

## The Gendered Politics of Historical Writing in *History of Education*

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### Abstract

This article looks through the lens of the gendered politics of historical writing at the main forms and direction of scholarship on gender in *History of Education* since its publication. It discusses how social, women's, feminist and gender history have played out in the journal and how developing approaches around the body, space, materiality, and the construction of the archive, are informing the production of new knowledge around gender. The article argues that *History of Education* has contributed to ways in which gender has been imagined in historical reconstruction and analysis. As the gendered politics of history have played out in the journal, gender analysis has contributed to the development of history of education as discipline. The article concludes that in re-writing and re-theorising traditional educational history, the radical openness of the future of gender analysis lies in the continuing transformation of gender analysis itself.

### Introduction

In 'Gendering the Story: Change in the History of Education' Ruth Watts explored the historiography of women's and gender studies represented in *History of Education* from 1976 to the end of 2004.<sup>1</sup> Watts identified a number of key areas of scholarship: relationships of gender and power; challenging the masculine Whig view of progress; making women visible; examining the sexual division of labour; disqualification from the professions of educationally qualified women by virtue of their sex; negative effects of concepts of femininity and feminization; social construction of masculinities and sexualities; languages; and linguist understandings; separate spheres; public-private divide; class; family; negotiating a gendered political and educational world; networks; spheres of influence; experience of hidden groups; knowledge of material forces; lived experience; active contributions; divergent experiences of individual women; biographical approaches; autobiography; intersection of social structure with individual lives; and debates on interdisciplinary crossings and poststructural and postcolonial theory. There was a preponderance of nineteenth and twentieth century histories and English history but there was little work on masculinities (with the exception of Christine Heward's analysis of the men, women and the rise of professional society),<sup>2</sup> on minorities, or on the education of working class women. Watts concluded that few historians of

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Watts, 'Gendering the Story: Change in the History of Education', *History of Education* 34, no.3 (2005): 225-241.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Heward, 'Men and Women and the Rise of Professional Society: the Intriguing History of Teacher Educators', *History of Education* 22, no.1 (1993): 11-32

education now totally ignored gender but more work was needed in these areas as well as comparative or transnational research, on women as knowledge-makers and bearers, and on what knowledge counted in the past. Since Watts' overview, scholarship on working class women, minorities and masculinities continues to remain sparse; but visual, spatial, material and transnational methodologies are being adopted by researchers with an interest in gender.

In this article, I complement Watt's overview by looking through the 'lens of the gendered politics of historical writing'<sup>3</sup> at the main forms and direction of scholarship on gender in the journal. I select articles that highlight theoretical and methodological developments rather than for their representativeness.<sup>4</sup> The (over)-representation of masculinity in this discussion is prompted by its function in *History of Education* largely as 'unmarked' and not gendered.<sup>5</sup> I look at how social, women's, feminist and gender history have played out and consider how developing approaches around the body, space, materiality, and the archive, are informing the production of new knowledge around gender. I end with an afterword, rather than a conclusion, to indicate the productive 'work-in-progress' as gender analysis continues to bring to *History of Education* new insights and innovative scholarship.

### **Gender as a category of analysis**

I am involved in the 'politics' I describe in that I have written largely on the history of women's and girls' education and have an interest in methodology.<sup>6</sup> Developing my approaches to the history of women's education in the 1980s I was influenced by texts in the journal by Joan Burstyn, Carol Dyhouse, Felicity Hunt, June Purvis, and Ruth Watts, who critiqued accounts based on the lives of 'women worthies' and access narratives underpinned by liberal Whiggish approaches. I grappled with the way that gender as a category of analysis was 'a much contested concept' and a 'site of unease rather than of agreement'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Here, I follow Rebecca Rogers, 'The Politics of Writing the History of French Girls' Education', *History of Education Researcher* 80 (2007): 136-145. I use 'political' in the sense of who and what constitutes historical discourse.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Morgan, ed., *The Feminist History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2. I have drawn on Morgan's narrative in shaping the discussion that follows.

<sup>5</sup> Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), Kindle loc 143-2, 46-7.

<sup>6</sup> See also Rogers, 'History of French Girls' Education'.

<sup>7</sup> David Glover and Cora Kaplan, *Genders* (London: Routledge, 2000), xix

Although scholars argue that approaches from gender, feminist and women's history are not interchangeable,<sup>8</sup> Watts noted that they have overlapped in the journal. While women's history is defined by its subject matter, may be written by men, and does not necessarily invoke a feminist perspective, feminist history is defined by a theoretical agenda informed by the ideas and theories of feminism, and may include research on men, masculinity and the male world. Gender history focuses on the interdependence and relational nature of female and male identities.<sup>9</sup> It draws on work dealing with women, but refers to socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity, the gendering of concepts, institutions and social orders and new forms of association. Pavla Miller notes, 'there is gender even where there are no women, due to the potency of different notions of manliness and of intense homosocial (as opposed to homosexual) attachments between comrades in arms, members of monastic communities, guilds or bureaucracies'; and 'theorisations of gender involve relations of power, not just between women and men, but among more or less powerful females and males'.<sup>10</sup> Although they have overlapped in the journal, there has been a tendency more generally to present these three approaches as a progressive narrative in which women's and feminist history are displaced by gender history. Alongside lines of continuity, discontinuities and ruptures are also evident the journal - most notably between accounts that incorporate an Enlightenment notion of a subject with a fixed and stable identity, entering into social relations with its gender in place,<sup>11</sup> and accounts that theorise the subject as relational and contingent, where the subject is fluid and provisional and gender is seen to be constructed and in need of continuous maintenance.<sup>12</sup>

### **Social histories and education for women and girls**

As social historians in *History of Education* placed women and girls in educational histories they drew on details from everyday life and demography. David Coppock's work on pupil teachers presented

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<sup>8</sup> Jane Rendall, 'Uneven Developments: Women's History, Feminist History and Gender History in Great Britain, in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, ed. Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall (London: Macmillan, 1991), 45-51; June Purvis, 'From "Women Worthies" to Poststructuralism? Debate and Controversy in Women's History in Britain', in *Women's History in Britain 1950-1945*, ed. June Purvis (London: UCL Press, 1995), 1-22.

