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Jeanne M. Connell

Imagine a society where there is no poverty, no crime, no pollution, no war, and no disease. In this society technology not only serves human needs, but also works in harmony with nature. Population growth allows a comfortable standard of living for everyone. In order to maintain a large population with a high quality of life, the community forgoes eating meat, and instead, dedicates all of its agricultural land to organically based food production. The result of this dedication to sustainable agriculture is a land "in a state of perfect cultivation. . . . a land that looked like an enormous park, only it was even more evidently an enormous garden" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 11). Members of this community share common values and unite around common interests. But there are more than just community concerns. This imaginary society also promotes the development of individual capacities to their fullest potential and supports the personal and intellectual growth of individuals throughout their lives. Collective life is primary, and yet, individuals thrive. In this society everyone contributes to community life based upon their individual talents and interests. In the words of one observer of this society, "I never dreamed of such universal peace and good will and mutual affection" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 98).

This idealized social vision can be found in a turn of the century utopian novel written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman describes a society that

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demonstrates a concern for ecological issues and works to strike a delicate balance between community and individual needs. The novel *Herland* (1915/1979) is an imaginative mix of social critique, social theory, and engaging fantasy. Its literary form makes accessible to a broad audience (both young and old) its social theory and critique of early 20th century liberalism. Gilman shares the communitarian vision that seeks to reinsert the value of community into everyday life, and to step beyond the liberal view of community as simply a means of enabling individuals to pursue their self-interest (Mulhall & Swift, 1992). Amatai Etzioni, a visionary of the modern communitarian movement, argues similarly that

> Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and overlapping communities, to which all of us belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy and resources to shared projects. The exclusive pursuit of private interest erodes the network of social environments on which we all depend and is destructive to our shared experiment in democratic self-government (1993, p. 253).

Enabling this kind of genuine sense of community is fundamental to Gilman's social vision. Since Gilman's notion of community is relevant to current communitarian thought, *Herland* is worth revisiting today, not only for its advocacy of building a greater sense of community in American life, but also for its placement of education as a central instrument for creating and maintaining this new community spirit.

Positioning Gilman as a Social Theorist

Gilman was not just an effective writer of fiction. At the turn of the century, Gilman was also known internationally as a social critic, lecturer, and social activist. Throughout her life, Gilman advocated social change in her writings and through her public lectures. Her primary goal was to improve social conditions of society as a whole by improving conditions for women. When conditions became more humane and equitable for half of society's population, society as a whole would benefit. Gilman advocated (a) changing the public and private roles of women, (b) redesigning public and private spaces so as to reflect equality for women, and (c) making certain traits attributed to females—such as caring and cooperation—more central to community life (Upin, 1993). While Gilman's reform agenda focused on the needs of women at the turn of the century, she regarded herself more as a humanist than a feminist.

Gilman claimed humanism for herself and regarded the term feminism inaccurate because the dominance of masculine values made women's

concerns simply the other side of a problem defined by men (Spender, 1982). "She defiantly asserted that it was the women who protested against tyranny, oppression, and exploitation who were the human norm, against which masculist values could be measured and found wanting" (Spender, 1982, p. 516). It is clear that Gilman's humanism grew out of her concern for the problems of women, problems that continue to resonate with modern feminists. Feminist philosopher Dale Spender assesses Gilman's work on behalf of women as significant in originality as well as depth of thought: "Overall, the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman still stands in the forefront of feminist theory. . . . I know of no current issue [in feminist theory] that she did not address and many topics that she raised which have not been pursued" (Spender, 1982, pp. 525-526).

Gilman recognized that male dominance, sex-based division of labor, gender socialization, and traditional notions of masculine and feminine stifle women's development and deprive the community of their talents (Martin, 1985). Gilman's solution not only required greater equity between males and females in both private and public spheres, but also transformed social relations by placing greater value on the development of "female" traits like caring and cooperation in both males and females. Thus, Gilman's efforts to transform conditions for women were linked to changes in social relations, which in turn were linked to changes in the community-at-large.

