Vankeirsbilck and Ceulemans, 1978). Unlike in the U.S.A., where print media appear to be more accessible to women, in Belgium the female-male ratio was somewhat more favourable to women in broadcasting than in the print news media.

On German television (Federal Republic of

Germany), women were least visible in the news shows, the most popular programmes among all television content, particularly with male viewers. Only 3.1% of ZDF and 5.9% of ARD news correspondents were women. Female reporters were also overwhelmingly assigned to soft beats such as health, family, youth. Politics, the major topic of German TV news shows, is a male field both on television and in reality (X, Küchenhoff, 1975). The underrepresentation of women on the air, and beat segregation were also clearly established patterns in information and documentary programmes, although to a lesser extent than in news broadcasts. The low appearance frequency of female journalists on German TV is a reflection of their functional and distributional position within the structure of German broadcasting companies. An exploration into the status of female editorial staff employed at three selected ARD broadcasting companies (Freise and Drath, 1977) revealed that (1) women represented an occupational minority in broadcast journalism; (2) female editorial employees were concentrated in the lowest echelons of the employment hierarchy and in the lower-status (i.e. traditionally female) programming units; (3) administration, organization and processing of pre-prepared materials accounted for the bulk of their work routine, while functions of a more creative and essentially journalistic nature such as writing, reporting, interviewing were reduced to a minimum. While this study makes no pretence to being either representative of the entire ARD-system or exhaustive, it does support the findings resulting from programme monitoring: female journalists tend to be relegated to traditionally female areas; their primary professional activity does not concern on-air reporting and presentation.

Scandinavian broadcasting systems seem to have adopted a more positive attitude towards women, who receive equal pay and equal assignments to those of their male colleagues (Marzolf, 1977, 286-288). However, as elsewhere in Western Europe and the U.S.A., Scandinavian women are absent from TV-management.

(b) The representation of women in TV-production and management

The survey of American mass media - defined as the most ubiquitous, most insidious and most powerful force dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo - compiled by the Media Women's Association includes a descriptive article about the employment status of women on the nation's four television networks staffs (Strainchamps, 1974). Sexual division of work was a recurrent pattern in network organizations: women worked mostly as secretaries, researchers and assistants to men; production, writing, editing and management were male areas of employment. Sexual discrimination operated with respect to salary and promotion: women holding the same positions as men were paid less, opportunities for advancement were limited. Due to the increased activity of newly organized women's groups within the companies, some progress has been made in recent years, which is nonetheless perceived as mere tokenism. Women have achieved some success in pressuring their employers into adopting affirmative action programmes. Female employees of NBC recently won a significant victory. As a result of a class action suit, NBC agreed to pay 2 million dollars in damages to present and former women employees.

One source of information about the status of women and minorities in broadcasting is the annual report broadcasting stations are required to file with the Federal Communications Commission under the Equal Employment Opportunities Rule. On the basis of the data contained in these reports, the Office of Communications of the United Church of Christ noted a significant increase from 1971 to 1975 in the proportion of women classified in the upper four job categories (as reported in X, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights, 1977, 87). The percentage of minority employees in the top four categories had also risen, but less sharply than the proportion of female workers. The overall proportion of employees classified in these job categories (Officials and Managers/Professionals/Technicians/Sales people) had increased over the same period. These findings prompted the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) to examine whether broadcasters were reclassifying low-level employees in upper-level job categories while in fact retaining them at the same jobs and salaries. A sample of 40 TV-stations was drawn to explore the extent of employment discrimination against women and minorities. A comparison of 1971 and 1975 employment figures confirmed the earlier findings. Overall the number of white male employees decreased, while the proportion of white females, minority women and minority males rose. Changes were even more striking in the top four employment categories: the proportion of white males decreased, while the proportion of white females and of non-white males and females increased. According to the Commission's report, these data reflect that the employment categories were being used in such a way that three-quarters of all employees could be classified in the four top job categories. To determine to what extent women and minorities were represented at all levels within the broadcast organizations, an indepth analysis of employment at 8 TV-stations was conducted. This survey demonstrated that the true employment status of women and minority employees was seriously misrepresented. Females and members of ethnic/racial minority groups were virtually absent from the higher levels of management. Most of the crucial decision-making positions within each job category and within each department of the organization were occupied by white males. The integration of women and minorities at all levels of station management and operation, and particularly at the policy-making level,

is considered of crucial importance to guarantee a diversified and balanced TV-programming. The current FCC employment data forms fail to uncover deficiencies in TV-station's work force and allow for misrepresentation of women's and minorities' employment status. The fact that broadcasters utilize this opportunity to misrepresent the position of female and minority employees demonstrates their lack of commitment to providing equal employment opportunities. According to the Commission, the FCC is to blame for failing to enforce compliance with the EEO rule. The first step in remedying this situation was recently taken by a female FCC commissioner. Her proposal to re-evaluate the job descriptions in the broadcast industry was adopted, and preparations for revision are currently being made (X, Media Report to Women, Jan. 1978).

The discrimination against women in television which appeared from the 1975 employment figures persisted in 1976. The total percentage of employees classified in the top four job categories rose to 80% in 1976, 86% of whom were male at commercial TV-stations and 80% at non-commerical TV-stations (X, Media Report to Women, April 1977). Most of the TV-stations did not increase the proportion of either women or minorities working in the upper echelons of the organizations.

While the above data reveal the underrepresentation of women in television, particularly in management, they provide no insight into what kinds of barrier prevent women from participating at all levels of television production on an equal basis with men. One such investigation was conducted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Task Force on the Status of Women (X, Women in the CBC, 1975). It was found that employment decisions, which keep the majority of jobs closed to women and generally deny female employees an equal share in the "corporate wealth" in terms of salary, training, advancement and decision-making power, were based on a set of assumptions which the Task Force demonstrated to be untrue for the majority of women. The fact that men, who constitute 75% of CBC staff and 93% of management personnel, held markedly different views about women to those of the female workers, and that it is these men who have the power over women's careers and working environment was identified as the basic cause of discrimination in the CBC and the resulting dissatisfaction and frustration of women workers.

In order to expose the operation of sexist employment practices in British television, the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians (ACTT) conducted a thorough analysis of the job structure in ITV, the British commercial television network (X, ACTT, 1975). Few data were available on the BBC, as the ACTT has no negotiating rights in the BBC and membership of the union is entirely optional for BBC employees. Television represents the largest branch in the union and the largest area of employment for women: 49% of the total ACTT membership. Since 1969, the rate of growth of female membership has also been significantly higher than that of male membership. One-third of the female ACTT members, representing 14% of all ITV employees in ACTT grades, is permanently employed at ITV as compared to half of the male members. Another 1/6 of female, and 1/5 of male ACTT members, work full-time at the BBC. Most of the ITV women (70%) work for the five major television companies, where they are channeled into secretarial positions and excluded from the skilled technical jobs. The concentration of women in clerical jobs also applies to the BBC. Work at ITV is clearly divided along sexual lines. With regard to grades employing both males and females, excluding those of director and producer, 45% of the men vs. 24% of the women worked in senior grades. Only 8% of all directors and director/producers at ITV were women. Instances of blatant discrimination reported to the union are numerous. The complaints concerned both jobs which are closed to women because of their sex (e.g. director, editor, senior researcher, etc.) and jobs with a high concentration of females (e.g. production assistants typecast as glorified secretaries). Other major factors causing the maintenance of women's inferior status in the industry include:

The undervaluation of female jobs

More than 2/3 of the women in ITV work in jobs offering little or no opportunities for professional advancement and financial success.