<sup>9</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 2,4.

<sup>10</sup> Pavla Miller, 'Gender and Patriarchy in Historical Sociology' in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, ed. Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (London: Sage, 2003), 337.

<sup>11</sup> As for example in social history accounts that take gender identity for granted (see below)

<sup>12</sup> This distinction draws on Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 13.

invaluable new information and insights into the position of women and girls in education to complement previous scholarship that often presented a false universalism while ostensibly describing the education of men and boys. Coppock provides evidence from pupil teachers employed in Birmingham between 1850 and 1900 to demonstrate the emergent feminization of the teaching profession. While career opportunities differed for males and females and daughters of the lower middle class predominated within the elementary schools at the expense of the skilled artisans, the majority of the working class were hardly represented at all.<sup>13</sup> In its descriptive usage within social history, as Coppock's account illustrates, gender differences are explained within the existing frame of explanation; and categories of identity (male/female, girls/boys, men/women) are seen to reflect objective experience and identities, rather than gender being taken as a study in itself.<sup>14</sup> But as Pavla Miller notes, adding women into the historical picture not only greatly improved the precision of the description, but also challenged and eventually altered the theoretical tool bag.<sup>15</sup>

### **Theorizing Patriarchy**

Challenges to the theoretical toolbag became clear in *History of Education* with arguments from feminist historians of education, who pursued an agenda to make women visible in histories of education, to constitute women as historical subjects and agents in the making of history and of education; to question the concepts and analyses of conventional educational histories; to examine the power relationships between men and women; and to find out about women's day-to day educational experiences. In debating the politics of history-writing with Keith Flett, June Purvis argued that a focus on class in researching the working class had resulted in 'the drama of working-class men being enacted' and 'a history of education identified with the history of working-class boys and men'. What was needed, maintained Purvis, was analysis of women's position in education that included both a social class and gendered dimension. Purvis' own work exemplified how working-class schoolgirls in nineteenth century England experienced the double burden of class and gender.<sup>16</sup> Here, she mirrored arguments from socialist feminist historians that analysis should bring together

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<sup>13</sup> David A. Coppock, 'Responsibility as a Prerequisite of Moral Character: the Social and Occupational Mobility of Pupil Teachers in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *History of Education* 26, no.2 (1997): 165-186.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Miller, 'Gender and Patriarchy'.

<sup>16</sup> June Purvis, "'We Can No Longer Pretend that Sex Stratification Does Not Exist, Nor That it Exists But Is Unimportant'" (M. Eichler). A Reply to Keith Flett', *History of Education* 18, no.2 (1989): 147-152.

the capitalist mode of production, the sexual division of labour and patriarchal authority.<sup>17</sup> Purvis concluded that once feminist historians began to ask new questions of the historical data and examined sexual divisions within education, and the power relations between the sexes, different dimensions were brought into historical analysis.<sup>18</sup>

Feminist historians of education found the idea of patriarchy useful to connect gender to class and to theorize the reasons for women's oppression in a range of societies. Within feminist scholarship, patriarchy refers to the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women as a group and assumed to have authority over them. Patriarchy remains a contested concept. For some, it implies a universal transhistorical field structure rooted in biological differences and suggests a single determining cause of women's subordination; for others, within any group women as a group are disempowered compared to men of their group, with patriarchy existing in many forms and varieties.<sup>19</sup> Historians of masculinity have argued that patriarchal frameworks highlight the changeability of public and institutional power structures but leave masculinity as unitary, fixed in time and oppressive to an equal degree.<sup>20</sup>

Meera Kosambi draws attention to the reiterated troping of patriarchal domesticity as a prison house and of education as a window on the outside world in nineteenth century India. She discusses the positioning of women as the site for the confrontation between the patriarchal family structure and the reformist attempt to educate women and the politicization of women's education within the formulations of both 'cultural' and 'political' nationalism. Kosambi highlights the patriarchal definition of women solely through their wife, housewife, mother role and that lack of education underscored the inferiority of women by denying them privileges reserved for men. The iconography of the woman at the piano represents a negative symbol of foreign influence, while the masculinist argument of patriotism resulted in every man's patriotic duty being to 'protect' women from the masculine world of business, politics and public affairs. While sensitive to patriarchy, Kosambi complicates her narrative. There is the possibility that education might serve as a leverage for the woman to break out of the 'prison houses', breaking the barriers to women's participation in

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<sup>17</sup> Purvis, 'From "Women Worthies" to Poststructuralism?'

<sup>18</sup> Purvis, "'We Can No Longer Pretend"'.

