*Vitae Scholasticae, 2005*

# The Progressive Legacy of Flora White

Linda C. Morice

*Southern Illinois University Edwardsville*

The life story of Flora White (1860-1948) informs a growing body of scholarship on the role of women in the progressive education movement of the early twentieth century. A pioneer in physical education and technology education, White's experience differed from prominent male theorists on whom most interpretations of progressivism have been based. According to Lynne M. Getz, educational historians have long focused on a small number of men, such as John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and George Counts, and thus have concentrated, "purposely or not,"[1] on theory rather than practice in defining the progressive movement. Flora White's career supports the findings of Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel who, along with contributing scholars, studied sixteen women who founded progressive schools or initiated educational reform efforts. The authors found practitioners who took the ideas of theorists and implemented emerging theory in classrooms, thereby shaping the course of progressive education. Sadovnik and Semel noted the scant recognition the women practitioners received and expressed the hope that their contributions would not be marginalized in the future.[2]

Flora White taught and led schools during the formative period of the progressive education movement when opposing camps of theorists debated the merits of traditional versus progressive schooling. Ironically, White's position on the fringe of the discourse gave her insights not easily available to fully enfranchised participants; however, her marginalized status as a woman practitioner limited her ability to influence mainstream institutions. This short educational biography seeks to provide insights on the role and contributions of women progressive educators in the context of one career.

## *Biographical Overview and Early Influences*

Flora White was born in Heath, Massachusetts. She had five older siblings, four of whom were living at her birth.[3] flora's family heritage was a source of pride throughout her life. She was descended from Colonel Asaph White, who had been "connected with almost every enterprise of a public nature in…[the]

region."[4] Her mother was unusually well educated for a woman of her time, having studied Latin with the local minister to prepare for Emma Willard's Female Seminary in New York.[5] When Flora's father died during her infancy, the Whites lived on limited means.[6] Her only brother was "bound out" to a family with a male head of household—an indication of gender roles in her childhood. Flora's mother maintained her remaining family in Heath and Shelburne Falls; later Mrs. White and her daughters moved to Amherst where they were boarders in a minister's home. There Flora received "classical schooling"[8]in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. Between 1875 and 1877, she attended and graduated from Westfield Normal School in Westfield, Massachusetts.[9]

As a result of an exhibit at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, White learned of the work of Otto Salomon, director the Sloyd Training School in Naas, Sweden. He read in their own languages the works of great philosophers and educators who "approve of physical activity as a means of formative education." Salomon retical academic subjects and develop physical skills."[10]Through handcraft projects, he promoted individualized education adapted to the needs and interests of each child. His goal was to transform the school by moving it away from mass education emphasizing superficial knowledge.

Recently out of Westfield and eager to study at Naas, Flora sold a story to *Harper's* magazine and used the compensation to pay for her trip to Sweden. She acknowledged gender restrictions by using the pen name "George Heath."[11]Flora graduated from the Sloyd Training School and, upon returning home, crusaded for the inclusion of "motor activities"[12]—sloyd and physical education—in the curriculum.

White began teaching in the West Springfield, Massachusetts, public schools. In 1881, she moved to the public schools in neighboring Springfield,[13]where industries attracted French Canadians, European immigrants, and residents from surrounding towns.[14] In the mid-1880s, Flora relocated to South Africa where her sister, Harriet, taught at the Huguenot Seminary at Cape Colony.[15] Flora spent three years teaching English in a boys' preparatory school at Paarl, near Cape Town.[16]When she returned to the United States, Flora and her sister, Mary, opened a small day school in Springfield.[17]

At this time White became interested in the work of G. Stanley Hall and William James. Hall, who earned Harvard's first doctorate in psychology, was the champion of child developmentalists grounded in the writings of Rousseau and Pestalozzi.[18] James was a Harvard psychologist and proponent of pragmatism. He believed truth should work for the individual in action, not abstraction.19 White began a professional association with Hall and sent both Hall and James the first draft of her novel on "life-forces that have the power to maintain themselves in spite of circumstances."[20]

White taught at Westfield Normal School from 1892 to 1895 where she introduced physical culture (physical education) and sloyd programs in the two year teacher training course.[21] In 1897 she and Mary founded Miss White's Home School for Children in Concord, Massachusetts, an "experimental school"[22] stressing that "a healthy, active organism is the first requisite for a healthy, active mind."[23] Their success was evident in their students' distinguished careers in education and the arts.

