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INSIDER AND OUTSIDER, COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT: ELIZABETH CECIL WILSON'S TRANSNATIONAL EXPERIENCES AS A PROGRESSIVE AMERICAN WOMAN EDUCATOR

Dentro y fuera, comunidad y conflicto: las experiencias transnacionales de Elizabeth Cecil Wilson como educadora americana progresista

Kate Rousmaniere[α]

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Abstract. This essay takes a feminist educational biographical approach to the transnational life and work of the American educator Elizabeth Cecil Wilson (1913-1994). Central to this interpretation is the way in which Wilson's life exemplifies the concept of "internal exile" as a result of her transnational movements in China, Korea, and the United States. Wilson's early experiences with internationalism, all-women's education and American progressive education shaped her interpretation of her later work in educational administration, leading her to develop a unique perspective about being both an "insider" and an "outsider" in her world. Raised in a variety of close and strongly identified communities, in her later professional life she experienced a sense of isolation and displacement in the structured hierarchical environments of international organizations and American state school systems. Late in life, she articulated this challenge in feminism when she argued for women's inclusion in formal educational leadership.

Keywords: Biography; Internal exile; Educator; Internationalization; Progressive education.

[α] Department of Educational Leadership, 304 McGuffey Hall, Miami University, Oxford Ohio, 45056. rousmak@muohio.edu https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2881-3962

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Resumen. *Este ensayo aborda desde una perspectiva biográfica educativa feminista la vida y el trabajo transnacional de la educadora norteamericana Elizabeth Cecil Wilson (1913-1994). Se hace central en esta interpretación el modo en que la vida de Wilson ejemplifica el concepto de «exilio interior», como el resultado de sus movimientos transnacionales a China, Korea y Estados Unidos. Las prontas experiencias con el internacionalismo, la educación progresiva norteamericana y la educación de las mujeres dieron forma a su postrero trabajo de interpretación, llevándola al desarrollo de una única visión desde «dentro» y desde «fuera» en su mundo. Crecida en una variedad de comunidades cerradas y de fuerte identidad, experimentó en la última parte de su vida profesional un sentido de aislamiento y desplazamiento en entornos de estructuras jerárquicas de organizaciones internacional y de los sistemas escolares estatales americanos. Al final de su vida articuló este desafío en el feminismo cuando argumentó la inclusión de las mujeres en el liderazgo educativo formal.*

Palabras clave: *Biografía; Exilio interior; Educadora; Internacionalización; Educación progresiva.*

This feminist biography draws upon Jane Martin's concept of auto/biography in which the biographer identifies links between the public and private self and incorporates the experience of the researcher.[1] Methodologically, Martin argues for the close reading of sources that reflect a woman's life in both the public and private realm and that may not have been intended to be autobiographical.[2] Wilson's biography requires such innovative work, as none of her private documents, letters or personal artifacts remain. Her physical movements can be tracked through official records—such as boat manifestos, census and educational records. Her intellectual journey is available through a few public research documents. The only trace of her personal life exists in her alumnae records to her college where she wrote with some informality on her activities.

In addition, the way in which I found Elizabeth Cecil Wilson exemplifies a feminist biographical approach. I first learned about Wilson when I found her obituary in my late mother's collection of family and

[1] Jane Martin, "The hope of biography: the historical recovery of women educator activists," *History of Education* 32, no.2 (2003): 219-220. See also: Joyce Goodman, "Cosmopolitan women educators, 1920-1939: inside/outside activism and abjection," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no.1-2 (2010): 69-83.

[2] Martin, "The hope of biography", 225.

personal papers.[3] A cousin who was engaged in genealogical research helped me to identify Wilson and track her life. A friend who had researched women educators in Asia helped identify some of Wilson's international travels. My brother helped identify Wilson's summer home in Maine. Over a three-year period, I gradually pieced together more information about Wilson, and reflected on how her life as an educator loosely paralleled my own. Thus, distinctly private familial and friend networks and a personal commitment helped me to unearth the fragments of a public life that was otherwise largely lost to history.

