Four eighth grade literature anthologies ("Focus," "Counterpoint," "Perception," and "Adventures for Readers") were analyzed to determine what roles women played in adolescent literature anthologies. Out of the 171 selections analyzed, only 24 had female authors. Selections which contained no female characters, depicted women in a negative view, or portrayed mothers as useless beings were written by male authors. Most of the stories depicted women in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. The study also noted that females who were shown as fully developed characters were either pre-menstrual or post-menopausal. Active young girls interested in many things were characterized as tomboys. Women shown as professionals were teachers—"old maids" and heartless people. Another stereotype consisted of the woman plotting to catch a man. Finally, it was noted that approximately a third to a half of the selections did not even mention a female character, whereas boys were given numerous and attractive models to follow. (HOD)
SEX BIAS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE ANTHOLOGIES

A study prepared by Gayle Hurst for the St. Louis Chapter of NOW.

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SEX BIAS IN JUNIOR-HIGH LITERATURE ANTHOLOGIES

Introduction

Our society is changing. Its people are changing; its institutions are changing. And amidst these changes is the sexual revolution. Women are refusing to remain ignorant, underpaid, subserviant. They are insisting that concern be shown for every area of woman's life. One of these areas—a very important one—is woman's education.

This concern comes at a time when the institution of education, too, is in process of change. Much criticism is being given to the schools as they are and much thought given to what they should become. One question being raised in regard to the schools is How can we maximize the individual's potential? It is the thesis of this study that in answering this question, the potential of all individuals must be considered. This means female potential as well as male. The educational system has been indicted for its failure to foster the intellectual development of these—female—students. This study indicates one area for beginning to solve this problem. There must be a change in the content of the literature textbocks used in our schools.

The literature texts used in our schools have accelerated a dehumanizing process operating on the females of our society. This study analyses the role of women shown in these textbooks. The study's researcher's found that their analysis supports this premise: "The central problem is that this society has produced an image and a mythology of women that has deprived them of their humanity and creative role in society."
This study exposes the part played by literature texts in the dehumanizing of women in our society. It indicates the effect which unrealistic portrayals of females in these texts must have on their female readers, and the effect on these readers of unattractive female role models. The study has also surveyed the number of women authors included in the anthologies. Suggestions for changes and additions to the textbooks are included.

**Definitions**

Clarification of three terms used throughout the study may help the reader understand the study's arguments. These terms are "whole person," "traditional person," and "personal goal."

The study refers to the portrayal of female characters in the literary selections as either "whole persons" or "traditional persons." Within the study a "whole person" is a fully-developed character. She has an identity separate from the family and the males in her life. She is shown as possessing a psychological and emotional self as well as physical attributes. In contrast to this "whole person" is the "traditional person." The female shown in a traditional role is seen seeking to find a husband or only dealing with children or housework. The author portraying a female character in a traditional role never explores or characterizes her total self.

It is possible for a female character to be a whole person, yet engaged in a traditional role. For example, Miss Smith in the story, "The Kiskis" is a schoolteacher. Although she is engaged in a traditional role as teacher, she relates to her students as a whole person: a total self. The author shows many facets of Miss Smith's personality, and has her achieve her goal through her own abilities.
The third term that needs explanation is "personal goal." A personal goal is a goal held by the female character herself. It is a goal which she defines herself and it extends beyond the limits of society. The traditional goal is to get a husband, boyfriend, or to devote herself more fully to her family. In contrast, personal goal might be to win an athletic event, to succeed in a career, to develop her potential, et cetera.

**Method of Study**

The researchers selected literature anthologies for the study. They had two reasons for this choice: every student is required to take English, and all districts surveyed used anthologies for instructional purposes. The researchers chose texts from the eighth grade because they felt this level reflected what had preceded in the students' education and also foreshadowed what was to come. The researchers feel that the adolescent years are crucial in the development of young men and women and the early years of adolescence are critical.