Mary Lowell Coolidge received a Ph.D. from Radcliffe. She was Dean of Wellesley College from 1934-48 and a Professor of Philosophy until retiring in 1957. Known for her "clarity of mind," she was an excellent horsewoman and was interested in "aesthetics and art as a craft."[24] Sculptor Mary Odgen Abbott's early enjoyment of sloyd led to study at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Her teak doors were placed in the Department of the Interior in Washington, D. C. A skilled equestrian, Abbott traveled with her mother in 1922-27 throughout Asia, the Middle East, northern Africa and southern Europe. In 1940, she shot a jaguar in Mexico that was sent to the Museum of Natural History in New York.[25]Henry Howard Brooks painted at the Fenway Studios in Boston. A member of the Guild of Boston Artists, Brooks exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D. C .[26] Archibald Galbraith, a student at the Springfield day school, served from 1919 to 1949 as headmaster of Williston Academy in Easthampton, Massachusetts. He stressed "the finest values of traditional education"[27] coupled with instruction geared to individual student needs. His children were taught by Flora and Mary White.[28]

In 1914, the sisters sold Miss White's Home School and planned to travel in Europe. With the outbreak of the First World War, they chose instead to instruct some students at Heath. Throughout her career, Flora gave presentations to numerous professional and parent organizations.[29] At Heath, she also wrote and published poetry as well as articles on education, history, public affairs, and foreign policy.[30] White advanced her views by holding salons attended by social activists and intellectuals including theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and jurist Felix Frankfurter. [31] She died in Greenfield, Massachusetts, in 1948, at the age of 87.32

## *Marginalizing Factors and Windows of Opportunity*

Although White had an educated mother and a fortuitous opportunity for European study, she nevertheless entered teaching in a marginalized position. Her early work occurred in a climate of doubt concerning the competence of female teachers to prepare students for life in an industrialized and urbanized society.

During the nineteenth century, Massachusetts became the most urban among the states. In 1810, it had less than a half-million people; by 1830 the state's population had grown by fifty percent, and by 1860 it had tripled. Three-fourths of Massachusetts residents in 1860 lived in towns with populations over 3,000;

less than fifteen percent of the state's economy was based on agriculture. Oncehomogenous communities of Yankee farmers were becoming larger and more diverse. Some people expressed fears about assimilating the large number of new immigrants who settled in the state; others voiced concern that the public schools would be dominated by a need to mold these and other students into the "regimented world of the factory."[33]

Their fears of regimentation were well founded. Throughout the nineteenth century, male and female teachers who were "ill-trained, harassed and underpaid, often immature"[34] relied on strict discipline, recitation, rote memorization, and physical punishment in U. S. public schools. Flora White's opposition to rote learning and mass education ultimately resulted in her departure from public schools to seek another arena in which to make a professional contribution. She said in 1899, "I have long had a fancy that Nature covers her face and weeps whenever she beholds a school-house."[35] White objected to "dreary brick buildings on small plots of ground" where students were driven into rooms "by fifties and sixties" and compelled to sit for five long hours each day over verbal tasks, permitting them for motor activities only wigglings of the fingers with pen and pencil, wigglings of the tongue in using words, and a few rigid movements of the arms taken under peremptory commands.[36]

