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Dedication



Douglas J. Simpson

When I first heard Doug Simpson present a paper—most likely on some aspect of the thought and work of John Dewey—the first thing that came to my mind was, “Does he think as slowly as he talks?” I was soon able to resolve my query. Using his slow, southern drawl and dry sense of humor, Doug was soon entertaining and enlightening his audience by sharing acute, analytical, artful, critical, and reflective insight into Dewey’s work. Always approaching Dewey in the way that Dewey might approach Dewey, Doug attacks the haunting problems of American education—such dualisms as separating theory from practice and separating education of the mind from the body and confusion about the purpose of education. Doug’s scholarship on ethics, educational reform, democratic community, and diversity shows he understands the importance of integrating theory and practice in education: he grasps not simply what to do, but why we do it. Doug ranks among the top scholars in the field of educational studies on John Dewey and has never forgotten, as have some Dewey scholars, how much Dewey admired and

respected the teaching profession and was therefore willing to challenge teachers when he felt they held to the status quo or failed to understand the true purpose of education in American society as preparing students to participate in democratic society.

I was honored when Doug asked me at an American Educational Studies Association meeting in Charlottesville to consider working on a project that would include Dewey's essays in a text directed to teachers, educational leaders, curriculum developers, and a democratic citizenry. It did not take me long to agree to the project that culminated in *Teachers, Leaders, and Schools: Essays by John Dewey*, published by Southern Illinois University Press. Collaborating with Doug is truly "learning by doing." As many know, Doug is a mentor and a colleague, not one interested in his own laurels, but working and sharing ideas in the true sense of the academic and intellectual community Dewey often wrote about and lauded. As scholars in educational studies, we often forget the public nature of our work and can become easily "siloeed," becoming more an isolated intellectual rather than a public one. Doug embodies what we should all seek to become as scholars in education: compassionate, caring, reflective, critical, and imaginative while grounded in a sense of humor, and, importantly, not taking ourselves so seriously.

Even though Doug has held the highest leadership positions in educational studies, he has always shown devotion to and consistently served SOPHE and its predecessor, the Southwestern Philosophy of Education Society. Furthermore, he served as long-time editor of the *Journal of Thought*, a journal that began from SOPHE's origins. We thank Doug for being a mentor, colleague, and friend, and dedicate this issue of the *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* with our great admiration for his scholarly contributions and tireless service to SOPHE and the field of educational studies.

Sam F. Stack, Jr.
West Virginia University

2011 SOPHE Presidential Address

From Collaboration to Corporation: Higher Education Trends in Texas

Lee S. Duemer, Texas Tech University

One need only turn on the nightly news to be reminded that our nation faces a serious financial crisis. How we allocate increasingly limited resources is an important question that must be understood and justified. In many states, for example, legislators have cut higher education allocations yet concurrently expect institutions to better account for their expenditures. With dramatically reduced allocations from their respective states, public institutions now must be increasingly resourceful about how they spend what budget they are granted while experiencing heightened pressure to generate soft money from existing revenue sources and develop new ones. High unemployment raises the level of competition for state services which often results in lower allocations to state-supported higher education institutions since in an economic recession, consumers are likely to purchase fewer goods, resulting in fewer sales tax dollars used to support state services (Lasher & Greene, 1993; Whalen, 1996). This phenomenon is particularly likely to affect states such as Texas, which has no income tax and generates revenue primarily through sales taxes. The problem in Texas is indeed acute since the state budget faces a shortfall of \$20 billion in the next biennium, and institutions have already been asked to find ways to cut their budgets (Mangan, 2010b).

Texas Public Policy Foundation

The financial problems that plague Texas institutions are compounded by public accusations that higher education does not adequately address societal problems, costs too much, and that faculty do not teach enough or conduct relevant research. To address higher education issues Texas Governor Rick Perry called together the governing boards of the state's six university systems to a May 2008 higher education summit in Austin (Tumulty, 2011). This summit marks the beginning of Perry's initiative to reconceptualize how higher education operates in Texas.

The ideas Perry proposed were developed by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) and entitled the “Seven Breakthrough Solutions.” Supported by some of Perry’s largest campaign contributors (Stripling, 2011), the TPPF is an Austin-based foundation led by one of Perry’s former policy directors, Brooke L. Rollins (Mangan, 2010b) and founded by Jeff Sandefer, a major campaign contributor. The solutions Perry proposed largely focused on running higher education institutions more like business institutions, with students treated as customers and university faculty and staff accountability and transparency (Mangan, 2011d).

Much of his proposal escaped public notice until fall 2010 when Texas A&M University revealed it created a spreadsheet ranking faculty according to how much money they brought in to the university through teaching and research in an effort to justify the money spent on their pay and benefits—or to reveal if instead faculty cost the university money (Mangan, 2010a). Perry and the TPPF then disclosed and promoted faculty rankings, claiming rankings insured students were learning (Mangan, 2010b). Perry also advanced a plan that required universities develop two separate budgets for teaching and research. This second plan was based on the assumption that too little research is conducted that directly pertains to university missions, and that separate budgets make it easier for university administration to focus on teaching rather than research (Mangan, 2011a, 2011b).

Implementation at Texas Universities

The ideas put forth by Perry and the TPPF have yet to be fully implemented at the state’s six university systems; however, collectively we should be very concerned about what has happened, and what *can* happen. For example, at Texas A&M faculty merit pay for teaching now is based solely on student evaluations (Mangan, 2011a; Stripling, 2011). As social science researchers I hope we can agree on the methodological weaknesses of something as important as merit pay (ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000) being tied to a single research paradigm (quantitative), a single method of data collection (a survey instrument), and a single constituency (students)—all done anonymously (Mangan, 2010b).

More recently Perry proposed the state’s leading universities develop a plan for a four-year undergraduate degree that would cost no more than \$10,000, cutting tuition in half (Mangan, 2011d). Critics of his plan argue it can only be fulfilled by faculty focusing their energy almost solely on teaching, will require large class sizes, and correspondingly will compromise academic quality and institutional prestige.

For those of us who work in Texas state institutions it is a legal requirement that grade distributions for our classes be electronically available on the university website no more than three clicks away from

the university home page. The website must also include data from teaching evaluations and a copy of faculty's course syllabus including all assignments (Texas House Bill 2504, 2009). All these requirements were developed by and lobbied for by the TPPF (Mangan, 2010b).

Opposition and Criticism

When implemented Texas A&M faculty strongly opposed the financial ranking system, arguing it does not present an accurate portrayal of the diverse aspects of the work they do. One's ranking is based only on how much money one brings into the university from combined teaching (tuition hours generated) and grants (soft money) in any given academic year. However, the formula accounts for only a fraction of the many roles faculty play: advising students (in particular doctoral students whose advisement can be especially time consuming), service on dissertation committees, service on college and university faculty committees, work on editorial boards, participation in professional conferences and associations, serving as external reviewers for promotion and tenure candidates, generation of unfunded publications and conference presentations, and a host of other activities that are expected of us but for which faculty receive little acknowledgement. Many of these activities are particularly necessary as faculty accumulate vitae items used to justify their promotion from associate to full professor. What is not noted or considered in this ranking system is that many faculty work year-round, during summer, even though during summer faculty are off-contract and unpaid.

Faculty are deeply critical of the plan to award merit pay based on teaching evaluations alone. Critics claim the plan will reward faculty who grade easily, which suggests the plan may actually undermine student learning by making classes less rigorous and encouraging students to shop around for courses with the lowest expectations. Treating students as customers—and that is the exact language of the TPPF—may in fact be counterproductive (Mangan, 2010b).

When asked about faculty criticism of the plan, in a September 2010 interview for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Brooke Rollins replied, "Faculty should welcome the opportunity to make their case, and there's no better way than through full transparency" (Mangan, 2010, para. 20), yet in reality the matter is far more complex than Rollins' response suggests. But how can faculty possibly participate in the process when the plan was written and implemented before it was ever presented to faculty? Emails obtained by the *Houston Chronicle* show the governor's office's close involvement in pushing universities to adopt the TPPF policies (Hart, 2011). These emails originate in May 2008 at the same time plans were revealed to university leaders. Subsequent messages

instruct university leaders to develop timelines for implementing the solutions, requests for updates on progress, and advice to regents on how not to be influenced by criticism from university employees (Anonymous, 2011). There was neither a plan for faculty to make their case, nor was there full transparency in how the Seven Breakthrough Solutions were developed. Governor's office staff emails characterize soliciting faculty input as unwanted, and never part of the plan.

Aside from the lack of transparency in how the Seven Breakthrough Solutions were developed, there has also been considerable criticism of the plan's details, such as its proposal to separate teaching and research into two different budgets. This part of the plan is based on the Governor's and TPPF's concerns that too much research undermines student learning; however, there has been no case made by the TPPF regarding the manner in which research allegedly undermines the teaching and learning process. Peter T. Flawn, president emeritus of the University of Texas at Austin, concluded that if the TPPF plan is implemented both UT and A&M would, "In a very few years go from being first-class graduate research institutions to second-rate degree mills" (Mangan, 2011d, para. 21).

Student leaders at UT–Austin also expressed concern over the Governor's plan to deemphasize research. In April 2011 they delivered a letter to the Board of Regents claiming their degrees will be cheapened and they will have difficulty finding employment were the university's reputation to suffer (Mangan 2011b). Word of the Governor's plans come to the attention of the Association of American Universities (AAU), which expresses its concerns in a letter to Texas A&M Chancellor Michael D. McKinney about the university's commitment to advancing research. When asked how he responded to the letter Chancellor McKinney stated he has thrown the letter in the trash (Mangan, 2011a).

Rather than harming students' ability to learn, a coupling of research with teaching develops stronger methodological skills among graduate students. A 2011 study in *Science* concludes graduate students who both teach and participate in research show an improvement in their methodological skills (Feldon, Peugh, Timmerman, Maher, Hurst, Strickland, Gilmore & Stiegelmeyer, 2011). Their research is one of the first studies closely to examine skills students obtain from being involved in the research process, rather than merely on students' perceptions of their own skills (Berrett, 2011). Their findings provide a data-driven rationale for a continued emphasis on research and involving graduate students in the research process. If the Governor's plans are to be fully implemented they will also harm the ability of emerging research universities to attain tier one status and will

compromise research institutions' ability to retain their status as research institutions, a factor in obtaining external funding. A shift away from research and toward heavy teaching responsibilities will result in less scholarship and would be evident in fewer grants and publications, one of the key indicators of an institution's status.

Cronyism and Pay-to-Play

The business-oriented philosophy Perry brings to academe enjoys considerable support among the university system's boards of regents. After over a decade in office he has appointed every regent now serving (Fain, 2010; Mangan 2011b). His support by the boards is evident in an April 2010 Texans for Public Justice report, which finds Perry received campaign contributions from 63% of the regents he appointed (Texans for Public Justice, 2010). In 2010 he collected an estimated \$6.1 million from 97 of the 155 regents with an average campaign contribution of \$39,251 (Fain, 2010).

The large percentage of campaign donors among Texas' boards of regents raises serious questions about their independence. While running for Governor in the last state election, U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison accused the Governor of cronyism in appointing regents whose loyalties are to him rather than to the institutions they govern (Mangan, 2010b). One may be tempted to dismiss such evidence as just a part of politics, nevertheless several incidents suggest Perry demands more than political loyalty from his appointees: personal loyalty.

Two former Texas Tech regents report being pressured to resign because they supported Sen. Hutchison when she ran against Perry. Mark Griffin confirms Perry's chief of staff asked him to resign after Griffin introduced Hutchison at a campaign stop in Lubbock. Brian Bewdy told Griffin, "The governor expects loyalty out of his appointees and if you can't be loyal it's probably not best to be on the team" (MacLaggan & Embry, 2009, para. 10). He chose to resign rather than "place the institution at political risk" (MacLaggan & Embry, 2009, para. 10).

Another regent, and former Lubbock Mayor Windy Sitton, was informed by the chair of the board of regents of the Governor's upset that Sitton's name appeared on a list of Hutchison's campaign supporters. Sitton is told by the chairman to "cease and desist supporting Kay Bailey [Hutchinson] immediately or resign from the board" (MacLaggan & Embry, 2009, para. 2). She chose to serve the remaining two months of her term rather than resign.

The presidents of three public Texas universities have been pressured to resign after conflict with their respective chancellors, all of whom are Perry supporters (Fain, 2010). Elsa Murano resigned in 2009 as president of Texas A&M's main campus following a dispute with

Michael McKinney, formerly Perry's chief of staff. That same year Gretchen Bataille resigned from her position as president of University of North Texas' main campus following clashes with chancellor Lee Jackson. In 2008 Jon Whitmore resigned as president of Texas Tech University as a result of conflict with chancellor Kent Hance (Mangan, 2010b).

Perry's efforts to fill regents' appointments with political supporters do not end with his campaign contributors. In May 2011 the Governor may have violated state law by directly appointing a Texas A&M student regent rather than selecting a regent from a panel of names forwarded by campus student government. The directly appointed student did not go through the application process as defined under state law, but rather applied directly to the Governor's office. This student is active in the local Tea Party, which raises concerns his appointment is part of Perry's efforts to gain the support of the Tea Party as he sought the Republican presidential nomination (Anonymous, 2011).

Conclusion

In fairness to the principles behind the proposed changes the Governor has advanced, specifically accountability and transparency, there are positive qualities within these ideas. It is only logical that institutions find new ways to maximize how money is used. Because education is largely a function of society, and is partially paid for with public funds (even though state allocations now often only make up 10–20% of a university's budget), it stands to reason that higher education ought to manage its resources in a responsible and efficient manner (Conrad, 1978). Those of us who work at public institutions are acutely aware of the increased scarcity of resources to fund our universities. As long as state funding allocations do not violate personnel and employment laws, and policy decisions do not represent a risk to public safety such as the release of confidential or sensitive information, it is difficult if not impossible to develop an argument that transparency does harm.

The problems that confront us as faculty members are ascertaining what is meant by the terms of Perry's plan and how the data will be interpreted, reported, and applied. Will data be used to make the university a fairer and more efficient place to work? Will they help make informed decisions about improving student learning? Or will they be used to advance a politician's populist political aspirations?

So, what does this all mean for members of SOPHE? There has been considerable university faculty opposition to Perry's plan, as well as from national groups such as the AAU. However, with boards of all Texas public university systems filled with Perry's appointees and campaign donors it does seem the measures will come to be

implemented, particularly since faculty participation in developing the plan was discouraged, and as emails from the Governor's office reveal, was unwanted.

In May 2011 more than 800 faculty members at Texas A&M University signed a letter to the Board of Regents expressing concern about the lack of transparency behind how the TPPF operates with the Governor (Mangan, 2011c). David Guenther (2011), a spokesman for the TPPF responds to their concerns by stating, "The people who have a vested interest in the way things are naturally are going to get nervous about things that could change" (June, 2011, para. 30). He adds in another interview, "Barely one in five faculty members is involved in research that relates to the university's tier-one status" (Mangan, 2011d, para 22). Thus far, no one at TPPF has revealed how they came to their plan, what data they used to arrive at it, or how the data were obtained. Michael Sullivan, former vice president for TPPF, further dismisses faculty concerns by stating, "These guys sipping coffee in the top floor of the ivory tower are upset because somebody's asking questions" (Mangan, 2011d, para. 41).

Aside from dismissing faculty concerns, the same concerns some members of TPPF stated they welcomed, their plan comes disturbingly close to being an *ad hominem* argument, something none of us would accept in our classrooms, and should especially not be tolerated by those seeking to reform higher education. What should be even more troubling to us is that which the plan does not reveal. State Sen. Judith Zaffirini (D), who chairs the state's Senate Higher Education Committee, notices the apparent contradictions between what the Governor and TPPF say and do. "They talk about transparency," she says in an interview with the *Chronicle*, "but meanwhile they're working with the governor behind closed doors in an attempt to hijack the higher-education agenda" (Mangan, 2011d, para. 13). She also questions what she refers to as Jeff Sandefer's "undue influence" on higher education in Texas (Mangan, 2011a, para. 22). State Rep. Dan Branch (R) is equally critical of the lack of transparency in plans to overhaul the state's higher education system. "Think tanks ought to be able to weigh in in the public arena, but they shouldn't be calling the shots behind the scenes" (Mangan, 2011a, para. 20).

These changes being mandated and implemented in Texas are not limited to a single state. These changes reflect a trend across states in terms of how higher education institutions are evaluated, and how they are meant to serve the public interest. For example, some institutions recently cancelled contractual agreements that allowed for lighter teaching loads in exchange for other assignments. There has also been a trend toward cancelling small, specialized, seminar courses and

increasing enrollment in existing courses in order to maximize revenue (Wilson, 2011).

Why rank faculty based on income generated? Does it affect student learning? Rankings such as those of Texas A&M are hardly ever an end in themselves. Rankings are a means to an end, and the end has yet to be revealed.

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From the Editors

In the pages of many past volumes of *JoPHE*, so many among our membership speak to the particulars of democracy, and volume 62(1) is no exception. Might this predilection be a reflection of this historical moment? Or might democracy be a perennial and inexhaustible theme of western history and philosophy of education? While it is for you, our readers to decide, here we set out to offer some thoughts emerging as we prepared this volume for press.

As we enter the final throes of the campaign for President of the United States, what better time to reflect upon the notion of democracy and our need for its tenets, particularly within education? The US citizenry in general seems to have lost its understanding of the term democracy and all-but lost its taste for democracy's collectivist intent. In this Foucauldian era of surveillance and amidst the crush of a neoliberal economy's attendant blind consumerism, a rather opaque, individualist capitalism seems to overlay democracy all but obscuring its collectivist intent. "I'll get mine, you get yours" therefore replaces "all for one and one for all" leading the many suffering to suffer even more at the hands of such systems of domination as capitalism. An individualist version of democracy superimposes the myth of meritocracy justifying the upper social classes' literal and figurative parsimony and their belief in collectivist rule replete with undeserved "charitable handouts." Of great import to those of us within education—particularly those of us who prepare pre-service teachers—the loss of a collectivist notion of democracy clouds our ability to illustrate the sources of schools' injustices and inequities to our audiences who oftentimes base their justifications for their class status upon their own deserving natures.

All to say that perhaps never before has there been a time more critical for the work of historians and philosophers of education publicly to speak of democracy, its meaning and value, its merits and certain of its authors' intents. For only by bringing, once again, the collectivist notion of democracy to the forefront might we successfully battle the myths of meritocracy and The American Dream that reify and reinscribe destructive systems of domination and their inequities. By speaking to a truly collectivist democracy's tenets and merits we can begin to impress upon our students—fellow countrymen and women—that life is not simply a contest hell-bent upon getting more; rather by lifting up others, we all prosper.

In this spirit, we begin volume 62(1) with a hopeful essay exploring creativity, memory and how we become who it is we will be: Kathy Thomas' *Memory and Creativity: Bergson and Proust on the Creative Process and Implications for Educating Schoolchildren*. Hers begins a section in which authors interpret texts to arrive at new meanings for education and its place in society. Each of those sections which follow begin with a lead article: Donna Sayman launches "Freedom, Equity and Education"; Kelley King opens "Historical Perspectives on Education"; Chuck Fazarro leads "Structures in Schooling"; and Brian Dotts begins the section "Educational Reform."

As SOPHE members we do the work we do because we believe we can affect understanding and educational change. This volume of *The Journal of Philosophy & History of Education* richly speaks of our convictions. Thank you to authors and reviewers alike for your important contributions to this inspiring volume of *JoPHE*!

Memory and Creativity: Bergson and Proust on the Creative Process and Implications for Educating Schoolchildren

Kathy Thomas, Oklahoma State University

Introduction

In this paper, I analyze Marcel Proust's use of involuntary memory in fashioning an educated self through the theoretical lens of Henri Bergson's (2007, 2010a, 2010b) concept of memory. I begin by showing connections between the novelist and the philosopher disproving Proust's denials that he wrote a "Bergsonian novel." I then define and explain Bergson's concepts of memory and recognition positioning them within his theory of memory and its role in creativity. I analyze passages from Proust's seven-volume novel, *In Search of Lost Time* by exploring his understanding of memory, its role in creativity, and its importance in the process of becoming an educated self. I focus primarily on the first and last volumes of the novel, *Swann's Way* (2003a) and *Time Regained* (2003b), where the narrator begins his journey to an educated self and its culmination in his preparation to create his *magnum opus*. Finally, I illuminate the implications of this reading for education and the development of both kinds of memory in schoolchildren for creative writing purposes and also for acquiring new knowledge.

Critics have long noticed similarities between Proust's novel and the philosophical writings of Henri Bergson. Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (2010b) was published with much fanfare the year Proust turned twenty-five, and Bergson's theory on memory was widely read and talked about at the time. It is highly unlikely that Proust, a young philosophy student, was unaware of the splash that Bergson's theories made on the public and in philosophical circles in the late 1800s. While Bergson was considerably older, the two men share a family connection: Bergson married Proust's cousin. Bergotte, the name of an influential character and novelist in Proust's great work, certainly brings to mind the name of Bergson and cannot have failed to do so among the minds of that generation (Painter, 1989, p. 68). The men

also connect in professional circles. Bergson favorably reviews Proust's translation of Ruskin's *La Bible d'Amiens*, and Proust (2006) writes kindly of Bergson on more than one occasion.

...I am glad that you read some Bergson and liked him. It is as though we had been together on some great height.... But, I have read enough of Bergson, the parabola of his thought is already sufficiently discernible after only a single generation, so that whatever "creative evolution" may have followed, I can, when you mention Bergson, know what you mean. Besides I think I have told you of my great admiration for him and even, which is less interesting—although it gives him a moral quality—of the great kindness he has always shown me. (p. 237)

Proust's admitted familiarity with and admiration for Bergson's work indicates more than a passing knowledge of Bergson's theories. Maurois (1984) goes so far as to call Proust a "disciple" (p. 156) of Bergson.

In spite of these connections, Proust (2006) flatly denies Bergson's influence. "They are not Bergsonian novels, for my work is dominated by a distinction which not only doesn't figure in Bergson's philosophy but which is even contradicted by it" (p. 272). He qualifies his denial in a later letter, stating, "...for there has never been, insofar as I am aware, any direct influence" (p. 488), yet in the same letter he describes his work using a Bergsonian simile:

It is perhaps like a telescope, which is pointed at time, because a telescope reveals stars which are invisible to the naked eye, and I have tried...to reveal to the conscious mind unconscious phenomenon which, wholly forgotten, sometimes lie very far back in the past. (pp. 271–272)

Here he appears to be referencing Bergson's famous memory cone. At the very least, Proust seems less than truthful when he denies Bergson's influence on his work, and Bergson himself acknowledges the connection between their writings late in his life in the first introduction to his collection of essays, *The Creative Mind* (2007). He tips his hat to Proust when he speaks of his own journey into inner life toward the discoveries that would make him famous. He speaks of the possibility that novelists and moralists have advanced more quickly than philosophers, however no one has made much progress. "Perhaps; but it was only here and there, under the pressure of necessity, that they had broken through the barrier; no one had as yet bethought himself of setting out methodically 'in search of time gone by' (à recherché du temps perdu)" (p. 15). In spite of Proust's denials, Bergson's influence is evident throughout Proust's entire work, and in many respects, in his novel Proust gives us an exquisite and detailed

example of how Bergson's theory of memory and creativity work in the life of a young, budding artist in the process of educating himself to create something truly new and innovative.

Bergson (2010b) begins laying out his theory of memory in *Matter and Memory* by distinguishing between two types of memory. "The past survives under two distinct forms: first, in motor mechanisms; secondly in independent recollections" (p. 87). Motor mechanisms (habits) form when we develop a mechanized motor response to a perception through repetition; an example might be memorizing a poem or a set of facts. Each additional reading of the piece overlies previous readings; each reading constitutes an individual image, but the readings layer over each other and blend together until they form a habit. One reading becomes indistinguishable from all others. These habitual responses become so natural that action happens practically at the moment of perception. No thought or hesitation intercedes between perception and action; the conditioned body knows how to respond.

The second kind of memory Bergson describes is pure or spontaneous memory. This memory records all the events in our lives as they occur and stores them for future use; events then rise from the past towards the present whenever we perceive an image or situation similar to a previous experience. In the interval between perception and action, humans have the capacity to hesitate and create something new or respond differently, but mostly we operate out of habitual memory acting on perceptions based on previous actions. Habitual memory constantly inhibits our spontaneous memory. The past is stored in these two kinds of memory, the motor mechanisms that make use of the memory-images and the spontaneous memories which are personal and store all the events of the past in all their sensory richness. "The first, conquered by effort, remains dependent upon our will; the second, entirely spontaneous is as capricious in reproducing as it is faithful in preserving" (p. 102).

Humans tend to privilege the first form of memory because they can control it to a certain degree, and because they cannot always count on the second to reappear, but spontaneous or involuntary memory is by far the more powerful, offering rich, strong, detailed images unsullied by other encounters. In fact, recent neurological research indicates **involuntary memory** is not as capricious or unmanageable as previously thought (Lehrer, 2008; Rasmussen & Berntsen, 2009). Sprenger (1999) describes two kinds of habitual or voluntary memory (semantic and episodic) and three kinds of spontaneous or involuntary memory (procedural, automatic, and emotional). All are activated by different criteria, but each creates pathways across the brain and deposits information in different locations. The most powerful learning

occurs when more than one pathway activates, and memories are stored in several places in the brain for easier access.

Because learning is memory, and the only evidence we have of learning is memory, then the more memory lanes we use to store information, the more powerful the learning becomes.... Our brain can easily store all learning experiences. Teaching to multiple memory lanes makes the connections to those experiences stronger and easier to access. (pp. 62–63)

Humans grasp the past in the present through the process of recognition that comes in two forms (Bergson, 2010b). On the one hand, there is inattentive recognition in which a habit of acting develops without the help of a memory-image. Recognition in this case is instantaneous, and the body acts with a well-ordered motor accompaniment at the instant of perception. Learning how to play a difficult song on an instrument involves such rote and action-oriented recognition. On the other hand, attentive recognition requires an inhibition of action and then a turning of attention to memory-images that resemble the object being perceived. This process can go on indefinitely as the mind mines deeper into more distant memories seeking details that will flesh out the perception. “Thus attentive perception is a reflection, on the present object, of chosen images from the past” (p. 124). Attentive perception is not a rectilinear progression, but “a *circuit*, in which all the elements, including the perceived object itself, hold each other in a state of mutual tension as in an electric circuit” (p. 127, emphasis in original). Bergson’s model shows the perceived object at the center of the smallest circuit with larger circles behind it corresponding to “growing efforts at intellectual expansion” (pp. 126–127). These circuits represent expanding memory and a deepening reality. Memory, always present, expands as our attention reflects upon the object. The entirety of the past is available for recall and use as attention “results in creating anew not only the object perceived, but also the ever widening systems with which it may be bound up” (p. 128). Perception gives rise to movement, and memory-images rush forth to meet and coalesce with it. The virtual memory-images become actualized as they blend with the perception and interpret it, completing the perception.

Bergson famously represents this process in a diagram called the memory cone. “S” signifies the point of the cone where a body is situated in the present. Rising up from this point and expanding outward and upward, ever growing, “AB” (the two sides of the cone) represents the past filled with memory-images.

We tend to scatter ourselves over AB in the measure that we detach ourselves from our sensory and motor state to live in

the life of dreams; we tend to concentrate ourselves in S in the measure that we attach ourselves more firmly to the present reality, responding by motor reactions to sensory stimulation. (pp. 211–212)

The cone operates like a telescope expanding and contracting to clarify and focus in on images that may be useful.

...memory, laden with the whole of the past, responds to the appeal of the present state by two simultaneous movements, one of translation, by which it moves in its entirety to meet experience, thus contracting more or less, though without dividing, with a view to action; the other of rotation upon itself, by which it turns towards the situation of the moment, presenting to it that side of itself which may prove to be the most useful. (p. 220)

The sides of the cone expand outward infinitely. The past, while forgotten, is always available to be retrieved, recalled, or recognized in a new perception. In this way, the normal psyche utilizes memory intellectually and habitually to navigate everyday life. Bergson calls the man who always responds with action a man of impulse and the man who lives in the past—in the world of recollections—a dreamer. Somewhere in-between these two extremes is the way of good sense, and it is in this in-between where creativity or something new can occur. In this interval between perception and action where spontaneous memories arise, thought or creation happens.

This in-between interval becomes the obsessive focus of Proust's (2003a, 2003b) narrator in *In Search of Lost Time* as he struggles to become the writer of his aspirations. Throughout the novel, the narrator experiences spontaneous or what he calls involuntary memories that come back to him unbidden but closely associated with a sensory impression and full of rich sensory details. These memories will coalesce for him over a long period of time until they form the fragments from which he will derive his great work, his novel. The sum of his encounters, experiences, and memories serve as an apprenticeship as he fashions himself, acquires understanding, and develops the mental tools he needs to create a great work of art. Along the way, in episode after episode he skillfully illustrates Bergson's concepts of recognition, habitual memory, and spontaneous memory.

Proust (2003a) illuminates the process of recognition early in *Swann's Way* when he describes Swann's arrival at his family's back gate:

Even the very simple act that we call "seeing a person we know" is in part an intellectual one. We fill the physical appearance of the individual we see with all the notions we have about him, and of the total picture that we form for

ourselves these notions certainly occupy the greater part. In the end they swell his cheeks so perfectly, follow the line of his nose in an adherence so exact, they do so well at nuancing the sonority of his voice as though the latter were only a transparent envelope that each time we see this face and hear this voice, it is these notions that we encounter again.... (p. 19)

Recognition of a person is a cognitive process of pulling up all prior images or circumstances from previous encounters with that person and associating them with the current perception. In Bergson's words, "To recognize...is to associate with a present perception the images which were formerly given in connexion with it" (Bergson, 2010b, p. 105). Over time, the "corporeal envelope" (Proust, 2003a, p. 19) of the person recognized becomes stuffed with associations, notions, and random memories that fill him out and give him substance and character. Recognition is a specific kind of habitual memory in which former encounters layer over the present perception to flesh out the character of a person we know.