*The data sheet enabled the researchers to note many areas of each selection read and served as a guide for in-depth study of each textbook and selection. (See Appendix A for a sample of the data sheet used for this study.)*

School districts included in the study are Normandy, Parkway, Pattonville, St. Louis, Hazelwood, Ferguson-Florissant, Webster Groves, Riverview, Maplewood, Brentwood, Mehlville, Wellston, Berkeley, and Bayless. Many districts contacted would not cooperate with the study.
Overview of Textbooks

The following textbooks appeared on approved textbook lists most often: Focus by Scott, Foresman, and Company; Counterpoint by Scott, Foresman; Perception by McGraw-Hill; and Adventures for Readers by Harcourt, Brace and World.

Focus is an attractive text that appears on first glance to take a liberal approach to contemporary literature. However, the contents are similar to other texts studied. Out of forty-two selections, two show female characters as whole persons. The typical story in the text has no female character who is even mentioned as a character (18 stories). Many selections mention a woman as she brings in the tea or feeds the family. The omission from the literary selections of female characters is distressing. Almost as disturbing as the lack of female characters is the type of female character that is shown throughout this text. (This will be discussed in-depth later in the study.) Out of Focus' forty-two selections, only seven have female authors.

Perception contains excellent story selections from the viewpoint of themes, morals, and literary craft. It is a poor collection when evaluated from the standpoint that the audience of readers is over one-half female. The majority of Perception's stories are written by, for, and about men. The majority of stories having women characters depict women in the traditional role of housewife and mother. There are thirty-nine selections in the text: five of these stories have female main characters. There are eighteen that do not mention a woman at all! Only five female authors have been used in the text.
Counterpoint resembles the other texts in its omission of women characters. Of those stories which do have women characters few, if any, present admirable women who could serve as models for the modern junior high school girl living in a world where nine out of ten females can expect to work outside the home at some time in their lives. There are thirty-seven selections. Four of these show female characters as whole persons. Twelve of the thirty-seven selections have no women characters at all. Five selections by female authors were included in this anthology.

Adventures for Readers is flagrantly unbalanced sexually. There are fifty-three selections in the text. Forty-six authors are male; seven are female. Forty-nine selections have males as the main characters. Four depict a female as main character. It is shocking that there are twenty-five selections in which no female character is mentioned—not even once! Yet, this text is used widely in the St. Louis area.

Results of the Study
Unrealistic Portrayal of Life

The textbooks used in the literature classes should reflect life realistically. There are four areas of women's lives which must be made clear. First, working women are a significant part of the work force and should be depicted in proportion to their numbers. Second, the anthologies are used with mixed classes, and should present as many models for female students as for male students. Third, the roles of mother and wife are important in our society and must be depicted as such. Fourth, the fact that women and young girls are given names at birth, and have names throughout their lives must be revealed in the textbooks.
A True Picture of Women as Workers.

Women are not shown as members of the labor force in the overwhelming majority of the selections. The 1972 Labor Bureau statistics show that 40% of the work force is female. 45% of women over sixteen are working. The Bureau of Women in the Department of Labor reports that the average woman will work twenty-five years outside her home. If she does not marry, she will probably work more than forty-five years. Thus, the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers, so much the mainstay of these literature anthologies, are only one part of the life styles the female readers will create for themselves in a world where modern technology yearly decreases the drudgery of housekeeping and where the population-pollution problem decreases the desire for large families.

Selections in literature texts must reflect life as it really is, and as it will become. Women are involved in all areas of American life—not simply as mothers or wives. In the St. Louis area, there are approximately fifty female doctors who are in private practice. Women are working in brokerage firms. Women are making great strides in government work: "There are more women in top decision-making jobs in the Government than ever before." Since forty-five percent of the labor force is female, it is obvious that women are doing more than simply sitting quietly at home saying "yes" and "no" to their husbands as the selections would have us believe.