This essay is also informed by the concept of internal exile because Wilson's life was marked by travel and change, and, in both geographical and intellectual ways, a sense of separateness from the world in which she lived. Western literary and philosophical responses to modernity have often used the exile trope to characterize a prevailing sense of unease, estrangement, and spiritual orphanhood or what Edward Said argued was "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place".[4] Yet exile can happen even while remaining on one's own soil, as described by the concept of *internal exile* when one is geographically at home and yet still feeling like a stranger, disconnected and excluded from political processes and social benefits. That estrangement can be experienced as either a negative existential burden or as a positive liberating choice.[5]

Internal exile aptly describes much of Wilson's life and work: born and raised in an expatriate community, she continued to experience close community living in her own all-women's education and as an educator in small progressive schools. She then began to experience

[3] "School Official Elizabeth Wilson Dies at Age 80," *The Washington Post*, Sunday, November 13, 1994, 6.

[4] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 173; Paul Allatson, and Jo McCormack, "Introduction: Exile and social transformation," *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* (2005); Anthony D. Cousins, *Mythologies of Internal Exile in Elizabethan Verse: Six Studies* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[5] Rosemary A. Barbera, "Internal exile: effects on families and communities," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* (2008): 69-76. Helia López Zarzosa, "Internal Exile, Exile and Return: A Gendered View," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11, no.2 (1998): 189-198; Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Writing and internal exile in Eastern Europe: The example of Imre Kertész," in *The exile and return of writers from East-Central Europe: a compendium*, eds. John Neubauer, and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

dissonance in her international educational work and in American public school administration which led her to articulate a sense of separateness and critique from her organizations and to advocate for educational reform that was based on community. In this latter reform work, Wilson argued that teachers needed to cultivate the ability to "stand outside oneself and one's immediate experience to describe, to analyze, and to interpret it for others…. observing and documenting the manners and mores of a familiar educational institution in the same way the anthropologist studies the culture of far away and esoteric people". The concept of a "resident anthropologist" as a key actor in school reform emerged from Wilson's own experience as both an insider and outsider.[6] Throughout her life, she struggled to replicate the insider community experiences of her earlier education, even as she increasingly felt the conflict of being an outsider.

EARLY LIFE

Elizabeth Cecil Wilson was born November 27, 1913 in Shanghai, China, the daughter of Protestant missionaries Martha Cecil Wilson and James Morrison Wilson, a Presbyterian pastor who later served as Superintendent of St. Luke's Hospital in Shanghai. The Wilson family was originally from Louisville Kentucky, a small city in the American South.

Shanghai in the 1920s was a vibrant and cohesive city that was commonly referred to in this period as its "golden age" because of its international cosmopolitan community. The city was a primary commercial and financial hub of the Asia-Pacific region, and citizens of many countries came to Shanghai to live and work; those who stayed for long periods —some for generations— called themselves "Shanghailanders". Protestant missionaries, including Presbyterians like the Wilsons, were part of that strongly identified expatriate community in Shanghai.[7]

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[6] Florence Howe, John McCluskey, and Elizabeth Wilson, "Hierarchy, power and women in educational policy making," *Institute for Educational Leadership. George Washington University. A position paper proposed by the National Conference on Women in Education Policy Making* (1976): 13.

[7] Mark F. Wilkinson, "The Shanghai American Commbunity, 1937-1949," in *New frontiers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); James L. Huskey, "The Cosmopolitan Connection: Americans and Chinese in Shanghai during the Interwar Years," *Diplomatic History* 11, no.3 (1987): 227-242; Norma B. Hannah, "Shanghai: The Last of the Good Old Days," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 2, no.3 (1975): 179-191; Niv Horesh, "From Mudflats to Cyber-Hub? The Shanghai Experience,

The city was also a center of educational change: the American educational philosopher John Dewey visited Shanghai in 1919; and his Chinese discipline Hu Shi had studied experimental education in Shanghai some years earlier.[8] American missionaries founded their own schools in the region, originally for their own children but then open to any European, and some Chinese, residents from expatriate diplomatic, missionary and business backgrounds. Especially popular with missionary and expatriate families was the Shanghai American School: founded in 1912 in a European section of Shanghai, it was a private elementary and secondary school located in Victorian style buildings designed to replicate Independence Hall in Philadelphia and offering a coeducational Western curriculum.[9] Like many American college preparatory schools at home and abroad, the Shanghai American School was noted for its strong community identity and many student organizations, sports, and traditions.[10] Like many "Shanghailanders", the Wilson's community life centered on the Shanghai American School which the Wilson children attended, where Martha Cecil Wilson taught Bible and where, in later years, Elizabeth Wilson would teach.

