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ABSTRACT

The Progressive Education Association (PEA) was a vibrant, influential organization that survived for over three decades (1919 to 1955). Since women comprised a significant majority of the nation's teachers during that time, but were also situated within staunch socially constructed gender roles, the question is raised how women and women's issues contributed to the life cycle of the Association. It was expected that findings would show that women's contributions were significant but relatively invisible, that women's issues were situated within predominant social ideologies and discourse, and that gender contributed to the demise of the organization. Data from primary and secondary sources provided evidence to support these hypotheses and to demonstrate that women's issues were centerpieces in the rise and fall of the PEA. Histories of the PEA have substantiated the claim that professionalization contributed to the Association's demise. The credentialling process established an educational hierarchy in which elementary school teachers, who were mostly women, were the lowest rank. As the PEA became more professor-dominated, it excluded women. As it became more theory-focused, it also excluded women, and as it became more interested in science-as-research, it further excluded women. (Contains 7 tables and 15 references.) (SLD)

Gender's Contribution to the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Education Association, 1919-1955

by

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ABSTRACT

The Progressive Education Association was a vibrant, influential organization that survived for over three decades (1919 to 1955). Since women comprised a significant majority of the nation's teachers during that time but were also situated within staunch socially constructed gender roles, how did women and women's issues contribute to the life cycle of the Association? I expected to find that women's contributions were significant but relatively invisible; that women's issues were situated within predominant social ideologies and discourse; and that gender contributed to the demise of the organization. Using data from primary and secondary sources, I found evidence to support these hypotheses, and that, in fact, women and women's issues were centerpieces in the rise and fall of the Progressive Education Association.

Gender's Contribution to the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Education Association, 1919-1955

I. Overview

Gender has proven to be a useful tool of analysis in many recent histories of various aspects of twentieth century American education, including the progressive education movement.[1] This tool, however, has not been applied extensively to historical examinations of the Progressive Education Association (1919-1955). Two of these treatments were written before gender became an accepted category of historical inquiry.[2] Authors of a third treatment simply chose not to apply gender to their presentation of the Association's official periodical Progressive Education.[3]

This lack of attention to gender's role in the PEA represents a significant gap. One portion of this gap centers on the fact that the insights issuing from the many fine gender and feminist analyses of the progressive education movement as a whole have not found their way into analyses of the PEA. Patricia Graham observed the close link between the larger progressive education movement and the PEA: "Progressive education's sins of commission and omission were also the Association's and common to both the general movement and the specific organization was responsibility for much of the improvement in American education between 1919 and 1955."[4] This close relationship between a movement and an organization suggests

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[1] See, for example, Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, eds., Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940 (Westport, CT, 1983); Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald, eds., Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching (Buffalo, 1991); andSari Knopp Biklen, "The Progressive Education Movement and the Question of Women," Teachers College Record, 80 (Dec., 1978), 316-335.

[2] Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1961); Patricia Albjerg Graham, Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe: A History of the Progressive Education Association, 1919-1955, (New York, 1967).

[3] Stephen I. Brown and Mary E. Finn, eds., Readings from Progressive Education: A Movement and its Professional Journal, Vol. 1 (Boston, 1988).

[4] Graham, p. 145.

that, if gender was important in one, it was probably important in the other, and the Association's contribution to thought and practice in American education adds to the need for an analysis that is expanded to include gender.

A second portion of the gap in the historical literature lies within the realm of women's obvious presence in the PEA, especially in its early years. Women provided the original impetus for the Association, contributed to it on a variety of levels, and largely financed it in its first decade. This strong women's presence in influential positions declined steadily and drastically, however, in spite of the fact that the organization itself continued to grow in membership through the 1930s and into the 1940s. What is not known is why this sharp decline occurred within the Association.

The life cycle of the PEA was affected by gender and in turn had dramatic effects on women's participation in the organization that call for exploration and that raise significant gender questions. Why did women's presence in an organization they so clearly helped to create decline so drastically? In what ways did gender contribute to the rise and fall of the Association?

II. Background and Rationale

This paper draws on a rich collection of works on the feminization of teaching, the professionalization of teaching, and the role of science in the progressive education movement. Each of these subjects has been treated within a gender context, and conclusions from them help to form the theoretical framework for this paper. Additionally, historical studies of the PEA and its official periodical share important conclusions about the life cycle of the organization that provide further support for this analysis. In short, this paper draws on rather than contradicts secondary sources and seeks to apply the analyses provided by women's and/or feminist historians to the conclusions drawn in historical treatments of the PEA.

Since this paper is about the life and death of an organization, its focus is on the public record. The interest here is on women's numerical presence in the organization, on their public roles, and on gendered discourse. Although other sources furnish information on women's participation in the organization, the Association's most immediate and official voice was its publication Progressive Education. Women's status, power, visibility, and voice within the organization can be measured in large part in the pages of the PEA's official periodical.

III. Data and Methods

The PEA gained life as an organization in 1919, and the first issue of Progressive Education appeared in 1924. The PEA ceased to exist in 1955, but Progressive Education continued publication until 1957. The periodical, then, was published through every decade of the Association's life and supplies information on women's participation in the organization as officers, commission and committee chairs, editors, and writers for the periodical. More important, the pages of the periodical captured the Association's stance on gender, which evolved over time.

A sample of periodicals was drawn for this paper from each decade of the organization's life. Social changes resulting from World War I, the Depression, and World War II, each with well-documented effects on gender and gender ideology, provide grounds for this organizational arrangement. This arrangement was likewise utilized, for good reasons, in Patricia Graham's history of the PEA. The Association was different in the 1930s from what it had been in the 1920s; different in the 1940s from what it had been in the 1930s; and different in the 1950s from what it had been in the 1940s; and these differences were reflected in the pages of Progressive Education.

