Midwives of progressive education: The Bureau of Educational Experiments 1916-1919
Staring, J.F.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
CHAPTER 4

The Bureau of Educational Experiments 1916-1919
The Founding of the Progressive Education Association 1919

The Bureau was a non-hierarchical collective of women who worked together towards common ends and who supported each other's work through mentoring and guidance. This was a network of female relationships in which both personal and professional needs and interests intersected. Though not as encompassing an environment as the settlement, in these respects the Bureau was more like a settlement than an academic institution or a research institute...Moreover, Mitchell, Johnson, Pratt, and others associated with the founding of the Bureau were part of an active network of women volunteers and professionals in New York reform efforts on behalf of poor families, largely immigrants living in slum conditions, particularly children and mothers.


In Chapter I, I argued that a nationwide movement for progressive education did not exist during the Progressive era. Yet, local grassroots education reform initiatives were alive, instigated by social settlement workers, parent associations, and civic groups, among others. Sections in the chapter discuss several of these renewal efforts, focusing on New York City circumstances. It is interesting that a number of the same women — that is, Caroline Pratt and her circle of activist colleagues — appear over and over in differing settings as grassroots reformers. I underscored that local circumstances prevented several educational organizations founded during the era from evolving into a nationwide movement for progressive teaching practices, e.g., the Gary School League. In late 1917, the outcome of the NYC Gary School War over combating school congestion effectively blocked progress toward such a movement. What is more, the conflict ominously demonstrated that parents and community leaders needed voice in education reform efforts and organizations. Another point that I underscored is that government repression of educators (and others) who had opposed the 1917 entry of the United States in World War I had an added paralyzing impact on educational renewal in 1917 and 1918, especially in New York City. Yet, it did not dull the spirit of reformers. Only two-and-a-half months after the November 1918 armistice ending war activities, a nationwide organization striving for professionalization of progressive education teachers was established: the Progressive Education Association (PEA). This Association also functioned as a clearinghouse, as well as offering resources to protoprofessionalize parents and other interested laypersons. The NYC Gary School War lesson that parents need voice in renewal had been grasped well and even led to the PEA Secretary exclaiming the PEA “is primary an association of parents, not of teachers” (Cobb, 1920, p. 204).

In Chapters 2 and 3, I sketched parallel developments in the winding careers of Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt, two women who became members of the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) and would become essential links in the
establishment of the PEA and the formulation of its mission. We saw how both women, after receiving a Protestant religious upbringing in rural settings, became teachers at small rural schools. Also, both women later taught at Normal Schools, instructing prospecting teachers. Johnson then experienced an existential crisis, ten years after its onset resulting in the founding of a rural coeducational experimental school in the utopian Georgist colony in Fairhope, Alabama. Johnson (1909, 1910a, 1911) identified herself as a Georgist social reformer, committed to reforming education in order to change human relations and living conditions for the better. Constantly struggling meeting the school’s budget since 1912, she toured the country raising the needed money by delivering lectures, thereby extending her social network while almost developing into a prophet of educational renewal. Pratt, after a professional crisis and a winding career as textile industry researcher, settlement house worker, political activist and manufacturer of toys, founded an experimental coeducational urban school in New York City. She (1905a-b, 1906, 1912a) plainly identified herself as a member of the Socialist Party. She had a goal to improve society through her tutoring.

Both Johnson and Pratt advocated manual training, learning by activities, and the amalgamation of the three R’s, social sciences and the arts into one interconnected curriculum. They promoted field trips for the children as part of their school’s programmes, Johnson in rural areas, Pratt in inner-city conditions. Eventually they became members of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, Pratt at its inception in 1916, Johnson a year later.

The present chapter tells the founding history of the Progressive Education Association added to a description of the early history of the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments. I emphasize that between 1916 and 1919, the BEE had no clear initial direction and was limping on two legs. On the one hand, Pratt and her Bureau colleagues offered a clearinghouse — a ‘Bureau of School Information’ gathering and distributing educational information, preparing exhibitions, issuing bulletins, and maintaining a specialized library for professional and general publics, professionalizing the first, protoprofessionalizing the latter. On the other hand, they subsidized, initiated, and conducted a range of educational experiments, and anticipated great advantages from mental testing in educational research. Before they found their direction, at last in 1919, by enlivening two associated laboratory schools as the vital heart of the organization, Bureau members scored a few successes and their full share of failures. In the spring of 1917, parallel to the U.S.’ entry into the war, they evaluated their progress and formulated new priorities. Among other courses of action, this led to hiring Marietta Johnson to supervise a demonstration organic education class at Public School 95, and to become a non-resident BEE member. One outstanding yet unintended success was the Bureau’s previously unacknowledged influence on the birth of the Progressive Education Association. In turn, formation of the PEA helped Pratt and her Bureau colleagues focus on small-scale research priorities instead of running in all directions, providing them means to restructure the Bureau organization and to grow into a kind of forerunner action research institute.

The Formation of a Group of Women Progressives Around Sprague Mitchell

In the fall of 1911, Lucy Sprague took a four-month sabbatical from her position as Dean of Women at the University of California, Berkeley. During a series of what she characterized as apprenticeships, Sprague worked with prominent women in education and social settlement in New York City. She arrived just when troubles related to the city’s population congestion began to peak. Later, in her autobiographical Two Lives
(1953), she wrote of the very last apprenticeship, the one in public schools, that “This is the work for me...Public education is the most constructive attack on social problems” (p. 210).

In 1913, following her marriage to economist Wesley Mitchell and their subsequent move from Berkeley to Manhattan, she, now Lucy Sprague Mitchell, offered her services to the Public Education Association. She began as a volunteer under the direction of Harriet Johnson, then head of the Association’s visiting teachers. Problems of overcrowding in New York City corresponded with those described in White’s (1886) The Problems of a Great City, a book that analyzed failing inner-London-city conditions, and included chapters on overcrowding, drink, and “Sterilization of the Unfit.” In October of 1913, Sprague Mitchell made her first NYC presentation, on teaching sex education, at a meeting of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis; as a former Dean of Women who had given pioneering courses in sex education to female university students, Sprague Mitchell saw a need for meaningful sex education for all ages (Gordon, 1990). At the meeting she met Laura Garrett, a special teacher who taught sex hygiene classes and who lectured on sex education — including the topic of eugenics. They became life-long friends.

After a year’s work for the Public Education Association, in mid-1914, Sprague Mitchell accepted the post of Chairman of the Association’s Committee on Hygiene of School Children. She administered mental tests on schoolchildren, made home investigations together with visiting teachers, and gathered physical data of the children by measuring the senses, length, weight, nutrition status, blood pressure, etc. She did so to achieve expertise in test administration while seeing to establish new standards for testing of children and gaining insight into their individual scores and in generalized growth norms. The mental examinations, which had been administered by some Public Education Association workers since about 1911, included a wide range of newly developed construction puzzles, memory tests, naming opposites tests, identification of forms tests, motor control and coordination tests, and of course the revised Binet-Simon Age Scale test. Home investigations, establishing family and personal histories, family relationships, living conditions, statements of teachers, and other social data completed the mental tests (E. Dewey, Child, & Ruml, 1920).

At the time, Sprague Mitchell not only worked with visiting teacher and mental test forerunner Harriet Johnson, making home investigations, but also with intelligence test pioneer Frederick Ellis, who, as director of the Department of Social Research of the NYC Neurological Institute, developed and revised psychological tests and tested children. As well, she combined forces with Elisabeth Irwin, another mental test forerunner — who administered Binet-Simon intelligence tests at special schools (Irwin, 1914, 1915a, 1916), in coordination with the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys at Vineland, New Jersey, under direction of Henry Goddard, author of the notorious eugenic study The Kallikak Family (1912), who had introduced the Binet and Simon tests in the U.S.A. in 1908. Goddard (1917) also tested immigrants at Ellis Island in New York Bay before they were permitted entrance in the U.S.A. He maintained that the majority of the immigrants tested were ‘feeble-minded,’ that is developmentally disabled.