In 1926, as political unrest was developing in China due to the impending Chinese Civil War, Wilson, aged 12, and her younger sister and brother left Shanghai for the United States.[11] Their mother either traveled with them or came later, as in 1929 the youngest Wilson child, Martha, was born in Louisville Kentucky. Much of the family later returned to China, although Elizabeth Wilson stayed in Louisville, living with relatives and attending J.M. Atherton Girls High School from which she graduated in 1930.

Although Louisville was a Southern American city, noted for traditional gender roles, Atherton Girls High School, which had opened in

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1842-2009," *American journal of Chinese studies* (2009): 105-117; Xi Lian, *Redeemed by fire: The rise of popular Christianity in modern China* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010).

[8] Sun Youzhong, "John Dewey in China: Yesterday and Today," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35, no.1 (1999): 69-88.

[9] Angie Mills, *The Story of the Shanghai American School, 1912-2008* (Shanghai: Shanghai American School Association, 2008).

[10] Minji Yao, "American schools brought Western curriculum," *Shanghai Daily* July 8, 2014.

[11] List of Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States, September 3, 1926. Thanks to Joyce Goodman for identifying this documentation.

1856, had a history of providing strong academic education to the City's middle-class girls. One of its emphases was the preparation of future teachers. By the time of Wilson's attendance, the school may also have provided a progressive influence to its students as its principal was Emma Woerner who before her appointment as the school's first woman principal in 1924 had been President of the Louisville Woman Suffrage Association.[12]

Wilson's experience at Atherton was a formative one, providing her with a strong female centered community where she was active in sports and community life. Three decades after graduating from Atherton High School, Wilson acknowledged it in her curriculum vitae that she attached to her 1959 doctoral dissertation. That Wilson attended that high school, instead of returning to China with her family, also speaks to the academic commitment of her family: her parents were both college graduates and notably, her mother was a 1909 graduate of the elite all women's Wellesley College.

After high school, Wilson attended Randolph Macon Women's College in Lynchburg Virginia for one year and then Wellesley College in Massachusetts, her mother's alma mater. At Wellesley, she sang in the college choir and was involved in the Shakespeare Acting Club.[13] She graduated in 1934 with a BA in English Literature, and for the rest of her life, she sent in regular reports to the alumnae journal, noting her various professional activities. Wellesley College was known for its cohesive women-centered community where women professors taught women students and served as a model "women's university", a cohesive intellectual and social community.[14] Wilson's experience at Wellesley continued her positive all-female experience begun at Atherton and furthered her professional aspirations.

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[12] *Woman's Journal and Suffrage News* 201 (1913) Issue 26; Amy J. Lueck, "High School Girls: Women's Higher Education at the Louisville Female High School," *Ohio Valley History* 17, no.3 (2017): 44-62.

[13] Wellesley College *Legenda,* 1933, 187; Wellesley College *Legenda,* 1934, 173.

[14] Patricia A. Palmieri, "Here was fellowship: A social portrait of academic women at Wellesley College, 1895-1920", *History of Education Quarterly* 23, no.2 (1983): 195-6; Patricia A. Palmieri, "Patterns of achievement of single academic women at Wellesley College, 1880-1920," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (1980): 63-67.

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Wellesley College introduced Wilson to her career in progressive education: she spent her year after graduation as an apprentice teacher at the progressive private Shady Hill School.[15] Wellesley College had a strong connection with Shady Hill, founded in 1915 in the neighboring Boston area. A leading influence was its first principal, Katherine Taylor, who was part of a group of women progressive school founders in the period. Taylor had been both a student and a teacher at the Francis Parker School in Chicago, which was greatly influenced by the work of John Dewey and Parker, who Dewey called "the father of progressive education".[16] Taylor's special commitment to teacher training led her to establish an innovative teacher apprenticeship program with local colleges, include Wellesley. Taylor understood that the making of a good teacher involved more than the mastery of educational theory or the development of pedagogical skills in practice teaching in the classroom. Echoing Dewey's notion that education involved deep social processes and personal reflection, Taylor argued that the art of teaching required an understanding of both child development and the teacher's own personality development. Taylor herself led special seminars for apprenticeship teachers that focused on the apprentices' reflections of their teaching experience. Taylor's influence on Wilson's understanding of progressive education was strong, and probably led to her appointment as a teacher at the Francis Parker School some years later.[17]

After her year at Shady Hill, Wilson taught at the local elite private Belmont Hill School as a Kindergarten teacher. She returned to Shanghai in 1936 where she taught at the Shanghai American School until 1938, experiencing some of the increased tension of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai that intensified in the late 30s. She returned to

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[15] *Wellesley News*, September 27, 1934.