Meanwhile, the gender composition of the teaching force was changing. In 1860, women comprised eighty percent of all Massachusetts teachers—a dramatic increase since the 1830s, when female teachers were sixty percent of the workforce. By 1906, males constituted only ten percent of the state's teachers; most of the men still in the profession had moved into educational administration.[37]

Massachusetts had a long history of paying female teachers substantially lower wages than their male colleagues.[38] Moreover, in the late nineteenth century, many articles appeared throughout the American press with titles such as "Feminization of Schools" or "Feminization in School and Home." Stephanie L. Twin noted:

> Observers worried especially about the effect on boys of women's predominance as school teachers. Since urban jobs separated men from their families for most of the day, many people feared that boys were losing role models both at school and home. Organizations such as the Boy Scouts were meant to serve as compensation, and , in large measure, so were sports…[which] Americans believed…revitalized "masculine" instincts.[39]

Scholars reinforced this view of sports. In 1907, University of Chicago sociologist William I. Thomas wrote in Sex and Society: Studies in the Social Psychology of Sex that women needed to exercise, but "athletics were beyond their physical capacity."He added that females were physically inferior to males because their reproductive function arrested their development early; moreover, women "resembles the child and the lower races, i.e., the less developed forms," in having "relatively" shorter limbs and a longer trunk than man. This was "a very striking

evidence of the ineptitude of women for the expenditure of physiological energy through motor action."[40]Flora White's initiatives in physical culture and competition were inappropriate for women. When she introduced a physical culture program at Westfield—with gymnastics practice three times per week, and theory, physiology, and teaching methodology[41]—most American women "still wore layered, corseted clothing [and] remained undeveloped."

Another marginalizing factor was a prejudice that females were not suited for rigorous intellectual work. Women were not admitted to colleges in New England until Boston University opened in 1873; they attended normal schools or private academies. According to Robert T. Brown, the preponderance of female students at normal schools was not lost on state policymakers, who shared prevailing attitudes on gender. Members of the state Board of Education visited Westfield in 1867 and discovered "many cases of failing health, headaches, sleeplessness, arising evidently from too much brain…work." They concluded that "since the brain of an adult is not capable of more than four hours hard work a day, a young person cannot work to advantage more than three." Thereafter, Westfield prohibition "unreasonable rising and study" on the part of students.[43]

Despite these limitations, White was educated during a window of opportunity in Westfield's history. Founded in 1839 as the first coeducational teacher training institution in the United States, Westfield was part of Horace Mann's plan to improve common, or district, schools in Massachusetts.[44]When White enrolled at Westfield, its student population was nearly ninety percent female. The school's teacher-training curriculum had evolved over time to provide a liberal education to young women who came almost exclusively from small towns in five western counties of the state.[45]

Flora's classmates at Westfield were the daughters of small farmers and mechanics. Their rural isolation and limited resources gave them few options beyond the common school. Students took advantage of Westfield's free tuition and moderate boarding costs and pressed for advanced courses that went beyond the school's original focus on teacher training. Their demands met with a favorable response from Principal John Dickinson, a follower of Pestalozzi, who headed the school from 1856 to 1877. In 1869, he added a four-year program to supplement the existing two-year offering. The curriculum, taught by seven fulltime faculty, included courses in rhetoric, psychology, didactics, moral philosophy, history, mathematics, the sciences, foreign languages, gymnastics, and drawing. Although Westfield did not offer a bachelor's degree, it was functioning as a small college.[46]

The expanded curriculum was relatively short-lived. When Flora returned to teach at Westfield, external forces moved to curtail the academic program. In 1893, the Massachusetts Board of Education approved a policy, for implementation in the fall of 1895, requiring high school graduation for admission to the state's normal schools. In addition, the Board began to consider

modifications to the normal school curriculum. Its annual report noted that the aim of the normal school would be "to teach the history, the philosophy, the science, the art of teaching as applied to every subject discussed, and not to primarily teach the subject matter itself."[47]

These actions resulted in faculty turmoil during Flora's employment at Westfield. In 1890, 22 percent of Westfield students had graduated from high school, an accomplishment "largely restricted to males and to the urban, well-todo classes."[48] Since many students lived in areas where public high schools were not easily accessible, the changing standards threatened Westfield's enrollment. Tension mounted when the Massachusetts legislature voted to open four more normal schools in the state, including one in a western county that had traditionally sent students to Westfield.