This confidence in testing “on every conceivable aspect of learning and human development” (Reese, 2005, p. 158) paralleled the onset of faith in the authority of scientific psychology. This occurred not only in setting education, medicine, and immigration policy, but also in the U.S. Army. A testing team at the Vineland Training School, which included Goddard, developed the U.S. Army Intelligence Tests, introduced during World War I.
In December 1914, at the annual meeting of the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroses, held in Manhattan, Sprague Mitchell read a paper envisioning psychological testing of children through a “Psychological Clinic for Normal School Children” (Daily Standard Union, 1914). In 1915, following up on her earlier testing experience, Sprague Mitchell wrote a proposal to establish a clinic to administer psychological tests to schoolchildren, which was funded as Psychological Survey in the same year.229 In the fall of that year, she began, together with her staff, working out of her own Greenwich Village home as newly elected head of the Public Education Association’s Psychological Survey. Staff members were Evelyn Dewey, Harriet Forbes, Eleanor Johnson, and Frederick Ellis. In 1916, Harriet Johnson, then head of the Association’s visiting teacher project, joined her staff. This was a largely spontaneous clustering of exceptionally capable women at the Public Education Association.

They — that is, the staff of the Survey, its majority experienced female pioneer psychological test administrators, together with Sprague Mitchell’s husband Wesley Mitchell, intelligence test pioneer Elisabeth Irwin, sex education teacher Laura Garrett, Jean Lee Hunt (the Secretary of the Fairhope League in support of Marietta Johnson’s endeavours), and long-time socialist friends Helen Marot and Caroline Pratt — had found each other. In the final section of Chapter 3 we have seen that they came together during winter evenings of 1916, discussing an idea to establish and organize an educational clearinghouse, a ‘Bureau of School Information.’ They formed a close-knit network of like-minded social and educational reformers. In the spring of 1916, then, they united as the Bureau of Educational Experiments.

Before addressing the precise association of Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt with the Bureau, their strength, focus and ability regarding educational renewal, and their involvement with the founding of the Progressive Education Association, the subsequent four sections in this chapter will narrate the founding of the BEE, its functioning as clearinghouse, its early accomplishments as research institute exploring the world of educational reform, and the mid-1917 evaluation of its first year. After that, I first list its 1917 three new priorities, before explaining Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt’s exact association with the Bureau.

May 1916: The Founding of the BEE

In May 1916, Sprague Mitchell, her husband, and Harriet Johnson founded the Bureau of Educational Experiments. A few months later, in October 1916, the BEE already opened offices at 70 Fifth Avenue. The Bureau strove to be a simple, cooperative, flexible and democratic organization. The organizational modus was not unlike that of the Hartley House social settlement, where almost all of the original female charter members had once worked. The Bureau had no specified director. Sprague Mitchell intended her position among active members as that of a primus inter pares. “Consecutive cooperative thinking” was the Bureau’s motto (Antler, 1982, p. 564).230

When Bureau members began their work in May 1916, archives show that the original aims were both to collect and share information regarding progressive education, and to conduct, promote, and support educational experiments.231 Seeking formal approval for Bureau education initiatives in the spring of 1916, Jean Lee Hunt successfully petitioned the United States Bureau of Education in Washington, D.C. for governmental printing and franking privileges for the Bureau. Using book and periodical indexes, Bureau members initially gathered numerous articles and reports. This collection formed the basis of an extensive library of books and articles about testing schoolchildren, alternative schools, and progressive education. In the fall of 1916, they
opened a reading room available to professionals and the public. By so doing, within a few months from formation, they had already met one of their initial goals. BEE members actively extended their social networks. They also gathered a comprehensive collection of data on education research and researchers, libraries, organizations interested in experimental education, and institutions of interest to the Bureau. In corresponding with those organizations, they acquired member lists of educational societies, testing organizations, mailing lists from social settlements, publishers, and contact information from persons attending conventions and conferences. Systematically, they created a master mailing list, which further enabled them to approach individuals and institutions receptive to Bureau initiatives, request information, and send printed promotion material, extending their clearinghouse function.

**Carry-Over of Gary Plan Propagandizing**

In *Chapter 1*, we have seen that the majority of the women who became BEE charter members in May 1916 had vigorously supported the “Garyizing” of New York City’s public elementary schools. At the time, they worked for the Public Education Association, the civic pressure organization that officially and enthusiastically endorsed William Wirt’s plan to address NYC public school congestion with a Gary-type class organizing system, *i.e.*, “Garyizing” the overcrowded public schools. In April 1916, only one month prior to the founding of the Bureau, later BEE members Sprague Mitchell and Eleanor Johnson became officers of the Gary School League that endorsed Wirt’s plan; each chaired a standing committee for one year. In the same month, they already represented the League and spoke in favour of Wirt’s plan at a public hearing before the NYC Board of Education.

Astonishingly, by June 1916 — merely one month after its establishment — the Bureau hired a field worker to collect all accessible information on Wirt’s Gary Plan to combat school congestion in New York City. The field worker visited the experimental schools in Gary and “Garyized” schools in other cities. Within a few months time, she put together the most comprehensive collection of Gary schools material available. In addition, the Bureau distributed a *Gary Bibliography*. Internal BEE weekly bulletins listed where and when ‘moving pictures’ of Gary schools would be shown. The Bureau even organized a Gary Plan discussion evening for public school teachers early in March 1917.

As well, the Bureau commissioned a researcher and an artist to put together an exhibit consisting of fifteen screens detailing Gary System characteristics and Wirt’s class organizing principles. The screens were first exhibited at a public meeting promoting the Gary Plan. It will therefore not come as a surprise to know that the Secretary of the Gary School League exclaimed that “there is in New York City no other group of people so keenly in sympathy with the Gary school work, so deeply grounded in educational theory and practise, and so willing to help forward radical experiments in education.”

It is safe to conclude that women who worked for the Public Education Association until mid-1916 and since then served the BEE as active Bureau members, or otherwise, *seamlessly* carried over their Gary Plan propagandizing from the Public Education Association to the Bureau of Educational Experiments. They continued to very energetically support the principles of Wirt’s plan and the Gary School League — professionalizing the specialized public, protoprofessionalizing parents and the lay public. Interestingly in this respect: John Dewey, promoter of “Garyizing” NYC public schools, and William Wirt, who headed the inner-city “Garyizing,” served as the Bureau’s honorary members.
1916-1917: The Bureau as Clearinghouse

In April 1917, following the exhibit of screens explaining how Wirt’s plan would work in NYC public schools, the Bureau organized an exhibit on toys and school equipment at the Riverside Branch of the New York Public Library, with special attention given to Caroline Pratt’s Do-With Toys™.239 In June, the Bureau organized yet another exhibit, this one on psychological tests, at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Corporation Schools in Buffalo, New York.240

The April 1917 exhibit led to publication of several Bureau bulletins; the June 1917 exhibit led to publication of two more Bureau bulletins and an additional pamphlet listing available mental tests.241

Given that the majority of BEE members had earlier been involved in pioneer mental testing of schoolchildren, the exhibit and bulletins concerning psychological test materials represented their interest in developing standardized testing procedures. Knowing about mental norms, and digressions from these norms, seemed to be an important basis for observing children during their activities. General interest of Bureau members in psychological test materials led to publication of a Bureau sponsored book about testing schoolchildren (E. Dewey, Child, & Ruml, 1920).242

BEE Secretary Hunt (1917b) devotedly referenced the exhibit of psychological test materials in School and Society and stated, “[A] special library of professional books, periodicals, bulletins and reports is maintained, in addition to the services offered by the Secretary’s office.” The Bureau’s reading room was open daily, without charges, making the collected information available to “teachers, workers in educational, civic and philanthropic organizations, and to the general public.”243 Between 1917 and 1922, the BEE as clearinghouse would issue a dozen bulletins discussing the curriculum of diverse experimental schools, sex education, play equipment, mental tests, and other subjects.244

1916-1917: The Bureau as Research Institute

The Bureau’s first listings consisted of topics of interest to educators: teaching, health, administrative problems, and, lastly, school and community.245 Specific headings included Gary school methods, school discipline, the visiting teachers program, Laura Garrett’s approach to sex education, and Marietta Johnson’s educational principles. Bureau members and a number of interested outsiders were asked to write proposals for research or classes related to the listings. The Bureau received twenty proposals during the fall of 1916 and winter of 1917.246 Only a few survived scrutiny. Garrett’s sex education proposal was approved. She would begin teaching in P.S. 95, and later in Play School as well. Other plans were reconsidered, while requests for financial aid were turned down.

