



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

WOMEN

and the

PROFESSORiate OF EDUCATION

Mary A. Cain

I speak to a revered academic tradition--that which comes from the mythology and folklore surrounding women--and I introduce in evidence my favorite ancient Chinese poem; it reflects a Western attitude as well.

*A clever man builds a city,  
A clever woman lays one low;  
With all her qualifications,  
that clever woman  
Is but an ill-omened bird.  
A woman with a long tongue  
Is a flight of steps leading  
to calamity;*

*For disorder does not come  
from heaven,  
But is brought about by women.  
Among those who cannot be  
trained or taught  
Are women and eunuchs.<sup>1</sup>*

Pythagoras gave us a second theorem: "There is a good principle which created order, light, and man, and an evil principle which created chaos, darkness, and woman." Aristotelian "logic" held, "We may thus conclude that it is a general law that there should be naturally ruling elements

and elements naturally ruled. . . . the rule of the freeman over the slave is one kind of rule; that of the male over the female another." The Old Testament asks, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" and the New admonishes, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection." From the good Dr. Johnson who believed, "A man. . . is better pleased when he has had a good dinner than when his wife talks Greek," to Stokeley Carmichael, who claimed that "The only position for women in SNCC is prone,"<sup>2</sup> we have grown up in the tradition that woman is to be scorned for her inferiority, and spurned for her evil ways.<sup>3</sup>

But now that we have passed through three quarters of the twentieth century and prepare to grapple with the twenty-first, I bring you news of the status of women: *Nothing has changed much.*

Long ago--because they had more muscle in a time when muscle mattered--men could sit in their lodge houses learning tribal mysteries and playing flutes and tabors, and invent the songs and poems which later became philosophy--the mythologies which grew into tradition and history. Naturally, they included their own treatises on female physiology and psychology. These became part of our heritage, and men are still telling women what their "psychology" is.<sup>4</sup>

Women, being persons after all, and not to be outdone, found ways to respond which gave them some subtle control over their own destinies. The tendency to pout, to storm, to withhold sex or bribe with it, to cry, to pretend admiration when one feels indifference or contempt, to play dumb--*these are the defenses of the oppressed*, of a human minority seeking a way to assert its humanity through

whatever channels remain to it. Because of their adaptive behavior, women became known as irresponsible, threatening, silly, hysterical, weak--and dumb. Rooted in tradition, enshrined in law, sacred to religion, and taught by the family from the birth of each child, the conception of woman as "unqualified" is basic to our institutions and systemic in our culture. Inevitably, it is part of academic tradition.

So today, we find that institutions have been discriminating against women by requiring higher standards for their admission or by applying quotas.<sup>5</sup> We find millions spent for the development of the sound male mind in the sound male body, but not a penny for women who have demonstrated their athletic competence and talent. Women students are counseled out of traditionally male curriculums and the lucrative professions,<sup>6</sup> graduate and professional schools reject qualified women applicants in favor of less qualified males,<sup>7</sup> and women receive less financial aid and fewer scholarships than do men.<sup>8</sup> The number of women attaining the doctorate has declined steadily since 1920.<sup>9</sup> On academic faculties--if nepotism policies don't keep them out altogether--it is the women who are trapped in dead end and thankless part-time and temporary appointments, where their competence and diligence have little bearing on their pay. Women who, in Dylis Laing's fortunate phrase, would "rather make odes than beds," have taught continually and competently for years without gaining entry to the tenure stream. Women are concentrated at the lower ranks and it takes women, with the same qualifications and achievements as men, longer to be promoted. At any rank, a woman is paid less than her male counterpart. The proportion of women faculty in post-secondary education has

declined in the last hundred years.<sup>10</sup> For women, obstacles to employment become cumulative: one cannot secure the second job without requisite experience of the first. Women have less access to requisite experience. Upon retirement, women receive lower monthly benefit payments than men. Under some plans, if a faculty woman dies before retirement, her spouse can collect none of her benefits unless he is totally disabled. In positions of leadership, administration, supervision, decision-making, POWER--we find men.