To reflect reality, the literature texts must include in increasing numbers stories and plays featuring females as professional and factory workers, as politicians, military personnel, et cetera. With one exception, the only working women shown in the selections studied were school teachers.
Instructional Materials Appropriate to Student Users

The anthologies studied are used with both male and female students. Analysis of the texts implies that only males use them, since they show few female key characters. Remember Counterpoint's thirty-seven selections among which twelve do not even mention a woman character and only four develop a female as the main character. If textbook publishers were concerned with all students in a literature class, half of the selections would feature strong female characters.

The Importance of Wives and Mothers

The role of wife and mother is an important one in our society, but the literature anthologies provide those girls who do become wives and mothers with few admirable models of that role. As stated in the pamphlet, Dick and Jane as Victims:

Wives and mothers are not only dull; sometimes they are actually unpleasant! One mother chases the children with a rolling pin and a wife nags her husband until he misses his three wishes. Mom spanks, yells, gets mad. She hates fun and spontaneity almost as much as she hates dirt.5

The role of mother is not an admirable one as characterized in the literature anthology. Most of the selections show mothers as passive, simple, subservient creatures who are unable to make decisions and guide the children. In the selection "The Man Who Rode the Bear,"6 Tildy (a wife) is described as listening and looking thoughtful. The male author comes through with the following statement: "Since there seemed nothing else to do, Joe decided to take his wife's advice."7 The implication is that Tildy's advice certainly could not even be considered if there was anything else to do--any other choice to make.
in the story "When You Run Away," a young boy's resentment toward his mother is clear when he says, "I used to pity my father, who was tied so to my mother's apron strings." There seems to be nothing more important to teach our adolescents than the contempt society holds for a strong, independent woman.

"An Old-Fashioned Iowa Christmas" graphically portrays mother and the other female characters engaged in activity keeping them in their place--the kitchen. They spend their Christmas in the kitchen preparing the food. There is no spontaneity nor fun from these mothers.

Mothers are important, dynamic members of their families. Even if they choose to be traditional, they have worth in the family structure. This worth is not reflected in the anthologies. Mothers are not like the excerpts from the above stories. They are not seen only as they serve the coffee or the supper. They do not wait breathlessly for fathers to come home in order to have the decisions made. These characters are not typical of the American mother, except in the minds of male authors. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles, a Labor Department publication, rates each occupation on a skill scale from a high of 1 to a low of 867. Interestingly, homemaker is rated number 878. Apparently, males view mothers as unimportant, but this view does not portray women as they are realistically.

Whole Persons Have Names

Women and girls like men and boys, are given names at birth, although the texts reveal many nameless female characters. This is an incredible omission, and sounds totally impossible! A good example, however, is found in the play "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." The "bride" remains nameless throughout the story, and the reader gets the idea that she is merely a symbol of the inevitable
and somewhat regrettable coming of domesticity and civilization to a "played out" western town. Note that not one male character in the play went nameless. Another example, from Focus, "Why the Iceman Stopped Coming to Our Flat" refers to the female character only as "Mother." She is never given a first name, or a surname. In many selections, the woman is mentioned only as X's mother or Y's wife. Such misconstruing of reality is inexcusable.

Female Roles in Antologies

The majority of stories in the anthologies depict women in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. These characters usually depend on men, submit to them, support them. Their roles in the stories are usually secondary, and often unimportant. Mothers are shown often as only nameless, but without self-identity. Most often, the mother is not developed as a character. She is only mentioned as she serves dinner. The mother in "Bloodstain" is mentioned as she serves tea. In the story, "So Much Unfairness of Things" (an ironic title), Mrs. Burdick is mentioned twice: "I'll have Mrs. Burdick bring in some milk and cookies," and again, "He looked down at the milk and cookies Mrs. Burdick had left him." In these stories, if any female characters appear at all, this is the extent to which they are developed. Sadly, these stories represent approximately ninety percent of the selections.

