

# The New Scholarship on Women and Education

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The new scholarship on women and education will change the ways in which we think about educational research. The authors of the articles in this special issue of the *Educational Researcher* consider both conceptual and methodological issues. Jane Roland Martin argues that an education of the mind is an inadequate education if it ignores generative love. While her paper is anchored in the philosophy of education, she challenges the dualism of vocational versus liberal education. Joan Burstyn discusses the history of education, but focuses particularly on the ways in which our current conception of this field is organized around male experience. Consideration of women's lives as "subject" rather than as "other," she says, will change how we interpret educational events. In her report of efforts to create a history of women in educational research, Charol Shakeshaft poses methodological questions raised by the new scholarship on women. She suggests that traditional sources, questions, and approaches may be inadequate for characterizing women's contributions. Jacquelynne Eccles approaches the issue of gender and achievement from a psychologically framed perspective as she investigates the relationship between occupational preferences and gender-role stereotyping. Susan Klein and Karen Bogart recommend sex-equity strategies for all levels of the educational system. Janice Scheuneman examines the quantitative areas of statistics and research methodology to probe the ways in which the new scholarship on women challenges certain methodological tenets. We have chosen articles that reflect a variety of perspectives, but the authors share an understanding that the structure of educational disciplines as we know them, and the nature of methodology as we have come to understand it, will change as generalizations about human behavior are generated from women's as well as men's experiences. These articles will hopefully stimulate dialogue around these important issues.

## Redefining the Educated Person: Rethinking the Significance of Gender

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**F**ormerly, the future was simply given to us; now it must be achieved" (Schell, 1982, p. 174). The dramatic shift in vision these words signal has enormous implications for education. Deriv-

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ing this new perspective from his appraisal of the nuclear peril, Schell understands that to achieve the future we must do more than acknowledge an obligation to save the species; we must comprehend that obligation as "a new relationship among humans"—"a form of love," he calls it, resembling "the generative love of parents." The nuclear peril, he goes on to say, "makes all of us, whether we happen to have children of our own or not, the parents of all future generations" (p. 175).

Schell is absolutely right that the nuclear peril requires us to rethink human

relationships and, in addition, our relationship to the earth itself. Our ecological peril does so too. The question that concerns me is how we are going to foster the form of love Schell calls generative and others have called "preservative" (Gray, 1970; Ruddick, 1984). It has to be learned; it is not something innate that we can count on to emerge automatically as people mature.

Moreover, the startling statistics on child abuse, rape, and family violence in today's society testify that this love will not necessarily be acquired informally in the course of growing up. If a new

form of love is what the future requires, we must look to education. Unfortunately, when we do, we discover that the prevailing conception of education has no room for the nurturing capacities and the “ethics of care” (Gilligan, 1982) this love involves.

Examine the recent national reports on education. You will find repeated demands for proficiency in the 3 Rs, for clear, logical thinking and for higher standards of achievement in science, mathematics, history, literature, and the like. You will search in vain, however, for discussions of love of any kind.

Why are there no calls for mastery of the 3 Cs of care, concern, and connection? On one level the answer is simple. Assuming that the “true” object of education is the development of mind, we subscribe to an ideal of the educated person that gives pride of place to intellectual virtues and attainments. Couldn’t education develop intellectual virtues and also the feelings, emotions, values, and attitudes the future requires? Of course it could, but our assumptions about the function of education do not allow us to conceive of the educated person in this inclusive way.

Here I want to show the connections between our ideal of the educated person and our definition of the function of education. In so doing I will be revealing transactions of gender beneath the surface of educational theory and rhetoric.

A sensitivity to gender and a determined effort to make it a fundamental category of education will make possible the future.

### The Contemporary Ideal

In the late 20th century United States—if not in all times and places—the educated person is one who has had, and profited from, a liberal education. He or she will have been initiated into the various forms of knowledge and will have acquired, along with a body of information, conceptual schemes and cognitive perspectives by which to interpret experience (see Peters, 1972).

Educators and philosophers argue over the exact number of forms of knowledge: Are there seven, nine or five? They disagree about how to distinguish them: Are physics and biology separate forms or not? They debate the qualifications of specific candidates: Is art a form of knowledge at all? Is religion? There is remarkable consensus, however, about the broad outlines, if not

the specific details, of both liberal education and our overarching ideal of the educated person. It is generally accepted that the object of liberal education is to develop mind, that a well developed mind is governed by reason, that rational mind is defined as the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and that the preferred kind of knowledge is theoretical.