Another kind of habitual memory that Bergson defines and Proust illustrates involves an automatic response to one's surroundings. The narrator in *Swann's Way* describes returning home from a lengthy walk with his parents with his feet dragging from exhaustion. His father enjoys taking them on long, circuitous walks until Marcel and his mother are completely lost and unsure of their whereabouts before he surprises them by showing them their own back gate. Marcel describes the surreal experience of his body moving without his mind's awareness:

And from that moment on, I would not have to take another step, the ground would walk for me through that garden where for so long now my actions had ceased to be accompanied by any deliberate attention: Habit had taken me in its arms, and it carried me all the way to my bed like a little child. (p. 117)

This part of the walk, once he perceives and recognizes the landmarks, is so familiar to him that in his exhausted, sleepy state he can navigate without thinking until he is safely in his own bed. The description evokes a passage in *Matter and Memory* when Bergson (2010b) describes taking a walk in an unfamiliar town. At every corner, he hesitates as various alternatives are presented to his body, and he must make choices as he moves, but later after many walks, he can go about it mechanically. "I began by a state in which I distinguished only my perception; I shall end in a state in which I am hardly conscious of anything but automatism" (p. 110). Habitual or voluntary memory holds a unique and vital place in Proust's work, but it is how he makes use of spontaneous or involuntary memory that has made his reputation as one of the finest novelists of the 20th century.

The most famous Bergsonian episode of spontaneous memory in *In Search of Lost Time* takes place very early in the first volume of the novel, *Swann's Way* (2003a). The narrator takes a madeleine, a small bit of cake shaped like a seashell, dips it in his tea, and at the moment a crumb of it touches his tongue, an ineffable and inexplicable joy spreads throughout his being. He spends several minutes sipping tea and trying intellectually to grab whatever is slipping around the edges of his brain, but it is too deeply buried. "Undoubtedly what is palpitating thus, deep inside me, must be the image, the visual memory which is attached to this taste and is trying to follow me" (p. 46). Eventually, the memory does appear, and the narrator recalls the madeleine dipped in lime-infused tea which his Aunt Leonie gave him when his family lived in Combray so many years ago. At this point, a veritable rush of involuntary memory-images from his past spontaneously and forcibly are pushed upward, a string of mental images of buildings, landscapes, and people from his childhood in Combray. It seems as if only by chance that a present perception or sensation calls forth a previous experience (memory-image) and unlocks the storehouse where these memories reside, while prior to this event, the narrator describes how fruitless it is to try to recall the past intellectually. "It is a waste of effort for us to try to summon it, all the exertions of our intelligence are useless" (p. 44). For Proust, artificial, lifeless, voluntary memory can never do what involuntary memory does, for "[t]he problem with images of voluntary memory, those figured by boring snapshots or *instantanés*, is not that they are inadequate as images, but that they do not retain anything of *life*" (Guerlac, 2009, p. 399). The more powerful involuntary memory provides a richer experience by blending and internalizing various sensations connected with the memory. Involuntary memory "takes 'two different objects,' the madeleine with its flavor, Combray with its qualities of color and temperature; it envelops one in the other and makes their relation into something internal" (Deleuze, 2000, p. 60). Involuntary memory requires the association of two images or sensations, one of which is summoned from the past after a long absence. For Proust, involuntary memory also requires forgetting to be at its most powerful. "For if an image remains constantly present, it becomes familiar, freezes into habit, and loses its potential effect" (Shattuck, 2000, p. 121). The image maintains its purity and the quality that makes it distinctive only if it remains hidden and forgotten for a long interval before it is evoked by a new perception. Thus when the narrator's childhood rushes up anew, it is "solid, alive, and still charged with the emotions which once had built about it such a world of happiness" (Maurois, 1984, p. 162).

The seemingly capricious nature of involuntary memory means historically researchers and educators have ignored it and focused exclusively on voluntary or habitual memory. "The absence of intention

in involuntary memorization serves as an excuse to consider it random, lacking any regularity, and therefore impossible to subject to conscious organization and management in the academic efforts of schoolchildren” (Zinchenko, 2008, pp. 44–45); however, advancements in neuroscience (Lehrer, 2008; Ramussen & Berntsen, 2009) and several recent studies involving schoolchildren (Zinchenko, 2008; Zinchenko & Sereda, 2011) show involuntary memory can be managed indirectly through the organization of specific cognitive activities. Involuntary memory is a by-product of certain kinds of targeted activities where students interact with an object or where they are faced with a problem they must figure out and comprehend on their own. The created involuntary memories, as Proust suggests, tap the essence of the object or the problem and are much more fruitful for actual learning than voluntary memorization or habitual practice.

Zinchenko and Sereda (2011) conduct a study with Russian second graders learning root words. Instead of asking students to identify the root word in a series of words, a task in which students learn “about only one superficial feature of the root—that it is ‘the common part of related words’” (p. 23), they gave them the root word itself and its definition, then ask them to add other letters to create new words from the root word. They are then asked to explain the difference between the two words. In this activity, students perform a cognitive action, “changing the word based on meaning and ascertaining by means of comparison those properties that convey the meaning” (p. 23). They identify the meaning of both the root word and the word made by adding prefixes or suffixes. Students are never asked to memorize or drill on the concept of root word; instead, they actually experience the concept in the action they perform in creating new words and explaining differences. They acquire knowledge of the concept of root words which is “memorized involuntarily during the learning process itself” (p. 25). When asked “what is the root?” and “how can the root be found?” at the end of the study, 88% of second graders answer the first question correctly and 96% correctly respond to the second question. Fifth graders taught the concept of root words and identifying them in the traditional way score 80.7% on the first question and only 61.3% on the second; interestingly, by sixth grade what they learned in fifth grade about root words is largely forgotten as they score 22% on the first question and 58% on the second. These discoveries about involuntary memory harbor tremendous implications for educators and for the future of pedagogy. Assimilation of knowledge through experiences stored in involuntary memory anchors knowledge more firmly and ensures ready access when students face similar but novel problems or situations. Schools tend to orient learning toward voluntary memory where students memorize information through rote and repetitive

activities, but Zinchenko & Sereda's research indicates involuntary memory promises much better results when students are learning new material. "It is our deeply held conviction that the lack of focus on involuntary memory in teaching is holding back the development of ways and means to train learner memory through schoolwork, which significantly undermines school's efforts to achieve the conscious and long-lasting assimilation of knowledge" (Zinchenko, 2008, p. 45).

Involuntary memory also plays a significant role in the process of creativity. For Bergson (2010b), a creative act depends on choice. More than storing recollections, the function of the body is to choose the useful memory "which may complete and illuminate the present situation with a view to ultimate action" (pp. 233–234). Because choice is up to an individual with his or her own past experience and because there are many different "recollections equally capable of squaring with the same actual situation.... A certain margin is, therefore, necessarily left in this case to fancy..." (p. 234). In this interval between perception and action something new or different can originate, because freedom to make choices lies within the interval. The past is automatically preserved complete and always available, but the tendency is to put it aside or to choose only what experience in the recent past illuminates the situation at hand in the present. Perception of an object works in much the same way. The brain immediately resorts to habit and responds with an intellectual action classifying and labeling the object based on previous experience. Bergson suggests the need to respond to stimuli with intuition as well. On occasion, unique individuals who do not adhere to the habitual way of responding to situations and objects arise and see the world in different ways. Instead of always responding intellectually or habitually, they ably combine intellect and intuition to see the world and the things around them in new, fresh ways. They access the whole of their past through involuntary or spontaneous memory to create something new. These people are artists, painters, poets, sculptors, musicians, and even philosophers (Bergson, 2007, p. 114). Through art, "shades of emotion and thought appear to us which might long since have been brought out in us but which remained invisible; just like the photographic image which has not yet been plunged into the bath where it will be revealed" (p. 12). Creativity occurs when we hesitate between perception and action allowing involuntary memory time to mine the whole of the past for traces of images that might enable us to think of something in a new, innovative way.

Proust's (2003a, 2003b) narrator educates himself to become an artist. The narrator believes art is the highest form of human expression; this theme recurs throughout *In Search of Lost Time*. The narrator at various points concerns himself with music, painting, acting, architecture, but most particularly literature. Art is the highest form of

human expression, but Proust privileges literature above the rest. Several artists constitute the secondary characters in the novel, including: Vinteuil, the composer whose little sonata becomes a symbol of Swann's obsession with Odette; Elstir, the painter who frequents the Verdurin's salon; Berma, the popular actress that Marcel longs to see; and Bergotte (whose name brings to mind Bergson's), the distinguished novelist Marcel reads and admires. The entirety of *Search* describes the process by which Marcel, the socialite and lover, becomes Marcel, the novelist and artist. His narrator grapples with how to take the fragments of his past and turn them into art, and eventually he succeeds in determining how to proceed. In the process, he concludes that everyone has the capacity to express deeply buried experiences, "So that the essential, the only true book, though in the ordinary sense of the word it does not have to be 'invented' by a great writer—for it exists in each one of us—has to be translated by him. The function and the task of a writer are those of a translator" (Proust, 2003b, p. 291). Everyone has the capacity to create his or her own literature or art, but most do not, "And therefore their past is like a photographic darkroom encumbered with innumerable negatives which remain useless because the intellect has not developed them" (Proust, 2003b, p. 299). Here Proust appropriates Bergson's metaphor and reiterates his point: everyone has a past available for tapping and utilizing for creative purposes, but not everyone turns their memories into art or something new. Often Bergson's intuition lies fallow and unused leading to lost opportunities to produce art or creative endeavors. For Bergson as for Proust, creativity illuminates the essence of life. "Every human work in which there is invention, every voluntary act in which there is freedom, every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity, brings something new into the world" (Bergson, 2010a, p. 137). This creativity is vital and necessary for human advancement and for understanding the world.

Society values creativity and innovation, and relies on new ideas to solve problems and improve quality of life. Americans have long been on the forefront of technological, scientific, and artistic advancement, but for the first time in history, research indicates creativity in America is in decline. Bronson and Merryman (2010) describe a crisis in creativity taking place among American schoolchildren. For 50 years, psychologists and researchers have used the Torrance Creativity Index to measure creativity among children. Kim (2006, p. 14) concludes the battery of tests over time have proven to be a good measure of everyday creativity, and the index has proven remarkably accurate at predicting kids' creative accomplishments as adults. "Those who came up with more good ideas on Torrance's tasks grew up to be entrepreneurs, inventors, college presidents, authors, doctors, diplomats, and software developers" (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, para. 4). Like IQ tests, for

decades CQ (Creativity Quotient) scores rose steadily until 1990, but since then, scores have inched downward (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, para. 5). In a world with multiplying and increasingly complex problems, this trend is particularly troubling. On the bright side, neuroscience and several research studies indicate creativity can be taught, practiced, and managed. Creativity occurs when the brain engages in “constant shifting, blender pulses of both divergent thinking and convergent thinking, to combine new information with old and forgotten ideas” (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, para. 15). Those who practice creative activities can develop their brains’ creative networks to respond quickly and to function more effectively. When engaging in problem solving, a person first takes a left-brain approach, searching facts and familiar possibilities. If that fails, the right brain activates, scanning remote, involuntary memories for something that might be relevant. If a connection happens, “...the left brain must quickly lock in on it before it escapes. The attention system must radically reverse gears, going from defocused attention to extremely focused attention” (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, para. 15). This experience leads to the “aha” moment or insight when the brain recognizes the rightness and certainty of the solution (Lehrer, 2008).

Proust (2003b) describes his own “aha” moment near the end of *Time Regained*. The narrator realizes the material for his art has been within him all the time, and now it is up to him to take these materials and fashion them into the art that he feels destined to create. He speaks of a new light illuminating within him:

And I understood that all these materials for a work of literature were simply my past life; I understood that they had come to me, in frivolous pleasures, in indolence, in tenderness, in unhappiness, and that I had stored them up without divining the purpose for which they were destined or even their continued existence any more than a seed does when it forms within itself a reserve of all the nutritious substances from which it will feed a plant. (p. 304)

Everyone has an infinite past stored up and waiting to be accessed for creative purposes. Creativity is no longer a mysterious process that only a few can activate. It can be developed, managed, and practiced.

Both Bergson and Proust place creativity in the space between perception and action where intellect and intuition meet, and this creativity relies upon rich, sensuous memories that return unbidden from the past into the present. One of the more impressive aspects of Proust’s memory-laden passages is the specificity and the rich sensory detail that make his recollections come alive anew for the narrator and provide such sharp, well-developed pictures for the reader. Later, when

his involuntary memory pulls up long-forgotten past experiences, he describes them fully in beautiful sensory images. His attention to detail enlivens the experiences for readers and allows them to put themselves in his place. These kinds of memory-images forge the substance of great writing, the kind of writing students largely are unable to produce as they labor in most classrooms across the country, particularly given pedagogues' predilection to rely upon voluntary memory.

George Hillocks, Jr. (1975) states, "Nearly all writing is directly dependent upon the writer's observation of phenomena and the relationships among those phenomena" (p. 1). The kinds of sensory detail and description that invigorate Proust's novel are sadly missing from most students' writing today. Educators complain that students make generalizations unattached to specific details leading to dull, pedestrian prose that has little to no impact on the reader. Many students do not know how to observe and record details and most pay little attention to their own sensory impressions. At least some of the lack of creativity in student writing reflects the ways they are taught. Rarely are students taught to observe, to remember, to access their own experiences, or to try something new. Instead, teachers fill students with facts and information that students then return in the form of answers on high-stakes accountability measures. Creativity is not required or desired in this model. Yet, Proust's great work, *In Search of Lost Time*, powerfully, poignantly shows how memory provides the ballast for creative activity. The narrator only begins his novel when he realizes his subject matter lies in the fragments of his past which return to him involuntarily through sensory-laden memories deeply buried but nevertheless always available. Recollection of his experiences provides the education he needs to create the art he has long hoped to produce. He takes these perceptions and responds to them in a new way, creating a lasting work of art, an optical lens through which a reader may discover something new about him or herself. Schoolchildren have the same capacity for accessing and using their own experiences both in everyday and in unique, challenging situations. Bergson's theory of memory provides a theoretical grounding for teaching students first to be observers, taking note of the sensory details of their experiences in order to use memories of their experiences to create something new—a work of art, an innovation, an invention, an ingenious idea.

Creative people are very good at marshaling both sides of the brain to solve problems, and with the right cognitive training, schoolchildren can learn to use the process as well. Learning creativity requires students define and redefine problems or set their own action-oriented goals (Repkina, 2011; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991; Zinchenko & Sereda, 2011). After observing many classroom situations, Zinchenko (2008) concludes students perform two distinct tasks in the process of acquiring

information—cognitive and mnemonic tasks. Zinchenko finds in classroom after classroom students acquire knowledge and retain it better when teachers prepare and attach a challenging cognitive activity to the material presented. “The highest rate of involuntary memorization of material is achieved when it is dealt with in active and substantive ways: it declines when the cognitive task is so easy that it can be carried out almost automatically” (p. 48). Difficult problems that require children to think creatively and access involuntary memory lead to better understanding of new material. Zinchenko notices students achieve the highest rate of involuntary memorization when there is a substantive relationship between the motive for the material presented and the goal of the activity. Students need clearly to see the connection between the task and the information to which it is attached. The strength of this connection contributes to the depth of their learning. In addition, the activity is most effective when organized in such a way that “the needed material occupies the place of primary target within it” (p. 49). The children he observes learn best when the information being taught is directly instrumental in solving the cognitive problem. He suggests these patterns be present in any work assigned that requires students to figure it out on their own. Cognitive tasks that require students to use both sides of their brain and activate their involuntary memory in defining the problem and looking for a solution provide the best means of acquiring new knowledge.

The more complex and difficult new material is to understand, the more important the organization and stimulation of the cognitive activity will be. These are the very conditions that favor involuntary memory. It is at its most productive during the performance of a cognitive task related to material that demands a heightened, active, mental effort, substantive active understanding, and thinking. (p. 56)

Cognitive tasks anchor information more deeply through creative experiences that form involuntary memories.

The second task students perform are mnemonic ones that engage voluntary memory; mnemonic tasks reinforce previously acquired knowledge through practice activities, and they traditionally form the basis of most students’ educational experiences. These tasks serve an important role in student learning, but in many US classrooms today, mnemonic tasks have become the primary mode of teaching rather than an accompaniment for reinforcing more creative cognitive activities. In the most prominent model of education, repetition replaces thinking and memorization replaces understanding. Most classrooms orient learning toward voluntary memory asking students to memorize and perform mnemonic tasks, but education that is oriented toward developing both

kinds of memory using cognitive tasks for acquiring new knowledge and mnemonic tasks for reinforcing learning will ultimately lead to more successful, long-term acquisition of knowledge by students.

It could be said that among schoolchildren of all ages, what is most important in the relationship between thinking and memorizing is the influence of the former on the latter, the formation of logical memory on the foundations of the development of thinking processes. (p. 85)

Thinking creatively deepens understanding and assures students have unique, memorable experiences with the knowledge that will enable them to retain it.

Henri Bergson's (2007, 2010a, 2010b) theory of memory remains vibrant and relevant today. Current research validates his descriptions of the two kinds of memory and how they function in the process of creativity. Marcel Proust (2003a, 2003b) in his great novel gives the world an example of Bergson's theory at work showing how voluntary and involuntary memory collaborate and provide all the elements necessary for great innovation and creativity. Current research reinforces Proust's steadfast assertion that involuntary memory is the more powerful of the two, also indicating involuntary memory can be managed and practiced. For educators, Bergson's theory and Proust's example have several implications. Students who observe and note their own sensory perceptions create involuntary memories that can be tapped to yield richer, more detailed and finely nuanced writing. In addition, a major Russian study (Zinchenko & Sereda, 2011) shows students who use involuntary memory in solving challenging cognitive problems connected to the curriculum at hand deepen their understanding of new material, and through activities of practice and repetition, voluntary memory serves firmly to anchor that knowledge. Education today is primarily oriented toward voluntary memory, the most familiar and most easily understood; however, a curricular and pedagogical orientation that seeks to develop both kinds of memory and recognizes the importance of involuntary memory in creativity and in learning new material could significantly improve the experiences of students making learning more meaningful and long-lasting, allowing children's genius to emerge.

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The First Amendment Goes to School¹

John F. Covalleskie, University of Oklahoma

*Congress shall make no law respecting an
establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free
exercise thereof....*

—*First Amendment to the US Constitution*

Introduction

In this paper I examine the claim that the First Amendment, the primary instrument we have to govern the relation between government and religion, is not designed to do the job it is currently being asked to do: keep civic peace in the relationship between church and certain forms of religious belief on the one hand and the secular civil square on the other. Not surprisingly, the Amendment is not doing a very good job at what it was neither intended nor designed to do. Supporters of complete “separation of church and state” argue this separation is the best way to keep civil peace and prevent religious strife. I offer our current “culture wars” as evidence our current policies are not having their desired effect. The reason, I argue, is twofold: (1) keeping religious belief out of policy making is both conceptually incoherent and undemocratic, and (2) the First Amendment was not designed to, and is not effective at, making the sort of judgments currently required of it. After briefly sketching my first argument, I consider a few specific cases that demonstrate the inability of the First Amendment to make the decisions it is supposed to be making, and how we came to be engaged in the current civil strife around matters of faith and politics.

The point of this essay is that the First Amendment was perfectly adequate to the task of keeping the federal government apart from controversies about religion but is neither intended nor suited to be an instrument for deciding those same issues. Unfortunately, under the doctrine of incorporation, that is just what the First Amendment has been pressed into doing for us. The problem is that it is too blunt an instrument effectively to perform the sort of judicial surgery required in its new role.

Politics and Religious Belief

There is a complicated relation in any democratic society between personal conscience and public policy. The nature of democratic life is such that on the one hand, all citizens, regardless of religious or other

fundamental commitments, have equal standing in the public square, and for that reason have an equal right to have their commitments honored in law and public policy. Government shall not take sides. Call this the *principle of non-establishment*. On the other hand, laws and policies do need to be established and followed, and many of them will reflect the moral commitments of one group of citizens while violating the moral commitments of others. Citizens do and should have the right to vote their moral commitments, even if rooted in religious belief and even if those commitments shape policy advocacy. Call this the *principle of free exercise*.

Examples of issues implicating these principles are the commonplace of our civil life and even more so of our civic strife: abortion, prayer in schools, teaching of evolution, issues of war and peace, the death penalty, tax policies, the social safety net, and access to medical care are but some of the issues that constitute the litany of what are called “culture wars” in the US. Some of these disputes are specifically about matters of faith: prayer in schools, for example. Others are less obviously so: the death penalty, for example. Opinions about all these issues, and many others as well, are rooted in matters of conscience, which in turn may or may not be rooted in religious belief. Whether or not, though, one’s position on such matters is often connected to fundamental belief about the moral order and its requirements (an alternative to *religion* would be a *systematic humanism*, for example).

If the principle of free exercise is given primacy, then policies that are rooted in religious belief should be considered legitimate public policy unless they seriously inhibit the free exercise of others or if they are excessively narrow in their sectarian justification and/or application. On the other hand, if the principle of non-establishment is primary then policies that in any way privilege one religious group over another or the religious generally over the non-religious will be suspect and subject to close scrutiny. There is no guide on which principle or clause to make prior to the other precisely because they were meant to be mutually reinforcing, demanding the federal government stay out of disputes that could be considered to implicate either principle. So one point to keep in mind is that political views on a wide range of public concerns are often deeply rooted in moral commitments and that one’s defining moral commitments may either be religious at root or rooted in some other foundational or identity-conferring worldview. As citizens of a democratic polity, we do have an obligation to pay attention to the voices and opinions of those who disagree with us. That is, the right of free speech in the political realm of democratic governance entails that one’s fellow citizens listen in a serious way (Green, 1994). In the current political climate, the most divisive issues we face are moral ones and for

some citizens on some issues, specifically religious. It is a serious problem for democratic life that people on opposite ends of the religiosity spectrum find it increasingly difficult to hear each other's claims about the reasons for public policy preferences (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). More to the point, we have in effect declared as public policy some citizens' reasons for preferences invalid for the public's consideration. Some who do not themselves hold religious beliefs argue that (1) the First Amendment requires a strict and complete separation of church and state by which they mean (2) that implementing policy on the basis of religious reasons violates that requirement. I argue the First Amendment does not obviously require complete separation and that the implication that separation of church and state excludes moral and even religious reasons for policy advocacy adversely affects democratic discourse.

Consider just two obvious examples of this proposition: prayer in school and abortion. As the debate often plays out, those who oppose the first and support the second rarely bother to refute the arguments of their opponents; they simply dismiss them as being *prima facie* invalid because they are rooted in religion. It is equally true that those who support prayer in school and oppose abortion dismiss as invalid the arguments on the other side. On this point, I want to focus on the problem of exclusion by Constitutional fiat, which prevents civil disagreement and simply rules the reasons that motivate some citizens as being out of bounds.

Before considering the particular difficulties in using the First Amendment to settle controversies over religion using school-related cases as exemplars, I note that because the Constitution deals with absolute prohibitions and requirements (or because we today believe it does so), it does not leave room for negotiation and what we might refer to as regular democratic politics—a discussion (probably idealized, but at least conceptually possible) in which citizens debate the best and/or proper way to formulate public policy. That is, once citizens have recourse to the courts because the issue has been transformed from a political one to a constitutional one, the question is of necessity changes from “what is the best (right, proper, correct) course of action?” to “what is the required (forbidden, permitted) course of action?” These are not equivalent questions, and the difference between them has implications for democratic life. Although these implications are not my focus, I note briefly the nature of these implications.

Democratic publics are supposed to arrive at solutions to public problems by means of argument, disagreement, negotiations, and compromise. In his “Federalist Number 10,”²² Madison argues this basic point claiming the inevitably factional nature of democratic politics is

precisely what will preserve democracy: factions will form and reform and accommodate each other; this process of malleable contention will bring us to the best possible policy. Democratic politics are supposed to operate through this process of malleable contention. Certainly, the reality falls far short of the ideal, but that short-falling does not deny the reality of the ideal or the general tendency of the democratic process to find common ground on matters of public policy.³

However, the United States is not an ancient Greek city-state, not a democracy, but a representative republic. Furthermore, the US is a *constitutional* democratic republic. In a constitutional democratic republic, certain issues are considered fundamental, placed outside democratic politics, and are therefore not subject to the consensus-building democratic process but to the win-lose judgments of US Constitutional courts. As we increasingly turn to this means of settling disputes, we undermine the processes of democratic governance by decreasing the incentive to negotiate to a mutually acceptable (if ideal-to-no-one) decision.⁴

This is not to say that the constitutional protection of basic civil rights is not a good thing: it most certainly is. Democratic life is not just—not even primarily—about process but outcomes. Without the pre-determination of certain outcomes—the protection of basic rights of citizenship—democracy is always under threat. At the same time, it remains true that: (1) shifting from questions of what is best to questions of what is required/forbidden, while at times necessary, distorts the conversation about public policy, and the more it happens, the more civic discourse is distorted; and (2) if whatever instrument or means is used to resolve civic issues is poorly suited to that task, the results are likely to be unfortunate—at least in the area of religion. It is often said that the purpose of using the First Amendment to assure the separation of church and state is to reduce or prevent civil strife over matters of religious practice and belief. To this end, the First Amendment has manifestly failed. In part, it has failed because, as argued previous, it is not designed for and is poorly suited to the task. The instrument we use to separate church and state was specifically and carefully crafted to protect state authority from federal interference (as it was then seen). In the US, the First Amendment both mediates and exacerbates the conflicts about such issues.

The First Amendment

The First Amendment is a piece of constitutional legislation intended to keep the public sphere uncomplicated by the sort of religious conflict that roiled Europe and several of the American colonies in the years prior to the Revolution and framing of the Constitution. Examining the Amendment's wording reveals several listed

protected rights of democratic citizenship. Of interest here are the two clauses concerning religious liberty: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Taken at face value, the First Amendment protects liberty of conscience—neither necessarily the same as “freedom of religion” or “separation of Church and State”—in two ways (Nussbaum, 2008): the principle of non-establishment and the principle of free exercise. Through the principle of non-establishment, the government is prohibited from taking any action that would put the support of government on the side of religion (or, a critical alternate reading, *a particular religion*), for to do so would constitute government establishment. Under the principle of free exercise, government cannot take any actions that would interfere with individuals’ ability to “exercise”—practice—their religion. As specific conflicts arise, these two clauses can be in tension with one another, as I argue shortly. For now, consider the significant fact that “Congress” is prohibited from “establishing” or “prohibiting” “free exercise,” not government in general.

The First Amendment, as a tool to adjudicate disputes about the line between religion and politics has not been very effective. It is not likely to become even less so, since this is not the task it was designed to accomplish. When written, the First Amendment protected the rights of the states against the federal government, not the rights of citizens against government. Unlike the other protections enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the prohibitions enumerated in the First Amendment did not protect citizens from government; it made sure that only state or local governments could restrict the rights protected against *federal* curtailment. There is a large difference between saying “Congress shall make no law” and speaking of the rights of the “people.” The former formulation comes from the First Amendment; the other articles of the Bill of Rights specify that it is the rights of *the people* that are being protected.

The second point to consider is that the two religion clauses of the First Amendment are, if not exactly contradictory, at least in tension with each other in its current application. True for many of the issues listed above, what one person considers *free exercise*, another considers *establishment*. Those who want prayer in school, for example, think that laws against school prayer restrict their free exercise of religion by prohibiting devotional acts in public spaces (schools). Those opposed, on the other hand, argue that allowing this practice would constitute state (in the guise of the school) establishment of religion.

In the issue of school prayer, we see the difference between the establishment of religion and the establishment of *a* religion, and the complex relation between establishment and free exercise. If the First Amendment prohibits any action on the part of government that can be seen as in any way supporting *religion in general*, then school prayer would indeed be prohibited. On the other hand, if the First Amendment's authors originally intended to prohibit only the establishment of a particular religion or sect, then prayer in schools would constitute no violation of that prohibition. Further, those who see protection of free exercise as the paramount purpose of the First Amendment claim that prohibition of school prayer is a violation of free exercise, as the government taking the side of atheism, agnosticism, or humanism against religious belief.

All these readings of the amendment are defensible, one consequence of the fact that the language of the amendment was perfectly adequate to its original purpose: to keep the federal government completely uninvolved in matters of religious exercise. So long as the First Amendment applied to the federal government and the federal government only, all it did was put all state and local actions in the arena of religious exercise outside the authority of the federal government while giving the federal government no authority of its own in this domain. Interpreting the First Amendment was simple: if the issue were religion, the federal government would leave it to the states, where the First Amendment did not apply. If a given state decided to allow, to require, or to forbid prayer in school, it could do so as its people and legislators saw fit.

Circumstances changed in 1868 with the passage of the lengthy Fourteenth Amendment. Of its five separate provisions, the section relevant to our purposes says, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." This section of the Fourteenth Amendment is generally taken to have "incorporated" against the states the prohibitions listed in the Bill of Rights. As case law accumulated, the understanding emerged that the Fourteenth Amendment applied against the states and, by extension, against local governments the prohibitions and restrictions in the Bill of Rights that had previously applied only to the federal government. This application is significant, for now the Bill of Rights protects citizens' rights against the actions of any government agent or agency from school board and county commissioner up to officials and institutions of the national government.

Additionally, and less commonly noted, the role of the First Amendment changed along with its application. Originally, as mentioned previously, the purpose of the First Amendment's religion clauses was to keep the federal government out of matters of religious exercise *so that state and local governments could discretionally settle questions of religious practice and its relation to government through the political process*. Thus, the First Amendment did not keep *government* away from policy on religion up to and including establishment (interpreted either way); the First Amendment simply required the federal government to leave such questions to the states and to local government.