To determine which proposals were practical, the Bureau held several informal conferences during the winter months of 1917. Seminar topics included industrial education, vocational guidance, the use of dramatization in schoolwork, toys and play in education, nature study and social hygiene, rural schools, and summer camps. Through these conferences, through inviting experts to lecture at these conferences, and through reading suggested literature, Bureau members gained a fair overview of subjects for further research, turning themselves in involved professionals — professionalizing themselves.247

Three experiments: the Bureau’s Camp Liberty experiment, Neurological Institute Laboratory School experiment, and Porter School experiment are illustrated in next three sub-sections.
A number of suggested topics for research explored by Bureau members would eventually form the nucleus of a project — leading to a report, experiment, or book publication. For example, in the winter of 1917 Helen Marot (not a BEE member) suggested investigating viability of organizing a multi-day conference about educational aspects of military training in public schools. Conference discussions should address psychological, medical, sociological, and physical training aspects. Marot also recommended that John Dewey present a summary of relevant educational views. Instead of organizing such a seminar, the Bureau asked Marot to write a proposal to recruit city boys for farm labour in the countryside. Her immediate response to the request led to a BEE administered experiment. The rationale was that implementing the proposal would lessen work force demands due to the cessation of immigration, a chronic exodus of farm workers to the cities and consequent absorption of work force in manufacture. It would also help alleviate food shortage that might ensue due to World War I. Boys and young men would work in the country as farm cadets during the day and board in a labour supply camp by night. Moreover, the work itself would constitute an educational experience for the boys; it was “to test out by actual practice new and meritorious methods of instruction for children and youth” and to demonstrate “social and educational values of a summer’s experience in a carefully supervised labor camp” (Artman, 1918, p. 149). The Bureau financed publication and distribution of Marot’s proposal as a folder: *Farm Labor and Boy Camps*, reprinted in *The New Country Life* (H. Marot, 1917a).

Next, in June 1917, Camp Liberty, the envisaged farm cadet camp was set up in Stanley in upstate New York, at the invitation of several of its farmers. In total twenty-seven young men of different — mostly immigrant — parentage and with different religion (five religions were represented), mainly from comfortable NYC and suburban middle-class families and a minority from lower East Side families, with an average age of eighteen years, were recruited and enlisted through the Farm Service Office at Columbia University and the Farm Cadet Bureau of the State Military Training Commission. On the whole, they were students from high schools and colleges. The camp lasted until intensive farm harvest ended.

Early in 1918, a report by the camp’s leader appeared in *The Survey* (Artman, 1918), and the BEE issued a bulletin analyzing the experiment (Hunt (Ed.), 1918b). While there is no evidence that anyone objected to this Bureau sponsored exploitation of student labour, both accounts raise questions about how well the middle class BEE reformers understood the relationship between labour and learning. What did the young ‘student’ farmers learn from a day of hard farm labour? What did they learn from the camp’s self-government features? “It taught them the dignity of manual work when honestly and thoroughly done,” wrote the camp’s leader (Artman, 1918, p. 154). He exemplified his evaluation by giving several illustrations of first-hand experiences of farm life and farming operations carrying some educational aspects for inner-city young men. Still, though his report and the Bureau bulletin bespeak the camp’s council — asserting that the group formation processes and working in a rural environment was in itself educational, as contrasted to, for instance, spending the summer in recreational camps — they deliver no genuine insights into Camp Liberty’s educational aspects. The great demand for the young men’s labour and ten-hour working days effectively prevented them from attending educationally intended evening gatherings. In spite of both accounts praising the experiment, and “leading employers expressed a strong desire to have a
similar camp established in the following summer” (ibid.), no further camp sessions were organized under Bureau aegis.\textsuperscript{248}

**Demise of the Neurological Institute Laboratory School**

A plan to establish a special ‘Laboratory School for Children with Special Defects’ at or near a neurological hospital in New York City was first discussed in June 1915 by visiting teacher Mary Marot and Frederick Ellis of the NYC Neurological Institute. It had several false starts. The General Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Committee on Mental Hygiene and other organizations had various reasons to reject the undertaking (Ungraded, 1915). In 1916, at last, the BEE appropriated the money needed to establish the envisaged school (Bailey, 1916).

In October 1916, the Laboratory School opened on the ground floor of an apartment building near the Neurological Institute. On average eight children attended. The criteria for acceptance was that they could neither fit in with regular graded nor ungraded classes. First, all children were administered mental tests and medically examined, including neurological exams. All turned out to be behind for their age physically. Follow-up examinations included physical measurements, teacher’s observations, and psychological assessments. Physical examinations showed that a majority required glasses; several needed removal of their tonsils. All children received dental treatment. During their stay at Laboratory School, they profited from good nourishment and physical exercise. Teachers made records of the children’s progress. The curriculum was not strict, allowing the freedom needed to make progress in accumulating knowledge, experience and skills. Block building and excursions formed part of schoolwork activities, very much as it was the case in Pratt’s Play School. The Laboratory School program also shows that time was reserved for projects, well before Kilpatrick first introduced project method, in 1918.\textsuperscript{249}

The experiment failed completely. It began too late in the academic year; not all children had been pre-examined physically and mentally. Not all of the children were suited to the program. Some were merely suffering from an infectious disease or undernourishment. These children received proper treatment and were sent home. School staff was too small. Initial planning had been insufficient. The teaching personnel were not trained to instruct such a group of children. Teaching methods were inadequate. This particular BEE experiment was discontinued in May of 1917. As regards to conducting research not under complete BEE control, Bureau members had learned a dear lesson.\textsuperscript{250} Failures represented hard lessons to learn before genuine, lived-through professionalism could thrive.

**The Porter School Experiment**

Between 1910 and 1912, before she became sole teacher at Porter School, a typical one-room school in the ‘Little Red School House’ tradition, Marie Turner Harvey (1866-1952) directed the Model Rural School at a State Normal School. There she instructed distinctive one-room school didactics, additionally stressing the importance of acknowledging interests of the school’s rural children, thereby serving the needs of country life in the form of teaching laundering, domestic sciences, agricultural principles (like testing milk, seeds, and studying soils), as well as installing good school heating, electricity, rural telephone connections, water supply and flush closets (American Primary Teacher, 1911; Harvey, 1912; Scudder, 1912).
In 1912, in Porter School, Harvey began practicing her newly developed school methods. She remodelled the out-of-repair school building in collective labour with parents, put running water into the building, organized school gardens as well as a demonstration experimental farm, community clubs, music clubs and music bands, and social gatherings at the schoolhouse, with the aim of making the school the center of social activities, revitalizing community life. Harvey (1912) described ideal one-room schools as “the real social center of the community” (p. 484), underscoring a “wise co-operation of the home, church and school” (p. 482). While she conducted poultry experiments and kept good relations with the State Agricultural College in order to learn about the latest science finds (Nelson, 1919), sending some of her students at times to its “Short Courses,” her “medium of teaching” was always agriculture, using farming expressions for spelling, “the weight of a given number of hogs before shipping and after the shrinkage which follows shipping” for mathematics, etc. (Keyes, 1914, p. 208), stressing “the relation between formal instruction and practical activities, its intimate connection with and reaction on the community” (State of Missouri, 1915, p. 114).

Inspired by these actions, Evelyn Dewey (1919) would write, “[Harvey] has never done things for the people of Porter, she has done things with them” (p. 71). The task Harvey set herself almost failed; a few years later approximately half the community voted against her experiment and against re-election her as teacher, nearly bankrupting the school. Mid-1916, though, BEE members became interested in Harvey and her community school. In November, they appropriated money to the school for financial support for the duration of one year. Their money saved the school, interfering however with Harvey’s experiment of involving the rural population with their local public school (also meaning: financially).

Evelyn Dewey regularly visited Harvey’s school, in 1919 reporting her findings in New Schools for Old, her BEE supported book on the regeneration of Porter School.

Mid-1917: Evaluation After One Year BEE

By the end of 1916, the very first half year of work already betrayed an essential duality within the Bureau’s aims: would the BEE grow to be a clearinghouse servicing the general and professional public, or would the BEE hire experts to conduct experiments? It turned out that for a while longer the BEE would remain a bureau of (school) information. Its conducted surveys, bulletins, organized exhibits, and literature searches were successful. Thus, the Bureau’s clearinghouse leg stood firmly on the ground.

