

Forgotten Women of Educational Psychology: Redeeming Their Contributions in the 21st Century

Author's Details:

- ⁽¹⁾**Jerry Aldridge, Ed.D.** University Professor University of Alabama at Birmingham
⁽²⁾**Jennifer L. Kilgo, Ed.D.** University Professor- University of Alabama at Birmingham
⁽³⁾**Grace Jepkemboi, Ph.D.** Assistant Professor-University of Alabama at Birmingham
⁽⁴⁾**A.K. Bruton, B.A.** Communication Specialist University of Alabama at Birmingham

Abstract:

The field of educational psychology developed into a salient subspecialty of psychology between 1890 and 1920. Gender bias during the early years of psychology and educational psychology was well known and documented. At the beginning of the 21st century, Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychological Association and the International Reading Association published histories of or related to educational psychology. These early 21st century histories continued to underrepresent women's contributions in psychology and education. The purpose of this article is to describe the continued marginalization and neglect in reporting historical contributions of women in educational psychology since 2000. Suggestions are provided for ways educational psychology can correct this injustice.

Key words: women, marginalization, educational psychology, 21st century

Modern psychology can be traced to 1879 when William Wundt (1832-1920) established the first psychological laboratory in Liezig, Germany (Boring, 1929). Edwin Boring (2008) called Wundt “the senior psychologist in the history of psychology. He is the first man who without reservation is properly called a psychologist” (p. 310). Around the same time, William James (1842-1910) established the first psychological laboratory in the United States at Harvard University (James, 1890; Watson, 1978). Contemporaries of William James included G. Stanley Hall (1844-1824) and Edward L. Thorndike (1874-1949). Hall, often referred to as the father of American developmental psychology, was the first person to receive a Ph.D. in psychology. Hall had many other firsts. He was the first president of the American Psychological Association (APA), the first president of Clark University, and the first psychologist to write extensively about the differences between men and women (Hall, 1904; Ross, 1972). Thorndike, also a first generation modern psychologist, was a founding father of educational psychology (Mayer, 2003). From this brief history of modern psychology, there is little doubt the discipline of psychology was established and dominated by men. Not surprising, the history of modern psychology during the 20th century continued to be directed through patriarchal lens. The fact that women in psychology were marginalized and under reported in the psychological and educational literature is well documented (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013; Calkins, 1930; Diehl, 1986; Furumoto, 1998; Gordon, 1905; Milar, 2000; Minton, 2000; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Seller, 1981; Stevens & Gardner, 1982). Even so, marginalization has continued in the 21st century, particularly regarding women's contributions to educational psychology. The purpose of this article is to describe gender inequity in writing the history of educational psychology during the first decade of the 21st century. Examples of the marginalization of women in educational psychology are provided using projects from Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the International Reading Association (IRA). A discussion of this injustice is presented, as well as recommendations for how this could be corrected.

The History of Educational Psychology as Described by the American Psychological Association

In 2003, the Educational Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association published a history of educational psychology in the 20th century. *Educational Psychology: A Century of Contributions* (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003) was divided into three parts, which included (a) the founding period (1890-1920), (b) the rise to prominence (1920-1960), and (c) educational psychology in the modern era (1960 to the present). This resource had chapters focusing on the contributions of 14 men, but only two women. Part I, the founding period, included the following five men: William James, Alfred Binet, John Dewey, Edward L. Thorndike, and Lewis Terman. Further, Part I included only one woman, Maria Montessori. Part II, the rise to prominence, reported the history and contributions of five men that included Lev S. Vygotsky, B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, Lee J. Cronbach, and Robert Mills Gagne. No women were reported during this era that spanned from 1920-1960. Benjamin Bloom, N. L. Gage, Jerome Bruner, and Albert Bandura were the four men reported in Part III, educational psychology in the modern era, and Ann L. Brown was the only woman represented.