[16] Alan Sadovnik, and Susan Semel, eds. *Founding mothers and others: Women educational leaders during the progressive era* (London: Springer, 2016); Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*: *Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 21; Marie Kirchner Stone, "The Francis W. Parker School: Chicago's Progressive Education Legacy," in Susan Semel, and Alan R. Sadovnik, *"Schools of Tomorrow," Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education. History of Schools and Schooling* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999): 23-66.

[17] Sandra Ramsey Loehr, *Katharine Taylor and the Shady Hill School, 1915-1949* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1989); Edward Yeomans, *The Shady Hill school: The first fifty* years (Nebraska: Windflower Press, 1979).

the Boston area where she taught for some more years at Shady Hill School.[18]

Wilson's early experiences as a student and teacher were in institutions where community was a priority. Certainly her work at progressive schools like Shady Hills School was based on the progressive emphasis on education in which students and teachers were active members of a cooperative and democratic community. Even at the elite schools where she studied (Shanghai American School, the Atherton High School for Girls, and Wellesley College) and taught (Belmont Hill School), community building was emphasized in the importance of school traditions, athletic team work, and student clubs. Wilson was involved in all of these activities, and she maintained a loyalty to her schools throughout her life. At her two all-women's institutions, Atherton High School for Girls, and Wellesley College, Wilson observed accomplished women educators lead community.

Between 1943-46, Wilson, now in her early 30s, served as a Lieutenant in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), the women's branch of the United States Naval Reserve during World War II. Originally led by a former Wellesley College President Mildred McAfee, the WAVES offered Wilson opportunities for service and travel, but the gender stratified hierarchy of the military may also have caused her some internal conflict. The WAVES provided a war-effort organization that was staffed and led by women, yet because it was located within the male dominated American military, the WAVES was a marginalized feminized institution.[19] While late in life Wilson wrote her Wellesley College friends that she appreciated her two tours of duty with the WAVES, in her later critiques of educational organizations, she referred disparagingly of such military-type hierarchical organizations.[20]

[18] List of United States Citizens on SS Empress of Japan, leaving Japan for Manila for Victoria BC, Canada, July, 1938. Thanks to Joyce Goodman for identifying this documentation. 1940 census, Cambridge Massachusetts. Thanks to Vicky Jones for identifying this documentation.

[19] Elizabeth G. Hendricks, "Mildred McAfee Horton (1900-1994): Portrait of a Pathbreaking Christian Leader," *The Journal of Presbyterian History (1997-)* 76, no.2 (1998): 159-174; Melissa E. Murray, "Whatever happened to GI Jane: Citizenship, gender, and social policy in the postwar era," *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* 9 (2002): 114.

[20] Elizabeth Cecil Wilson alumna entry, 1979, Wellesley College.

After the war, Wilson returned to Boston to earn her Masters of Education in 1947 at Harvard Education School, majoring in Psychology. She then moved to Chicago to serve as Assistant Principal of the progressive Francis Parker School, the same school that Katherine Taylor, her principal at Shady Hill School, was so influenced by.

In 1953, Wilson was back in the Far East and also back in a large quasi-military environment of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA).[21]

KOREA

A defining experience in Wilson's career was the two years that she spent in South Korea as part of the United Nations educational reconstruction efforts. After its defeat in 1945, Japan was forced to cede its 35-year long control of Korea. American military occupied the peninsula until the Republic of Korea was established in 1948, but within two years, the nation was divided, literally, at the 38th parallel by the invasion of Soviet forces from the north. After a bitter and destructive war, the truce of 1953 led to years of intensive economic reconstruction under United Nations forces that were dominated by the American military. In what Wilson later observed as "a confusing and cumbersome organizational pattern", educational reconstruction in South Korea after the war was led by three different United Nations organizations and at least three private educational efforts.[22]

As she wrote her Wellesley classmates, the work was intense and confusing: "there never seemed to be enough hours in the day to encompass

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[21] United Nations. Korean Agency, https://archives.un.org/content/united-nations-korean-reconstruction-agency-unkra (consulted on december, 2021).

