

Winter 1998

Feminist Scholarship Review: Women and Urban Development

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Petty, Marty; Lash, Alta; Utz, Anne Lundberg; and Bauer, Janet, "Feminist Scholarship Review: Women and Urban Development" (1998). *Feminist Scholarship Review*. Paper 11.
<http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/femreview/11>

Feminist Scholarship Review

Women and Urban Development

Trinity College
Volume VII, No. 3

Hartford, CT
Winter 1998



In memory of

Mildred Torres Soto, Corporate Affairs Manager for The Hartford Courant

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The Hartford Courant

Feminist Scholarship Review

is a project of the Trinity College Women's Center.

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Introduction

Inspired by our curiosity about the effect of development around campus on the local community, "Women and Urban Development" emerged as this issue's topic. Including Trinity's administrators and non-tenured scholars as contributors, also resulted in a pleasantly feminist issue by including the expertise of Trinity's unsung scholars. Alta Lash, Director of Trinity Center for Neighborhoods, Anne Lundberg Utz, Director of Internship Programs, and Dr. Janet Bauer, Assistant Director, Trinity Center for Collaborative Teaching have contributed engaging essays on this challenging topic. These women discuss issues ranging from overdue tribute to Hartford's female political advocates to worldwide educational discrimination. They have taken on the formidable challenge of compiling their expertise and applying it to the broad topic of Women and Urban Development.

Alta Lash celebrates the invaluable contributions of female neighborhood leaders in Frog Hollow and other Hartford areas. Urban women's grass roots contributions have been overshadowed by powerful men whose monetary contributions facilitate their public recognition. Lash acknowledges the grass roots political activism of Hartford women who focused on the practical needs of their neighbors. They were instrumental in establishing and running "schools, organizations and clubs" in addition to battling landlords and developers. With little hope of recognition, these women worked to improve lives with their presence. Hartford's women activists continue to face the poverty and injustice of the struggling communities that surround the affluence of Trinity College. They embody the power and perseverance of great leaders and their kudos are long overdue. Their investment in Frog Hollow and surrounding communities is tempered by empathy and motivated by a genuine desire to enrich the lives of residents.

Anne Lundberg Utz contributed an excerpt of her Masters Thesis about the life and work of Mary Hall. Mary Hall forged a career for herself as a lawyer at the turn of the century and became a powerful activist who was able to work within the conservative, male dominated arena of political activism in Hartford. Like many women activists, past and present, she was effective because she tempered her feminist ideals by allying herself to a conventional/conservative endeavor. Her creation of the Good Will Club for Boys allowed her to help underprivileged boys in the Hartford community while maintaining the favor of male politicians. Despite Hall's elitism, she was able to work within the framework of early 20th century urban politics to foster support for disadvantaged young men. Her life was full of remarkable accomplishments and Utz has written a comprehensive tribute to Hall's life and work.

Dr. Janet Bauer provides amazing breadth to this examination of urban life by discussing world-wide urban issues and exposing the educational discrimination poor children endure. Her extensive travels and field work from Kansas City, Missouri to Teheran, Iran, exemplifies her academic expertise about the inequity of education for poor children, especially poor girls. Hartford is part of a global community that suffers similar injustices dealing with racism and poverty. Education is touted as the best solution to urban children's economic and occupational empowerment. Urban children around the world, however, have different realities that interfere with their education (the need to work to help support their families, for example). These children also must battle assumptions made by educators and communities. Assumptions about the limited academic futures of migrant farmer's children, for example, discourage educators and communities from investing in their education. Basic education is a fundamental right for all people, but there is nothing basic about the barriers to providing the most effective and equitable education to the embattled urban children of the world.

The unsung sheros of Frog Hollow and Hartford have transcended the tradition of women's activism embraced by Mary Hall, whose contributions sparkle through the fog created by local historians who would have you believe only men contributed to the welfare of the city. The activism of today's sheros overlap and expand the fight to improve urban areas by addressing the many complicated issues that threaten the education, empowerment and survival of urban communities. Dr. Bauer shares her experiences and expertise about the dangers of applying a simple solution, basic education, to a complex societal problem.

The Feminist Scholarship Review is a collection of essays typically contributed to by professors with academic expertise in curricular disciplines. Professors do not have a corner on expertise, however, and this issue suggests honoring the field work, non-academic and academic work of the women herein. This issue is about honoring the existing scholarship on and around this campus and the activism we have left unsung. The authors and subjects of these essays have employed their scholarship and energy to empower existing communities instead of tearing them down and starting over. It is an honor to share their work with you.

This issue of the Feminist Scholarship Review is dedicated to

Mildred Torres Goto

Marty Petty, Publisher & CEO of The Hartford Courant, presented a version of the following speech at Trinity's Convocation Dinner celebrating Women and the Millenium. With a profound sense of loss, the Trinity Women's Center shares this speech with you in tribute to the life and work of one of Hartford's unsung sheros.

Mildred understood how to build a community—you bring people together, allow them to get to understand what they have in common and then provide them with an opportunity to work for a common cause. Within six months of coming to The Courant, Mildred knew as many of her colleagues as did employees who had worked at the paper for years. From the day she started at The Courant, she began inviting all kinds of people into "our house." She literally and figuratively opened the doors. Many folks who had never been at The Courant became regulars in our hallways. We met many people in this room, and thanks to Mildred, we became friends. A week did not pass that she didn't walk into my office, grab my hand and say: "Come with me, there is someone you need to meet." Well, you know, we all did what Mildred told us. She was rarely subtle. It was the mother in her. She knew what you needed and told you.