The First Amendment Today

I want to consider this claim in the light of two specific cases: *Everson v. Board of Education* (330 US 1, 1947) and *Engel v. Vitale* (370 US 421, 1962). The first case is the one that converted Jefferson's claim that there should be a "wall of separation" between church and state from a political metaphor to a Constitutional principle. Ironically, in this case the support for religion under challenge—paying for transportation to private, including religious, schools—was found to be permissible. This elevation of the metaphor of a "wall of separation" to a Constitutional principle set the course of judicial reasoning about these issues for 64 years and counting. This *wall* metaphor then became the basis of the decision in *Engel*, prohibiting school prayer, and later decisions on church-state relations. The purpose of this essay is not to re-adjudicate either of these cases, nor any of the myriad of other, related cases, but to make the case that the First Amendment is poorly designed and was never intended to make such decisions. In point of fact, the wording of the First Amendment was precisely intended to exclude the federal government from any involvement in the sort of decisions it is now used to make.

Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing Township was the first case that used the Fourteenth Amendment to incorporate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment against actions by the states and their local governments. In his opinion, Justice Hugo Black, writing for the majority, argued that the First Amendment allowed no connection between church and state. There is an irony in the opinion of the Court, as pointed out forcefully in the dissenting opinion. After all the talk of a "wall of separation" and its importance, a five to four majority found that the state could indeed pay for parents to transport their children to religious schools. As Justice Jackson put it in his dissent, "the undertones of the opinion, advocating complete and uncompromising separation of church and state, seem utterly discordant with its conclusion, yielding support to their comingling in educational matters." He is, I think, correct.

If one reads the Establishment Clause narrowly as only prohibiting aid to or formally and officially establishing one particular religion, then the majority view is correct and the aid in question is permissible. However, it is equally plausible to read the Establishment Clause more broadly as prohibiting all aid to religion in general. Such a reading would support the dissenting view that support was impermissible. The Justices' analyses do not even consider the complications introduced by adding the Free Exercise Clause: does aid to parents for transportation constitute mere passive support for free exercise (in which case the aid would be permissible unless *clearly* violating the Establishment Clause, whatever that means), or would denial of the aid itself constitute a barrier to free exercise of religion for those parents denied it (in which case the Free Exercise Clause would *require* allowing the aid)?

If the First Amendment's job is to keep the federal government at bay while the State of New Jersey decides the question of whether to support parents' desire to send their children to religious schools, it is perfectly and carefully worded to satisfy that objective. However, if the question is whether the state should provide such aid, the Amendment is less well suited to the task. Put another way, the First Amendment is designed *not* to determine whether the act is permissible, and it does that very well. It is, on the other hand, now required to make the decision, and it is poorly suited to that end. This difference in design and contemporary application helps to explain the rarity of unanimous decisions on First Amendment cases. There are several reasonable interpretations of the Amendment and no easy way definitively to choose consistently between them.

The issues in *Engel v. Vitale* are very much the same. Here the practice in question is the permissibility of a "non-denominational" prayer in public schools of New Hyde Park, NY. The prayer reads: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country." This case, even more than *Everson*, hinges on the meaning and scope of what is included in the prohibition of "establishment." Clearly, this prayer, even during the school day as prescribed by the school board, does not violate the narrow meaning of "establishment": It does not set up any specific denomination as the official state religion. On the other hand, if "establishment" is construed more broadly, as prohibiting any aid at all, even non-material endorsement, to any religious practice or belief at all—to religion in general, "all religions," in the words of the majority in *Everson*—then the prayer, though non-denominational, does suggest a government endorsement of religion in general. Again, the issue becomes yet more complicated when we add the "Free Exercise Clause": is allowing the prayer merely permitting free exercise, or does

prohibition constitute a denial of free exercise to those for whom public prayer is an important religious expression?

In a six to one majority decision, Justice Black emphasizes the importance of maintaining the wall of separation referenced in his *Everson* decision. The decision specifies that any state-sponsored prayer in schools violates the principle of non-establishment. As was the case with *Everson*, the decision assumes the broadest meaning of “establishment” reaffirming that the prohibition is not restricted only to specific establishment of a particular religion but includes policies that reasonably could be construed to lend government support to religion in general. The decisions commit government—all governments—to a policy of neutrality on the subject of religion, both particularly sectarian and in general. The democratic problem, however, is that there is no such thing as neutrality on the sorts of issues usually at stake when calling on the First Amendment. Not entirely wrong, many citizens with deep religious commitments see the secular neutrality as secular but not neutral. When the majority of citizens in a town or school district cannot have voluntary (but school-sponsored) prayer in school (*Engel v. Vitale*) or at graduation (*Lee v. Weisman*, in a 5:4 decision), it is not entirely unreasonable, from a certain point of view, to see the prohibitions not as neutral with respect to worldviews, but as on the side of secular or humanist ones.

Everson and *Engel* are the first in a long line of cases that address the same complicated tangles between the limits of non-establishment and the exercise of religious freedom. In *Abington v. Schempp* (1963) the Court decided by an 8:1 majority to prohibit not only school prayer but Bible readings. In *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987) litigation expands to curriculum content. In *Edwards*, the Court overruled, 7:2, a Louisiana law that requires creationism be taught whenever, but only if, evolutionary theory is included in the curriculum.

Conclusion

I want to make clear my concern here is not whether the cases were rightly decided, all things considered, nor to point to exactly where the line between church and state, between religion and policy, between morality and legislation should be drawn. What I want to suggest is that applying the First Amendment to settle these questions in any way that is close to definitive will continue to yield unsatisfactory results since it was neither intended for nor suited to the task.

Though I have examined the paradoxes and problems of First Amendment jurisprudence in the context of schools, the general issues pointed out here are the same that we face more broadly. In society in general, as in schools, the question of *free exercise* versus *non-establishment* must be decided, though there is no clear standard by which to decide. Similarly, the Court must determine which sorts of Ten Commandment

displays and holiday crèches are permissible, in what context, and where; these are the sorts of decisions the First Amendment was specifically designed *not* to make.

One effect of the situation in which political decisions are replaced by Constitutional ones and compromises on what is satisfactory are preempted by determinations of what is permitted and forbidden is that the political dialogue that is the lifeblood of democratic governance is replaced by the winner-take-all conflict in the courts. The former approach, at least in theory, allows for the recognition that there is a common good, a compromise by which the body politic as a whole can be better off; the latter approach is by definition one in which the winner takes all and the loser nothing. This, combined with a metaphor that presumes democratic life is best maintained by building walls that separate believers from non-believers and one group of believers from another, makes the maintenance of a civil democratic polity difficult.

At the same time, democracy is not merely a procedure for settling political disputes (though this in itself is no small or insignificant thing). It also guarantees that certain outcomes will prevail, or, more precisely, provides the structure insuring that if certain outcomes do not prevail, the polity cannot be a democracy. In other words, whatever problems there may be with the elevation of certain political issues to the realm of Constitutional adjudication, the failure to do so on certain issues that define democratic life may well create worse problems. Certainly, the basic civil rights of minorities cannot be put up for majority approval and the society be properly called a democracy at the same time.

The strength of a Constitutional system like ours is that there is a real barrier protecting basic civil rights. However, the danger of using that system too often is that it shortcuts the political process and reduces the opportunity to arrive at a consensus. Instead of compromise, the outcome of a judicial content is a winner and a loser. The losers are still part of the political system despite their not consenting to the outcome. The losers do not go away, as is evidenced by the fact that we are still fighting over the *Engel* decision and the meaning (or validity) of the “wall of separation” metaphor from *Everson*.

One avenue of thinking that could possibly make the discussion more fruitful is to replace the notion of “freedom of religion” and “establishment of religion” with the more general “liberty of conscience” (Nussbaum, 2008). The concept of liberty of conscience can suggest framing the debate in a slightly different way. Both freedom of religion and separation of church and state are ways of rooting public discourse and policymaking about religion and public policy in institutional relation (“religion,” “church,” and “state”). In contrast,

liberty of conscience focuses the discussion on individual citizen and the citizen's moral beliefs. Additionally, whereas some do not view "freedom of religion" as including atheists (atheism not being a "religion"),⁵ liberty of conscience is clearly more inclusive. This is related to the first point: freedom of religion can be understood as being a right guaranteed to religious organizations and institutions, not to individual members, nonmembers, and citizens in general. Liberty of conscience neither advantages nor disadvantages non-religious worldviews like secular humanism. Perhaps this reframing would enable us to make some progress in finding a balance within which all can live. Perhaps our problem is not that there is no such balance possible but that we are seeking balance in unproductive ways. Further, given the radically different context of First Amendment jurisprudence compared to its origins, it is possible that there is no one perfect balance but a range of irreconcilable ones. Regardless of its limitations, tensions, and ambiguities relevant to its present use, what we are left with in the end is the First Amendment. We must find a way to make it work.

Let me be clear: I am not of the opinion that there is an easy (or any) solution to the problem I describe. However, that does not make the problem any less of a problem. It is certainly the case that basic civil rights, like freedom of religion and speech, need to be protected from the whims of a majority, or democracy is no more than an illusion. It is equally true that the First Amendment, as written, is a poor instrument for that task. It is, however, the best we have, and perhaps the best possible in an imperfect world. Knowing the deep nature of the problem might help us make better decisions.

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Endnotes

- ¹ I wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the editors of this journal and to the anonymous reviewers who greatly improved the quality of this paper. Its remaining deficiencies, of course, are mine.
- ² Published Friday, November 22, 1787, “Federalist Number 10” is, along with “Federalist Number 51,” the most well known of the *Federalist Papers*, originally published under the pseudonym, Publius. In this series, Publius argues for ratifying the United States Constitution. Madison authored both “Federalist Number 10” and “Federalist Number 51.”
- ³ As one of our political parties become increasingly ideologically “pure,” it has become an open question whether this ability to make public policy by a process of negotiation and compromise can be recuperated.
- ⁴ It is true that there are views of democracy that argue it is merely a matter of majority rule, with nothing owed by the majority to the interests of the minority. That is not the view I am assuming in this discussion.
- ⁵ The cogency of this argument is not what is at stake here, simply the fact that the wording of the amendment allows it to be made.

An Analysis of Barack Obama's Dual Language Game on Education

Basiyr D. Rodney, Webster University

Lea Stephan, Webster University

Introduction

Educational reform is high on the political agenda of President Barack Obama. It would be fair to say President Obama views educational reform as a defining legacy to bequeath to future generations. His administration has overseen the re-authorization of the controversial “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (NCLB) as well as “Race to the Top” competitive grants. In policy documents such as the *Blueprint for Educational Reform* (US Dept. of Ed. [DE], 2010a), the Obama administration has outlined the direction of the President’s education agenda. In addition to policy statements, President Obama has spoken extensively on education. His rhetoric on educational reform has centered on two major rationales: first the need for enhanced educational opportunity in order to help underserved students achieve social mobility and attain full civic participation in a democratic society; and second on the neoliberal paradigm of improving the economic competitiveness and consumer potential of the American worker in a hyper-globalized world. Many educational commentators see these two ideals—education for individual market driven consumption *vs.* education for democratic participation—as being contradictory (Freire, 2007; Giroux, 2010; Spring, 2008), but President Obama has utilized an educational rhetoric that shows he supports both these ideals. He advocates for minorities in their quest for social mobility and the requisite access to services such as education. He is able to do this even as he projects strong support for the educational goals of the corporate elite. The corporate vision of education is driven by the neoliberal paradigm of preparing workers for an economically competitive world and the privatization of public schools. In pulling together these two ideals, President Obama effectively uses the language of educational reform as a platform for a language game targeted to multiple audiences.

President Obama’s educational reform discourse has policy implications for how we might assess the future success of his reform initiatives. Analysis of his discourse on education is necessary in order to understand whether his rhetoric is likely to lead to policies that are meaningful or if he is simply engaged in speech making for political survival. Is President Obama merely engaged in a discourse of political

expediency? Is his speechmaking on education merely designed to garner support for political gain? Or is President Obama a pragmatist seeking change but willing to make compromises because of the political moment in which he finds himself? Either way Obama's language games have implications for bolstering the position of one or more constituents. Those policies that emerge from his rhetoric can either support the concerns of the corporate elite or of individual Americans, especially youth and minorities very receptive to Obama's electoral calls for hope and change during the 2008 election cycle.

Our aim in this conceptual argument is to explore the question of whether the rhetoric of President Obama is based on education for social mobility and citizen participation or on education for economic competitiveness in a globalized world. One of these arguments is more linked with the values of neoliberal corporate elites, stressing the need for educational reform in order to foster greater economic competitiveness of the US in a globalized world. In this regard the President's rhetoric would give voice to increased calls for the privatization of schools, prioritization of a jobs-based curriculum and more talk for school funding linked to corporate measures such as teacher and school performance.

The second argument is commensurate with minority and wider citizen participation in a democratic republic and has been more centralized, particularly when Obama talks with minorities such as African-Americans and Hispanics. It is this freedom to participate as a natural democratic right that is enshrined in the history of the common school (Cremin, 1964). His rhetoric calls for ensuring educational access to all Americans characterizing education, in the words of Horace Mann, as the "great equalizer" (Cremin, 1964). When taking advantage of such access to education his rhetoric suggests these groups can attain social mobility through work or other creative pursuits, rendering them better able to participate in a free and open society. Such rhetoric calls for school reforms that empower and support citizens as well as strengthen the role of parents and families, stressing a broad-based curriculum that fosters a more informed citizenry and providing for community and government responsibility through equitable funding mechanisms.

Our analysis will, in part, offer an understanding of the extent to which President Obama, like political aspirants before him, is merely giving lip service to a rhetoric of hope and change. Is he consciously playing this language game by appealing to a shared *doxa* (opinion) of some of the US electorate's distinct strands? Ours are important questions for a number of reasons. If there is any credence to the claim the first Black president of the United States heralds neither a period of change nor hope, then the struggle for educational equity tragically remains elusive. Some intellectuals such as Giroux (2010) and West

(2010) argue such a failure represents President Obama's squandering of the political possibilities of this moment in time.

A key purpose of this type of examination is to see if the rhetoric of candidate Obama is different from that of President Obama. Moreover as we explore the rhetoric of the President, we will come to offer implications of his rhetoric for informing educational policy. A rhetoric that implies or yields support to corporate-elites or that panders to multiple audiences indicates that Americans will see more unraveling of the public school system under the Obama administration. Such an unraveling indicates the social, communal and democratic aims of the public school are now being eroded. A dualistic or middle-of-the-road language game along these lines is in fact contradictory. The danger is that educational reform initiatives will fail as the Obama administration attempts to translate them into federal policy. Greater still is the danger that a corporate aim will supersede the social and democratic good that it is the sole potential of compulsory schooling to provide.

To understand President Barack Obama's education-centered language game, we examine the text of his autobiographical political philosophy as well as the text of his speeches on education since assuming office. Uncovering consistency within his discourse on education before and after assuming office would reveal whether or not Obama has maintained a clear view toward policies of empowerment for minorities or underserved constituents as well as for the principal inhabitants of "Main Street, USA."

Theoretical Framework

The rhetoric of a presidential candidate is not a random accumulation of facts and words. He is always engaged in a language game. Wittgenstein (1963) explains language games are discourses that lack universal and generalized meaning; instead discourses have "family resemblances" that are shared amongst select individuals or groups within society. In this context certain political discourse terms can be fairly elastic, lacking universal meaning or singularity in thought. When politicians use such terms, the audience may appear to arrive at the same meaning yet the elasticity of discourse allows for the making of multiple meanings.

As in all language games, a speaker engages in a discourse that is shared between himself and his audience. The challenge is language games generate pictures that hold the communicators captive (Wittgenstein, 1963), and in the realm of politics language games generate realities or "pictures" that can hold both statesman and audience captive. In the case of our current political climate prevailing language games on education can serve to limit the range of action of some constituents and those of a presidential administration. For example, given waning public trust it is a commonly held view that

politicians are not truthful, leading audience members to listen to political discourse with some skepticism. This language game therefore is based on the presumption that politicians talk and audiences listen with skepticism and so both audience and speaker are trapped in a dance where rhetoric does not necessarily lead to action. The picture, as Wittgenstein (1963) theorizes it, is one in which politicians give a speech with no intent to act and the audience is fully aware of this discourse's meaning.

Kopperschmidt (2010) argues that language is in part rhetoric, and analyzing rhetoric provides good detail about how a language game works. Like in all language games the orator tailors his discourse to fit the shared *doxa* of his audience. In any speech with a persuasive goal, the central point, when adapting to one's audience, is the common opinion or *doxa*. In his or her use of language the orator "desires to convey only a *doxa*" (p. 203), not necessarily knowledge. In order to gain the trust of the audience, language communications demand the orator builds his or her speech upon assumptions already held by the audience, hypothesizing the beliefs, values, and opinions of the target audience. The orator's speech thus is modeled according to the shared language of the orator and the audience (Kopperschmidt, 2010).

This construct of the orator is consistent with his or her role in a language game (Kopperschmidt, 2010) in which the orator has to take into account what he or she believes to be the preliminary ethos, meaning the image the audience has of him or her. In his case, Obama goes always to great pains to project himself as a leader connected to all constituents in an increasingly diverse and "post-racial society" (Kitwana, 2009).

As a master orator President Obama consistently uses speeches as a "political tool" to tackle "serious political or policy problems" (Boyd, 2009, p. 78). In speeches he projects a discourse about himself that captures popular imagination and appeals to multiple audiences, making President Obama more persuasive and reflecting how he views the power of language. For him language can persuade as well as alter power relations and also produces policies that can serve to change longstanding ideologies (Boyd, 2009). Obama therefore seeks to speak a language that is appealing to all and conveys a shared meaning. He has effectively been able to project this language on key policy issues such as health, education and economic development (Boyd, 2009).

Both President Obama and candidate Obama recognize one must work his or her language game to convey the opinion of a mass or populist base, while at the same time one must hone in on the aspirations of certain specific groups such as rural or urban youth. It is on this basis that Obama engages in a very nuanced language game, one which draws on the struggle for educational access and equity. Moreover

an additional language game draws on the need for national economic survival. He skillfully and successfully links these to a wider broader national struggle for economic renewal in a hyper-globalized world.

It can be argued from the research on globalization and education that both these premises are contradictory. It is certain that the global competitiveness rhetoric is rooted in the “knowledge economy” ideology as spawned by globalization (Spring, 2008). As a construct of the neoliberal paradigm, this approach to educational reform values profits over people and efficiency over equity.

Obama, Education and the Rhetoric of Globalization

So what will our analysis reveal about Obama’s rhetoric? For the most part the President conflates the corporate aim with the rights and needs of minorities and other underrepresented citizens. Obama’s rhetoric on education uses the American learner as victim of the global economic system. He positions US students as being victimized by the ongoing expansion of global capital. For him one purpose of a reformed educational system is to compete in an increasingly globalized knowledge economy. In this case the victimized transcend race, they are of all backgrounds including race, class and gender. He argues that, “too many of America’s schools are not holding their end of the bargain” (Obama, 2006, p. 159). He says openly that America’s schools fail to prepare children for the new knowledge economy and that American education does not provide adequate opportunity for students to compete.

The language game that presents all Americans as victims of globalization argues that children of any background are American children and therefore are to be supported in their struggle for a better system of education. Obama in his defining speech on race, *A More Perfect Union*, explains:

This time we want to reject the cynicism that tells us that these kids can’t learn; that those kids who don’t look like us are somebody else’s problem. The children of America are not those kids, they are our kids, and we will not let them fall behind in a 21st century economy. Not this time. (Obama quoted in Sharpley-Whiting, 2009, p. 259)

The shared opinion that globalization is a threat to our economic future presents an opportunity for Obama to tap into a shared understanding that appears to be prevalent in the US body politic. This allows him to reiterate the value of education and hold it up as a unifying ideal for all. In comments to the NAACP he argues that the education of “every American child” is today’s “civil rights” challenge.

In a world where kids from Detroit aren’t just competing with kids from Macomb for middle-class jobs, but with kids from

Malaysia and New Delhi, ensuring that every American child gets the best education possible is the new civil-rights challenge of our time. (Obama quoted in Olive, 2008, n. p.)

In this passage, Obama also links the educational dilemma of the US to the human capital needs of the global knowledge economy. This moves the education debate from controversial local divides such as urban *vs.* suburban and black *vs.* white or right *vs.* left to a larger international global market competitiveness issue in which Obama uses a language game of global economic competition to appeal to national security and to engender social class feeling. He positions education as key to preserving the American Dream, a typically class-based discourse. He points to three particular elements that appeal to the middle class: “better health care, and better schools, and better jobs” (Obama quoted in Sharples-Whiting, 2009, p. 128). The centrality of education in this discourse cannot be ignored, since for Obama education facilitates the development of human capital for the global economy.

The danger of his language game is that it inherits the deep-rooted flaws of the paradigm from which it is derived. The human capital rhetoric is predicated on the narrative that certain skills are of more value in the global knowledge economy than others. As Spring (2008) argues, English and Math are being advanced as “the only essential subjects needed for preparation of students for lifelong learning for the knowledge economy” (p. 50). This flaw is already becoming an outcome of national educational policy. In the reauthorization of NCLB, the Obama administration’s *Blueprint for Reform* (2010a) focuses on higher standards in reading and literacy. Obama positions the importance he gives to reading as a key concern for global competitiveness. He argues, “literacy is the most basic currency of the knowledge economy we’re living in today” (Obama quoted in Olive, 2008, n.p.). He considers an emphasis on literacy skills is part of “reforms that work” (Obama, 2006, p. 161), moreover, in using the globalization discourse as a penultimate framework, Obama overlooks the fact that there are many other aspects of the school reform process that require governmental responsibility.

Obama, Education and the Rhetoric of Educational Equity

Obama uses the rhetoric of competition in the knowledge economy to appeal to a wider audience in terms of social class. He also uses the rhetoric of education for social mobility and minority citizen participation in his language game in order to appeal to underrepresented audiences. It is certain that Obama is communicating this shared language game with all potential constituents. It is mastery of such language games that makes Mr. Obama an expert orator.

His approach reflects more political expediency than democratic purpose. In one breath President Obama argues for a neoliberal approach to education in order to deal with global competition, yet in

the next he uses the language game of education for educational equity with minority audiences. Education for social mobility and social participation are two of the prevailing narratives that describe the purpose of education in the US. In *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama (2006) centralizes this theme as a main construct of his thought on educational reform. He characterizes education as a natural right in the process of social advancement, writing “throughout our history, education has been at the heart of a bargain this nation makes with its citizens: If you work hard and take responsibility, you’ll have a chance for a better life” (p. 159). He takes great pains to point out that education helped him to arrive at this defining moment. Education then becomes attached to a discourse of social access and democratic participation and a key to financial stability and security as well as social mobility, particularly since people without a college degree earn less money. Therefore from his earliest works candidate Obama supports the view that a lack of education limits one’s access in a democracy (Olive, 2009).

Obama makes the case that this lack of access is a social travesty and the need is so grave that government intervention is required to meet this civil rights need of our time. In his hallmark speech *A More Perfect Union*, Obama aims to tackle racial issues in the context of the Reverend Wright controversy. The speech is sometimes thought of as a singularly important commentary on the national race discourse, akin to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have A Dream” speech (*Encouraging Family-Friendly Workplace Policies*, 2009; Matthews, 2009). Despite the divisiveness of race in America and the fact that most politicians shy away from it, Obama is forced to deal with race in the context of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright controversy. What is most telling here is that he uses the shared language of education for social mobility and democratic participation to project his audience beyond racial lines. Whiting (2009) notices his leap, saying, “That a speech on race became a bully pulpit for a discourse on education [which] certainly spoke to Obama’s deft political skills” (p. 154). He reaches beyond race to argue more broadly for government to invest in education so that more poor and minority citizens can be supported. He states, “your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dream;...investing in the health, welfare, and education of Black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper” (Sharpley-Whiting, 2009, p. 140).

Policy Implications of the Obama Language Game

Obama’s language games have given rise to a series of educational policies and practices. His policy prescriptions have led to three major reforms in education, each giving rise to a number of unintended outcomes. Some of the policies and outcomes from President Obama’s

language game are: a). an overly restrictive focus on reading (literacy) and STEM subjects has resulted in a narrowing of the school curriculum; b). broader support for school choice has led to further segregation and restricted minority participation and educational access; c). the entrenchment of efficiency practices in schools has led to further divisiveness and low professional morale; and d). the flat-lining of student achievement in the very subjects that were supposed to improve over the past 10 years.

The high levels of focus on literacy (reading), mathematics and science across US schools have resulted in a disingenuous narrowing of the curriculum. Obama's advocacy positions literacy and a narrow slate of STEM subjects as key to the curriculum for preparing 21st century "knowledge workers." Both minorities and wider mainstream political constituents support this position. In fact, the provision for family literacy in the *Blueprint* (DE, 2010a) is principally aimed at high-need schools and can therefore be viewed as being particularly supportive of minorities. Obama's policies also advocate for family literacy programs and the improvement of library services (Olive, 2008).

Even as he engages in a language game of education for social mobility and citizen participation, President Obama's policies continue to point toward the entrenchment of neoliberal policies. "Neoliberal school reforms are designed to privatize traditional government school services and return them to the marketplace in the form of school choice and for-profit schooling" (Spring 2008, p. 18). Under the *Blueprint* (DE, 2010a), Obama enacts a choice-friendly educational program that is centered in neoliberal policy, selecting advocates of charter schools such as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (Mora & Christianakis, 2011). Obama also advocates for the removal of caps on such schools. In a speech to the Hispanic chamber of commerce he states,

[R]ight now, there are many caps on how many charter schools are allowed in some states, no matter how well they're preparing our students. That isn't good for our children, our economy, or our country. (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, para. 30)

Even as Obama recognizes and provides for a discourse of education for mobility and competition in a knowledge economy, his attachment to neoliberal choice policies are apparent. According to the Obama administration's policies such as the *Blueprint* (DE, 2010a), states will be encouraged to expand educational options, to increase choice within the public school system. Based on prevailing neoliberal assessment and accountability measures, more "high-performing" schools should be available, in order to foster "meaningful public school choice" (DE, 2010a, p. 35). *Race to the Top* as well as aspects of the "American

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” (ARRA) consist of “competitive grants to states and school districts. These grants are meant to engender ambitious and comprehensive reforms, that encourage the broad identification, dissemination, adoption, and use of effective policies and practices” (DE, 2010a, p. 36). The *Blueprint* argues for the expansion of educational options through the support of “effective charter schools” (DE, 2010a, p. 37). Moreover, the reform puts an emphasis on inter-district as well as intra-district choice programs (DE, 2010a).

Obama recognizes desegregation is an essential part of the language game of education for social mobility and minority citizen participation. In his *A More Perfect Union* speech, Obama denounces segregated schools:

Segregated schools were, and are, inferior schools; we still haven't fixed them, fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the inferior education they provided, then and now, helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between black and white students. (Obama quoted in Sharpley-Whiting, 2009, p. 91)

In response to this ongoing problem the Obama administration endorses neoliberal school choice initiatives such as charter and magnet schools. A charter school is a public school that is exempted from inflexible management rules typically associated with traditional public schools. Charter schools are under public supervision and operate on the basis of a written contract from a public chartering agency. They are subject to the same laws for desegregation, special needs and government-funded public agencies (NCLB). Charter schools are overwhelmingly segregated and magnet schools, especially those within smaller school districts, are also segregated (Lockette, 2010). In recent studies researchers on school choice point out public school segregation is now at higher levels than in the years preceding *Brown vs. Board* (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2009).

The number of US charter schools has grown rapidly over the last decade. The Obama administration continues to position charters as a solution to student achievement and desegregation problems, yet research shows the charter school movement is a civil rights failure (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2009).

[C]harter schools enroll a disproportionate share of [B]lack students and expose them to the highest level of segregation. Almost a third end up in apartheid schools with zero to one percent white classmates, the very kind of schools that decades

of civil rights struggles fought to abolish in the South. (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2009, p. 1)

Considering these realities it is a travesty that the Obama administration continues to endorse charter schools as they now stand as an option for ensuring educational access.

A magnet school is “a public elementary school, public secondary school...that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different racial backgrounds” (National Archives, 2011, p. 618). The stated purpose of a magnet school is to offer themed instruction, attract students of different racial groups to a school, and improve desegregation along certain specified ethnic goals (Rossell, 2003). Research into magnet schools also indicates a minimal effect on desegregation. Rossell reports the largest study of voluntary *vs.* involuntary desegregation in American schools, finding small school districts show less increase in students’ racial exposure when magnet schools are included in their desegregation plan. Districts with more than 27,000 students saw greater desegregation once magnet schools were added.

In the *Blueprint*, magnet schools are positioned as alternatives to court-ordered desegregation. The DE also awarded \$100 million in magnet school grants in 2010 to help “establish new magnet schools or expand existing magnet programs that are part of a school district’s voluntary or required desegregation plan” (DE, 2010b, n.p.). Considering the research evidence, it is unlikely that magnet schools will produce expected results.

Conclusion

The dual language game of education for global competition and social mobility supports policies that lead to the further erosion of the aims of the common school and compulsory schooling. President Obama’s rhetoric influences educational policy and in playing the dual language game, his policies are at risk of further undermining the educational reform process.

Minority groups such as African-Americans have to deal with “a lack of desirable human capital attributes” (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, p. 39) resulting from low-quality education (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Yet Obama’s rhetoric on education for equity and social mobility appears to be more language game than a commitment to foster real change. In putting forward this type of language he does endear his audience and sways them in his direction, yet his policies on education do not appear to give meaningful choice options and supports that will lead to social mobility for African-American families. Further entrenchment of

neoliberal choice programs and charter schools are unlikely to produce equity or mobility for African-Americans. The language game of education for equity and mobility is noble but it exists in contradiction to Obama's proposed and prevailing neoliberal solutions.