During the founding period of educational psychology (1890-1920), the advancement of educational psychology was “identified with the more basic areas of learning, measurement, and development” (Hall, 2003, p. 6). During this

time, there were numerous women psychologists who contributed to these three applied areas. For example, Mary Calkins (1863-1930) studied learning through association experiments (Calkins, 1896); Kate Gordon (1878-1963) wrote one of the first educational psychology textbooks (Gordon, 1917); Leta Stetter Hollingsworth (1886-1939) (1942) pioneered intelligence testing and investigated learning in children with intellectual disabilities, as well as those who were gifted (Hollingsworth, 1942); Naomi Norsworthy (1877-1916) studied children with intellectual disabilities (Norsworthy, 1908) and child development (Norsworthy & Whitley, 1918); Millicent Shinn (1858-1940) wrote one of the first comprehensive baby biographies that was used as a text in child development courses (Shinn, 1895, 1900); Amy Tanner (1877-1964) also produced one of the first child development texts (Tanner, 1904); and Helen Woolley (1874-1947) was a pioneer of nursery schools in the United States (Woolley, 1926). While Norsworthy and Hollingsworth are briefly described in Zimmerman and Schunk (2003) in relation to Edward Thorndike, the other first generation women psychologists described here were not mentioned. Ironically, Maria Montessori (1870-1952), the Italian physician, was described regarding her contributions to educational psychology (Gutek, 2003).

Women psychologists, who made advances during the rise to prominence period (1920-1960) and the modern era (1960 to present day), were also under represented. For example, Mamie Phipps Clark (1917-1983) was the founder and director of the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem for over three decades. Clark's (1939) research on the identity of African American children through the use of coloring and doll tests made significant contributions to educational psychology. Anna Freud (1895-1982) "catalogued the normal and exceptional development of older childhood and adolescence" (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013, p. 102). She developed and researched residential and educational programs for young children during World War II (Edgumbe, 2000), produced assessments for entry into preschool programs (Freud, 1960), and constructed a series of lectures for teachers concerning education and development of young children (Freud, 1952).

Table 1 provides a summary of the contributions of women psychologists during the founding period and beyond. These women psychologists deserve a place in the early history of educational psychology; however, they were not included in Zimmerman and Schunk (2003).

Table 1

Women Psychologists Who Were Not Included in Zimmerman and Schunk (2003)

Name	Areas of Contribution to Educational Psychology
Mary Calkins (1863-1930)	Learning; Association experiments
Kate Gordon (1878-1963)	Learning; One of the first educational psychology textbooks
Millicent Shinn (1858-1940)	Child development; One of the first comprehensive baby biographies
Amy Tanner (1877-1964)	Child development; One of the first child development textbooks
Helen Thompson Woolley (1874-1947)	Early education; Pioneer in nursery school education
Mamie Phipps Clark (1917-1983)	Identity and education; Leader in African American identity development and education
Anna Freud (1895-1982)	Early care and education; Pioneer in developmental assessment and early intervention

Women educators of the 20th century, as well as psychologists, also conducted research, developed innovative ideas, implemented successful educational projects, and contributed to educational psychology; however, they were never mentioned in Zimmerman and Schunk (2003). Many were progressive in their ideas and innovations (Sadovnik & Semel, 2002). These included Ella Flagg Young (1845-1918), who helped John Dewey develop many of his educational ideas (Young, 1901); Jane Addams (1860-1935), who was a pioneer researcher and educator in settlement houses, worked to establish compulsory school attendance, helped establish the first juvenile court, and advocated for child labor laws (Addams, 1930; Wolfe, 2000); Marietta Johnson (1864-1938) and the School of Organic Education she developed (Johnson, 1929, 1974), served as research material for Dewey's qualitative study, *Schools of Tomorrow* (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1878-1967), founder of the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE), now Bank Street College of Education, was a pioneer in qualitative research in education whose ideas were forerunners of

developmentally appropriate practice (Mitchell, 1916; Nager & Shapiro, 2007; Shapiro & Nager, 1999). Caroline Pratt (1867-1954), founder of the City and Country School, was a researcher of young children's development and education (Pratt, 1948; Pratt & Stanton, 1926). Finally, Patty Smith Hill (1868-1946), an early childhood professor at Teachers College and a colleague of E. L. Thorndike, extensively researched children's intellectual and social development through play (Hill, 1923; Wolfe, 2000).

Table 2 provides a summary of women educators who deserve a place in the history of educational psychology. The contributions of each woman to educational psychology are highlighted.

