

# Women's right to be educated

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Before the Revolutionary War education was undergoing many changes. One of these changes was that many people, like the Puritans, felt that education was the key to help a person be successful in life. The idea was that if you were successful in life, then you would be spiritually successful also. The only problem with the Puritan's ideas was that it left out women. For a woman, in order to be successful, she had to raise her family in the way of the Church, and obey her husband. If she were to do this, she would achieve spiritual success. But the philosophy was mainly focused on the breadwinners of the family.

A woman's role in society was not as noticeable to achieve merit. Their primary role was to stay at home and take care of the children. Also, they would help their husband in many of his daily activities. Women were being excluded from education, society, and power. The turning point for women though, was the Revolutionary War. Many women were left at home to take care of all of the responsibilities around the house or farm. With this new set of responsibilities, women began to think a little bit. They began to wonder why they hadn't been able to obtain any sort of social power.

The fact remains that women had no power at this time because of historical reasons. Historically men had been the heads of the household. And with the strong religious beliefs of the time women couldn't change that. The Bible was a clear-cut answer to who should run the home. A woman's function from the perspective of the Bible was to be a mother and to be obedient to their husbands. Women didn't need education in order to be mothers and or to be obedient.

Women had been educated before the turn of the Revolutionary War. But the education they were getting was not equal to that of the men or clergy.

Really, the only education they were getting was the education that was taking place in the Church, separated from men. Before the War, women had a 40% literacy rate. This meant that 40% of the women's population could sign their name. They were only allowed to learn about the Bible and their religion. So historically women only needed enough education in order to stay at home and do domestic labor, and also to take care of their children. Secondly, men had been supporting the family for centuries. So all in all women had no power whatsoever. They had no voice in society, except for the raising of the children and the instilling of morality over their children. This would later be helpful as women started teaching.

Before the War women had been dependent upon men. Now that the men were gone fighting, the women had no choice but to take over the responsibilities of supporting the family. This caused women to start thinking about their situation. They started to wonder why it was that they could do everything a man could do now, but they weren't being treated as though they were equal. They had no education, no power, no voice, and were now supporting the family.

After the War was over some very interesting social groups popped up. One of these groups was called the Loyal Citizens. The Loyal Citizens group was a woman's group that was formed in order to uphold the "Republican Motherhood". The basic idea here was that women should shape their sons in the image of the Republic. Also, the mothers should shape their daughters

to become good Republican Mothers. This and other groups would be a powerful influence on the unification of women. For one of the first times we see women joining together in a common voice. Women are starting to understand that they aren't going to get anywhere unless they are unified.

Meanwhile many schools were developing with the intention to educate women. The economy was booming which created many job openings for men. This left a void to be filled in the schools. For the private schools this meant that they weren't going to be able to stay open unless they were able to fill the open spots. So in order to fill the need, many women were educated in Proprietary schools. The education in these schools was not the same as the education in an all-male school. These schools were actually beauty and technical schools. Although, women were not receiving the same education as men, the education they were receiving would also have a large impact on the unification of women. Education at this time was responsible for unifying the country and shaping children as talked about in previous papers.

With the education of women starting to be accepted, there was an explosion of girls schools called academies. This was around 1807-1808. The purpose of the academies was to teach grammar and etiquette. Some of them were actually finishing schools. Academies were a huge step for women's education. Women finally had a school that they could call their own.

As women became educated, men started to wonder if women's education would interfere with their opportunities. The argument was made that

education would not make women discontent with their roles in life, but instead would lead them to accept their place in society more easily. Here it is obvious to see that the women are having to justify their education to the men in order to continue. Women's education is still not accepted among society because the people in power, who were men, heavily influenced society. Hence, women still had little opportunity to do anything with this newfound education.

In the early part of the 19th century, many of the common schools were undergoing dramatic changes. With such an onslaught of women becoming educated, there would soon be a large percentage of women who would need jobs. As the common schools began to increase in size, the demand for teachers rose. The women that had recently found education would soon meet the demand for teachers.

One of the reasons for this was that women could be given less pay than men. And education was in great demand with the signing of the Northwest Ordinance. The majority of women's teaching was at the elementary school level. They would have approximately 40 to 100 kids all of whom were between the ages of 3 and 16. The only qualification that a woman needed to teach was that she had to have graduated from elementary school. With little education, women would start teaching with as little as 1 week of training in etiquette.

In 1839 Horace Mann would come back from Europe and start to influence the way teachers were being educated. He developed the Normal School. It would teach the basic methods of teaching. He borrowed these methods

from the Prussian education system. Later, in 1861 the Oswego Normal School would be a forerunner of all of the Normal Schools by placing even more emphasis on the learning of teaching methods. Normal Schools became an outlet for women. They could be educated to become teachers because society's views were changing.

Finally in 1837, Oberlin College started accepting women and African Americans. Economically it had become cheaper to educate both the girls and boys. Society had become more egalitarian because of this push for women to educate themselves. But equality was far away. Society had changed. There was a need for women to come out of the home and into the workplace. But was this for the best. Women today still struggle to find equality in the workplace. Society, which was run by men, allowed women to come out of the home and to teach. So women did make a great stride in the right direction, but only because they were let to go there.

Margaret Haley was an activist for women's power and a vehement supporter of teacher's unions. She noticed that women had no power and were still confined by the bounds that were placed upon them by men. Examples of this were that women would have to report to male administrators and were constantly scrutinized by men. She wanted to level the playing field by empowering women. She was also responsible for the American Federation of Teachers, which would later be known as the AFL-CIO. With women being educated, the only thing left for them to do was to gain power and to someday give society the gentle touch of a woman.

Women had learned the role of the Republican Mothers. There was no better way to teach a child than to have a woman who already understood their role as a mother. This role would be to shape the children they would teach into sons and daughters of America. Women were the perfect teachers. They had been teaching their own children for years how to be moral and responsible citizens. Through their struggle women eventually won their suffrage and would have a larger voice in the country. But even today there are still ripples from the pond that reach us. Women still struggle daily with trying to achieve total equality. Hopefully, they will win their fight!