<sup>19</sup> Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (London: Polity Press, 1999), 15-20.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Roper and John Tosh, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity', in Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds, *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991).

the public sphere; and by enabling the intellectually minded female to negotiate the dominant discourses and systems of the time, a pathway might be provided to the 'modern' world.<sup>21</sup>

*History of Education* demonstrates engagement with what earlier feminists used to refer to as women's 'collusion with patriarchy': the necessity of explaining how people are bound into the existing social order but nonetheless re-work their identities and work towards change.<sup>22</sup> Jane McDermid illustrates that women educational reformers may have been 'subordinate' by working within patriarchal power structures but they were not necessarily subservient in working to achieve their reforms. McDermid argues that Grace Paterson worked to improve the health of the city's poor by raising the standard of domestic education of working-class girls and women in Board schools and through the establishment of the Glasgow School of Cookery. By working with the city fathers, rather than against them, she did not openly challenge patriarchy. Despite the constraints that this imposed on her in terms of at least appearing to accept male leadership, McDermid concludes that Paterson manoeuvred successfully within her chosen fields.<sup>23</sup>

Michael Roper and John Tosh note that patriarchy provided a way of drawing links between the different contexts in which men's power operated in the structure of ideas, relations and institutions, resulting in constructions of divergent, competing and changing forms of masculinity. They argue that codes of manliness relate to both the public and the private domains, serving as gender boundaries.<sup>24</sup> Discussing Pestalozzianism, Paul Elliott argues that the Pestalozzian emphasis on domesticity and maternity appealed to dissenting groups whose theology emphasized family networks; and those schools that imitated 'the spirit of domestic education' were adjudged the most effective. Pestalozzianism was useful as a guide to the upbringing of middle class males in a period when, as Tosh argues, 'never before or since has domesticity been held to be so central to masculinity'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Meera Kosambi, 'A Window in the Prison-House: Women's Education and the Politics of Social Reform in Nineteenth Century Western India', *History of Education* 29, no.5 (2000): 429-442.

<sup>22</sup> McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*, 18-20.

<sup>23</sup> Jane McDermid, 'Place the Book in Their Hands: Grace Paterson's Contribution to the Health and Welfare Policies of the School Board of Glasgow, 1885-1906', *History of Education* 36, no.6 (2007): 697-713.

<sup>24</sup> Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction'.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Elliott and Stephen Daniels, 'Pestalozzianism, Natural History and Scientific Education in Nineteenth Century England: The Pestalozzian Institution at Worksop, Nottinghamshire', *History of Education*, 34, no.2 (2005): 295-313.

James Mangan and James Walvin trace how early Victorians manliness represented a concern with the transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, while the late Victorian ideal of neo-Spartan virility formed the preeminent qualities of the male English public school.<sup>26</sup> Richard Aldrich illustrates how the education of boys in the Spartan system of education was geared towards military prowess. Boys from the ages of seven to 19 underwent a rigorous state education, which required them to sleep away from home in barracks. Boys were taught to fend for themselves and to inure their bodies and minds against all physical hardship. Underfed and ill clad they learned survival skills and did exercises, contests and violent games to develop their discipline and toughness. Because the principles of uniformity, conformity and collective interest were more highly valued than specific military skill in strategy and tactics, boys also acquired a sense of obedience, moral courage and the need for cohesion.<sup>27</sup> Mangan and Walvin argue that after its inception in the nineteenth-century English public schools, the neo-Spartan ideal of masculinity was diffused throughout the English speaking world.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Doctrine of ‘Separate Spheres’**

An alternative analysis to patriarchy in *History of Education* is based on the notion of separate spheres. Three versions of the separate spheres approach can be identified. The first views separate spheres in negative terms as incarceration in the home; the second places the familial and domestic centre stage as a supportive and empowering female culture and a generative site of feminist identity;<sup>29</sup> and the third sees public and private, male and female spheres influencing each other reciprocally.<sup>30</sup> Articles in *History of Education* using these approaches illustrate engagement with Amanda Vickery’s critique that separate spheres analysis has tended to conflate prescription and

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<sup>26</sup> James A. Mangan and James Walvin, ‘Introduction’, in James Mangan and James A. Walvin, eds, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1,2.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Aldrich, ‘Education for Survival: An Historical Perspective’, *History of Education*, 39, no.1 (2010): 1-14.

<sup>28</sup> Mangan and Walvin, ‘Introduction’, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Kerber, ‘Separate Spheres: Female Worlds, Women’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History’, *Journal of American History* 75, no.1 (1988): 9-93.

<sup>30</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 7,8.

'reality' and that gender boundaries were (and are) more permeable than the public-private divide suggests.<sup>31</sup>

Jessamy Harvey notes that the Francoist regime (1939-75) legislated a cultural divide between girls' and boys' educational material extending from the classroom to all areas of childhood culture as part of disseminating the 'official truth' of the 'New Spain'. Despite notions of separate spheres being articulated through legislation and propaganda in the service of the state, boundaries between the private female sphere and the male political sphere were porous because of the Francoist regime's official culture of National-Catholicism. Historical heroines in Spanish textbooks were not simply domestic exemplars. While schoolbooks taught girls that their future role was to be religious, moral, a lover of the home and vigilant mothers to their children, the cultural repertoire of the Spanish female in textbooks included women wielding swords. This was the result of the 'forced marriage' of the ideologies of the Catholic Church and the Falange's<sup>32</sup> women's section in the field of girls' education, which linked domestic work being with the building of the Spanish empire, and the defence of Spain against foreign invasions. Harvey concludes that while Spanish women were denied citizenship and political rights during the Francoist Regime, the appearance of warrior wives alongside domestic queens and female saints may have allowed girls to negotiate gender identities in ways that could escape the constraints of dominant ideology.<sup>33</sup> Her analysis also demonstrates the variability in historical relationships of gender, education and nationalism.