The BEE did however not perform well when conducting experimental research. Disappointing outcomes of diverse activities taken on during the first year taught Bureau members that their overall organization was hardly functioning optimally. They interacted with too many “spot experiments” that they had not chosen to conduct themselves, and over which they had no control. Bureau supported experimental undertakings were only more or less affiliated with the Bureau’s aims, like the Neurological Institute’s Laboratory School and Harvey’s Porter School. The optimistic view was that these activities would provide the Bureau insight into conducting educational experiments. However, supporting the Porter School, for instance, simply supposed donating financial aid for school equipment, repairs and salary, thereby interfering with the school’s original community work experiment. While parents and the wider Porter community were unable to raise needed assets, they were in fact prevented to do so because of Bureau financial support; therefore, it was realistic to expect that community involvement would remain limited to only deliver assistance crucial to end the school’s disrepair status. The Neurological Institute Laboratory School, on the other
hand, had been opened far too hastily. Preliminary physical and mental examinations of
the children were absent. A number of children had to be excluded from the study, which
was already small, since, upon further examination, they did not have relevant
neurological conditions. The school’s staff was neither trained nor well organized. A
number of additional other factors interfered with the gathering of relevant data.

Mid-1917: Three New BEE Priorities

In the previous four sections, I have reviewed the founding of the BEE, its functioning as
clearinghouse, its early accomplishments as research institute, and, lastly, its mid-1917
evaluation of its first year. In this section I address its mid-1917 new priorities, as well as
Caroline Pratt and Marietta Johnson’s association with the Bureau.

The 1916-1917 Annual Report of the Chairman of the Bureau of Educational Experiments
reiterated the Bureau’s mid-1917 stance — speaking of a “sketchy” Bureau organization,
a “vision [that] has not been clear enough,” and about “scattered experiments:” “We
have come to realize that the danger of scattered experiments is that we shall not know in
any reliable way what actual results we are getting. Unless we have some uniform
method of measuring our results, we shall not carry very far our real purpose.”
Nevertheless, the Bureau’s first year’s developments positively aided in focusing BEE
members on defining their foremost and central aim: studying children and their
reactions to differing environments. The 1916-1917 Annual Report of the Chairman
suggests three new priorities: improvement of office organization to oversee experiments, surveys,
publications and other work; hiring qualified scientists; and, opening a laboratory school.

Regarding the first priority, overseeing Bureau activities: Between 1918 and 1922,
the Bureau improved its office organization indeed. Precise office management details
are not of interest here, but the fact that the Bureau since mid-1919 managed two
laboratory schools and held regular meetings with the teachers of both schools to keep
everybody involved and informed, underlines its growing professionalism.

Over the years, BEE members and Bureau-hired researchers and office workers with various career
backgrounds, career goals, and political dreams, were to grow into a more efficient self-
directing cooperative body.

Regarding the second priority, hiring qualified scientists: The Bureau especially
needed psychologists trained in mental testing and statistics as well as a physician to
administer medical examinations. As a result, the BEE in 1917 hired a psychologist, in
1918 a second psychologist, and a physician in 1919. The Bureau also needed a
recorder to keep the physical, psychological, and social records of the examined,
measured, observed, and tested children up to date. Interestingly, Mary Marot, founding
mother of the Public Education Association visiting teacher program became the BEE
Recorder in 1918.

Finally, concerning the research priority: After Bureau members in earnest
concluded that the Neurological Institute Laboratory School failed, they first intended to
hire the principal of Public School 89 to direct a BEE laboratory school. P.S. 89 was the
Harlem school with the largest population of African Americans in New York City.
However, when the Bureau unsuccessfully requested the principal to change P.S. 89 for a
school more in line with BEE goals, efforts to cooperate with him ended swiftly.

1917-1919: Pratt’s Play School Prime BEE Laboratory School Candidate

Between mid-1917 and 1919, not surprisingly, Pratt’s Play School more and more
became the prime candidate to function as the Bureau’s laboratory school. In 1916, Play
School moved into a refurbished stable behind the Mitchell Washington Square home. The back yard became the play-yard. The school had three classrooms and functioned as an experimental school. Pratt (1917a) assured parents that there would be no experiments on children in her school. The children were the experimenters! She observed that the experimental method of trial and error is their true method—for instance, when learning to walk and talk. Another of the school’s articles of faith was: “The pursuit of information is never regarded as an object in itself. It is the process of getting the information which is important” (p. 12). Pratt paid ample attention to its most visible example: children learn experientially during and after field trips. And she connected children’s creative experimenting to art: “As the children play with drawing materials, with plasticine, with blocks and toys, with words, with dramatics, the emotions are freed and in a primitive way art is produced” (p. 13). Still, until mid-1919, Play School had not yet begun to function as the Bureau’s laboratory school.

As long as there was no BEE heart in the form of a lab school, improving organization management and hiring research experts did not root well. When NYC Mayor Mitchel’s attempt to “Garyize” all public schools appeared to contribute to his failure to win reelection in November 1917, the Bureau’s support of the Gary Plan suddenly represented a major obstacle. Since its foundation in May of 1916, the Bureau had championed Gary Plan school management ideals, and its experiential learning procedures. BEE co-founder Sprague Mitchell even was an officer of the Gary School League. She chaired one of its committees. The moral of the outcome of the Gary School War in late 1917 (namely that educational renewal needs the consent of parents and local community leaders) and the consequent official reversal of implementing the Gary Plan in the city’s public schools in 1918 were hard lessons to learn for Bureau members.

1917-1918: Marietta Johnson and the BEE Demonstration Organic Education Class

Of course, not every BEE endeavour turned into failure. Two distinct Bureau enterprises led to mixed results. The first, a demonstration class in Organic Education supervised by Marietta Johnson, to be sketched in this sub-section, began well in 1917 but ended abruptly in 1918—neither a failure, nor a success. The other, a nutrition experiment in P.S. 64, to be sketched in the next sub-section, began in 1918 and was rather successfully brought to an end in 1921. Yet, Bureau members held serious reservations about the scope of tests and measurements conducted by hired scientists. By the end of 1918, the skepticism would give food to a more generally felt insistence to definitely modify Bureau priorities. This coincided with an obvious disappointment following a Bureau-led endeavour of Caroline Pratt and her partner Helen Marot, to be reviewed following the sub-section on nutrition research.

In the final section in Chapter 2, I emphasized that—just as Bureau members were contemplating discontinuation of the Neurological Institute Laboratory School in the spring of 1917—Marietta Johnson wrote an application to the BEE for assistance in the support of her school. By then, Bureau members had already been considering a plan “for cooperation with Mrs. Johnson, P.S. 95 and [the] Greenwich House” settlement. Bureau members found that an organic education experimental class could fit a new 1917 Bureau priority to establish a laboratory school. As outlined in Chapter 2,
in return for a generous salary, the Bureau offered Marietta Johnson a supervisory role in teaching an experimental organic education class at P.S. 95 as well as advisory work at P.S. 64.267 She began that work in September 1917 (School, 1917). Half a year later, apparently quite satisfied with her own results, she reported to the BEE Working Council that regarding P.S. 95, she observed “great improvement in the children’s voices, their poise, and their self-direction.”268 Earlier, in October 1917, Bureau members seemed convinced of Johnson’s expertise, and suggested her to the Membership Committee as a non-resident member.269 In December, the BEE Working Council unanimously elected her as a non-resident member, meaning that whenever she attended committee meetings, she would have the qualifications and privileges of active Bureau members, but not the right to vote.270

At the time, Johnson was not only serving as supervisor and advisor in P.S. 64 and P.S. 95; she continued to lecture on organic education at teachers’ conferences,271 held regularly at Greenwich House in Manhattan, and elsewhere, outside of New York City.272 And, at an exhibit in the spring of 1918, at the Boston Normal School, a Bureau representative (possibly Johnson) explained her organic education teaching procedures (Education, 1918). The Bureau of Educational Experiments planned to continue Johnson’s experimental class in P.S. 95 for another year (that is, during the 1918-1919 season); it also considered beginning an experiment under her guidance involving two experimental organic education classes in P.S. 64, and it proposed moving Johnson’s summer school to Hopewell Junction near Poughkeepsie, New York, at a farm the Bureau rented in 1918. She was to train teachers during the summer months.273 In spite of this, in April of 1918, sudden gloomy clouds were on the horizon.274 Minutes of the Bureau’s Executive Committee April 24, 1918, meeting read: “It was the sense of the meeting that the Executive Committee recommend that the Bureau should discontinue its work in P.S. 95 beyond the present school year.”