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College Majors Are Not Created Equal: The Class-Based Nature of Journalism Higher Education

Dina Gavrilos, University of St. Thomas

Introduction

From an ideal perspective, journalism is an essential function of a representative democracy like the US providing information about our social world that is necessary for effective citizenship and policy-making. To prepare journalists to serve this critical role, there are approximately 478 journalism and mass communication undergraduate programs in the US (Becker, Vlad, & Desnoes, 2010, p. 229), awarding a total of 50,850 bachelor's degrees during the academic year 2008–2009 (p. 230). In this list of universities preparing students for this noble, if not fully realized, mission in US society, there is a notable absence: not one Ivy League university (among other highly selective, top-tier universities) offers journalism as an undergraduate major.¹ One might presume that a profession fulfilling such a visible, fundamental public interest would be a critical area of study, not only available in, but highly touted by elite universities.² The lack of journalism as a major at top tier institutions then is a curious absence, at first glance, one that is rarely noted in academic and public discussions about journalism education in the US.

Furthermore and paradoxically, Ivy League graduates, given their prestigious education, can still strive for and obtain journalism jobs without a journalism degree while students who gain intensive training as journalism majors at the hundreds of less-elite universities are equally eligible for these same jobs. A prominent example is CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper who studied political science at Yale before obtaining one of the top jobs in US journalism. Although the majority of news editors and other communication managers do seek entry-level employees from the ranks of those graduating with journalism degrees and with plenty of real-world internship experiences, the point remains that those who study something other than journalism at elite schools are eligible for those same jobs despite their lack of undergraduate journalism training. These little-discussed observations about journalism undergraduate education speak volumes about the class-based nature of US higher education that pitches different curricular offerings to a minority of elite students than to the masses.

Through the example of journalism education, I explore a major curriculum distinction between elite and non-elite educational institutions that breaks down along the lines of an exclusively liberal arts curriculum and vocationally oriented offerings like journalism. Indeed, Yale's academic philosophy cited on its website makes explicit this distinction as it defines the classic liberal arts education:

Yale College offers a liberal arts education, one that aims to cultivate a broadly informed, highly disciplined intellect without specifying in advance how that intellect will be used. Such an approach to learning regards college as a phase of exploration, a place for the exercise of curiosity and an opportunity for the discovery of new interests and abilities. The College does not seek primarily to train students in the particulars of a given career, although some students may elect to receive more of that preparation than others. Instead, its main goal is to instill knowledge and skills that students can bring to bear in whatever work they eventually choose. (Yale University, 2012)

Yale's academic philosophy does not only proudly tout the advantages of a liberal arts-only education, but does so, notably, by contrasting it sharply with vocationally oriented goals. Through this curriculum contrast, such elite liberal arts-only schools mark themselves as different from non-elite universities catering to the masses that also offer liberal arts coursework but heavily emphasize vocational preparation through majors like journalism, business, marketing, etc. Contrary to Ivy League colleges, such universities proudly market the idea that students will be explicitly trained to succeed in specific careers like journalism after graduation—as I demonstrate in this essay by reviewing the online promotional descriptions of the largest journalism programs in the US. The different educational goals non-elite and elite institutions promote—the merits of vocational training in fields like journalism or the merits of an exclusively liberal arts, non-career-track education—constructs students' relation to education based upon social class.

In this essay, I want to make explicit the ideological implications of an elite and non-elite curriculum distinction. It is clear enough that institutional prestige, perceived intellectual rigor and exclusivity mean that Ivy League degrees confer tremendous cultural, social and economic capital on their recipients in ways that reinforce class status and reproduce class hierarchy. In addition to those factors, though, I want to show that those advantageous outcomes are also contingent upon the differentiated curricula found in elite and non-elite institutions, places where the pursuit of knowledge is defined differently. Promoting such dissimilar goals of higher education constructs class-based orientations to higher education that can, consequently, constrain the majority of

students' imaginative possibilities about education, life options and themselves.

To develop my thesis, I briefly review the history of a liberal arts education and journalism's emergence in higher education. Then, I examine the role of commodification in higher education. I discuss the social, cultural and economic capital embedded in how elite and non-elite universities market education differently through the case of journalism education in particular. And, finally, I explore how students are positioned to relate to education differently as a result of these class dynamics in higher education.

The Liberal Arts Tradition

According to Lind's (2006) historical overview, universities that arose in the US colonial period carried forth the West's centuries-long classic liberal arts education, a general, non-specialized education emphasizing the humanities, the classical languages, classical literary canon written in those languages, and training in rhetoric and logic (p. 52). Also included were arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy (p. 54). This classical curriculum was inherently elitist as it was intended to educate politically free and economically independent men—a privileged minority class of people—better to become part of the ruling elite (p. 54).

In the 19th century, reformers challenged this classical curriculum looking to replace the “dead” languages and a general education with more vocational training (p. 55; Pak, 2008, p. 30). In response to these curricular reformers, a Yale committee produced one of the most influential reports in higher education defending the classical curriculum. Because of Yale's prestige and the persuasive power of its *Reports on the course of instruction in Yale College* (Committee of the Corporation and the Academical Faculty, 1828)—what becomes known as *The Yale Report*—the call for utilitarian reforms within elite institutions were, for the most part, kept at bay. The *Report's* authors expressly argue against vocational training in favor of maintaining a traditional liberal arts education, as indicated in this passage:

The course of instruction which is given to the undergraduates in the college, is not designed to include *professional* studies. Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all. (Committee, 1828, p. 14, emphasis added)

The authors defended this position by first asking rhetorically:

But why, it may be asked, should a student waste his time upon studies which have no immediate connection with his future profession? ... Why should not his attention be confined to the subject which is to occupy the labors of his life? (p. 14)

The answer:

When a man has entered upon the practice of his profession, the energies of his mind must be given, principally, to its appropriate duties. But if his thoughts never range on other subjects, if he never looks abroad on the ample domains of literature and science, there will be a narrowness in his habits of thinking, a peculiarity of character, which will be sure to mark him as a man of limited views and attainments. Should he be distinguished in his profession, his ignorance on other subjects, and the defects of his education, will be the more exposed to public observation. On the other hand, he who is not only eminent in professional life, but has also a mind richly stored with general knowledge, has an elevation and dignity of character, which gives him a commanding influence in society, and a widely extended sphere of usefulness. His situation enables him to diffuse the light of science among all classes of the community. Is a man to have no other object, than to obtain a living by professional pursuits? Has he not duties to perform to his family, to his fellow citizens, to his country; duties which require various and extensive intellectual furniture? (p. 15)

The *Report's* authors' rationale for a broad-based education still informs the mission of elite liberal arts colleges today and is even referenced on Yale's academic philosophy webpage, as noted. While the specifics of a liberal arts education have been transformed since the days of studying a set of Greek and Latin "classics," a liberal arts education at elite schools like Yale and its Ivy League counterparts still emphasizes developing a well-rounded, broadly educated individual. In the process, it does not include a curriculum offering substantive career training in any profession. Instead, Yale and other elite institutions offer graduate programs in the more applied areas of business, law, education, and, in the case of Columbia University, a prestigious graduate school of journalism. Such institutions encourage professional training as only proper following a solid liberal arts undergraduate education.

This is not to say that elite universities do not adapt to changing social trends, respond to market demands, or engage students in discussions of their future careers. Rather, the intellectual worth of these degrees, as well as their marketing cachet, is generally contingent upon upholding these clearly defined merits of the liberal arts curriculum. Indeed, in historian Michael Pak's (2008) contextualized reading of *The Yale Report*, Pak claims Yale's main interest in defending an exclusively liberal arts education is "namely, that the clientele of colleges demanded preserving such requirements, and that because of the intensifying competition among colleges, even an elite institution like Yale had to be

careful to accommodate client demand” (p. 34). While previous historians suggested that “suffocating traditionalism” and other reasons existed for defending liberal arts education, Pak makes the case that “relentless realism” and the need to “respect the bottom line in college management: the survival and welfare of the institution” were at issue (p. 34). He concludes that the *Report’s* longstanding influence lies in its strategic impulse that reflects how many universities operate today: “[employing] the dual strategy of anxiously making surface adjustments from year to year, semester to semester, while putting off deep structural reforms” that might diminish the university’s long-established prestige (p. 57). Paradoxically, then, economic anxieties and interests implicitly undergird a traditional liberal arts educational agenda.

The Origins of Journalism Education in Higher Education

The practice of training journalists in the US can be understood through this same market-based logic. Despite the lofty rhetoric surrounding freedom of the press, journalism in the US began as a more mundane trade. Mirando (2002) indicates in his comprehensive historical tracing of journalism education in the US, upon which I draw heavily for this overview, journalists were synonymous with printers prior to the 1800s—part of a trade, not a profession. The printer-journalists of the time presumed apprenticeships were the ideal way to learn journalism. According to Mirando, “higher education was initially reserved for the rich and professional classes [those in the ministry, law or medicine], and most early American journalists often got their start in journalism while serving a term of indentured servitude in a print shop” (p. 76). As noted, during US colonial times, universities valued and emphasized knowledge as a good in and of itself—the goal of liberal arts or classical studies was to create well-educated, refined individuals.

With the Industrial Revolution, however, higher education goals changed as educators began paying attention to such non-traditional and applied areas of study as business and manufacturing as well as journalism. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 facilitated and supported the growth of higher education by offering land to colleges that would also serve to train students in practical subjects resulting in Midwest land-grant universities’ establishing journalism courses. In response, a few Ivy League schools began providing some journalism education too. Cornell offered the first journalism degree in 1875, and the University of Pennsylvania organized the first journalism curriculum in 1893 (Mirando, p. 78). However, vigorous debates ensued about the role of journalism in higher education. Many universities remained adamant about not including vocational training in their curricula (as discussed, *The Yale Report* defends this approach). Conversely, many working journalists continued to resist journalism in higher education believing the newsroom itself as the place to learn the job.

Despite these debates, journalism programs grew rapidly in the early 20th century for various reasons. Industry support increased as more editors became college educated (Winfield, 2008). The corrupt practices of yellow journalism pushed Progressive Era reformers to call for changes in journalistic practices through higher education training “about obligations, correct practices, and knowledge of historical roots and acceptable principles” (p. 4). One significant moment in the legitimization of journalism higher education was news-publisher Joseph Pulitzer’s well-publicized and substantial \$2 million donation, given in 1903, to Columbia University for the establishment of a journalism school (it opened in 1912) in the hopes of starting a movement of journalism in higher education that would create better journalism for the public interest. According to Columbia officials at that time, “their [new] school of journalism would be on equal footing with the university’s schools of law, medicine, engineering, architecture, and teaching” (Mirando, 2002, p. 79). Similar sentiments were the basis for establishing the University of Missouri’s first School of Journalism in 1908 (Winfield, 2008). Subsequently, journalism in higher education became increasingly formalized as two-dozen American journalism programs became separate university departments and schools (p. 1). Throughout, the predominant approach to journalism education was the technical/vocational model using real-world labs in the form of campus papers or working closely with community papers. Nonetheless, while journalism education penetrated universities, its value within elite universities diminished. In 1931, Columbia eliminated its undergraduate journalism degree, offering only graduate-level work in journalism—as it still does today. Cornell and Penn, which had provided some of the earliest offerings in journalism coursework, have also long eschewed any journalism courses in favor of the broader, scholarly-oriented study of communication.

State universities and other less-elite schools, on the other hand, grew their journalism and communication programs, but not without controversy. With the growth of both formalized journalism education and new forms of mass media in the mid-20th century, debates about the proper mix of vocational training and broader understanding of the media as a dominant social force ensued. According to Mirando (2002), this technical/vocational approach came under sharp critique from both educators and journalists for not being rigorous enough, albeit for different reasons. A group of distinguished academics formed the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press and distributed a 1947 report that concludes:

...journalism schools did not accept an obligation to serve as independent critics of the press, were not training students to

be competent judges of public affairs, and did not recognize that a mass communication revolution was taking place in society. (p. 82)

Ironically, while these academics critiqued the too-technical nature of journalism education, journalists began criticizing the lack of rigor in the technical training.

From mid-century critiques of the technical/vocational model for journalism education emerged the journalism education seen today. Balancing a liberal arts education and technical training in journalistic practices is the standard for the organization accrediting journalism programs, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, which requires that students take the majority of their coursework in areas outside journalism and mass communication.

Significantly, from 1961 to 1979, journalism enrollments rose nearly 500 percent (p. 84). This phenomenon is popularly explained through students' attraction to the glamour and prestige associated with high-profile Watergate scandal investigative journalists Woodward and Bernstein (especially after, in 1976, the acclaimed movie *All the President's Men* immortalized their story). However, such factors as baby boomers reaching college age, skills-oriented education's growing value, practical degrees leading to jobs, and universities' using marketplace strategies to recruit students also contributed to growing interest in journalism education evidenced in enrollment increases. In the 21st century, journalism education broadens to include vocational training for such other communications professions as advertising and public relations where the growth in these programs mainly lies.

The Commodification of Higher Education

The increased marketing of journalism and professional communication education as a path to potentially successful careers was part of a general trend toward selling higher education in terms of its consumer value and monetary rewards—the commodification of education. Although not new (see Veblen's 1918 critique of business interests' encroachment on universities and the previous discussion of Yale's early 19th century interest in meeting client demands and maintaining prestige), the commodification of education became increasingly inescapable as the logic of neoliberal capitalism—with its emphasis on free markets and individuals-as-consumers—began to dominate public discourse and policy in the 1980s in conjunction with ongoing cuts in government funding for education both at the school and student levels. So, while the proliferation of universities in the 20th century (the massification of college education, one might say) allowed access to higher education for larger numbers of people, a simultaneous process of commodification was also occurring. Universities increasingly adopted business and profit-oriented operations models to compete in

the marketplace for students, status, and ever-decreasing resources from government funding.

Much has been written about the commodification of higher education. Miller (2010) delineates exactly which values are commoditized in higher education: the credential (in which the degree is all that is sought for purpose of successful entry into the job economy); the skills that can meet the needs of the market; and, finally, education itself as consumption by students as consumers. Labaree (1997) criticizes the degree to which education has, in contemporary society, become a private consumer good in which the credential is more valued than actual learning, supplanting other visions of education as a public good, providing collective civic benefits.

Today, the commoditization of education has only accelerated and been exacerbated by greater economic anxiety as well as the exorbitant cost of higher education. Students and parents, understandably, become willing to act as consumers in these times of economic anxiety and decreasing opportunities for upward mobility or economic security. Anecdotal stories about college students' choice of major bear this out. If an undergraduate says English, philosophy, or history, then plentiful jokes ensue about the student's inevitable fate waiting tables or asking customers if they want fries with that. Anxious parents ask about such non-practical majors: what are you going to *do* with that? What kind of *job* will you get? Quiggin (2011) points out growing economic inequality has led to economic insecurity among the middle to upper-middle classes resulting in increased and intense competition for spots in high-economic-return-on-investment elite colleges, while the number of openings in those universities has not increased since the 1950s (and before many women even sought college degrees).

The commoditization of higher education amidst rising economic insecurity constitutes a crisis among those who value a liberal arts education for the promotion of critical thinking in contrast to the purportedly crass notion that education is an economic good. Although the importance of knowledge for students' intellectual and moral growth and, consequently, civic betterment, claims lofty space in college mission statements, the sales messages of various programs predominantly promote college degrees as economic goods to be exchanged for jobs—their rate of return measured in job earnings. For instance, Puddephatt and Nelsen (2010) reveal how neoliberal market forces increase pressure on sociology departments to promote the employment benefits of education. Although many journalism programs complement skills training with a strong liberal arts foundation, the skills courses and their employment outcomes remain the main attraction as the websites of journalism departments granting the greatest number of journalism and mass communication degrees in the nation evidences. Becker, Vlad, and

Desnoes (2010) cite Michigan State University as conferring the most undergraduate journalism degrees in 2010 followed by Pennsylvania State University, University of Florida, and The Ohio State University. The goal for these programs is clear: to train students to be successful professional journalists.

Celebrating the School of Journalism's centennial, Michigan State journalism educators proclaim on the 2010 webpage:

Every day across the globe, Spartans use the craft of journalism to improve their communities, ensure justice and share stories to lift the human spirit. They are Pulitzer Prize winners, community newspaper publishers, television news anchors and multimedia producers. They report on city councils, school boards and state legislatures. They photograph marches for peace and are embedded with soldiers to tell the stories of war.

A list of more potential employers follows on the website:

Spartans are highly sought by news media employers and are successful in the industry for both their intense training and their flexibility in the field. Our alumni work in a broad range of positions in online media, television stations, newspapers, magazines, public relations, universities and government as writers, reporters, editors, designers, multimedia professionals, photographers, videographers, managers and teachers.

At the same time, Michigan State's journalism school highlights the future and positions students as the future: "[o]ur curriculum is designed to prepare students for the future of the industry. In addition to teaching valuable journalism skills across platforms, the School of Journalism trains critical thinkers to become leaders and visionaries in the field." One readily can see Michigan State's marketing approach is one that emphasizes employability and success in the field with some attention to the loftier goals of journalism and particularly a liberal arts education. Because vocational and liberal arts education values are interwoven in all but the elite schools, incorporating liberal arts education language—leaders and critical thinking—into their professionally oriented educational mission is not unusual.

A focus on employment is also the predominant message on Penn State University's Department of Journalism webpage which directly states the department's goal is to "help educate students for careers as writers, reporters, editors and photographers" with another heading "Career Opportunities" on the same page. Similarly, the University of Florida's (2012) Department of Journalism website states educators teach future journalists to understand the profession as a craft and its loftier mission to:

...teach the art and craft of excellent journalism, study journalism and related subjects; foster an appreciation for accuracy, fairness, truth and diversity; develop and cultivate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of news media professionals and scholars in a democratic society. (University of Florida, 2012)

Even more simply, The Ohio State University's journalism program (2010) "teaches you how to investigate and disseminate news." By the end, Ohio State's graduates "are equipped through an extensive array of classes to enter the marketplace as a multimedia journalist, ready to step directly from our classroom into a newsroom."

In addition to positioning students as the well-trained and employable journalists they will become, journalism programs also promote the valuable professional experience of the faculty. For example, according to their websites, Michigan State (2010) prides itself on having "a Pulitzer Prize winner, a former globe-trotting *Time* magazine reporter and editor, [and] the former graphics editor of *Newsweek*," while Penn State's (2012) faculty is "on the cutting edge of the business" and "return often to the profession to enhance skills, stay up to date on industry practices and learn new techniques to teach students."

As someone who teaches in a university department of communication and journalism, I want to assert that I am not arguing professionally oriented education is inferior because of its vocational goals in contrast to the liberal arts-only education. As I argue, it is not all black and white, as many journalism programs, including my own, incorporate critical thinking into the curriculum via theory and ethics-based courses exploring the complex role of communication in society. Nonetheless, the point is the prevailing market logic makes it seem commonsensical, for all but the elite schools, that economic payoffs should be the primary emphasis in their marketing messages. In contrast, Ivy League schools not only eschew practical, vocationally oriented education but also do not explicitly sell the economic benefits of their liberal arts education—there is, in fact, an absence of commercial language.

To illustrate how Ivy Leagues market their curricular options, I use the area of study that comes closest to the field of journalism, communication, a significant, although relative newcomer among academic disciplines. All but two Ivy League schools—Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania—are so traditional in their liberal arts curricula they do not offer communication studies as an arts and sciences option. When comparing how these two elite institutions pitch communication studies to undergraduates on their websites to the state schools, their marketing proves not only different but seemingly

nonexistent. Ivy League schools' descriptions emphasize the scholarly approach to the field of communication in quite dry, scholarly language. Cornell's Department of Communication website (n.d.) states it "is a national leader in the study of communication as a social science. Our faculty and students are dedicated to understanding the role and enhancing the effectiveness of communication processes, systems and infrastructure in society." Faculty members' scholarly interests soon follow: "We explore communication in its many forms and contexts as a fundamentally social phenomenon. Our faculty members are recognized for developing and applying novel theoretical perspectives to the most pressing social and policy issues of the day."

The University of Pennsylvania has an equally scholarly oriented message in the online description of its undergraduate communication program (a program housed in Penn's Annenberg School for Communication):

Undergraduate communication majors study media institutions, communication and contemporary culture, and a variety of communication influences in social, political, and economic contexts. Scholarship in communication intersects with many disciplines—including history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, law and economics—drawing from both humanistic and social-scientific modes of inquiry to examine fundamental communication processes and effects. (University of Pennsylvania, 2010)

Avoiding the explicitly commercial forms of communication their non-elite higher education counterparts proudly wield when marketing their programs, these elite schools clearly position their audiences as intellectually curious: they use scholarly language, minimize addressing students as their intended audience, and wipe clean any current or future tangible educational outcomes of employment. Ironically, these Ivy League institutions retain their prestige by promoting an intellectually oriented liberal arts education completely devoid of employment promises while the rest of higher education faces market pressure to promote skills-based education to "train" students for specific jobs, a rhetoric maintained even as the most popular undergraduate major in the US is business (Lind, 2006).

Increasingly, politicians and business leaders call for more practical educational training so the US, through its college graduates, can compete in the global marketplace. And yet, elite schools survive—and thrive—with non-vocational curricula. Why has the capitalist-driven trend toward commoditization failed to penetrate Ivy League schools resulting in establishment of undergraduate majors like business or journalism?

The Two-Tiered Higher Education System

On one level, the answer is simple—all college degrees are not created equal. Ivy League degrees are inherently more valuable commodities in the marketplace by virtue of their prestige and exclusiveness than non-Ivy League degrees. Retention of these schools' top status is documented and publicized annually in the highly publicized *US News & World Report* college rankings. Prestigious colleges embody tremendous social, cultural and economic capital and, consequently, the Ivy League graduate is more likely than most to get a job and earn more regardless of his or her major.

In a recent *USA Today* article on whether the ever-increasing cost of Ivy League degrees is worth the money (a rather false debate as all the data show they indeed are), Koba (2011) describes the perks of such elite degrees: more attention from employers, a high profile and prestigious social network that aids job attainment, higher starting salaries, and fewer student loans as a result of significant university subsidizing of tuition for many. The social capital arising from this exclusive education—the connections to and between the small circle of rich and powerful—are reproduced. According to an online *US News & World Report* article, "Ivy League schools produce a disproportionate amount of corporate leaders" (Burnsed, 2011). Another report shows that Harvard, Stanford and Yale graduate most members of Congress, many earning advanced business and law degrees from these institutions (Morella, 2010). Thus, while Ivy League schools pride themselves on a non-career-track undergraduate curriculum in favor of job-anxiety-free intellectual exploration, it is also well known that many of these elite students will pursue graduate school in professional programs such as law, medicine or business—the most prestigious programs found at those same Ivy League schools. Furthermore, there is a dramatic gap between the earnings of those with college degrees versus those with high school diplomas. While women and men aged 25 to 34 with bachelor's degrees earn 79% to 74% more, respectively, than those earning only high school diplomas (College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2011, p. 4), graduates of elite colleges "enjoy an even higher earnings premium than others" (Eide, Brewer, & Ehrenberg cited in Dowd, Cheslock, & Melguizo, 2008, p. 443).

The demographic enjoying these benefits, however, is quite small. Ivy League and other elite institutions educate less than 1 percent of the US, college-aged population, 27,000 entrants per year, compared to an 18-year-old cohort of more than three million entering non-elite institutions (Quigglin, 2011). Furthermore, the opportunity to obtain an elite education is highly contingent on one's socioeconomic status. Of those attending 146 highly selective elite institutions, only 3% of

freshmen were from the lowest quartile of a socioeconomic status (SES) index (Carnevale & Rose cited in Dowd, Cheslock, & Melguizo, 2008, p. 443). It is well documented in recent years that economic elites, those at the upper end of the income distribution, have easier access to elite higher education (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Dowd, Cheslock, & Melguizo, 2008; Golden, 2006; Kahlenberg, 2004; Karabel, 2005). Douthat (2005) shows how meritocracy has failed in higher education by outlining how financial aid and college access, among other advantages, are rigged to benefit middle- and upper-class families more than others.

A two-tiered higher education system thus emerges from the data: exclusive and elite institutions versus all others. Higher education expert Christopher Morphew (2008) describes this two-tiered higher education system in the US, one which:

...serves the vast majority of students, teaching them and helping them to develop literacy and job skills. It is underfinanced, at least in comparison to its more-elite counterpart, and is under increasing attack from the public and politicians for failing to be innovative, efficient, transparent, and subservient to what business leaders say they want in college graduates. (p. A34)

In contrast, the “other subsystem is much smaller and consists primarily of the top-tier institutions” which offer students access to the “creative class and a better quality of life” (p. A34).

Important to note, however, prestige and exclusivity do not necessarily explain why there are different types of degrees offered and different ways of marketing them. After all, an elite institution could create a prestigious journalism program, for example. This is why I posit the prestige of these institutions is also inextricably linked to their strict centuries-old, classic liberal arts education that expressly avoids so much as a whisper about vocational training in their promotional materials. Since many universities have a core liberal arts curriculum, elite universities’ traditional liberal arts emphases cannot alone establish their exclusive niche. Rather, liberal arts coupled with the *absence* of undergraduate vocational training marks these institutions as unique and prestigious. These schools offer a curriculum that conveys to the world that students there engage only in intellectual, elite, ruling-class pursuits that know no career bounds. The “purity” of this liberal arts knowledge then, a purity seemingly untainted by practical contemporary considerations of business interests or marketplace anxieties, is the exclusive cultural capital bestowed on recipients of an elite education. Bourdieu’s (1977, 1986, 1996) theory of cultural, economic and social capital helps explain the cachet attached to this kind of knowledge. While the majority of universities market the advantages of vocationally

oriented fields of study which have less cultural capital among elite social circles than non-vocationally focused programs, elite institutions' liberal arts-only curriculum represents the highest degree of cultural capital and potential economic return. Thus, for these elite schools, knowledge for knowledge's sake is *both* the cultural capital and the unspoken marketing approach. Consequently, not merely institutional reputation, exclusivity, and intellectual rigor distinguish between elite and non-elite higher education but the type of curriculum offered or withheld.

Generally, then, the differentiation of degrees in higher education—the vocational in contrast to non-vocational training—perpetuates status quo class relations. Although the American Dream ideology embeds the culturally pervasive belief that the brightest and hardest working can aim for class mobility through earning a college degree—even one from an Ivy League school—the two-tiered structure of higher education instead engineers educational pursuits that are much more rigid and rigged.

Class-Based Constraints on Students' Imaginative Possibilities

Having discussed the elite/non-elite curriculum differences reinforcing this two-tiered higher education system, I now turn to the ideological implications of this system for students. I examine how this system can constrain students' imaginative possibilities about education, life options, and themselves.

I begin with some caveats: distinguishing between these two approaches to education in general terms, not black and white terms. Non-elite universities do require considerable credit hours in the liberal arts and convey the importance of becoming thoughtful, well-educated, productive citizens. Many students in non-elite universities value a classic liberal arts education and study history, philosophy, or English with little concern for their education's economic-exchange value. Conversely, I imagine many Ivy League students think strategically about their educations and education's role in planning professional careers. My larger point is not based on what particular individuals do in these circumstances or in the exceptions. Rather, I am interested in bringing to the fore the dominant ideologies about education and how these ideologies position members of varying social classes in particular ways, even as students might resist them.

By virtue of how higher education is marketed to elite and non-elite students—as seen in the earlier examples of marketing messages—students are subtly positioned to take up certain class-based roles in society. The elites are positioned to see themselves as inherently intellectually minded, as thinkers, and thus as future innovators, entrepreneurs, leaders, change agents and free agents. Non-elites are

positioned to see themselves as future employees or followers needing to acquire specific job skills to be marketable to a specific profession. While individuals are predisposed to seek out certain kinds of education based on upbringing and class status, elite and non-elite educational marketing messages reinforce and perpetuate their beliefs about education.

To elaborate, valuing knowledge for knowledge's sake is a privileged class position. Learning without having to think about what you are going to *do* with your knowledge is an elite perspective on educational attainment. For others, education must produce tangible, practical results like specific job preparation. An overemphasis on the ideological equation that education is career preparation, however, limits students' educational possibilities. I do not suggest that more English majors should be recruited or that vocationally oriented majors should be avoided in favor of elite liberal arts-only education. Rather, the goal should be more transparency about class dynamics in higher education so students can more fully and freely explore what it means to pursue knowledge and what its purpose can be in one's life.

Overemphasizing job-specific skills as the educational goal indoctrinates students to think of themselves as needing training before accomplishing a task in contrast to feeling empowered to think through a task and solve problems. Ironically, solving problems is an intangible skill that employers value more highly. Overemphasizing job-specific skills can subtly undermine students' potential to see themselves as independent learners and original thinkers. To emphasize education as a process of learning particular skills rather than as a process of learning "how to think" prepares students for inside-the-box thinking and performance, with the implicit need to be trained at each step of the way. By contrast, Ivy League schools position their privileged students as intellectually competent, worldly, and adventurous—earned or not—because of how their education is marketed to them. The presumption: by virtue of their well-rounded Ivy League educations, Ivy League students are inherently smart, will get the best jobs, and will be able to meet future industry challenges regardless of what they actually did or did not learn in college.

In the case of journalism education, much opportunity lies in thinking through the potential of this industry, which is witnessing major transformations in ownership, technology and audiences yielding an uncertain and oft-debated future. To see its future potential, journalism majors would need to study journalism skills as one facet of journalism's role in society. No doubt, many journalism educators (and journalism programs) provide the opportunities to explore the complexities of journalism in humanistic ways alongside skills training. Nevertheless, if

US students are primed to see the value in the tangible skills portion of those classes because of the dominance of neoliberal market forces and its inextricable two-tiered higher education system, then educators find themselves in an unevenly matched struggle to persuade students of the importance of intellectual exploration outside of all but the concrete skills taught.

Ultimately, an overemphasis on the vocational goal of education dehumanizes students by positioning them as commodities, and bodies designed to generate profit. Students are taught to think of themselves in terms of marketable traits tied to future job titles and salaries. Although all of us must inevitably market ourselves to find jobs, equating human potential to job market value seems especially problematic during a time when most college-aged students are still forming their identities, values, and beliefs about themselves and their place in the world.