Needless to say, in defining the educated person as one possessing rational mind and construing this latter in intellectual terms, feelings, emotions, and other so-called “non-cognitive” states and processes of the individual are ignored. Except for the skills and procedures required to use the conceptual schemes of the disciplines in interpreting the world, procedural knowledge—*knowledge how*, as philosophers sometimes call it—is neglected too. What is perhaps less apparent, but equally important, is that this ideal also makes suspect the development of physical capacities, artistic talents, and effective moral action (see Martin, 1981).

The great irony of liberal education today is that it is neither tolerant nor generous. The liberally educated person (i.e. the educated person) will have knowledge about others but will not have been taught to care about their welfare. That person will have some understanding of society but will not have been taught to feel its injustices or even be concerned about its fate.

John Dewey devoted his life to combatting the modern tendency to separate reason from emotion, thought from action, education from life. The dualisms he tried to lay to rest continue to haunt us. The distinction we draw between liberal and vocational education represents a separation of mind from body, head from hand, thought from action. In identifying “true” education with liberal, not vocational, study, we build this cluster of splits into our ideal. Because we equate educated persons with educated minds and interpret the concept of mind narrowly, a split between reason and emotion is also built into our ideal. But this is not all. Valuing rationality for its contributions to self-control and personal autonomy, we embrace an ideal that cuts the self off from others. No intimations of human connectedness complicate the picture. The ability to sustain human relationships, a desire to care for and nurture other living beings, a sense of oneness with nature—these are not considered

relevant, for the ideal guiding education today divorces self from other even as it alienates each separate self from its own body and emotions.

Where does this lopsided ideal come from? Why does it hold us in thrall? In *Reclaiming a Conversation* (Martin, 1985), the first party to the conversation on women’s education I reclaim is Plato (Martin, 1985). The ideal I have just described has its roots in the *Republic*. Once adjustments are made for Plato’s anti-democratic politics and his distrust of empirical knowledge, one can see that our contemporary conception of the educated person is patterned on the ideal he constructs to guide the education of the guardians of his Just State.

In the perfect society of Plato’s imagination there are three classes of people—artisans, warriors, and rulers—and justice consists in each class performing its own job and no other. Although every individual in the Just State is suited by nature to carry out only one set of societal tasks and duties, education is necessary to insure the full development of a person’s inborn talents and capacities. Since the well-being of the state depends particularly on the rulers doing their job effectively, the guardian education is Plato’s special concern.

Because Plato takes ruling to be a matter of knowing The Good, and considers this knowledge to be the most abstract kind there is, he requires the rulers of the Just State to engage in rigorous theoretical study so as to perfect their deductive powers and develop the qualities of objectivity and emotional distance.

To be sure, not one of Plato’s guardians will be the “disembodied mind” sanctioned by our own ideal, for Plato believed that a strong mind requires a strong body. Nonetheless, he designed for his rulers an education of heads, not hands. (Presumably the artisans would serve as the guardians’ hands.) Moreover, considering the passions to be unruly and untrustworthy, Plato held up for the guardians an ideal of self-discipline and self-government in which reason keeps feeling and emotion under tight control. Consequently, although he wanted the guardians to be so connected to one another that they would feel each other’s pains and pleasures, the educational ideal he developed emphasized “inner” harmony at the expense of “outward” connection.

## Genderized Roots

Although our insistence that this ideal applies to men and women alike is a product of 19th and 20th century social movements, this thesis too has its roots in the *Republic*. In book 5 of that dialogue Plato leaves no doubt that the educational program he devises for his guardians applies equally to males and females—albeit to relatively few members of either sex. In regard to the question of who should rule the Just State, says Plato, sex is a difference that makes no difference. It makes no difference to education either, he adds, for those suited by nature to perform the same role should be given the same education.

I stress this because the qualities and traits Plato incorporates in his educational ideal are ones that our society associates with males. According to our cultural stereotypes, men are objective, analytical, and rational; they are interested in ideas and things; they have no interpersonal orientation; and they are neither nurturant nor supportive, empathetic, or sensitive. According to our stereotypes, feeling and emotion, nurturance and supportiveness, empathy and sensitivity are female attributes (Kaplan & Bean, 1976; Kaplan & Sedney, 1980). Since Plato's society resembled ours in its views of masculinity and femininity, we must ask why the educational ideal he held up for both sexes only incorporated traits his culture associated with men. It is not enough to say that he only valued the so-called "masculine" traits, although perhaps he did. The function of the guardian education must be considered.