And, as a result, we were enriched, we were enlightened, we were educated. Our doors opened, our walls came down, our horizons were broadened. We became all joined together as partners, Mildred's co-conspirators. She made us work together. On Park Street projects. On school projects. On projects at the Bushnell and this historic museum. She stretched our geographical boundaries as well-she led us into the heart of many communities, in such places as Bristol, New Britain and Middletown. She took us to many important places and then told us: "here's what needs to be done." And Mildred made us laugh and showed us how to enjoy life. Tonight she would want us to celebrate-not be sad. Mildred, we know you are here and as Edna says "channeling" to us.

She knew she would not be able to attend Trinity's convocation last night to accept her award. The very last thing she ever asked of me was that I be there to represent her. Although bittersweet, it was an easy wish to fulfill.

- Marilyn Bergman, 3-time Oscar award winner whose many lyrics were known by heart....

- Cathleen Black, another publisher friend, former president USA Today and today president of Hearst Magazines....

- Johnnetta B. Cole, anthropologist, author and former president of Spelman College....

- Dr. Susan Love, a surgeon and leading-edge researcher on breast cancer at UCLA....

- And Billie Jean King, one of the greatest tennis players who ever lived....

I looked around and saw female pioneers, pacesetters, innovators, moms and great teachers - and as Johnnetta Cole said in her convocation to the honorands: "We are truly amongst great "sheros," -which by the way we decided last night would be in the dictionary in the year 2000. I want to tell you that Mildred would have stood tall among those "sheros." She and I had started to talk a couple of times about her ideas for my comments tonight, this is her favorite event of the year, but her health worsened, she turned her energy to making certain those around her were tending to the community's work at hand. You know, Mildred had a plan.

She touched the lives of thousands of people in this community -- as a city councilwoman, as a corporate philanthropist, as a friend, as a teacher and as a caregiver to her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her death has left a large void in our lives - a huge hole in our community. That's because Mildred literally was the one who brought us together. She knew everyone. And through her, everyone knew everyone else. None of us should have been suprised when we came together in church to say farewell - There were corporate CEOs, 3 generations of local, state and national politicians, community activists, entire families and the media. Mildred and Mildred's work WAS a story.

Harder for us here in Hartford is fulfilling her other wishes and making her many beautiful dreams come true. What were those dreams? What would Mildred have said to you if she were with us tonight? You already know:

- "Bring all people together and work together."

- "Make the future better for our children".

We need to take the opportunity being together tonight to build on the strong foundation Mildred has laid for us. We need to work together as partners and as friends to make Mildred's dreams come true. We need action.

We are fortunate that there are many initiatives already underway that seek to bring Greater Hartford's diverse people together, with the goal of making this a first-class city and a welcoming and nurturing community with economic opportunity for all - especially for our children.

There is no bigger challenge facing this community as we head into the new millennium than race and ethnicity and education - the bridges to economic development and prosperity and a strong future. And, don't be confused, this is a bottom line issue. We can fund and build all the convention centers, sports complexes and entertainment venues we want downtown and yes, "they will come" - but will they stay? Mildred knew the answer.

Our young people won't make Hartford and Connecticut their home, a place to build careers and raise a family if we don't teach them to respect one another and the value of rich diversity of ideas and cultures.

Mildred would point us to one such learning opportunity, which the nation will watch with intrest - The Community Conversations on Racism that are taking place throughout our towns. Seventy of these conversations - five two-hour discussions involving diverse groups of people throughout the region and facilitated by trained volunteers in the study circle format - are being held in companies and communities over the next 12 months. We will hold our first one at The Courant next week and in early December a few hundred participants will come together to share their action plans.

Mildred would have approved because these conversations call for real action - not talk. We are especially delighted that The Courant's Northeast Magazine's groundbreaking series on race has been reprinted and will be used throughout the state as a part of these conversations.

Finally, as you all know, Mildred was a fierce advocate for education. She understood it IS the way to prepare children to grow and to lead. It provides the ammunition needed to carry on the fight.

And it is for that reason that I am especially proud tonight to announce that The Courant is joining with Trinity College, and inviting other Harford institutions and community friends in Hartford to participate in the creation of a special education award in Mildred's honor. The award will enable a deserving Hartford Latina to attend Trinity - the college that meant so much to Mildred. I want to thank Eddie Perez and Trinity President Evan Dobelle for their help in agreeing to establish this fund. I also would like to share the appreciation of Stephanie and Socorro for this perfect tribute to their mother.

Now let's lift a toast to Mildred and her dreams for this community and her people....and do her one favor she would have asked.... Before you head home this evening, go up to someone here you do not know and create a new friendship - find the common ground and agree to meet again.

Mildred, we love you.

Hartford's Sheros

By Alta Lash

Our society is quick to recognize and romanticize male heroes. This phenomenon also holds true at the neighborhood level. Industrial pioneers Albert Pope and Samuel Colt are easily remembered as people who have made major contributions to the Frog Hollow neighborhood. When I was young growing up in the neighborhood, the well-oiled political machine had its leaders -- Bob Killian, a city councilman who eventually became Lieutenant Governor, and Bud Mahon, owner of the "Summit Bar," a neighborhood package store, and Hartford's longest serving city Treasurer. Today, the same pattern continues with Evan Dobelle as the new hero.