The stereotyped female character, in addition to being shown as submissive and dependent is portrayed as illogical, easily flustered. For example, the short story by Alex Gaby, "Fifty-Two Miles to Terror" portrays the wife and daughter of the driver. The family is on a trip and find themselves having car trouble. The two females are frightened, dependent, childish, whining, cowardly.
They are shown as absolutely unable to cope, other than to do what the man tells them. Fortunately for them, the man is competent, calm, controlled.

In the anthologies, most of the mothers shown will neither contradict nor argue with their husbands. "The Enne from the Coast" by T.O. Beachcroft illustrates the disapproving mother who will not voice her opinions. In this story, the son is treated very harshly by the father. Mother disapproves, yet she refuses to step in and give advice. She is totally submissive to her husband. While this kind of characterization may reflect a male delusion, it does not portray most mothers as they are in reality.

Although "Mother" is never given a name in the story, "The Kitten," untypically, she is developed as a complete person. She is characterized as a traditional woman: submissive, motherly, but she is shown as the admirable character in the story as she endeavors to teach her son a lesson that he needs to learn for the rest of his life. The son is influenced greatly by her life style and by her teaching.

In the selections which feature females, there is one other stereotype—the tomboy. These selections seem to imply that a young girl who is assertive, athletic, and intelligent cannot possibly be considered normal. Thus, the male authors cast her in the stereotyped role of tomboy. Sissy, the main character in "The Great Drop Game" is typical of the tomboy stereotype who envies her brother and his friends because they get to play baseball. She becomes the only girl on the boy's baseball team (thanks to her brother, of course). Her name is Sissy, and she sets out to prove that she is not what her name implies. The boys in the story make negative comments about her. She is
a bother, interrupting their masculine ventures. However, when the ball team gets into trouble, Sissy is called to pitch. She proves herself the outstanding pitcher, and wins the game. Now, the boys ask Sissy to join the team. The author (Chapin), however, puts Sissy back in her place: "Sissy drew herself up, primly. 'I have decided,' she announced, 'that it's unladylike to play baseball.'" 19

In all of the stories surveyed, there were only two about athletic girls. In the second story, "On Guard," Emily wants to be popular with the girls in her school. Since she is new at the school, the popular girls ignore her. In hopes that the girls will accept her, she becomes a fencing team member, wins the fencing match, and is accepted by the other girls. The caption to the picture reads, "Fencing is one of the few sports in which girls can meet men on nearly equal terms." 20 In this story, too, an athletic girl is depicted as somewhat abnormal, and unhappy.

Another stereotype is that of the female seeking a male, and competing for the prized possession. Focus contains the best examples of this role in "Sunday Costs 5 Pesos." There are four female characters in the play. Two are competing and trying to achieve the ultimate for every woman--MARRIAGE! Berta Cantu is described thus, "She is very pretty, but unfortunately she has a very high temper, possibly the result of her red hair." 21 There is no statement made about her abilities, her intellectual attainment or career. Salome is introduced to the reader, "She is twenty-eight, and so many years of hunting a husband have left her with an acid tongue." 22 The play characterizes women as biting, ugly,
hating one another. And it seems to imply that a woman is old and futureless at 28 unless she has a man. These are not good models for impressionable adolescents.

In a rare selection, the female is shown as a professional woman—a school teacher. Even though 85% of all elementary teachers and 45% of all secondary teachers are female, the teacher in the literature tests are rarely shown as female. Those who are are fitted to still another stereotype. They are depicted as single, tending to imply that female teachers are unmarried, and the female teachers in the stories are characterized usually as heartless, insensitive creatures. The teacher in the story "The Scarlet Letter" is a traditional character. She's an "old maid," mean and heartless. "A Nice Old-Fashioned Romance" also portrays the teacher as a spinster who is tormented by mischievous children and mocked by the principal.