Two years of issues of Progressive Education for each decade of the

Association's life were selected for analysis. The particular years were chosen arbitrarily and in an effort to gain a sense of each decade. Thus, every issue for 1924, 1927, 1934, 1937, 1944, 1947, 1954, and 1957 was read from cover to cover. This sample includes the first and last years of publication.

Since the focus of this inquiry is gender, each issue of the periodical was coded in a number of ways: proportions of men and women officers, chairs, and/or staff; proportions of men and women writers; categories of topics written by men and women; and proportions of topic categories covered in the periodical. The purpose of this approach was to try to spot trends identified by gender.

IV. Results

Gender-Neutral Causality

Although the previously cited historians of the PEA did not agree on the weight that should be assigned to each factor they cited as contributing to the passing of the organization, they were solidly unified in their identification of four such factors that are surveyed here: 1) a narrowing of the Association's membership and leadership base; 2) the professionalization of both the PEA and of teaching in general; 3) the increase in influence within the Association by professors of education; and 4) a failure to synthesize the interests and ideologies of the Association's various factions within the confines of a unified philosophy of education. Each of these forces as a causal agent has been substantially supported by historians, yet, when gender is added as a category of analysis, previously murky explanations become sharper and clearer.

Graham, for example, noted that the Association's membership base narrowed over time so that it increasingly excluded lay people, private school officials and teachers, professionals from outside education, and academicians representing the intellectual life of the United States.[5] Bringing gender into this analysis further sharpens this explanation for the organization's decline.

As Table 1 shows, the overall membership of the Association followed a fairly even pattern of growth and decline. One hundred people gathered for the first organizational meeting, and membership peaked in 1938 at 10,000 members. The 1940s witnessed a sharp decline in membership, culminating in 1955 with a membership list of 1,900, most of which were institutions.[6]

[Table 1 About Here]

Data on the gender of the general membership were unavailable, but it seems likely that substantial portions were women. The feminization of teaching has been well-documented. Women comprised 75% of the teaching force in 1900, but this percentage jumped to 86% by the 1920s, fell back to 75% by the 1940s, and climbed back to the mid-eighties by the 1950s.[7] An organization devoted to pedagogy would be expected to have teachers on its membership rolls, and that appears to have been the case: " . . . teachers made up a substantial portion of PEA membership even in the

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[5] Graham, p. 155.

[6] Ibid., p. 17, 40, 54, 99, 100.

[7] John L. Rury , "Who Became Teachers: The Social Characteristics of Teachers in American History," in American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work," ed. by Donald Warren (New York, 198), p. 23 and 34; Geraldine Joncich Clifford, ""Man/Woman/Teacher: Gender, Family and Career in American Educational History," in American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work, Donald Warren, ed. (New York, 1989), p. 294-295.

late forties."[8] And since a large majority of teachers were women, it follows that a significant portion of the PEA's membership were women. The role of gender in the Progressive Education Association, therefore, appears to have had less to do with the exclusion of women as members in the Association than it did with the exclusion of women leaders, women contributors to Progressive Education, and women's issues.

Leadership Positions Within the PEA and Gender

Although the evidence on the gender of the PEA's general membership is merely suggestive, hard data on the organization's leadership reveals an unmistakably gendered and interesting story. The PEA retained three official offices, although not every office was filled during every year of the Association's existence: President, Executive Secretary or Director, and Editor of Progressive Education. Table 2 provides a breakdown of these offices by decade and by gender. As Panel A of Table 2 clearly illustrates, men dominated the organization's official leadership offices, never falling below 73% of the three major offices in any decade. Additionally, male dominance constituted a decided trend, growing from 73.7% of the offices in the 1920s to 100% by the 1950s.

[Table 2 About Here]

One office in which women occasionally outnumbered men was as editor of Progressive Education. Given the consensus view that this periodical was probably the most successful and long-lasting of the Association's ventures, women's visibility as editors is significant: the publication was attractive, imaginative, and "gave every outward appearance of the organ of a prosperous association, and there is no doubt that this editorial respectability was an important factor in establishing the PEA's

[8]Graham, p. 123.

reputation nationally."[9] Table 2, Panel B, displays women's declining participation as editors of the publication. Throughout the 1920s, one woman held the office of editor, but women's participation declined in the 1930s to 63.6%, in the 1940s to 20.0%, and to zero by the 1950s.

These percentages are particularly striking for the way in which they reveal a clear gendered trend towards complete male domination of the organization's official leadership offices from the Association's inception until its demise.

Similar evidence can be found in Table 3, which displays a breakdown by decade of women's and men's participation as the Association's commission chairs and committee chairs. The PEA did not develop commissions and committees until it began to succeed in garnering foundation grants for various research projects. These grants had disappeared by the end of the 1940s,[10] so only two decades are represented in Table 3.

[Table 3 About Here]

Panel A of Table 3 shows that the more coveted and prestigious commissions were dominated overwhelmingly in both decades by men, with women never coming close to their 25% participation rate as officers. Panel B contains the same kind of data for various committees. Here, women made a stronger showing by comprising 37.5% of the chairs in the 1940s. When presented in tandem, as in Panel C, a picture emerges that suggests that women participated as chairs of commissions and committees at roughly the 25% level, but given the lower status of committees, this panel is somewhat misleading in the picture it provide's of women's participation in the PEA's leadership roles.

[9] Ibid., p. 40.