[22] Michael J. Seth, *Education fever*: *Society, Politics, and the Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), especially chapters 2 and 3; Gregg A. Brazinsky, *Nation building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the making of a democracy* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Jong Jag Lee, Don Adams, and Catherine Cornbleth, "Transnational transfer of curriculum knowledge: A Korean case study," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 20, no.3 (1988): 233-246; Don Adams, "Problems of reconstruction in Korean education," *Comparative Education Review* 3, no.3 (1960): 27-32. For other contemporary studies of educational reconstruction efforts in Korea see: Vester M. Mulholland, "Cooperative Attack on Korean Educational Problems," *Virginia Journal of Education* (October 1953): 11-15; Betty Warner Dietz, "An Educational Adventure in Korea," *The American Teacher* 38, no.7 (April 1954): 8-10; C.W. Wood, "Post-Liberation Problems in Korean Education," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 39, no.3 (1957): 115-118.

what we did or should have been doing" -- and her work with her fellow educators "touched almost every aspect of the school system", often with inconsistent objectives. The work was "slow and confusing" because of the challenging working conditions, the reliance on interpreters and the effort to counteract "a lifetime of authoritarian methodology".[23] As she wrote her Wellesley classmates, her group often "felt completely surrounded by an impenetrable barrier of butterflies".[24]

Wilson's goal was to introduce progressive and democratic educational values to Korean schools in coordination with Korean teachers.[25] Yet for all her advocacy of cooperative international work, Wilson objected to traditional hierarchical values embedded in Korean culture that, she felt, kept Koreans from understanding the strategies or merits of progressivism.[26] Some historians have offered an analysis of such efforts, arguing that the promotion of progressive education to non-Western cultures contributed to larger patterns of cultural imperialism. At the very least, progressive impulses imposed Western ideas of individualism and liberal capitalism on traditional cultures. Progressive education was often experienced as colonial education, even as educators such as Wilson believed that the goal was collaborative bridge building.[27]

Korean traditionalism was not the only challenge, however, as Wilson also critiqued American educators' unquestioning advocacy of American values, the unclarity of their long-range goals, and the reliance of most American agencies on military procedures that were notably undemocratic and that focused on immediate crisis management.[28] This

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[23] Wilson, "Expanding Educational Frontiers," 149.

[24] Wilson, "Expanding Educational Frontiers", 150.

[25] Wilson, "The Problem of Value", 117, 164-5.

[26] Elizabeth C. Wilson, "Directions and Dangers for Further Work at the College of Education", quoted in Wilson, "The Problem of Value," 223.

[27] Joost Coté, "Administering the medicine': progressive education, colonialism and the state," *History of Education* 30, no.5 (2001): 489-511; Thomas Fallace, "Recapitulation theory and the new education: Race, culture, imperialism, and pedagogy, 1894-1916," *Curriculum Inquiry* 42, no.4 (2012): 510-533; Gerard Guthrie, "The failure of progressive paradigm reversal," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 47, no.1 (2017): 62-76; Yoko Yamasaki, and Hiroyuki Kuno, eds. *Educational progressivism, cultural encounters and reform in Japan* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017).

[28] Wilson, "The Problem of Value", 117-118, 161.

was the heart of what Wilson called the "problem of value": Americans were only trying to teach technical "know how" and not the "building of self-confidence and morale" which could help Koreans recognize "intelligent efforts to appraise old values and evaluate new ones". She believed that a more effective cross-cultural program would involve both American and Korean self-reflection and investigation of their own values and assumptions about education and culture.[29] Such an approach would involve physical reconstruction and the crossing of "a psychological and spiritual frontier" in the development of professional partnerships between people whose background, culture, and values were completely dissimilar. Educational reconstruction work needed to focus more on "companionship" and cooperative and inclusive teamwork where all co-workers were not only professionally qualified but also perceptive and sensitive people.[30] In other words, the development of progressive educational practices would allow all members of the collaborative international team to grow.

Ultimately, Wilson struggled with what some scholars have called the cosmopolitan ethic of a "world citizen" where commitments to a global notion of humanity replace provincial, national, and local concerns.[31] In this vision of international relations, collaborative work involved obligations to others in a kind of shared citizenship in which the value of humanity would be seen across differences.[32] In practice, this relationship was complex, as international work that intended to cross borders remained largely aligned with the interests of the nation state, leading to tension between utopian ideals of a global community and the national structures, traditions, and interests that underlay the efforts for such work.[33] Wilson may have heard of such idealism from her work at

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[29] Wilson, "The Problem of Value", 284.

[30] Wilson, "Expanding Educational Frontiers", 150.

