

G. Stanley Hall's published proposals for women's education clearly outline his commitment to separate and unequal educational programs to maintain women as the weaker sex. Hall's attitudes toward women and his assessment of their role in society can be understood via an investigation of his relationships with his mother and his first two wives. A review of Hall's attitudes and writing is appropriate at this time because he represents an extremist justification of sexist policies which are becoming increasingly unacceptable to the educational community.

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G. Stanley Hall: Male Chauvinist Educator

During a prolific career of writing and research in education and psychology, G. Stanley Hall examined a vast range of topics. Dorothy Ross, in a recent biography, stated with conviction that Hall "came into contact with most of the intellectual and cultural currents of his time" — a period of 80 years. Hall's varied interests prompted him to write apologetically to a young student that his life might appear to have been a series of fads or crazes.

However, one attitude that remained constant during his years of writing was a perception of women and women's education. Hall's opinions of women were formed early in life under pressure of a doting mother and were reinforced by his choice of wives. This paper will describe the influences that shaped Hall's educational program for young women that was the logical extension of his philosophical position.

Hall was a "Victorian," the victim of a childhood and an era that produced a sentimental, idealized view of women. Women were pure, saintly peacekeepers of exquisite sensitivity — and the educational process he described was designed to preserve and augment those qualities. By entering a man's world of education and business they (women) would be corrupted by operating on a man's terms. Hall was aware of "degenerate" women, especially when, as a young theology student, he walked the streets of New York with his classmates urging prostitutes to a religious conversion. However, to Hall these women were innocent victims of man's inherently evil nature.

G. Stanley Hall's romanticized view of women can be attributed to the early influence of his mother, Abigail Beals, and her definition of a woman's role in family and society. In *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist*, written in his late seventies, Hall admiringly describes his mother not only in personal terms but also professionally as a pioneer in the child study movement — basing his assessment on the informal diaries she kept of her children's development. Although denied a formal higher education, she taught in country schools until she married. As a teacher she kept precise daily records of her classroom activities. Hall described her notes as expressing a sophisticated and original pedagogy which stressed kindness as being the most "pleasing" type of activity and listed among those "displeasing" activities, inattention, gum-chewing, whispering, and tardiness.

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¹Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist As Prophet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. xv.

As a wife and mother one of her more persistent concerns was peace-keeping; "one of her chief anxieties was my father's harsh censure of us boys." Abigail kept copious secret religious diaries in which she constantly revealed a disappointment with her inadequacy and inability to serve her children, her husband, her household and her "Great Master." Hall, the psychologist, theorized that these religious diaries, heavily flavored with an emotional mysticism, were the outpourings of a woman who had "unrealized hopes in her wedded life," despite some evidence to the contrary.¹

Certainly Hall's father was a stern, practical, disciplinarian who, in contrast to his wife, did little to encourage his son's pursuit of higher education and only late in life came to appreciate his son's scholarship. Hall remembered with great embarrassment attending public meetings with his father and the shame he experienced when his father stood up to speak. In school Hall was mortified when children taunted him about driving the family hogs to market or about his unusually close relationship with his mother.

His mother, however, is only referred to with admiration: a saintly woman, a martyr, who never under the greatest stress showed a single symptom of anger or impatience. She endured and suffered and served; her children, her husband, and her God were her life. Hall's father is described as administering severe thrashings, although Hall tempers this reminiscence with the self righteous observation that the punishment was always deserved (Hall often challenged his father's authority, producing bitter quarrels).

Perhaps because of Hall's excessive attachment to his mother, he deemed himself to be "secretly and exceptionally corrupt and not quite worthy to associate with girls." It was not until he was a great distance from home, in Germany in 1867 at the age of 23, that he established normal friendships with members of the opposite sex. His encounters with several German Frauleins, which he describes as a "carpe diem" passion extending to long walks and shared intimacies, assured him that he was a "man in the normal sense" — apparently dispelling some doubts acquired in childhood. During puberty Hall's father, Granville Bascom Hall, indoctrinated him with frightening misconceptions under the guise of sex hygiene. Consequently Hall frequently examined his nose to see if he had been smitten with a "loathsome disease" associated with the unpardonable sin of self-abuse. He wrote of this time:

"So great was my dread of natural phenomena that in the earliest teens I rigged an apparatus and applied bandages to prevent erethism while I slept, which very likely only augmented the trouble. At one time I feared I was abnormal and found occasion to consult a physician in a neighbouring town who did not know me and took my dollar and laughed at me . . . What an untold anguish of soul would have been saved me if someone had told me that certain experiences were normal for boys in their teens . . . I have felt I should certainly never dare marry and have children."²

Certainly these experiences strengthened Hall's case for sex education in the public schools for both boys and girls.