Overlooked and equally important are the efforts of women who over the years have made enduring contributions to the neighborhood. They are the women who built and maintained the neighborhood institutions -- the schools, organizations and clubs. For the purpose of this discussion I am going to limit my example to women who chose to be involved in community organizing either as staff in the Frog Hollow neighborhood or as neighborhood leaders.

Going back to the early days of Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) in the mid-seventies, I remember going to community meetings on Park Street and running into my fifth grade teacher, Betty Cummings. She had retired from her teaching job at Immaculate Conception School and was still living at the family home on Allen Place. My fifth grade memories were of a pleasant, soft-spoken, kind woman who was very involved with church committees. Nothing, however, prepared me for the revised image of Mrs. Cummings as a tenacious grassroots leader who did not back down from a fight.

Betty was already well known and respected in the neighborhood before HART started. When she invited her neighbors to join her in starting the Allen Place Block Club, seventy-five of her neighbors showed up, spilling out of her house into the street. She was elected as a Board member representing Frog Hollow at the First annual HART Congress with over 1,200 in attendance. Betty's stature and respect within the city gave HART instant respectability when others tried to criticize the new organizing efforts at HART. Under Betty's leadership the Allen Place Block Club became a powerful force in determining the Frog Hollow agenda of the seventies. HART's later success is due to the foundation that Betty and other women built in the early years of HART.

Mary Camillieri of Brownell Street was already in her seventies when she became a leader in a major Frog Hollow issue -- what to do with Fox School on the corner of Washington Street and New Britain Avenue. City officials were intent on demolishing the building, which had served as a neighborhood landmark for years. Mary was adamant that this building and its history not be demolished. She led the campaign to remodel this school as housing for the elderly. She persistently dogged public officials, reviewed plans, attended countless meetings. Driving by that corner today we can see the fruits of her labors -- affordable housing for low-income seniors. The building today bears her name as testimony to her vision and persistence.

In the late seventies and early eighties there was a housing crisis in Hartford. There were literally no available affordable apartments in the city. People in neighborhoods like Frog Hollow were living two and sometimes three families per apartment. The city pegged the vacancy rate for apartments at 0%. Large numbers of Puerto Rican families had moved into the area. They had little knowledge of housing laws and were afraid of speaking out. Absentee landlords collected rents, but did little to maintain the properties. The resulting deterioration was bad for the tenants and bad for the neighborhood.

In response to this injustice two women focused their energies on the housing crisis for their community. As organizers, Luz Santana and Ramonita Ortiz went house to house organizing tenants into a formidable organization, Vecinos Unidos, a member group of HART. They devoted their considerable energies to securing justice for tenants living in abysmal conditions at the mercy of their greedy landlords.

The well maintained units on Broad and Lawrence Streets known as Casa Nueva were renovated in the early eighties largely as a result of the organizing work of Luz and Ramonita. Having first organized the tenants, they successfully pushed for funds under the Urban Development Action Grant program to renovate the buildings. Once the funds were secured Luz and Ramonita forced the developer to do the renovations in checker-board style to avoid the displacement of tenants from the neighborhood. Casa Nueva and its success has served as a model for further development projects. This effort gave confidence to the tenants to continue to organize. It also proved that the deterioration of the buildings had been caused by landlord neglect and not tenant abuse.

In the seventies and early eighties Roz Strickland was one of the few African-Americans who lived in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. Roz was a tenant living on Babcock Street and initially got involved in tenant issues and the Babcock Street Block Club. She moved on to tackle bigger issues like the campaign to secure property tax relief for owners of 1-3 family buildings in Hartford. Her point of view was unique and critical to the success of winning the tax relief. She maintained that property tax increases were paid by tenants as well as homeowners in that landlords passed them on to tenants in the form of rent increases. Therefore, she led other tenants in opposing the efforts of the business community to drive a wedge between owners and tenants. After serving on the HART board as a representative of Frog Hollow she was elected President of HART in 1980.

When I was growing up in Frog Hollow many residents had come from French speaking Canada and settled in the streets around St. Anne's Parish. Their children attended St. Anne's School located on the site currently occupied by Maria Sanchez School. Many small coffee shops, such as the Bean Pot Restaurant and the Canteen, provided everyday social interaction among the French Canadian community. One of the early leaders of the Babcock Street Block Club was Simone Soucy. We worked together on the rat issue, HART's first big organizing campaign. Simone had two daughters and clearly she was fighting for them. She wanted them to grow up in a safe neighborhood with amenities such as good street lights, a place to play and a rodent free backyard. Simone was elected the second President of HART. I will never forget her strength to persevere in spite of obstacles and her passion in pursuit of her goals.