Educational qualifications and social conditioning

The proportion of women with some sort of higher education, mostly secretarial, was much higher than that of male employees. However fewer women than men held a university degree or film/TV qualifications. The educational qualifications required by ITV are not very strict, since it relies primarily on experience and training provided by other industries where women are almost absent, and on a general technical background which few women are encouraged to develop. ITV does not provide sponsored training courses, except for engineers, although 80% of the men and 70% of the women expressed a desire to attend such a course. Since training opportunities within and outside of television are still largely closed to women, and jobs other than secretarial, for which almost exclusively women qualify, require extensive experience and training, women entering the industry have no other choice than to accept a secretarial position, probably to remain there indefinitely. The equation of authoity with masculinity excludes women from upper-level jobs such as directing and floor management for which they qualify in every other respect.

The job structure

The grades most women work in (e.g. production assistant) are perceived as careers in themselves. Although most production grades have no clear career structure, in practice some grades function as stepping-stones for men, e.g. vision mixing and assembly. There are either no women working in these stepping-stone grades, or they are not promoted on the same basis and at the same pace as their male counterparts. Since the rapid expansion of television has come to a stop, advancement is no longer automatic for men either. However, in view of the limited range of "women's jobs", opportunities are even more limited for women.

Job insecurity and working relationships

In terms of prospects for permanent employment and the financial state of the television companies, work in television is more stable than in laboratories and film production, the two other union branches. The relatively greater job security of ITV employees as compared with the other branches has created more favourable attitudes towards women, who are less perceived as a potential threat. Management and male union members nevertheless responded negatively to the introduction of maternity leave and child care provisions. This suggests that their liberalism is conditional upon women's willingness to behave like men, and fails to acknowledge women's specific needs.

The right to work and rights of work

While at the BBC employees have a right to maternity leave, ITV grants unpaid maternity leave only as a private arrangement and under strong pressure from the individual woman. Childcare facilities are absent. In all but one of the television companies, women were eligible to join the existing pension plan at a later age than men. Sickness benefits are the most generous among the union branches. Continuity of service is required in order to be eligible. Women however "break" their service more often than men for promotional or pregnancy reasons, and are thus at a disadvantage.

The underrepresentation of women in the union

Few women are elected to union offices. The unwillingness to elect them is due to the fear that management, not members, will not take them seriously. Women's major problems are lack of familiarity and experience with union procedures and operations, and their isolation from other women working in the industry. Production assistants are among the most militant in organized fighting for equal pay, grade structure and training opportunities. Unfortunately, they have confined their demands to their own particular situation, excluding other women in the industry. Women themselves have been reluctant to attribute their problems to discriminatory structures and employment practices. This reluctance is largely owing to the nature of women's work, including the geographical isolation, and to the fact that they consider their status a rather privileged one as compared with women outside the industry, whose opportunities are often even more limited. This attitude is changing though, and many production assistants have indicated their readiness for action. Organization to fight for change is more difficult among BBC employees, who fear victimization and reprimands from management. The BBC, a state-owned corporation, reacts negatively to radicalism among its employees with respect to political as well as women's rights issues. Women's demands for more power within the organization and for control over programming may therefore meet with greater resistance in the BBC than in ITV, the report concludes.

Conclusion

Education and experience are the formal qualifications giving access to employment in television. Women have little difficulty in meeting educational requirements, which are not a prime consideration in the industry. Greater emphasis is placed on experience, which is of crucial importance to advancement within the occupational hierarchy of the organization. The top-level positions in production, management, and the high-status reportorial functions are accessible only to those who are given the opportunity either to work their way up within the organization, or to acquire extensive training and experience outside the industry, and to those who possess the proper dose of authority and attractiveness. It is these qualifications which women are generally unable to develop:

- opportunities for advancement are more limited for women than for men. Women are prevented from moving upwards within the employment hierarchy, because upon their entry they are channeled into dead-end jobs with no career structure. Training facilities provided by the employer are limited and mostly inaccessible to women. The chances for obtaining the necessary experience in related fields outside of television are less favourable for women than for men;
- the equation of authority with masculinity hampers women's access to the top functions in directing, producing and management. In television news, the additional requirements of viewer appeal, attractiveness and personality give women equal chances with men to land an on-camera reporting job, as well as to obtain a successful financial arrangement. Being female has recently even become an asset in hiring, though not in promotion. As in other areas of TV-management, the higher-echelon position in news reporting and management largely remain a male preserve.

While women have made some progress in

certain areas of TV work (e.g. news reporting), other areas, particularly at the higher levels of production and management remain inaccessible to them, largely attributable to the persistence of male bias in both the employment structure and in management's view of women's professional capacities.

3. The film industry

Only in recent years have women begun to search for female and feminist footholds in the bastion of male influence which the film industry has been from the outset. This growing interest in cinema is manifested in the need women film critics and theorists are expressing for a feminist perspective on cinema and for a feminist film theory. Their attempts to formulate such a viewpoint have resulted in different approaches, ranging from impressionistic and subjective analyses of female portrayal in cinema to structuralist and psycho-analytical film theories (Kay and Peary, 1977). Which approach will prove most valuable to the understanding of women's role in cinema is a debatable issue, the discussion of which exceeds the intents of the present study. What concerns us here is the position of women in the film industry. The efforts of women film critics - and film criticism is one field where women rank among the most prominent and the most influential - to introduce new perspectives on cinema include, besides the assessment of female portrayal in film, the documentation of women's contributions to film-making in the past and the present. The startling observation that women are conspicuously absent from the chronicled history of film production served as an impetus to search for vestiges of female presence in all facets of film-making during the past decades (Smith, 1975). Current research reveals a much greater contribution of women in script-writing and directing than the existing body of documents revealed. In fact, more women were actively involved in film-making before the 1920's than at the present time (Rosen, 1973, 367). With respect to the American film industry, Rosen observes that the number of female scenarists and directors decreased steadily in the decades following the 1920's, when film became a big industry. In fact, only two women, Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino, seemed to have managed to secure a steady position as Hollywood directors during the past forty years. Whether and to what extent the films these women directed contributed to a raised consciousness of women's roles is the subject of an on-going debate (Johnston, 1975). The renewed interest in their work in recent years is yet another indication of the importance contemporary women attach to the presence of active women in the film industry. As for the present involvement of women in film-making, all interested in the subject join in deploring the limited opportunities commercial film offers for women directors, writers, actors, and in urging the entry of more women in the creative and technical areas of film production. As to the insertion of feminism in cinema, British and American critics - who have been most productive in analysing the interrelationship between film, women, and feminism - hold very distinctive views of what a feminist approach to film should be (Kaplan, 1977, 393-395). American film critics intuitively blame the male monopoly in the film industry for reinforcing male superiority vs. female inferiority, while the British are more concerned with the theoretical study of how sexist ideology, which permeates society at all levels, is reproduced in cinema (Place and Burston, 1976). In keeping with the British point of view, the presence of women in cinema will not result in a more balanced portrayal of women unless the infusion of women in the film industry "is inspired in a workable feminist theory and part of a social movement which strives to restructure society on all levels" (Place and Burston, 1976, 62).