Hall evaluated his first wife, Cornelia Fisher, whom he met during his teaching appointment at Antioch and married in Germany when he was 35, purely in terms

¹G. Stanley Hall, *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1923), p. 42.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26.

³Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 132

of his mother's virtues. She was made in his mother's image, not only in temperament, tastes and disposition, but even physically. He wrote little about their meeting, romance and marriage. However, Cornelia Fisher Hall appears in a semi-autobiographical story about an elderly man's romance with an aggressive young teacher career woman. Early in the story Miss Newell confessed to a friend:

"But I tell you I hate the dependence of married life. The helpless condition and the narrow, shallow life of most married women is the most pathetic thing in the whole wide world to me. I will show people that one woman at least has sense enough to take care of herself. Whatever else I was made to do in the world I was not made to smirk, and simper, and blush under the stare of every brainless, impudent beau."⁶

After establishing a successful career and failing to find personal happiness, however, Miss Newell accepts her suitor and confesses, "I was very headstrong and enthusiastic and foolish," and meekly succumbs to her destiny as wife and mother.

Cornelia and their six year old daughter died tragically in a freak household accident. It is safe to assume that Cornelia duplicated Abigail's pattern of personal subjugation to family and household. Hall spent long periods of time away from home lecturing and travelling while Cornelia brought up the children. He later publicly regretted having had so little control of his own children's education. Hall describes his second wife, Florence Smith, a teacher many years his junior, as a completely opposite type to his mother and his first wife. This marriage too ended in tragedy with his wife's commitment to a mental institution suffering from progressive dementia.

In an essay in the collection of fiction by Hall entitled *Recreations of a Psychologist*, he describes women's roles in a Utopian community:

"The beginnings of education were in the home, and no girl was allowed to marry or become a mother until the marriage board had satisfied themselves of her competence, not only to bear but to train children during the first three or four years of their life. . . She was priestess of the home, man's best advisor and confidante . . . She sought no sophistication, but trusted her intuitive promptings to guide and propel man to his goal. . . Women after the first flush of the nubile instinct to attract favorable attention to herself shunned all publicity and sought to limit her sphere of activity to those in her own immediate environment. The women most revered were those who bore and reared to maturity the most and best children."⁷

More illuminating than these descriptions of women in the ideal state is Hall's portrayal of the destruction of this society — due entirely to the mass rejection of the feminine role:

"The high ideals of motherhood began to suffer impairment. The number of those who would not, or could not, bear children increased . . . She came to seek other careers than that of motherhood. They demanded, and after a long struggle won, admission to the 'houses' and the 'courts' of honor, disparaged and flouted many of the activities, broke ruthlessly away from the old customs of dress and department and strove long and earnestly everywhere to make their sex a sect . . . Demanded the right to use man's attire . . . became more mannish in all their ways, works, and ideals and often cursed the fates that had made them women . . . Women who once dominated by 'sweetness and light,' by inherent merit and virtue, now it was by coercion and vociferation."⁸

While recognizing woman's mental abilities to proceed to higher education, as President of Clark proposing coeducation, and admiring the superiority of women as teachers of young children, Hall deplored the vacuum left behind in the highest

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁷G. Stanley Hall, *Recreation of a Psychologist* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1920), p. 229.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 99.

calling, motherhood, saying "to a man wedlock is an incident, but for women it is destiny."

The basic theme of Hall's educational program or ideal school for women is that women should be trained for motherhood, not for intellectual activity. To accomplish this, Hall proposed a particular setting, the educational-psychological principle of "retardation," a "father-confessor" role for certain members of the faculty, and a curriculum divided into nine major sections — health, religion, nature, primitive men, the child, history, arts and humanities, languages, philosophy, and, overwhelming them all, domesticity. These proposals were described in his book *Youth: Its Education, Regimen and Hygiene*; behind them one encounters the philosophy which pervades Hall's view of women.