Flora White left Westfield Normal School at the end of the 1894-95 school year.[49] The following spring five of the school's eight instructors signed a letter indicating no confidence in the leadership of the principal, James C. Greenough. The letter stemmed from his perceived lack of leadership in opposing the Board's changes. An investigation followed, and the suspected faculty dissident leader was fired. Greenough resigned, as did the four remaining instructors who signed the letter. When new faculty were added, Greek, German, trigonometry, and rhetoric were no longer taught. Seven science courses were reduced to one course in the natural sciences. Three history courses became one; the same was true for literature courses. Six courses in pedagogy replaced the former humanities courses; by the following year, all foreign language instruction ceased, not to return for sixty years. That same year, the Board voted to end the four-year advanced course of studies, and Westfield was reconstituted under the mantel of "social efficiency." In 1909 the Massachusetts Board of Education appointed educational sociologist David Snedden as the state's first Commissioner of Education. The Board empowered him to implement an educational program that was responsive to industrial needs. Snedden believed the normal school student was a person of "distinct social limitations and …of only average capacity for work and abstract thinking"50 and therefore a perfect role model for children in the lower schools.

***Educational Philosophy***

When Flora White taught at Westfield, the lines were being drawn for a national debate on the appropriate curriculum for U. S. schools in the twentieth century. The rift first became apparent in 1893, when the National Education Association's blue- ribbon Committee of Ten recommended that all American high school students receive a liberal education, with history, the sciences, and modern foreign languages being coequals with Latin, Greek, and mathematics. The committee's report aroused the ire of classicists, as well as those who felt such academic study was inappropriate for all segments of the high school population.

Many advocated manual training in high school programs.[51]

The strongest, sustained criticisms of the Committee of Ten's recommendations
came primarily from business leaders seeking economy and efficiency in schools, and progressive educators in the new colleges of education seeking closer alignment between the curriculum and industrial society.[52] Writing in 1928, child developmentalists Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker gave the following description of the rift that occurred:

> In this precipitation of mass education on the American scene, two opposing theories waged war with each other: the doctrine of discipline and the doctrine of growth….Every thinking educationist from 1890 to our own day has consciously or naively lined up with one or the other of these groups and has become an exponent of its theories.[53]

Rugg and Shumaker noted that between 1900 and the First World War there was "a growing body of theory but little application" of new teaching approaches from the "growth" contingent that formed the progressive education movement. The authors added, "More than all else was needed school experimentation with the new ideas."[54] Practitioners like Flora White would play an important part in this experimentation, as indicated by Rugg and Shumaker's analysis:

> Where in the American school system could it start? Not easily in the great body of public schools, committed to mass education and domineered over by the disciplinarian conception. Not even in the laboratory schools of the new schools of education that were springing up all over the country, for they were immersed in a veritable slough of technique—the investigation of intelligence, the analysis of the learning processes in the school subjects, and the statistical study of school practice.
>
> No, the movement for a freer type of education had to be launched almost altogether from outside the school system. It came, after the preparatory years, essentially from laymen, parents of means desiring the best in the way of schools for their children, and enthusiastic free-lance teachers.55

Educators and historians have used the term "child-centered" to describe most independent, progressive schools founded in the early twentieth century by women practitioners "spurred by the revolt against the harsh pedagogy of the existing schools and by the ferment and change of new thought."[56]Sudovnik and Semel fond that beyond this description, each school they studied "had a distinct philosophy and practice according to the particular vision of its founder."[57]Flora White had a child-centered philosophy in the tradition of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, plus a focus on motor activities due to her belief that physical, mental and moral aspects of learning were connected.