Certainly obtaining an education for the purpose of finding a good paying job, for economic security, is a necessary and honorable goal for any student.³ However, that narrow view of education is ideologically problematic. Knowledge is not power for the majority of students when education is marketed differently along class lines. The type of knowledge acquired reinforces a class hierarchy in which elite students are encouraged to see limitless possibilities, to see “college as a phase of exploration, a place for the exercise of curiosity and an opportunity for the discovery of new interests and abilities,” to re-state Yale’s academic philosophy. On the other hand, non-elite students are pointed to the narrow goal of job training—a challenging proposition for long-term success in this economically and technologically fast-changing society.

Unfortunately, critically evaluating the role of class (among other factors like race and gender) and how it constrains individuals’ educational opportunities (or other life chances for that matter) does not fit the pervasive US cultural narrative of limitless possibilities for all who work hard. Being explicit about class-based difference in college curricula is necessary, however, if students are to be empowered about their own and others’ educational opportunities. Paradoxically, the college classroom may be one of the few sites in which such critiques can be thoughtfully explored. If universities aspire to provide students with an education grounded in critical thinking—the *raison d’être* of the liberal arts—then, at some point in their studies, students (both elite and non-elite) should be strongly encouraged to question and examine the economic, social and cultural forces that conspire to relegate them to one role or another.

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Endnotes

- ¹ It is relatively common knowledge that the Ivy League Schools (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell) are some of the oldest and most elite schools in the US with highly selective admissions, extremely well-funded endowments and strong alumni support. Upon my review of undergraduate course offerings at Ivy League schools, I find journalism is not offered as a major.
- ² In my argument I distinguish broadly between elite and non-elite colleges. I describe as elite primarily the Ivy League schools and other classical-oriented, highly selective and prestigious liberal arts-only schools that do not offer bachelor's degrees in vocationally oriented fields. I contrast such schools with non-elite colleges, those which offer both liberal arts subjects (e.g., history, English, philosophy, etc.) as well as vocationally oriented majors such as journalism, accounting, finance, and marketing, among others.

While distinguishing broadly between elite and non-elite colleges, I recognize what is considered elite or not varies dramatically depending upon one's social class position. For example, to many poor, working-class or first-generation college students, graduating from any university may well be considered prestigious.

- ³ As a working-class, first-generation college student, I knew no other purpose for pursuing higher education.

Staying with the Mainstream Group: Pathological Effects of Labels in Special Education

Donna M. Sayman, Wichita State University

Background

To say Karl (a pseudonym) was a precocious student would be a gross understatement. He spent every lunch hour talking with the faculty at his middle school about a wide range of topics from religion to world literature and even physics. Seldom spending time with his same-age peers, he preferred to pose his queries about life to his teachers and school administrators. As his manager for special education, I was accustomed to his seeming endless supply of interrogation topics. His favorite questions never changed from the time I knew him when he was in eighth grade until his graduation from high school: “Why am I in special education? What made me have a *learning disability*? Why am I like this?” We would delve into his Individualized Education Plan (IEP), analyze his many assessment tests, and scrutinize formal and informal pieces of information that would give clues to his demanding questions. I diligently explained the medical-discrepancy theory of disability to him along with showing him evidence of “differences” in his learning. It was never enough. Although he was polite and attentive, my answers never seemed to sate the nagging doubts in his mind—or in mine.

I lost track of Karl following his graduation from high school. He applied to a local university and was accepted, but for some reason did not attend. Several attempts to contact his family a few years after graduation were futile. Rumor had it he was unhappy, living with his parents, and unemployed. Not the plan we had diligently worked out for post-high-school. As an individual with disabilities, he was not alone in his struggle with life after high school. Many of my former students could not find steady employment following graduation and were not successful in higher education. Various young adults had difficulty with interpersonal relationships and many were clearly not happy with their adult lives. Had I failed them or did the structure of the American school system assure their lack of success? Certainly we went through arduous assessments and occupational surveys to prepare them for post-high-school reality. I recall countless lessons on finding an apartment, securing a job, and enrolling in a technical school or university. I did everything required by law in accordance to the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, DE, 2010) regarding transition skills and training, and yet these young people somehow became lost in the miasma of real-world adulthood, and the promise of independent living was still a dream they could not envision or grasp for themselves.

Purpose and Research Question

In this qualitative study I sought to gain insight into self-perceptions of students labeled as having disabilities to determine their perceptions of identity, self-esteem, and difference following graduation. Utilizing the Foucauldian lens of normalcy, I set out to give voice to those individuals who feel as though they are marginalized through the special education labeling process. Duplicitous inequity in special education categorization is a problem that needs analysis through a critical lens, since labeling students in terms of deficits may serve to form a negative individual identity development along with learned helplessness that negates self-determination of behaviors. Eventually, children may begin to embrace the negative connotations the terms imply, and become immersed in a cycle of hopelessness, failure, and unhappiness (Blum & Bakken, 2010). Critical researchers have long recognized how individuals view themselves is strongly influenced by societal factors, and “mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). An implicit goal of my analysis is to generate a discussion about the power of schools and educators who participate to entrench discourses about normalcy and deviance that have profound consequences for children and society.

It is my hope that this study will provoke continued and renewed conversation regarding the use of labels and classifications within special education and continue to transform education to accommodate diverse learners. There is too much power given to schools arbitrarily to determine which children are “maladjusted” and which are “normal,” labels they come to embody, particularly since teachers are often the gatekeepers of children’s social construction of what is considered defective (Ruddick, 2006). Questions guiding this study are: How do students labeled as having a disability perceive their identities? Have students embraced a pathology of difference in relation to their neuro-normal peers?

All study participants graduated high school at least two years prior to the time of the interviews, but continue to struggle with their identity and with finding their place in society. They seem to be affected by an overwhelming sense of confusion and loss as if they are waiting for life to begin instead of taking charge and making decisions for themselves as responsible adults. They are all too aware of differences, separation, of being outsiders to whom the sharp stings of deficit labeling are still

painful experiences that dominate their school memories. Even years after graduation, these students still keenly feel separation and isolation from having been characterized as disabled. What grows from these interviews is an exploration of identity and the creation of *other* for students with exceptionalities in order to identify how detrimental special education labels are for individuals and society. These labels are not only capricious and inequitably assigned, but children begin to embrace their “pathology” and become situated as “delegitimized” (Hughes, 2012, p. 83) objects of disciplinary power, as Foucault (1975) describes, within an overarching hegemonic system of dominance.

Review of the Literature

Defining Disability

Students classified as having a disability generally fall within several categories of functioning. The majority of students classified for special education services are labeled in one of four high-prevalence categories: learning disability, emotional disturbance, autism spectrum disorder, and intellectual disability. Many individuals within these classifications often exhibit similar characteristics, strengths, and needs, but the “definitions for these disabilities are not now and never have been distinct enough to establish sharp boundaries among and between the categories” (Raymond, 2011, p. 6). My use of the term *learning difference* throughout this paper is my conscious attempt to shift away from traditional deficit-based labels and categorizations and into a new conversation about ability within a larger discourse of diversity (Ashby, 2010).

Truth in Labeling

According to the most current numbers from the National Center for Educational Statistics (DE, 2010), there are approximately 6.6 million students in special education classrooms throughout the United States. Individual states have their own subjective guidelines for referring children to special education and state guidelines are comprised of a vast array of symptoms and definitions. Traditional tropes of identification are largely based on the medical-deficit theory of disability “where often a deficit orientation is taken, and the assumption is that difficulties lie within the learner” (Bourke & Mentis, 2007, p. 321).

Assessment procedures for classifying individuals in special education resemble the normalizing strategy of power in a society which “has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize...it effects distributions around the norm...” (Foucault, 1978, p. 144) and creates a segregated education system. Although IDEA calls for increased use of *Response to Intervention* (RtI) models for identifying students with learning differences, most school districts also continue to implement medical and psychological measures in which a succession of psychoeducational tests are administered and evaluated to determine the presence of a

deficit. If a child is found to have a discrepancy between his or her intellectual quotient and academic achievement, he or she may be judged eligible for special needs services, and then given a prescriptive formula for accommodations and modifications called an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). As Reid and Valle (2004) contend, “the transformation from ordinary schoolchild to disabled individual is now complete” (p. 469).

Special education labels are considered justified and touted for their positive impact on individuals with disabilities. Turnbull, Turnbull, and Wehmeyer (2010) propose labels are necessary to provide appropriate instruction for students. They contend labels serve to increase awareness of specific conditions and may improve understanding of learning differences. Lauchlan and Boyle (2007) discuss how a special education label may lead to more appropriate treatment and assists educators in planning “for the curricular and social needs of children so labeled” (p. 36). Labels may also benefit families through clarification of their child’s difficulties and may give a name to strange or unexplained behaviors. In the current US school system, labels also equate to funding. Federal and state funding are based on how many students fall within specific disability categories in a school district.

There is a darker side of special education placements, however, as a child may be incorrectly referred for special education testing due to economic disadvantages, lack of cultural capital, or misunderstanding of the child’s cultural habits and conduct, rather than recognition of true developmental or behavioral disabilities (Grossman, 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2006). Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, and Sumi (2005) report the majority of students receiving special education services and living in poverty are predominantly African-American and Hispanic and Kincheloe (1999) recognizes “educators mistake lower-socioeconomic-class manners, attitudes, and speech for lack of academic ability” (p. 245).

Rafalovich (2005) discovers teachers often have a great deal of influence in determining the labeling of disruptive students. In his remarkable research on medication for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), he finds the majority of referrals come from school teachers and “provided that parents comply, the ADHD know-how of teachers is integral in moving children down the path to an ADHD diagnosis” (p. 35). In this same study, clinicians commonly saw a child already casually diagnosed by the teacher and sent to a doctor with the expressed intent of obtaining medication only. A teacher alone cannot legally make a determination for eligibility; however, teachers are an integral part of the eligibility team and are often responsible for

completing rating scales that strongly influence the psychologist or clinician in making a diagnosis.

Subjective Constructs of Labels

The standards for eligibility of special education categories are subjective and may paint an unreliable picture of a child's true level of functioning. Kauffman and Landrum (2009) chronicle the difficulty in defining as one of "a nebulous and constantly shifting standard" (p. 25). Sherwin (2003) recognizes speech patterns and slang usage from diverse racial backgrounds may lead to a misapplication of the "emotionally disturbed" label. Aggressive acts are the primary reason for referring a child for special needs testing; however, culturally specific aggression is little understood or tolerated by educators who are predominantly female, European-American, and middle-class. What is acceptable in African-American families may seem deviant to a European-American educator. Eskenazi, Eddins, and Beam (2003) discover disturbing evidence that the New York City public school system refers students for special education services in error or even for punitive measures rather than based upon actual disabilities. This same study identifies these "inappropriate referrals tend to target [B]lack, Hispanic, and low-income students" (p. 25). Their research indicates as few as 15% of the total special education population actually qualifies for services and 53% of those labeled as "emotionally disturbed" are African-American.

Creation of Identity and Labels

Sadly, a child with a disability label may begin his or her school career on a fast track to failure (Harvey, 2001; Keman, Griswold, & Wagner, 2003). Noguera (2003) details how students identified as high risk are more likely to be separated from their mainstream peers through school suspension, detention, or expulsion. He finds the most severe punishments are given both to students with disabilities and those with low socioeconomic status. These exclusionary practices begin as early as the kindergarten years for some children and, once labeled as troublemakers by teachers and administrators, they find themselves marginalized, beginning a journey of exclusion. Robbins' (2008) research on the effectivity of zero-tolerance policies discovers students with special needs are often punished more harshly than their "regular education" peers. Eskenazi, Eddins, and Beam (2003) report students in special education have little chance of returning to the mainstream classroom, and have a significantly lower graduation rate compared to their regular-education peers.

These exclusionary devices are crafted to place blame directly on the student and the family, not on the institution or process responsible for the label. Skrtic (1991) recognizes special education practices are

firmly grounded in the knowledge of medicine and psychology which “presupposes explicitly that school failure is pathological, and implicitly that school organizations are rational” (p. 43). Brantlinger (2004) also articulates a discussion of disability as anchored in confusion over definition of norms: how terms are utilized in an education system that guarantees some will fail and others will thrive.

Apple (2004) argues the use of labeling in education is a vital component of power and social control. Power is most effectively created when the claims of science are given to justify processes of evaluation and surveillance. Warner (1999) discusses how most people desire “individuality...but they want their individuality to be the normal kind” (p. 53). The assumed alternative to normal is abnormal, and individuals do not want to be identified as aberrant. Foucault (1975) chronicles historical processes that lead to the “power of the norm” and impose homogeneity (p. 184). Such power becomes insidious throughout every level of hierarchal organizations and is given authority through the certainty of science as well as deference to those individuals considered scientific experts. When a child is determined eligible for special education services and placed within a specific category of disability, this is accomplished with all the weight of federal and state law and based on evidence from experts. These processes of normalization focus on individual disorders rather than on societal or cultural issues, thus relieving the state from any responsibility in the making of a delinquent by placing blame directly on the victim (Ferguson, 2001).

Critical Questioning

Questioning of labels in special education is not a new concept, as evidenced by the groundbreaking book, *Issues in the Classification of Children* (Hobbs, 1975). Subsequent to the establishment of learning disabilities (LD) as a category of disability, Hobbs (1975) commissions a task force to “undertake a review of the disability classification of children and the negative consequences of labeling and categorization” (Florian et al., 2006, p. 37). This endeavor results in critical questioning of the use of labels and classification of students. Although out of print, Hobbs’ is a compelling and critical voice against disability classification across the fields of education, psychiatry, and medicine. Further, these same issues which prompted Hobbs to initiate his study are still troubling today, and even more crucial due to the wave of increased national standards, high-stakes accountability measures, and formulas for distribution of federal funds to US schools. Legislation which creates school access for students with exceptionalities also prompts researchers and scholars critically to examine how our society classifies those with learning differences, since for decades researchers and professionals have questioned the medical model of labeling students based on deficit rather than on learning difference.

Theoretical Frame

I utilize the Foucauldian concept of normalcy as my theoretical lens to examine self-perceptions of individuals' labeled as having a disability to determine if they embrace a construct of pathology. Foucault (1980) defines power and how it acts within a society to create a subject in order to restrict and control members. Effects of this pathology are to fashion a dependent subject who is viewed as an encumbrance. The "case," now disempowered, believes he or she is without agency. Deficit and blame are placed directly on the individual, and not on an organizational structure which serves to create this pathology. Normalizing judgment constitutes individuals as deviant and any "departure from the norm, the anomaly" (p. 299), is transformed into an "institutional product" (p. 301) stemming from the continuity of society's use of surveillance, control, and discipline. This normalizing judgment then is used as a prescriptive means of control, punishing those who do not conform to the ideal. A "universal reign of the normative" (p. 304) works through multiple arenas to assure some will be rendered docile, subjugated. Control assures a normalization process involving multiple agencies surveying, categorizing, and judging individuals. These institutions; schools, hospitals, prisons, and others work together in a subtle ballet of subjugation Foucault (1995) names the "carceral archipelago" (p. 297). This cluster of interconnected networks becomes "one of the major functions of our society" (p. 304) utilized to assure constant observation, judgment, and discipline. Foucault's model assumes a society of experts brandish their normalizing power for social control.

Within Foucault's (1975) carceral archipelago, schools are the initial arena where children are segregated, tested, labeled, and observed. Scientifically based knowledge of human behavior dictates a behavioral norm. Foucault (1978) chronicles strategies used by those in power to enforce "continuous regulatory mechanisms and corrective mechanisms...[as] it effects distributions around the norm..." (p. 144). During the early decades of the 20th century, the expansion of IQ and achievement tests in public schools confers a new and unique power to education officials in their ability to situate some students within a category of pathology and deficit. Children who perform outside any of the constructed normed parameters are deemed deficient. In modern-day US schools, this is accomplished within the special education referral process. Foucault (1975) further posits "all surveillances presuppose the organization of a hierarchy..." (p. 281), and such surveillance is exquisitely achieved in the IEP which contains a documented history of the child's every misdeed, every poor test grade, and every failure. This documentary evidence has the effect of molding the individual child into

a “case”—an object to be cured—rather than accepting the child as a unique human being.

Methodology

I chose a qualitative approach for this study as it allows participants to respond in their own voices, especially critical for an in-depth description of experiences of individuals with disabilities. Research participants were chosen via purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) and recruited from a group of my former students. Represented in the study are eight young men and women eligible for special education services and given IEPs, and, while in high school, all respondents were educated in a variety of regular and special education classrooms. Participants are identified as having a documented high-prevalence disability which includes Asperger’s Syndrome, Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Other Health Impairments. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine their post-high-school experiences. All participants graduated within the previous five years from a small rural district in the Midwest.

A pseudonym was assigned to each participant and demographic data was determined through self-identification. Ethnicities represented among participants are: African-American, Native American, and European-American heritage. Ages of participants at the time of the interviews ranged from 19 to 22 years old. Every consideration was made to represent the participants’ meanings and perspectives, including my methodological choice to use large data units in order to capture participants’ voice and intent. Individuals with exceptionalities may situate themselves as members of a marginalized group within society, and I determined their voice and perspectives should be emphasized in this study.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Study Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Category of disability	Grade when labeled for special education
Sam	22	European-Am.	Other Health Impaired, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive behavior	1 st
Rick	20	European-Am.	Learning Disabled (Math)	9 th
Billy	22	European-Am.	Learning Disabled (Reading, Writing) & ADHD	3 rd

Table 1: Demographic Data of Study Participants, continued

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Category of disability	Grade when labeled for special education
Stephen	22	African-Am.	Emotionally Disturbed, later changed to Learning Disabled (Reading)	7 th
Britney	21	Native Am.	Intellectual Disability, Later changed to Learning Disability (Reading, Writing, & Math)	2 nd
Francine	22	European-Am.	Asperger's Syndrome	6 th
Charlie	22	European-Am.	Learning Disabled (Writing)	3 rd
Larry	22	European-Am.	Learning Disabled (Reading & Math)	3 rd

Data

Several compelling themes soon echo through participants' voices. Strongly stated through the majority of interviews seems to be an inability to articulate a definition of one's disability classification. Few participants can name the disability label under which they are classified, and most are not able to detail how it influences their academic or social functioning. Many seem to consider their disability as something related only to school, saying since high-school graduation they have outgrown it or no longer need services. The inability to advocate in myriad settings of their post-high-school lives is a constant occurrence, as the majority of participants are not able to elucidate an understanding of the term *self-advocate*, nor are they able to provide a real-life application of the skill. Employment success also varies among participants. At the time of the interviews five of eight participants are unemployed. Themes emerging from study data are perceptions of disability, self-esteem, and impression of difference.

Perceptions of Disability

Some of the most compelling data from this research comes from the question, "Do you know what disability category made you eligible for an Individualized Education Plan?" The majority of participants cannot name the disability category under which they were placed, and

more troubling, they cannot elaborate how that disability affected them in school, on the job, or in social situations. Others reply they have no idea why they were placed into special education, but later in the interview reveal more knowledge of the label. For example, Sam, when asked to identify the disability category that made him eligible for special education his response is, “Not a clue. Mom handled all that. Really. I knew nothing of my...anything whatsoever.” Although he states he never knew about his disability, IEP records show him in attendance at his annual review during all four years of high school. Later in the interview he states he had a private room in college because of his OCD; however, he dismisses it as having nothing but a cursory impact on his life, since “...I never really had any special needs. I did use [it] to get my private room. I told them I did not want to share a shower with anyone because of my OCD.” He then whispers, “technically, a lie.... I played the OCD card. Early on I needed a private room, but now I just play the OCD card because I don’t want to find other peoples’ hairs in my soap.”

During the early stages of the interview, Sam seems to indicate an ignorance of his disability and the impact it has on his life. However, later in the discussion he reveals more self-awareness, although his words are contradictory. As he tells me about his job history and whether he ever discloses his disability to his employers, he says, “I don’t handle anything that, you know, triggers any of my OCD; well nothing much triggers it any more. I am pretty much over it. But back before I was completely over it, I never really...triggered it.”

In contrast to Sam, Billy knows the name of his disability, but understanding the term of his eligibility category does not equate with an understanding of how it affects his academics or behavior. “Um...I guess it would be learning disability. Not technically slow, but I didn’t comprehend things very well, so they said I had a learning disability.” When probed to elaborate further on the meaning of a learning disability he responds, “like sitting here reading something out...like reading the newspaper, I have to sit there and read it over and over again and I wouldn’t comprehend it.” He is also diagnosed with ADHD and discusses needing medication but will not take it because “It made me like a zombie.” As with Rick, Billy situates his identity around his perceived construct of “normal,” placing him as outsider compared to his peers with disabilities.

When I wasn’t on the medication I was still a normal kid. I would be hyper and in and out of the house all the time and doing stuff a normal kid would do. So, that’s what I was. I was just being a normal kid, just more overly hyperactive than most.

Billy uses the word *normal* five separate times throughout our interview when describing himself.

Stephen can name his disability, but cannot fully articulate a definition, "It was a learning disability...I think English, and I think it was...uh, I think that was it." In fact, he was originally labeled as Emotionally Disturbed in the 6th grade by the school district where he lived with his mother. When he moved in with his father in another district I became his case manager and noticed that Stephen had extremely poor reading skills. He was reevaluated in the 9th grade, but was found to be reading at a 1st grade level, so he qualified as Learning Disabled based upon his low reading comprehension skills.

Britney was originally diagnosed in the 2nd grade as Intellectually Disabled (ID) based upon her IQ score of 64. A score in the range of 70–130 is considered to be within the normal span of cognitive ability, with an IQ of 100 being statistically normal. Subsequent re-evaluation in the 6th grade put her IQ at 73, reclassifying her as Learning Disabled. She cannot articulate either label or how those labels affect her life. When asked, "do you know what disability category made you eligible for an IEP?" her response is "I don't remember." Even when prompted, "was it learning disabled or anything like that?" she responds, "No, I don't think so." The other female in the study, Francine, was diagnosed as having Asperger's Syndrome (AS) but, as with Britney, she cannot name her disability, but offers, "I think it was autism, but I'm not sure."

The final two participants also are not able to name their disability or define its impact on their lives. Charlie's response when asked about his disability category is, "I don't know. No one ever told me!" When probed to take a guess as to why he was on an IEP, he responds, "Anger issues...AD/HD...dyslexic." His response is compelling because a year prior to graduation from high school, he was reevaluated and all paperwork shows his signature indicating his presence throughout the entire process and meaning he was in attendance at the meeting where his learning disability was described to him.

The final participant, Larry is the only participant in the study who is married at the time of the interview. Like the majority of respondents, he does not articulate the label of disability until the very end of his interview. When questioned about his special education category he responds, "English...and spelling...writing." Prodded further about special education services he received, he replies, "I had spelling, writing, English." Later in the conversation he reveals a vague understanding of disability, saying "I was slower at learning certain things...if I was reading something myself, I'll understand it better if my wife was to read it to me than if I was to read it myself." At the beginning of the interview he cannot name his disability. Further into the discussion however, he confides information about labels including the statement he has outgrown his learning problems,

I don't feel like I need any help now. I feel like I overcame everything that I had. Everybody has their faults, but I feel like I've changed for the best. I really don't see that I have a problem with anything anymore.

It should be a powerful message to the special education community that this wonderful young man equates a learning difference to being a "fault" or a deficit.

Self-Esteem

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975) Foucault discusses how bodies within social institutions such as schools become an "object and target of power" (p. 136) with the goal of creating a docile body. Schools are "educational spaces" (p. 146) designed to control, supervise and form the docile body. Bourke and Mentis (2007) recognize schools and the continued assessment of students serve as "disempowering and demotivating; something done to rather than with the learner" (p. 319). The disconnect between students and their learning eerily is echoed in Billy's words when he recalls his memories of IEP meetings: "I didn't feel like the meeting was about me. It was *for* me, but not...about me." Bourke and Mentis conclude that children in the special education process become "unmotivated and further marginalized from their own learning" (p. 324). A habit of learned helplessness is formed as docile bodies wait to be directed, instructed, and segregated. Clearly seen within my data is how participants situate themselves within society as docile bodies: passive individuals waiting for opportunities or for someone to direct them in their adult lives. For example, life, according to Sam, seems like a string of random chance over which he has no control. When asked about applying to college, he quickly responds, "I didn't apply. I'm not sure how it happened, [the university] just called me one day and said, 'Hey...you want to attend our university?' I'm not really sure what happened, honestly." He does recall that acceptance to the university was contingent on the results of his American College Testing (ACT) exam, saying "I don't think I ever truly applied, I just kind of mailed off my ACT scores, and they called me after they got my scores. I didn't apply for anything until then."

Foucault's concept of a docile body is evident in Britney's words when she talks about finding a job after high school. She says she went to various child care centers, but asked her mother to fill out the applications for her citing her handwriting as the reason: "Usually mom wrote out the applications because my handwriting is terrible still." She reports several instances of health-related difficulties at her current job because of unreasonable working conditions. Britney admits she does not advocate for herself: "I'm probably not very good at that." She says

the most difficult aspect of the job is “speaking to them and telling them I need to go to the restroom and stuff.” Britney must ask permission to go to the restroom and was hospitalized twice the previous year due to digestive difficulties. Creating a regular lunch and rest schedule necessary for her wellbeing is also overlooked by her boss: “Usually I can’t even ask to make my lunch.” Upon further questioning, she says she does realize that by law they must give her breaks and a lunch time, remaining too afraid to ask, “I asked to go to the restroom or...make my food and sometimes it’s even hard to ask them to make my food.” When she does get a break she is not allowed to leave the room, but eats her meals with the babies in the nursery. During our interview, it is clear Britney does not want to talk about this topic as she became quieter and does not make eye contact until the topic was changed.

At the time of our interview, Francine was enrolled in summer classes in preparation for full-time matriculation at a local community college. She had not considered the necessity for modifications or adaptations in either academics or social contexts at the college and did not know where she could go for help if needed. When asked if she identified her disability to college officials, she says, “Um...I think I did. I’m not positive, but I think I did.” Her continuing dependence on her mother for guidance is evident throughout our interview. When I ask who helped her enroll at school her response, “My Mommy,” is accompanied with a huge smile and shrug of her shoulders. This dependence is again seen when she is asked specifically if she identified her disability to the college student services office. She says, “Pretty sure Mom and I did. I am not positive, but I am pretty sure we did.” She is quite dependent upon her mother to take care of major decisions in her life, referring to her mother forty-nine times during the course of our interview.

Impressions of Difference

As with several participants, Sam equates advocacy of his needs with being singled out from his peers. When asked, “Have you ever needed to self-identify or self-advocate in college?” his response is, “As in ‘Hey look at me. I have a problem?...NO!’” Recalling special education services in high school, Sam alludes to a construction of normalcy in relation to his peers: “I was treated the same as any other mainstream student.” He talks about this *mainstream group* again later in the interview, explaining, “I tried as hard as I could to stay with the mainstream group.” His struggles with identity and conformity are clearly evidenced when he brings up the topic of cliques. When in the 8th grade, Sam moved to the district from which he graduated. “Outsider” is the first label he assigns to himself. Justifying why he feels he did not

quite fit in is “the fact that I was never really a Christian. I was always at best an agnostic and at worse a nihilistic atheist. So, uh, that didn’t help either.” His hierarchy of high-school factions includes “two different kinds of Goths; the ones that were cool and the ones that watched...some loser from MTV.” However, he recalls he did not fit in with them and that, “I got bullied by the Goths too, so I don’t know what the hell their problem was.” Asked how he identified himself in high school, he says, “A nerd, I guess. Gamer? We had our own little group, I suppose.”

It was also clear that, when in high school, Rick did not connect himself with his same age peers receiving special education services. When asked if high school prepared him for the social environment of the workplace, he replies, “If you’re on an IEP, there’s going to be some crazy kids! I really had to learn to deal with kids who were out of their minds or maybe had a little bit of problems.” It is interesting Rick situates himself as an outsider compared to his peers in special education. When asked if he belongs to any social clubs at the community college he attends, he responds, “No. Not any clubs or social groups and any friends I have are people who are as old as my parents.” Even when in high school, he rarely associated with peers his own age, recognizing now that he had always been more comfortable with adults. “For some reason, I always bond with those people! I don’t know why...every time I have a get together it’s at the nursing home!”

When asked what type of special education services he received in high school, Charlie’s response is, “Just the normal classes.” As with Billy, Charlie also situates his identity around a conception of “normal” as revealed when asked how he spends his free time, saying “[I] hang out with friends...all the normal stuff” and he describes how an older friend at work helps him with “life, girls...normal stuff.” Similarly, Larry responds when asked if there is anything that we, as special education teachers, can do to help students with disabilities: “Help them feel more confident about their disability and it’s not a disability, it’s a problem that can be fixed. They shouldn’t feel ashamed...just because other people don’t understand it.” He also connects his special education label to an abnormality or a difference.

Post-high-school transition proves a difficult negotiation for Britney. During the course of our interview, she refers to herself as being “stressed” three times. She does not have a driver’s license and is dependent upon her parents to take her to and from work. Independent living remains a vague, intangible concept for her as she states, “Mom said, I’m not going nowhere, I’m her cleaning lady.” When asked if she is comfortable living with her parents she answers, “Pretty much. Some

days it sometimes gets...stressful because they ask so much from me, but they know I'll do it and I've done it for so long." Asked about living on her own provokes this response: "Maybe...I don't know...someday...but...I'll probably have to pay for that house when they are older and everyone else is gone." Even hopes of having a relationship with a significant other or having children is rejected by Britney: "No...I gave up on that." Probed further as to why at such a young age she has given up on having her own family she responds, "I don't know...I don't know."