Table 2

Women Educators Who Were Not Included in Zimmerman and Schunk (2003)

Name	Areas of Contribution to Educational Psychology
Ella Flagg Young (1845-1918)	Learning; Researcher of progressive education
Jane Addams (1860-1935)	Contexts of learning; Leader in child advocacy
Marietta Johnson (1864-1938)	Open education; Researcher of progressive education
Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1878-1967)	Qualitative research methods; Developer of curriculum materials for children
Caroline Pratt (1867-1954)	Education reform; Researcher of children's development and education
Patty Smith Hill (1868-1946)	Child development and early education; Researcher of children's intellectual and social development through play

Some educational psychologists may object to the recognition of these women educators, considering them unworthy of inclusion in a history such as Zimmerman and Schunk (2003). However, John Dewey merited a chapter in Zimmerman and Schunk. What is not reported is that all women educators discussed here influenced John Dewey's philosophy and research agenda (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013).

The History of Educational Psychology and Reading Instruction as Described by the International Reading Association

In the 1900s, the field of reading experienced difficulty finding a home in colleges and universities. During the early 21st century, reading was an important field of interest and research to educational psychology (Arnold & Sableski, 2007; Monaghan, 2007; Sears, 2007; Willis, 2007). As time passed, reading research and education became more associated with departments of teaching and learning, or curriculum and instruction, and less associated with educational psychology. Nonetheless, the early history of reading closely parallels the early developments in educational psychology and several individuals are associated with both fields. These include James Cattell (1860-1944), Charles Judd (1873-1946), Edmund Huey (1870-1913) and, most significantly, E. L. Thorndike (1874-1949) (Israel & Monaghan, 2007).

During the first decade of the 21st century, the International Reading Association, like Division 15 of the American Psychological Association, published a history. *Shaping the Reading Field: The Impact of Early Reading Pioneers, Scientific Research, and Progressive Ideas* reported the 20th century history of reading. Part I of the volume was titled, "The Psychologists: Researchers of Basic Reading Processes" (Israel & Monaghan, 2007, p. 33). Part II was called, "The Educational Psychologists: Researchers Applying Scientific Principles to Reading Instruction" (Israel & Monaghan, 2007, p. 99). In both the psychology and educational psychology parts of the book, only men were highlighted. This clear, gender bias was addressed in the preface of the book and then promptly dismissed.

The pioneers used for Israel and Monaghan (2007) were chosen directly from the Reading Hall of Fame, which began in 1973. The editor of *Reading Improvement*, Russell Cassell, and a group of founding members established the Reading Hall of Fame (Israel & Monaghan, 2007). While *Reading Improvement* is not a publication of the International Reading Association, nor is the journal associated with the organization, the decision was made to use the list of pioneers,

originally developed in 1973, as the content of the chapters for *Shaping the Reading Field* (Israel & Monaghan, 2007). The primary editor of this resource explained why more women were not included. “The pioneers were not selected by me. Instead, they were a preselected group, chosen in 1973 by the existing members of the Reading Hall of Fame” (Israel, 2007, p. xxi). Even before the authors of the edited book were chosen, colleagues in the International Reading Association began to complain about the exclusion of women. One unnamed member suggested, “Surely we should have included more women?...What happened to Ellen Cyr, who was the first woman in the United States to have a widely sold reading series?” (Israel, 2007, p. xxi). Finally, Israel acknowledged, “The focus of the Reading Hall of Famers on research unquestionably neglected the authors of earlier reading series in general, and women authors in particular” (Israel, 2007, p. xxi). Even after criticism revealed a lack of consideration for women researchers and contributors in the field of literacy, no changes were made to the list of early pioneers.