[10] Ibid., p. 54.

Perhaps the most striking display of the decline of women's presence in the PEA over its lifetime is found in Table 4. For this analysis, every page of each sample issue of Progressive Education was categorized according to the gender of the article's author. Table 4 displays with dramatic clarity the ways in which women's contributions to this important publication declined with each subsequent decade of the Association's life.

[Table 4 About Here]

In the 1920s, women authored close to 30% of the pages of the sampled issues of Progressive Education, while men authored around 40%. This relative parity survived into the next decade, when, in fact, women's presence actually closed the gender gap by almost one percent. Women's contributions took a nose dive, however, in the 1940s, so that their contributions were 50% fewer than men's in percentages of pages authored. By the 1950s, women authored only 12.6% of the articles in Progressive Education, while men authored 74.2%, a 61.6% difference based on gender.

Gender's Role in Activating, Promoting, and Funding the PEA in the 1920s

The Progressive Education Association actually began with Marietta Johnson, who founded and directed the "organic" Fairhope School in Fairhope, Alabama, and who helped start other "organic schools" in Connecticut and New York.[11] Johnson asked Stanwood Cobb, who was then associated with the United States

[11] Ibid., p. 17.

Naval Academy to help her to create an organization around the principles of natural development that formed the basis of her "organic" school. Cobb thought such a focus was too narrow for a national organization, so Johnson eventually changed her approach and convinced him to help develop an association "devoted to publicizing current experiments in education."[12] Thus, a woman, an educational entrepreneur, was instrumental in the formation of the PEA.

It was at one of Johnson's lectures, in fact, that Stanwood Cobb talked to Eugene Randolf Smith, then headmaster of the Park School in Baltimore about the organization. Smith was skeptical until he heard that the organization would be supported in the beginning by "a rich Washington matron, Mrs. A.J. Parsons."[13] Other rich matrons as well, such as Laura Williams, Gertrude Stevens Ayres, and Queene Ferry Coonley, supported the organization in its early years. Ayres also served as a volunteer secretary and bestowed significant sums to keep the organization afloat. Coonley had sponsored a private progressive school, and when she moved to Washington, she donated substantial time to the PEA and served as its treasurer from 1924 to 1930. In addition to making several monetary gifts, including one of $5,000 in 1926, she also endowed funds to cover the expenses of the new Progressive Education for two years. It was Coonley who suggested and secured Gertrude Hartman as editor for the publication.[14]

Clearly, then, the publication owed its existence, to a significant degree, to women who were well-known, successful women of means, progressive education reformers, and entrepreneurs. Why did women, who were so instrumental in the PEA's success, disappear from the organization's leadership and from Progressive Education?

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[12] Ibid., p. 18.

[13] Ibid., p. 17-19.

[14] Ibid., p. 40.

In her history of the PEA, Patricia Graham argued that World War I marked a dramatic shift in the progressive education movement as a whole. The pre-War movement was situated squarely within the social reforms that had been generated in response to population increases in urban areas, immigration, compulsory education, and a lengthening of children's school careers. Pre-War progressive education reforms occurred primarily in public schools and tended to focus on working-class and/or immigrant families. "Before the war, educational reform had been pretty much a part of that generalized progressivism whose symbol was Jane Addams' Hull House."[15]

After the War, Graham argued, progressive education's focus shifted to private schools and to wealthy suburban public schools. Since the 1920s were a period of economic prosperity, families with new money to spend often invested in private country day schools. Parents in these wealthier families felt in tune with progressive educators' emphasis on child-centeredness, individual expression, and creativity.[16] Thus, post-War progressive education was characterized by experimentation.

Neither Graham nor other historians of the PEA discussed the ways in which periods of experimentation can provide unusual opportunities for women. By the time World War I had ended, and about the time the PEA came to life, traditional approaches to education, such as an emphasis on classical studies and an allegiance to the pedagogical process of "mental discipline," had become outdated. In a similar way, Charles Darwin's theories, as Graham pointed out, "promoted skepticism about truths formerly regarded as absolute and traditions considered inviolate."[17] Thus, when the power of old concepts began to disintegrate, tradition lost its hold

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[15] Ibid., p. 1, 5, and 8.

[16] Ibid., p. 9.

[17] Ibid., p. 6.

momentarily, which paved the way for experimentation of all kinds, including women's participation in education.

This loss of reliance on tradition and increase in regard for experimentation occurred at a time when the American education system was still extremely decentralized. Although it is true that compulsory attendance laws were widespread by 1920, that more children were attending school, and that children were attending school for longer periods of time, it is also true that significant numbers of young children in regional pockets did not attend school at all and that the majority of students did not attend secondary schools.[18] Likewise, even though credentialing and other forms of professionalization had been increasing for some time prior to 1920, standards were still quite low in many places, and significant numbers of states did not institute strong policies for at least two more decades.[19]

Respect for experimentation within a context of a largely decentralized educational system, then, formed a fertile bed for the cultivation of women educational entrepreneurs and for experimental schools. Just as women had jumped head first into the window of opportunity they created out of the larger progressive movement of pre-World War I, women created opportunities for themselves within an area of public American life not yet completely dominated by rules that excluded them and an area of public American life that was considered to be a socially acceptable arena for experimentation. Private schools have historically often provided space for experimentation, in part because private schools have been less uniformly controlled than have public schools. Likewise, wealthy suburban districts have historically had more latitude in instituting innovative pedagogical practices than have poorer, urban districts.

Just as Marietta Johnson created her opportunity by founding her own

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[18] Rury , p. 26.