Originally, Gilman published *Herland* in her own monthly magazine as a serial. The public's awareness of her works, however, faded after her death in 1935. Recently, interest in Gilman's work in social theory has been rekindled by feminist scholars. Historian Ann J. Lane's research resulted in the publication of *Herland* in book form in 1979. In the past decade, feminist scholars looking to recover the contributions made by women to social theory, education, and philosophy have recognized Gilman as a major figure.

Gilman's utopian vision grows out of her discontent with social conditions under liberalism. In her view, a society built upon unfettered individualism has very little chance of ever becoming a genuine community. In *Herland* Gilman uses wit, satire, and a touch of romance (a) to reveal the shortcomings of a society that places greater value on individualism over any sense of community, and (b) to expose the absurdities of social relations in Victorian America. By contrasting the deep sense of community within *Herland* to the individualistic nature of American society, Gilman raises questions regarding our most basic assumptions about the "naturalness" and inevitability of the traditional structure of social life. Gilman's utopian novel is of special interest to educators because it highlights a central role for education in the reconstruction of community. The vision of

education that Gilman presents is broad. Education is "the process by which values permeate an entire social fabric" (Lane, 1979, p. xxii).

Educational philosopher Jane Roland Martin identifies Gilman as an important contributor to the philosophy of women's education. Martin applauds Gilman's effort to mount a powerful challenge to the constraints of domestic life and gender roles, but questions Gilman's commitment to democratic theory and the practicality of her solutions. In particular, Gilman's theories seem to contain an elitist element. Martin questions the Herland policy that "only those few talented and interested individuals will be educated for carrying on the reproductive processes of society" (Martin, 1985, p. 170). According to Gilman's policy, the primary responsibility for the care and education of children in Herland should rest with professionals. After birth, a mother is free to spend time with her child especially during the child's first 2 years of life, but the day-to-day care rests with professionals. Children in Herland are provided with professionalized communal childcare that duplicates the dedication, care, and love of a family.

While in Gilman's fiction communal care succeeds, in reality intimate family-like bonds are difficult to replicate. Perhaps the closest modern model of communally based child care is found in the kibbutz movement in Israel. After decades of providing communal child care to infants and toddlers with highly dedicated child-care workers, the kibbutz movement is declining because "even a limited disassociation of children from their parents at a tender age is unacceptable" (Etzioni, 1993, p. 59). The kibbutz experience demonstrates the difficulty of replicating intimate family life in an institutionalized setting.

The American experience with institutionalized child care also reveals a number of problems. Child-care centers vary greatly in quality and many suffer from poor funding, high staff turnover, and overcrowding. As such, the current American child-care model does not reflect a serious commitment to the welfare of children. These modern day examples demonstrate that Gilman's idea of providing a level of care similar to care received in a family is a difficult task. There are, however, alternative ways for a community to *support* parents in their efforts to raise their children that would not disrupt family intimacy and autonomy. In her other writings, Gilman envisions radical changes in community-based services that would enhance the quality of life for the nuclear family (Lane, 1992). But in order to be successful, Gilman is well aware that a community would need to make the needs of children a top priority.

Martin also suggests that Gilman tends to favor solutions that involve collective rather than individual commitments. These "collectivist" solutions, however, are consistent with Gilman's efforts to counteract the ill effects of individualism by reaffirming the centrality of community connections and