In analysing how the feminine ideology formed the enveloping context of the work of women's teacher training colleges and enriched women's capacity for personal development and individual fulfilment, Elizabeth Edwards illustrates the 'separate spheres' approach of supportive and empowering female culture. Edwards traces the translation to an institutional setting of the familial and domestic customs of the middle-class home, and the widening cultural horizons which the experience of college afforded girls, and enhanced the lives of the individual women concerned, although the development of a feminist consciousness was not a necessary consequence.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal* 36, no.2 (1993): 383-414.

<sup>32</sup> A political organisation which fought on the Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>33</sup> Jessamy Harvey, 'Domestic Queens and Warrior Wives: Imperial Role-Models for Spanish Schoolgirls During the Early Francoist Regime (1940s-50s)', *History of Education* 37, no.2 (2008): 277-293.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'The Culture of Femininity in Women's Teacher Training Colleges, 1900-1950' *History of Education* 22, no.3 (1993): 277-88.



In a later article in the journal, Edwards discusses the conflicting discourses of woman principal in teacher training colleges. Here, she demonstrates the third approach to 'separate spheres', in which public and private, male and female spheres influence each other reciprocally, and ostensibly binary oppositions around public and private, femininity and masculinity are permeable. Edwards argues that because training colleges were organised on familial lines, the principal had to take on the role of powerful and authoritative father, but this was always intersected by maternal and feminine concerns. Principals attempted to solve this conflict by dividing their lives into public and private spheres. On public occasions they adopted the role of a powerful authoritative father; privately they showed maternal concern for staff and students and, more intimately, they formed a homoerotic partnership with another woman, which was never given an explicitly sexual label. Each principal had to make her own resolution of these conflicting discourses of masculinity and femininity, gender and power, often expressed in a spiritual language of idealism and service, using a traditional feminine discourse for a wider purpose.<sup>35</sup> In reconstructing the lives of principals, Edwards demonstrates engagement with what lesbian history has termed the heteronormativity of history and the consequent erasure of the lesbian subject.<sup>36</sup>

*History of Education* engaged with critiques of 'separate spheres' from Afro-American feminists who raised questions about the marginalisation of racism in analysis and the 'pretence to a homogeneity of experience'.<sup>37</sup> They argued that analysis spoke only of a white, Western, largely middle-class world, leaving women of colour invisible.<sup>38</sup> Linda Perkins noted that the story of woman's 'separate spheres' from men and the notion of 'true womanhood' espoused for nineteenth century middle-class women was plausible only for white women; for adding analysis of race and class to the study of women's education changed the story. Perkins outlined that unlike their white female counterparts, African American women did not have a history of existing in a sphere separate from African-American men. Since neither African-American men nor women were considered humans throughout slavery, the notion of 'true womanhood' which expected women to be 'pious submissive domestic and pure' was not extended to them. Throughout the nineteenth century, freed Blacks of the north and emancipated African-Americans in the South espoused the notion of

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Women Principals, 1900-1960: Gender and Power', *History of Education* 29, no.5 (2000): 405-414.

<sup>36</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 19, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Purvis, 'From "Women Worthies" to Poststructuralism?'

<sup>38</sup> Mary Maynard and June Purvis, eds, *New Frontiers in Women's Studies: Knowledge, Identity and Nationalism* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 11, 12.

'race uplift' as central to their educational philosophy. Perkins concluded that feminist perspectives of nineteenth and early twentieth century African-American women originated in teaching which stressed that contributions from all members were necessary and reflected the experience of being Black.<sup>39</sup>

### **Colonialisms, Ethnocentrism, 'Race' and Gender**

Postcolonial theory increased the focus on the boundaries of racial, cultural and gender divides. In colonial society, the 'rule of colonial difference' in which gender was a constitutive element, distinguished colonisers from the colonised by preserving the alien-ness of the ruling group.<sup>40</sup> Catherine Hall notes that in late eighteenth century India, Macaulay father and son regarded Indians as a 'race of men lamentably degenerate and base', needing 'an injection of manly vigour and independence'.<sup>41</sup> In parts of British colonial Asia, educational institution-building around 'miscegenation' played into the 'rule of colonial difference' around caste, class, gender and race. In both India and Hong Kong, the British focussed attention particularly on Eurasian or half-caste children, 'who were thought to symbolise moral degradation and racial impurity'. Patricia Chiu notes how a domestic ideology framed by evangelical beliefs and a colonial gaze was reproduced through the curriculum and through a domestic model of schooling, transposed, represented and contested in a predominantly Chinese society under colonial rule marked by class and ethnic differences. While Chinese boys could take advantage of their English Education to become 'elites and middlemen' in the colony, their English-educated female counterparts were seen to be at risk because their English education resulted in them being in high demand in the 'marriage market'. As a result, the notion that Chinese girls' education needed to be conducted in vernacular schools shaped the development of girls' education in Hong Kong, illustrating the racial boundaries and divides in colonial society that were reinforced through regulation of native women's sexuality. Theories of racial superiority

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<sup>39</sup> Linda M. Perkins, 'The Role of Education in the Development of Black Feminist Thought, 1860-1920', *History of Education* 22, no.3 (1993): 11; Maynard and Purvis, *New Frontiers in Women's Studies*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 10. For an overview of colonialism and education see Joyce Goodman, Gary McCulloch and William Richardson, 'Empires Overseas' and 'Empires at Home': Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives on Social Change in the History of Education', *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no.6 (2009): 695-706; and for the UK see Ruth Watts, 'Education, Empire and Social Change in Nineteenth Century England', *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no.6 (2009): 773-786.

