

The Impact of Informal Curriculum Experiences: A Study of the Education of a Female Community Leader in Houston, Texas

Linda J. Black

Stephen F. Austin State University

Abstract

As a community leader for five decades, Ima Hogg helped establish major cultural institutions in Houston, Texas, such as The Houston Symphony, The Bayou Bend Museum, and The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. This paper will discuss the informal educational experiences of this influential community leader, focusing on the influence of parents and siblings in the period 1880-1930, as a way of examining the connections between educational experiences and the development of leadership skills.

The *Houston Post* headline for August 20, 1975, read, "Miss Ima-She nurtured Music, Art, Public Service." Ima Hogg, Houston community leader, philanthropist, and patron of the arts, had died in London, England, at the age of 93. In 1913, she helped found the Houston Symphony, serving as President of the Symphony Society from 1917-1921, and again from 1946-1956. In 1929, she started the Houston Child Guidance Center to provide the first mental health services for children and families in Houston and was involved in the leadership of this organization for over two decades. In her concern over the mental health of children in the community, she researched and developed the first visiting teacher or school social worker program while serving on the Houston ISD school board from 1943-1949. In 1940, she established the Hogg Foundation for Mental Hygiene (later Mental Health) at The

University of Texas, which continues to provide information, scholarships, community resources, and training for mental health professionals throughout the state. As a community leader for five decades, she helped establish major cultural institutions in Houston such as the Museum of Fine Arts, which now includes Bayou Bend, her former home. This paper explores connections between the informal educational experiences of Ima Hogg and the development of her leadership skills.

Women's Educational Experiences

Throughout history, much of women's educational experiences have been described as non-traditional or informal education, education that took place within the family, the community, and through social interaction. This type of learning, outside the boundaries of formal education, has often been dismissed, not considered by some as legitimate education, but only as a form of subjective knowledge (Lerner 1979; Zinsser 1993). However, feminist writers describe this as not so much of a problem of subjective or objective knowledge as much as a paradigm stemming from the power relations between men and women.

The assertion that women's knowledge is based on personal experience while men's knowledge is based on objective grounds obliterates, first and foremost, the relationship between education and personal experience. The only education

that can have meaning is education that is personal. The ingenuousness of an educational process that attempts to obliterate the personal is profoundly silencing (Lewis and Simon 1986, 464).

In looking at examples of informal learning, the influence of family, particularly parents, in establishing patterns of leadership and community involvement, is important to understanding the actions of individual women. Delgado Bernal (1998), for example, wrote that “knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next provides an understanding of certain situations and explanations about why things happen under certain conditions” (568). Ford (1990) also noted the significance of women’s informal education by describing the educative nature of women’s activities and how important this was in understanding the human condition. Her examples of sources particularly relevant in researching informal education and its impact included church and club records, diaries, oral histories, literature written by women, crafts, and the production of textiles. “Social history,” wrote Ford (1990), “cannot be understood without an understanding of how marginal groups [like women] have performed daily to support society” (14).

Education for Women in the Progressive Age

The period from 1880 to 1920 was a key transitional period for women across the United States, an era characterized by changes in women’s roles and by female organization and institution building (Chafe 1991; Dye 1991; Freedman 1979; McArthur 1998). Not only did women gain the right to vote at the end of this period, but the changes in education resulting from industrialization and urban growth

transformed the perceived purpose of formal education for the rest of the twentieth century. In addition, the activities of women’s organizations during this period provided both informal educational experiences for women as well as increased political, economic, and cultural opportunities (Talbot 1910).

The influence of informal educational experiences on the development of female leadership on a national level during the Progressive Age was examined by Lagemann (1979) who described the relationship between education and individual achievement in the lives of five female reformers in New York City. This work is an example of how education is viewed as a lifelong process of interaction and focused on the combined influence of family, mentors, and colleagues in analyzing the lives and accomplishments of female leaders. Although these informal experiences were outside the realm of formal education, they still performed an educative function in the lives of these women. Because women of the period 1880-1920 lacked the quantity and the quality of formal educational opportunities afforded to males of the time, examining the informal as well as the formal educational experiences, produces a more integrated and balanced picture of female education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and helps to shed light on how women made meaning from all of their educational experiences, and, as a result, how they structured their world as a result of their education.