In keeping with the spirit of his times, Hall assumed that a rural location in the midst of picturesque scenery fostered a superior mental attitude. To be alone with nature "develops inwardness, poise, and character." One of Hall's unique concepts of education is the theory that it is possible and desirable to "broaden by retarding." He believed that a girl's school curriculum should be designed "to keep the purely mental back and by every method to bring intuitions to the front . . ." because "a purely intellectual woman is . . . a biological deformity." Although Hall suggests no specific curriculum for this behavior objective, he does provide a guideline:

"The rule should be to keep nothing that is not to become practical; to open no brain tracts which are not to be highways for the daily traffic of thought and conduct."

As a psychologist, Hall took some care to attend to the interpersonal needs of young females in his ideal school by suggesting that "there should be at least one healthful, wise, large-souled, honorable, married and attractive man" on the faculty. His demeanor should give "poise, polarize the soul, and give wholesome but long-circuited tension at the root no doubt sexual, but all unconsciously so;" girls could "turn their hearts inside out in his presence."

The hygiene program outlined by Hall was almost entirely practical. He focused on foods (for "metabolism on the highest plane"), sleep ("regular, with a fixed retiring hour and curfew"), and bathing ("in moderation . . . dress and toilet should be almost raised to fine arts and objects of constant suggestion"). On the subject of exercise Hall recommended that "out-of-door walks and games should have precedence over all else" and "every possible adjustment should be made to sex . . . with the competition element sedulously reduced." Moreover, Hall pronounced that no girl could be considered educated who could not dance.

Included in "exercise" were "manners," in which girls were to be taught to attempt "to compel every one whom they meet to like them," and regularity. Hall emphasized that girls should rest during their "monthly Sabbaths" to let "Lord Nature work." (Incidentally, why Hall chose to masculinize "Nature" at this point, while recognizing the anthropomorphic femininity of "Nature" at all other times, is unclear.) He insisted that male and female physicians should not be the ones to instruct girls on these "mystic" and "sacred" matters because they would make it "too professional." Nor should a "maiden teacher" enlighten the girls as to the facts because she would "lack reverence for it." Instead, such instruction should, according to Hall, come from one whose "soul and body are full of wifehood and motherhood," but who is "not without the technical knowledge."

Hall assumed that religion should hold the same prominent place in the lives of women as politics in the lives of men. His suggested curriculum started with the Old Testament tales of "virtue, duty, devotion, and self-sacrifice"; followed by the stories of the prophets; and, finally, the life and words of Jesus (as humanist, rather than ascetic). Through this instruction, Hall envisioned religion psychologically as "the great agent in the world for transforming life from its earlier selfish to its only really mature form of altruism."

Hall emphatically encouraged the study of botany and zoology for girls — deliberately rejecting physics, chemistry, mathematics, and including meteorology, geology, and astronomy only because they offered an opportunity for outdoor activities. In botany "plant lore and the poetic aspect . . . should have attention throughout, while Latin nomenclature and microscopic technique should come late if at all . . ." He also suggested that instruction in the economic and medical aspects of plants should be given, along with the fundamentals of sexual reproduction. To Hall, zoology in a women's school should be taught with "plenty of pets" and with an emphasis on heredity, especially that of man.

Hall advocated that girls be exposed to the myth, custom, belief, and domestic practices of savages because the primitive man and the child could be "so clearly related to each other." He specifically recommended that women avoid "the details of anthropometry, craniometry, philology, etc."

History's place in the curriculum was to be offered through the development of a "woman's course of instruction" emphasizing biography and sociology, while minimizing "dynasties, wars, authorities, and controversies . . ."

The gates of instruction in all of the arts, including music, painting, literature, poetry and drama would be open to women with the simple restriction that good taste be observed. Though he would have allowed modern language instruction, Hall believed that Greek, Hebrew and Latin should be excluded from the curriculum of a women's school. This would have efficiently prevented graduates of such a school from entering any of the higher educational institutions of the period.