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Hall, 'Making Colonial Subjects: Education in the Age of Empire', *History of Education* 37, no.6 (2008): 784, 787.

constituting the foundation of colonial rule, resulted in children of mixed race, particularly 'Eurasians' being seen as the 'tangible evidence of moral irregularity', while to the Chinese community they embodied the shame and 'evil' of their marginalised mothers. Educating Eurasian girls alongside Chinese girls was opposed; and the aim of preparing 'future wives and mothers', regularly invoked in regard to Chinese girls, was never applied to 'Eurasians' by missionaries.<sup>42</sup>

Non-Western writers provided counter-narratives of colonial education, pointing to the ambivalences of identity that colonial education engendered and ways in which dominant systems of gender were open to subversion and reformation as indigenous women 'took' from colonial education, accommodated its demands and developed their own forms of educational provision. Kay Morris Matthews and Kuni Jenkins note that the identity of thousands of Maori women is tied up with the strong sense of *turangawaewae* (a place to stand) and is re-enacted in the feeling for schools where they spent young adult years and in the bonds of the network that forms part of their identity as Maori. By conforming to a model of ideal womanhood Maori girls were seen by the British as the future guardians of morality through their roles as wives and mothers. Educated along the lines of English middle class Victorian girls to dress, behave and speak as befitted a Victorian middle class woman, they were expected to assist with the daily running of the school. Teaching Maori girls 'valued knowledge' (defined as useful knowledge to run Pakeha (white) homes and turn them into model Maori citizens of colonial settler society), was to prepare for the assimilation of Maori into Pakeha society. Yet, schools like Hukarere provided the highly academic curriculum that gave Maori women access to university and professional careers.<sup>43</sup>

Arguments around imperialism, ethnocentrism and racism point to ways in which Western constructions of indigenous women have impacted on the 'naturalized, normative and unproblematic' status of 'whiteness'<sup>44</sup> in the making and maintenance of gender and of gender identities in Western societies.<sup>45</sup> Discussing Harriet Newcombe and Margaret Hodge, two teacher/suffragettes, Lynne Trethewey and Kay Whitehead argue that during their sojourns in Australasia and England, their educational and feminist agendas and networks reflected their positions as white middle-class Englishwomen in a colonial society. In London in 1910, their talks

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<sup>42</sup> Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu, "'A Position of Usefulness': Gendering History of Girls' Education in Colonial Hong Kong (1852-1890s)", *History of Education* 37, no.6 (2008): 789-805.

<sup>43</sup> Kay Morris Matthews and Kuni Jenkins, "'Whose Country Is It Anyway?' The Construction of a New Identity Through Schooling for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand", *History of Education* 28, no.3 (1999): 339-350.

<sup>44</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Maynard and Purvis, *New Frontiers in Women's Studies*, 3.

portrayed Australia as a land of promise for young rural settlers, whom they assumed to be white, and in the racist fashion of the times they discussed 'the aboriginals' along with geography, flora and fauna. Although their ultimate goal was universal peace and prosperity for all peoples and nations, like many feminists of the time Margaret and Harriet did not challenge the White Australia policy.<sup>46</sup> They focussed on white women and children in Britain and the white settler dominions first and foremost, then the working class generally, and in some distant future would incorporate the 'so-called coloured peoples'. Trethewey and Whitehead's analysis also demonstrates ways in which 'race', gender and class were implicated in empire and interconnected with each other.<sup>47</sup>

### Poststructuralist Debates

As these examples demonstrate, critiques from black women and insights from postcolonial theory<sup>48</sup> led to increasing recognition of the multiplicity of differences between women and between men, drawing particularly on poststructural debates. Influenced by the work of Foucault, scholars theorised the subject as relational and contingent. Rather than a fixed and stable identity, which enters into social relations with its gender in place, in the poststructural formulation, the subject is always fluid and provisional, and in the process of becoming,<sup>49</sup> and gender is constructed and maintained performatively through discourse and everyday actions.<sup>50</sup> Here, '[t]he story is no longer about the things that have happened to women and men and how they have reacted to them; instead it is about how the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed'.<sup>51</sup> Staple categories of feminist historical analysis, such as women, identity, experience, agency and subjectivity, were seen to need deconstructing rather than being taken for granted.<sup>52</sup> The view that 'experience' is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in

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<sup>46</sup> Angela Woollacott, 'Australian Women's Metropolitan Activism: From Suffrage to Imperial Vanguard, to Commonwealth Feminism', in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, eds Christopher Fletcher, Philippa Levine and Laura E. Nym Mayhall (London: Routledge, 2000), 191-206.

<sup>47</sup> Lyn Trethewey and Kay Whitehead, 'Beyond Centre and Periphery: Transnationalism in Two Teacher/Suffragette's Work', *History of Education* 32, no.5 (2003): 547-559.

<sup>48</sup> Following Morgan, I use postcolonial to denote continuous disengagement from colonialism as a historical dynamic. Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>50</sup> McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> See Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', in Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 28-50.