[19] Michael W. Sedlak, "'Let Us Go and Buy a School Master': Historical Perspectives on the Hiring of Teachers in the United States, 1750-1980," in American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work, ed. by Donald Warren (New York, 1989), p. 266.

progressive school, by helping to found others, and ultimately by pushing for the establishment of a national organization to promote at least some of her ideas, "other private schools were founded by remarkable women such as Caroline Pratt and Elisabeth Irwin, who opened their establishments in the hope of enlivening and enriching local educational opportunities."[20] These women, along with Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Harriet Johnson, Margaret Naumburg, and many others, founded schools that came to be associated with progressive education. [21]

Histories of the PEA have remarked on the degree to which teachers in private schools, heads of private schools, and administrators in public schools were present in the early years of the Association but were gradually excluded as the organization aged. These histories do not, however, link the presence of private-school personnel to gender. Table 5 furnishes data on the extent to which private school teachers, heads, and directors (and even lay people) participated in the Progressive Education Association as contributors to Progressive Education. These data show clearly that, in the 1920s, private and public school teachers, private school heads, and public school administrators contributed one-third of the articles to Progressive Education. Women actually contributed more than half of that 30 percent. The percentage of contributions by both genders declined in the 1930s and 1940s until there were no contributions of any kind to the periodical by either gender in the 1950s. Women's contributions (as teachers, private school heads, or public school administrators) were relatively equal to men's in the 1930s, but they actually outstripped men in the 1940s. Thus, women's contributions occurred more often as a result of their association with private schools, but this association also contributed to their decline in contributions.

[Table 5 About Here]

[20]Graham, p. 9.

[21] Ibid., p. 9.

Decentralization played a strong role in the Association's early years, not only in terms of the kinds of people who contributed to Progressive Education, but in terms of the organization's leadership as well: "Although nearly all the early leaders were either teachers or private school administrators, the Association maintained that it tried to attract laymen. Stanwood Cobb noted that approximately half the people at the 1920 Washington convention . . . were laymen."[22]

Decentralization and experimentation, then, account in part for the strong presence of women in the PEA and its periodical in the 1920s. As schooling became progressively centralized, and as the Association's membership and leadership narrowed, women's participation became increasingly constrained.

Professionalization and Gender

As mentioned earlier, histories of the PEA have substantiated the claim that professionalization contributed to the Association's demise. Hitherto unexplored, however, are the ways in which gender intersected with professionalization and the impact of that intersection on women's participation in the PEA and on the rise and fall of the organization itself.

The topic of professionalization and gender has received considerable attention in the realm of American educational history. A number of facets of professionalization are germane to this paper, and the argument proffered here is that professionalization helped to exclude women from participation in leadership roles in education in the United States in general and in the PEA in particular. Even more, professionalization's impact on gender, it will be argued, contributed to the PEA's decline.

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[22] Ibid., p. 22.

Teaching Credentials and Gender

Sedlak has written extensively on the topic of teaching credentials and examinations and has illustrated that, although by 1900 educational credentials and examinations had come into wide use for the purpose of teacher certification, and although certification was becoming an increasingly centralized process, only three state systems of certification existed in 1894, 15 in 1911, 26 in 1919, and 36 in 1926.[23] What is important in these numbers for the purposes of this paper is that, when the PEA began in 1919, roughly half of the states had yet to develop centralized certification systems. Although certification systems appear to have developed rapidly, they were still absent from enough states and still new enough that their increasing incidence could be felt within the PEA and the larger progressive education movement. Also important to this paper is Sedlak's observation that certification standards increased significantly during the 1920s and again in the 1930s.[24]

The Professional Education Credential Model

Sedlak has shown that states were also during this period relying more and more on using educational attainment instead of examinations as the chief qualification for certification. By 1921 all but one state "recognized graduation from normal schools and universities as evidence of qualification for certification."[25] During this time, as well, normal schools were becoming four-year teachers' colleges, and colleges of education were being established within universities; concomitantly, states increasingly required a bachelor's degree for certification (in 1930, 23 states required the bachelor's degree, but by 1940, 40 states required it).[26] The increase in and

[23] Sedlak, p. 266.
[24] Ibid., p. 274.
[25] Ibid., p. 265.
[26] Ibid., p. 275.

spread of certification requirements, once again, were by no means complete by the time the PEA was founded; rather, certification was a phenomenon that grew stronger and broader throughout the life span of the organization.

These increased requirements had several important connections with gender. First, the process made it more difficult for women to become certified as teachers; second,it upped the ante for movement into leadership positions, because each step of the hierarchy required more credentials, primarily meaning more education. Although women continued to enroll in college in record numbers, they met with a number of social and professional barriers to their advancement. Third, increased certification would put a damper on women's entrepreneurial spirit, if for no other reason than that worth came to be defined increasingly,not by achievement or knowledge or experience but by educational attainment. Fourth, certification served to standardize education, which by definition stifled the experimentation of the 1920s. Graham pointed out that "while the first decade of these experimental schools was largely an epoch of private school individualists aglow with missionary fervor, the professionals would in due course take over and put their stamp on the movement."[27] What Graham did not discuss, however, was that the stamp professionalization placed on men was different from the one it placed on women.

An American Educational Hierarchy and Gender

One of the most significant effects of this increase in certification requirements on the PEA was the way in which people with credentials literally took control of the organization and "squeezed out" lay people, teachers, private school officials, and even public school administrators from its leadership, which was one of Graham's

[27] Graham, p. 109.

major theses about the history of the PEA.[28] The story Graham told, however, becomes even more interesting when gender is entered into the plot.