The philosophy curriculum, in which "metaphysics and epistemology should have the smallest, and logic the next least place," demonstrated Hall's insistence that women were incapable of rational thought. Instead, ethics should be taught on the basis of "a whole series of practical duties and problems," while little concern should be expressed for "theories of the ultimate nature of right or the constitution of conscience."

If one assumes, as Hall did, that all females should be married, have children, and submit to the will and intellect of their husbands, it is a logical necessity that the school should provide direct, practical instruction in family ideals and behavior. Moreover, the "training should aim to develop the power of maternity in soul as well as in body . . . so that . . . future generations shall not rebel against these influences" of intellectual pursuits.

Hall saw as the final product of his educational scheme a docile, sensitive wife and mother ready to perform as his mother had done, encourage her children to higher purposes, shield them from adversity, instill them with a zeal for the education she had been denied, cater to her husband's emotional and physical needs and, above all, unceasingly deny "self."

Studies in the history of educational thought should enable educators to re-appraise those forces from the past which are still at work in the present. G. Stanley Hall figures prominently in the history of American education as an early proponent of the child-centered curriculum⁹ which included a special attention to the needs of adolescent females. He advocated the development of a separate educational program for females based upon their psychological needs, their inherent "nature."

In discussing the nineteenth century phenomenon of the rise in feminism, the beginnings of feminist education, and the subsequent disintegration of coeducation into separate (but not equal) women's education as described by G. S. Hall, one can differentiate between that education for women which reinforces their second class role and genuine *feminist* education which leads to equal opportunity and status for women. According to Florence Howe, the colleges which feminists had founded in the early and mid-nineteenth century were "drained of their feminist content and their commitment to change."¹⁰ Thus, it is hardly surprising that "once feminists lost control of the education of women, women were educated to believe in their own limited capacities and in the unlimited capacities of males."¹¹ Inferior education is clearly the result, if not the intent, of G. S. Hall's co-educational curriculum. If a feminist (equal opportunity) perspective is to be inculcated into higher education, then the pitfalls of both separatist, but non-feminist education and co-education defined by traditional educational philosophies (which are anti-female) must be avoided.

An awareness of the relationship between Hall's attitude towards women and the curriculum he designed to encourage women to fit his "ideal" can serve as a warning against separate-but-equal education for women (or for any other group suffering exclusion from leadership positions). It is altogether too easy for well-meaning, contemporary educational leaders to propose or accept policy changes which placate demands for immediate action on legitimate grievances, but which have the long range effect of maintaining the status quo — the hegemony of the current elites.

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⁹Alexander S. Rippa, "The Influence of G. Stanley Hall," in *Education in a Free Society: An American History* (New York: David McKay Company, 1971), p.p. 210 - 13.

¹⁰Florence Howe, "Equal Opportunity for Women: How Possible and How Quickly," in *Sexism in American Education*, Stacey, J., Bereaud, S., and Daniels, J., eds. (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), p.p. 423 - 434.

¹¹Howe, p. 430.

RESUME

Les idées publiées par G. Stanley Hall sur l'éducation des femmes montrent clairement qu'il se voue aux programmes pédagogiques indépendants et inégaux qui ont pour but de préserver le rôle de la femme en tant que deuxième sexe. Les attitudes de Hall envers les femmes et son évaluation de leur rôle dans la société peut être comprises au moyen d'une étude de ses rapports avec sa mère et ses deux premières épouses. Une critique des attitudes et des oeuvres de Hall est à propos aujourd'hui parce que l'homme lui-même représente une justification extrémiste des politiques qui tendent à la discrimination des sexes et qui deviennent de plus en plus inacceptables à la communauté éducative.

 ADDITIONAL FOOTNOTES

The following segments of the article entitled "Women and School Administration", which appeared in Volume 8, No. 3, Pages 165-175, should have cited the M. Nixon and H. P. Hrynyk study "Women in School Administration" *Occasional Papers*, The Alberta Teachers' Association, March 1973, as the basic reference:

Paragraphs 1 and 2, page 165.

Tables 1, 2 and 6.

Lines 9-11, page 171.

Paragraphs 2 and 3, page 172.

The quotation at the bottom of page 172.

Paragraph 2, including the quotation, on page 173.