<sup>52</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 13.

need of interpretation<sup>53</sup> proved influential in problematizing the concept of experience itself and in performative notions of gender. In the performative view, gender is what you do at particular times, rather than who you are – ‘not a question of whether to *do* a gender performance but what form that performance will take’.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, as Valerie Walkerdine argues, individuals do not take up *any* position in any discourse. Rather, ‘the positions available to them exist *only* within certain limits’. In this sense it is not possible to take up an identity or position at will.<sup>55</sup>

Poststructuralism proposed a history grounded in close attention to the workings of culture, language, meaning and representation. Michel Cohen’s re-reading of Dorothea Beale’s *Reports Issued by the Schools Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls* demonstrates how beliefs regarding boys’ and girls’ character and intellectual capacities were inherited from late eighteenth-century educational thought and moral prescription, where they had acquired specific meanings. The presence of certain mental qualities in the female (quickness, vivacity and perceptiveness), constructed her mental powers as inferior and deficient, while their absence in the male was construed as evidence of superior intellect. Cohen argues that concerns around the ‘sexed mind’ related to anxieties about gender and knowledge. By the mid nineteenth-century, these assertions about difference, based on moral prescription and lacking a rational or scientific basis, had taken on the authority of ‘scientific’ truths. Cohen unpacks the meanings of ‘emulation’ (central to boy’s motivation and the construction of the ‘masculine’ mind but inimical to the construction of feminine virtue), ‘thorough’ and ‘thoroughness’ (which ‘explained’ why ‘thoroughness’ would elude females); ‘accomplished’ and ‘showy accomplishments’ (the latter designating the parlous state of girls’ education through the inevitability of parents ‘showing’ their daughters in public). Cohen concludes that the gap between expectations and evidence that girls could equal or even surpass boys was resolved first, by asserting the equal intellectual capacity of both sexes and initiating a shift in the perception of some gender differences; and second, by creating new language and meanings that postulated other gender differences.<sup>56</sup>

Poststructuralism stimulated new areas of research into men, masculinity and male institutions, based on the notion of variable, historically-specific meanings of masculinity and

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<sup>53</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Experience’, in *Feminists Theorise the Political*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (London: Routledge, 1992), 37.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Judith Butler’, <http://www.theoryorganisation.uk/ctr-butl.htm> [downloaded 18 January 2000].

<sup>55</sup> Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* (London: Verso, 1990), 21.

<sup>56</sup> Michèle Cohen, ‘Language and Meaning in a Documentary Source: Girls’ Curriculum From the Late Eighteenth Century to the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868’, *History of Education* 34, no.1 (2005): 585-595.

behaviour.<sup>57</sup> In discussing the (incomplete) shift from character training to personal growth in the Outward Bound movement promulgated by Kurt Hahn, Mark Freeman traces how far Outward Bound followed a shift from wartime martial masculinities drawing on Hahnian understandings of *mens sana in corpore sano* in which physical effort was 'seen as a *seine qua non* in the development of manly strength', to models of masculinity post World War 2 that stressed the language of 'personality' and 'self-discovery', and was accompanied by the abolition of National Service, the growth of affluence and the rise of the 'therapeutic'. Freeman argues, however, that not all aspects of 'martial' masculinity were jettisoned in the 1960s, when 'a disciplined work ethic, strength of personality and self-control' were still seen as important components of individual character.<sup>58</sup>

### **Bodies, space, materiality, and the archive**

Poststructuralism sparked new ways of writing about and understanding gendered bodies in educational history. Catherine Burke notes that feminist theorists have considered the gendered body of the schoolchild an essential part of identity formation in modern schooling'.<sup>59</sup> Judith Butler collapsed the sex/gender distinction to argue that gender as a system of knowledge about sexual difference, produced various meanings of the body. In Butler's view, the idea that gender is performative sought to show that what was taken to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body.<sup>60</sup> Performativity opens the space for the body to be seen both as a site where the fashioning in external appearance and internal habits secure and prolong the relationships of power that have underpinned schooling and a site of contestation and resistance.

In analysing representation of the uniformed body of the schoolgirl, Stephanie Spencer uses visual, material and oral history methodologies to unpack the sex/gender aspects of girls' school uniform. She argues that the girls' uniforms of the 1950s repressed expression of individual (hetero)sexuality by demands for uniformity; but carried mixed messages in the compulsory tie (marker of masculinity) and conservative-length skirts, gloves and hats (markers of femininity).

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<sup>57</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Mark Freeman, 'From "Character-Training" to "Personal Growth": the Early History of Outward Bound 1941-1965', *History of Education* 40, no.1 (2010): 21-43.

<sup>59</sup> Carrie Paechter, 'Reconceptualising the Gendered Body: Learning and Constructing Masculinities and Femininities in School', *Gender and Education* 18, no.3 (2006): 121-135; Catherine Burke, 'Editorial', *History of Education* 36, no.2 (2007): 165-171.

<sup>60</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Spencer reads the customisation of school uniform as an example of the uneasy relationships between the formation of individual selves and expectations of a homogenous, sometimes overpowering identity of 'schoolgirl'. By subtly adapting the uniform, to the outside world and to any casual observer of the photograph. the wearer's identity as 'schoolgirl' was clear; but from a remembered point of view the individual styles were adaptations of contemporary fashion which produced a group identity of 'teenager'. Spencer concludes that the lived-body and the representation of that body provide a site for the inscription or encoding of the turbulent time of 'teenage' self-creation, when adolescents are working out who they are and who they want to be. The visualised body represents a site for representing the difficult individual negotiation between academic aspiration and overarching models of gendered, classed and teenage identity.<sup>61</sup>