Given the doctrine of male supremacy and stereotypic sex roles, it is easy to understand women's absence from leadership positions. For what, after all, are the characteristics of leadership? Leadership demands assertiveness, and the ability to make decisions on sound principles rather than on first impressions, hysteria, or "intuition" (whatever that is). Leadership requires a hand strong enough to unite a group, a heart strong enough to fight for common purpose, and a head strong enough to do these things in the light of reason. Obviously, leadership is "unfeminine." This is the *Catch 22* for women with aspirations. Put a woman's leadership characteristics in a male body, and she would be a highly desirable candidate. But because she *is* a leader, she has the devil of a time getting to *be* one. The fact is, nobody can stand a pushy woman.

Allport has shown us that prejudice distorts perception; the biased eye sees only what it expects.<sup>11</sup> Nowhere is this more true than in the case of women. When a woman seeks to enhance her career, her rank, or her compensation, it is difficult to take her seriously. Our perceptions are still dominated by the myth that woman is an adjunct of man, and by the fiction that, for

women, work is only a hobby anyway--quickly dropped when husband, children, or pregnancy call. Actually, 91% of women with doctorates are working; 81% work full-time. Of men with doctorates, 83% work full-time in their field of study.<sup>12</sup> It is creditable for a man to devote the major thought and energy of his lifetime to his work, for there is pride and honor in scholarship. Only women are told, "I could not love thee, Dear, so much--loved I not honour more." We fail to see that women, too, are seekers after goals, devotees of causes, and lovers of the truth.

Of course, some responsibilities are permitted women in academe. They may chair committees and see that the work gets done. They may assist in the preparation of reports (by doing the writing and meeting the deadline). Women may make studies, write books, or make coffee and empty ashtrays. Sometimes, women may even direct activities--involving *other women*. But all of this occurs without accompanying status, title, or salary. Gunnar Myrdal said that the main function of women and blacks in American society was to free "the white male from menial concerns."<sup>13</sup> Yet each of us knows in our profession women of great competence, knowledge, spirit, and independence of mind. Why are they not in high-ranking or administrative positions? Because, when we look for someone to fill an exalted position, primeval lore makes us look for a man. During the search for leaders, women become invisible.

Affirmative Action would have us look with a keener eye. The policy assures that recipients of Federal funds--and employers who have been found to discriminate in employment against minorities or women--will take positive

steps to overcome the effects of past discrimination. As applied to women, it calls for conscious and deliberate action to locate, interview, hire, and promote qualified women. Executive Order 11246, as amended by Executive Order 11375, says:

*The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship.<sup>14</sup>*

The EEOC has outlined specific steps which employers must take in order to comply with the Executive Orders, including publications of an affirmative action commitment, and appointment of an official with responsibility and authority to direct and implement the program. Employers must study the labor market for the percentage of qualified women and minorities available, and compare this with the percentage presently employed at the institution, to determine areas of "underutilization". Goals and timetables for bringing the percentage of women and minorities employed up to the level of the general labor pool are developed from this study, and specific personnel procedures, wage and salary structures, employment conditions, supportive training, and monitoring systems are developed. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights describes the policy as "...steps taken to

remedy the grossly disparate staffing and recruitment patterns that are the present consequence of past discrimination and to prevent the occurrence of employment discrimination in the future."<sup>15</sup>

But not everyone views Affirmative Action with the same enthusiasm and misconceptions concerning the Executive Orders are rampant. One indictment is that Affirmative Action requires quotas. This is not true; it requires reasonable goals. Nor will the policy, as some believe, displace qualified white males already employed. The recent hue and cry raised (by white males, notice) against Affirmative Action contends that the policy encourages the hiring of "unqualified persons"--and you know what sex and color *they* are--who would "lower the standards" of academic institutions. Since most colleges and universities do not yet have a plan, the accusation has no defense. We have no evidence that unqualified persons are being hired, but we do have evidence that those who level the charges perceive women and minorities as "unqualified," and this supports our initial premise that sexist and racist traditions dominate decisions concerning our campuses. Affirmative Action asks only that institutions make their own reasonable goals and timetables for the hiring of qualified women and minorities. Employers must encourage application from, interview and hire (for without hiring, one would never reach one's goals) qualified minorities and women. If employers should hire unqualified persons, it would probably be the result of poor job descriptions.