A wide range of women researchers with discordant views of reading could have been included in *Shaping the Reading Field* (Israel & Monaghan, 2007). Examples of these women include Ellen Cyr (1860-1920), the first woman to produce a reading program that was widely used throughout the United States (Cyr, 1891); Jean Chall (1921-1999) created and directed the graduate programs in reading at Harvard University and synthesized research on how children learn to read (Chall, 1967); Yetta Goodman (1931-present) conducted research on the roots of literacy and emphasized the salience of environmental print in learning to read (Goodman, 1980). Dolores Durkin (1921-2012) illuminated the need for comprehension instruction and found that teachers misunderstood the differences between testing reading and teaching reading comprehension (Durkin, 1976). Marilyn Jager Adams (1948-present) is still a pioneer on intervention and prevention of reading problems in young children (Adams, 1990). Finally, Susan B. Neuman (1947-present) has conducted innovative research on access to print and media, best practices in early literacy, as well as reading and poverty (Neuman & Celano, 2006).

Table 3 provides a summary of these six women exemplars that deserve recognition in educational psychology. Similarly, the table highlights their contributions to the history of reading and literacy instruction.

Table 3

Women Who Should Be Included in Future Iterations of Reading Pioneers

Name	Areas of Contribution to Reading/Psychology
Ellen Cyr (1860-1920)	Reading instruction and materials; First woman author of a widely used reading program in the U.S.
Jean Chall (1921-1999)	How children learn to read; Synthesizer of research in early reading; Director of Reading at Harvard
Yetta Goodman (1931-present)	The roots of literacy; Emphasized the importance of literacy experiences including environmental print
Delores Durkin (1921-2012)	Comprehension instruction; Researcher of basal readers and the teaching of comprehension
Marilyn Jager Adams (1948-present)	Intervention and prevention of reading problems; Researcher on how children develop literacy
Susan B. Neuman (1947-present)	Early literacy and poverty; Researcher on children’s access to print materials and instruction

Other women researchers contributing to the psychology of reading also would qualify for inclusion in the history of literacy. Examples include Lisa Delpit (1995) for her research on the cultural contexts of learning, Dorothy Strickland (2010) for her work in early literacy, Nina Traub (2000) for her research on phonics instruction, Joann Yatvin (2004) for her work on the role of government and standards in reading, and Marie Carbo (Carbo, Dunn, & Dunn, 1986) for her investigations of reading styles.

Discussion

The history of educational psychology evolved through patriarchal structures that remain in existence today. “Like the segmented relationship that emerged between medical doctors and nurses, the relationship that grew up between scholars and practitioners of education

was gender related and hierarchical” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 234). The vast majority of pioneers highlighted in recent histories of educational psychology, published in the 21st century, were privileged white men (Israel & Monaghan, 2007; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003). Edward Lee Thorndike, as a founder of educational psychology, is a salient example. “As a scientist

formulating the laws of learning, Edward L. Thorndike felt confident that he could enhance a teacher's performance without ever watching that teacher teach. Buoyed by a false sense of superiority and by then-common assumptions about linear relationships between theory and practice, scholars like Thorndike failed to heed the old adage that doctors could not cure if nurses did not care" (Lagemann, 2000, p. 234).

While E. L. Thorndike is discussed in most educational psychology courses, the women reported here are not. According to Madeleine Grumet (1988), the "absence of women

is not a mere oversight" (p. xi). The vast contributions of women in both education and psychology are not included, even in the recent 21st century histories reported here. About the nonexistent of women's voices in the academy, Grumet goes on to say, "Women constitute the majority of all public school instructional personnel; nevertheless, our experience of this work is hidden. You will not find it in the volumes that record the history and philosophy of education. You will not find it articulated in teacher education texts or administrative handbooks. It is hidden from our students, our colleagues, even from ourselves" (Grumet, 1988, p. xi).

The issue with pioneers in *Educational Psychology: A History of Contributions* (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003) and *Shaping the Reading Field* (Israel & Monaghan, 2007) is not who was included, but who was not. Both Division 15 of the American Psychological Association and the International Reading Association must correct this injustice by proactively developing ways to be more gender inclusive of history and practice. To this end, the following recommendations are made:

1. Rewrite the history of educational psychology and reading with the intention of incorporating women who made seminal contributions to the field, but were marginalized because of gender.
2. Encourage members to engage in educational psychology and literacy research that address issues of gender, as well as race, ethnicity, class, disability and difference.
3. While gender issues should be inclusive and not isolated, until gender equity is accomplished, develop special sessions at conferences to address gender issues and other differences.

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