White articulated this philosophy in writing and speeches that emphasized the importance of centering the curriculum on the child's interests and activities. She believed in respecting each child's individuality and cautioned against interfering with nature's plan for its development.[58] White felt the teacher should 'surround

the growing life with suitable materials for its use and … watch and wait patiently for its unfolding, letting it select and draw unto itself those things which it desires and needs."[59] She advised teachers to "learn of the child the road the road of its desires, and travel along that road—hand and hand with it—beside it, not in front of it…[or] above it."[60]

Flora White was very clear on the goal of education, which was to "secure for each [child] a space that would insure it against repression." She asked, "What do we want for our boys and girls? Is there some one common good that should come to them alike from sloyd or Latin or science or home or any other part of their education?" She answered by giving the response of the early Greeks: "More life and fuller."[61]

White felt that too often schools imposed their own systems of work on children and concentrated excessively on work completion, which signaled the end of growth.[62] She described a boy whose mind is determined by the "orthodox school" to be in a state of chaos. If the school simply trained the boy's mind, she reasoned, he would develop growing resentment. Rather, she regarded, the school should accept the chaos of the boy's mind as normal, and let him "test and do and dare."[63]For Flora White, real education was synonymous with growth and disassociated from anything that hindered growth.[64]

White distinguished between training and education, noting that one could train a soldier but not a poet. She wrote, "The most perfect training will be the most perfect conforming to the best standards," and an ignoring of the "bigger world that lies beyond the realm of training."[65]White observed, "If…we have as the product of our works less original ideas and more techniques, less creation and more execution, less of a man and more of a machine,"[66]the result is a negative one. She recalled that Thoreau had learned how to make one pencil well and then refused to make another one. Flora added, "In that single act of his was concretely lived as much philosophy as Emerson ever wrote."[67]

Flora White championed small class sizes and asserted that an effective sloyd class should not have more than fifteen students.[68] In an apparent reference to theorists who placed their faith in measurement, she observed:

> [W]e ought to get percentages on joy and exuberance of spirits, if we would make safe, sane, and righteous standards for our schools. If the pulses do not beat faster, longings grow stronger, and the joy of mere living tingle the nerves, the school and all its bookishness will be of but little avail toward producing a stronger, nobler race.[69]

### ***Inside Miss White's Home School***

Flora and Mary White established Miss White's Home School for Children in Concord, Massachusetts, in a residence that had once belonged to Frank Sanborn, secret backer of radical abolitionist John Brown. Upon purchasing the

property the sisters equipped a gymnasium[70] and enlarged a wing of the house for classrooms.[71]

Flora obtained endorsements from prominent Massachusetts citizens, including the superintendent of the Springfield public schools, leading clergy, a Boston physician specializing in women's health, an Amherst professor, and a respected Concord resident. G. Stanley Hall also endorsed the school and, in 1898, wrote the following for its catalog:

> From some years of personal acquaintance with Miss Flora J. White, and knowledge of her educational ideals and large competency in her work, I am confirmed that her school at Concord can be heartily commended to the parents for its general methods and scope, and for the devoted personal attention each pupil is sure to receive.[72]

In selecting the location of the school, the White sisters chose a small town that was steeped in history and literature and "not provincial."[73] For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson's daughter taught at Miss White's Home School, and Louisa May Alcott's grand-nieces and nephews were pupils there.[74]

The school was "organized for girls;" however, exceptions were made "with young children, especially in cases where it is desired to place two or more children from the same family in the school." The catalog's statement that the school was "an effort in the direction of organic education,…founded in the belief that a healthy, active organism is the first requisite for a healthy, active mind" reflected the progressive notion of the "whole" child—with attention paid to body, mind, and spirit. The catalog also specified a particular focus of Miss White's Home School: "Regime, physique, and bodily alertness are considered preeminent factors of education."[75]