This tradition of strong women leaders in Frog Hollow continues to this day. Bea LaFlame on Allen Place picked up where Betty left off. Bea is responsible for the successful campaign to rid Allen Place of slumlord Stanley Tucker. Ana Natal continues efforts to secure jobs and provide job training for residents of Frog Hollow through her work as Director of the HART Jobs Center. Edie Lacy gives selflessly of her time and energy as the Chairperson of the Frog Hollow Revitalization Committee, dealing with issues such as building demolition, public safety, and revitalization strategies for the neighborhood. Yolanda Rivera organized the Affleck Street Community Garden on a site which previously housed an abandoned building burned down by drug addicts freebasing. Yolanda is now leading the development of a new coalition of community groups and labor unions called "Good Jobs Partnership" which promises new employment in construction for Frog Hollow residents.

Finally, I would like to mention the contribution of Mildred Soto who recently died. While most of the women mentioned above were working to build the Frog Hollow community through community organizing activities, Mildred was at work strengthening the political power of Puerto Ricans living in Frog Hollow. Both as a member of City Council and behind the scenes, Mildred spent her career working for the betterment of her community. Like so many of the other women, she was a first, taking risks so that others could follow in her wake.

What characterizes all of these women is their selfless dedication to and their passion for their community. We all have benefitted from their accomplishments. Their names might never be acknowledged as heroes in the history books - but, we will always remember them as such.

**PORTRAIT OF A HARTFORD FEMINIST:
Mary Hall and the Good Will Club, 1880-1927**

by Anne Lundberg Utz

Mary Hall settled in Hartford in 1879 when she was thirty-four years old, an educated school teacher from a rural Connecticut town, determined to pursue a career in the law. By the time of her death in 1927, at age 84, she was a respected figure in the public life of the city, widely known as the guiding spirit behind the Good Will Club and an acknowledged expert in the areas of law and social welfare. Her life and accomplishments are best understood within the broader context of late-nineteenth century social reform, including changing roles for women. At a time when careers for women were severely restricted by prevailing views about "separate spheres" and women's proper domestic role, Mary Hall apprenticed in a law office, gained entry to the otherwise all-male bar in 1882, and worked successfully as an attorney. She also became actively involved in the local suffrage movement, lending her reputation as a woman of unusual talent to the cause.

Hall's professional life was closely integrated with her interest in assisting working class boys, and later, with her service on the State Board of Charities. The Good Will Club, started by Hall in 1880 in memory of her beloved brother and backed by some of Hartford's most influential citizens well into the 20th century, served primarily working boys from the East Side, a neighborhood which represented the horrors of immigration and urban decay to middle-class Hartford. The club's story provides a case study of one organization's approach to problems of social control, Americanization, and changing urban demographics, and also demonstrates how Hall used her charitable activities to validate and support her feminist principles.

Mary Hall recognized the obstacles facing an upwardly mobile professional woman in late 19th century Hartford and navigated a cautious path between activism and conservatism to reach her own goals. In order to overcome social barriers and win acceptance among the city's governing class, Hall deliberately combined her beliefs about equal rights for women with active participation in an appropriately conventional charity for working class boys. She understood that "to contribute to the charities of the locality is one of the means by which social advancement is secured."² Like other benevolent women of her day, she consciously exploited the practice of "domestic feminism," the idea of... "women winning a place outside the home using domestic credentials," but she proved more successful than most in that her professional work facilitated and sustained her charitable work, and vice versa.³ Due in part to her own choices and ambitions, Hall struggled with definitions of women's proper place and the conflict between society's expectations and her own desires. Her ability to resolve these conflicts in favor of her aspirations testified to the strength of her feminist ideals. In effect, to use Nancy Cott's model, she represented the process whereby "subtle changes in women's view of their domestic role established a substructure for their non-domestic pursuits and aspirations."⁴ Cott's interdependence of feminism and the ideology of domesticity, as represented by Hall's professional career on the one hand, and her charitable work on the other, are captured in Hall's experience.

Moreover, as a women's rights advocate committed to promoting the moral improvement of Hartford's immigrant youth, Hall also personified the class dimensions of the city's evolving social welfare structure. Like "her boys," she, too, was an outsider striving to climb the social ladder, inhibited by her status as a new arrival and as a woman who had to work for a living. These elements of shared perspective were never consciously acknowledged or expressed. In keeping with Hall's ambition to achieve insider status in her adopted city, and with her view of herself as a successful member of the ruling Protestant establishment, the rhetoric and practice of the Good Will Club incorporated the noblesse oblige attitudes and elitist views typical of her more conservative Hartford contemporaries.

When Hall arrived in Hartford, she first joined the City Mission Society (CMS), where she

became acquainted with Virginia Thrall Smith and the many programs administered by the society. An 1886 account of the Good Will Club's history explains that Miss Hall began in 1878:

by collecting a few boys in the City Mission room and reading to them the "Ragged Dick" series of books. During the winter she read the four volumes, the boys becoming greatly interested, and gradually increasing the number by bringing some of their companions with them ... They had never had any discussion and it required a good deal of tact and skill to tame them down. Sometimes a policeman had to be sent for. But the taming process, though slow, was sure.⁵

Hall felt "the need of a safe place of entertainment for boys in Hartford, and perhaps still more their need of wise and helpful friends," and she settled on the idea of establishing a boys' club.⁶ According to another account of events, "it was while pursuing her [law] studies that Mary Hall gathered a few boys about her, talking about interesting and instructive subjects, furnishing games, and reading stories to them. Her little friends became so numerous that she could not possibly accommodate them all."⁷ In her own words on the subject, Hall says only that, "the first meeting of boys, preliminary to organization of the Good Will Club, was held Friday evening, April 2, 1880, nine boys being present."⁸