Conclusion

I think back to Karl and ask myself what I would tell him now. Would I let him know that, although he possesses above-average intelligence, he nevertheless was segregated into a curriculum that was not as rigorous as his peers' simply because he was born to a single mother in a lower-socioeconomic-status family? Would I tell him he is an object of a disciplinary process that assures there will be a steady stream of unskilled laborers to fill mundane jobs? How do I respond to Britney when she tells me her employer will not let her go to the restroom and she is often denied a lunch time away from the nursery?, or Stephan who says he is looking for "somebody to tell me that I'm okay?" I remain complicit in the process of constructing an identity of deficit. Although I do recognize there exist true biological learner differences, I also recognize the use of a medical-deficit model of disability needs to be eliminated along with special education labels, agreeing with Ferri (2004) who is "not arguing for a unification or homogenization of approaches" (p. 513), but for creating a space where contradictions can co-exist and learner difference is not viewed as a handicap, but simply as a variation. A major paradigm shift in the use and application of labels is needed to prevent the creation of *other* through the misuse of labeling. I hope the findings of this study will provoke continued conversation regarding the use of labels and classification within special education and inspire transformation of education to accommodate diverse learners. As Ruddick (2006) observes, schools seek to contain misbehavior and difference and are too quick to medicate the child or to segregate them rather than examine the environmental and social causes behind the child's actions.

As educators participate in entrenched discourses about normalcy and deviance that have profound consequences for children, there is nevertheless too much power given to schools to arbitrarily determine which children are "maladjusted" and which children are "normal." In her study on the social construction of smartness, Hatt (2012) concludes that, "the institution of schooling is intrinsically connected to smartness

and a key process by which students are sorted, inequities in academic achievement (and treatment) justified, and social power ascribed across students” (p. 457). Framing certain students as *smart* creates the corollary effect of positioning other students into a perceived identity of *deficient*. Teachers are often gatekeepers of a child’s social construction of the term “defective child” (Ruddick, 2006), therefore it becomes our responsibility in special education to recognize the harm labels inflict upon students and stop the cycle of shame and hopelessness. Shepherd and Hasazi (2007) contend this is an issue of social justice, recommending “social institutions...be organized and structured to value and include the experiences and perspectives of all members” (p. 476). As Warner (1999) reports in his study of the political element of sexual shame, “variations from the norm...are not necessarily a sign of pathology; they can become new norms” (p. 58).

Change must to begin at the university. Teacher education programs should stress a truly inclusive classroom where difference is embraced, not condemned. We must educate pre-service teachers and our children that “people are disabled not by any impairment they may have but by the failure of society to recognize and accommodate their needs” (Hart, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2007, p. 499).

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Location and Place: Does ELL Classroom Location Reflect US Claims of Social Justice and Democracy?

Cathleen Skinner, Oklahoma State University

Introduction

In a recent conversation with the English as a Second Language (ESL) coordinator of a mid-sized, lower-socioeconomic community on the periphery of one of Oklahoma's large metropolitan areas, she remarks that the only reason many of the English Language Learner (ELL) kids are still in high school is so they can pass the required eighth-grade reading test, allowing them to get their driver's licenses, after which they drop out of school. Stunned, questions began rolling around in my mind. While many native English-speaking students are deciding which college or post-secondary program to attend and what to major in, why is the biggest academic dream of ELL students passing a reading test so they may obtain a driver's license? Is it just their adolescence? Where is the promise of our education system to prepare these young, unwritten futures to have big dreams and see them through? The obvious discouragement in the coordinator's voice suggests our system has sunk to new levels. Could it be that something in the environment and placement of these students within the school causes them to feel isolated from the community of their high school?

Who has not heard the three most important factors in real estate are location, location, location? Location has both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic facets. The way we describe location can indicate status by describing one location in relation to another, such as "the wrong side of the tracks" or "across the border." Rank and power, and the lack thereof, are intrinsic elements of location (Sundstrom, 1986). Throughout society, one's status marker of location makes a statement. Not only is location a factor within the semi-private spaces of neighborhoods and the public spaces of the professional world and government, it makes a statement inside schools as well. In addition to its physical denotation, the concept of place also carries with it the connotation of a power relation to others in society, as evidenced in the phrase, "knowing one's place."

The emotional and relational aspects of place are intertwined with physical positioning. Location of educational services made available to children who do not speak English or have limited proficiency reveal

society's biases and the place ELL students (also known as Limited English Proficient [LEP] students and English as a Second Language [ESL] students) occupy in spite of legislated promises of equal opportunity. So, while the letter of the law can be interpreted and carefully adhered to with dotted "P"s, crossed "T"s, and ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) language proficiency test scores reported by the October federal deadline, the heart of the law can be broken along with the heart of democracy. The heart of the law is broken by failure to live up to the promises of equal opportunity for borderland crossers simply because of their place in the education system, both physically and socially, and due to funding appropriations and rapid population growth in communities that place ELL students' needs near the bottom of the priority list. The less obvious, less tangible purposes of public education may be less available to ELL students, especially those in middle and high school, including the development of trust and an inclusive feeling leading to positive attitudes and beliefs they have a valued, integral place in American democratic society. ELL students' perceptions of their place in society, reflected in their place within the school building, may be limited because of the quality of education they are receiving: teachers who are not being prepared to—and perhaps do not care to—effectively instruct them, classmates who ridicule and reject them because of their difference and inability to express themselves in a common language, and their physical placement within the school building and district where educational services are located. Miller and Endo (2004) include this anecdotal evidence in their work:

While observing an ESL class, [the researcher] heard a native-English speaking student guest comment that it sounded like he was no longer in America. The teacher was allowing students to communicate in their native languages. The room fell silent, the result of anxiety. (p. 787)

Many students with limited English proficiency also have little "social capital," defined by one educational researcher as "...the presence of parents in the home on a regular basis, parents communicating with their children often, parents monitoring their children, and the number of brothers and sisters enrolled in college, etc...." (Deb-Burman, 2005, p. 7). Many children with immigrant parents live in poverty, their parents working long hours at low wages in order to eek out an existence, providing what they can for their children, depending on the older ones to take care of the younger ones. The negative effects of a life of poverty on both parents and children are innumerable, yet even while many immigrant parents recognize the outcome of the life they are caught in, they see no way out. One of many problematic effects identified by

Robert Slavin (quoted in Smith, Young, & Colt, 2005), psychologist and researcher, is that when children lack the first three measures of social capital defined above, acquisition of their first language is incomplete, thus hindering their ability to learn a second language and plunging them into a borderland without words.

With more than 400 different languages reported among non-native English speaking students enrolled in US public schools, ELL students are overwhelmingly native Spanish-speakers, at 79%. To complete the profile, 2% speak Vietnamese, 1.6% speak Hmong-Chinese, 1% speak Cantonese-Chinese, 1% speak Korean, and 15.4% speak other languages (McKeon, 2005). According to a 2005 report by the National Education Association, the ELL population is the fastest-growing group in US schools. Between the 1990–1991 to 2000–2001 school years, US ELL enrollment rose 105% in comparison with just 12% total growth in student enrollment. During the 2000–2001 school year, 45 school districts across the nation had 10,000 or more ELL students enrolled. Georgia, Mississippi and Montana experienced a more than 50% increase in ELL student enrollment during that time (McKeon, 2005). In addition to the states that traditionally have bilingual education programs serving ELL students (California, Texas, Arizona, New York, Florida, Illinois and Colorado), many states not used to serving ELL students, including Nebraska, North Carolina, and Tennessee, are suddenly faced with the need to educate significant numbers of these students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Compounding this problem, many ELL students who are children of migrant workers have only been exposed to a few years of formal education in their earliest years (McKeon, 2005).

For many engaging in the US educational system means meeting daunting challenges such as a lack of a formal academic education schema, limited family resources, inadequate support from the educational system and a lack of understanding and acceptance verging on being shunned and ridiculed by native English-speaking students, and societal backlash in general. With the US government demanding ELL students reach English proficiency by 2014 (Pelayo & Pachon), with few teachers prepared with effective ESL teaching skills, and with other contributing factors like poverty, Hispanic student drop out rates are four times that of their white counterparts. In 2007 this meant 21% of Hispanic students dropped out of school in contrast to 5.3% of white students (Pelayo & Pachon, 2010). White US citizens commonly believe Spanish speakers are not US citizens when in fact 75% are native-born Hispanics—including the student population of Puerto Rico—classified as ELL (Pelayo & Pachon, 2010).

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), ELL students score far below all others on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the assessment used to compare nations in

ranking educational achievement. The middle school/junior high experience is a pivotal time for all students, but especially for ELL students (Pelayo & Pachon, 2010). While 31% of eighth graders read at grade level and higher, only four per cent of ELL students are able to reach that goal. Additionally, in the 2000 US Census, among eighth graders rated as not proficient in English, only 49% complete their high school education earning a diploma within four years. Among a population considered at risk, especially one so large and ever growing, every measure must be taken including careful thought to the location and environment where ELL students are instructed to ensure they receive an education that will help them succeed and enable them to live beyond the borderland of society (Diener, Wright, Julian, & Bylington, 2003; Kindler, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Vernon Feagans, Scheffner Hammer, Miccio, & Manlove, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

In this paper I examine the concepts of space and place using the theories of Michel de Certeau (1984) and Virginia Woolf (1934), and using Anzaldúa's (2007) construct of a "borderland" in analyzing the physical positioning of ELL classrooms within schools. First, I define space and place using de Certeau's distinctions. I then introduce Woolf's psychological and sociological use of place in *Three Guineas*, followed by a definition of Anzaldúa's borderland construct of location and place. I then analyze the space and place of the positioning of ELL classrooms as a socio-psychological borderland through Anzaldúa's concept of borderland in *La Frontera* and Woolf's concept of an "Outsider Society." Finally, I draw inferences and conclusions on the physical placement of ELL classrooms.

Place and Space

In his work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) approaches from the perspective of the common man in mainstream society to discuss culture as spatial knowledge, revealed within the ways places are described. Spaces inherently tell stories and de Certeau offers evidence of how various aspects of culture and language intersect to establish spatial ordering through practices or procedures of delimitations, or "marking boundaries." He defines place as "...an instantaneous configuration of positions," a "relationship of coexistence" (p. 117). Nothing can be in the same place as defined by location at the same time. Space, on the other hand, includes the intersection of speed, direction, and time of movement. "Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities" (p. 117). Furthermore, the relation between place and space exists in that "space is a practiced place" (p.

117). Place is stable while space is dynamic. de Certeau invokes Merleau-Ponty's separation of the multiple concepts of space and isolates a particular spatiality he calls "anthropological space." This space is an "outside" form of space in which "space is existential' and existence is space" (p. 117), interpreting Merleau-Ponty's perspective as:

...a relation to the world; in dreams and in perception, and because it probably precedes their differentiation, it expresses "the same essential structure of our being as a being situated in a relationship to a milieu"—being situated by a desire, indissociable from a "direction of existence" and implanted in the space of a landscape. (p. 117)

Socio-Psychological Positioning

Bringing the philosophical concepts of de Certeau and Merleau-Ponty into focus in her book *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf, raised among the elite of British society, writes about the sociological and psychological place she lives in, the feeling of lacking in value, unfulfilled desires, of lost dreams and lost hope that the daughters of educated men occupy in the pre-World War II era, a place felt and clearly perceived by disenfranchised groups in current society. Relegated to a velvet prison in the homes of their fathers until they move to another when they married, she calls upon this group of women to form an "Outsiders' Society," and become its members who advocate and support ideologies, or meet social needs, to which women are expected to contribute without having a voice or place in deciding the direction of British society, in contrast to being members of the many "societies" or organizations established among the upper classes of Britain. Yet as de Certeau (1984) describes, Woolf's daughters of educated men are "implanted in the space of a landscape" (p. 117). Membership in society suggests belonging, usually a positive psychological place, but the psychological place of membership in an Outsiders' Society provides just the opposite.

Unable to be employed because it would be unseemly in light of her father's social position, and therefore without money or property, and unable to have any real power or freedom in the life of greater society, the daughters of educated men live in obedience under the authority of father or husband, yet always as outsiders. Woolf (1938) describes how Outsider Society members must realize how much of the world is governed by men's rights, how much is endowed to men in society that has been denied women, and act upon their knowledge:

...the outsider will make it her duty not merely to base her indifference upon instinct, but upon reason. When he says, as history proves that he has said, and may say again, "I am fighting to protect our country" and thus seeks to rouse her patriotic emotion, she will ask herself, "What does 'our

country' mean to me an outsider?" ... She will inform herself of the amount of land, wealth and property in the possession of her own sex and class in the present...in fact belongs to her. (p. 107)

At the time of *Three Guineas*, women cannot own property, and therefore by extension, for all real purposes, do not exist, for again as Merleau-Ponty describes, "space is existential and existence is space" (quoted in de Certeau, 1987, p. 117). While just a bit more than a generation ago women's perspective was forced to come from the heights of the privileged class in a proudly stratified British society, such a stratum is echoed today among those living in the shadowy borderlands of a fiercely defended democratic society, a society that insists "class" is non-existent within its borders while creating a maze for those who are unfortunate enough not to have been born in the right "place."

Borderlands: A Sociological and Psychological Phenomena

While Woolf chooses an epistolary novel to describe the isolated social and psychological place of disenfranchisement once occupied by women in educated British society, advising her sisters and herself to develop indifference, yearning to be able to distance herself from "society" and therefore avoid heartbreak, poverty and injury, Anzaldúa (2005), who grew up in very poor circumstances in the borderlands of Texas and Mexico exposes her self through stories and poems written in a combination of Spanish and English describing living in a similar psychological and sociological space to that Woolf describes. She expresses the place of border culture as "...una herida abierta (an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (p. 25). Anzaldúa continues:

A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (p. 25)

For people like Anzaldúa who come from borderlands, or live in society's borderlands as many limited English proficiency speakers do, whose identities are wrapped in variations of English, and/or other languages, particularly Spanish in the US, they bring the borderland with them. These are the children of immigrants in our ELL classes, children considered at risk of educational failure. In many cases children psychologically never quite leave the borderland, and it is perpetuated within schools. The result is often sociological membership in an outsider's society, forced into a voiceless existence in the borderland's third country.

Locating ELL Students

Casual observation of the conditions and physical locations where some districts provide services to ELL students leads to interest in the consideration of what the implications of location, whether intentional or not, can mean, and its potential ramifications. Of concern in this study is the location of ELL students considering both place and space using Merleau-Ponty's description of anthropological space—the "outside space" that deals with our relationships and existence. Research into the psychology of the physical environment puts into words what we already know: our surroundings and their configuration convey messages. Sundstrom (1986) finds status markers, which include place, can work as supportive elements when they have a functional value or are instrumental in the completion of tasks to help one assume responsibility. In addition he finds status markers play a role in rewarding and supporting individuals. An individual's place in the hierarchy of an institution is symbolically shown through the space that person inhabits and is recognized not only by those inside an organization, but by those on the outside as well (Konar, Sundstrom, Bradley, Mandel, & Rice, 1982; Sundstrom, 1986).

Research specifically conducted within educational environments documents the connection between school and classroom environments and educational outcomes (Chua, Wong & Chen, 2011; Dorman & Fraser, 2009; Fraser, 2006; Fraser & Kahle, 2007; Huang, 2007; Konar, et al., 1982; Sundstrom, 1986; Temons, 2005; Wubbels & Levy, 1993). Some ten specific areas have been investigated, among which are teacher and student perceptions of classroom environment, actual versus preferred environment, the effects of existing variables on the environment such as school types, and the application of environmental instruments used to change classroom life. In reviewing over thirty years of research, Fraser and Kahle (2007) gather together highly significant evidence of a strong connection between classroom environment and students' cognitive and affective development. Specifically their review shows students who perceive their classroom environment positively learn better, regardless of background factors. But is the classroom environment enough?

While students' classroom environments may be positive, their place in relation to the educational institution may isolate them from the rest of the educational society and life of the school. Psychologically isolated by their inability to communicate effectively in English, ELL students often are isolated physically from their English-speaking peers and, by where they receive instruction, placed in a borderland of education. Being isolated from the mainstream in this way speaks volumes about the status of those included in ELL programs, whether or not their treatment proves intentional. During my own classroom

observations in a prosperous area of the Oklahoma City metro, I found ELL students housed within what is normally temporary space, classrooms in trailers behind the school, side by side with other special needs groups.

The way ELL instruction is implemented depends primarily on the English language proficiency of the student, but also the age. Kindergarten and primary grade students are most often mainstreamed into regular classrooms and provided with various levels and types of ESL support. Based on their needs as reflected by their ACCESS-W-APT score (WIDA [World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment] ACCESS Placement Test), they are provided with someone in their classroom who can assist them: a bilingual paraprofessional, aide, tutor or translator, or given differentiated instruction from the classroom teacher and receiving language development instruction in small groups with an ESL specialist who conducts a push-in or pull-out program totaling between one hour and five hours per week. Decisions concerning the amount of time students spend with an ESL Specialist are suggested by the state, but determined at the district level. Principals are responsible for assigning the actual location and furnishing the space where an ESL Specialist meets with children who depend on his or her help. Some principals hold to the same standard of quality when furnishing ELL spaces as they do for regular classrooms. In some districts, the ELL Program Coordinator may assist the principal and ESL Specialist with providing elements believed to enhance instruction.

At the secondary level, the same allowances and restrictions on space found among elementary schools also apply. Middle school- and high school-aged students are placed in a Newcomer class if they fall within the lowest range of the ACCESS-W-APT. In these classes, students are quite isolated from native speakers of English and more proficient ELL students, and their instruction focuses on communication and building language skills through curriculum-based instruction. Depending on the program and instructor, the language of instruction may be in the student's native language, if the instructor is bilingual, or primarily in English. The next step on the ladder is sheltered core curriculum, with a heavy emphasis on developing academic language. As ELL students' language skills improve, they are moved into mainstream curriculum content classes and usually take an English/Language Arts elective that continues to focus on building academic vocabulary and solidifying their English language proficiency for academic purposes. However, of great interest and concern, Gandara and Rumberger (2006) find in 2005 among California's tenth-grade ELL students, 60% are able to pass the yearly mandated California English Language Development Test at the early advanced or advanced level of English proficiency, yet only 3% of these same students are able to pass

the state's English Language Arts test. Their "findings suggest that there are [widely] varying standards of language proficiency" (Pelayo & Pachon, 2005, p. 24).

While the language instruction ELL students receive may follow good practices, and offer engaging classroom environments, ELL students nevertheless are in danger of remaining outsiders because of their placement in a borderland environment. When I investigated the landscape of ELL classes, ELL coordinators in most districts surveyed—regardless of socioeconomic status or size—have been quick to assure me ELL students in their districts are receiving equal treatment to native English speakers. Nevertheless, spaces away from mainstream activity and social interaction are being made into learning environments: an office, a corner of a library, an-out-of-the-way classroom, or a portable outside and at a distance from the main building. Such spaces further isolate students who already feel isolated because of an inability to make their voice heard in the language of the community and their inability to become members of any society other than an outsiders' society, isolated because they so often look different and sound different, and isolated because their families pull them out and move on. Districts maintaining the placement of ELL services in spaces away from the mainstream and in borderland locales may appear to be done for logical reasons—most of which are rationalized based upon lack of space due to overcrowding. In one of the fastest-growing, rapidly changing demographic suburban districts surveyed, when I ask about classroom accommodations for ELL students, the ESL coordinator quickly comments, "Well we're growing, and we just have to find space wherever we can. We've turned a closet into the office for the ESL Specialist, and she meets with her students there, but it has everything." Tied to these psychological and sociological concepts of place and space, of dream and perception, of living as outsiders, in the introduction to the third edition of *La Frontera*, in a tribute to Anzaldúa following her death, Julia Alvarez (2007) describes the dilemma faced by many in immigrant communities:

Racially different, we could not blend in, even if we tried. Mobility allowed us to maintain our connection to our native cultures and countries and language, so our old homelands were still a part of our new selves. But by being here, that homeland had also undergone a change within us. We could not go back. We did not fit there; we did not fit in here. We were caught between worlds, a no man's land.... (p. 10)

Those in society who experience a forced exile, or choose it, exist in both psychological and sociological borderland, on the fringes, in the margins beyond the movement of the established members of the

society and community around them: a dangerous place indeed. “The very word ‘society’ sets tolling in memory the dismal bells of a harsh music: shall not, shall not, shall not. You shall not learn; you shall not earn; you shall not own; you shall not—” (Woolf, 1938, p. 105).

Analysis

“The marginal man...is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures...his mind is the crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and, either wholly or in part, fuse” (Park quoted in Stonequist, 1937, p. 8). When faced with the causes behind so many ELL students becoming dropouts, especially among Hispanic students, one must ask if the location of ELL classrooms contributes to this societal problem. While Slavin and Cheung (2005) point out the teacher and his or her instructional practices have the greatest effect on students’ success, included in the realm of instructional practices are the dynamics of the classroom which, in the case of ELL instruction, can include place. “The most effective (ELL) programs used cooperative learning, extensive vocabulary instruction, and rich literature” (p. 247), yet they strongly suggest motivation in learning can be related to social environmental factors, such as location, and that intrinsic, autonomous motivational environments lead to the fulfillment of psychological needs, including achievement and competence. As students internalize external controls, they are more likely to succeed (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). Following an opposing train of thought, in learning environments that students perceive as negatively controlling, such as a psychological borderland, where they are unable to have choices, where they feel they have to compete, or the environment is unpredictable, they may perceive the environment as hostile, and react through negative or amotivational behaviors resulting in failure in the academic environment. Miller and Endo (2004) discuss the role of anxiety in language acquisition for ELL students, providing this story:

Chris Carger shares this story about Alejandro, a Mexican-American boy, who was a student in a predominantly Latino Catholic school in Chicago. While the teachers and administrators never overtly stated that they thought their students were inferior, they treated them as if they were. Mrs. Wright, Alejandro’s homeroom teacher often used a demeaning tone when she spoke to the students. She didn’t allow them to ask questions, nor to think on their own. Many of her assignments included content to which her students could not relate. For example, one task that the students were asked to complete was to describe going to the dentist. Many of Mrs. Wright’s students had never been to the dentist. When a lack of

background knowledge that is needed to complete an assignment or to learn new information is added to language difficulties, students experience a heavy “cognitive load,” which is usually lightened if the students are at least able to draw on their own experiences and knowledge. Mrs. Wright’s students did not have this opportunity. (pp. 788–789)

As I discuss, social environmental factors include location because the perception of location is a status marker and therefore can effect autonomous motivation, considered among the keys ideal to success in academics and beyond to American society.

With regard to non-discrimination and equal opportunity, does the US educational system include physical location of services provided to ELL students? Could one of the factors contributing to the dropout rate be an environment that promotes isolation, including the location of their ELL classrooms and, as Woolf (1938) writes, foster at best indifference? Does the placement of ELL students in such environments demonstrate the inclusive equality of treatment and live up to the promise that American society and the school system claim to provide?

Conclusion

Perhaps a bridge between the past of the old world, so to speak, and the new world can be built over the borderland. One ingenious model that has been tried and benefits both Limited English Proficiency students and native monolingual English-speaking students is Bilingual Education, particularly the Dual-Immersion model (Thomas & Collier, 2002). This model benefits both native-English speakers in learning a second language, and Limited English Proficiency students in acquiring English. It is the perfect marriage, providing both sets of language learners with accurate models, increased interaction and context. It supports the English Language Learners, providing them with much needed validation and power, bringing them into the mainstream, making them valuable members of the community while they develop both social and academic language skills. It provides a qualified teacher the optimal student group with which to use proven best practices for second language acquisition, providing an inclusive, motivating environment for second language acquisition and academic achievement that promises to build future multilingual leaders for American society.

In conclusion, research shows what kinds of teaching strategies and learning environments are needed to provide a quality education for ELL students and enable them to become contributing members of our democratic society. Many voices are crying to be heard, and advocates are needed for the voiceless and placeless among ELL students. It is time for governmental and educational leaders across the country to take

a stand and fulfill the promise education offers all its students by preparing qualified teachers and providing a place for effective bilingual education—healing the wounds and mending the heart of American democracy.

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Mexican American Civil Rights Leaders and Discrimination in South Texas Schools

Martha May Tevis, University of Texas–Pan American

When the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin was named for Dr. George I. Sánchez (1906–1972) in 1995, many Mexican Americans did not recognize his name, especially young people. However, long before 1995 he had been called “Padre de la Raza” (Father of La Raza) by Dr. Hector Garcia, founder of the American G.I. Forum.¹ In 1984 a retrospective honoring him at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law cited him as the single most influential individual in securing equal rights through law for Mexican Americans. His fight for equal rights began in his native New Mexico in the 1930s and continued in Texas through the 1940s until his death in 1972. When George I. Sánchez wrote his master’s thesis in Educational Psychology in the early 1930s on the use of IQ tests with Spanish-speaking children, he produced a document that would result in his reputation as an expert witness in most cases of discrimination concerning Mexican American children in Texas public schools. His influence on and mentoring of Mexican American attorneys and examples of his strategic advice to them are the subject of this paper.

The Delgado Case

After World War II, Civil Rights began to be seen as an issue that could no longer be ignored in the United States. Most people associate the cause of equal rights with African American citizens, but the Mexican American community also began to fight more and more fiercely for their children’s right to an equal education. During the 1940s Roger Baldwin, head of the ACLU, suggested Sánchez contact A. L. Wirin, who had won a famous California discrimination case, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946). Sánchez and Wirin collaborated on many other legal concerns and the Westminster case influences the development of his “class apart” theory. In 1948 the Delgado suit, which Sánchez researched and helps to orchestrate and finance through grants, results in the State Board of Education in Texas

adopting a policy against discrimination on the basis of one's Spanish surname. While the ruling does not change things overnight, it does provide a policy that can be cited in future court cases where Mexican American children have been segregated as "a class apart."² Before this time, plaintiffs assumed suits were only able to be brought against the local school district and not against the state. State Board members and the Commissioner were willing to make a deal to have their names dropped from the suit.

In a second strategy used in this case Sánchez in a 1968 letter to a MALDEF attorney advises, "Ask for \$1.00 damage against each defendant. Good trading point. Scares hell out of them. If you can get \$1.00, you can amend, if they appeal, and ask for \$100,000, or any figure."³

A third strategy is more political when he advises, "If you put the Attorney General on the spot, he will back down (politics) if it would make him look bad. And, you know, the AG can't appear to be anti-Mexican. The Delgado case took 15 minutes in Rice's court."¹

In future cases Sánchez would use the *Delgado* case and others to build a legal barrier against the practice of discrimination with one case frequently serving as precedent for the next case in a carefully reasoned plan of attack. Sánchez gives the attorneys strategic advice and is provided funding through the American Association of Spanish Speaking Peoples organization which has a grant from the Marshall foundation. Three of the cases with which Sánchez is involved in the 1950s and to which he frequently refers in his correspondence are *Herminio Hernandez et al. v. Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District*, *Trinidad Villareal et al. v. Mathis Independent School District*, and *Diego Chapa, a minor, et al. v. Odem Independent School District*.⁴

In writing to Simon Gross of the Robert Marshall Civil Liberties Trust, Sánchez informs him that two suits involving segregation, in Driscoll and Mathis ISDs, have been resolved. Both suits are similar to Delgado. Sánchez replaces the original lawyers in the Driscoll and Mathis cases with James De Anda and Gus C. García⁵ because he is "afraid that the original lawyers were going to lose for lack of preparation."⁶ These new lawyers proceed to win the Driscoll case and "negotiate an out of court settlement that gave plaintiffs all they had asked for in the complaint"⁷ in the Mathis case. Sánchez is cited as an authority in the pre-trial memorandum.⁸

Driscoll, Texas ISD

Both George I. Sánchez and attorney James De Anda⁹ visit the Driscoll and Mathis school districts. In Driscoll they find that all "Latin" children have to spend at least two years in the first grade and are placed there solely on the basis of their inability to understand

English.¹⁰ Also, “all children of Latin American or Mexican descent [are segregated] in the first and second grades and for a period of three or four years for alleged language deficiency.”¹¹ Tempers evidently ran high as a story in the *Austin-American* newspaper reports. The school district responds to the suit by filing “a counter suit for an injunction requiring the plaintiff parents to speak only English in the presence of their children”¹² In a May 1956 letter to De Anda, Sánchez states:

The entire Driscoll argument is based on their *assumption* that it is pedagogically proper to base the grouping and promotion of children on whether they “understand the English Language” (whatever that means!).

He goes on to expand his statement, questioning the actions of the Driscoll administrators and teachers. His declarations along with a few direct questions here and there provide De Anda with insights regarding teaching and learning unlikely known by an attorney. This knowledge allows De Anda to question the defense’s arguments and frame some of his own based on sound pedagogical principles.

Mathis, Texas ISD

In this case Sánchez finds there are two schools in the Mathis district: one school referred to as the “New Elementary” and the other as the “Old Elementary” school. “All first grades [are] 100% Anglo, [and] there [are] 100% ‘Latin’ sections of all other grades except Eighth in the ‘New Elementary.’”¹³ The “Old Elementary” is 100% Latin and the “New Elementary” has a full day session while the “Old Elementary” has half-day sessions for all except the third grade.¹⁴ When Sánchez, as expert witness, asks how the sectionalizing was determined, he is told it is based on achievement tests, but school authorities admit there was no “cutting score...that ‘various other factors’ were taken into account.”¹⁵ This instance of segregation is especially blatant since the two schools share the same campus and the same geographical attendance area.¹⁶

The Mathis suit was a risky one to try in court because the school board based its separation of children on test scores, and Sánchez is afraid

...a court might side with the school board in the exercise of its discretion in the assignment of children on the basis of tests...[and, as he said, by negotiation of an out of court settlement, they] won as much as [they] could have won in court without the risk or cost.¹⁷

The Mathis case is a good example of Sánchez the advisor and strategist. De Anda takes seriously the assessment by Sánchez that the case is too risky to try in court. Additionally, Sánchez the strategist can be seen in

the negotiated settlement via the board-adopted resolution. Sánchez's advice and strategy save the setback and embarrassment of losing in court while simultaneously creating a long-term commitment with the organization to greater equity in the education of all children.

The negotiated settlement includes a resolution by the school board affirming its commitment to serving all students without regard for "national origin or native language."¹⁸ The resolution states there will be no more separate schools for "children of Mexican or Latin descent,"¹⁹ home language will not serve as a criterion for first year school placement, there will be no more segregated sections within schools, a normal first grade curriculum will be provided for first graders of Mexican or Latin descent, placement will be on a "first come, first serve basis" for all children, and those enrolling late will be placed in various sections, not segregated in one. While not a court victory, the settlement proves rich with long-term impact.