responsibilities. Lane correctly points out that while Gilman believes that the "greatest possibilities for human happiness lie in the collective world, individuals were not sacrificed for the greater social good" (Lane, 1992, p. 301). In seeking to combat the excesses of individualism, Gilman identifies with a number of popular socialist movements of this time period, especially the Fabian Society with its "belief that socialism will emerge peacefully from the process of capitalist development" (Lane, 1992, p. 184). While Gilman draws from the socialist movement of the turn of the century, she creates her own distinctive social theory by blending a commitment to the idea of cooperative collectivism with a complex mix of feminism, progressivism, pragmatism, and social Darwinism (Lane, 1992; Martin, 1985; Upin, 1993) . As both Lane and Martin point out, there are a number of problems with Gilman's social theory. In part, some of Gilman's problems arise from her limited participation in higher education. Lane indicates that Gilman's adherence to 19th century theories may be due to the lack of "formal training and the self-confidence to reject what she had never studied systematically" (Lane, 1992, p. 294). Also, while Gilman corresponded and associated with a number of well-known intellectuals, writers, and social activists of this time period, she did not have an ongoing supportive intellectual circle of people that might have challenged her thinking (Lane, 1992). There are substantial problems with Gilman's treatment of issues of class, ethnicity, and race. There are also problems with her theories of genetics, her lack of attention to issues of intimacy, and her uncritical view of science. Despite these problems, however, Gilman's social theory still contains many strengths. Lane points out that "if the flaws in her work are apparent, so are the strengths. She set out to forge a new world-view, a social philosophy whose central tenet was the social nature of life and whose major lens was gender" (1992, p. 296).

Gilman's analysis of community is worth examining for the creative ways she wrestles with, and attempts to solve, the problem of balancing individual and community needs. We now focus on Gilman's vision of community contained in the utopian novel *Herland,* and evaluate its contributions to communitarian thought.

Gilman's Vision of Community

Gilman, who describes herself as a humanist-socialist, criticizes the excesses of liberalism—with its possessive individualism—that serve to undermine the development of any sense of community obligation and commitment. Gilman's purpose in *Herland* is to highlight the problems inherent in the individualistic tendencies in American society and to suggest remedies. While her primary mission is to advocate social reforms that im-

prove the status of women, her remedies share much in common with communitarian thinking. A strong sense of community is exemplified by the women of Herland:

> To them [Herlanders] the country was a unit—it was theirs. They themselves were a unit, a conscious group; they thought in terms of community. As such, their time-sense was not limited to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life. Therefore, they habitually considered and carried out plans for improvement which might cover centuries. (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 79)

For Gilman, a genuine community in the world would share values, interests, and obligations just like the community of women in her novel.

Gilman's interest in developing a greater sense of community is intimately connected to her efforts to change the status of, and equalize opportunities for, women. Of particular concern to Gilman is the way that liberally inspired individualism affects social relations between men and women. While Gilman recognizes that the activities of group life require "specialized functions" (Gilman, 1916, p. 51), the subordinate position of women in society and their confinement to domestic life harms not only individual women, but also limits the progress of the whole community. Gilman's vision of community requires equality for women, thus she devotes much time and effort to challenging the idea that women are innately inferior to men. Gilman's primary themes are social rather than political. It is interesting to note that even though she participated actively in the suffragette movement, Gilman did not believe that gaining the right to vote would significantly change conditions for women (Lane, 1992). Negative stereotypes and confinement to the private sphere would still severely limit women, even if they could exercise their right to vote.

The story in *Herland* chronicles the discovery of an isolated civilization by three male adventurers. Despite rumors that this hidden civilization consists of only women, these Victorian explorers conclude that there must be men somewhere. They believe men must have developed the country's technology and provided leadership, as well performed a more basic need—as partners in procreation. To their surprise, the explorers discover that the men of this tiny country disappeared over 2,000 years ago. The civilization survived and flourished as women mysteriously gained the power to procreate on their own. With a stark contrast of views on ideology and gender, Gilman is able to appeal to an "assortment of our comic sensibilities—the satiric, the whimsical, the sardonic, the rousing belly laugh—all in the interest of exposing the absurdities of accepted pieties" about women (Lane, 1979, p. v). Her underlying message, however, is a serious one.

One of the major assumptions within the liberal tradition that Gilman attacks is the view of the inevitability of competition as a primary, moving social force. In *Herland*, the Victorian male visitors argue that competition is necessary because it provides the stimulus to industry, without which no one "would be willing to work" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 60). The world of work, which the visitors believe is the exclusive domain of men, requires the competitive element. As one explorer explains, the struggle connects to a masculine view of the world and natural law. The visitors declare that "if there is not struggle, there is no life—that's all" (p. 99). The male visitors, however, hesitate to describe the social ramifications of competition.