The body has also been a focus for educational historians writing about ways in which the boundaries between the homosocial and the homosexual are policed. Foucault claims that portrayals of homosexuality as problem and pathology in nineteenth century medicine, psychoanalysis and other forms of discourse played into the invention of the 'homosexual' and that sexual perversion as a category was produced by the sciences of sexuality arising in the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Whitehead notes that by the 1920s, the new sciences of sexology and psychology were reinforcing marriage as a women's natural destiny and pathologizing older single women as 'embittered, sexless, or homosexual'.<sup>63</sup> Freeman shows how the construction of masculinities in *Outward Bound* was seen to redress the perceived 'evils' of the 1960s thought to result from homosexuality and remarriage.<sup>64</sup> David Limond discusses the charges brought against a Scottish art teacher described as 'something of a refined aesthete' and thought by the mother of a boy of having behaved towards her son 'more like that of a man to a woman than a man to a man'. While the mother insisted that the relationship between the art teacher and her son was perfectly innocent, she also thought him more fond of her son than the other boys. The art teacher had taken artistic photographs of the boy in the nude, which was not thought to be in line the school's aim to produce 'a succession of young men, healthy in mind and body, taking a pride in their physical fitness and outdoor pursuits'. Limond concludes that time spent contemplating the nature of true art and taking

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<sup>61</sup> Stephanie Spencer, 'A Uniform Identity: Schoolgirl Snapshots and the Spoken Visual', *History of Education* 36, no.2 (2007): 227-246.

<sup>62</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, 1988 edition), 43.

<sup>63</sup> Kay Whitehead, 'Vocation, Career and Character in Early Twentieth-Century Women Teacher's Work in City Schools', *History of Education* 34, no.6 (2005): 579-597.

<sup>64</sup> Freeman, 'From "Character Training" to "Personal Growth"'.

pride in male physical fitness did not extend to being photographed naked.<sup>65</sup> But as Geert Thyssen illustrates, in the context of the visualisation of the body in medical discourses at Senne I Bielefeld's open air school in inter-war Germany, photographs of boys' naked bodies formed a source of control and differentiation.<sup>66</sup>

Caroline Bowden's analysis of seventeenth century convents illustrates the importance placed by historians of women's education on religion as an empowering identity for women.<sup>67</sup> It also shows how the material dimension of 'place' plays out in constructions of gendered identities through the disciplining of the body and spatial ordering. Herman et al demonstrate how material objects act as mediating agencies as they are given meaning, and are used, and re-used in the everyday routines of schooling and technologies of the Self.<sup>68</sup> For Bowden, material culture is significant for understanding the process of enculturation whereby young women were assimilated into the life of the convent, learning how to use the buildings and space and how to adopt appropriate behaviour and attitudes. Complex rules regarding gesture, speech, dress and movement through space reinforced roles, rank, and behaviour, norms passed on to newcomers by the novice mistress. Convent rules spelled out the separation between women religious inside the enclosure and lay people outside. Poverty was reflected in all aspects of daily life and austerity regarding food, dress and beds was applied as part of their formation. The internalisation of humility and obedience was further reinforced by external bodily movements; for the novice mistress had to ensure her

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<sup>65</sup> David Limond, 'Only Talk in the Staffroom: "Subversive" Teaching in a Scottish School, 1939-40', *History of Education* 29, no.3 (2000): 239-252.

<sup>66</sup> Geert Thyssen, 'Visualizing Discipline of the Body in a German Open-Air School (1923-1939): Retrospection and Introspection', *History of Education* 36, no.2 (2007): 237-264.

<sup>67</sup> Particularly for Irish women's education: Judith Harford, 'The Movement for the Higher Education of Women in Ireland: Gender Equality or Denominational Rivalry?' *History of Education* 34, no.5 (2005): 497-516; idem, 'An Experiment in the Development of Social Networks for Women: Women's Colleges in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century', *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no.3 (2007): 365-381; Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, 'Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Negotiating a Place Within a Non-denominational System', *History of Education* 36, no.3 (2007): 353-365.

<sup>68</sup> Frederik Herman, Angelo van Gorp, Frank Simon, Marc Depaepe, 'The School Desk: From Concept to Object', *History of Education* 40, no.1 (2011): 97-117.



changes learned appropriate gestures, manner of speech, comportment, and the correct wearing of the habit; and schoolgirls had to learn how they fitted into the life of the convent.<sup>69</sup>

Tanya Fitzgerald relates space, the archive and the production of gendered knowledge in her discussion of women's letters and diaries from the CMS women teachers working in New Zealand (1923-35). In focussing on the relationship between gender and knowledge, Fitzgerald reconstructs the mission family home as a form of archive *at* home and *as* home, central to descriptions of missionary women and activities. Home was reconstituted as a family home, meeting space, teaching space, and community dwelling, representing and (re)producing spatial and social hierarchies according to status, role and the perceived needs of the home occupations and guests. Home was located at the juncture of family and community and the 'civilised' and 'heathen' worlds as a sanctuary (colonising space) from the world outside the missionary station fences that was deemed to be non-English and non-Christian. Home also referred to England, where families and 'sisters' resided. The physical act of writing/reading letters and journals repositioned the family home as a form of archive. History and home were therefore inextricably linked and the archive neither public nor private space. Fitzgerald calls for the recognition of artefacts such as house and home as carriers of memories, and for the written material about life with/in house and home to be seen as material evidence of the gendered boundaries and experiences of domestic and family life.<sup>70</sup>

Gender and knowledge is the focus of Annemieke van Drenth's work on the relationships between gender, disability and the history of special education in the nineteenth century. Van Drenth uses the Foucauldian notion of caring power to argue that in the field of care for the mentally ill and the mentally 'retarded', male physicians dominated the process of professionalization based on claims of their medical expertise. The professional profiles of doctors were saturated with meaning of male autonomy and competency, based on scientific knowledge and skills connected with men's place in the world, while women evolved from their volunteer careers in the sphere of philanthropy into the world of professionalism between 1850 and 1890. This ran alongside the way in which disabled people were gradually perceived as human beings, as philosophers, physicians and

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<sup>69</sup> Caroline Bowden, 'Community Space and Cultural Transmission: Formation and Schooling in English Enclosed Convents in the Seventeenth Century', *History of Education* 34, no.4 (2005): 365-386. Note also the importance of landscape to girls' education, see Joyce Goodman, 'A Cloistered Ethos? Landscapes of Learning and English Secondary Schools for Girls: An Historical Perspective', *Paedagogica Historica* 41, nos 4-5 (2005): 589-603.