**Whole Persons Only Pre-Menstrual and Post-Menopausal**

Whenever a female character does play a significant role and is developed as a whole person, she is not at an age or time in her life when she is likely to have a meaningful sexual relationship with a man. The study indicates that females shown as whole persons are either pre-puberty or post-menopausal. The most admirable of all the female characters is Anne Frank. She is human in her faults and brave in her ambitions, and not at all stereotyped. She is defined not as someone's mother or wife but as herself, a whole persons, trying to cope with dawning adulthood and hiding from the Nazi's during World War II, all at the same time. Yet, Anne is young and the reader has doubts about whether or not she will, in the end, give up her own ambitions in order to marry and live out her life as Peter's proper wife, who once, as a silly teenager, wanted to be a writer.
Grace Wiley is portrayed in "Woman Without Fear" as a whole person. She is seen as a capable human being, pursuing her own interests in life. Grace studied snakes, and was an admired person in her profession. The author says, "If Grace Wiley had wished to make a mystery out of her amazing ability, I am certain she could have made a fortune by posing as a woman with supernatural power." The only aspect of Grace's life that is shown is her professional self. She is characterized, in a positive view of a competent individual, as a person knowledgeable about snakes.

However, even in this story where the woman is treated as a whole person, statements like this are found: "Although Grace was sixty-four years old, she was as active as a boy." The sentence could not read "active as a child or as a girl." No, she must be given the highest form of praise, being compared to a male. Interestingly, Grace is 64, which supports the theory that the whole female characters in the texts are either pre-menstrual or post-menopausal.

This theory is further supported by the story "The Scarlet Letter." In this story, Emily Vanderpool finds a friend in Virgil Meade. She turns to Virgil because the girls do not accept her. This seems to imply that she and Virgil could not possibly be friends, unless Emily was unacceptable to the other girls. A preferable way of handling the story would be for Emily and Virgil to become friends because of their similar interests. In "The Scarlet Letter," Emily gains status and friends because of her friendship with Virgil. However, Emily's personality is developed in the story, and she is shown as an independent person who finds a way to get even with Virgil at the end of the story. Once again in this story, the wholly-developed female character is pre-menstrual.
The old woman in "A Christmas Memory" is a complete person because she is free to do what she wants with her life. The author develops her fully as a traditional whole person. Her life is not based upon luxuries or upon being busy with "womanish" chores. She bakes fruit cakes for others, so they will have a merry Christmas. The reader views her as a person who feels she has a mission and seeks to perform it. Once again, the whole woman is post-menopausal.

This data seems to indicate that male authors cannot see female characters as whole persons unless they are not in the child-bearing years. During the child-bearing years, they present women primarily as "servers" of the males in their lives.

Conclusions & Implications
What is glaringly apparent from the study is that the anthologies used in these St. Louis Area schools depict life unrealistically. As noted in the body of this report, there are four areas of life which are not now clearly reflected in these texts: 1) women comprise a significant part of the society's work force, 2) the roles of "mother" and "wife" are important ones in our society, 3) females are given names at birth, and 4) the classes which use these texts are coeducational and require admirable models for both sexes in their instructional materials. These four areas of life are so obvious that it is incredible that publishers allow material such as that studied to be printed.
Most of these stories depict women in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. Sadly, even those women shown in the stories who do limit themselves to roles approved by society are characterized with contempt. Often the female characters do not even have names. The study shows that females who are shown as whole persons are either pre-menstrual or post-menopausal. Active young girls interested in many things are characterized as tomboys—not simply active girls. The woman shown as a professional is a teacher—an "old maid," and a heartless person. The last stereotype is the woman plotting to catch a man. All of these stereotypes add up to almost a wholly negative view of woman.

The researchers analyzed a total of one hundred, seventy-one selections. Of these one hundred, seventy-one, only twenty-four had female authors. Selections containing no female characters, depicting women in a negative view, or portraying mothers as useless beings were written by male authors. There appears to be a correlation between male authors and a negative view of women.