Plato takes the job of education to be that of equipping people to fill their predestined roles in society. In addition, he was concerned above all about insuring the unity of the state, yet he perceived private home, family, marriage, and childrearing as potentially divisive institutions. In book 5 of the *Republic* he abolishes these for his guardian class. Thus, there is no need to prepare the guardians to live in families, be wives or husbands, and rear children; their sole societal duty is to rule.

What in my book I call the reproductive processes of society—I define these broadly to include not simply conception and birth but rearing children to maturity, caring for the sick, feeding people, and so on—do not, of course, disappear from the Just State. Except for conception and birth, they are not, how-

ever, the guardians' responsibility. Hence the guardian education can safely ignore them.

What has this to do with the exclusion from the Platonic ideal of so-called "feminine" traits? From the standpoint of the stereotypes of both Plato's culture and ours, the domain of feeling and emotion and the qualities of nurturance and concern for others is the home. If these are considered to have value at all, it is in relation to family living and its associated reproductive processes, especially childrearing. In relation to the public sphere and the productive processes associated with it—in which category I include political and cultural as well as economic processes—these "feminine" traits are considered downright dysfunctional. But then, one should not expect the Platonic ideal to embody them. Intended to guide the education of those born to carry on that most valued productive process of all—ruling—Plato's ideal quite naturally incorporates the virtues traditionally associated with men.

When one examines the social and educational philosophy of one of Plato's greatest admirers, the genderized nature of Plato's educational ideal, and consequently of ours, is further clarified. In his neglected masterpiece *Emile*, Rousseau rejects Plato's radical social programs. Arguing in book 5 that "it is by means of the small fatherland which is the family that the heart attaches itself to the large one," Rousseau (1979, p. 363) reinstates the institutions of private marriage, home, family, and childrearing in the lives of his citizens. Then, giving the girl Sophie full responsibility for carrying on the reproductive processes, he proposes a second educational track and ideal for her. Whereas the boy Emile is to be educated to be a participant in the General Will, which is to say a citizen in Rousseau's ideal state, Sophie is to be educated to be a good wife and mother in a traditional, patriarchal family headed by Emile.

In the contrast between the societal visions of Plato and Rousseau and their respective theories of education, the workings of gender are illuminated. Rejecting Plato's program of communal living and childrearing, Rousseau either had to make the private sphere and the reproductive processes he placed within it a female domain or give both sexes responsibility for it as Plato had done for the public sphere and society's productive processes. Not surprisingly,

Rousseau chose to reject the Platonic thesis about the difference of sex. For this great democrat, sex or gender—and neither Plato nor Rousseau differentiates these—is *the* difference that makes a difference. Societal tasks and responsibilities, personal traits and qualities, and education are all assigned to individuals according to whether they are born male or female.

## Incomplete People

Rousseau's misogyny is pronounced. In book 5 of *Emile* he tells us that by nature the girl Sophie loves adornment and is a coquette, that guile is a natural talent of hers, that works of genius are out of her reach. Furthermore, the destiny he prescribes for her is to bear Emile's many children; show the world through her modesty, reserve, and care for his reputation that they are his; and govern his household, oversee his garden, act as his hostess, and raise his children, all the while obeying even his unjust commands.

Writing nearly 200 years ago, Mary Wollstonecraft (1975) argued that Sophie's docility and "spaniel-like affection" make her the "toy of man his rattle" (p. 34). As such, Sophie cannot be the kind of wife Rousseau intended for Emile or the kind of mother he envisioned for Emile's children. "Meek wives," Wollstonecraft said, "are in general foolish mothers" (p. 152). "If women be educated for dependence; that is, to act according to the will of another fallible being," she asked, "where are we to stop? Will they not, in turn, make *their* children endure *their* tyrannical oppression?" (p. 43).

Wollstonecraft's critique of Sophie's education is compelling, but her assumption that the educational ideal Rousseau holds up for Emile is the proper one for both sexes must be questioned. Unfortunately, it seldom is today. Certainly those most concerned with women's education follow Wollstonecraft in appropriating for their daughters the educational goals Rousseau posited for his sons.

For the record, let it be known that although Sophie is passive and full of guile she is also the one with the patience and gentleness, zeal and affection necessary for raising children. Furthermore, she is the one with the tenderness and care "required to maintain the union of the whole family" and the one who is willing and able to make the lives

of her loved ones agreeable and sweet (Rousseau, 1979, p. 363).