But job descriptions and qualifications cannot discriminate, either. Recently, we saw listed as part of the requirements for an associate professorship,

"Experience as a Superintendent of Schools and/or an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and/or Instruction." Since only a handful of women in the entire nation ever reach these positions,<sup>16,17</sup> and since that handful is fast diminishing, the description constitutes illegal discrimination against women.<sup>18</sup>

Another outcry against Affirmative Action is the clamor that the policy discriminates against white males. The American system of higher education was begun by white males, for white males. White males with college educations entered the professions. Special institutions for women provided "suitable education for young ladies." Black colleges developed with their special purposes. But the precursor of what we now know as a university education--black or white--was white male territory. Lest the white males among my readers resent these statements, I hasten to assure them that I do not use the term pejoratively; some of my best friends are white males. I simply mention, as a fact, that whatever was lucrative, whatever brought leadership and prestige, whatever led to greatest personal growth, was almost exclusively the prerogative of white males.

Since women have little access to the white-male network that is the power structure of higher education, Affirmative Action provides a counter-agent to an illegal and unjust system of preference.

Other laws are aimed at eliminating discrimination among students, staff, and faculty in institutions of higher education. They are the famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Equal Pay Act, Title VII

of the Civil Rights Act, the Comprehensive Health Manpower Act, and the Nurse Training Amendments Act. Together with the Executive Orders, they can form a package for ending discrimination on our campuses. Violation of these laws is very expensive. Unnecessary litigation, court decrees, and out-of-court consent decrees have already cost offending employers millions of dollars.

What can the professoriate of education do to assure equity for women in academe? First, we can examine ourselves. How are our own feelings of adequacy, our relationships with others, and our decisions affected by sex-role stereotyping? It is safe to assume that each of us has something to learn, and a raising of consciousness pays many dividends.<sup>19,20</sup>

Second, we can study our institutions. Compare the faculty by sex according to rank, length of time in rank, salary, retirement and other fringe benefits, and sabbatical leaves. Is there a nepotism policy which keeps one spouse from working with the other? How many women administrators are there? Are they all, or nearly all, administrative assistants? What provisions are made for moving up women and minorities within the institution? Are pregnancy and child-bearing treated like any other temporary disability? Title VII says they must be. Are grievance procedures fair, and clearly publicized? What goes on in employment interviews at your school? Participate in forming your institution's plan and insist that goals be met.

We can protect the rights of women students, examining admissions procedures and recruiting policies.

Many highly qualified students do not go to college, and from 75 to 90 percent of these are women.<sup>21</sup> Here is talent going to waste! Are scholarships and financial aid provided for part-time students, which women often have to be? Are women being counseled out of traditionally male curriculums (if only by tacit assumption) and into the education bailiwick? If a woman loves math, she might become a mathematician. Does she have to be a math teacher? We must remember that not all teachers are women, and not all women have to be teachers. If the starting salaries of women graduates are lower than those of men--and they probably are, it is probably because women are being counseled, and are counseling themselves, into lower-paying, dead-end occupations. What responsibility does the institution take for equitable graduate placement? What are the per capita expenditures for men and for women in athletics, physical education, and recreation? Is good child care provided for the children of students? Are all curriculums offered at times when women are free to take them? How many extra-curricular and semi-curricular activities are sponsored for men only? Professional fraternities provide educational and economic advantages forbidden to women. Phi Delta Kappa was a good example, before it saw the light.

Having observed the process of change in an institution laboring to produce an Affirmative Action Program, I am convinced that the existence of the Executive Orders does not guarantee effectiveness without scrutiny and political action from each constituency in the University Community. This is particularly

appropriate from the professoriate, which has a tradition of respect for civil liberties.