The advent and spreading influence of the credentialing process resulted, first, in literal changes; that is, the credentialing process itself decreased access to educational positions. But of perhaps even greater importance, it established an educational hierarchy that was decidedly gender-specific, and these gendered connections were reinforced through social norms, through educational practices, and through rules and policies of universities. Lowest in this hierarchy were women elementary teachers, who comprised the majority of women teachers.[29]

Administrators were higher in the chain of hierarchy than teachers, but administrators in secondary schools were accorded more status than administrators in elementary schools. Normal schools were beneath four-year colleges and so on. Even within the university setting, education departments, schools, and/or colleges had low status. "Thus, while feminization clearly opened a wide field of opportunity for women in education, a clear-cut division of labor distinguished male and female roles in school systems around the country."[30] Male educators were able to take advantage of this division of labor:

> Since the late years of the nineteenth century, the proliferation of positions in college and university teaching and school administration has been a major source of male withdrawal from classrooms . . . . Pursuing either college teaching or the executive possibilities of the new science of school management was a way for men teachers to reestablish the difference between the two genders, and to escape the effeminacy generally associated with all school teaching.[31]

Certification requirements reinforced this hierarchy, in part by requiring further training and credentials at every level of the hierarchy. Women faced obstacles at the

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[28] Also see James T. Sears and John D. Marshall, "The Twilight of Public Alternative Education: Professional Malignancy, an Historical Perspective," Papers and Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Midwest History of Education Society (Chicago, Illinois, October 28-29, 1983) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 298 048, p. 80-87.

[29] Rury, p. 27.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Clifford, p. 326.

upper reaches of this hierarchy in the form of the disciplines and levels of education in which they were encouraged or even allowed entrance. Gender played the largest role in these obstacles.[32]

Gender, the Search for Esoteric Knowledge, Life-Long Career, and Prestige

A profession has been defined as an entity that possesses, among other things, 1) a specialized body of knowledge or skill, the acquisition of which necessitates extensive training; 2) "considerable prestige relative to other occupations; and 3) dedication over a long period of time."[33] The professionalization of teaching, like standardized certification requirements, began in the nineteenth century but was not fully realized by the time the PEA came into existence. Rather, continued professionalization exerted considerable influence on the Association during its lifetime.

Johnson has written about the similarities and differences between the fields of law and medicine and the field of education.[34] Johnson has cited two reasons for education's low status. One is that universities have not developed a model for training teachers: "Universities . . . appear to have had greater influence in shaping the conditions of professional practice, rather than the practice itself."[35] In addition, although in medicine and law, "powerful practitioners provided a balance the the academic perspectives," this balance is lacking in education.[36] Johnson has contended that, although teachers believe that "clinical knowledge is superior to

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[32]For a thorough discussion of some of these kinds of barriers, see Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York, 1978).

[33] Emil J. Haller and Kenneth A. Strike, An Introduction to Educational Administration: Social, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives (New York, 1986), p. 219-220.

[34]William R. Johnson, "Teachers and Teacher Training in the Twentieth Century," in American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work, ed. by Donald Warren (New York, 1989), p. 237-256.

[35] Ibid., p. 238.

[36] Ibid., p. 250.

theoretical knowledge," others do not.[37] Johnson concluded that "surely one reason is the gender of the majority of the nation's teaching force."[38]

The failure of education professors to revolutionize the practice of teaching is both cause and effect of education's low prestige; the practice/theory struggle and the problem of prestige, both of which are linked to professionalization, are clearly gendered within the field of education. Johnson has argued that schools of education have actually "distanced" themselves from teachers and that typical educational research has neither helped the practitioner nor impressed researchers from other fields.[39] This latter situation is tied directly to education's relationship to science, which will be discussed in a later section. The argument, for now, is that the professionalization of teaching created a hierarchy that reinforced women's low status and that served to exclude women from leadership positions (data to support this hypothesis are displayed in the section "Interests and Ideology"). This situation resulted in the creation of a dilemma from which the PEA could not escape.

Professors of Education and Gender

That the PEA itself and its publication were "professionalized" is made clear in Table 6, which provides the percentages of contributions to Progressive Education by professors from the 1920s to the 1950s. Table 6 provides data on the contributions to the publication by male professors and female professors as a percentage of total contributions by a particular profession or occupation. As the table illustrates, the contributions of male professors increased steadily from 12.4% in the 1920s to a whopping 75.5% in the 1950s. Female professors' contributions, on the other hand,

[37] Ibid., p. 250.
[38] Ibid., p. 252.
[39] Ibid., p. 244.

began in the 1920s at 7.3%, peaked in the 1930s at 10.4%, and decreased to 6.1% in the 1950s.

[Table 6 About Here]

The data in Table 6 support a common PEA historical treatment thesis, that male professors of education took over the organization after the 1920s, first professors from the East and later professors from the Midwest, and that this takeover separated the Association from the concerns of its members and from a larger intellectual and academic life. Gender, however, adds refinement to this thesis. Professorial takeover of any kind would naturally have excluded women, and any exclusion of women within an organization devoted to American education would naturally have worked to isolate the organization from its members.