> It was the more difficult to explain to her, because we three, in our constant talks and lectures about the rest of the world, had naturally avoided the seamy side; not so much from a desire to deceive, but from wishing to put our best foot foremost for our civilization, in the face of the beauty and comfort of theirs. (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 139)

Gilman also questions how this competitiveness influences the nature of patriotism or love of country. Patriotism in American society is largely a matter of pride and combativeness that "ultimately neglects national interests with a cold indifference to the suffering of millions" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 94). The visitors assume that competition is natural and that suffering is its inevitable by-product. Thus, suffering is expected and becomes so commonplace that it is almost unnoticeable. Gilman's story calls attention to social problems in American society that many people do not perceive as problems. Poverty, disease, and suffering are unfortunate conditions, but are considered a natural part of life. Gilman disrupts these assumptions about the effectiveness of, and the need for, competition by presenting an opposing view. Gilman presents an alterative view of community based upon growth through cooperation, commitment, and obligation.

Gilman's vision of reforming community life in America relies upon two major changes. The first change concerns the social relations between men and women, and the second change concerns the design of private and public spaces. First, according to Gilman, social relations or the connections between members in the community should be modeled after the ideal family, where mutual friendship and service are valued. Thus, while Gilman is highly critical of the limits imposed on women by the structure of Victorian family life and the definition of feminine virtues, she finds strength in certain family-based values. Gilman's main thesis is that a community could be transformed if positive values found in the private sphere, particularly caring and cooperation, became central to public life. Gilman believes that attributes such as caring and cooperation that are

usually associated with the private sphere and viewed as natural to only women, can serve as public values and become "natural" to all members of the community.

Martin raises questions about the practicality of Gilman's effort to value previously devalued traits associated with women, and argues that Gilman fails to explore the problems that arise when both sexes are expected to acquire previously "genderized traits" (Martin, 1985, p. 166). While genderized traits are not an issue in Herland since there are no men, Gilman is very much aware of these potential problems in a community composed of men and women based on her own experiences of living in a Victorian society. Gilman attempts to deal with genderization of traits through the power of education and readily acknowledges the need for and the difficulty of modifying both men's and women's consciousness about what is "naturally" male and female. *Herland* is an attempt by Gilman to modify public consciousness by undermining stereotypes and revealing the absurdity of the "natural" through the use of a popular medium. Gilman's plan is to value the best human traits—courage, mutual affection, intelligence, strength—and she assumes that all members of the community could learn to care for one another and work cooperatively, if they valued their connections to each other.

The model for Gilman's community grew out of an *idealized* vision of family life, with particular emphasis on the contributions to the quality of family life made by women as mothers and caregivers. The Victorian men who visit Herland note that

> all the surrendering devotion our women have put into their private families, these women put into their country and race. All the loyalty and service men expect of wives, they gave, not singly to men, but collectively to one another. (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 95)

The sense of obligation, commitment, responsibility, and caring attributed ordinarily to core values in the private sphere would benefit the public sphere. As the Victorian male visitor observed, Herlanders "loved one another with a practically universal affection, rising to exquisite and unbroken friendships and broadening a devotion to their country and people for which our word *patriotism* is no definition at all" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 94). Herlanders "loved their country because it was their nursery, playground, and workshop—theirs and their children's" (p . 94).

In the story, the sense of community and solidarity displayed by Herlanders is compared to the isolation of actual American family life. Gilman suggests that the isolation of the family is partly the result of negative social conditions, "children grow up in private homes and families, with every effort to protect and seclude them from a dangerous world" (Gilman,

1915/1979, p. 101). Isolation also serves to separate women from public life, a condition assumed to be based upon women's limited and so-called specialized nature. Nature relegates women to the roles of wife and mother. In Victorian society the ideal woman managed the household servants and devoted her life to her children and husband. The romantic ideal was that these women were loved, idolized, and honored by their husbands.