A combination of motivations drew Hall into charity work. Her feminism ensured that she recognized the opportunity to expand her public involvement and enhance her social status. She was influenced by the rhetoric of child-saving and reformist motherhood, believing that she could contribute to the moral uplift and education of young boys in a surrogate mother role. And, as the methods of charity organization dictated, she believed that the prevention of poverty offered a solution, that "what the poor most needed was assistance in developing good character [and] good character meant, first and foremost, ability to support oneself."⁹ Hall wanted both to encourage young men to achieve independence as she had done, and to ensure that a potentially disruptive element of society developed a true reverence for "that great bourgeois principle -- work."¹⁰ In this dual motivation of individual improvement and social control, she was not unlike many women reformers for whom "protecting children from the wrongs of adults unified the charitable and the controlling impulses."¹¹

According to the "Boys' Constitution of the Good Will Club," drawn up by the first members, the object of the club "shall be the improvement of its members, mentally, morally, and physically."¹² All of its programs and activities were designed to address these three areas of character development: mental faculties, moral fortitude, and physical fitness. "The plan had nothing in it of the day-school or Sunday school. The idea was simply to entertain the boys with interesting games, stories, illustrated papers, etc. No religious views or sectarianism were allowed to be broached. It was simply an evening's entertainment once a week for the boys, thus drawing them from the bad life of the streets."¹³ A closer examination of the club's operations and membership reveals that, in fact, a great deal more than entertainment was going on. The directors, led by Miss Hall, engaged consciously and without apology in a form of social engineering whose mission was to turn poor, immigrant working boys into obedient, patriotic and virtuous citizens. They conformed to Gwendolyn Mink's image of women reformers who "worked to turn ethnic men into American men ... They taught the work ethic and vocational skills to young boys ... Such lessons on productive and associational life -- on the pursuit of manly independence -- were the mainstay of assimilationist methods directed toward men."¹⁴ With the passage of time, the mission of teaching good republican citizenship became increasingly explicit.

From the original six or eight boys with whom Mary Hall established the club, membership

grew steadily. Reaching some 800 members by 1889, over 1,100 boys were listed as active members in 1917. Most members worked as office and newsboys, usually in the after-school hours, and the majority lived in Hartford's East Side neighborhoods (after 1900, they came increasingly from the North End). The growth and success of the club depended in large measure on the continuing support of its benefactors. From the beginning, Mary Hall enlisted the help of influential friends and neighbors, while regular solicitations for donations and volunteers repeatedly yielded good results.¹⁵ In this, the Good Will Club was not unlike many charities, for, as Keith Melder has found, "men were extremely influential, and few women's benevolent organizations flourished without encouragement from the other sex ... [and] potent support from clergymen and from leading respectable citizens."¹⁶

In her emphasis on proper behavior, industrial training, healthy peer influence and role models or mentors, Mary Hall situated herself in the vanguard of social work for boys. Other organizations had also focused on the needs of young men as a distinct group and Hall certainly learned from their efforts. The earliest example may have been the YMCA itself, founded in Boston in 1851 and modeled on an English antecedent. Grounded in the principle of "religious fellowship as a source of strength and mutual aid," the Y initially served migrant boys seeking work in the city. In 1900, Mary Hall hosted a conference in Hartford for "trustees of Good Will Clubs, boys' clubs and kindred organizations doing work for boys."¹⁷ The meeting was the fourth gathering since 1896 of leaders in the "Men of Tomorrow" movement, whose purpose was to coordinate the efforts and share the methods of successful boys' clubs. The influence of "scientific charity" could be clearly seen in this field, as the delegates met to define their relationship to an "organized, economical and wise extension of such work." The reporting on the event revealed a good deal about Hall's connections to the growing network of people involved. The conference, called "one of the most distinguished affairs ever held in Hartford," took place at the Pratt Street club building, "under the superintendency of that most distinguished lady ... Lawyer Mary Hall." Representatives attended from large and small clubs throughout New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, although "no club has become any better known over the entire country than the Good Will Club of Hartford. It is considered a model worthy of imitation in its methods and management. Visits from the heads of other clubs are frequent to obtain ideas ... The Good Will Club of Hartford enjoys a national reputation." This reputation may have accounted for Hall's ability to attract G. Stanley Hall (*no relation to Mary*), president of Clark University and "the father of child-study in America," as the keynote speaker.

The group evidently adhered to the ecumenical principles Hall espoused for the Good Will Club. According to one report, "one of the best features of the conference is the unsectarian spirit dominating it. Protestant, Catholic and Hebrew clubs will be represented each by its own speaker." The only speeches covered in detail (at least in Hall's clippings) are those of several Protestant speakers, including Edwin Northrop of Worcester. He spoke on "Police Court Work," describing his "contact with boys already started on the downward road. If we reclaim them, help them, save them, there comes a definite knowledge of something accomplished." The rhetoric of child-saving surfaced also in the speech of Reverend Edward Niles of the Middle Collegiate Church in New York, along with a healthy dose of assimilation language. Referring to the number of foreigners in Hartford, he asserted that, "in them is the opportunity for the altruistic citizen to perpetuate American ideas by making them intelligible to and beloved by the coming generation of this new, controlling element, who, racially, 'know not Joseph'...Let us save the boys for our country. Then shall we save our country through the boys."