The analysis of women's portrayal in cinema, and the theoretical discussion of how female images in film should be interpreted have been the subject matter of publications far more often than the position of women in the film industry. Two studies published in 1975, and the April 1974 issue of the French journal Image et Son on Women and the Cinema have attempted to fill this void. Two of these identify the patterns of discrimination working against women in the British and the French film industries. The third document has a threefold objective: (1) to present a world-wide overview of women involved in film-making since 1896; (2) to introduce the American women who are currently making movies outside of Hollywood; (3) to provide a directory of women film-makers throughout the U.S.A. (Smith, 1975). In the absence of additional sources, we are entirely dependent upon these three documents for information on this subject. A descriptive survey of women's presence in film production all over the world, largely borrowed from Smith (1975), will serve as a first approach to the issue. In a second section, we will take a closer look at the employment patterns in the film industry, with the French Image et Son (April 1974) and especially the thoroughly documented British situation (X, ACTT, 1975) as cases-in-point.

(a) Women film-makers: a world-wide overview

It has been repeatedly stated that women had their greatest impact in the pioneering years of film, when they were involved in every facet of film production except camera work. As the new industry began to prosper, the number of women actively involved in film production dropped drastically. It was not until the late 1960's that they began to reappear in significant numbers, in response to the new opportunities provided by the growing interest in a variety of cinematic forms (Smith, 1975).

Women involved in the big theatrical film productions are still few in numbers, but educational film, art film, documentary, experimental film and, to some extent, commercial cinema are creating new opportunities for women screen-writers, producers, directors, editors. While most of the successful female directors have not been particularly concerned with treating feminist themes, some have dealt with women's issues. Several feminists have also turned to film-making. The fact that their films have not achieved great commercial success does not diminish their significance. As Brayfield (1977) points out, the function of film has changed since the advent of television, and the size of its audience is no longer an accurate measure of its social impact.

Women all over the world are most actively involved in non-commercial productions.

In the U.S.A. and Canada, a new wave of young independent film-makers is emerging, many of whom are women involved in all aspects of production. If women are about to make their big breakthrough in Hollywood, a small vanguard of female directors and the increased number of women receiving production credits are paving the way.

On the Asian continent, female involvement in film production is extremely limited. Although Japan has the world's largest film production, only a few women film-makers have emerged since World War II. Among the leading film-makers Joan Mellen (1975) interviewed for her book on the Japanese cinema, not one film director was female. The book does highlight the careers of three successful women: a set designer, and actress and a woman who has earned a remarkable reputation internationally and a position of great influence in the national film industry through her work in the area of import and export of films. When Mellen wrote her second book on the Japanese cinema (Mellen, 1976), no women were working as directors in Japan. India is another Asian country with a highly developed film industry (Parrain, 1969 - X, World Communications, Unesco, 1975). Together with Hongkong, it stands among the top five countries in the world with the largest film production. In neither of these countries do women play a significant role. Despite the absence of legal and economic barriers in the People's Republic of China, few women have turned to film-making. According to Smith (1975), many women work in the lower echelon jobs, but the top creative positions are still monopolize by men.

In the Middle East, the Israeli film industry is offering the most promising prospects for women. Its most prominent person, head of the nation's oldest and largest film company, is a woman. Only one woman has so far succeeded in directing a feature film. Other areas in which women are active include screen-writing, camera work, production and editing.

The development of the film industry is slow in Africa, particularly South of the Sahara, owing to the lack of commercial outlets, financing and equipment, and black audiences' preference for Western films. Only a few women are active mostly in the production of documentaries and film shorts, e.g. in Egypt, Cameroun, Tunisia and Ghana. Sarah Maldoror, born in Guadeloupe, is Africa's most outstanding woman film-maker who has gained international recognition.

European countries where women in more or less significant numbers have been involved in writing, directing and producing include the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. Nelly Kaplan and Agnes Varda in France, Lina Wertmüller and Liliana Cavani in Italy have emerged in recent years as film-makers of international repute. In Sweden, former actress Mai Zetterling ranks among the leading film-makers. In other European countries, as in the rest of the world (Oceania and Latin America), relatively few women are making films. Those who are work mostly in documentary, educational, experimental film or productions for television.

What appears from the above cross-country survey is:

- that women all over the world are making films;
- that their creative involvement is concentrated in non-commercial film production;
- that an increasing number of women, particularly in Canada and the U.S.A., are working outside the established film industry in all aspects of independent film-making.

The barriers which the film industry has erected to prevent women's entry on all levels will be examined on the basis of the ACTT report on the British film industry (X, ACTT, 1975).

(b) Patterns of discrimination in the film industry: a case-in-point: United Kingdom (with comparative data on the French industry)

Both male and female membership of the film production branch of the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians (ACTT) has been dropping in recent years. The number of female members shows a greater decline from 1969 to 1973 (18%) than that of males (9%). Whereas twenty years ago, women accounted for over 17% of the branch membership, the percentage had dropped to 12% in 1973-1974. The increasingly low representation of women in the union is attributed to:

- the decreasing job opportunities in the industry since 1969, prompting the union to place an embargo on new entrants;
- the fact that women workers are concentrated in low-paid and undervalued jobs, due to prejudices against females, particularly in the technical grades;
- the change in the film industry: studio-based production has declined in favour of location work and free-lance film production. This development had a particularly significant impact

on women's position. Many departments employing women no longer exist, and the inconveniences of irregular hours and filming on location are decided disadvantages for women with domestic commitments.

The division of labour in the British film industry is clearly patterned along sexual lines. Out of the 60 grades covered by ACTT agreements, 20 employ no women at all. Females in the industry work in a very narrow range of jobs: 1/3 are continuity girls (French equivalent: script-girl) or production assistants/secretaries, another 1/3 work as editors or assistant editors, the final 1/3 work in pre-production (e.g. casting) or post-production (cutting) grades. Hardly any women are involved in laboratory processing or in actually shooting and producing films. As for the technical grades, a handful of women are sound recordists and assistant camerapersons, none work in lighting.

That women are concentrated in lower-echelon jobs is clearly indicated by the share they have in producing and directing (6%) and in editing (less than 10%). The only senior production grade which is easily accessible to women is that of casting director.

The French motion picture industry shows a similar employment pattern (Image et Son, April 1974). Women are poorly represented in the higher echelons. They are concentrated in jobs traditionally reserved for women: the subordinate, sedentary and second-rate positions lacking status and responsibility. Authority, initiative and technical knowledge are irreconcilable with expected feminine behaviour. Positions requiring such qualities and skills are therefore largely occupied by males.

The inferior position of women in the British film industry is attributed to several factors; major causes, as detailed in the ACTT report, are the subject of the following discussion.

Blatant discrimination

Forms of blatant discrimination are hard to control by the union, since few cases are reported. Among those that are, sexual bias is particularly flagrant in editing. That open discrimination is operating throughout the industry appears from advertisements for job vacancies which specify the sex of the applicant. The industry generally denies the existence of discriminatory employment practices. When asked why there are no women in technical jobs, employers reply that women simply do not apply. While this may be in part true, since the conviction that they will be rejected discourages many women from even applying, several female applicants have reported employers' refusal to even consider their application, because being female disqualified them automatically.