But actual family life in Victorian America fell far short of these ideals. Many aspects of private family life needed to be changed in order to create a viable model for public life. In particular, Gilman's notion of proper family life assumes a more equitable relation between a wife and a husband. The undemocratic nature of social relations in the home also impacts negatively on the public sphere. The inequalities between men and women in the private sphere that existed under liberalism at the turn of the century, led Gilman to conclude that Victorian domestic life was not a good training ground for democracy (Upin, 1993).

In addition to modifying social relations, Gilman recognizes the need for a second major change in the nature of social life. This second change concerns the design of public and private spaces. One of Gilman's major contributions to social theory is her treatment of spatial relations as a key factor in forming social relations. Gilman recognizes the need to change the physical design of communities as a way to promote social change. In particular, Gilman redesigns public and private spaces in such a way as to allow women the opportunity to participate in all aspects of public life. In order to preserve the nuclear family and still permit women to enter the public realm, radical changes need to occur in both the private and public spheres.

As Jane S. Upin suggests, Gilman's work on the importance of space in a social critique seems to have anticipated a position advanced recently by some post-modern thinkers. For example, the problem of devaluation of space found in Gilman's writings resembles a similar assessment of space in the writings of post-modern philosopher Michel Foucault (Upin, 1993). In her writings, Gilman boldly suggests that restraints imposed upon women by domestic life make homes more like prisons than private sanctuaries.

Gilman recommends changes in spatial functions and design. For instance, functions previously assigned to the private sphere, like domestic needs and childrearing, would move to the public sphere. Martin, however, questions whether Gilman's professionalization of domestic functions will solve the problem of the subordination of women. Will both men and women perform these professionalized domestic chores? Martin argues that Gilman fails to consider how the power of genderization would result in these jobs remaining female occupations with less status than other jobs (Martin, 1985). In many ways, Gilman underestimates the

power of genderization, perhaps in part because she continues to cling to liberal notions about the plasticity and malleability of human beings.

One important benefit of these changes is to make the public sphere more central to life than the private sphere. While private life becomes less important to Herlanders, there is still a deep respect for some level of privacy. When the Victorian men first arrive in Herland there are plenty of palaces and little abodes, but no "homes" of the type to which they are accustomed. In fact, Herlanders did not have an analogue for the word "home" or the idea of the Roman-based "family" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 94). One of the male visitors observes that "these people had, it now became clear to us, the highest, keenest, most delicate sense of personal privacy" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 125). From earliest childhood, each girl had a separate bedroom with toilet facilities. These private residences expanded in maturity to two rooms and bath, which consisted of a bedroom and an outer room for entertaining guests. Meals could be either taken in public eating facilities or in private residences. In her other writings on social theory, Gilman does not advocate eliminating the nuclear family or the private family home (Lane, 1992). But Gilman recommends moving most of the domestic functions into the public sphere as a means of changing the nature of family life.

Gilman's Theory of Education

Gilman's vision of community is of particular interest to educators because of her emphasis on the role education plays in social reform. Herlanders attribute their survival and prosperity in large part to education. But education is used here in the broadest sense of the term. Inherent in this view is the belief in the ability of human beings to adapt and change. There is no formal schooling until about age 10 when children begin to specialize according to individual interests and talents.

For children under 10, education is life. Gilman builds a general theory of education around a kind of 19th century faculty psychology that eliminates harsh discipline, and instead, emphasizes positive experiences:

> Our general plan is this: In the matter of feeding the mind, of furnishing information, we use our best powers to meet the natural appetite of a healthy young brain; not to overfeed it, to provide such amount and variety of impressions as seem most welcome to each child. That is the easiest part. The other division is in arranging a properly graduated series of exercises which will best develop each mind. . . . (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 105)

Children have rich opportunities throughout the day to play, develop, and

learn, but always within the public sphere. As with the model of culture in Classical Greece, the culture of Herland connects all aspects of community life with education. Drama, dance, music, religion, and education are interconnected rather than developed by separate disciplines. The purpose of education in Herland is to connect children with the community as well as to allow them to develop their interests and talents.