Thus, the dominant themes in the work of the Good Will Club also found expression on a national scale, as an emerging boys' club movement adopted the language and principles of earlier workers in the field. This process culminated in the establishment in 1908 of the Federation of Boys'

Clubs, under the leadership of Jacob A. Riis, the prominent social welfare advocate. Composed of superintendents and volunteers in clubs nationwide, the Federation aimed to "greatly systematize and strengthen this work for boys," and expected to "have the support of the public by endorsement and substantial aid."¹⁸

Mary Hall's significance as a figure in Hartford's history has been obscured by the reputations of her better known contemporaries, and perhaps by her own distaste for self-promotion. She represented a new model of American womanhood which took shape in the post-Civil War years: a woman with education, ambition, and the ability to play several different roles at once while moving comfortably within a variety of social settings. Hall was both a feminist and an elitist, believing in equal rights for women but drawing a line at equality between social classes. Like many women of her milieu, she combined these opposing principles into avid charitable work embodying the ideal of domestic feminism. Hall did more, however, by distinguishing herself not only in the realm of social motherhood, but also on her own terms as a professional attorney and public servant. It is for this greater achievement, through which Hall resolved the conflict between society's expectations for women and her own thirst for success and power, that she should be remembered.

Despite a reputedly prickly personality, Hall was admired by many in Hartford for her convictions, her energy, her integrity, and above all, for her work at the Good Will Club. As one observer remarked, "it is easy to sit at ease, in a house of wealth and refinement and sympathy for the unfortunate ones who crowd our streets, but how few women there are who will go down into their midst, raise them up and start them on the right way to a new life."¹⁹ At the time of Hall's death in 1927, the Good Will Club boasted some 25,000 graduates and had just opened its new season of programs for working boys in Hartford's North End. Hall was gone but her legacy, and her commitment to the welfare of Hartford's youth, lived on in the work of boys' clubs throughout the country.

Footnotes

1 This paper is excerpted from my unpublished master's thesis, "A Woman of Good Will: The Life and Work of Mary Hall, 1843-1927." Trinity College(Hartford), 1996. The full text and bibliography can be found in the Trinity College Archives.

2 Amos G. Warner, *American Charities* (NY, 1894) p. 380.

3 Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914*. (NY, 1980) p.10.

4 Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Women's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*. (New Haven, 1977) p.9.

5 Scrapbook 4, unattributed clipping, "The Boy's Club," 1886. Citations are to the collection of Mary Hall's scrapbooks, Nos. 1-12, at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, CT.

6 Scrapbook 4, unattributed clipping cites a letter from Miss Jennie Hunt to *Lend a Hand*, July 1886.

7 Mabel Holman, "American Citizens in Embryo." *The Connecticut Magazine*, Vol X, No. 2, 1906. p. 279.

8 *Historical Sketch of the Good Will Boy's Club, 1880-1889*, p. 6.

9 Robert Bremner, *From the Depths: The Discovery of Poverty in the U.S.* (NY, 1956) p. 51.

10 Marvin Gettleman, "Charity and Social Classes in the U.S., 1874-1900." *The American Journal of Economics and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1963. p. 419.

11 Linda Gordon, *Heros of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (NY, 1988) p. 29.

12 *Historical Sketch*, 1890. p. 2.

13 *Ibid*, p. 3.

14 Gwendolyn Mink, "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race and the Origins of the American Welfare State," in Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State and Welfare*. (Madison, 1990) p. 105.

15 Scrapbook 4, unattributed clipping, April 1887, A report from the annual meeting mentions both Harriet Beecher Stowe and Samuel Clemens among the ladies and gentlemen who "assisted" at the club during the year, though no description is supplied of their contributions.

16 Keith Melder, "Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th-Century America," *New York History*, Vol. 49, July 1967, p. 117.

17 All citations regarding this conference are taken from Scrapbook 8, six unattributed clippings, December 1900.

18 Scrapbook 12, *Good Will Star*, December 1908. p. 3.

19 Scrapbook 11, *Hartford Courant* clipping, letter from "HBF," March, 1905.

Poverty, Women, and Urban Education: Wasting Time?

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The construction of a neighborhood "learning corridor" on the edge of Trinity campus prompts us to reconsider what we know about urban schooling. Doing so reminds us of how little educational prospects for poorer newcomers congregating in our cities have changed in the face of repeated proposals to revitalize cities. Whether we have learned substantively new lessons about how to organize urban education, or whether we've just been wasting time in only now starting to implement what we already knew, remains to be seen.

Generations of immigrants (international and regional, domestic migrants) have struggled and sacrificed for their children or grandchildren to have better lives. Whether they could take advantage of or afford it, many newcomer groups, as well as American society generally, idealized education as "the primary instrument of the melting pot that offered poor immigrant children access to the fullness of American life (Greer, 1969:84)." But as Colin Greer observed in 1969, "What we are witnessing in our current panic over urban education is no more than an escalation of the criticisms made by school reformers since the turn of the century." According to Greer, for more than 100 years American schools have failed to live up to the expectations of promise for immigrants and newcomers to the cities and "the mobility of [even] white lower classes was never as rapid or as sure as it has become traditional to think." Recent reports like the AAUW's "How Schools Short-change Girls [1995]" continue to demonstrate what Greer suggested almost 30 years ago -- that "school performance seems consistently dependent upon the socioeconomic position of the pupil's family." Increasing years of schooling has not promoted the kind of social mobility expected because progress in school is heavily influenced by class background and parents' occupations.