A History of Community Involvement

Ima Hogg was born July 10, 1882, in Mineola, Texas, to James Stephen and Sarah Ann (Stinson) Hogg. Ima was the second child in the family, with one older brother, William

Clifford, and two younger brothers, Michael and Thomas Elisha Hogg. She was named for the heroine of a Civil War poem written by her uncle. She never married and was known as “Miss Ima” for most of her adult life. She was born into a family with a history of community involvement, particularly public service in politics. Her father, James Stephen Hogg, served as Governor of Texas from 1891 to 1895, while her grandfather Joseph Hogg served in the legislature of the Republic of Texas, and her great grandfather Thomas Hogg served in the legislature of three southern states (Bernhard 1984). While her family had been primarily involved in political service, Ima Hogg’s accomplishments and leadership in the community were demonstrated in a diverse variety of other arenas, including art, music, mental health, and historical preservation. While her formal education included private schools in Texas as well as courses at The University of Texas and the National Conservatory of Music in New York City, interaction with parents and siblings also provided significant informal educational experiences as well. Reference for her time at UT Austin? And national conservatory needed?

Informal Education: The Influence of Family

The frequent correspondence between Ima and her family provided examples of family influence and testify to the educative nature of informal learning. These letters reveal a deep affection between family members, but also a certain expectation for Ima that was established early in her life. For example, on her thirteenth birthday July 10, 1895, her father wrote to her saying,

On reflection I can recall but few epochs in my life’s way that present to my mind equal pleasure to this day-thirteen years ago-the date of your birth. In all the intervening years with each recurring day I have found nothing but pleasure from this great blessing. My confidence in the purity of your nature, in your deep regard for the rectitude and refinement of your sex at all times, on all occasions, firmly supports and justifies my hope that in no act of your life shall I ever find cause for disappointment or regret (3B111, Folder 1, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

The special relationship that James Hogg had with his daughter began at her birth. In a July 1882 letter to his brother John, James described Ima as “an angelic mien as ever gracious nature favor a man with” (3B111, Folder 1, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin). This fatherly adoration, coupled with unwavering support for whatever Ima Hogg chose to do, continued unabated until his death in 1906. And, in return, Ima Hogg idolized her larger than life father, whose accomplishments as governor earned him the title of “the last people’s governor of Texas” for the progressive legislative reforms enacted under his leadership (Frantz 1976; Bernhard 1984). The favoritism that James Hogg displayed toward his daughter over his three sons was quite evident when he replied to Ima’s suggestion in April 1902 that he bring his children to England where he was visiting:

Now, Ima, that dream of yours won't work. I shall not indulge those boys in a 'trip to England.' I should not do so if I had the wealth of Carnegie. Of course I shall be glad to take you anywhere, if I have to make the boys work to defray the expenses. In other words, you shall have carte' blanche, as you have always had and never abused (3B111, Folder 3, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

Part of the informal education provided by James Hogg was the knowledge and experience that his daughter Ima gained through travel, both in the United States and abroad, a practice she would continue throughout her life. From an early age, Ima Hogg became a frequent travel companion for her father due to her mother's frail health, often accompanying her father during his political campaigns. However, as her mother's health slowly deteriorated, she accompanied her father even more often, especially during his term as governor of Texas from 1891 to 1895. After the death of Ima's mother in 1895, the relationship between Ima and her father became even closer, with Ima gradually assuming the roles of friend, companion, advisor, and, finally, caretaker the last two years of her father's life.

Although Ima's mother, Sarah Hogg died when Ima was thirteen, she often spoke of her mother's influence. For example, when her father became Governor in 1891, Sarah Hogg assigned her daughter the responsibility of collecting and saving the family letters and the clippings from Texas papers and periodicals concerning the political campaigns, addresses, and other activities of her father, even though

she was only eight years old at the time. In 1973, Ima wrote of this duty and its educative influence, saying "I learned something about politics, but I also learned to be a keeper of letters and documents" (3B130, Folder 10, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

In a 1975 interview, Ima Hogg described the influence of her mother in the area of music. She stated that her interest in the piano began at the age of three when she heard her mother play and tried to imitate her. She began piano lessons shortly thereafter at the age of five and thus began, as Ima described, "a life-long love of music" (4Zg88, Folder "Book Notes," Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin). She continued her study of the piano for the next twenty-seven years, first, in schools in Texas, then, at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City, and, finally, as a self-directed program of study in Austria and Germany (3B130, Folder 10, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

In 1907, a year after the death of her father, Ima Hogg traveled to Europe for the first of several trips she would take in her life, though this time, to continue her self-directed study of music. Any idea where she had money for this trip? She was about 25 at the time of trip, was this unusual for a single young female to travel by herself? First, in Vienna, Austria, and later, in Berlin, Ima practiced and developed her technique, supposedly in the pursuit of a career as a concert pianist. But, by the time she returned to Houston in 1908, her career path had changed. She did not choose the life of concert pianist, but, instead, taught piano for the next few years, until 1919. In 1911, she helped form a musical organization for young

ladies in Houston called the Girls' Musical Club (later re-named the Tuesday Musical Club), and served as President for the 1912-1913 season (Kirkland 2004, 325). This organization was a women's study club whose purpose was to establish "an organization for the musical culture of the members and the uplifting of the standard of music in the city of Houston" (Box 2, Folder 1, Elizabeth Richardson Cherry Papers, Archives, Museum of Fine Arts).