The undervaluation of jobs predominated by women

Unlike skills required for male jobs, the qualities women are expected to possess for certain jobs are not financially rewarded. Many jobs that are primarily occupied by women require technical skills, but they are designated as secretarial positions, and remunerated as such.

Educational/social conditioning and lack of training facilities

High general educational or vocational qualifications are not necessary to work in the film industry. Training in film production has always been on the job. However, the opportunities to receive such training are dropping for men, and are practically non-existent for women. Few women or men employed in the film industry hold formal degrees. Women were on the whole, apart from schooling in film and technical education, better qualified than men. Many women do lack technical background, which the National Film School, with an increasing female enrolment, does not provide.

The job structure

The job structure in the film industry is one of the major barriers operating against women, for whom the British industry provides few training opportunities. In order to reach the top levels of directing and producing, women have to obtain the necessary experience outside of the industry. Women either enter the industry at a high level after gaining experience elsewhere or remain in their low-echelon jobs, but men can move up within the industry. Grades such as those of editor and assistant-director, which function as stepping-stones in the job structure, are less accessible to women than to men. Most women work as production secretaries and as continuity "girls". Although these jobs require knowledge of many areas of production, they are not regarded as relevant experience for anything else, except to some extent for the positions of production manager and casting director. Casting director is actually the only high-level job which is easily accessible to women. The grade of production manager, while involving considerable responsibilities, carries much less authority and creativity than that of producer or director. The job structure in the film industry is nevertheless much more flexible than in other branches for men, but not for women. A major factor working against women is the importance of contacts and reputations. Women are often excluded, because the images men have of the women they know, as well as of women in general, are often confined to the stereotypes of secretary and assistant.

Working relationships and job insecurity

Few women are given the opportunity to show their talents. The commercial system of film-making stresses toughness: it requires people to be able to endure extremely long working hours and to face long periods of unemployment. Women are not expected to stand up to such pressure and are perceived as incapable of meeting these demands. These are the prejudices women are confronted with on the part of both their employers and the male crew they work with. It is also generally considered more important for a man to be able to earn a living than for a woman, who is supposed to have a man to support her. As a result, there are more women than men unemployed for long periods of time. Women were on the average paid less than men and only in this respect can they be perceived as a potential threat to male employment in the free-lance market: employers are offering women less money. Unemployment figures indicate, however, that men are still given more chances to work. The highest unemployment rates among men were typically in those grades where there are no women.

The right to work

Unlike Eastern European and all EEC countries except Ireland, the United Kingdom does not enforce maternity leave. While the union can negotiate maternity leave for permanent employees, employment to free-lance film-making complicates the question. Child-care facilities are also lacking. Forty per cent of the women and 8% of the men surveyed were more likely to apply for work when child-care provisions were available. Sixteen per cent of the female free-lance workers mentioned domestic commitments as the reason for working on a free-lance basis.

Sick leave, like maternity leave, is dependent on continuous service. Women are absent slightly more often because of illness than men, but, according to the report, this is related to grade and earnings as much as to sex.

The underrepresentation of women in the union

Women appear to be strongly underrepresented at the top levels within the union. Much of the impetus to change women's position in the industry has come from female members working free-lance, probably because of the difficult working conditions which exist there, and the unavailability of work, particularly permanent employment. The report points out how difficult it is for women to organize in order to fight collectively for change, because of the irregularity of employment, women's isolation from other women in the industry, and the presure they experience from their male work environment, which requires women to conform to male norms and considers "women's issues" irrelevant.

Conclusion

While current research on the position of women in the film industry leaves large areas unexplored, the scant data that are available substantiate the charges of sexual discrimination. First, it has been shown that film history has largely neglected to chronicle the substantial contributions women have made in all areas of film production during the first decades of film-making. Second, it can be noted that the present opportunities for women in film production are limited. As a result, women film-makers are either involved in non-commerical production, or - and increasingly so - working outside the establishment in independent film-making. Third, the causes of women's absence in the creative and technical areas of film production are to be sought in structural factors and socio-cultural conditions prevailing in the commerical system of film-making. As the structural barriers against participation of women on an equal level with men are essentially based in socio-culturally conditioned prejudices, no real progress will be made with respect to both the level of female involvement in the film industry and the quality of female portrayal in cinema until society has eliminated sexual bias at all levels.

4. Newspaper and magazine publishing

Research to date on the employment status of women in the print media has focused primarily on enterprises which gather and disperse news. Particularly the situation of North American women journalists has been fairly well documented. The growing influence of the feminist movement in calling public attention to the inequality in opportunities and treatment afforded American women has roused genuine concern with the status of working women. From its inception, the American movement for women's liberation has recognized the powerful influence mass media have in shaping social attitudes and behaviour. Equal access to the decision-making positions in mass media organizations has therefore been a prime concern in women's fight for equality. Although consciousness of women's diminished opportunities in employment and in other aspects of life is by no means confined to North America, the issue of female employment in mass media has nowhere else been accorded as much attention. Developing countries are becoming increasingly concerned with the impact of transposing Western media concepts and structures on their socio-cultural contexts, and with its interference with the optimal utilization of mass communication media for social progress, including the improvement of women's status (Coseteng, 1976). Directing mass communication education and research towards development objectives, and training both women and men in all areas are emphasized as the first steps in orienting mass media development towards social progress in general and the advancement of women's status in particular.

(a) The status of women in the newsroom: North America

In Bowman's 1971 survey of female employment in the news media, the printed press emerged as the sector with the least resistance (Bowman, 1974). Nearly 90% of all the female journalists in his nationwide sample worked on daily/weekly newspapers or newsmagazines, with daily papers accounting for the largest share (62.5%). Women's share of editorial jobs in the print sector amounted to 23.7%, as compared to 7.7% in the broadcast sector. The figures reported by Lublin (1971) were more favourable: women represented nearly 1/3 of all editorial staffs of the sampled newspapers. A 1975 survey of the 106 daily newspapers published in Canada (Robinson, 1975) revealed a 3 to 1 distribution ratio of male vs. female journalists. This figure is somewhat higher than Bowman's data, but below the figure reported by Lublin. The latter, however, represented a smaller and less representative sample than that examined by both Bowman and Robinson. In relation to U.S. population figures, journalists are overrepresented in large and medium-sized markets (more than 50,000 inhabitants) and underrepresented in small markets (less than 50,000 residents) (Bowman, 1974). Print journalists, and particularly females, are concentrated in medium and small-sized markets. Almost half of all women journalists working in the print sector were located in small markets. In Canada, the situation was reversed with a higher representation of women in large cities, which offer better opportunities in terms of prestige, visibility and money (Robinson 1975). Both Robinson and Bowman used two measures to describe the positional distribution of women in the news organizations: areas of news coverage and hierarchical position. The area of news one covers, i.e. "news beat", determines to a large extent the journalist's opportunities for progress along the professional status track. Lublin (1971) noted the existence of sex-segregated beat structures in most organizations. Women were consistently assigned to cover "feminine" beats, i.e. the "soft news" such as features on personalities and in-depth coverage of non-political issues. Although Bowman's and Robinson's data revealed that women have moved into a wider spectrum of news responsibility, women were still excluded from more than half of the beats in the U.S.A. In Canada, female journalists had clear access to almost half, and were represented in another quarter of all beats. Opportunities for professional advancement are thus still limited for women, particularly in the U.S.A. Progress in the managerial sphere, the formal status structure, is inhibited as well. Female news staff were concentrated at the lower editorial echelons of the news organizations' hierarchies (Bowman, 1974 - Robinson, 1975). Only in the lowest managerial category were women relatively fairly (Canada) or overrepresented (U.S.A.), because it comprised the predominantly female women's/lifestyle section editors. The upper reaches of news management are still closed to women, and more tightly so in Canada than in the U.S.A. Women's inferior position both within the professional prestige hierarchy and the managerial power structure suggests the existence of sex-linked barriers interfering with their advancement. According to Bowman, the status inequity between male and female news staff is not entirely attributable to differences in educational background and journalistic experience, but to differential treatment based on sex as well.