Odem, Texas ISD

A third school discrimination case takes place twenty years later, *Diego Chapa, et al. vs. Odem Independent School District*. This case illustrates how, while many changes may have occurred since the previous cases and *Brown v. the Board [Topeka]* decision, for some Mexican American children, the fight for equality continues. In July 1967 Dr. Sánchez writes to James De Anda with whom he had worked on the two previous cases responding to De Anda's request he review the pre-trial brief in *Diego Chapa, et al. vs. Odem Independent School District*. Sánchez's reply is illustrative of the type of argument he uses in testifying as an expert witness and for advising attorneys through the years concerning students' grouping, language, testing, and retention:

In Defendant's motion...a most damaging admission is made; that 35 out of 105 children who will be in the First Grade in the Fall are repeating that grade (presumably some for more than the first time). There is something radically wrong with a school system wherein one-third of the First Grade children are repeaters.... This would suggest that the school; makes virtually no effort, or no effort at all, at remedial teaching for children—or that those efforts are highly misguided and indefensible.... All of this should be heavily underscored if the repeaters are predominately children whose home language is Spanish.

The proposed testing and classification program is, as you have pointed out, just another way at arriving at segregation...to sectionalize the children, at first, on the basis of chronologic age is farcical on its face. If they are kept two or more years in

the First Grade, or if they are not brought into the school at age 6, they will be of course older than the children who enroll at 6!

The testing program proposed to remedy this disastrous mode of initial classification is equally farcical. To apply the Gates Reading Test to children who are not proficient in English, and who do not know and *are not expected to know* how to read, is a brutal perversion of pedagogy.... Sectionalizing children in the elementary school is hazardous at best, and easily challenged—unless the groupings are heterogeneous (random) ones. It is only *intra*-class that we are justified in “homogeneous” groupings in the elementary school.

The stress placed on tests, and the percentages of children to be assigned to grade sections is a pseudo-scientific way of assigning children arbitrarily and capriciously....

These people in Odem are clinging desperately to the idea that English and education are synonymous, and are overlooking the obvious fact that these Spanish-speaking children are normal children and that their knowledge of Spanish is a natural cultural resource that should be cultivated. It is not a handicap.²⁰

The court order came quickly on July 28, 1967. Previous court cases paved the way for the speedy execution of justice in this situation. The court found that segregation did indeed exist and rules the school district is to be “permanently enjoined from maintaining separate classes and/or sections of classes on the basis of ethnic or national origin, and from discrimination...against students of Mexican extraction...”²¹

Donna, Texas ISD

In addition to court cases, Sánchez gives advice to attorneys who lack the resources to take a school district to court. An example of this type of advice can be seen in correspondence between Dr. Sánchez and R. P. “Bob” Sánchez, an attorney in McAllen. Bob Sánchez met George I Sánchez as an undergraduate; he has an ongoing correspondence with Dr. Sánchez (no relation) until the latter dies. Dr. Sánchez uses six legal-sized pages in response to a letter from Bob Sánchez concerning the Donna, Texas school district. Dr. Sánchez, in a vivid example of how he advises attorneys, states:

- In the first place, are you sure that only Mexicans (all Mexicans (?)) are being given the tests? If so this is discrimination and segregation on the face of it....
- Assuming this is an honest operation: Why in hell is a separate school, on a separate campus, called for? Retarded children do not require special physical facilities...!

- Still assuming that this is an honest operation: presumably something *special* is to take place in the segregated school—special facilities, special teachers, special procedures (say classes of less than twenty). What *special* provisions are being made? *Have them list them.* What makes the teachers “special?” Why cannot these special features be made available in the regular school or schools?
- They are assuming that every child should be up to “grade average.” *This is a most elementary error.* ... It is perfectly normal for some children to in a given class to be two (sometimes more) grades below normal and for some to be two (sometimes more) grades above normal. That, indeed, is how we arrive at the very concept of “normal.”

He goes on to point out that the board members have created a situation which they have convinced themselves is in the best interests of the students and which keeps their consciences clear from recognizing blatant segregation. School administrators are considered no better since they do not stand up to the board on behalf of the wellbeing of students.

Bob Sánchez replies that, as a result of George I. Sánchez’s advice, the situation is improving in Donna. He continues:

In closing let me say something that comes from the bottom of my heart. I clearly remember that at a GI Forum Convention held in Austin years ago good ole rambunctious Hector Garcia got up and named you “Padre de la Raza!” You know something—he was not wrong! It is a good feeling to many of us “out in the field” to know that we can always go to a man of caliber and integrity like you for a huddle before we take a crucial step in the social world.²²

These examples of his actions and the content of his correspondence illustrate how the educational opportunities for all persons of Mexican heritage have been greatly enhanced through the lifelong contributions of George I. Sánchez. For over four decades he devoted himself, frequently at great personal sacrifice, to ensuring that future generations would have equal rights.

Sánchez’s points regarding the situation in Donna ISD are as relevant today as when they were issued. Our sensitivity to marginalized groups has increased, but many of our practices remain repressive such as the push for “English Only” in some states and the repressive treatment of immigrants who have been here since shortly after birth and know no other home. Sánchez’s list provides an excellent starting point for an internal or external assessment of practices that might inhibit the equal educational opportunity for all. New activists would do well to study his work in the field of equity.

Though not an attorney himself, Sánchez serves as an advisor to several of attorneys in various civil rights cases that emerge during his lifetime. In some instances he is directly involved in a case, such as Delgado, and so is able to offer his advice directly to the court. At other times, Sánchez is not directly involved in the litigation; however, attorneys who are directly involved in these cases seek his advice. Consequently, even when Sánchez is not directly involved in the litigation, the influence of this expertise as an educator and strategist is prominent. Much like a winning coach, he does not play the game, but makes sure that those who do play have the knowledge and skills necessary to play well and win. In fact, in the Driscoll and Mathis cases, he even picks the players for that particular engagement when he replaces the original attorneys with James De Anda and Gus C. Garcia.

As important, and perhaps the best actions for today's Mexican Civil Rights Leaders to emulate, are Sánchez's strategic perspective in his advice and actions. For example, his use of previous cases to argue precedent for current and future cases demonstrates his methodical building of a foundation of a carefully reasoned plan of attack. Another example of his strategic perspective can be seen in his emphasis on effecting policy over extracting a monetary judgment in case settlements. For example, in Delgado, the State Board of Education adopts a policy against discrimination on the basis of surname and in the Mathis case, while it is settled out of court, the important element for Sánchez is the adoption of a resolution by the Mathis School Board that states there will be no more separate schools for "children of Mexican or Latin descent." His strategic perspective here clears the way for future complaints to be argued with greater ease. Courts have not been kind to entities that violate their own policies, so by working to put policies and resolutions in place, Sánchez provides for the equitable treatment of Mexican American children in schools for generations to come.

A final example of his strategic perspective is his focused argument style that hit educators "where they live." In this regard, he provides litigators with educational arguments to counter educational arguments. As an expert in testing, grouping practice, and best pedagogical practices, he is able to help litigators find the "devil in the details" of their own arguments. This is vividly portrayed in his exchanges with James De Anda and R. P. "Bob" Sánchez.

Sánchez's short-term wins are specifically engineered to achieve a long-term goal. By settling the Mathis case out of court he demonstrates his understanding of losing now in order to provide for bigger wins in the future. Sánchez advises De Anda and Garcia to give up immediate gain in order to gain positioning for future wins. As noted earlier, the settlement itself rings of positional decision making in that the adoption of the resolution sets the context for future actions.

While marches and boycotts can claim the attention of many, their focus is often short-lived. Today's social justice advocates would do well to examine the life of George I. Sánchez and model his actions as an individual that used his knowledge and expertise strategically to affect long-term change. Today's social justice advocates will find powerful lessons on how to create both short- and long-term influence for the civil rights of others if they but study the life of Dr. George I. Sánchez, truly the "Padre de la Raza."

Endnotes

- 1 Robert "Bob" Sánchez, interview by author, 11 June 2007.
- 2 *Minerva Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, et al.* (Civil Action No. 388), District Court of the United States, Western District of Texas, Final Judgment; *Illegality of Segregation of Spanish-Speaking Children Recognized by Texas State Board of Education*, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.
- 3 George I. Sánchez to Mario Obledo, 15 October 1968.
- 4 All three cases were filed in the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division.
- 5 Gustavo "Gus" Garcia later was one of the lead attorneys in *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954), the first case concerning Mexican American rights to go before the US Supreme Court.
- 6 George I. Sánchez to Simon Gross, 19 August 1957, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Plaintiff's Pre-Trial Memorandum: *Herminio Hernandez et al. v. Driscoll C.I.S.D.* (Civil Action N. 1384) and *Trinidad Villareal et al. v. Mathis I.S.D.* (Civil Action No. 1385), District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division, [no date], Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 9 De Anda later was a founder of Texas Rural Legal Aid and was also cofounder of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). In 1979 he became the second Mexican American to be appointed a federal judge. President Carter appointed him to the US District Court of the Southern District of Texas.
- 10 George I. Sánchez to James De Anda, 28 October 1955, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.

- 11 *Herminio Hernandez, et al. vs. Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District, et al.* (Civil Action File No. 1384), Plaintiff's Reply to Defendant's Brief, United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division, [no date], Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 12 "UT Professor Testifies on Segregation Changes," *Austin American*, 1 November 1956. Photocopy located in George I. Sánchez's private papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 13 George I. Sánchez to James De Anda, 28 October 1955, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 14 "Complaint to Enjoin Violation of Federal Civil Rights and for Damages," *Trinidad Villarreal et al. vs. Mathis Independent School District et al.* (Civil Action No. 1385), District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division, [no date], Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 15 Sánchez to De Anda, 28 October 1955, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 George I. Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 7 May 1957, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 18 "Resolution Adopting Policies and Administrative Procedures Concerning Students of the Mathis Independent School District," October 1956, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 George I. Sánchez to James De Anda, 7 July 1967, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
- 21 *Diego Chapa, a Minor, et al. vs. Odem Independent School District*, ORDER (Civil Action No. 66-C-92), District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division, 28 July 1967, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Library.
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Anna Julia Cooper's Theory of Re-Education: Reconciling the Law of Reason and the Law of Love

Goldie Thompson, University of Oklahoma

Introduction

The “Law of Love” and the “Law of Reason,” as expressed in Anna Julia Cooper’s *A Voice from the South*, are used as tools of *voice* in promoting the necessary components for positive social interaction within a nation full of race, gender and class prejudice. The Law of Love, which requires care and concern for an individual, as well as the Law of Reason, which necessitates a rational and logical approach to individual actions, work together to promote a unified and just society.

Cooper’s *voice* is essential in illuminating injustice and pointing out the weakness of the foundation on which it stands. Her approach to improving society and helping to advance the human condition is forthright. She uses *reason* to provide a logical argument for pursuing a course of action that promotes the common good of society. She also incorporates *love* to show an aspect of nurturance that is indicative of strength—another necessary component for the good of society. Cooper attempts to reconcile the two—the Law of Love and the Law of Reason—through explicit language that pairs the two to work in conjunction with one another instead of in opposition.

Cooper, by focusing on the feminine Black voice in America, offers her audience a model that may be used to better understand the power of voice in response to oppression and subjugation. Through the lens she creates, she observes her own social condition and exercises critical thought to determine how to improve not only the position of the Black woman, but also that of the Black race and women in general. In her opening essay, Cooper underscores the significance of the role women play in providing the essential foundation for and fruitful propagation of the nation. She boldly states:

...the position of woman in society determines the vital elements of its regeneration and progress...not because woman is better or stronger or wiser than man, but...because it is she who must first form the man by directing the earliest impulses of his character.¹

One sees her adherence to the vital notion of feminine strength in developing the foundation of a society. In an effort to diminish social ills, her implication is that women must observe their role in this process.

Though Cooper approaches her work from an oratorical standpoint, the content of her essays has philosophical validity. This philosophical content, embedded throughout the text, is expressed as a theory of re-education. Her theory brings women and men together to learn to hear one another's voices and to project their own voices to reconcile the Law of Reason with the Law of Love. Because characteristics associated with love are attributed to femininity, and those associated with reason, masculinity, there is an assumption that love has no place among social, political or educational spheres in which men dominate. However, Cooper composes a valid argument showing that the Law of Love has an explicit place beside the Law of Reason: to advance society.

A Voice from the South is indicative of a philosophy of education that is both ethical and political. Cooper's application of voice to her ideology reveals what it means to be an educated person and lead a good life, and it stresses what is important in making a society just. These three components she weaves into a seamless argument using the Law of Love and the Law of Reason to validate her claims of authenticity.

I interpret Cooper's text as an appropriate vehicle for a philosophy of education that has an ethical and political curriculum at its base. In an effort to show how such a curriculum is supported by love and reason, I interpret how Cooper applies these terms. She characterizes love as exemplary of such attributes as mercy, peace, care, nurturance, kindness and empathy, whereas reason she characterizes as truth, rightness, logic, intellect, and intelligence. Cooper convincingly argues the two together—love and reason—are necessary to improve civilization. In so doing, she employs the Law of Love and the Law of Reason using the power of her voice to endorse their significance to society.

A Theory of Re-Education

To fulfill their hegemonic desires and maintain economic, political and social control within society, White males have instituted a process of withholding education from Blacks and women. Before, during and after the nineteenth century, theirs is an intentional practice used to keep both Blacks and women in specific functional roles, subjugating them to unfair and unjust practices. Still, in spite of this divisive system, Black males historically fare better in pursuing and obtaining an education than their female counterparts. Thus, patriarchal domination was prevalent in both Black and White communities. It is in opposition to this systemic custom that Cooper expresses support for the education of women.

For Cooper women's higher education is important to their self-empowerment, personal success and intellectual capacity. Education affords women the tools and knowledge to develop intellectual agency for societal contribution. Cooper's support is clear:

...intellectual development, with the self-reliance and capacity for earning a livelihood which it gives, renders woman less dependent on the marriage relation for physical support (which, by the way, does not always accompany it). Neither is she compelled to look to sexual love as the one sensation capable of giving tone and relish...to the life she leads. Her horizon is extended. Her sympathies are broadened and deepened and multiplied.²

Here, Cooper rails against the societal norm that insists woman's place is in the home. She disregards common stereotypes depicting women as mere instruments of men's pleasure and explicitly promotes women's viability as recipients of a formal education.

Her suggestion has strong implications for coeducation because it calls for removing attention from a male-centered sphere and placing it into a context in which women have a space to engage in learning. Cooper strategically illustrates the significance of love and reason in order to illuminate the possibilities for both male and female intellectual growth. She eloquently articulates:

...it is the prevalence of the Higher Education among women, the making it a common everyday affair for women to reason and think and express their thought, the training and stimulus which enable and encourage women to administer to the world the bread it needs as well as the sugar it cries for; in short it is the transmitting the potential forces of her soul into dynamic factors that has given symmetry and completeness to the world's agencies. So only could it be consummated that Mercy, the lesson she teaches, and Truth, the task man has set himself, should meet together: that righteousness, or *rightness*, man's ideal,—and *peace*, its necessary "other half," should kiss each other.³

Here we see how Cooper stresses the vital role women play in promoting the virtues of mercy (as indicative of love) and how mercy can be conjoined with the male ideology of truth (as indicative of reason) to cultivate an environment conducive to societal advancement for both sexes.

Implicit in her message is the educative significance for the formal curriculum; what it means to be an educated person changes in scope.

Religion, science, art, economics, have all needed the feminine flavor; and literature, the expression of what is permanent and best in all of these, may be gauged at any time to measure the strength of the feminine ingredient. ...you will not find the law of love shut out from the affairs of men after the feminine half of the world's truth is completed.⁴

What implications does such a message have for males who engage in formal education along with females? It is Cooper's intent to show that reason in conjunction with love will be that much more beneficial toward social progress. Apparent here is the educative purpose for which Cooper exercises her power of voice.

Thus, Cooper stresses the Law of Love not as tangential to reason but rather as influential or complementary to it. Love is the foundation that nurtures human existence and social interaction. To affect change in a patriarchal domain Cooper enlists the voice of reason to admonish her audience to recognize and alleviate practices that perpetuate oppressive injustices toward Blacks, women and the lower classes. Love is a necessary ingredient to motivate positive dispositions in this process. Pressing for social change in allowing the education of females and Blacks, Cooper states:

All I claim is that there is a feminine as well as a masculine side to truth; that these are related not as inferior and superior, not as better and worse, not as weaker and stronger, but as complements—complements in one necessary and symmetric whole.⁵

It is amazing to see Cooper's deep understanding of the role education might play in moving, not only people of her race, but all men and women toward progress. Fortright in her argument about achieving progress in society and bettering the human condition within a nation of oppressive domination, she emphasizes education as a major factor in addressing oppressive domination. She states:

Education is the word that covers it all—the working up of this raw material and fitting it into the world's work to supply the world's need—the manufacture of men and women for the markets of the world... Education, then, is the safest and richest investment possible to man.⁶

Understanding that education is a privilege allowed men and denied women, her tenacity to continue the struggle for her own place among academic scholars deserves great applause. Cooper's sentiment regarding human progress is exact: "I believe in allowing every longing of the human soul to attain its utmost reach and grasp."⁷

Ethical Aims of Education

Ethics is a framework of principles which inform what one should do in terms of what is right and what is wrong. Cooper is astute in acknowledging the twisted dispositions and behaviors of Whites as they claim Christian principles but act in opposition to those principles when relating to specific groups. The Christian religion dictates love is the most prized virtue and, Christianity being the dominant religion of those within American society, love should be exercised as such. The New Testament is of extreme importance to Cooper as it mandates one is to “love thy neighbor.” During Cooper’s time period, this edict was neither embraced nor exemplified in American society, and the dominant classes were not willing to embrace this biblical principle. She ardently states:

A conference of earnest Christian men have met at regular intervals for some years past to discuss the best methods of promoting the welfare and development of colored people in this country. Yet, strange as it may seem, they have never invited a colored man or even intimated that one would be welcome to take part in their deliberations.⁸

She goes on further to state Black women are excluded in much the same fashion.

Cooper contends that to achieve the pinnacle of goodness or a good life, one must adhere to the true principles God commands. Again she refers to the Law of Love and the Law of Reason to support her claims of mutuality and collective respect:

We need men and women who do not exhaust their genius splitting hairs on aristocratic distinctions and thanking God they are not as others; but earnest, unselfish souls, who can go into the highways and byways, lifting up and leading, advising and encouraging with the truly catholic benevolence of the Gospel of Christ.⁹

Thus, Cooper argues for equality in religious practice. In essence characterizing love as an internal motivator for action-centered approaches that promote the societal advancement of marginalized groups. Cooper offers justification (or reason) as to why love is necessary—if nothing else, it is the right thing to do because Christianity demands it.

Further support of Cooper’s convictions can be found in sentiments expressed by Joan Goodman and Howard Lesnick who assert that a good life is reflective of one’s personal aspirations as well as our commitments to those around us. In other words, we must learn to live and operate collectively, building mutual respect, trust and care for one another. Goodman and Lesnick, citing James Griffin, state:

A good life will, as the classical utilitarians say, contain enjoyable mental states, but it will also contain accomplishment, deep personal relations, understanding, dignity, and so on. Mental states are short term, but other good things in life require long-term commitments, which fill and give shape to our whole lives. Good lives are, therefore, inevitably lives of...deep commitments to particular persons, careers, institutions, and causes. ... We can want the wrong things, things that, when we get them, make us no better off, or even worse off. Our desires, aims and goals are subject to rational constraints. ... And what motivates us in our search for a good life for ourselves must be compatible with what motivates us in our decent behavior toward others....¹⁰

Cooper's perspective aligns with these sentiments as she presses her audiences to engage in those practices which will result in bettering the human condition for the entire nation. Similarly, Nel Noddings states,

...the very goodness I seek, the perfection of ethical self is, thus, partly dependent on you, the other.... If you are unscrupulous enough, you can deprive me not only of life and fortune but of the ethical ideal for which I am striving.¹¹

Noddings' idea is reflected in Cooper's argument in that she challenges individuals to evaluate their ethical stance toward marginalized groups using the Law of Reason and promoting the Law of Love.

By pointing out individual conduct in various institutional settings (religious, educational, economic and political), Cooper exposes those things that are problematic with the ethical framework of individuals who act as oppressors. Hence, her inclusion of reason throughout her text becomes powerful in making logical arguments, as logical arguments are potentially educative in shaping the mindset and disposition of those who lack the principles of either being good or ethical.

Cooper desires all individuals in society have equal opportunity to contribute according to their individual worth. However, one's individual worth, she argues, is not summed up within one's gender or skin color. Rather, an individual has something of external value of potential benefit to the collective good of society.

Therefore, Cooper looks for leaders—"...men of intellect, heart, and race devotion, men to whom the elevation of their people means more than personal ambition and sordid gain...."¹² Her approach to improving the nation is educative and her focus on changing the individual hearts of the public utilizing the Laws of Love and Reason offers a critical step in moving toward the goal of equity. Cooper recognizes the strength of the White male power structure and

understands that a collective effort will be necessary, through love and reason, to challenge and undermine it. Thus, her ethical curriculum emerges as a component of re-education in which discriminatory practices are challenged.

Political Aims of Education

To have a just society, those who govern must have virtues that are expressed in the form of equality for all citizens. During the late nineteenth century, Blacks and women were still fighting for equal rights within a nation that boasted of liberty, justice and freedom for all its people. Of course, the people who benefit are clearly those of the White male power structure. Even though the Fourteenth Amendment mandates law purporting to span the entire citizenry of the nation, separate requirements for Blacks and women make second-class citizenship *de facto*.

Cooper disdainfully addresses this injustice towards women when she states:

There were not only no stimuli to encourage women to make the most of their powers and to welcome their development a helpful agency in the progress of civilization, but their little aspirations, when they had any, were chilled and snubbed in embryo, and any attempt at thought was received as a monstrous usurpation of man's prerogative.¹³

In other words, women are not allowed individual autonomy equivalent to that of a man. Even before birth, their station in life is predetermined, crippling females and robbing them of an equal status in society before they ever get to the point of awareness. To further marginalize women, men prevent them from obtaining an education that would render them intellectually competent. As a final blow to individual female agency, women are not allowed the right to vote, a political power essential to changing the human condition and acquiring rights. This move is intended to make women politically impotent and solidify their subjugation to men.

Blacks, too, faced perils of uncertainty in a nation that did not value them and actually viewed them as a "problem."¹⁴ Cooper, referencing the plight of the Black man in America, states:

...the Negro in America has suffered and is suffering.... He merely asks to be let alone. To be allowed to pursue his destiny as a free man and an American citizen, to rear and educate his children in peace, to engage in art, science, trades or industries according to his ability,—and to go to the wall if he fail.¹⁵

Implicit here is her frustration over the inferior brand inflicted upon Blacks. According to Gloria Ladson-Billings:

An often-asked question of people of color, women, and other marginalized groups is “What is it you people want?” Surprisingly, for some, what these people want is not very different from what most Americans want: an opportunity to shape and share in the American dream.¹⁶

It is this lack of civility that diminishes the progress of the nation.

In an effort to make changes in the political sphere, Cooper is savvy enough to underscore not only the ethical and moral requirements for valuing human agency, but the economic component as well. Economics play a vital role in the power structure of any nation. Cooper makes a sound argument concerning the viability of a nation that oppresses its members socially, politically and economically. Using the Law of Reason, Cooper implies that there is worth associated with America. She then commences to educate her audience on how that value or worth becomes evident in a nation.

According to Ladson-Billings “there is little reward for individual achievement at the expense of others.”¹⁷ Cooper asks, “But what do we represent to the world? What is our market value[?] Are we a positive and additive quantity or a negative factor in the world’s elements[?]”¹⁸ She alludes to hypocrisy, racial prejudice, sexism and classism as qualities necessary to overcome in order to improve the worth of a nation.

In referencing governmental responsibility for America’s status as a nation, Cooper openly places the institution under scrutiny. She states:

We have a notion here in America that our political institutions,—the possibilities of a liberal and progressive democracy, founded on universal suffrage and in some hoped-for, providential way *compelling* universal education and devotion,—our peculiar American attainments are richly worth all they have cost in blood and anguish. But our form of government, divinely ordered as we dream it to be, must be brought to the bar to be tested by this standard.¹⁹

Again, this goes back to the notion that our society is judged by the worth of our men and women within it. “Our money, our schools, our governments, our free institutions, our systems of religion and forms of creeds are all first and last to be judged by this standard....”²⁰

Thus, we see a political curriculum emerge indicative of the educational influences of the societal power structure. Cooper shows us the injustices prevalent in the political sphere are harmful and should be alleviated by first recognizing their ill effects. Using reason to undermine the weak premise of discriminatory practices pervasive in this domain, Cooper’s voice delivers a powerful message condemning the fallacies supporting the steady oppression of Blacks and women.

Conclusion

If eliminating social ills from society requires a more ethical and just citizenry, it is imperative that individuals embrace the Law of Love and the Law of Reason as tools to promote this process. Though Cooper's activism is apparent during an era in which these social ills were exponentially magnified, the relevance of her work is still apparent today. Love and Reason must mutually coincide and individuals must utilize these attributes to improve social relationships and move society forward. The Law of Reason and the Law of Love should not be thought of as dichotomous entities. Taken as one, they are complimentary to the progress of a nation. Together, they give persuasive power to Cooper's voice in providing a rationale for morally acceptable action—opposition against the White male power structure.

Her moral imperative to promote equality and mutual respect drives the attention paid to Cooper's work. Her philosophy of education warrants a closer look at how society functions toward a common good and how we might work to ensure there is a continuum of the *voice for the voiceless* in this process. Cooper's views on how to endorse a better citizenry for our nation are not only noble, but moral and ethical. Such characteristics separate the human species from that which is inhumane and dark.

It is clear from Cooper's text she offers a theory of re-education in which American society, at large, is urged to reassess its claims toward hegemonic and misogynic practices. What is most powerful about Cooper's attempts to re-educate her audience is contained in her underscoring of the mis-educative premise that perverts the moral aptitudes of society and exposes the injustice of the patriarchal system of male domination during that time period. Though the White male is the primary perpetrator of oppressive behavior—socially, economically and politically—Cooper is not remiss in mentioning the role Black males play in subjugating Black women as well—certainly an extension of the mis-education already prevalent in society. Her uncanny knack for admonishing her readers to embrace justice and equality lies in her use of voice as she points out the tragic and outrageous practices that perpetuate division, marginalization and oppression in the nation. The more obvious and urgent need is to incite social, economic and political change—equality and justice among women and men regardless of race and sex.

Cooper emphatically urges:

I care not even for the reasonableness and unimpeachable fairness of your social ethics,—if it does not turn out better, nobler, truer men and women,—if it does not add to the world's stock of valuable souls,—if it does not give us a

sounder, healthier, more reliable product from this great factory of *men*—I will have none of it.²¹

This quote sums up Cooper's strong support of an egalitarian nation. Her essays, advocating a better America, are educative and present a philosophy of education that is relevant for society today. Throughout her text, the educational, ethical and political messages are clear—all citizens have value and should be treated with mutual respect and equality. Recognizing the truth behind the value of human life and agency allows the Law of Love and the Law of Reason to be reconciled in a holistic approach to social improvement.

Endnotes

- 1 Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 68–69.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 57, emphasis in original.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 57–58.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 60.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 244.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 259.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 10 Joan F. Goodman and Howard Lesnick, *The Moral Stake in Education: Contested Premises and Practices* (New York: Longman, 2001), 67. Originally cited in James Griffin, "Virtue Ethics and Environs," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15, no. 1 (1998): 56–70.
- 11 Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 48.
- 12 Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 35.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 63–64.
- 14 W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 1.
- 15 Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 215–216, emphasis in original.
- 16 Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dream-Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 150.

¹⁷ Ibid., 82.

¹⁸ Ibid., 233.

¹⁹ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 282–283, emphasis in original.

²⁰ Ibid., 282.

²¹ Ibid., 283, emphasis in original.

Teacher Transgressions and District Disputes: Appeals to the Texas State Superintendent of Public Instruction, J. S. Kendall, 1899–1901

Kelley M. King, The University of North Texas

Introduction

In 1898 Joel Sutton (J. S.) Kendall was elected to the position of State Superintendent of Instruction for Texas in the wake of a scandal involving teaching credentials that caused his predecessor, James McCoy Carlisle, to decline to seek the office for a fourth term.¹ Kendall took charge in 1899 of a loosely organized, rather chaotic system of public schools that had suffered for years from budget difficulties and political dissension within the state. Although state records documenting the early years of the Texas State Board of Education, including Kendall's administration, are scant, three unmarked folders in the State Board of Education records housed at the Texas state archives contain records of appeals brought before the State Superintendent from 1881 to 1901. In order to illuminate how the current Texas Board of Education became so politicized and powerful and the negative effect instability in funding, attendance, leadership, and teaching has on schooling, I summarize the state of Texas schooling prior to Superintendent Kendall's tenure in office (1899–1901) before surveying the disputes that came before him.² Appeals brought before the superintendent included local arguments about district boundaries, the locations of schools within communities, student transfers, teacher contracts, student behavior, and teacher incompetence and misconduct. The cases raise key questions about education in Texas at the beginning of the twentieth century that one would be wise to consider today within the historical framework of Texas schooling. Who had and has the authority to make decisions for schools? How were and are schools to be organized? What was and is required of administrators, teachers, students, and the community at large?