However, it was this organization, The Girls Musical Club that Ima would use as a means to create an organization that would evolve into the Houston Symphony Association (Rousell 1972). The significant role that Ima Hogg played in the initial formation of the Houston Symphony is demonstrated by a 1915 photocopy of the Registration form filed with the State of Texas by the Houston Symphony Orchestra Association. There are five signatures of the directors of the Symphony Association on the document, four men and Ima Hogg. In an autobiographical speech she gave in 1962, upon the twentieth-five anniversary of the founding of the Houston Symphony, Ima reflected on her parents' influence, describing the manner of support from her parents as "parental counseling." She described her leadership role in helping to start the symphony and how the idea took shape as a result of both her mother's love of music and her father's support for her decision to continue her study of music in college. Maybe need a reference here for the speech, how did you know what she said in speech?

Informal Instruction

Many of the letters written to Ima Hogg from her father James and later, her brother William, were examples of informal education

that were also instructive in nature. For example, in March of 1898, her brother William wrote to her, apparently in answer to her question about a biographical series of English and American authors in which she was interested, and gave advice about the selection of authors to read. He advised her to "lay the foundation of your taste with the masters that the latter-day, lesser, saints of literature all more or less copy: Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle, Irving, Stevenson, and others" (2N156, Folder 1/9, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

William also advised Ima that "if Thackeray suits your taste, you should cultivate that taste by a careful reading of his works-a reading that will make this thought and language unconsciously a part of your own" (2N156, Folder 1/9, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin). The focused manner in which Ima was advised to read by her brother, spoke to a program of self-directed learning Ima would later employ in gaining information about the major interests of her adult life-art, music, mental health, and historic preservation. This idea of immersing one's self in a subject by reading everything available about that subject as well as consulting the leaders in the field, would become a pattern of informal education that would repeat itself throughout Ima Hogg's life.

Several of the letters to Ima from her father James Hogg were highly instructive in nature, with lengthy explanations of subjects as varied as the reputations of ladies and gentlemen, the political revolution in Panama, and the oil business. One particular letter that

James Hogg wrote to his daughter from England in March of 1902, revealed the former governor's decidedly American political bias as he described the shortcomings of parliamentary monarchy. The letter continued on for two more pages, the majority of which James Hogg devoted to an explanation of the differences between the American and English systems of government, including a detailed description of veto powers as they existed in England and the United States at the time.

The instructive purpose of this letter is openly referred to on the last page of the letter when James Hogg advised his daughter, "Your fondness for history, I do trust will not abate. A woman who well understands history and political phrases and distinctions finds a welcome place in the center of the best circles everywhere" (3B111, Folder 4, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin). The expectation of success without gender limitations seemed to be part of a recurring pattern in Ima Hogg's life. As she recalled in a 1975 interview, "as a child, I was always encouraged to compete with the boys [her brothers] in all things" (4Zg88, Folder 4, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin). The suggestion for public service as well as a proposal for demonstrating her personal leadership abilities came in another letter from her father in March 1902.

I want you to wield your influence, which I hope may be potential, on the side of the plain people. By all means, my daughter, keep up interest in politics. Understand well the principles on which your rights are based and stand by them. Know your lesson-your duty-and you

can lead or teach others (3B111, Folder 4, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

The support and encouragement shown by James Hogg in his letters to his daughter seemed to reveal an attitude that, because of his perception of her abilities, she could pursue whatever interests she wanted, an attitude that would encourage Ima to do just that. While the pervading attitude about women's proper roles in the beginning years of the 20th century was predominantly one of wife and mother, the advice of James Hogg to his daughter in the matter of subjects such as politics or business, was decidedly different, saying, in the same letter, "When you quit school I trust you will study the land and oil business so that you can profitably employ your fine talents" (3B111, Folder 4, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, the University of Texas at Austin).