Of 151 persons listed in a directory of Affirmative Action Officers, 69% are male.<sup>22</sup> What each institution needs is a Women's Advocate, to enhance understanding of women's status, and to influence policy for women's equal opportunity. I think it not unreasonable to include in the bona-fide occupational qualifications that this person be a woman. The Women's Advocate should be a person of learning and status, accountable to the President, and able to deal from a position of equality with the professoriate. Such a person could also channel to the institution the resources which will make Affirmative Action work, and should serve as a liaison with other institutions, with government agencies and legislatures, and the community at large, to create understanding of women's needs in higher education. Each professional organization, too, should have its Women's Advocate at the national level, to study the problems of women in the professoriate and the profession, to publicize present changes, to provide resources to member institutions, and to sponsor and guide the development of non-sexist curriculum.

Our responsibility to the profession includes using our influence to assure that candidates are placed where they are needed and where they deserve to be. Men are needed among young children--as teachers, not just as building principals. Women must be trained for leadership in education. Public schools will be pressed to increase the number of their female administrators. All the little girls in all the public schools of the land need to look

to people in positions of leadership and see something besides men. We must make clear that teaching is a career--not something to "fall back on."

We must prepare our women students to define themselves as first-class citizens, while learning to reshape the world to accommodate their talents. This will require effort, since women are often their own worst enemies--they have been taught to be. Both women and men give more credence to the opinions of men.<sup>23</sup> Matina Horner has found among women college students a "will to fail," developed (at great cost to society) to avoid the accusation of lack of "femininity."<sup>24</sup> If we are truly to set free women's minds, we must disabuse them of the notion of their own inferiority. Yet colleges do much to reinforce this notion. Among the remarks overheard in classrooms:

*"Women are strictly for cackling and homemaking."*

*"What are you doing in here?"*

*"Don't you girls leave anything to the men?"*

*"Girls just aren't as smart as guys."*

*"My high school math and science teachers weren't women with whom anyone would want to identify--you just know they'd never get married."*

Young women in home economics read about the glandular inferiority of females. Biology texts repeat stereotypic sex roles in the guise of "science," gynecology textbooks offend both women and men with their sniggering about the female anatomy, and their condescending view of women patients.<sup>25</sup> In a course in communications and careers, women read these words of wisdom concerning the evaluation interview of the executive-to-be:

*...the applicant normally talks very freely about his wife... The man may say, for example, "Oh, her interests are primarily concerned with her home and children. Actually, she is a wonderful mother and helpmate..."...Comments such as these... obviously reflect an excellent marital adjustment. And, if a man is happy at home, he is more likely to be able to give his full energies to his job.<sup>26</sup>*

When a young woman must read and be tested on such drivel, how does she learn to see herself as a professional or an administrator? When she sees herself portrayed in "scientific" textbooks, reinforced by professorial behavior, as a dim-witted sex object, it is small wonder that she loses interest in graduate school! The professoriate can and has taught young women their place--the place of inferiority.

Women who achieve in college and maintain high expectations for themselves have found, among other things, female models among the professoriate after which they pattern themselves.<sup>27</sup> We need among the professoriate a higher percentage of female models.

Those who trust themselves (only tentatively, I hope) to us for their education and for their preparation as teachers are sent to their task with dangerous weapons in their hands. Armed with the nefarious basal reader, which turns women into dull incompetents and makes girls fearful ninnies and the butt of jokes,<sup>28</sup> they will sally forth to teach the stifling sex-role stereotypes to yet another generation. They will, without protest, use math books in which boys pour chemicals and girls, if they appear at all, pour tea.<sup>29</sup> They will coach girls' basketball teams when they can only

use the gym from 6:00 to 7:00 in the morning. They will segregate boys at the workbench and girls in the housekeeping corner, and send little boys to the "girls' corner" for punishment. They will teach in so-called "vocational education" programs where it is assumed that only boys take shop, and that girls take home economics to learn how to be attractive to men. They will teach a history that is a lie. And they will have no idea how to invent a non-sexist curriculum.