The value placed on education in Herland is evidenced by the high standards set for those involved with childrearing. Caregivers and teachers must demonstrate high competence since Herlanders regard education as the "highest art" and entrust it only to those who are the most skilled (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 83). Children are educated in, by, and for community such that

> in each step of the rich experience of living, they found the instance they were studying widen out into contact with an endless range of common interests. The things they learned were *related*, from the first; related to one another, and to the national prosperity. (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 100)

By limiting the functions of private life with the expansion of the public sphere, children in Herland develop a strong sense of community. A classic example of the way this connectedness develops for children is provided by the story of a young girl who catches a butterfly and carries it to the nearest insect teacher. As it turns out, the butterfly is really a moth that destroys an important tree in their food supply. The realization of the impact of this discovery on the community, as well as the praise the girl receives for her service of collecting this insect, fosters a strong sense of her role in the community, and ultimately sparks her interest in pursuing a career as a forester (Gilman, 1915/1979). The constant caring and nurturing in the public sphere reinforces the connectedness of individuals with the larger community.

A community that values its children and fosters their involvement in the public sphere needs to provide the same kind of nurturing, caring environment found within the protection of the family. In Herland, the public environment is the playground of early childhood and is specially designed to protect children from harm, "no stairs, no corners" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 107). Children learn through games and research projects that emphasize the development of their physical ability, senses, and intellectual capacities. By making the public sphere in a sense both "home" and "school," children can be taught continuously, but "teaching" is subtle and apprehended by children through personal experiences.

In Herland, there is also an important assumption that all members are capable of sharing a general education, "that what one knew, all knew, to a very considerable extent" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 64). Because this general education was reinforced throughout the culture, it was easily apprehended

by all children. "Common knowledge we have long since learned to feed into the minds of our little ones with no waste of time or strength" (p. 105). This common knowledge addresses the practical needs and includes sciences such as anatomy, physiology, nutrition, botany, and chemistry. All Herlanders also develop an understanding of history and a kind of social psychology. All of the country's intellectual efforts concentrate on maintaining a high quality of life. As one male visitor notes, "all over the country, as well as those in towns, and everywhere there was the same high level of intelligence" and he had to admit that Herlanders knew more about their own country than Americans know about their own society (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 64).

In Herland, the main purpose of education in childhood is to develop far-reaching judgment and a strong well-used will. These attributes are fostered when children are provided with choices within their games or their own research projects. Gilman explains that they devote their best efforts "all through childhood and youth, in developing these faculties, individual judgment and will" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 106). Here, Gilman encourages an individual judgment that implies some level of autonomy, although she does not elaborate further on this topic. Clearly, however, any kind of mindless groupthink would be harmful to the Herland community, especially since each new generation makes its own laws and adjustments to changing social needs. "We have no laws over a hundred years old, and most of them under twenty" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 63). Unfortunately, Gilman leaves many unanswered questions about the degree to which autonomy flourishes within the community. For instance, while Herlanders attain a high level of both general and specialized education, uncertainty remains as to how interests and talents are matched with community needs.

The only kind of formal education for young girls comes around age 10, when special training or apprenticeships occur under the watchful eyes of experts. This specialized training is described as a time when "eager young minds fairly flung themselves on their chosen subjects, and acquired with an ease, a breadth, a grasp, at which I never ceased to wonder" (Gilman, 1915/1979, p. 95). Special knowledge is open to all as they desire it, and most women train in several specialties throughout a lifetime, and pursue other interests as hobbies. This society values lifetime learning; "we like to keep learning, always" (1915/1979, p. 105). The visitors make note of the wide range of interests and associations open to all Herlanders throughout their lives.