In marked contrast to curricular changes at Westfield, Miss White's Home School offered a liberal education for girls that included the academic subjects of English, Latin, German, French, mathematics and science. The White sisters used progressive methods in teaching these subjects, "in every case adapted to the pupil as to meet the demands for her highest development." The school emphasized "the acquisition of pure, vigorous English" which took "precedence of all other linguistic studies." In addition, "Games, Sloyd and Gymnastics (both educational and corrective)" formed "an integral part of the school work." The catalog added, "Special attention is called to the opportunity here offered for the development of physique."[76]

The Whites made special arrangements for the study of additional languages, as well as for piano, clay modeling, drawing, and dancing. A maximum of eight boarders lived at the school; total enrollment was limited to twenty students. The yearly rate was one hundred dollars for day pupils and six hundred dollars for boarding students.[77]

The home life of the school was "that of a refined, well-ordered family, each member of which is expected to show careful consideration for others." The regime was "simple, hygienic, and invigorating." "Abundant exercise and recreation"[78] were evident, in keeping with Flora's belief that knowledge itself was not power; knowledge through action was.[79] Late in life, Flora recalled that motor activities had motivated students. A reporter wrote, "Boys who formerly had sworn at Latin and Greek, spent such long hours at Flora's school in the delight of motor activities that their mothers declared—'Miss White and her new courses have ruined home life in Concord.'"[80]

Parents had the option of placing students with the White sisters for an entire year.[81] The summer program operated at Heath, where Flora and Mary had returned in 1896 in the hope of purchasing some of their family's ancestral holdings. When none were available, they bought other land in the town.[82] The program, Plover Hill Camp for Girls, offered lessons "in household arts; in gardening; in handcraft; in study of the local birds and wild flowers, the geography of the heavens; in the reading of classic literature,"[83] including an hour's reading of Shakespeare on a typical day. As at Concord, gymnastics were an important focus—with ropes, a climbing ladder, and other apparatus being available for indoor work. Basketball also had a prominent role at Plover Hill. Whereas early women's basketball games were played in long skirts, Flora's program required clothing that was less confining. According to the 1907 catalog, girls at Plover Hill Camp were expected to bring—among other items—two lightweight walking skirts, two pairs of bloomers, "stout walking boots," and two pairs of sneakers.[84]

Miss White's Home School was shaped by its program and also by Flora's leadership style. Sadovnik and Semel wrote that female founders of independent, progressive schools shared common leadership traits. Many of these were evident in Flora White. For example, she was strong, driven, intense, tenacious, and visionary, and possessed a sense of social mission.[85] White's contemporaries described her "yeasty"[86] mind, superb organizational skills, and high energy level. Children perceived her as strict, while interacting with them in ways they didn't resent.[87]Contemporaries noted she modeled her beliefs—for example, by doing a daily handstand until she was nearly seventy.[88]The Greenfield Gazette and Courier reported that until Flora White "was 80 years old, she was considered the most athletic woman in the country."[89]

During a period of intense debate between academic traditionalists and progressives, it is noteworthy that White's curriculum included a broad array of liberal studies delivered with progressive teaching methods. Indeed, Miss White's Home School represented a middle ground between the two groups. Long after she told her school, Flora wrote a piece for Unity magazine about the dispute between John Dewey and his traditionalist critic, Robert Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago. Hutchins criticized child-centered education as "an aimless, trial-and-error process"[90]and advocated reform through reading Great

Books. Dewey criticized Hutchins' belief in fixed an authoritative principles; he felt Hutchins' proposed study of the classics would divorce learning from contemporary life.[91]Flora said that in addition to Dewey and Hutchins:

> Other philosophical educators and scholars have been aroused to active discussion until metaphysics, theology, and mysticism have become such a part of the attenuated controversy that not even Boethius could hope to keep pace with its elaborated trend.
>
> There are however certain assumptions as to the part schools play in the educative process which are quite within the grasp of any intellectual layman. There is a fair probability that the layman judgement in this field may be of greater value to society at large than that of the scholaticised educator.
>
> For there is undoubtedly in the heart of the average parent the conviction that it is the duty of both school and home to bring their young into wholesome realtions to life. To stimulate in them the desire to become rightminded citizens with a vital interest in the welfare of their communities.[92]

White's views on this subject were not written for an education journal but, rather a Unitarian Universalist magazine edited by John Haynes Holmes, a pacifist minister and a founder of the NAACP an American Civil Liberties Union.[93]Today, more than sixty years after Flora wrote the Unity piece—and over one hundred years after the founding of Miss White's Home School—educators are voicing the need to find balance or common ground between the traditional and progressive camps. This desire has been expressed by scholars of such differing perspectives as Paul Shaker and Diane Ravitch, as well as by school leaders such as former superintendent David B. Ackerman.[94] Flora White's experience shows the marginalization of one woman a century ago, resulting in the muting of her discoveries and therefore a lengthy period of delay before the knowledge came into the professional mainstream.

## *Enduring Legacy and Conclusions*

When Flora and Mary White sold their Concord school in 1914, Eliza Dillingham acquired the building the building for an elementary and Montessori school. When she died in 1920, her schools merged with a new upper school known as Concord Academy.[95]With the end of Miss White's Home School, the question remains: What lasting effect did Flora White have on schools, the progressive education movement, or her profession?

White received the greatest professional recognition from her advocacy of sloyd; however, the skewing of her vision indicates the degree to which she was marginalized. In 1896, White presented a paper on "Physical Effects of Sloyd"[96]at the annual meeting of the National Education Association. In 1899, she authored an article with the same title in the Sloyd Bulletin, a publication of the Sloyd Training School in Boston.[97]The school—directed by Naas graduate Gustaf Larsson and funded by philanthropist Pauline Agassiz Shaw—offered free sloyd instruction for Boston's elementary teachers. By 1917, 400 teachers had graduated from the program.[98]

Shaw's interest in sloyd stemmed from her efforts to uplift immigrants in Boston. She established free nurseries and kindergartens and experimented with sloyd out of a belief that the "inability to do anything well was a direct cause of proverty and crime."[99]By 1890, some educators contended that "ordinary activities of the kindergarten" could be joined to sloyd at the elementary level and "tool exercises or homemaking" in secondary schools. The result would be "an orderly progression of manual work to parallel intellectual activities throughout the twelve-year period of general education." Lawrence A. Cremin wrote, "[I]n a proper balance of the two they saw new vision of popular schooling suitable to the demands of an industrial age."[100]

The balance was delicate at best; it took only a small step to ignore sloyd's pedagogical benefits in favor of skill instruction. In the 1890s, public schools saw a "fabulous advance of manual training" emphasizing skill development without the educative benefits White espoused. Businessmen wanted "practical trade training to free them from growing union regulation of apprenticeships." As new school administrators sought reform through manual training, "talk about a liberalizing balance between manual and intellectual activities became increasingly academic."[101]

Nevertheless, Flora White's formative work in this area had some lasting effects. Sloyd is recognized today as an important forerunner of technology education . In sloyd, the project was the principal means of teaching and learning—an important component of industrial arts instruction later set forth by Fredrick Bonser and Lois Coffey Mossman of Teachers College at Columbia University.[102]

White's introduction of sloyd and physical culture to Westfield was affirmed By the National Education Association's Committee on Normal Schools. In 1899 it proposed including sloyd and physical culture in a four-year curriculum for normal school students. Contrary to White's views, the group also advocated replacing liberal arts courses with offerings in the social sciences, domestic science, and drawing.[103]