Interests and ideologies

Child Study and Gender

One boon to women's participation in the Association in the 1920s was the progressive education movement's (and the Association's) advocacy of a child-centered pedagogy that relied on a strong sense of individualism and creativity. This aspect of progressive education has been well-documented elsewhere. What is lacking is an application of women's historians' treatments of the ways in which the feminization of teaching played out across the American educational landscape. Certainly teaching was associated with women's work.[40] Given the fact that the majority of the nation's teachers were women, teaching lacked status. But even within

[40] See Geraldine Joncich Clifford, "'Man/Woman/Teacher: Gender, Family and Career in American Educational History," in American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work, Donald Warren, ed. (New York, 1989), p. 293-343.

the broad rubric of "teaching," another hierarchy began to emerge. Clifford's summary has furnished the theory for the argument in this section:

> The theory of the sexual division of labor holds that women's laboring will not only be somehow associated with domesticity but that when men and women work in the same occupation they will occupy different spheres, do different sorts of things, or have their work differentially valued. Thus, in education, men will, on average, teach more older than younger students, tech more boys than girls, and teach the 'harder' subjects.[41]

Clifford argued that teaching, as women's work, was associated with family, the domestic sphere, and the home--a domestic ideology. This association of gender with certain educational levels and activities was clearly represented in the progressive education movement, in the PEA, and in the pages of Progressive Education.

Consider, for example, the data in Table 7. These data were compiled by collecting all of the articles from the sample of Progressive Education that discussed a particular age group (young children, adolescents, college-aged students, and adult students) and by categorizing each article accordingly. Table 7 displays these results, first by exhibiting the percentage of articles appearing within each category by decade, and second by presenting the percentage of each category contributed by men as compared to women.

[Table 7 About Here]

Panel A of Table 7 shows that the articles on young children's education as a topic in Progressive Education were well represented in the 1920s (37.1%), dipped in the 1930s (this dip will be explained in the section on practice vs. theory), rose to 30.4% in the 1940s, and dropped to a mere 8% in the 1950s. Although this particular line of the table does not spell out a clear trend, the importance of child-centered education is perhaps made evident here and contrasts with a drop in importance in the

[41] Ibid., p. 300.

1950s.

The data for the prominence of articles devoted to issues relevant to the teaching of adolescents reveal a similar pattern but with a different result. These articles started out in the 1920s as 34.3%, dipped to a little more than 20% in the 1930s and 1940s and then spiked up in the 1950s to 58%. Clearly, a concern for older children (adolescents) had supplanted the earlier concern for young children.

The table does not reveal trends on the incidence of articles focused on college-aged students. Such students were discussed in the 1950s in relatively the same proportion as they had been in the 1920s.

The adult education story is also somewhat murky. Although no articles were found on adult education in the sample from the 1920s, roughly one-fifth of the articles in the 1930s and 1940s were devoted to older student issues. Why this proportion dropped in the 1950s to zero is unclear.

Another way to look at the table, of course, is to see which topics predominated by decade. The breakdown by category for the 1920s in Table 7, Panel A, suggests that young children had prominence in that decade's periodical, followed by adolescents. Third in importance were college-aged students (28.6% of the articles identified as age-related were devoted to college-aged issues), but adult students received absolutely no mention in the sampled issues. In the 1930s, children, adolescents, and adults had equal status, while college-aged students achieved prominence. In the 1940s, articles about the education of young children increased but were on relative par with articles about college-aged students. In the 1950s, articles dealing with adolescents and college-aged students accounted for 92% of the age-differentiated articles.

This table supplies compelling evidence that the status of young children declined in the pages of Progressive Education, and that older students' status increased; thus, this table likewise provides evidence to support the contention that the

PEA not only isolated itself from its members, but, more important, from women, because women most often taught younger students.

Panel B of Table 7 tells a perhaps more strikingly dramatic story. When the decade categories were exchanged for gender categories, it was revealed that, over the period of the four decades, women authored 82.8% of the articles about young children, a little less than half the articles about adolescents, only 22.5% of the articles on educating college-aged students, and a mere 16.5% of the articles on adult education and training. This table establishes that, within the pages of Progressive Education (which can also reasonably be understood as a proxy for the PEA, which in turn has been treated by historians as a proxy for the progressive education movement), women wrote about low-status issues, while men wrote about high-status issues, at least in relation to the age level of the education being discussed.

One important result of this analysis for the purpose of this paper is that there is some evidence that the assigning of status on the basis of the client's age in an educational setting was not necessarily static; that is, it seemed to have grown stronger with time. Furthermore, Progressive Education was an instrument that served to promulgate and reinforce gender categories within the education domain.

Theory, Practice, and Gender

A second facet of gendered interests and ideology is displayed in Table 8. In this table, the theory vs. practice dichotomy that was mentioned earlier is presented in two ways. Recall that educational theory had come to be associated with high-status research, with professors of education, and, therefore, with men. Practice, on the other hand, had come to be associated with teachers and, therefore, with women.

Panel A depicts the proportion of articles on educational theory compared to practice that appeared in the sample of issues of Progressive Education. Articles

about theory constituted only 36.5% of the theory and practice articles published in the 1920s, but that proportion shifted steadily and dramatically through the next three decades so that, by the 1950s, only 8.5% of the articles on theory and practice were devoted to theory. Given what has been previously argued about the association between gender and the theory/practice struggle, these statistics begin to make sense.

[Table 8 About Here]

Panel B of Table 8 illuminates the issue further. In this panel, contributors who wrote about theory and practice are identified by gender. Thus, in the 1920s, 73.9% of the articles devoted to theory were written by men, while the articles about practice were evenly distributed between the gender categories. Thus, although men had an early corner on theoretical articles, practice was apparently not as gendered a topic. As the decades wore on, theoretical discourse continued to be dominated by men, peaking in the 1940s with a whopping 93.9%, but articles devoted to practice were always (in the first three decades, that is) written by a higher proportion of women. The 1950s statistic may be less a reflection of an actual shift in male focus towards practice than a result of two events: 1) men wrote almost everything in the 1950s; and 2) one of the two years of issues examined for this paper contained works by graduate students, and these works were practice-focused.