A further relevant indication of women's status in print journalism is the salaries they earn. Salary is the most tangible measure of a person's competence and recognition in any field. In journalism, women were consistently paid less than men situated at the same occupational level (with the sole exception of the higher managerial ranks in news magazines) (Bowman, 1974). In Canadian daily newspapers, female salaries within each job category were at the lower end of the pay scale, approximating those paid in small and medium-sized markets rather than those prevailing in large markets (Robinson, 1975). The size of the city appeared to be a major predictor of a journalist's salary, together with years of media experience and sex. Sex-linked mechanisms operating within the industry, which keep women out of larger markets, high-status positions and prestigious beats, severely curtail women's earning potential. The explanation researchers offer for the discrimination of women in journalism includes a structural factor, i.e. the fact that journalism is a male-dominated profession, and a psychological factor, i.e. the pervasiveness of sexual stereotypes of women's roles throughout society which affect men's attitudes and behaviour and results in a sexual division of labour (Bowman, 1974 - Robinson, 1975). The relationship Lublin (1971) found between male executives' concepts about women's capacities and the position of female journalists on their newspapers affirms the impact of the psychological factor.

As the above discussion demonstrated, a major factor preventing women from obtaining relevant experience to qualify for higher positions is the allocation of beat assignments on the basis of sex. Politics/government, sports and women's news figure among the most sex-stereotyped beats. The first two are traditionally male areas, the last is a conventionally female responsibility. Two studies examined the position of women working in respectively a "feminine" department, i.e. the women's section (Chang, 1975), and a "masculine" area of coverage, i.e. congressional reporting (Endres, 1976).

Among the sampled women's page editors employed by daily and weekly newspapers across the U.S.A., women outnumbered men 9 to 1. These figures support the finding that "feminine" news areas and departments represent a traditionally female responsibility. The proportion of males in

the sample was less than half the percentage reported by Merritt and Gross (1977), whose study was confined to large-circulation metropolitan newspapers. This discrepancy reflects the overall trend that women journalists tend to be concentrated in smaller markets (cfr. supra). Using salary as an objective measure of de facto discrimination, Chang found that male editors earned significantly more than their female counterparts. The observed disparity was not related to differences in educational background or years of media experience, except in the 1 to 5 and 16 to 20 years' experience categories. Women's section editors' perceptions of women's position in the newsroom provided a subjective measure of discriminatory treatment. The female editors' responses furnished some, though not extensive, evidence for the operation of discriminatory practices within the profession. Male women's page editors did not share their female counterparts' opinion that female journalists had been discriminated against for years, and were assigned to cover traditional women's page stories only. Both groups concurred that a person's qualifications should be the only consideration in hiring and that opportunities for women to enter the profession were currently improving.

The large difference in salaries earned by female vs. male journalists was also the most striking conclusion of a survey of accredited congressional correspondents (Endres, 1976). Women's average salary amounted to only 58% of that earned by male reporters. Endres attributes this discrepancy to two factors: the women interviewed lacked jouranlistic experience in relation to the male respondents, but were also hired at a lower salary. The latter finding indicates differential treatment on the basis of sex. Almost half of the surveyed females were not aware of discrimination in salary, advancement or employment. Women congressional correspondents did agree that entry into the field was more difficult for women than for men. The low proportion of women covering Congress (16.9% at the time of the survey) indicates indeed that this traditionally male field continues to be dominated by men. It was also the respondents' belief that they were able to compete with men on a fairly equal basis once differences in journalistic experience were erased. The existence of salary inequities at the entry level suggests however that neither educational nor experiential qualifications are accurate predictors of a journalist's earnings.

The research results discussed above prove conclusively that sexual discrimination pervades the North American press:

- women are denied equal entry into the profession;
- they are particularly excluded from the large prestigious organizations, as well as from the upper reaches of the hierarchical and professional status ladders;
- beat segregation persists;
- remuneration is partly based on sex;
- lack of media experience is a major factor interfering with women's career advancement. However, structural barriers and male-biased attitudes prevent women journalists from attaining the experience and training allowing them to compete on an equal basis with men.

Subjective measures of sex-based differential treatment are generally less successful in exposing discrimination. Women journalists perceive discrimination in a number of areas such as hiring, promotion, salary, news story assignment, but not as overwhelmingly and extensively as expected (Lublin, 1971 - Endres, 1976 - Chang, 1975). Bowman (1974) offers the fact that women journalists expect less from their work than their male colleagues in terms of recognition, prestige and money as one explanation for the paradoxical finding that female journalists are relatively satisfied with their jobs.

(b) The status of women in the newsroom: Europe

Although the employment status of European women journalists is far from exhaustively documented, several patterns are observable which closely resemble those prevailing in the North American press:

- women represent a numerical minority in journalism. On the basis of union membership figures obtained for 7 Western European countries, Marzolf (1977) reports male-female ratios ranging from 9 to 1 (Norway, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany) to 2 to 1 (Finland). Swedish women held 25% of the union memberships. In France and the United Kingdom about 20% of all professional journalists were female as of 1974. The editorial staffs of Dutch-language print and broadcast news media in Belgium comprise on the average about 7% female journalists (Tielens, Vankeirsbilck and Ceulemans, 1978). Full-time female reporters in the print media represented only 5.9%. The national average for Belgium appears to be somewhat higher with 9.8% professional women journalists (Boone). In The Netherlands, the proportion of women journalists was as low as 4.6% in the late 1960's (Muskens, 1968). Matejko (1970) reports a national average of about 25% women among journalists in Poland.
- wage surveys conducted in Sweden, Norway, Finland and the United Kingdom (reported by Marzolf, 1977, 292-294) revealed a discrepancy in the salaries earned by equally qualified male and female journalists, despite the principle of equal pay negotiated by the journalist unions.
- news management remains a male preserve. The above cited survey of the Belgian Dutch-language press (Tielens e.a., 1978) showed that women were concentrated in the rank-and-file reportorial categories and virtually absent from managerial ranks. An earlier survey of professional journalists in Belgium also indicated the low-level

hierarchical positions occupied by females (Maes, 1973). Similar findings have been reported for women journalists of the Federal Republic of Germany and France (Reumann and Schulz, 1971 - Frappat, 1970).