[31] Thomas Popkewitz, *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform. Science, Education and Making Society by Making the Child* (London: Routledge, 2008), 1.

[32] Kwame Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London: Penguin, 2000), 6.

[33] I am grateful to Joyce Goodman for introducing me to the research around the concept of what she calls "imperialism threaded through internationalism." Daniel Laqua, "Transnational intellectual cooperation, the League of Nations, and the problem of order," *Journal of Global History* 6, no.2 (2011): 223-247; Damiano Matasci, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Hugo Gonçalves Dores, "Imperialism, internationalism, and education in Africa: connected histories," *Paedagogica Historica* (2021): 1-7.

Wellesley College in the 1930s, where some faculty were involved in the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) which promoted a concept of the "international mind," a liberal discourse of equality which included the wider understandings of humanity as a whole.[34]

Ultimately, however, Wilson believed that such efforts at collaborative education and community engagement failed in Korea, due to both Korean traditionalism and American authoritarianism. The problem of competing values and interests dominated the work. For the rest of her career, she struggled to introduce a resolution to such conflictual patterns into American educational practice.

AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Upon her return from Korea, Wilson took a job as District Curriculum Director with the County Educational Services of Montgomery County, Maryland, outside of Washington DC near where her sister lived. Now experienced in small independent private schooling and in the American military and United Nations work, her entry into a public school district organization rounded out her experience in educational organizations. In this role, through the 1960s and 70s, Wilson took part in a number of national school reform projects focused on curriculum planning.[35]

In this period, she described herself as "a puzzled, concerned, and yet fascinated observer and participant" in education who was one of many middle-aged teachers who found "one old practice and assumption after another hitting the dust".[36] Noting the rise of disruption in education due to the civil rights movement and student radicalism, as well as modern popular culture and media, Wilson drew on modern philosophy, educational psychology and family studies to reflect on the confused dynamic of education in modern times: "On the one hand, we seem to know something about how to make ourselves. On the other hand, we

[34] Goodman, "Cosmopolitan women educators", 73.

[35] Louise L. Tyler, *A Selected Guide to Curriculum Literature: An Annotated Bibliography* (Washington DC: National Education Association, Center for the Study of Instruction, 1970); Elizabeth C. Wilson, "The Knowledge Machine", *Teachers College Record* 70, no.2 (November 1968), 109.

[36] Elizabeth C. Wilson, "Response and Responsibility in American Public Education", *Educational Horizons* 49, no.4 (1971): 143.

know practically nothing". The only solution, she suggested was to recognize the gaps in knowledge and address them by linking community members with schools.[37]

She later expanded this idea in a number of articles, in which she argued for the replacement of old administrative structures that emphasized standardization with more responsive and flexible managerial structure that would address the increasing complexity of schools and that would be inclusive of the wider school community. Drawing on new ideas in systems thinking, she argued that educational organizations consisted of many smaller subsystems, each of which served as a check and balance on other systems and which all needed to be linked together in effective communication. Only such "alternative managerial models" and comprehensive system wide institutional reform could lead to the effective reform of modern schools.[38]

Wilson's unique contribution to the curriculum reform discussion of this period was her emphasis on more inclusive administration in schools. She believed that liberal progressives in the 1960s and 70s had broad visions but limited experience with managing school organizations of the power dynamics of modern community politics.[39] Traditional administrative structures, like those she had experienced in Korea and in American public education, were not responsive enough to change. In order to break the "institutional change barrier", a systems approach—a total reconfiguring of administrative structures, from the classroom to the district and state office—was the only way to enact real change and to break "the clay feet of the school".[40] The work would not be easy, she warned. Building a new institution out of an old one was "an extraordinarily difficult task," and a "long, slow, grubby, and unspectacular job" that worked from the ground up as a "bootstrap operation".[41]

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[37] Wilson, "Response and Responsibility in American Public Education", 146.

[38] Elizabeth C. Wilson, "Quality control in the public schools." *Educational Technology* 11, no.10 (1971): 29.

[39] Elizabeth C. Wilson, "Can the school become a center of inquiry? A design for institution building", *Perspectives for reform in teacher education* (1972): 28.

[40] Wilson, "Needed: A New Kind of Teacher", 13.

[41] Wilson, "Can the school become a center of inquiry?", 32; Wilson, "Needed: A New Kind of Teacher", 14.