Rousseau's fundamental insight in *Emile* is that the plausibility of Emile's education is due to the existence of Sophie. In book 5, Rousseau acknowledges that the man Emile, even when educated according to plan, *is not and cannot be a complete moral person*. Only in partnership, says Rousseau, can Sophie and Emile be completely moral, and then neither one alone is a complete moral person, but rather the *union* of Sophie and Emile constitutes one.

It is easy to be blinded to Sophie's virtues and dazzled by Emile's, for Rousseau tends to concentrate on what Wollstonecraft correctly diagnoses as Sophie's vices. However, once the education of Sophie and Emile is considered in relation to that of Plato's guardians, one realizes just how problematic it is to extend to women the educational ideal Rousseau holds up for males without first transforming it. Rousseau models the ideal guiding Emile's education on Plato's ideal for the guardians of his Just State. Granted, Plato extended this ideal to both sexes. However, in the Just State, whatever reproductive processes the guardians require will be carried on by others. It thus can be plausibly maintained—although I would argue not, in the final analysis, correctly—that Plato's guardians do not need to possess Sophie's virtues.

Unlike most modern commentators on the *Republic*, Rousseau read book 5 carefully and took seriously its social programs concerning women, children, and the family (see Pierce, 1973). He saw, as few others have, that Plato's philosophy of education is incomplete in that it specifies the preparation of those whose responsibility it is to carry on the productive processes of society—or, at least, the productive processes of defending and ruling the state—but not the preparation of those whose responsibility it is to carry on society's reproductive processes.

Rousseau understood that having rejected Plato's social programs he could not embrace Plato's philosophy of education without modifying it significantly; he understood that in his own philosophy he would have to make sure that *someone* was educated to perform the tasks and functions to be carried on in Emile's home. Choosing Sophie for this role and designing her education accordingly, he felt free to retain for Emile the educational ideal Plato held

up for his male and female guardians, for just as Plato had removed all responsibility for carrying on the reproductive processes of society from their lives, so Rousseau removed it from Emile's.

We who reject Sophie and the sex-based division of labor in which her education is grounded have much to learn from Rousseau's conversation with Plato. For unless we want to drop out of our lives responsibility for society's reproductive processes, we too must acknowledge that the educational ideal Plato holds up for the guardians of both sexes—the one Rousseau holds up for Emile—is incomplete.

Recognition of Rousseau's insight does not require us to endorse his prescriptions for a patriarchal society in which only males can be citizens and for a patriarchal family in which wives must endure their husbands' wrongs without complaining. Nor does it require us to endorse a two-track educational system and a division of labor based on sex. It does, however, require us to take Sophie's virtues seriously and seek ways of incorporating them into the overarching ideal guiding the education of men and women today. Perceiving generative love as necessary to the well-being of the private sphere, Rousseau made it Sophie's domain. Recognizing it as essential to the whole social sphere, indeed to the fate of the earth, we can no longer consider it the possession of only one half the population.

### The Need for a Gender-Sensitive Ideal

Given the significance of generative love to the entire range of societal processes and the need of both sexes to acquire it, can we not forget about its genderized origins and by fiat simply incorporate nurturing capacities and the 3Cs of care, concern, and connection into our ideal of the educated person? Having acknowledged Sophie's virtues can we not at least be Platonists about the difference of sex? By all means let us side with Plato, against Rousseau, in extending the duties, tasks, and privileges of citizenship to women. But let us not, therefore, suppose that Plato is correct in judging gender to be irrelevant to education.

In the first place, people with similar talents who might be expected to perform the same tasks with equal proficiency often learn in different ways, thereby benefiting from different modes of instruction. Furthermore, some start with handicaps, having nothing to do

with natural aptitude, that must be overcome if a given end is to be achieved. In either case it is a mistake to assume that an identical education will yield identical results in all instances.

The question, of course, is whether differences in learning styles and learning readiness are systematically related to gender. Please note that to ask this question is not in itself to raise the specter of biological determinism. Many aspiring female tennis players face difficulties their male counterparts do not encounter in acquiring an adequate serve, not because of their biological makeup, but because they have had little practice throwing a ball. Similarly, many female students of mathematics experience problems their male counterparts are spared, not because of their genetic constitution, but because of their early socialization. To insist that these females must receive an education identical to that of males is to court failure.

These two examples, introduced to show that one can reject Plato's assumption that gender makes no difference to education without being committed to the existence of innate sex differences, do not in themselves settle the issue of the relevance of gender quite generally to learning. They do, however, point to the need for those of us committed to the ideal of sex equality to remember that whether or not identical *results* require identical *educational treatment* is an empirical question.