- women's news continues to be a traditional female assignment (Marzolf, 1977 - Tielens e.a., 1978). Although several Belgian newswomen refused to be channeled into this traditional female department, many considered this an opportunity to deal with issues of relevance to women.
- while women admit that they are underrepresented in the news media, especially at the decision-making levels, recognition of sexist practices was not widespread (Tielens e.a., 1978). They are generally aware of subtle manifestations of male bias, which they attribute to the impact of sexual stereotypes prevailing in society at large. Barr (1977) attributes the underrepresentation of women on British newspaper staffs to the absence of training opportunities, to tokenism and paternalistic attitudes of the news executives.

The above data suggest that European news media have erected structural barriers which inhibit female entry and career advancement in the male dominated newsrooms. A second cause of women's inferior status is the persistence of male-biased views. While the available evidence is insufficient to be conclusive, it clearly suggests the objective fact of sexual discrimination. Subjective perceptions of differential treatment proved to be unreliable indicators of de facto sexual discrimination (cfr. supra, p. 121).

(c) Women in women's magazine publishing

Magazine publishing was one of the four media sectors examined by the New York based feminist group Media Women's Association. Its 1974 publication edited by E. Strainchamps (1974) explored the way the media industry is structured and operates, particularly with respect to employment policies. The document is a compilation of personalized accounts by present or former employees of various representative publishing/broadcasting companies, most of them located in the New York area. Evaluations of women's position within each organization were based on personal experience and observation rather than systematic analysis. This method of data collection may detract from the objectivity of the results obtained.

Of the media sectors examined, newspapers and wire services emerged as the most enlightened in their employment policies with respect to women (cfr. Bowman, 1974). Metropolitan newspapers were less sexist than their suburban counterparts in terms of hiring, promotion, and attitudes towards female employees. Suburban newspapers do not abide by the Newspaper Guild terms enforced in city newspapers: there is no equal pay for equal work; women are channeled into positions traditionally seen as women's jobs, and assigned to sections traditionally called women's news. The situation of New York newswomen is admittedly better than the national average, and is improving, partly owing to consciousness-raising efforts, criticism and organized action on the part of women workers.

Women, however, continue to be severely underrepresented in the newsrooms. The editorial staffs of women's magazines present an entirely different picture. These magazines employ a large and often predominantly female staff under male supervision and direction. Men occupy the crucial decision-making positions. Several of the publishing companies are accused of blatant discrimination against women in both employment and editorial policies. The Ladies' Home Journal is cited as the prototype of male dominance and male bias. Other publications, such as McCall's, demonstrate a definite positive orientation towards women (cfr. supra, p. 72). In recent years some progress has been made. Since women employees have started organizing, and in some instances have brought suit against their employers, affirmative action programmes have been established and efforts to recruit and promote female workers have increased. However, most of the authors contributing to this publication share the feeling that these measures are merely token gestures which do not reflect a genuine commitment to the improvement of women's employment status.

While in the U.S.A. women employees of all sectors of the publishing and broadcasting industries are organizing and initiating legal action to fight employment discrimination, female editorial employees in Europe have not yet reached this level of consciousness which leads to action. According to Faulder (1977), editorial staffs of British women's magazines are predominantly female, excepting the top echelons of management. This sexual division of labour, which relegates women to the low-level editorial jobs and elevates men to the crucial policy-making positions, prevails in the women's press of other Western European countries as well (Marzolf, 1977).

(d) Education and training in mass communication: opportunities for women in Africa and Asia

Educational qualifications and possession of special skills acquired through training and relevant experience are the formal requirements women must be able to meet, if they are to gain equal access to employment in all media sectors. Surveys of female employment in the media, particularly in journalism, have demonstrated that women are as qualified for media careers as men in terms of educational background. What women seem to lack most is relevant media experience which is a major factor in career advancement. It has been demonstrated throughout this report how structural and cultural barriers operating throughout the male-dominated world of the media keep women in the low-level and low-status

jobs they are channeled into upon entry. In the West, women working in the well-established and tradition-encrusted mass communication industry are increasingly voicing their grievances, and organizing to fight collectively for equal employment opportunities. Women in Asia and Africa are most concerned with avoiding the development of mass media devoid of woman power (X, Africom, March 1977 - Coseteng, 1976). In the existing structures women are not fully integrated, especially not at the policy-making levels (X, Africom, March 1977). To strengthen women's position and influence in the media, the creation of adequate education and training facilities is considered a first prerequisite. A close correlation appears to exist between the existence of fairly well-established media structures and the availability of academic mass communication programmes (Coseteng, 1976). In Asia, 70% of the institutions offering courses and/or degrees in mass communication are concentrated in just five countries: the Philippines, Taiwan, Republic of Korea, India and Japan (Coseteng, 1976). These are the nations which approximate Western countries in terms of socio-economic and technological development. Mass communication training schools significantly conglomerate in the large urban centres. The concentration of mass media and professional mass communicators in metropolitan areas is considered a potentially harmful situation in that urban middle-class values are projected onto rural areas where the vast majority of the population resides (X, Media Report to Women, Feb. 1978). At the Asian Consultation on Women and Media, held in 1976 in Hongkong, a participant from Thailand pointed out that women media professionals were reluctant to move out of the cities into the provinces, where trained media personnel is in demand (Terrawanji, 1976). Where mass communication has been established as an academic discipline, women wishing to pursue a media career have equal access opportunities. In the various schools and universities in Asia, whose mass communication programmes were discussed at the Hongkong consultation, female enrolment is high and often exceeds that of male students. However, female graduates are faced with discrimination when seeking employment. Qualified women are unable to compete on an equal basis with men for the limited number of media jobs that are available. As in Western media organizations, Asian women are confronted with traditional concepts and values conditioning male views of women's capacities. As a result, recruitment for media positions favours males; management and policy-making positions are almost inaccessible to women. Prejudices about women's suitability to cover certain news areas or to cope with unsocial working hours curtail female journalists' chances of obtaining relevant experience. As in newsrooms all over the world, female editorial workers are relegated to the women's pages and the "soft news beats" traditionally assigned to women. The above described deficiencies in women's employment status reiterate patterns documented extensively with regard to Western media practices. Among the measures proposed to remedy this situation, the importance of education and training is stressed. Only when armed with professional skills and knowledge of communication theory and practice will women be able to assume a significant role in turning mass media into an effective instrument for national development.

Conclusion

The employment status of women in the print media compares favourably with that in other media sectors in terms of numerical representation only. With respect to work assignments, access to positions carrying prestige and power, and remuneration, opportunities for women are significantly inferior to those for men. Awareness of discriminatory employment practices has led women media workers to seize their right to protest and demand equality, particularly in the U.S.A. Organized action, frequently involving litigation, has produced some improvements. However, these modest successes are interpreted as merely token gestures which do not reflect a change in attitudes towards women. The male-dominated and male-oriented structure of the industry, and the prevalence of male-biased concepts of women's capacities and performances are identified as the major causes of continued sexual discrimination. Mechanisms interfering with equal participation of women are not confined to the highly developed media of the West. Similar barriers are hampering women's media careers in countries of Asia and Africa. Efforts to redress deficiencies in the mass media system located in the urban centres of a rural society and influenced by foreign models, and the diminished status of women within this media structure, envisage the re-orientation of the mass media towards national goals and the improvement of the employment status of women in the media.