The four anthologies studied are not conducive to the total development of the female students forced to use them. Another way of looking at this situation is that textbooks used in the St. Louis area have a negative affect on at least half of their users. This is to ignore the unfortunate results for the male readers of learning to see the females destined to be their wives and the mothers of their children in such negative ways.

These textbooks fail to provide significant and admirable models for young girls. Children learn by imitation, and adopt models to copy. When a textbook has forty-two selections with male main characters and two with female major characters, female students are being denied significant models. And what type
### SUMMARY OF FEMALE ROLES IN ANTHOLOGIES

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Total no. stories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories with no female characters</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories with female main characters</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stories with female authors</td>
<td>14%</td>
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### FEMALE ROLES IN SOCIETY

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>% female students USA elem. and secondary</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>% female workers in labor force</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% female teachers elementary school</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% female teachers secondary school</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of positive heroines are passive, simpering, suppressed mothers? What young woman wants to be like the spinster school teacher who hates the students she teaches? Or like the vicious young women competing to capture the man of their dreams? Approximately a third to a half of the selections do not even mention a female character. In comparison, boys are given numerous and attractive models to follow from successful athlete to safari adventurer.

These facts lead to the second serious implication of the study, the contribution of such texts to the underachievement of the adolescent female. "It is in junior and senior high school that most students come to idealize the sex roles prescribed by our culture. And it is, significantly, in these years that many girls start to underachieve." With textbooks being used that make no effort to present woman realistically and admirably, females begin to realize their lack of importance in our society. According to a study by M.C. Shaw and J.T. McCuen:

There is evidence that girls who are underachievers in high school usually begin to be so about the onset of puberty, while for boys underachievement in high school usually has an earlier onset. This contrast is a further indication that the achievement drop-off among girls as they reach maturity is linked to the adult female sex role.

The effect of showing young women no female models or few models that are positive in nature will inevitably contribute to their developing low self concepts. It is time now in the 20th century to broaden our attention to include the female segment of our society. To do this, suitable textbooks must be selected or put together. And the schools of St. Louis must exert themselves toward this goal.
FOOTNOTES


7. Ibid.


19. Ibid.
Footnotes


28 *Stafford, op. cit.*


APPENDIX A

Title of Anthology ____________________________

Title of Selection ____________________________

Author of Selection ____________________________ Role ______ Result ______

Date of Publication ____________________________ No. of World Characters ______

1. Importance in story:
   ______ key
   ______ intermediary
   ______ minor

2. Kinds of attributes a woman has in selection:
   ______ feminine
   ______ comboy
   ______ domineering
   ______ submissive
   ______ helpless
   ______ self-sufficient

Roles:
   ______ stereotype
   ______ quasi-stereotype
   ______ whole person

3. What is her goal:
   ______ achieve traditional role
   ______ personal goal

4. Does she achieve her goal ______ yes ________ no:
   If yes ______ by herself ________ by aid of stereotyping ________ woman stereotyping
Selections to be included in new anthologies:

1. "Diary of Anne Frank" by Anne Frank
2. "The Survivors" by Pamela Wylie Sullivan
3. "Indian Swing" by Roma Rose
4. "A Nice Old-Fashioned Romance" by William Saroyan
5. "The Lovely Night" by Shirley Jackson
6. "Little Lost Dog" by Jean McCord
7. "Now There Is Peace" by Richard Sherman
8. "Island of the Angels" by Leonard Wibberley
9. "The Erne from the Coast" by T.O. Beachcroft
10. "The Lillies of the Field" by William E. Barrett
11. "Women Without Fear" by Daniel P. Mannix
12. "The Kitten" by Richard Wright
13. "The Scarlet Letter" by Jean Stafford
14. "A Christmas Memory" by Truman Capote
15. "Children of the Harvest" by Lois Phillips Hudson
16. "The Night the Cops Got Me" by M.J. Amft
17. "The Kiskis" by May Vontuer
18. "Visit to a Small Planet" by Gore Vidal