For this work, Wilson received much praise, leading one professor of teacher education at Columbia University's Teachers College, to identify her in 1972 as "one of the leading public school educators in the nation".[42]

In January 1974, at the age of 61, Wilson attended a conference on Women in Educational Policy Making, in Denver Colorado and later co-authored an article, "Hierarchy, power and women in educational policy making", as the result of discussions at the meeting. The co-authors were Florence Howe, founder of Feminist Press, and leading figure in the contemporary Women's Studies curriculum movement and two professors of education.

While we can only conjecture about the extent of Wilson's participation in the co-authored essay, the writing extends many of her prior arguments and experiences into a feminist analysis. The article explored the way in which educational administration followed a corporate and military model, characterized by hierarchy and authoritarianism, led by men, and increasingly excluding women. Also excluded from such leadership models was the development of "the warmth and intimacy of some long-term personal relationships" which were necessary for the nurturing of true educational growth.[43] The authors argued that the power aspect of educational leadership needed to change from the authoritarian model to the type of power that would promote a person's "self-esteem, independence, awareness, aspiration and efficacy".[44]

Women needed to take on the leadership of this change by studying power relation in schools as a kind of participant-observer of the institution or what the authors called a "resident anthropologist".[45] Women were particularly well suited to the job of resident anthropologist since they were traditionally excluded from and had little investment in current power structures and so were not defensive about them. In addition, the

[42] Bruce Joyce, "Introduction to Wilson, Elizabeth. Can the school become a center of inquiry?," in eds. Brice R. Joyce, and Marsha Weil, *Perspectives for reform in teacher education* (Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 23.

[43] Howe *et al.*, "Hierarchy, power and women", 5.

[44] Howe *et al.*, "Hierarchy, power and women", 6-7.

[45] Howe *et al.*, "Hierarchy, power and women", 13.

paper argued, "women seem to have a built-in natural interest in the health and welfare of or educational institutions".

This experience of standing "outside oneself" could be risky for women, as challenging the existing power structures could make the "political kitchen" very hot, particularly for women who were already in marginalized positions.[46] But the work was also rewarding, as Wilson and her co-authors wrote:

> it is fun to be caught up in the triumphs, rivalries, and passions that are the life blood of power. It can be very heady wine. And the requirement that one later articulates one's feelings and observations with a degree of objectivity and even with a sense of the absurd may be sobering, but it can also, in a quieter vein, be equally absorbing.[47]

In 1974, Wilson's work at Montgomery County changed from a formal curriculum director to a community-focused role where her task was "to build better bridges between local schools and communities". The change was partially a result of her own desire for "less of an administrative burden" and partially a result of the district's need to connect central office experts with the community.[48]

After retirement in 1979, Wilson was involved in her Wellesley College Alumnae Club, and various charities.[49] She owned her own home in Washington DC and in 1968 had purchased a large summer house in northern Maine with a friend. She died in November 1994 at the age of 81.

CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Cecil Wilson's interpretation of the world was largely informed by her transnational experiences, as one who spent much of her life as both an insider and an outsider, both part of and excluded from, her multiple contexts. Her early educational experiences were in

[46] Howe *et al.*, "Hierarchy, power sand women", 14.

[47] Howe *et al.*, "Hierarchy, power sand women", 13.

[48] Elizabeth Cecil Wilson alumna entry, 1974, Wellesley College.

[49] Elizabeth Cecil Wilson alumna entry, 1979, Wellesley College.

idealized communities—the American ex-patriate community of Shanghai in the 1920s, the academic worlds of her girls' high school and women's colleges, and her experiences teaching and leading in progressive schools. From these idealized communities, Wilson faced the authoritarian structures of military, UN and state public school systems. Facing the discrepancies between her vision of community and hierarchical structures, Wilson took on the experience of an "internal exile" and developed critiques of the oppressive structures that did not align with her vision of community. Adopting a feminist perspective late in life, Wilson argued that women's experience of being internal exiles provided the ideal mechanism for reflective and community based school reform. Her vision rested on the importance of community engagement in the school, led by educators with a goal of "nourishing self-realization" and "building new alignments of power, communication, and expertise, as well as creating new definitions of community".[50] Drawing on her own experience of inclusion and exclusion, she argued that personal reflection on and respect of different values would help to build community out of difference.

Note on the author

Kate Rousmaniere is professor of the history of education at Miami University, Ohio, USA.

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[50] Wilson, "Needed: A New Kind of Teacher" 21.

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