III. Conclusions, implications, recommendations

The evidence presented in the currently available literature on women and media indicates that media images tend to define woman within the narrow confines of her traditional domestic roles and her sexual appeal to man. This two-dimensional image is insufficiently counteracted by viable alternative portrayals which reflect the numerous significant contributions of women in contemporary society. The feminist redefinition of sex-roles and the growing public awareness of women's diminished social position thus seem to have found little response in the mass media.

A closer look at the media professionals who are responsible for perpetuating these female stereotypes exposed the male-dominated, male-oriented and male-biased structure of the mass communication industry. Work in the advertising, broadcasting, film and publishing industries is generally divided along sexual lines, which channel and keep women in jobs devoid of status and power, while reserving most influential positions for men. The constraints which interfere with women's participation in all aspects and at all levels of media employment are firmly rooted in culturally conditioned concepts, which affect both women's and men's perception of, and expectations from, their work roles. Critics unanimously call for a greater involvement of women in the creative and decision-making aspects of the industry. However, it is also their belief that this will not effect the desired change in female media portrayals without a concurrent change in sex-role definitions in society at large. Research has demonstrated that women and men alike are affected by sex-role socialization (Orwant and Cantor, 1977). Female mass communicators however appear to be less influenced by sex-role stereotypes than their male counterparts (Orwant and Cantor, 1977), and are more concerned with changing sex-roles and lifestyles (Merritt and Gross, 1977). Thus it seems that augmenting their numbers in the media would at least enhance the chances for a more balanced and progressive depiction of women.

The implications of this report ensue from both the above summarized research results and the sources from which they are derived. In overviewing our documentation, we are impressed by the disproportionate volume of research materials on the media image and status of Western, and particularly American women. To assume that the unfair treatment women seem to be afforded in the mass media is a phenomenon confined to Western societies would be a misinterpretation. The imbalance we have observed in the literature merely suggests that research to date has provided some insight into the ways in which mass media reflect and perpetuate outdated sex-role concepts persisting in Western cultures, while information on media content and organizational policies with regard to women prevailing elsewhere in the world is severely lacking. Implied in the above finding is the striking conclusion that our knowledge about the interrelationship between women and mass media is far exceeded, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by what remains unexplored. It further suggests that most of the conclusions we have presented in this report pertain, strictly speaking, only to the particular socio-cultural contexts, which we have indifferentiatedly termed "Western". However, since Western, and predominantly American, media materials are exported on a world-wide scale, their influence extends far beyond the geographical borders of the nations which produce them. The adverse effects of this Western media-dominance, both in terms of production and distribution channels, on developing nations is increasingly becoming a source of concern. Dependence on foreign programming and news services is seen as impeding these nations' efforts to create programming and disseminate information appropriate to the needs of the majority of the population in the vast rural regions, where illiteracy and the absence of a technological infrastructure hinder access to print and broadcast media. It has been pointed out that heavy reliance on imported media materials, and the concentration of media organizations and media professionals in the cities, widen the cultural gap between the educated and affluent urban elites and the rural population. While such criticism is undoubtedly justified, particularly

in view of the sexual stereotypes predominating Western-produced media content, it requires modification in two respects. First, dissatisfaction with stereotyped sex-role concepts as perpetuated by the mass media is mounting and increasingly being voiced, including via mass communication channels. Actions against media stereotypes of women are receiving some - as yet insufficient - coverage in the press. Activist groups and organizations, such as the National Organization for Women in the U.S.A., have effectively utilized the public media for national publicity campaigns which exposed demeaning female portrayals in advertisements. The need for objective evidence to corroborate sexist charges has greatly encouraged research efforts. To the extent that less developed countries derive media content from Western sources, some of the attacks on the sex-role concepts reflected in these materials filter through, which may eventually benefit research or inspire other forms of corrective action.

Second, transnational dissemination of information and other mass media materials, along with the socio-cultural concepts they reflect, in particular those pertaining to sex-roles, is by no means an exclusive prerogative of Western nations. Control over international communication channels is divided along the same political lines which have created distinct spheres of influence in the world. Our present understanding of the interrelationship between women and mass communication is largely confined to media content and organizational structures of Western countries. To the extent that these media materials and organizational concepts are transposed transnationally and cross-culturally, we can assess their potential impact with respect to the social status of women. As information about media content produced and disseminated by and in the socialist sphere of influence is largely lacking from the currently available and accessible literature, we have no measure of evaluating its effects, both intra- and cross-cultural. The question of the interrelationship between mass media and the status of women, and its implications for policy formulation on a national and international level, particularly with respect to the less developed nations, is ultimately one which must take into account political, cultural and ideological influences. One conclusion which can be drawn from the above observations regarding the situation of the developing world is that the establishment of a national communication policy, as well as the expansion of these nations' communication capacities are urgently needed in order to reduce dependency on foreign influences. In the formulation and implementation of such policies, and in the development of mass media, both new and traditional, the involvement of women must be insured in order to redress the current disparity. The utilization of mass media for the advancement of women must be integrated in an overall communication policy oriented towards national development.

The research evidence available combined with the vast hiatus which remains in our present knowlege allows for the formulation of more specific suggestions which are applicable regardless of nation's developmental stage, political course, or socio-cultural specificity. With respect to two areas - research and policy development, we propose the following measures, many of which reiterate suggestions formulated by women and men in study and conference reports.

Proposals conducive to improving the scientific and practical value of research on women and mass communication should include:

Studies on communication systems, media-content and the role of women

- continued analysis of female portrayals in various media in relation to the reality of women's social position and women's self-perceptions; parallel research on the images of men;
- study of media images of women from a developmental or historical perspective to document changes in female portrayal over time in relation to the evolution of women's status and the structural/functional changes in the mass media within a specific socio-cultural context;
- content studies of feminist media vs. the establishment press;
- cross-cultural and multinational comparative studies of media content with respect to sex-roles;
- analysis of the values and images projected in media and media materials aimed at a female audience, including the traditional women's press in its various formats, TV-soap-operas, and women's programming on radio and television;
- development of a comprehensive theory of women's role within a specific social system, the function of mass media within this social system, and the interrelationship between both;
- review of educational textbooks of communication schools to modify sexually differentiating conceptualizations.

Audience research

- surveys of audience response to media programmes and materials, including specific questions about consumers' reactions to male and female role portrayals;
- investigation into the socio-economic conditions, educational level, information needs and level of understanding of media audiences in order to maximize the effectiveness of media materials aimed at specific target groups;
- study of media usage patterns of women including access to and consumption of mass media of rural vs. urban women in developing countries.

Communicator research

- multinational comparisons of the employment

status of male vs. female media professionals;
- study of women media executives, their social background, career history, work performance, as well as the attitudes of their male colleagues towards them;
- study of women's access to, and representation in, educational institutions and training facilities providing theoretical and practical training in mass media;
- study of the participation of women media professionals in unions, professional organizations and women's action groups.

Effect studies

- research on the cross-cultural impact of mass media, particularly with respect to women's roles;
- study of the impact of media gatekeepers' perceptions of women on the selection, conception and production of media programmes and the images of women they project;
- study of the socializing influence of mass media on sex-role concepts and behaviour of male and female adults and children.

