

Response to: “ ‘A Professorship and an Office of One’s Own’ ”

CSE 544

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Allow me to begin my response to Jane Martin’s article, “ ‘A Professorship and an Office of One’s Own’ ” by acknowledging Martin for doing an excellent job in bringing attention to several important questions in philosophy. These questions are posed towards a “woman’s philosophical” standpoint, as Martin so eloquently writes. I agree with the point that Martin makes when she writes, “... in contrast to men’s do we think about education differently? Do we argue our points differently? <sup>1</sup>” The answer, although Martin does not answer it immediately, to this question is yes. Now, before you “change the channel” on this station, and on my response, and conclude that I am a chauvinistic pig, please allow me to defend my answer of “yes.” If you do so, then you will see why this answer is not a bad, or incorrect, answer. In my response to Martin’s “ ‘A Professorship and on Office of One’s Own’,” I am going to give you the reasons why “women think about education differently than men” by examining three items. First, we will discuss the subject of progress. Then, we will discuss the subject of participation. And, finally, we will discuss the subject of professionalism, or as Martin entitles it, “professorship.” So, if you are still allowing me the opportunity to do so, let us continue.

Martin begins her article perturbed about the fact that a symposium for “Women Doing Philosophy of Education” was even necessary. Her anger and fury grows even more when she begins to think back and place herself in the times of Virginia Woolf, in October of 1928. For, it was at this time, Martin writes, “... Woolf did not have to make the case that Jane Austen, the Brontes, George Eliot wrote fiction. <sup>2</sup>” Then, a change, for

it is only a few pages later in her article when Martin is praising and giving, "... thanks for the progress that has been made in the world on the other side on that bridge I was about to cross. <sup>3</sup> " You see, it was Woolf who was chased off from this bridge as a lady because she was a woman. And, in Woolf's era, women were not allowed to "cross the bridge" that Martin is referring to. This is the progress that I mentioned I would be discussing with you in this response.

It is now, at this time, I would like to relate this progress to another, specific, "group" of women, *The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)*. "The *Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)* is an organization governing a professional basketball league for women in the United States. <sup>4</sup> " This basketball league was formed in 1996, as a counterpart to the NBA (the men's league of professional basketball players). I am able to remember the time when the WNBA was being created and the "noise" that was stirring around it. This "noise" I am writing about included: comments about women being jealous of men; women wanting more money; women's equal rights' movements, etc.

This is where that "bridge" that Martin wrote about in her article comes into play. You see, just as Martin wrote about Woolf not being allowed to cross the bridge, for many years women had tried to form this league and had failed. Even now, the league is not equal to its NBA counterpart, when compared to money revenue. However, similar to the Philosophy of Education Society, the WNBA has made significant progress. Since the league's creation in 1996 with only eight teams, the league has now currently expanded to *fourteen teams*. So, the women (and league) have "crossed that bridge" and have had success in only *12 years time*.

Now, I would like for us to turn our attention to the next subject, which is participation. Martin makes several comments on this subject, some of these are direct, others indirect, in her article. It seems as if she likes to keep this subject more “gray” than “black” or “white.” What I mean by this is that it never appears that she ever takes a “concrete stand” on the subject on which I am going to discuss.

Something that Martin appears to use (maybe I see it because I am a sports fan) is sports terminology when she writes about frustrations that she experienced in a library. . Martin went to the library seeking a book on gender and education by a certain woman author. After going, and going, through a maze of books and questioning numerous people, trying to find the book, Martin became very frustrated and recalls a successor’s words spoken to her, “ ‘Ladies are welcome on this turf provided they obey the rules’ . 5 ”

These words are almost an echo of a “catch-phrase” that the WNBA coined as one of their marketing techniques in their first several years of existence. That phrase was, “We Got Next.” This phrase, has its origination from men’s basketball, especially men’s street basketball, and is said by the group / team of players who are standing on the side watching the two current teams playing. It means that they are going to play the winner of the teams currently playing. Similarly to Martin, the WNBA, by taking this on as a slogan, was “powerfully saying,” we are here, you can tell us that are not supposed to write philosophy (or play basketball), but there is nothing you can do to stop us, *we are going to do it!*