Opportunities and challenges are there for the taking. From my experience with teachers and undergraduates in workshops for the development of non-sexist curriculum, I've discovered once again the refreshing and progressive curriculum our students can invent. Career education can become an insightful exploration of the world of work, and it can begin in early childhood. A curriculum of value exploration can help boys and girls to

appreciate each other's many skills and to honor each other as persons. Here are opportunities for new seminars, for much needed in-service training, for the development of an understanding of the real contributions of women to our nation, for the eradication of denigrating stereotypes, for independent study, research, exploration, and invention-- and for that most exhilarating way of living which evolves when teachers seek understanding together with other teachers, and with their students.

Each of us is to some degree the victim of the old myths, and so are our students, and our students' students.<sup>30</sup> It is up to us to model for them a better way through our own conduct, and to move the profession in more exemplary directions. Sex discrimination has been institutionalized in education since before our time, and we must institutionalize a better way, make a newer truer history for our students, with a concerned regard for the competence and humanity of us all.



NOTES

1. Mark Van Doren, ed., "Woman," H. A. Giles, trans., *An Anthology of World Poetry* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1928), p. 4.
2. Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 31-5.
3. American Association of State Colleges and Universities, *Women's Stake in Low Tuition* (Washington, D.C.: AASCU, 1974), n.p..
4. Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," in *Women in Sexist Society*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971), pp. 207-24.
5. AASUC, *op. cit.*
6. Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *Opportunities for Women in Education* (Hightstown, N.J.: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973).
7. Bernice Sandler, Statement to the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, *Hearings on Equal Rights for Men and Women*, 1971.
8. AASUC, *op. cit.*
9. Carol Tavris and John B. Wexo, "Woman and Man," *Psychology Today*, vol. 5 (July, 1971), pp. 54, 79.
10. Sandler, *op. cit.*
11. Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958).
12. Helen S. Astin, *The Woman Doctorate in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969).
13. Jo Freeman, "51 Percent Minority Group," in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 44.
14. U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Affirmative Action and Equal Employment, A Guidebook for Employers*, vol. 1, 2 (Washington, D.C.: EEOC, 1974).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Clement, Jacqueline P., "Where are the Women Superintendents?" *Women's Studies Newsletter*, vol. 2 (Winter, 1974), p. 1, ff.
17. "Fact Bombardment." *Colloquy*, vol. 6 (November, 1973), p. 30.
18. "The Vanishing Female School Administrator," *American School Board Journal*, vol. 161 (January, 1974), pp. 16-17.

19. Warren Farrell, *The Liberated Man* (New York: Random House, 1974).
20. Marc Feigen Fasteau, *The Male Machine* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974).
21. AASCU, *op. cit.*
22. Kristen Pearce, *The "Minature Directory" of Administrative Officers in Higher Education with Major Responsibilities in Human Relations, Affirmative Action, and Minority Affairs, 1973-74* (Princess Anne, Md.: University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, 1974).
23. Philip Goldberg, "Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?" in *And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education*, ed. Judith Stacey, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 37-42.
24. Matina S. Horner, "Women's Will to Fail," *Psychology Today*, vol. 3 (November, 1969), pp. 36-9, 62.
25. Estelle R. Ramey, Statement before the Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, 93rd Congress, *HR 208* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1974), pp. 495-508.
26. Richard A. Freed, *The Evaluation Interview* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973), pp. 228-9.
27. Elizabeth M. Almquist and Shirley S. Angrist, "Role Model Influences on College Women's Career Aspirations," *Merrill Palmer Quarterly*, vol. 17 (July, 1971), pp. 263-79.
28. Women on Words and Images, *Dick and Jane as Victims* (Princeton, N.J.: Women on Words and Images, 1972).
29. Marcia Federbush, *Let Them Aspire!* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221: KNOW, Inc., Box 86031).
30. H. R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964).

#### Special Reports

Commission on the Status of Women at Western Michigan University, "Viewpoint," unpublished position paper (Kalamazoo: The Commission, 1974).

Task Force on the Status of Women in Graduate Education at the University of Michigan, *The Higher, The Fewer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1974).