The theory vs. practice struggle as a gendered issue can be conceived in the life of the PEA as male leaders' attempts to masculinize progressive education and the PEA. In the 1930s, the Association devoted most of its time and energies to discussions of social reconstructionism to which George S. Counts breathed life.[42] This heavy dose of theory resulted in a struggle to resolve thorny philosophical issues. The debate over theory continued into and dominated the 1950s. Although this

[42] For an account of the impact of Counts' speech on social constructionism on the PEA, see Graham, p. 57.

strategy may have masculinized the Association, it also separated the leadership from its membership, who were concerned primarily with practical issues surrounding the classroom, whether as a location of teaching and learning or as a work site.

Science, Gender, and the PEA

Graham noted that the PEA, although it recognized the importance of the scientific movement in education, never fully endorsed it. Science was clearly a male-dominated domain. In addition to social as well as policy obstacles to women's participation in science, two of the leading spokesmen on whose work the scientific movement in progressive education was based promoted decidedly narrow roles for women in education.[43] Although the PEA did not wholeheartedly endorse the scientific movement, science's impact was felt on a differently level. Citing Holmes at Harvard, Johnson argued that, in education professors' rush to gain prestige, they bought into

> the scientific research values of the larger university community, which set education professors over teachers in the schools. Ironically, as education professors attempted to conform to academic standards in their research, the research they produced was often rejected by traditional academics . . . . As education professors attempted to establish academic credentials and forge academic careers, their research became more and more methodologically sophisticated, and thereby less and less accessible to practitioners.[44]

One advantage of the Association's shift to research interests and its increasing professionalization was that it was able to attract substantial foundation grants, beginning in 1929 and ending in the 1940s. These grants improved the Association's reputation and were invaluable vehicles for positive publicity. On the other hand, a commitment to research grants meant a further breaking away from a layperson-oriented, decentralized membership base. When the foundation grants dried up in the

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[43] Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York, 1978), p. 104-106.

[44] Johnson, p. 244.

1940s, the membership and leadership of the organization had changed drastically.[45]

Age, theory, practice, science, and research all came to be associated with gender, and all were assigned gender-based status. The data presented in this section suggest that gender-neutral treatments of the PEA that cited one contributing factor in the organization's downfall as its failure to synthesize the interests and ideologies of the organization's various factions, while not contesting this claim, do expand it by illustrating that gender played a significant but unspoken role in the Association's synthesizing efforts. By gendering age, science, research, practice, and theory in the discourse of Progressive Education, for example, the Association both constrained women's contributions and isolated itself from its members.

Progressive Education: The Term and Gender

As the PEA became more professor-dominated, it excluded women; as it became more theory-focused, it excluded women; as it became more science-as-research focused, it excluded women. The processes of feminization, of the gendered construction of issues (such as the study of young children and the issue of practice vs. theory), and of professionalization and centralization all began long before the PEA was formed; but each of these processes broadened and deepened over the course of the Association's life.

But these processes, while they explain women's presence in the beginning of the organization and their absence in the end, do not tell the whole story about gender's role in the demise of the organization. Graham argued that, in addition to a multitude of other factors, the PEA suffered from its name. By the 1950s, progressive education had come to be associated with quackery.[46] But why? Progressive education, in critics' minds, meant child-centered education, a focus on the individual

[45] Graham, p. 54.

[46] Ibid., p. 123.

child, a valuing of creativity, and a belief that children are more than their intellects. It also meant a loose collection of ideas about teaching that was not unified by a coherent philosophy.

The 1950's reaction to the term progressive education has been seen by most of progressive education's critics as well as by its historians as a reaction to the lack of intellect, organization, and theoretical base of the movement. Is it coincidence that each of the characteristics chosen for criticism was one that had come to be associated with women, women's issues (and therefore of low prestige), and/or women's work? Child-centeredness, a dedication to educational practice, a focus on creativity, and a lack of a unified theory were all gendered constructions.

The term progressive education had been subsumed into a category of women and women's work. If the kindergarten teacher's role was viewed, as it was by Friedrich Froebel, as "the highest form of motherhood,"[47] then progressive education, with its emphasis on child-centeredness and with its beginnings in work with young children in private schools that, in many of their most famous instances, were founded by women, then progressive education was guilty by association of all of those ills commonly ascribed to women: frivolity, quackery, lack of intellect, disorganization. The very words used to criticize progressive education were indeed the words so often used to describe women.

The PEA, therefore, found itself in a dilemma. It had already separated itself from its life source (teachers and, therefore, women) by becoming increasingly oriented towards research, theory, and older students. On the other hand, if the organization were to retreat from these positions, which it did in the last few years of its life,[48] then it would suffer from its association with women's sphere. By the time of the

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[47]Clifford, p. 315.

[48] Graham, p. 21. Graham described how the Association changed its name in 1944 in an effort to disassociate itself from the pejorative connotations of the term progressive education. On the other hand, in 1953, in a last effort to revive the organization, the Association returned to its original name and even to some of its original tenets: child-centeredness, creativity, and an emphasis on elementary education.

Association's demise, there was probably no way out of this dilemma. Graham concluded:

> The choice of the term "Progressive Education" was fortuitous and ultimately fatal. In selecting it, Cobb and his followers hit upon a name that would one day be used to label the entire educational reform movement . . . . As a result, the Association benefited from the general popularity of "progressive education" in the twenties and thirties and suffered from its decline in the forties and fifties.[49]

Graham was correct in citing the Association's name as an albatross, but critics' quarrels with progressive education may well have been less with substance than with form--the female form.