Recommendations for corrective measures to be implemented by the industry, for affirmative action to be taken on the local, national and international level on the part of official and private agencies, and for continued protest and pressure to be exerted by women media consumers and media workers include:

- developing mass media materials which portray women in a positive and constructive manner and in a wide variety of roles;
- the adoption of non-sexist guidelines by advertisers, broadcasters, film-makers, journalists and publishers such as those formulated by the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom, the Women Media Workers in Australia, the National Advertising Review Board in the U.S.A., to eliminate sexual stereotypes in the spoken, written and visual language;
- the redefinition of journalistic concepts of "news" and "newsworthiness" to include women as active participants and creative forces in society;
- directing print and broadcasting materials dealing with issues traditionally considered "feminine" to both female and male audiences;
- creating positive attitudes among mass communicators towards the integration of women in the mainstream of societal life, allowing for their increased commitment to bringing information for and about women to the public's attention;
- making those who control the media aware of the need for a balanced work force of both sexes, and insuring their commitment to the cause of women;
- the establishment of affirmative action programmes within the media organizations for the active recruitment of qualified women and the institution of promotional evaluation strictly on the basis of functional requirements;
- the expansion of media education, training, and employment opportunities for women to insure their adequate representation at all organizational levels and in all areas of employment, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas such as media management and policy-making;
- the integration of all job categories and work assignments, and where possible, the elimination of job classifications allowing for differential treatment of women vs. men;
- the improvement by the media institutions and industry of paid parental leave, child-care facilities and flexible working patterns with a view to increase the job opportunities of women in the mass media;
- the publication of career and job information and the advertising of job vacancies with the specific statement that they are open to both male and female applicants;
- continued pressure from women within the industry for better opportunities, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas, and for the enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws through policing and litigation;
- support from professional associations, trade unions, and women's organizations, for women's fight for equality in hiring, promotion and pay;
- publicity campaigns sponsored by these organizations to expose discrimination against women in the media, to notify women about their legal rights, and to heighten the public's awareness of media images which are insulting and demeaning to women;
- the development of independent feminist media for the dissemination of information which contributes to a positive image of women;
- spontaneous as well as organized action on the part of consumers to protest against sex-stereotyped portrayals in mass media via letter-writing camapigns, product boycotts, etc.;
- the establishment of anti-discrimination legislation and of commissions empowered to regulate the advertising, broadcasting, film and publishing industries;
- the inclusion of the study of women's images projected in mass media in the curricula of communication schools;
- the establishment of national and international data banks on the status of women, and of international networks for the dissemination of such information to media specialists and to relevant government and private agencies to serve as a basis for policy-making and future research.

The development, implementation and enforcement of such anti-discrimination policies as we have proposed, and the continued documentation of the relationship between women and mass media through critical research of the kind we have suggested are important instruments for redressing the current media practices towards women in portrayal, status and employment. However, for such research and policy development to occur, those who consume,

control and regulate the public media, and those who sponsor the research, need to be sensitized to the issue of women's full integration and to establish the necessary equality between the sexes.

This will not happen unless society ceases to view and treat women as a segment of the population. Mass communication presents but one, though an immensely powerful, force in reflecting and stimulating this process of social change.

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Ms. Masuko FUJIKI Her Story: Just Graduated from University in Japan at Age 83

Reviewed by Prof. Steve McCARTY
Osaka Jogakuin University, JAPAN

My name is Masuko FUJIKI. I am 83 years old. I was born in Shanghai, China, and I came back to Japan at 5 years old. I grew up in the small town of Kuwana in Mie Prefecture in central Japan.

The author, Prof. Steve McCARTY at her graduation

I had valuable learning experiences from before to after World War II. In July 1945, a month before the end of World War II, my school and my house were bombed in an air raid. At that time I was a high school student, and some of my friends died by the bombs.

After the War, many people were suffering from lack of food and a shortage of housing. We resumed study in a temple instead of school.

In May 1948, the system started of educating boys and girls together in the same buildings and in the same classes. We enjoyed school life and studying. For example, I belonged to an alpine hiking club and English speaking club with friends.

I had an arranged marriage with my husband and lived in Kamakura, near Tokyo, for about 55 years. We have three daughters, two grandsons, three granddaughters and one great grandson.

We moved to Osaka in 2007 from Kamakura, but my husband soon died of a cerebral infarction, a type of stroke.

When I was a teenager I had a dream, which was to study at a university in English. Now I have just graduated from Osaka Jogakuin University on March 14, 2015. However, my English skill is poor. Yet when I was first year student, I handed in an illustration essay to the teacher, who commented on it, "Did you write all of this by yourself?" Of course because I live alone. However, my English grammar scores were not as good.

I enjoyed physical education during the first two years of university (around age 80). During a vacation, I joined a short–term study abroad program to Melbourne, Australia. It was a wonderful experience with a home stay.

My graduation project was titled "The Support System in Japan for the Care of the Elderly." I conducted a questionnaire survey with 20 care managers and home helpers. And I interviewed 5 family care givers. When we get old and care is necessary, we need to decide where to end our days. People will have two choices: the family home or an institution.

Japan is one of the fastest aging societies in the world. Therefore it is facing many medical and welfare issues.

COMMENTARY

Japanese people of all ages who were born on the Asian mainland, left over from military advances or for other reasons, have been returning to Japan from pre-War times until recently. Ms. FUJIKI's family returned in time to be bombed in the War. And yet, showing no bitterness, she learned from the experience and took an interest in the outside world through English. This is characteristic of many Japanese people who cherish their Peace Constitution.

From the early post-War period, with the American-guided Constitution guaranteeing equality of opportunity, females could vote and study alongside males at a relatively early stage, which contributed to Japan's rapid development. However, in Japan, custom is sometimes stronger than law. Most women of Ms.FUJIKI's generation had marriages arranged between families, whereas the practice is uncommon now and women are quite free in most ways.

She entered OJU at age 79 ("Jogakuin" means women's institute). OJU is known for its education, internationalism, and activism on behalf of oppressed minorities. The two-year college and university have been contributing to a children's hospital in Bangladesh for decades.

Almost all Japanese say their English is poor, but Ms. FUJIKI studied abroad and fulfilled the senior thesis requirements to graduate from OJU. Japan currently has the highest average age and proportion of elderly people, so her thesis research is of interest in Japan and globally as birthrates decline around the world.

HER GRADUATION AS NEWS

Ms. FUJIKI's graduation was reported in regional newspapers and on the NHK public TV news that evening. Parts of the graduation were filmed, with most students in colorful kimonos. The news value was perhaps that it was an unusual occurrence but representative of a growing new trend. Japanese education and business customs have been somewhat inflexible, like an escalator with steps representing people's age, in a set path from school to work.

Screen shot of Ms. FUJIKI's graduation reported on evening TV news

For example, reputable companies tend to hire only fresh university graduates, and anyone falling off the elevator to success may not be able to get back on track. But having more non-traditional graduates will tend to push the boundaries of what is possible in Japan. With a rapidly shrinking population, the talents of women, the elderly, foreigners, and non-traditional Japanese cannot be overlooked.