Four reasons were given — the last one the weightiest:

The Principal seems to be in an unfortunate attitude toward experiments just now and we cannot at the present time determine that his point of view will change. Unless it does we are very sure that we should not choose that school as our main plant and that we should not be welcome there as experimenters who were aiming at a reorganization of a school system. Unless we can be perfectly frank with the person at the head of the school and unless we can be sure of the cooperation of the head and of his subordinates we cannot make headway in our plans.275

Until 1918, both the principal of P.S. 64 and the principal of P.S. 95 promoted the Ettinger Plan (reviewed in Chapter 1) adopted by Mayor Mitchel to reform the NYC public education system. In actual fact, P.S. 95 implemented Ettinger’s plan in a hybrid form as a modification of Wirt’s Gary Plan (Worthington, 1915). When NYC Mayor Mitchel failed to win reelection in November 1917, newly elected NYC Mayor Hylan announced plans to discontinue introducing the Gary System in public schools. Mayor Hylan even ordered to “de-Garyize” already “Garyized” schools, among them P.S. 95 that had been converted according to a hybrid Ettinger-Wirt-Plan. This circumstance may very well explain P.S. 95’s principal’s substantial reluctance to house and support Marietta Johnson’s experimental class in his school for yet another year.276

In May 1918, when the P.S. 95 principal resolutely spoke out against Bureau policy, all plans for Johnson’s participation in BEE activities for the 1918-1919 school year ended abruptly.277 Discontinuation of Marietta Johnson’s work at P.S. 95 represented yet another major setback for the BEE; it was at least partly related to the outcome of the Gary School War. Without a doubt, hard lessons had to be learned.
Chapter 4

Nutrition Research

When the U.S. entered World War I in April of 1917, conditions leading to hunger in inner cities seriously worsened to almost endemic malnutrition and related maladies.\textsuperscript{278} In 1918, the Bureau hired the services of a Bostonian pediatrician who had conducted nutrition research with underweight and undernourished children to prepare the opening of a nutrition clinic for NYC public school children.\textsuperscript{279} This specific Bureau enterprise led to well-documented nutrition experiments conducted at P.S. 64, during the first year supervised by the hired pediatrician.\textsuperscript{280} He outlined, in the *American Journal of Diseases of Children*, how he had received an invitation from the Bureau “to conduct a nutrition clinic under its auspices in a public school” in New York City (Emerson, 1919a, p. 251). He found it was “an opportunity to demonstrate whether it is practical during a school regime to secure a sufficient part of the essentials of health to obtain satisfactory results” (*ibid*). An explanation of the research work done during one year and preliminary results of the experiments followed.

This research project became a relative success for the Bureau. It was well thought out, and BEE organizational support efforts were professional. It therefore met the first two 1917 Bureau priorities (hiring qualified scientists, and improvement of office organization). The whole BEE endeavour, which will not be reviewed here, eventually led to publication of a substantive report in book format, *Health Education and the Nutrition Class* (Hunt, Johnson, & Lincoln, 1921). Still, Sprague Mitchell and other Bureau members had deep-felt reservations about scientific research perspectives held by Bureau consulting scientists. They found them ignoring really interesting and even intriguing observations. Sprague Mitchell (1953, p. 460) remembered:

> At once, [hired BEE physician Dr. Lincoln] ran into difficulties when she began to measure height — or length — as measurements were taken when the babies were lying down. They wiggled. They seemed to be made of rubber — shorter one day than the day before. In the Child Research Institute at Minneapolis, they put the babies into casts so they couldn’t wiggle. They got the measurements. And they weren’t interested in the wiggle. We were. Nor were they bothered that casts might be an emotional strain to the babies. Again, we were…Wiggling was an interesting behavior in young children. Emotions were a very important part of children. But could wiggles or emotions be measured? If not, they must lie outside the realm of scientific study.

Clearly, Bureau members concluded that prevailing tests and measurements were not capable of generating the data they wished, even when conducted by hired specialist scientists. It is beyond the scope of this thesis, but we can view Sprague Mitchell’s critique of the measurement problems as keen insight into the inability of then prevailing education measurement models and psychometric constructs to measure growth rather than an argument in favour of qualitative research over quantitative research.\textsuperscript{281} This consideration would eventually lead to favouring small-scale action research throughout the 1920s. Since other factors contributed to the decision to conduct this kind of action research, these factors need underlining in the next sections.

1918: The Creative Impulse in Industry

Caroline Pratt and Helen Marot took the NYC Gary School War lessons to heart. Before renaming Play School to City and Country School in April 1919, they had been exploring a drastically new educational format. Perhaps as a result, the whole of 1918 brought a flood of turbulence, preventing the Bureau from adopting Play School as its
laboratory school. Marot, who was hired by the Bureau in 1917, had been assigned for six months to survey the literature on industry and education. She submitted her report early in January of 1918. Later that month, Bureau members recommended that the report “be offered to a magazine for publication, reserving rights for publication in book form after the completion of the final report.” Fitting with Bureau planning, Marot (1918a) wrote an article based on her report in the April 1918 Dial.

Next, in September, in The Creative Impulse in Industry, Marot (1918b) argued “for the necessity of reconstructing both industry and education in order to provide the industrial worker with a creative experience” (Leja, 1993, p. 144). Besides criticizing both American and German industrial education, Marot reviewed Schneider and Wirt’s plans to reorganize overcrowded NYC public schools. As well, she praised a plan for an integrated “workshop and [secondary pre-vocational] school concerned with the production of play materials” (Marot, 1918b, p. 117) as previously proposed to her by Pratt. It was a completely new, truly revolutionary idea for an “educative workplace” where “skills were balanced with the humanities and social sciences” (Rowbotham, 1995, p. 63).

Pratt’s social-reconstructionist plan advocates organizing an experimental Toy Shop for manufacturing wooden toys, simple to construct, therefore practical for forty students ranging in age from fourteen to seventeen years who would make up the staff of the shop. Half a dozen adults would do the heavy or unsafe work on machines and would help to guide the students to improve their standards and techniques related to manufacturing toys, keeping accounts and assessing the shop’s costs, working force, economics, service, etc. The experimental school and toy shop students would form the shop’s staff, also being the shop’s manufacturers, producers, clerks, and, of course, learners — all at the same time. The course would be limited to two years.

The BEE issued an exceptionally supportive statement in the book’s preface: “The experiment…seems to the Bureau to be of real moment, — one of which both education and industry should take heed. They earnestly hope it may be tried immediately. In that event the bureau hopes to work with Miss Marot in bringing her experiment to completion” (in Marot, 1918b p. vii).

Eventual Failure of The Creative Impulse in Industry

The influential American academic leader Granville Stanley Hall (1919) reviewed Marot’s book, asserting, “The very clever scheme of Caroline Pratt is worthy of attention” (p. 88). The Bureau mailed 115 complementary copies of the book and sent out 210 special advertising letters. Additional to 1900 folders distributed by the publisher advertising the work, the Bureau circulated 2000 copies of a publications list naming the book. The New York Call review of the plan was a glowing endorsement, “Does Miss Marot advocate the Gary system? No; for her idea is more revolutionary and beneficial, if carried out, than the Gary plan” (Pippa, 1918). Other reviewers were either less encouraging, paid little attention to the plan, or gave incorrect details. Some reviews even unequivocally dismissed it. A second printing was issued in December 1918, only three months after the release of the book. As a consequence, Marot would often lecture on subjects relating to the contents of the book (e.g., School, 1919).

Did Marot’s 1918 BEE Industry and Education report and her 1918 book (with many reviews, some passionately in favour of Marot and Pratt’s plan for a school of pre-vocational education annex toy manufacturing shop managed by the students themselves, a plan for a bold and revolutionary educational experiment) lead to
anything? Or was all this no more than purely intellectual endeavour? Merely an exercise in educational discourse?

BEE archives show that Marot, with the Bureau’s blessing, kept busy promoting the plan among manufacturers, businesspersons, educators, financiers, and others, *well before* her book was published, in 1918, and during winter months of 1919; to no avail. She failed. The path of this particular venture had reached a dead end. Accordingly, Marot resigned from her Bureau work in the summer of 1919. Pratt and Marot had done all they possibly could to formulate and plan a true alternative to the combined Schneider, Ettinger and Wirt Plans to reorganize the congested NYC public school system and find sponsors for their plan as well. We must conclude that Pratt and Marot were planning to found a specialized experimental school for students aged 14 and 15 years. By the end of 1918 their joint plan failed completely, but, on the other hand, gave way for other Bureau initiatives.