When I think about explanations and options for enhancing the impact of education on poor city kids' futures, I draw on my own experiences in both urban and rural schooling of poor kids across different cultures. My first urban teaching job was in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, at Lincoln High School, which later became a magnet school under desegregation orders. At Lincoln, which was racially and economically segregated, I taught English and psychology, offering, I thought, innovative ways of engaging with drama and English classics. Students didn't care much for it. For them it was a waste of time. They wanted traditional grammar exercises and tests -- first, because they knew getting good jobs depended upon standard English skills, and second, because they knew they could 'make up' the traditional homework more easily when they had to miss class to work or take care of sick family members. Clearly the substance of my lesson plans did not fit into the exigencies of their lives. By their sophomore year, one in three girls had a child and most were working at least part-time in a city where they were not even sure a high school education would get them a better job. The middle class expectations of teachers and staff separated them from effectively collaborating with students' families to change educational outcomes in the school.

For poor families in the barrio schools around the small town in the Philippines where I taught, children were still a needed source of household labor; the local middle class teachers knew which households the kids came from and treated them accordingly. Few of the kids of peasant farmers went on to high school and college. When even college graduates had to leave the country to find work, it didn't seem to improve their chances for employment much. The impact of mismatched teaching was more pointed in Agusan del Sur, in the southern Philippines, where, as a literacy worker, I was enlisted by a native leader, Datu Tagleong, in his conspiracy to join another Datu, Manpatilan, in creating their own local government federation to assume more local control.

Of course, not much came of it; instead government teachers from the towns continued to be sent out to these remoter, but self-sufficient, hill groups to teach 'those people' how to enter the 'non-ethnic mainstream,' which eventually meant leaving the local community's economy and traditions.

In the southern neighborhoods of Teheran, Iran, where I later worked, an amazing young woman from another part of the city had decided to construct an educational complex that offered 'the best and latest in education' to those children from the poorest, mostly rural-urban migrant, families. The director and her friends planned the complex and its activities, including cultural events like musical concerts for these children, but their families had little input into its organization and curricula. While students appreciated the facilities and the efforts of the director, most of the teachers saw a large gap between the lives of their students and themselves. Some were even afraid to go into the neighborhoods where those students, many of whom were 'turks,' lived. Parents, for their part, considered education important (Islam supports that view) but their daughters' access to status and respectability still came more readily through marriage and motherhood.

In other words when kids' labor is needed by their families, when they have few or inferior educational opportunities, when they are perceived by the school system and, in turn, perceive it as culturally different from their own class/culture experience or having little to do with their future status or employment in the larger society, or when the neighborhood is not involved in making decisions about their kids schooling experiences, the schools (urban or rural) don't serve the children well. School failure, as Ray Rist observed (1971) becomes a self fulfilling prophecy for the poor and racially or ethnically stigmatized.

Back in the United States, a mountain of research in urban education since the 1970's has suggested that urban and immigrant parents, who are attracted disproportionately to the cities, generally support education and/or expect their children to use education as a vehicle for social mobility (Rosenfeld 1971, Kibria 1993). Immigrant mothers often sacrifice their own educational and employment opportunities in order to further their children's. In New York City, Chinese immigrant women were taking jobs in the Chinese enclave economy rather than higher paying jobs elsewhere in order to stay in the neighborhood where their children (especially young children) would be better integrated into the community (Min Zou et al. 1989). Adult women must often forego even literacy training that might facilitate their own adjustment to a new society or culture, which in turn can affect their children's ability to live between two cultures (Davidson 1996).

Since the 1970's, the classic explanations for the failure of urban schools have shifted from placing blame on individual students, to their family/cultural background, to the classroom experience itself, and finally lead to the analysis of schooling in relationship to larger societal conditions. Research by Ogbu (1978), Ginsburg (1972) and Rist (1971, 73), supported the argument that it was not genetic difference that accounted for discrepancies in school achievement or test scores. Rather cultural differences in home/school environments, in expectations and in socialization to different learning styles (associated differently with test success), as well as classroom experiences and structural conditions imposed by class, accounted for more. Rist's studies, in particular, exposed the role of middle class teacher (even teachers of color) expectations for students in creating the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. What teachers 'knew' about the students (often based on clothing, neatness and cleanliness) predicted which ability level reading group children were assigned in elementary school. These earlier studies also chronicled working class resistance to the school culture (Willis 1978).

For Ogbu the position of some minorities (across different cultures) approaches a "caste-like" state, in which "the social and occupational roles of its members are determined by caste, not by education and ability (1978:343)." That is, there are visible markers used to distinguish members of the caste which they cannot change through achieved statuses like educational attainment. Thus, oriental Jews in Israel, West Indian immigrants in Britain, and African-Americans and Puerto Ricans in the United States, have been perceived by the society and school, sometimes by the teachers themselves, as being less capable, may miss more school because of family responsibilities, and not surprisingly come to score lower on educational tests. Caste-like minorities who have been denied access to equal employment and educational opportunities historically can escape only by "passing or emigration" to other places (1978:353).