<sup>70</sup> Tanya Fitzgerald, 'Archives of Memory and Memories of Archive: CMS Women's Letters and Diaries 1823-35', *History of Education* 34, no.6 (2005): 657-674.

educators constructed new images of the mentally ill and their troubled minds and located the disabled and their physical impairments in need of care and cure. The women matrons and attendants had influence in the daily practices within the asylums and hospitals but could never count on professional credit. They were regarded as 'sweet-tempered and persistent' and 'caretakers' but not as 'conscientious and gifted with a thorough knowledge of human nature' like men. Van Drenth concludes that increasingly this expertise in science became the criterion to define professional identity and status.<sup>71</sup>

### **Transnational and Comparative Histories of Education and Gender**

Other accounts (including those of Trethewey and Whitehead) deploy transnational methodologies to situate women as 'experts' as the circulation of knowledge of girls' education crossed national borders and metaphorical space. Transnational perspectives pay attention to the 'broader field of interactions between peoples and movements and ways in which the traditional borders of education are traversed by new developments which cross geographical or conceptual borders'.<sup>72</sup> Goodman draws on transnational frames to look at how the 'idea' of the girls' secondary school circulated via the internationalization of women's organizations and of teachers' associations during the 1920s, as English women educators tested and discussed their ideas concerning the girls' secondary school within European transnational networks. Drawing on Bourdieu, she argues that the contribution of English women educationists to European debate regarding girls' secondary education was related to their location in communities of interpretation within wider political, professional and educational fields in which gender carried different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts. These fields, in turn, were implicated in wider change around the position of women in society, with education for girls operating as both a conservative force and a force for change. At the same time, the 'idea' of the girls' secondary school was validated through comparative investigation of girls' secondary education in Europe with a methodology in which particular notions of social change were embedded.<sup>73</sup> Transnational histories call into question the units out of which national histories have been made, but national and comparative approaches

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<sup>71</sup> Annemieke van Drenth, 'Doctors, Philanthropists and Teachers as 'True' Ventriloquists? Introduction to Special issue on the History of Special Education', *History of Education* 34, no.2 (2005): 107-117.

<sup>72</sup> Inderpal Grewal, A.Gupta and A.Ong, 'Introduction: Asian Transnationalities', *Positions* 7, no.3 (2000): 653.

<sup>73</sup> Joyce Goodman, 'Social Change and Secondary Schooling for Girls in the "Long 1920s": European Engagements', *History of Education* 36, no.4-5 (2007): 497-513. For transnational histories of education see also Joyce Goodman, 'Working for Change Across International Borders: the Association of Headmistresses and Education for International Citizenship', *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no.1 (2007): 165-180.

remain important for understanding the similarities and differences in the operation of gender in national and local contexts and for casting into relief evidence of sameness and difference that would otherwise be lost.<sup>74</sup> Their importance is exemplified in the comparative study of the teaching profession by Mineke van Essen<sup>75</sup> and the insights on gender from the comparative study of social change and education in Ireland, Scotland and Wales by Deirdre Raftery, Jane McDermid and Gareth Elwyn Jones.<sup>76</sup>

### **Afterword**

*History of Education* has contributed to ways in which gender has been imagined in historical reconstruction and analysis. The gendered politics of history playing out in the journal have also contributed to the development of history of education as discipline. Morgan argues that the 'radical refusal' of gender analysis 'to settle down' and to call anywhere 'home' is related to its place coming in from the margins as theoretical position. She claims that a gender perspective can never inhabit the historical mainstream in any epistemological sense, 'for that would be a disavowal of its fundamentally subversive practice'. Paraphrasing Morgan, this remains the radical openness of the future of gender research in *History of Education*: that in re-writing and re-theorising traditional educational history through the lens of gender, it must look to its own transformations and its own re-imaginings.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Glenda Sluga, 'The Nation and Comparative Imagination', in *Comparison and History*, ed. Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (New York: Routledge, 2004), 103-114.

<sup>75</sup> Mineke van Essen, 'Strategies of Women Teachers 1860-1920: Feminization of Dutch Elementary and Secondary Schools from a Comparative Perspective', *History of Education* 28, no.4 (1999): 413-433.

<sup>76</sup> Deirdre Raftery, Jane McDermid and Gareth Elwyn Jones, 'Social Change and Education in Ireland, Scotland and Wales: Historiography on Nineteenth-century Schooling', *History of Education* 36, no.4-5 (2007): 447-463. For the use of comparative data by women in the inter-war period see Joyce Goodman, 'Cosmopolitan Women Educators, 1920-1939: Inside/Outside Activism and Abjection', *Paedagogica Historica* 46, nos 1&2 (2010): 69-83.

<sup>77</sup> Morgan, *Feminist History Reader*, 37.