Given that any recognition of the workings of gender is likely to be misunderstood and construed as an acceptance of fixed male and female natures, it is tempting to adopt the Platonic strategy of ignoring gender entirely. Yet the phenomenon of "trait genderization" lends additional support to the hypothesis that gender is a significant educational category. That many traits are genderized—that is, are appraised differently by a given culture or society when possessed by males and females—cannot be doubted (see Beardley, 1982). Aggressiveness, for example, is judged in North America, at least, to be a desirable trait for males, but not females. So too, a highly developed capacity for abstract reasoning, a self control in which feeling and emotion are subordinated to the rule of reason, and an independent spirit are qualities for which men are praised and women regarded with suspicion, if not downright disdain. Yet these are the very traits in-

corporated into the educational ideal Plato holds up for his guardians, Rousseau holds up for Emile, and educators today hold up for all.

In the face of trait genderization, Plato's thesis that sex is a difference of no consequence to education loses credibility. If those born female are educated in so-called "masculine" traits for which they are denigrated, will not this negative evaluation reverberate in the way and the extent to which the traits are acquired? No one who has read Wollstonecraft's arguments in favor of the education of female reason could possibly want to follow Rousseau in sealing off women's education from every trait genderized in favor of males. Yet in rejecting his gender-bound educational philosophy, let us not cast out his insight that traits and gender are related.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to choose between an educational ideal bound explicitly to gender, as Rousseau's is, or implicitly to gender, as Plato's is, for another possibility is open to us. Joining Rousseau's insight that traits and gender are connected to Plato's insight that roles and gender are not fixed by nature, we can opt for a *gender-sensitive* ideal (Martin, 1981). Taking gender into account when it makes a difference and ignoring it when it does not, such an ideal allows us to build into curricula, instructional methods, and learning environments ways of dealing with trait genderization and with the many and various other gender related phenomena (e.g., the portrayal of women in the subject matter of the curriculum) that enter into education today.

### Achieving the Future

It must not be supposed that Plato was the only philosopher who extended to girls and women an education originally designed for boys and men. Of the parties to the conversation recorded in my book, all but Rousseau do this. Even Catharine Beecher, who rejected the citizen role for women, claimed for her own sex an education in the "masculine" virtues of rationality and independent judgment. It is quite another story, however, to claim for men an education in the "feminine" virtues of nurturance and care; indeed, many women today are hesitant to claim these virtues for themselves.

Any attempt to redefine the educated person in the manner the future requires, without also addressing the long-

standing value hierarchy that places the public sphere above the private, productive processes above reproductive, and men above women, is futile. We cannot expect people to endorse an education in traits and qualities they consider suspect. Needless to say, educators cannot by themselves transform our culture's attitudes and expectations. On the other hand, we can become aware of and try to counteract the negative messages transmitted by the standard curriculum about women and their culturally associated tasks and traits.

The projects currently underway at many college and university campuses of bringing the new scholarship on women into liberal studies help us do just this. They are important not sim-

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ply because some abstract concept of justice or fairness demands that the forms of knowledge represent adequately "the other half" of the population. When women's lives, work, experiences, and relationships are excluded from the curriculum or else distorted, the message received is that they do not matter.

Integrating the new scholarship on women into curricula at all levels and of all types is essential to achieving the future, but educators can and should do more than this. Emphasizing knowledge and understanding, the curricular projects on women aim at changing the content of liberal education, not its overarching ideal. Providing information about women and new cognitive perspectives on both sexes, these projects may well affect students' valuational schemes. But since they do not challenge the contours of a liberal education and its guiding ideal, their primary concern remains the traditional one of the development of rational mind. To introduce research on women into the curriculum is not in itself to foster the nurturing capacities and 3 Cs of generative love.

I do not mean to suggest that recent research on women is irrelevant to the enterprise of diffusing generative love

throughout the population. Although this enterprise requires us to restructure liberal education so as to join reason to feeling and emotion and self to other, the scholarship in question indicates the true dimensions of our task. Revealing that in our culture masculinity and femininity lie at opposite ends of a single continuum, it allows us to understand why for a male the acquisition of "feminine" traits is seen as a loss of masculinity, as for a female the acquisition of "masculine" traits is seen as a loss of femininity. Masculinity and femininity do not have to be construed as polar opposites, but in fact they are. Thus, in seeking ways to promote generative love as well as rational mind in all students, educators will have to reckon not only with the phenomenon of trait genderization but with the underlying cultural construct of gender itself.

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