**Exit BEE Clearinghouse Activities Firmly Related to the Founding of the PEA**

Before the penultimate section in this Chapter sketches what became of the BEE after 1919, and the final section will wrap up a number of the key points in this dissertation, this section sheds new light onto late 1918 - early 1919 circumstances that led to the establishment of the Progressive Education Association tightly related to the Bureau of Educational Experiments’ members’ involvement.

In September 1917, the Bureau advertised in the *Manual Training Magazine* (1917) that it was “a clearinghouse of educational ideas.” It certainly functioned as an institute helping to professionalize educators and protoprofessionalize laypersons. Its purpose was to “collect material...concerned with the scientific study of education, and by publications and exhibits, make it easily available to people who are interested” (p. 23). By the end of 1918, half a year after Marietta Johnson’s exit from the Bureau and P.S. 95, just when the impending failure of Marot and Pratt’s toy shop experiment plan was becoming perceptible, mid-1917 BEE restructuring plans all of a sudden became tangible. First results of the nutrition experiment at P.S. 64 were encouraging. The Bureau’s consulting psychologists had begun testing children at Pratt’s Play School too, laying the basis for longitudinal research. Another spark was that Sprague Mitchell wrote in an early December internal communication to every Bureau member, “I propose we seriously consider starting a class of very young children — say from one to two to three.” Since March 1918, Sprague Mitchell had served on the administrative council of an organization to open maternity clinics and nursery schools under the aegis of the Henry Street Settlement visiting nurses program (Goewey, 1918). There she felt the widespread need for well-organized nursery schools. More than a year of war tribulations had aggravated inner-city public health and child welfare circumstances. And, Sprague Mitchell’s proposal fit flawlessly with the late 1916 BEE proposal to establish a nursery school, written by former Henry Street Settlement visiting nurse and now Bureau member Harriet Johnson.

In 1919, these developments were rapidly gaining momentum. More and more, the initiated nutrition research at P.S. 64 became a centre of research activities around which management and planning was developing efficiently. This met the first two 1917 new Bureau priorities (improvement of office organization, and hiring qualified scientists). Sprague Mitchell’s inspirational words of beginning a class of very young children not only energized Harriet Johnson’s late 1916 proposal to establish a day nursery, it revitalized their 1917 desire of opening a laboratory school managed by the
Bureau. In fact, it sparked the idea to open two laboratory schools: a nursery school and the accommodated Play School.\textsuperscript{296}

The collapse of Marot and Pratt’s plan to found a pre-vocational school annex toy-manufacturing shop in a positive way made room for other Bureau initiatives. It would perhaps even lead to the realization of the third 1917 Bureau priority (opening a laboratory school). The developments meant that Bureau members would gradually exit from clearinghouse activities to focus on research ambitions. Parallel to the Bureau’s critique of the inability of then existing education measurement models and psychometric constructs to measure growth and emotion, which was one preliminary outcome of their nutrition research reviewed above, and probably of their own testing experiences, the exit from clearinghouse work would possibly lead to embark on a successful kind of action research programme.

But in spite of all these developments, the real root of an accelerated restructuring of Play School in the spring and summer of 1919 and the founding of the BEE Nursery School not much later laid hidden outside the Bureau’s offices — namely, in the unexpectedly rapid establishment of a national organization of progressive educators: the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education, later renamed Progressive Education Association.

\textit{Hartman’s 1918 BEE Conference Proposal Basis for Establishing the PEA}

For Marietta Johnson, and obliquely for the BEE, a most significant development gained momentum in late 1918 and early in 1919. Ironically, it originated in the Gary School War aftermath. At first, repercussions of Johnson’s dismissal looked particularly bad for her. Mid-1918, after her one-year term as organic education teaching supervisor at P.S. 95 and advisory work for P.S. 64, salaried by the BEE, Johnson began another phase in her life. First, she retreated to her pre-BEE life of directing two schools, organizing summer school sessions at her Fairhope and Greenwich organic education schools, and giving public lectures. Though she never stopped lecturing during the 1917-1918 BEE term, she now began preparing for a truly nationwide fund-raising lecture tour. Indeed, apart from directing two schools, lecturing, boarding trains more and more often, and being constantly on the road was Johnson’s way of life — all over again. Beyond any doubt, this post-BEE phase of her life was met with extremely good news from Connecticut, just when she learned that her tenure with the Bureau would soon end. On May 20, 1918, the Connecticut school that she directed received the donation of a grand mansion in the Rock Ridge section of Greenwich, valued at $300,000. According to \textit{New York Herald} (1918a-b) reports, Johnson was utterly surprised by the generous bequest. It meant survival of her Greenwich organic education school was secure for years. Still, the Fairhope school remained in dire need of finances.

Earlier, however, and this is the crucial story in this sub-section, during the 1917-1918 term at P.S. 95 and P.S. 64 in New York City, Marietta Johnson made stopovers in Washington, D.C. She did so whenever travelling to and from Fairhope, Alabama to either the school she directed in Greenwich, Connecticut or to her supervising and advisory work at the NYC public schools. One lecture evening in January 1918 in Baltimore, near Washington, D.C., she had a conversation with Stanwood Cobb.\textsuperscript{297} His memory of the conversation is that Johnson first suggested founding a national association to promote her organic education framework (Drost, 1971). However, Johnson’s proposal to Cobb also reflected scheduling for a conference planned by the BEE. As non-resident Bureau member, Johnson knew that consulting BEE researcher Gertrude Hartman was planning a conference along with planning a national association

\textit{Midwives of Progressive Education}
of teachers of experimental schools. Minutes of a January 1918 Bureau meeting read: “Miss Hartman is arranging a conference of teachers of experimental schools with a view to forming an association of such teachers working in close cooperation with the Bureau in its surveys, its publications, its library, and its experiments.” Later, BEE members suggested that the intended “Conference of Experimental Schools” be postponed and be held in the summer of 1918, and to already plan a registry for teachers of experimental schools.

Two versions of what happened next exist. One historian of education concludes that a short while after Johnson’s initial suggestion to Cobb, she changed it into “a proposal to establish an educational association devoted to publicizing current experiments in education” (Graham, 1967, p. 18). Cobb found the new proposal more appealing indeed. Another historian believes that after considering Johnson’s initial idea Cobb dropped it “in favor of a broader sort of conference in which various experimental educators and parent groups might gather to exchange ideas” (Cremin, 1961, p. 242) — in fact a carbon copy of the conference suggested by Hartman to her BEE colleagues in January 1918. Either way, Johnson successfully borrowed Hartman’s idea.

As a consequence, after consultation with a number of interested educators, and as soon as it became clear that World War I had effectively ended, seizing the moment, a group of educators regularly met in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1918 and winter of 1919, among whom were Cobb and Johnson (Cobb, 1929). They were planning establishing a national educational organization under the provisional name Association for the Advancement of Experimental Schools (Kliebard, 1995). Their preparations went smoothly, and swiftly showed results. In February 1919, at the Washington Studio House, they officially presented their proposal for an Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education. In March the Association in statu nascendi held its first public meeting in the Washington Public Library — and presented a statement of principles heavily influenced by Johnson. By the end of that month, BEE Working Council minutes reported about an interview with Cobb (date not given), who asked for financial help for the imminent Association and for a “representative from the Bureau to serve on their executive committee.”

On April 4, 1919, then, the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education was founded, renamed Progressive Education Association (PEA) in 1920. Among others, Marietta Johnson, one of the Association’s five co-founders, was on the Executive Committee; however, there was no BEE member on the Executive Committee. Bureau charter member Caroline Pratt, though, was a member of the Association’s Advisory Council, bringing in her extensive expertise with managing organizations (e.g., the WTUL, Socialist Party, Teachers’ League of New York, and BEE). Later that year, together with other primary PEA members, Johnson and Pratt issued a draft of ten preliminary principles, refined to the seven official PEA principles in 1920. Pratt’s expertise certainly paid off; it was instrumental in a swift formulation of the PEA’s principles. It must be clear: BEE principles became part of PEA principles.

In fact, both directly and indirectly, the Bureau was the organization that had stood at the crib of the PEA and co-formed its initial structure. The Bureau of Educational Experiments, born from the Public Education Association, was midwife to the Progressive Education Association. It is only fair to label the PEA as the brainchild of Gertrude Hartman, a BEE-consulting researcher between 1918 and 1923. Already in the fall of 1923, without delay after she had drawn her BEE surveys to a close and published her book Home and Community Life (1923a) and an article on imaginative literature for children (1923b), Hartman became editor of the PEA’s journal Progressive Education
(Drost, 1971). She remained sole editor of the exceptionally influential journal until 1930.307

What Became of the Bureau after 1919?