Lastly, Ima Hogg's perception was that her father and her brother, in particular, were role models for her subsequent actions as a community leader. Their beliefs and their actions in the community would serve an educative function in her life. For example, Ima Hogg's father, James Hogg, served twenty years in government office as a local justice of the peace and district attorney, then state attorney general, and finally governor. As governor, he earned a reputation for progressive reform, proposing five significant pieces of legislation, all dealing with issues either protecting or supporting the rights and privileges of what he described as the "common man," against foreign and corporate interests.

The educative influence of James Hogg on his daughter also extended to the field of psychology and mental health issues. When receiving an award from The University of Texas in 1968, Ima Hogg spoke of her interest in studying psychology and the connection to her father.

I selected this course in the University because my father engendered my interest in the subject by his own interest. While he was Governor and I was still a child, he frequently carried me along on his inspection tours of the State Hospitals and penitentiaries. I heard him discuss case histories of many inmates and talk with them (MS21, Box 13, Folder 1, Ima Hogg Collection, Archives, Houston Museum of Fine Arts).

During interviews with Ima Hogg in 1961 and 1967, she described in detail the trips to asylums and prisons, the influence of her father's beliefs about mental health, and how, in large part, these events were a significant part of the impetus behind her fifty-year support of mental health services for children and adults. She even commented that she had also talked to patients and had, at one point, thought about becoming a nurse in a mental hospital.

Ima Hogg's older brother, William, also served as a role model by continuing the family's tradition of public service during the first two decades of the 20th century, even though he chose business and not politics as a career. His strong belief in public service included serving on the Board of Trustees for a national organization that promoted training for those individuals interested in public service.

Much of his time and his fortune were spent in support of various educational, civic, and philanthropic causes (Kirkland 2004). The recipients of his philanthropic efforts included The University of Texas, the Boy Scouts, veterans of World War I, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Houston Symphony, and the YWCA (Bernhard 1984). Demonstrating their own leadership and service was not the only way that the Hogg family had an educative influence on Ima. There were also family expectations that Ima would be successful and continue the family tradition of service and leadership.

Conclusion

Both formal and informal educational experiences helped define Ima Hogg's role as a community leader. Family was the initial source of informal education as father, James, and brother, William, demonstrated the family tradition of service to community, through their roles as political and civic leaders. Her parents also recognized the benefits of formal education and demonstrated this by funding Ima's educational experiences in private elementary and secondary schools in Austin and San Marcos, Texas, at The University of Texas for two years, and at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. Through all of this, they demonstrated to Ima the value and benefits of education.

While her formal education provided Ima Hogg with basic knowledge and skills, it was not the sum total of her education. The informal educational experiences of Ima Hogg were also vital to her success as a community leader. First, interviews with Ima and family correspondence seem to demonstrate that the Hogg family provided both support and

encouragement for Ima throughout her life for whatever endeavors she attempted, particularly her passion for music. These same sources also reveal family expectations of success and involvement in community affairs in a leadership role as well, something considered not as common for women in this time period. Second, the educative influence of the Hogg family can also be seen in the instructive nature of Ima's relationship with her mother and father, as well as her brother. Finally, the actions of her mother, father, and brother also served an educative function in that Ima perceived her parents James and Sarah, and brother William to be role models, individuals whose behavior she sought to emulate in giving back to the community in a tradition of public and community service. As she commented during her campaign for the Houston school board in March of 1943, "It would be my desire and hope to perform a service, however modest it might be, to my community as a whole" (4W237, Folder 3, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

In examining the actions of Ima Hogg as an adult, evidence suggests a significant connection between the informal curriculum of educational experiences provided by her family and her actions as a community leader. The instructive nature of the attention and the time spent with Ima by her parents, particularly her father, coupled with family expectations for both success and community leadership, provided her with a sense of self-esteem and purpose, a purpose that reflected the interests and attitudes of her family. The tradition of public service demonstrated by her father and brother from 1880 to 1930 would be carried on by Ima Hogg in the following decades, as she

demonstrated her leadership in establishing community resources in the fields of art, music, education, mental health, and historic preservation. In a speech to the Woman's Club of Houston, during her campaign for Houston ISD School Board, March 23, 1943, Ima Hogg summarized her perception of the importance of the informal curriculum experiences provided by her family.