This strength of participation has helped the subject area of women’s philosophy of education become as strong as it is today. From the writings of authors, and pioneers, such as Maxine Greene, Nel Noddings, Virginia Woolf, Jane Austin, etc., participation

has grown and changed tremendously over the past eight decades. Woolf perhaps summarized it best, as Martin writes, when she said, “ ‘Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.’ ”<sup>6</sup> Wow! What a statement! Can’t you picture her standing on a platform, almost similar to Rev. Martin Luther King, raising her fist in the air while making that statement? Then, can’t you hear the people screaming and roaring for the approval of her words? The only thing is this, those words were not *spoken*, those words were *written down*! Yet, they still have that much strength! It was neither the time, nor the place for her to be *standing* and *shouting* those words, but because she had *pen* and *paper* those words were heard just as loud *then* as they can be heard *today*.

Now, let us go back to the WNBA, back to its origination. Sheryl Swoopes, Lisa Leslie, and Rebecca Lobo all had this same passion for the game of basketball in their *hearts* that Martin had for women’s philosophy of education in her *mind*. You see the aforementioned three women were the three “pioneers,” or “ambassadors” of the WNBA. They were the three women who “put the league on their shoulders” during its origination. They were the three women who helped “market” the league on television and to the world. And, by doing so, they also took the responsibility of taking on the risk of failure, if the league did not survive. Their participation, as was Martin’s, was vital to each individual’s own league / organization’s success.

Finally, allow me to discuss with you the last item which I said I would discuss, “professionalism / professorship.” Of course, by Martin’s title including the word “professorship” you know the theme / idea is going to be in her article, somewhere; but where? It does not appear until the very end and I enjoy the excellent words that she uses

*afterwards* to describe this professorship that she has discovered. These words are, "... my nugget of pure truth. 7" She discovered, through this writing, as well the experiences from a small fish market, that it takes both the philosophy of educational leadership from a woman *and* a man, in order to gain the knowledge necessary to be successful.

Throughout the writing of this article Martin continues to make comparison after comparison between female and male philosophers. This comparison can be made in most any profession. Let me refer to the WNBA again, this time using money as an example. If you compare the salaries of the players in the WNBA to the salaries of the players in the NBA it is unbelievable how much difference that there is. The average pay for a WNBA player with three years of experience is capped at \$42,000 per year.

*However*, if you take the average pay for a NBA player with the same number of years experience, his average salary per year is capped at approximately \$385,275 per year. That is a difference of \$343,275 per year! 8 Before you become too upset though, when comparing these two figures, it is necessary to take into account these considerations: the amount of total revenue that each league brings in; payroll per team; endorsement contracts per team; and many other similar items. Once all of these items are taken into account and the numbers are recalculated you would find that on a dollar-per-dollar comparison it is not as an absurd figure as it appeared to be at first glance.

This is an example of a situation, similar to the one, which Martin writes about concerning "professorship." You see, before the creation of the WNBA, there were many talented collegiate women basketball players. Some of these basketball players may have had "ambitions" to play professional basketball after college. Yet, there was not a league for them to play in. So, to paraphrase a situation which happened to the young man which

Martin buys fish from in her article, these girls had to forsake their values and opinions and that to hold onto their precious commodities they must give up their ambitions. 9

However, nowadays, this is not the case with the women philosophers of educators, or the women's basketball players. It is because of the Maxine Greene's, Virginia Woolf's, Nel Noddings', Sheryl Swoopes, Lisa Leslie's, and Rebecca Lobo's that women are able to both be an *Educational Philosopher* and "Have an Office;" as well as play professional basketball in the WNBA and "Get Next."

I hope that by writing and discussing with you the progress, participation, and professionalism / professorship in this response that you have seen how women *do* indeed think differently about education than men. Hopefully, I have given you insight towards the goals that I wanted to achieve and along the way you have picked up something *extra* to take with you in your educational studies and / or research.

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1. Jane Martin. "A Professorship and an Office of One's Own." 121.
  2. Ibid. 120.
  3. Ibid. 122.
  4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WNBA>
  5. Jane Martin. "A Professorship and an Office of One's Own." 125.
  6. Ibid. 127.
  7. Ibid. 129.
  8. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WNBA>
  9. Jane Martin. "A Professorship and an Office of One's Own." 129.