

## **Elise Boulding and Peace Education**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Elise Boulding has been called the “matriarch” of the twentieth century peace research movement. Sociologist emeritus from Dartmouth College and the University of Colorado, she has been in on the foundations of the movements of peace, women’s studies and futures and has played pivotal roles in each. Prior to her scholarly career that formally began at age fifty, however, she was already making major contributions in other areas, most notably as a peace educator and activist, a leader in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and as a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Boulding has been the recipient of over nineteen awards for her work in peace and was a 1990 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Boulding’s theoretical work on the role of the family in educating toward social change, and the role women have played in peacemaking, predate her later work discussing women’s unique capacities for connections, networking and peace. The various stages of her life--child, student, young wife, Quaker, activist, sociologist and scholar, retiree and elder--have been bound together, metaphorically as a hologram. Always eschewing dichotomy, her life has been a constant attempt to integrate, both privately and in her public life, the human needs for both autonomy and connectedness. Elise Boulding’s ideas on transnational networks and their relationship to global understanding are considered seminal contributions to twentieth century peace education thought.

### **BACKGROUND**

Boulding was a key player in the beginning of academic peace studies in the 1950s and early 1960s, continuing this work through the decades of the 1970s, when peace studies was established as a legitimate academic discipline. She has long advocated, often at her own professional peril, for an integration of peace education, research and activism. Early perceptions of peace education were that it was education toward the abolition of war and that it was an “arm” of the peace research movement. In the years following the Second World War, and particularly in the latter part of the twentieth century, new ideas have expanded the concept of peace education. Boulding’s writings and those of other feminist in the 1970s laid the groundwork for the work of later educators who embraced ideas of connectedness, caring and the importance of thinking globally and acting locally. Many of Boulding’s ideas predated contemporary thinking on the importance of ecological sustainability and the dangers inherent in “cultures of war.”

Elise Boulding’s contributions to peace and the grounding she received for her subsequent theoretical work began in her early life, as an immigrant child born to parents with high expectations, and in her marriage to internationally known Quaker economist and poet Kenneth Boulding. Throughout her life, Elise always used her immediate life experiences to add meaning to her existence. She always grounded whatever she has done in the basic human experience that begins with the child and involves the family. She, to paraphrase a family friend, “is a person who has been able to stretch so far the limits of human experience that she could address the United Nations with no problem and then, in the next second, stoop to tie a child’s shoe and be aware of the needs of both at the same time” (Giffin, 1999).

Elise's dynamic partnership with Kenneth Boulding, together with some of their conflicts, contributed to her theoretical ideas on cultures of peace. The grounding she received from her Quaker spirituality has played an important role in influencing the focus and content of her work in many areas.

In a field long dominated by men, Elise Boulding has left an indelible mark and made major contributions to the ongoing theoretical work on peace and social change, including the importance of linking individuals to their communities and to the global world. Her life and work speak to the significant presence of cultures and societies of peace, while most media attention and scholarly publications focus on extreme violence in today's society. Her book *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Boulding, 2000) was written in recognition of her long-time associations with UNESCO and the United Nations, organizations that designated the current decade (2000-2010) the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE EDUCATION

Peace education is currently considered to be both a philosophy and a process involving skills that include listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution (Harris & Morrison, 2003). The process empowers people with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. The philosophy teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life. The Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association further clarifies the definition to take into account both *explicit* and *implicit* peace education (Peace Education Commission, 1997). Explicit education, also sometimes traditionally associated with *peace studies*, is the processing of facts elicited from peace research. Implicit peace education is the attempted means of creating a peaceful culture and the process of educating students toward this. Betty Reardon of Columbia University offers what is probably the most comprehensive definition of peace education and discusses the purpose of peace education as the promotion of the "development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human conditions by changing social structures and patterns of thought that have created it" (Reardon, 1988, p. x). Reardon believes that at the center must be the potential for transformation, both inward and outward. UNESCO has defined peace education as "international by nature, global in perspective and action-oriented in its aspirations" (UNESCO, 1981).

These contemporary views on peace education reflect the evolution of the concept from the beginnings of what we now know as the current peace movement, beginning in the 1940s and 1950s. During this time peace education was seen as the process of propagating the findings of research. Peace research in the modern sense began in the decades following World War II with the establishment of various research institutes for the Study of Peace. One of the first was established by Johan Galtung in Oslo, Norway in the late 1950s. These institutes were founded as independent entities because finding universities that would support such projects was nearly impossible. The International Peace Research Association, founded in part by Elise and Kenneth Boulding, began in 1965, an outgrowth of work done by the Quakers and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom with funding from UNESCO. Peace research institutes were founded in order to study war, its causes and cures. The key players in these institutes were overwhelmingly male.