The process of education in the individual is made up through experiences as well as through teaching. Therefore, with the roots of influence beginning in the home, it becomes a many-sided community responsibility in addition to being a school problem. This, I think we cannot overlook when considering a program for the development and education of our youth as future citizens. These are my beliefs, well grounded in me through heritage, training, and an abiding interest in my fellow man (4W237, Folder 3, Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

This study of the education of a female community leader contributes to a growing body of research on the role of education, both formal and informal, in helping to shape women's lives in the period 1880 to 1920 (Graves 1998; Rury 1991; Talbot 1910; Tyack 1992). In examining the literature on women's education in the United States from 1880-1920, Woody (1929) described the informal educative impact of the women's club movement and women's club participation as giving women "a foundation for civic powers" (467), a theme echoed by later historians (Frankel and Dye 1991; McArthur

1998; McElhanev 1998; Riley 1986), including several who wrote about Texas women and the influence of women's organizations (Chapman 1993; Cottrell 1993; Turner 1997). However, few sources offer an analysis of all aspects of women's education in the period 1880 to 1920: the formal as well as the full range of informal educational experiences and how all of these experiences connect to the development of the knowledge and skills that enabled women, such as Ima Hogg, to become influential community leaders (Lagemann 1979).

Finally, by analyzing the educational experiences of female community leaders such as Ima Hogg, understanding of the complex nature of the educational process, especially for women and especially as education has been traditionally defined, is extended. This study attempted to deepen the understanding of women leaders with a portrait of not just the achievements of twentieth century Texas women, but how the personal, the private, and the public realms of education play an integral and interconnected role in women's lives, in general. The results demonstrate the importance of analyzing both formal and informal educational experiences, not only as a means of understanding woman's education, but also as a necessary component to understanding the relationship between women's education and women's achievement.

References

Bernhard, V. 1984. *Ima Hogg: The governor's daughter*. Austin, TX: Monthly Press.

Chafe, W. H. 1991. *The paradox of change: American women in the twentieth century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chapman, B. T. 1993. From the parlor to the public: New roles for women in Houston 1885-1918. *The Houston Review: History and Culture of the Gulf Coast* 15 (1): 31-44.

Elizabeth Richardson Cherry Papers, Archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Cottrell, D. M. 1993. *Pioneer woman educator: The progressive spirit of Annie Webb Blanton*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press.

Delgado Bernal, D. 1998. Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (Winter)
<http://www.edreview.org.ezproxy.tamu:2048/harvard98/1998/wi98/w98berna.htm>

Dye, N. S. 1991. Introduction. In *Gender, class, race, and reform in the Progressive Era*, eds. N. Frankel and N. S. Dye, 1-9. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.

Ford, R. L. 1990. Why spend time on women grinding corn? *Texas Journal of Ideas, History, and Culture* 12 (2): 12-15.

Frankel, N., and N. S. Dye, eds. 1991. *Gender, class, race, and reform in the Progressive Era*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.

Frantz, J. B. 1976. *Texas: A bicentennial history*. New York: Norton.

Freedman, E. 1979. Separatism as strategy: Female institution building and American feminism, 1870-1930. *Feminist Studies* 3 (3): 512-529.

Graves, K. 1998. *Girls' schooling during the Progressive Era: From female scholar to domesticated citizen*. New York: Garland.

Ima Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin James

- Stephen Hogg Papers, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Kirkland, K. S. 2004. *Envisioning a progressive city: Hogg family philanthropy and the urban ideal in Houston, Texas, 1910-1975*. PhD diss., Rice University.
- Lagemann, E. C. 1979. *A generation of women: Education in the lives of progressive reformers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lerner, G. 1979. *The majority finds its past: Placing women in history*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lewis, M. and R. I. Simon. 1986. A discourse not intended for her: Learning and teaching within patriarchy. *Harvard Educational Review* 56, 457-471.
- McArthur, J. N. 1998. *Creating the new women: The rise of Southern women's progressive culture in Texas, 1893-1918*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- McElhaney, J. M. 1998. *Pauline Periwinkle and the progressive reform in Dallas*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.
- Riley, G. 1986. *Inventing the American woman: A perspective on women's history, 1865 to the present*. Arlington Heights, IL: Davidson.
- Roussel, H. 1972. *The Houston Symphony Orchestra, 1913-1971*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- Rury, J. L. 1991. *Education and women's work*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Talbot, M. 1910. *The education of women*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Turner, E. H. 1997. *Women, culture, and community: Religion and reform in Galveston 1880-1920*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tyack, D. B. 1992. Introduction. In *The 'girl question' in education: Vocational education for young women in the Progressive Era*, ed. J. B. Powers, ix-x. London: Falmer Press.
- Woody, T. 1929. *A history of women's education in the United States: Volumes I and II*. Repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1966.
- Zinsser, J. P. 1993. *Feminism and history: A glass half full*. New York, NY: Twayne Publishers.