Initially many first generation immigrant children tend to do better in school than second generation kids of the same ethnic group (Ogbu 1991). However, many immigrant parents (especially nonwhite immigrants) also find that their children begin to place themselves in the American racial caste paradigm, expecting that their life chances and the return to their education will not be the same as white kids'. Ogbu suggests here a significant difference in the experiences of voluntary versus involuntary immigrants -- those groups who through slavery and colonial relationships with host/mainland and maybe even refugee flight find themselves in another culture versus those groups who have had more choice in the matter. However, these differences are also complicated by additional contrasts by race.

While, acknowledging the importance of classism and racism in explaining the effectiveness of education for different groups, Fordham and Ogbu have turned to closer investigations of which poor, urban kids do well in school and to explanations that accentuate individual agency and identity within the context of other explanatory conditions. For both working class Appalachian and African-American urban girls, passing (or having to be something one is not) facilitates school success. Those who succeed have to suppress certain habits, to 'act middle class or white,' and to distance themselves from the neighborhood culture to succeed in school, thereby facing pressure from other kids not to "sell out" to white culture. Much school failure, according to Fordham, involves a struggle to assert one's humanity, to get respect for who one really is, and where she/he comes from. High school students' attempts to "reclaim what they see as their appropriated humanity undermine[s] their academic performance (Fordham 1997:343)." She argues that "the opportunity structure will have to do more than reflect the norms and values of the historically dominant 'other'" -- that is the white middle class American culture (1996:344).

Fordham found little respect for or integration of diverse home cultures into the school culture. Middle class teachers (black and white) only gave lip service to black history in the high school curriculum of the black high school Fordham in Washington, DC. Community expectations, especially motherhood as a measure of womanhood, can place additional burdens on female students. For working class Appalachian girls and urban poor girls, motherhood offers security and acceptance during the emotional turbulence of adolescence and when educational opportunities are not perceived as translating into viable career outcomes (Ogbu 1978; Borman et al. 1988).

Some recent studies continue to focus on classroom pedagogy and the interaction between students and teachers in the urban school in proposals for school reform. Haberman's critique of "teaching acts" in city schools stresses the inactivity and passivity engendered in classrooms where teachers emphasize asking and answer questions, making assignments, settling disputes, and giving grades, etc., rather than actively engaging students in learning (Haberman 1996). Such pedagogy is also common in the poorer, rural schools I've observed, for example in North Carolina, where socializing the students to the middle class expectations of school culture and behavior, in sometimes overcrowded classrooms, and raising test scores have become the highest priorities. Other studies

have given more nuanced attention to the racialized nature of student/teacher interaction regardless of the school's urban or rural location. Philips demonstrated the educational consequences of 'cultural' miscommunication between native American kids and their off reservation teachers (1983), and Grant has shown that teachers (black and white) tend to reinforce white boys on academics matters, white girls for some combination of politeness and academic achievement, and black girls for their social skills in the classroom (1992).

In the 1990's most educational research reflects greater attention to the intersection between the school experience and neighborhood context and culture, to access to jobs and other opportunities, and to understanding the multiple burdens of gender, race and class in the context of urban poverty. Delpit (1995) has stressed (1) the importance of teachers acknowledging and respecting home language and culture, while teaching standard content and languages at the same time and (2) the possibilities of facilitating this by empathetic listening and engaging students through techniques students are familiar with in their home cultures. However, in the 1990's, we understand not only the burdens of passing in white middle class school culture (urban and suburban), but also the positive impact of suburban school experience on city kids. Researchers like Wells and Crain (1996) and reports from Hartford's Project Concern (Connecticut 1996) confirm that with the current discrepancy in resources and organization of urban and suburban schools, city kids, especially minority kids, who are integrated into suburban schools do better in terms of retention and college attendance than their cohort who remain in the city, partly because they have increased confidence that they can succeed and see more genuine connection between school and acquiring employment, despite any emotional costs of 'passing.'

Recognizing, accepting, and respecting the backgrounds of students, engaging and empowering the community in educational design, providing experiences (like desegregated classes) that validate the connection between one's own community, doing well in school and future opportunities may all be important, but poverty, discrimination, and class factors are still the most important factors in urban educational success or failure. It remains to be seen whether new educational resources in the city will be reinforced with better economic opportunities that will help guarantee better return on individual educational capital, especially for the poor. [One only has to look at the November 10th Courant article, "Black Social Workers Complain of Agency Bias" on an employment discrimination suit brought by black social workers in Hartford to see obstacles to achieving success.] In the interim this may mean giving more attention to reforming vocational (school to work) programs, alternative and informal education, and providing daycare and additional support for student parents, especially young mothers. Educational equity legislation (like Title VII, Title IX, the 1984 Perkins Act to establish high school and college programs for poor women and the 1988 Family Support Act) has had some impact on "education for teenage parents in all regions of the country," according to Burge and Culver (1990).

What the learning corridor can do for women and the community outside of school is as important as the school facilities themselves. Whether the learning corridor experience is substantially different from other kinds of 'school improvement' will depend in the last instance on economic revitalization, the realization of opportunities for the poor, and fuller integration of 'caste-like' minorities into the larger society, something we've known a little about for, probably, the last 100 years. It really seems like we've been *wasting time!*

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