Early scholars of the peace movement recognized the inherent relationship between peace research, education and activism. Elise Boulding, in her writings, has often used metaphor to relate her conception of this relationship. She believes that peace research and action can be related metaphorically to medical education and practice. Whereas doctors train to heal patients, peace people train to heal the world. Boulding essentially makes no distinction between the

importance of peace research, education and action. Quoted in an interview in the 1990s with Judith Porter Adams, Boulding stated:

My goal has been to initiate a dialogue between the action and the research perspectives.....my mediation role has been between peace researchers and peace activists, each of whom think the other is failing to address the real needs of our time" (Adams, 1991, 52).

The founding of COPRED (The Consortium on Peace, Research, Education and Development) in 1970 by the Bouldings was a conscious effort to unite these three disparate elements.

Earlier, peace education in the late nineteenth century had begun in earnest in the United States by social reformers such as Jane Addams and Fanny Fern Andrews. Addams, as a founder of WILPF, was one of the first to make the connections between the social conditions underlying the oppression of women and families and the violence propagated in communities around the world. Elise's early ideas on educating for peace were inspired and grounded in the work of these women reformers.

Later evolving ideas of peace education, including its relational and transformative potential, arose partly as a result of the women's movement and its influence on the field of peace studies. Feminists such as Elise Boulding, who taught women's studies at the University of Colorado, were concerned about the emphasis in the peace movement, largely dominated by males, on the technical aspects of the arms race, to the neglect of the more human and personal consequences of violence. Boulding's research project on the women who participated in the Women's Strike for Peace in the early 1960s showed that women were overwhelmingly concerned about these social issues. She discussed this research in a report to UNESCO in the early 1980's (UNESCO, 1981).

In the 1960s there was intense discussion among academics about the relationship between peace and feminist issues, largely lost from the earlier nineteenth century work of reformers such as Addams and Andrews. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, of which Boulding was international chair in the late 60s, again took up the banner of pacifism in relation to women's issues (Alonso, 1993). Connections were seen between poverty, racism, children, ecological danger and physical, structural and psychological violence. Peace began to be seen as a state of harmonious relationships, intra-personal, inter-personal and inter-global.

At that time, some "second-wave" feminists viewed peace studies as a diversion from the ultimate goal of liberation from oppressive structures. However, in the early 1970s a generation of feminists came into "new ways of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Different ways of looking at connectedness and its relation to nurturance and how women learn and process moral thinking provided the grounding for the work by such thinkers as Elise Boulding, Betty Reardon, Birgit Brock-Utne, Nell Noddings and Sara Ruddick. Boulding at this time was teaching and writing about women. Her work celebrated women's capacities as peacemakers, mediators and nurturers and discussed the fact that the peace work of women goes largely unnoticed, particularly in the developing world. She has called this part of the globe the "two-thirds" or the "five-sixths world", thus placing "development" in its proper perspective. Boulding was also struggling, as were many feminists such as Jean Baker-Miller and Carol Gilligan, not to exclude men in their thinking.

These views of women as nurturers and caretakers and as carriers of the values of their culture came to be seen by some, with the rise of feminism's third wave (postmodernism), as "essentialist." The essentialist position, as defined, is that women are inherently different from men in a *relational* sense and that they possess characteristics such as the capacity to nurture, to

care and to connect in ways that men do not. Because of this, women are expected to be kinder and gentler than men. A few of Boulding's associates felt that some of her ideas were out of touch with the current feminist thinking. In fact, this criticism did not alter her belief that men have much to learn from women about partnering, nurturing, sharing, and connecting and she countered the critics by vehemently denying that she was an essentialist.

## CONCLUSION

In 1996 , Boulding received the first Peacemaker of the Year award given by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center in Boulder, Colorado. This poem was written and read for the occasion by the Center's long-time founder and director, LeRoy Moore, and in some sense may be considered a summation of the life and work of Elise Boulding:

Elise, how do I prize you?  
Is it for the breadth and depth of your knowledge?  
    for your wonderful curiosity?  
    for your love of children?  
    or for your great rolling laugh?  
    or is it that you speak for women?  
    or that you champion those who are despised  
        and misunderstood?  
    and what about your insistence that action  
        without reflection is empty  
        but that nothing changes without action?  
When I hear your name  
    so many words, thoughts, images come to mind-  
"the 200 year present" you say we carry with us,  
development, whether of the child, the global civic culture,  
    the economy--none really separate from the others  
simplicity  
sustainability  
"the family in the world and the world in the family"  
play: as essential for adults as for children  
    --is it true that the revolution you seek  
    is one where you'll be absent if you can't play?  
the trinity of thinking, feeling, acting  
your challenge that we explore cracks in the technological shield  
    that separates us from the essential reality  
    of our own bodies, our own souls, our earth house  
INGO, no not Bingo, but INGO:  
    international non-governmental organizations,  
    the abundance of which you have charted,  
    some of which you have chartered, many charged.  
You remind us, Elise, in this age  
    when the nation-state is simultaneously  
    so destructive and so outmoded,  
    so predictable, yet so predatory-  
    you remind us that we already are creating

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