In Chapter 1, I showed that the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education, that is, the later Progressive Education Association (PEA), as a nationwide professionalization organization advocating for educational renewal, unmistakably functioned as a clearinghouse of progressive, experimental, education. The PEA, in its professionalization and protoprofessionalization functions, organized seminars, held conferences and conventions, coordinated courses, issued press releases, bulletins and newsletters, promoted publication of literature reviews, articles and research findings in journals, newspapers, magazines and books, and published its journal *Progressive Education*. It must be clear: the PEA could serve far better as a nationwide clearinghouse of educational renewal and (proto)professionalization organization than the BEE ever intended. 1920-1923 PEA bulletins informing readers about progressive and experimental education can be viewed in lieu of earlier BEE bulletins. This understanding helped Bureau members to scale down clearinghouse ambitions, narrow focus, and to concentrate more on small-scale educational research. It aided the BEE in becoming a kind of action research institution centering on its two laboratory schools. And it allowed the PEA to quickly grow into the nationwide professionalization and protoprofessionalization organization and clearinghouse of educational reform. Ten years after its naissance, Cobb (1929) indeed declared, the PEA had, “in the first decade of its existence, succeeded in becoming the clearing-house for the new education movement in this country” (p. 72).

Developments sketched in the foregoing sections ended the initial phase of the Bureau, which its members later characterized as the “pre-Bureau” phase (Sprague Mitchell, 1953, p. 457). After the founding of the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education and formulating its preliminary principles, while Marietta Johnson was preparing the 1919 session of her annual Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich, Pratt began restructuring her School into the BEE laboratory elementary school.308 She and Helen Marot had decided not to progress the revolutionary path of founding a school of pre-vocational education toy manufacturing shop managed by the students themselves — as outlined in Marot’s 1918 *The Creative Impulse in Industry*. In April 1919, Pratt changed the name of Play School to City and Country School. In September 1919, the school officially became laboratory school of the Bureau. At the same time, under Harriet Johnson’s lead, the Bureau founded a laboratory nursery school for pre-school age children.309

Hence, after initially exploding in outer-directed activities as a clearinghouse in 1916 and 1917, and after failing to organize truly BEE managed educational experiments in 1917, the Bureau now progressively primarily focused on becoming a research institution centred around two lab schools: the BEE Nursery School and City and Country School.310 Consequently, between 1919 and 1922, the BEE would issue its final bulletins,311 while it further aided in publication of several books already in preparation.312 Yet, the Bureau would no longer mainly involve clearinghouse activities, but would progressively include the gathering of educational, psychological, social and medical data on the children in both lab schools, as well as small-scale experiments.313 Both laboratory schools became small powerhouses of data collection and action research.314 Lacking evidence of post-1922 BEE minutes, it seems small-scale research results (e.g. research into eye-hand coordination, causes of fatigue, *etc.*) were mainly used for further internal
Chapter 4

study and adjustment\textsuperscript{315} — in fact, remarkably in line with current action research (Kincheloe, 1991).

The research was conducted by hired researchers, by Bureau members as well as by teachers of both BEE lab schools: formulating research ideas, recording observations and gathering data, analyzing them to be able to adjust circumstances to fit conclusions, in order to perhaps start a new research cycle. This provided ‘feedback,’ a cognition of educational processes, a preliminary meta-awareness. In fact, it constituted action research before it became an idea. The participative kind of research of children and their reactions to differing environments concerned best practices, was cyclical, constituted a reflective praxis in both schools, and empowered the schools’ teachers (H. M. Johnson, 1928a).\textsuperscript{316}

After maintaining relative silence about its existence and activities during the mid-and late 1920s (Cenedella, 1996), in 1930, the BEE terminated its action research program and moved to a four-story building at 69 Bank Street, an old warehouse. In May 1930, eight schools under Bureau lead joined forces to become a student teacher training program, the Cooperative School for Student Teachers, later renamed Cooperative School for Teachers (CST).\textsuperscript{317} CST initially developed a one-year nursery, kindergarten, and elementary school teacher education program for their cooperating schools.\textsuperscript{318} CST closely cooperated with the New School for Social Research, founded in 1919 by Sprague Mitchell’s husband, Bureau member Frederick Ellis, and others.

In 1950, CST became Bank Street College of Education — a graduate school.\textsuperscript{319}

Conclusion

In this dissertation I stressed that before 1919 a nationwide movement for experimental progressive education did not exist. Instead there were many grassroots educational reform initiatives, in many cases driven by women who jointly covered wide areas of expertise, working for organizations that built on everyone’s extensive capacity for innovation. Examples taken from New York City (e.g., Hartley House settlement, Public Education Association, Socialist Party Committee on Education, WTUL) show that groups of predominantly women in changing combinations of cooperation aided enormously to educational reforms — not always successfully.

I sketched the lives of two of these women, Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt. Each, in her own way, after parallel winding careers, independently founded experimental schools. Their first-person declarations in the contemporaneous media about their work and their socio-political views characterize them as social reconstructionists \textit{avant la lettre} — in contrast to the prevalent vision in the literature that they merely uninformedly promoted a-political child-centered education. Johnson amassed an impressive curriculum vita as primary and tertiary education teacher, as director of two experimental schools, and as public lecturer, while Pratt amassed an impressive curriculum vita as primary and tertiary education teacher, researcher, social settlement worker, political activist, toy manufacturer, and director of an experimental school. Both women, as \textit{forerunners} in educational renewal, in due course became members of the same innovatory NYC educational organization: the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE).

I shed some new light on a number of long-held views, ‘established facts’ in the history of progressive education. A couple of examples and their relevant connotations will suffice. While the aftermath of an emotionally charged NYC school war and repressive activities by government agencies effectively suppressed educational renewal in New York City during the final years of World War I, the newly founded Bureau of
Educational Experiments was more significant than previously acknowledged. I underlined that the majority of BEE members were true forerunners of psychological testing in schools. Having tested children in public and special schools before becoming Bureau members, as early as 1911, in order to determine growth norms and patterns more precisely than had previously been done, they next expressed a drive to study children and their reactions to differing environments in a lab school. Although most Bureau members hoped a science of mental testing would be of great help to children’s learning, they had to conclude rather quickly that prevailing test assessment constructs could not answer their research questions about growth and human emotions. In 1919, as a consequence, the Bureau would switch to a pre-form of participative and cyclical action research. First functioning as a clearinghouse, then, from mid-1917 onwards more and more aiming at becoming a scientific research institute, the BEE ultimately drastically changed its priorities in 1919 while it embraced two laboratory schools as its very action research heart. In this sense, Bureau members were true forerunners in action research too.

This, however, was only possible after formation of the Progressive Education Association, earlier that year, as a result of a suggestion made in January of 1918 by then-BEE member Marietta Johnson to a colleague progressive educator to found a nationwide progressive education organization. I showed that Johnson thereby duplicated an idea first put forward at a BEE meeting by Gertrude Hartman, one of the Bureau’s consulting researchers. Allegorically speaking, the Bureau of Educational Experiments, born from the Public Education Association, was midwife to the Progressive Education Association.

BEE members aided the early PEA in different ways. After the PEA was founded, BEE members could subsequently leave clearinghouse activities to the PEA, which had a truly nationwide reach; it freed them to begin conducting small-scale action research. During the whole of the 1920s, they thereby focused on immediate educational processes in their two laboratory schools: e.g., introduction of a jobs program for older children at City and Country School; the use of blocks in recreating field trip experiences afterwards through dramatic play for younger children at both the BEE Nursery School and City and Country School.

In this dissertation I further emphasized that Marietta Johnson, Caroline Pratt and other women rather independently from (male) educational theorists organized new ways of educating and expressed new theories about education. For instance, Johnson developed a political agenda of Georgist organic education and implemented a curriculum based on her views in the practice of actual class situations in her Fairhope school. Pratt (1913) developed a theory about shop classes as model as to how the whole of child education should proceed under the adage that “the shop might serve as a clearing house for the whole school” (p. 99). She implemented her theories, designed and constructed her own toys and blocks, and used them in the actual class situations of the school she founded.