Concern About the Nature of Community Life

Herland ends on a cautionary, but somewhat optimistic note, about the

potential advantages of reestablishing a community with both male and female members. The forced isolation from men of the Herland community serves the important purpose of disrupting traditional gender roles and thus provides a more equitable starting point for the reunion. The conclusion of *Herland* reflects Gilman's continuing optimism about the potential for social change, despite significant resistance to her radical ideas. Gilman continues to have faith in the power of ideas and the potential for change, especially through collective action. According to Gilman, a more humane social order—a genuine sense of community—could be created by making values like caring and cooperation more central to the public sphere. Modern day communitarians, like Etzioni, call for an increased commitment to community by stressing a balance between individual rights and social responsibility where "each member of the community owes something to all the rest, and the community owes something to each of its members. Justice requires responsible individuals in a responsive community" (Etzioni, 1993, p. 263). Gilman creates an utopian community that feels a responsibility for the material and moral well being of others. Gilman's society also reflects Etzioni's notion of communitarian social justice, which is "alive both to the equal moral dignity of all individuals and to the ways in which they differentiate themselves from one another through their personal decisions" (Etzioni, 1993, p. 264). Gilman's caring and cooperative community shares many commonalities with communitarian thinkers of today who seek to reinsert the value of community into everyday life. Gilman clearly recognizes the difficult tensions between individual and community needs, but she concludes, and modern communitarians would agree, that a society that lacks some level of shared commitment and responsibility among its members will not provide the kind of environment that individuals need in order to flourish. While her social theory contains a number of weaknesses, communitarian thinkers might benefit from not only Gilman's effective analysis of the problems contained in liberal theory, but also from her crucial insights about gender and spatial relations.

For educators, Gilman's social theories also raise important questions about how a genuine community regards its children. Gilman makes the care and nurturing of children the primary concern that unites the community. By connecting all children in Herland to one ancestral mother, Gilman explains how every member of the community regards every child as her own responsibility. While Gilman's idea of a society dedicated so completely to its children may be too narrow, the idea of extending a deep level of concern to all the children of a society appeals to communitarians as well. Etzioni would agree with Gilman that our society needs to value its children more and support parenting in such a way that makes parent-

ing a less taxing and more fulfilling experience (Etzioni, 1993). Modern daycare centers, however, do not provide the quality of care that Gilman envisioned in Herland, where professional caretakers and educators cared for each child as if this child were their own. Etzioni suggests that, if daycare arrangements are a necessity, parents should seek cooperative arrangements where all parents contribute some time each week to their child's center. "Not only do such arrangements reduce the center's cost, they also allow parents to see firsthand what actually goes on, ensuring some measure of built-in accountability" (Etzioni, 1993, p. 58). The main point of agreement between Gilman and Etzioni is that communities have a moral responsibility to *enable* parents to raise their children to become contributing members of society, and one way to achieve this goal is for *society as a whole to value all of its children more.*

If a society values its children, education then becomes a top priority. The idea of a community extending a high level of concern to all of its children resonates in the work of educator and writer Jonathan Kozol. Kozol suggests that private concerns about our own biological children should be extended to "other people's children" and would benefit the whole community (Kozol, 1991). Kozol is particularly concerned about improving the quality of schooling for poor and disadvantaged children. His research reveals the large disparities in funding for public schools that influence educational quality. Based on the current funding structure, many rural and inner-city schools have considerably less money available to spend per pupil than many suburban schools. These disparities in school expenditures create a two-tier system that disadvantages the already disadvantaged. Kozol believes that the nation ought to care more about all of its children:

> Looking around some of these inner-city schools, where filth and disrepair were worse than anything I'd seen in 1964, I often wondered why we would agree to let our children go to school in places where no politician, school board president, or business CEO would dream of working. (1991, p. 5)

Kozol suggests that American society would reflect mole closely its democratic ideals and also benefit by raising the quality of schooling for all of its children.

In her utopian novel composed at the turn of the century, Gilman articulates her vision of an ideal community that can serve to stimulate the imagination of modern-day participants in the world of experience. While one may argue that attempts to achieve such "universal peace and good will and mutual affection" among all members of the human race is a Sisyphian struggle, one may still hold that attempting to take such a journey is our responsibility.

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