This brief paper omits discussion of many important and valid causes of the rise and fall of the Progressive Education Association. The purpose here was not to provide a definitive answer but rather to broaden and deepen our understanding of the complicated role that gender played in the organization and in American educational history from 1920-1955.

[49] Ibid., p. 20.

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Table 1[1]
Numbers of Members in the
Progressive Education Association, 1919-1955

	1919	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Membership Totals	100	6,621	10,000	8,349	1,900

[1]Each membership total represents the highest membership total in that decade for which data were available. Source: Graham, p. 40, 99, 100.

Table 2[1]
Numbers of Officers in the
Progressive Education Association
(by Gender and by Decade)

A. Total Number of Presidents, Executive Secretaries or Directors, and Editors

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Men	14 (73.7%)	22 (75.9%)	25 (93.0%)	14 (100.0%)
Women	5 (26.3%)	7 (24.0%)	2 (7.0%)	0 (0.0%)

B. Total Number of Editors

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Men	0 (0.0%)	4 (36.4%)	8 (80.0%)	10 (100.0%)
Women	6 (100.0%)	7 (63.6%)	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)

[1] Offices include President, Executive Secretary or Director, and Editor of Progressive Education. Numbers represent the count by gender; if one person assumed the duties of an office for more than one year, that person was counted more than once. Source: Graham, 166-167.

Table 3[1]
Numbers and Percentages of Commission and Committee Chairs
in the Progressive Education Association
(by Gender)

A. Commission Chairs

	1930s	1940s
Men	7 (87.5%)	10 (90.9%)
Women	1 (12.5%)	1 (9.1%)
Total	8	11

B. Committee Chairs

	1930s	1940s
Men	18 (87.5%)	10 (90.9%)
Women	8 (30.8%)	6 (37.5%)
Total	26	16

C. Commission and Committee Chairs

	1930s	1940s
Men	25 (73.5%)	20 (74.1%)
Women	9 (26.5%)	7 (25.9%)
Total	34	27

[1]The PEA formed a number of Commissions and Committees in the 1930s and 1940s. Most Commissions and Committees named a Chair. Percentages represent the rate at which men and women participated as Chairs, given the number of Chairs available in that decade. Source: Graham, 168-171.

Table 4[1]
Percentage of Pages of Progressive Education
Contributed by Men and Women by Decade

Decade	% Men	% Women	Total Difference
1920s	40.4	29.4	11.0
1930s	46.5	36.3	10.2
1940s	67.4	17.1	50.3
1950s	74.2	12.6	61.6

[1] Data are based on a sample of Progressive Education issues from each decade. Percentages represent proportions: number of pages authored by men or women in relation to the total number of pages authored by men or women. Rows do not total to 100% because only articles with gender-identified authors and only articles authored by only one gender were included in the analysis.

Table 5[1]
Proportion of Private School Teachers, Heads,
and Directors Contributing to
Progressive Education by Decade and by Gender
(as percent of total contributions)

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Men	13.9	12.0	5.0	0.0
Women	16.1	11.2	11.1	0.0
Total	30.0	23.2	16.1	0.0

[1] Contributors for issues from sample years were coded by gender and by the profession of the contributor. Percentages represent the proportion of contributors for that category in relation to total contributors.

Table 6[1]
Proportion of Professors as Contributors to
Progressive Education by Decade and by Gender
(percent of total contributions)

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Men	12.4	34.0	40.2	75.5*
Women	7.3	10.4	6.2	6.1*
Total	19.7	44.4	46.4	81.6*

*One of the issues in the sample from this decade highlighted the work of graduate students. These articles were excluded from the analysis for this table.

[1] Contributors for issues from sample years were coded by gender and by the profession of the contributor. Percentages represent the proportion of contributors identified as professors for each gender category in relation to total contributors.

Table 8[1]
Proportion of Articles on Educational Theory and Practice
in Progressive Education by Decade and by Gender
(as percent of sum of articles on educational theory and practice)

A. By Decade

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Theory	36.5	45.1	63.2	91.5
Practice	63.5	54.9	37.8	8.5

B. By Gender

	1920s		1930s		1940s		1950s	
	Theory	Practice	Theory	Practice	Theory	Practice	Theory	Practice
Men	73.9	48.0	85.5	38.8	93.9	46.2	87.2	86.7
Women	27.1	52.0	14.5	61.2	6.1	53.8	12.8	13.3

[1] Pages of issues in the sample were coded by topic: theory, practice, or neither. Panel A represents the proportion of pages in each category in relation to the total number of pages devoted to either theory or practice. Pages were also coded by the author's gender. Panel B represents the proportion of pages in each category in relation to the total number of pages devoted to either theory or practice.

Table 7[1]
Incidence of Age-Related Topics in
Progressive Education
(by decade and by author's gender, in percentages)

A. By Decade

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
Children	37.1	20.6	30.4	8.0
Adolescents	34.3	20.6	21.7	68.0
College-Aged	28.6	38.2	27.4	24.0
Adult Educ.	0.0	20.6	20.5	0.0

B. By Author's Gender

	Men	Women
Children	17.2	82.8
Adolescents	51.8	48.2
College-Aged	78.5	22.5
Adult Educ.	83.5	16.5

[1] Topics of articles in sample issues for each decade were identified first as being age-related or not. The topics that were identified as age-related then formed the data on which the percentages are based. Percentages in Panel A represent proportion of each category in relation to total number of age-related topics for a particular decade. Percentages in Panel B represent the proportion of each category in relation to total number of age-related topics for a particular gender.

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