I additionally indicated that by the end of World War I, the extraordinary situation arose that John Dewey became the ultimate spokesmodel for progressive education. Even while he was still shrugging off the 1917 NYC “Garyizing” of public schools disaster (since he did not really commit himself), it was his voice that was needed in the media and at public meetings to promote the educational renewal practice initiated and established by the women united in the BEE. This suggests, viewed from another angle, a changing of perspective in the history of education: In spite of the mutually beneficial relationship which developed between progressive BEE women educators and Dewey, it seems as if the women needed a man’s voice to get ideas across. The women did not exclusively promote their ideas and practice as their own — but promoted as
their spokesperson, a man, articulating *their* ideas. They made Dewey their champion, and he was happy to contribute. Dewey remained; the accomplishments of the Bureau progressive women educators went into oblivion, as did the early history of the BEE, and as did the early history of the founding of the PEA.

Finally, I roughly stressed that Johnson’s School of Organic Education, Pratt’s City and Country School, and the BEE that changed into the Bank Street College of Education tended to be lasting institutions. This did not happen with theoretical contributions to progressive education by the (female) Bureau members. Yet, if we use the right tools, as I tried to do, we will unearth previously unacknowledged texts, reports, newspaper articles, *etc.* In that way we definitely rewrite long-told narratives, and in so doing (perhaps) change essential parts of the established history of education.

A number of findings in this dissertation are new. Hopefully, they will widen the reader’s perspective and sharpen the focus on American early twentieth-century education reform efforts. The historiography of American education reform, while extensive, mainly concerns a small number of topics and persons — even since the revisionist interpretations of the 1970s. One topic rightfully advanced by revisionists is the role of women in educational reform.

This dissertation offers an overview of women who would join the Bureau of Educational Experiments between 1916 and 1919. Among my various aims with this dissertation is showing that certain women reform leaders — within a number of New York City settlement houses (roughly between 1905 and 1910), the Women’s Trade Union League (roughly between 1909 and 1915) and the Public Education Association (roughly between 1908 and 1916), before they, in 1916, became Bureau of Educational Experiments members — were highly motivated to reform education across an array of specific facets. Their sense of purpose ranged from campaigning for provision of noon meals at public schools, fighting child labour, sponsoring and delivering sex education classes, introducing the visiting teacher program to NYC schools and becoming visiting teachers, to exploring the efficacy of an emerging science of education by becoming pioneer intelligence test administrators in public elementary schools. Going beyond earlier research of the lives and work of *individual* women educational reform leaders (*e.g.*, Newman, 1999; Semel, 1999b), I sketch a deeper understanding of a group of women forming a particular *women-led network of reformers*, first as settlement house workers, then as Women’s Trade Union League allies, Public Education Association workers, Gary School League members, and ending as Bureau of Educational Experiment members, seeing how their continuing reciprocal, cooperative work was sustained over at least two decades, and eventually led to the founding of the Progressive Education Association and to conducting sound education practice research. In so doing, I principally revise the existing body of knowledge and understandings of the histories of these women and institutions in which they worked.

It was not only Marietta Johnson, Caroline Pratt, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, or Harriet Johnson, *etc.*, but all the women, together, leading the Bureau of Educational Experiments outlined here, who gained mutual energy and insight from their practice of almost daily discussion, project management, collaborative research, and collaborative writing. I show the depth of their commitment as Bureau of Educational Experiment members, illustrating how their interdependent, non-dogmatic practice allowed them to grow and adjust to new circumstances (for instance, they were not defeated by the losses over the Gary Plan fiasco) and learn from their mistakes (for instance, from the Neurological Institute laboratory school debacle). Still, I must commemorate one particularly outstanding yet unintended outcome of their activities, that is, the
establishment of the Progressive Education Association as a progressive education clearinghouse and professionalization organization in 1919.

Meanwhile, as my dissertation demonstrates, I found no support for a specific critique expressed by revisionist historians of education, that is: the assumed aim of reformers to promote social control. Yes, shades of paternalism (or, in this case: maternalism) are detectable in early writings of some of the women. Still, only a handful of their texts (e.g., Garrett, 1914c; Irwin in Rodman, 1915d) actually slide into vague hints of social control, such as fear of evolutionary degeneration. On the other hand, most show a genuine (and productive) scientific curiosity about the growth of children, displaying strong distancing from eugenic and societal control topics (Pratt, 1911b; E. H. Johnson, 1913). Therefore, “eugenicists waiting in the political wings” (Bender, 2008, p. 7) were not part of this women-led network of reformers.

Ending this summary, I have to mention one underlying, but in no way unimportant, aspect of the women-led network of reformers: their independent funding. Interestingly, often the same extremely wealthy women fortified the network of reformers by financing their endeavours, from when they worked for settlement houses until they joined the Bureau of Educational Experiments. Self-financing of social settlement houses, the Women’s Trade Union League, Public Education Association, and Gary School League, as well as the Bureau of Educational Experiments enabled the reformers to work within organizations devoid of much bureaucratization and (local) government or state interference. Succession of independent funding continued from the mid-1900s well into the 1930s, when the Bureau became Cooperative School for Student Teachers, later renamed Cooperative School for Teachers (CST) (Cenedella, 1996). CST was only the last in line of heterodoxly funded organizations focusing on community and educational reform led by the network of reformers discussed here. This continuous financially sovereign stance safeguarded the women against having to make large compromises and other unwished decisions. They were free to pursue their reform ideas in mostly undisturbed ways.

The women who are the subjects of the thesis began making their contributions to community and education reform more than a century ago. They transcended their immediate circumstances in several ways. For example, although they fell short of their goal of establishing progressive education practices across the spectrum of American schools, as Bureau of Educational Experiments members during the 1920s and 1930s they — at their two laboratory schools — developed a kind of pioneer small-scale short-term action research, forming the basis for their later teacher training activities, making real progress in showing how a science of education can inform day-to-day work in a classroom. Both Bureau lab schools survive, as does the Bureau-transformed-into the Bank Street College of Education, which today operates as a feeder of teachers in progressive schools throughout the U.S. (Grinberg, 2005).

Finally, to bring the findings of this dissertation to bear upon the Dutch context, I hope to have shown how endeavours of Bureau members are of importance at yet other levels as well. Specifically, this dissertation supports my view that Dutch Nieuwe Leren (New Learning) school war participants can learn valuable lessons from studying the history of successes and failures of the Bureau members. It is striking that the findings I describe in these chapters directly pertain to recommendations made by the Dutch Parliamentary Commission on Éducational Reforms in their 2008 report Tijd voor Onderwijs, and also listed in the Introduction: investments should be made in both initial training and expertise training of teachers, schools must be accountable to parents, Nieuwe Leren schools should restructure through a gradual process with involvement of (specialist) teachers rather than through large-scale educational reform from above, a
clearinghouse infrastructure ought to be developed and maintained, and lastly, small-scale short-term research should be done, focusing on specific aspects.

The history of the Bureau of Educational Experiments network of women introduced here indeed teaches us valuable lessons. The majority of them professionalized themselves on the job, and by pursuing formal (expertise) training as well, gaining academic degrees during the 1900s, 1910s, and 1920s in order to improve the quality of their reforms. During the Gary School war they learned the hard way that schools must be accountable to parents, that reform cannot be imposed top-down, either by the (local) government or by the management of schools, and that parents need a voice in educational reform. As passionate educators they established and maintained an educational clearinghouse; later, during the 1920s, they introduced small-scale short-term action research in two laboratory schools. In so doing they empowered teachers working at the schools to feel and become responsible for educational renewal and its needed revision, and to form a body of knowledge necessary to support the introduced reforms.

Related to conducting research and establishing an educational clearinghouse, the 2008 Dutch Parliamentary Commission on Educational Reforms report advised that “the relationship between schools and science (research) should be strengthened” (Commissie Parlementair Onderzoek Onderwijsvernieuwingen, 2008, p. 154). This recommendation leaves open whether the government will appoint academic investigators to conduct the proposed researches, or whether they will encourage schools to organize the research — empowering their teachers to conduct small-scale short-term action research, supervised by expert teachers, the outcomes preserved in a school’s clearinghouse. In the light of the Dutch New Learning debate that fell flat in 2008, might it not be wise to encourage teachers to gain expertise training and academic degrees, to conduct small-scale short-term action research, build a body of knowledge in their school’s clearinghouse, share outcomes with other schools, in this way honour the example of mutual assistance, professional commitment, drive to learn and to know, stimulating just good interaction and basic peer atmosphere of the Bureau of Educational Experiments network of women?