Flora's work was also minimized by the creation of adaptive rules for women's basketball and tennis. These actions were reflected in a view of female physiology offered in 1912 by Dudley Allen Sargent, Director of the Hemenway Gymnasium at Harvard. He noted that the sexes were "structurally similar. Therefore, women not only needed exercise, but could even be quite capable athletes."Sargent added that sports "broadened and strengthened women, making them more 'masculine' physically."Since only women with such acquired or else inherited masculinity could excel at men's sports"—which was socially undesirable—women's sports should be "modified versions of men's: shorter and less strenuous, like the female body itself."[104]

Nevertheless, White can be credited with nurturing women's athleticism during a period when, as Jane Addams noted in 1908, Americans refused to acknowledge the energies of girls.[105] White's inclusion of theory in her physical culture program at Westfield is also noteworthy. According to Alison Wrynn, most normal schools focused exclusively on methodology and gymnastics instruction, with academics being reserved for university students.[106]

During her years at Heath, Flora White continued to advance her ideas by writing on many subjects. She was joined by social activists and intellectuals whose means or academic schedules allowed them to enjoy Heath's inexpensive farmlands and beautiful scenery. The White sisters were instrumental in creating an "unusual summer colony"[107] through their friendship with Dr. Grace Wolcott, a Boston physician, and her patient, Ethel Paine Moors. Moors was married to a member of the Harvard Corporation and had an interest in left-wing politics. In the 1920s she befriended Felix Frankfurter—then a Harvard law professor—and in the 1930s became acquainted with Reinhold Niebuhr—a professor at Union Theological Seminary. She encouraged them to buy property in Heath. Frankfurter and Niebuhr joined other friends of the White sister who spent their summers there, including Angus Dun, Episcopal bishop of Washington, D.C., and William Vanderbilt of New York. The White sisters were "famous for their afternoon tea parties" for this group, where topics of discussion "would range from missionary activities in Japan, to economic conditions in Europe, and agriculture in Heath."[108]

One curiosity of Flora White's life is that she was marginalized on a professional level while enjoying friendships with prominent shaper of American thought. Several factors contributed to this situation. Throughout the twentieth century, the direction of American education was shaped by intellectual debate at the university which perpetuated the rift previously described.[109] Flora White—a woman who did not have a university education, worked as a practitioner in an independent school, and sought common ground between traditionalists and progressives—therefore had limited appeal. Her association with luminaries at Heath—and earlier with G. Stanley Hall—suggest a tenacity and ability to network in ways that would have benefited her career had women been allowed full access to the profession. But, as Sadovnik and Semel noted, many women who founded independent progressive schools "wound up ignored, lumped together, or as historical footnote."[110] The histories of progressive education therefore tended to be histories of men such as John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg, George Counts, and their opponents including Robert Huchins, Arthur Bestor, Hyman Rickover, and Isaac Kandel.

Mary White died in 1938.[111] Flora's last recorded interview occurred in 1947 when a journalist visited Parks Convalescent Home in Greenfield, Massachusetts. "Of Gertrude Stein appearance, with clipped grey locks," Flora was 87 years old and nearly blind. Although a cane leaned against the door of her blue-and-white bedroom, the writer described White's appearance as "far from feeble more of a

women in her late sixties."[112] Seven months later, Flora White fractured her hip in a fall and died.[113] Heath resident Margaret Malone recalled that the best of Flora's writings were

> her educational ideas and her fine philosophy, and her fine sense of universal values and her well grounded liberalism. As to her character, her genererousity [*sic*] and fair-mindedness, and her strong loyalty and courage made her a gallant soul—And of course dear Miss May [Mary] was a rare and choice spirit. They were both unusual and represented the best that this country has produced in their generation and field of endeavor.[114]

Flora White serves as a reminder of the cost of marginalization. It is hoped that new scholarship will heighten an awareness of other talented individuals who contributed to the progressive education movement.