The Darkest Field Educationally

Historians of education often identify the late 1800s as the period during which progressive impulses and ideas that had been circulating in the second half of that century began to congeal and take definite form. William Reese notes that in many urban areas, progressive reformers

worked against an already established educational monopoly: "By the 1890s, school systems had already existed for many decades, and public schools had become the predominant site for mass education in America."³ However, at the end of the nineteenth century, Texas remained largely rural and agricultural.⁴ Although better supported than public schools in other southern states, Texas schools at the turn of the twentieth century compared poorly to those in the rest of the nation. Like other Southern states, Texas was late to develop a public school system, and the Civil War and its aftermath further slowed development. In 1869, a visiting agent of the Peabody fund, Barnas Sears, found conditions so poor that he saw no point in offering aid.⁵ In 1870, the National Bureau of Education found Texas to be "the darkest field educationally in the United States." Seventeen percent of the white population and ninety percent of blacks were illiterate, and the state had no state-supported schools.⁶ When the Radical Republicans, supporters of the Union who controlled the state during Reconstruction, installed a system that included blacks and involved compulsory education, centralization, certification of teachers, and taxes to pay for the system, Texans vehemently objected to the Northern imposition and influence. When southern Democrats were restored to power, they worked quickly to undo many of the reforms of Reconstruction. With the Constitution of 1876 and a new school law the same year, Texas Democrats effectively dismantled the Republican system eliminating the office of state superintendent of instruction and establishing a state board of education "with only minimal supervision."⁷ The unpopularity of the Republicans encouraged Texans' distrust of government and slowed educational progress in the state for years. By the mid-1880s, however, public opinion had begun to shift, and the people of the state passed a constitutional amendment to create a system of school districts supported by state funds enhanced by local taxation. In 1884, the Texas legislature, enabled by state constitutional changes, passed a school law that reestablished the office of the state superintendent and allowed more counties to organize permanent school districts.⁸

Through the school law of 1884, legislators attempted to establish some consistency across a fragmented system of often-transitory institutions. The community system in place prior to the passage of this law created a dual system of schools in the state. Incorporated cities and towns gained exclusive control of public schools when a majority of taxpayers voted to establish a school system. These city districts were allowed to assess taxes to support schools. Rural schools, by contrast, were organized as less permanent community schools with no taxing authority.⁹ They depended solely on per capita appropriations from the state and, perhaps, local donations. Formed on a yearly basis, these schools were unable to budget beyond the current year and had no

access to bonds for building schools. Because of these limitations, the cost of building a school was one year's worth of instruction. In other words, school would not operate for a year, so that all the operating funds for one year could be put toward the construction of a school building to be used in subsequent years. The school law of 1884 required counties to form districts with more permanent boundary lines and schools and allowed some districts to raise more money. Still, the law exempted 53 counties, largely in East Texas and the Rio Grande Valley where there was resistance to education for Blacks and Mexicans. This exemption left a three-way system of independent city, community, and district schools forcing the superintendent to consider with each appeal the law appropriate to the type of school system involved.¹⁰ The three-way system complicated leadership at the local level. Community schools typically consisted of three trustees appointed at the request of school patrons by the county judge who was legally the *ex-officio* county superintendent of schools. Although the city council ran city schools, city leaders could call an election to establish a board of trustees specific to those schools. School officials at the time complained about the lack of regularity in the system: because cities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants could have one of six different ways of selecting trustees, confusion regarding the selection of trustees was ongoing.¹¹

In one of the earliest and most comprehensive historical studies of education in Texas, Frederick Eby notes that even with the 1884 legislation and increased public support, lack of funding in rural areas, an uneducated population with little sense of what quality schooling entailed, and lack of supervision slowed progress. "The full development of the free school policy," Eby argues, "was to be realized only gradually by many years of patient effort."¹² A well-known figure in education in Texas at the time of his election to the state superintendency, J. S. Kendall would play a leading role in that development. Prior to his election, Kendall was well aware of the challenges facing public education in the state, for he had served as a school teacher and administrator in the developing public school system of Honey Grove, Texas, and was, at the time of his election, superintendent of schools in that district. He was known in the field for his work organizing summer normal schools and teaching at the State School of Methods, a teacher-training school. In 1897, speaking before a meeting of school trustees, Kendall noted that when he organized the summer normal school for his county, he invited the 420 trustees of the 140 country school boards within his county to the sessions in order to improve their knowledge of schools. These experiences with school trustees likely served him in adjudicating appeals involving trustees.¹³ Importantly, he was a leading member of the Texas State Teachers' Association (ISTA) of which he was elected president in 1895.¹⁴ There he worked closely with such leading educators in the state as J. M. Carlisle, his predecessor as state

superintendent and a founding member of the TSTA. His role in this organization ensured his awareness of education developments across the country including the Report of the Committee of Ten, which Kendall discussed at the annual TSTA meeting in 1895. As a leader in the TSTA, Kendall helped shape the organization's agenda promoting the state's further school system development, emphasizing professionalization, and gaining clout for TSTA among public school employees and supporters by fostering unity and engagement. In 1895, as member of the TSTA Committee on Resolutions, Kendall urged teachers to become politically involved, to "make the issue with aspirants for public position in their party primaries, and to do all they reasonably and honorably [could] do to prevent the nomination of candidates who [were] not definitely pledged to the liberal support of the public schools and the enactment of laws that [would] strengthen and improve the public school system."¹⁵ In a state where obstacles to the development of a public school system were considerable, Kendall took on the job of promoting public schools and convincing leaders of the state that schools could be run in a "business-like manner."¹⁶

The Appeals Process

Texas school law held considerable authority over schools through the local school trustees. When disputes arose within districts, between two teachers, or between a teacher and a student's family, for example, the local trustees, who had governing authority over the school, heard the case first. Should the losing party wish to appeal the trustees' decision, the case proceeded to the county superintendent, most often the county judge. The next level of appeal was to the state superintendent who, in addition to hearing appeals of decisions the school trustees and judges had made, decided disputes between trustees and county superintendents, who sometimes made competing claims to authority over districts. Although the state superintendent's decision could be appealed further to the full Texas State Board of Education, according to records available, the full board most often sustained the state superintendent in the small minority of cases appealed beyond the state superintendent's decision.

Teacher Contracts

Kendall decided approximately 56 appeals on local issues during his roughly two years in office. Contract disputes were the most common type of dispute to come before the state superintendent. Of 56 cases, 24 were related in some way to teacher contract issues. This number of contract disputes reflects confusion about school management at the time. Reese¹⁷ and other historians of education explore the emphasis on managerial efficiency that some progressives promoted. Participants in efficiency movements emphasized centralizing school control and shifting to industrial models of people, equipment, and time

management. At the turn of the century, however, with more than 80% of the population living in rural areas, Texas economy was largely agricultural. Kendall was undoubtedly addressing businessmen when talking about running schools in a business-like manner, but the term “business-like” as he used it likely did not carry the full weight of the efficiency movement. Those within the disorganized system he oversaw were less concerned with moving large numbers of students and teachers through urban schools than their struggles with basic management and contracts as the numerous contracts disputes upon which Kendall ruled evidence. The appeals to his office indicate that in some cases local management of schools was highly confused and ineffective. As Kendall noted in a talk in 1897, school trustees were often businessmen with little experience in education or school management, and not all took pains to learn about their responsibilities. Some contract disputes arose because of confusion within the community about who held authority to authorize contracts. Teachers who were offered signed contracts sometimes found the contracts void when it was revealed that the signatories lacked authority over the schools. In Appeal No. 276, for example, a dispute over whether the school’s principal had a valid contract resulted when the hiring decision was made with input from the full city council. Because the two official trustees split their vote and the third was absent, Kendall determined their choice of principal was invalid.¹⁸ Other disputes arose when confused or divided boards of trustees authorized more than one contract for a single position. In one case, a teacher who had a contract signed by one of three school trustees tried to eliminate another teacher who held an earlier contract for the same position. The second teacher argued that one of the two trustees who signed a contract for the first teacher was not a legal trustee. Kendall ruled against this claim, which was the third filed by this teacher whose other appeals related to accusations that he cheated on his certification exam.¹⁹

In addition to disputes over the legality of contracts, disputes arose when trustees failed clearly to identify the principal teacher and those deemed co-teachers.²⁰ In Starr County, for example, a Miss Vela had been acting as principal of her school when mid-year trustees designated her co-teacher, Ms. Marks as the principal. In this case, Kendall ruled that trustees had the authority to change Miss Marks’ contract.²¹ In some cases, disputes arose when the local superintendent of schools refused to sign a contract or pay voucher. In Bexar County, the local judge refused to sign the contract offered to T. P. Huff and signed by two of three school trustees. The judge noted several complaints against Huff, the most damning of which the judge asserted was that Huff “mixed school affairs with politics generally” by running for office against the judge.²² In this case, Kendall notes it “would be a violence to the community to

refuse to approve the contract.”²³

Who Went to School, When, and Where?

Of the 56 appeals, 15 dealt with disputes over the formation of district or school boundary lines, the placement of school buildings, and the school term. Texas school law allowed families of students in rural schools to petition for transfer to attend a different school as long as the petition was made prior to the teacher being hired. Because state money followed the students, schools and districts occasionally fought over students. Kendall decided several cases in which parents alleged the county judge wrongly permitted, denied, or ignored student transfers.²⁴ In most of these, Kendall determines the judge was obligated to approve the transfers even if, as in one case, the judge believed that the requests were made from the desire of parents to punish a particular school.²⁵ In addition to the question of which schools children would be allowed to attend, disputes arose over the location of schools within some districts. Kendall lays out a general principle for school boundary cases in a case in which trustees proposed dividing a district’s students and appropriations into two schools in a manner that would pay for a longer school year for one of the schools: “The trustees have the right,” he notes, “to determine how many schools a district will have, when and where they shall be taught and how much money shall be assigned to each school, provided only that they have in view this one fundamental idea that the schools shall have approximately the same length of term.”²⁶ Although schools within a district were required to have the same length of term, trustees could shorten school terms if the school building was damaged. These cases often came before the superintendent as contract cases, when the teacher’s contract was summarily cancelled.²⁷ The dates of the school term might also be at issue. In one of the earliest cases to come before Superintendent Kendall, families in Polk County requested the school term be delayed until spring because of the difficulties children faced walking miles in the dark and cold and crossing rivers where there was no bridge. Despite the appellants’ argument that two-thirds of the school’s population would miss school during the winter months, Kendall notes the law provides no provision for such a delay. Only the trustees can make that decision: “The trustees legally elected or legally appointed become the legally authorized agents of the people.”²⁸ In this case, however, school trustees had not responded to the request.

Incompetent Teachers, Intractable Pupils

A number of appeals to Superintendent Kendall involved disputes about some combination of classroom management problems, teacher incompetence, and student behavior. Classroom management was at issue in ten of the appeals brought before Kendall. Parents and/or trustees could challenge a teacher’s classroom management accusing the

teacher of ineffectiveness, severity, or both. Notably, all but one case of alleged teacher incompetence arose from allegations that the teacher lacked control of students in the classroom. In the lone remaining case (also discussed earlier), the judge whom the teacher was seeking to replace in office charged that the teacher neglected the school, an accusation that likely implied the teacher lacked control, but also referred to the teacher neglecting to organize the students into grades as the judge demanded.²⁹ In four appeals to Kendall, parents challenged the punishment the teacher meted out as overly harsh. In some cases, the parents protested the teacher's harsh discipline, and the trustees sided with the teacher. In others, the trustees opposed the teacher's disciplinary measures as too harsh. In still others, the trustees supported corporal punishment until that punishment involved their own children. In one example, a trustee urged a teacher in the Eagle Grove district to use physical punishment on students to bring order to the school and then left the teacher jobless by shutting down the school because the teacher struck the trustee's child. In this case, as he did in all of the cases involving classroom management, Kendall sides with the teacher upholding the principle that teachers acting *in loco parentis* have authority over their classrooms.³⁰ He nevertheless lays out legal limits to a teacher's authority to inflict punishment and urges against corporal punishment.

One notable case challenging the school's punishment of a student involved human excrement found on the desk of a teacher and on the floor of another schoolroom in the public school of Cisco on a Monday morning in April, 1900. Based on the weight of evidence presented at a hearing before the school board, the trustees determined that 9-year-old Nat Neall, Jr. was the perpetrator. Nat's parents defended their son in an appeal to the county judge who upheld the teacher's and trustees' dismissing Nat from school for the remainder of the term. In Nat's defense, his parents argued that Nat claimed to be "in the country" at the time of the event and that the school had no authority to punish students for behaviors that took place when school was out of session. Since the excrement had been left over the weekend, they argued that the school had no authority to punish Nat. In his ruling on the case, Kendall supports the teacher and trustees with reference to law and to the practical argument of the necessity of institutional control: "If the trustees have no authority in such a case to exclude the offender then all sorts of infectious deposit might be left in the school building...the school might be taught for five days in the week and the building converted into a privy on Saturday by all the pupils, for what is granted as a privilege to one must be extended to all..."³¹ This case raised questions about the nature of student behavior. Kendall recognizes the child's age "in ordinary criminal affairs would certainly be a modifying

circumstance for clemency.” However, he also asserts a child of nine would recognize his was “a grievous wrong.” Kendall suggests the word “incorrigible” be applied to the young student: “Quoting from the Century Dictionary the word had the following synonyms: ‘incurable; hopeless; irrevocable; irreclaimable; graceless; shameless; hardened.’ The last three words would apply to such conduct as herein mentioned....”³²

In another case dealing with student behavior, the teacher dismissed student Lester Hamilton of Belton on February 1, 1899, for “unbecoming conduct and improper language.”³³ Testimony at Lester’s hearing was conflicted, but the school board upheld his dismissal on the grounds that:

For the past six years, during which time said Lester Hamilton has been a pupil in the Belton schools both his conduct and class work have been uniformly bad...he has been punished repeatedly for misconduct, lack of application, has been suspended a number of times for several days at each time for insubordination, and...he has never been promoted for his class work, but from time to time has been assigned to different rooms and placed under different teachers with the hope of accomplishing some good in his behalf.³⁴

In this case, Kendall supports the exclusion from school of students whom teachers perceive to be making little effort to learn on the principle that “a pupil in a school who from lack of application fails to profit by the instruction, not only personally loses thereby, but his presence is nearly always a detriment to the progress and good behavior of other pupils.”³⁵ Order was essential to the smooth operation of schools. That teachers, as long as they made an attempt to intervene, were not to blame for students’ bad conduct or failure to learn was supported by Kendall’s ruling in another case: trustees dismissed teacher R. Lee Hicks for incompetency due to failure to govern. Kendall rules for Mr. Hicks on the grounds that:

...it does not appear that the teacher’s failure to preserve decorum was due to any dereliction on his part.... The bad order existing in the school rather appears to have been due to the intractableness of the pupils than to the shortcomings of the teacher.³⁶

In the Hicks case, Kendall upholds the importance of a teacher’s contract: “In order to annul a teacher’s contract it must stand out clearly that the teacher has been guilty of some overt act of sufficient gravity to cancel a pecuniary obligation.”³⁷

In his decisions, Kendall repeatedly recognizes teachers’ obligation to take steps to keep order in the school and their legal authority to use corporal punishment to do so. Once their children were in school,

parents were to recognize the teachers' and institution's authority to act *in loco parentis*: "The right to govern and control the school is undoubtedly vested in the teacher and trustees. The parents cannot dictate, nor can the pupil dictate the terms of punishment for any offense."³⁸ Teachers' rights also extended to determining the level at which individual students would work. When a county superintendent ordered a teacher to place a student in a higher class at the family's insistence, Kendall overturns the judge's decision on the grounds that the teacher has the "undoubted right to grade his school and classify students accordingly."³⁹

Even as Kendall recognized teachers' authority to punish students, he also advised them to punish in moderation, as exemplified by the case of Chick Stengall, a girl who was suspended from school for refusing to allow the teacher to whip her for fighting. Although he finds that "teacher and trustees have acted within the scope of their authority in this case," Kendall notes, "we do not hesitate to recommend that the teacher and trustees reconsider this matter, and reinstate the pupil on condition that she will publicly apologize for her conduct."⁴⁰ Kendall uses the appeals involving classroom management not only to clarify teachers' authority over students in the classroom but also to trace the legal limits of teachers' behavior. In the case of the teacher dismissed for too harshly punishing students (including the trustee's son), he notes: "It may be laid down as a general rule that teachers exceed the limit of their authority when they cause lasting mischief, but set within the limits of it when they inflict temporary pain."⁴¹ In addition to refraining from causing lasting harm, Kendall determines teachers should not punish "merely to gratify their own evil passions."⁴² Even while recognizing that in law and principle, teachers have the authority to inflict corporal punishment on students, Kendall advocates a move away from corporal punishment: "In this connection, we may say that the day when the teacher may rely upon the potency of the rod to maintain discipline in the school room has passed away."⁴³

In every appeal concerning teacher incompetence, Kendall decides in favor of the teacher. Although Kendall expects teachers to take steps to keep order in the classroom, a teacher punishing students and using other interventions to manage classroom problems he considers sufficient. Kendall does not hold teachers responsible when such interventions fail, but blames the pupils' intractability. Similarly, he attributes pupils' failure to progress to their lack of diligence or capability, not to ineffective teaching methods.

Teacher Misconduct

Teacher contract issues sometimes coincided with charges of teacher misconduct ranging from absenteeism to sexual misconduct with students. Nine cases of teacher misconduct came before Kendall. Of

these, two were related to teacher absenteeism. In one of these, a teacher was ill and unable to conduct school for most of the month of February. The case notes students arrived at school for days in a row, only to find that school was not open.⁴⁴ No reason was given for an absence of over a month in the second case.⁴⁵ In both cases, Kendall rules with the school trustees who opt to dismiss the teachers.

In five cases, teachers were charged with violating community morals. Three of these cases involved sexual misconduct. Two teachers, both males teaching in “colored” schools, were accused of sexual relationships with students. In the first case, W. H. Hathaway, teacher in the colored school at Wharton, was charged with criminal intimacy with a student. After the board of trustees exonerated him, he resigned from the school until the board rehired him to teach the next year. One hundred five citizens and patrons of the colored school protested his employment to the state superintendent, but Kendall could not determine his guilt: “I am constrained to state that I cannot believe the testimony sustains the charge.”⁴⁶ In the second case, a woman stepped forward to accuse a teacher hired for the Texarkana colored school of seducing and ruining a young woman several years earlier. The young woman purportedly became pregnant, was sent out of state, and died in childbirth. Patrons of the school protested that the school board of Texarkana declined to hear evidence in the case on the grounds that “the immoral conduct charged occurred long before” the board contracted with the teacher.⁴⁷ Kendall again supports the teacher and trustees arguing, “We cannot believe that the school board of Texarkana would have declined to take any evidence that was really vital, nor do we believe they would impose upon the schools of the city a libidinous character.”⁴⁸

The remaining case of sexual misconduct involved a married, white principal accused of making improper sexual advances toward a female assistant teacher who was boarding with the principal and his wife. In this case, Miss Beach accuses W. T. Lee, principal of schools in Eagle Lake and Conroe of attempting “to induce her to surrender to him her character and virtue.”⁴⁹ After repeated advances, Miss Beach withdrew from his home and tendered her resignation at the end of the term. On the basis of these charges, the Conroe school board petitioned Kendall to cancel Lee’s state teaching certificate. This case is notable because Kendall travelled to Conroe and interviewed Ms. Beach personally before determining that the behavior she described indeed constituted a clear pattern. In the end, Kendall is convinced of Mr. Lee’s guilt and voids his state certificate.⁵⁰

The two remaining teacher misconduct cases involved Arturo Saens twice accused of some combination of drunkenness, improper language, and gambling. Kendall rejects the charges in the first case for too little evidence supporting Mr. Saens' drinking and improper language.⁵¹ In the second case, Saens admitted to gambling in the schoolhouse, but argued that his gambling was so limited as to be inconsequential. Kendall disagrees and cancels his certificate.⁵²

Analysis

Several themes arise from analyzing appeals to State Superintendent Kendall. The first theme is Kendall's respect for Texas school law that grants most authority for governing schools to the local board of trustees. In his rulings, Kendall defers to the local trustees in most cases. At times, Kendall recognizes the state law's inadequacy for solving such problems that come before him as transportation to distant rural schools during the winter months. Although he overturns their decisions only when he understands the trustees' actions to be in violation of the law, he does not hesitate to make non-binding suggestions about how local officials might address particular disputes, as in Chick Stengall's case when she refused to allow the teacher to whip her.

A second theme that emerges is Kendall's interpreting law in ways that support teachers. In cases where the law leaves teachers in such unenviable positions as finding themselves suddenly unemployed through no fault of their own, Kendall does not controvert the law. However, he does support teachers' contract rights in every way allowed within the law. He insists teachers are entitled to fair hearings before contracts can be cancelled, and he overturns the decision of a board of trustees if trustees attempt to cancel a teacher's contract or certificate based on insufficient evidence or hearsay. Kendall also requires teachers be paid for work done as evidenced in a Gregg County case. The Gregg County judge had closed school for the year and refused to sign a teacher's pay voucher after the teacher missed a few days of class due to a temporary disability. Kendall orders the judge to reopen the school and pay the teacher for days he already had worked.⁵³ Especially important, given the number of appeals that result from disputes about student and teacher behavior, Kendall consistently supports teachers and their authority within schools.

The third theme in Kendall's decisions, especially emerging in cases of teacher misconduct, is his ideal of professional dispositions for teachers and trustees. Because Kendall considers moral character the most important teacher disposition, deviations from the strict norms of the time sufficiently justify permanently excluding any teacher from the profession. "If [moral character] is wanting, no qualifications or experience can supply the fatal deficiency."⁵⁴ According to Kendall,

moral character requires “uprightness of general conduct, honestly, soberness, and such elements of character as are usually considered necessary to good citizenship.”⁵⁵ Referring to teaching as “a calling,”⁵⁶ Kendall expects teachers to do more than teach their students self-control; he exhorts teachers to be inspirational exemplars, “the embodiment of exalted ideals” whose “supreme efforts” should be directed “not only to giving instruction and controlling passion but to developing that which is noblest and best in human character, and which will count for good in the years that are to come.”⁵⁷ Kendall asserts the requirements of trustees are “closely akin to the requirements of a teacher.”⁵⁸

Related to Kendall’s promoting high moral ideals, a fourth theme in his decisions is the display of harmony, community cohesion, and good will toward one’s neighbors and colleagues. In case after case, Kendall pleads for the parties to make an effort to get along. When Nat Neall’s parents persist with their appeals, Kendall calls for peace: “Let this matter be dropped with malice for none and charity for all.”⁵⁹ Similarly, in a dispute over school transfers, he advises the parties, “this Dep’t [sic] is desirous of seeing all unpleasantness adjusted for the good of the people and above all for the good of the two schools involved...your schools are worth more than feelings and infinitely more than \$36.00.”⁶⁰ When Bruceville’s school principal resisted the trustees’ choice for a third teacher, Kendall impels the three teachers to work together: “I sincerely hope that personal self respect, the professional spirit of the teacher and the general welfare of all concerned will bring about a speedy adjustment of all previous differences and that I shall be informed in a short while that harmony and cooperation prevails in the Bruceville school.”⁶¹ Recognizing a modern system of schools could not be built unless educators and school supporters could win broad public support for such a system, Kendall discourages bickering and urges harmony towards creating a smoothly operating system.

Kendall left the position of state superintendent of schools in July 1901 when he was appointed principal (president) of the newly established North Texas Normal School in Denton. Determining his long-term effect on the state superintendency is difficult because few documents prior to the 1920s exist and because consistent records end with his administration, recommencing only in the 1950s. Although the Texas school system continued to grow after Kendall’s tenure, growth occurred without the sense of harmony Kendall promoted so that over 100 years after his resignation, debates involving the Texas Board of Education remain ever contentious.

Examining urban schools in four cities across the United States, William Reese notes that “a consensus on the value of education...[does] not translate into universal agreement on the role of

parents in children's lives, on the particular values taught in school, on the nature of school governance or on the propriety of state-sponsored schools controlled by a centralized board of education," and he identifies tensions between school administrators and parents over control of student behavior.⁶² Disagreement on these key issues was central to appeals to the Texas state superintendent at the turn of the century as well. Local officials contested each other's claims to authority over schools. Parents contested schools' authority over their children even as they demanded access to the services those schools provided. Teachers, largely untrained, were caught in the middle of numerous competing claims and interests: they could be charged with lacking control over the classroom or disciplining too harshly; they might be accused of violating standards imposed by the broader community. Texas' largely decentralized system left most authority to the local school trustees. Kendall's office provided important checks on the use (and abuse) of that authority. Teachers, in particular, appear to have benefited from an appeals process that afforded due process against the demands of parents, the caprices of local school trustees, and judges who misused their positions either out of neglect, ignorance, or self-interest. Interestingly, none of the appeals to the superintendent during this time period address curricular issues. At the local level, issues of basic school management overshadow curricular issues and debates.

Conclusion

Education policy of the last decades has been caught in a peculiar oscillation between decentralization and increased federalization. "The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001"⁶³ demands more state level control over schools in requiring state-level standards and accountability requirements. President Obama's *Race to the Top* initiative shifts control from the state to the federal level with pressure to implement national standards,⁶⁴ while at the same time, control over curriculum shifts from local to state to national control. Systems of schooling based on local school districts are being challenged, and, with President Obama supporting charter schools through his *Race to the Top*, federal policies increasingly undermine local school districts. Charter advocates argue that freedom from district-level bureaucracy will promote better outcomes by providing administrators, teachers, and parents the freedom to innovate. Although leaving education largely to local communities does not limit or resolve disputes and does not guarantee high-quality schools, in the current climate policymakers apparently fail to use historical antecedents to inform their moves to centralize curriculum while decentralizing school systems.

Summarizing the state of education in Texas prior to Kendall's state superintendency and then surveying decisions to appeals that came before Superintendent Kendall highlight Texas public school system's

growing pains, many districts' disorganization, and the influence of Kendall's practical philosophy of educational management during his superintendency. This study of conflicts and change over time provides an important historical framework through which to examine the effect of contemporary national, state, and local challenges, policies, and controls over schooling. School systems develop slowly and unsteadily in response to problems of instability in funding, attendance, leadership, and teaching. Remembering the challenges that impelled the development of organized systems of schooling in Texas as well as state-by-state throughout the nineteenth century also means remembering that institutions resist change and are difficult to dismantle, but once dismantled are not easily reformed.

Endnotes

- ¹ Carlisle was appointed to the position by governor James S. Hogg in 1891 then elected three times after the state changed the position to an elected rather than appointed one. See Kristi Strickland, "Carlisle, James McCoy," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed 30 November 2011, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fca55>
- ² This article is one of a series of articles I am writing on the Texas State Board of Education.
- ³ William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grass Roots Movements during the Progressive Era* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 16.
- ⁴ Alwyn Barr, "Late Nineteenth-Century Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed 27 April 2012, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npl01>
See also: "No. HS-7 Population of the Largest 75 Cities, 1900-2000," *US Census Bureau*, accessed 27 April 2012, <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-07.pdf>
In Texas, only San Antonio made the list of largest cities in the US. It ranked 71 of 75 with just over 53,000 inhabitants.
- ⁵ Frederick Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas* (New York: MacMillan, 1925), 182.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.
- ⁷ Gene B. Preuss, *To Get a Better System: One Hundred Years of Education Reform in Texas* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 13.
- ⁸ Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas*; Preuss, *To Get a Better System*.

- ⁹ Eby elaborates the reasons for disparities noting that with widespread tenant farming, property owners resisted paying to educate the children of tenant farmers. Additionally, whites resisted being taxed to establish schools for Blacks in east Texas and Mexicans in the southern and western parts of the state. See *The Development of Education in Texas*, 195–198.
- ¹⁰ Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas*, 195.
- ¹¹ “Duties of School Trustees,” *Dallas Morning News*, 4 July 1897, 16.
- ¹² Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas*, 196.
- ¹³ “Duties of School Trustees,” *Dallas Morning News*, 4 July 1897, 16.
- ¹⁴ Brian Hart, “Kendall, Joel Sutton,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed 25 November 2011, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fke20>
- ¹⁵ “Texas Teachers,” *Dallas Morning News*, 29 June 1895, 3.
- ¹⁶ “Speeches of Nominees,” *Dallas Morning News*, 11 August 1900, 2.
- ¹⁷ Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform*.
- ¹⁸ *Boyd and Frisby, Attorneys for the newly elected trustees, Gray, Morgan, and Bryan of Hubbard City Independent School District v. J. S. Kendall, State Supt. Pub. Instruction*, 267, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.
- ¹⁹ *A. L. Runyan, Teacher v. J. W. Bishop, Dallas Co.*, 284, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²⁰ In small schools the terms “principal” and “principal teacher” generally referred to the lead teacher in a school, not to a full-time administrator as in contemporary use.
- ²¹ *Miss Ernestina Mark v. Hon. J. R. Monroe, County Judge*, 301, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²² *T. P. Huff v. J. R. Watkins*, 297, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Teachers and Trustees of Ikard School Dist., Clay Co. v. Judge U. S. Hunt, County Judge*, 262, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education minutes and agenda; *C. R. Morris, et al. v. D. W. Crow, County Supt. Wood Co.*, 280, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-

- 23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda; *R. M. Spurlock v. G. W. Hanks, County Judge*, 296, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda; *Trustees School Dist. No. 86 v. Trustees School Dist. 84*, 314, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ [*O. C. Prenderworth*,] *Teacher, School No. 2, Johnson Co. v. [Peyton] Irving, County Sup't.*, 260, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²⁷ [*Board of Trustees of District 1 v. County Sup't of Uvalde County*], 264, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda; *Blanche Lytle v. B. L. James, Harris County Supt.*, 310, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²⁸ *J. M. Walker, et al. v. Independent District of Alveredo, Texas*, 250, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1898). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ²⁹ *T. P. Huff v. J. R. Watkins*.
- ³⁰ *D. M. Thomas, et al. v. Trustees Eagle Cove Dist. #38*, 311, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ³¹ *N. T. [Neall] for Nat [Neall], Jr. v. Cisco Public School Board*, 268, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ *W. H. Hamilton v. Belton School Board*, 269, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ *R. Lee Hicks v. Trustees Dist. No. Two*, 315, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ *Chick Stengall, Pupil v. Z. T. Johnson, et al., Trustees, Shannon School and J. S. King, Co. Sup't, Grayson Co.*, 289, (State Superintendent of Public

- Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ³⁹ *B. A. Moyers v. J. J. Stoker*, 286, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁴⁰ *Chick Stengall, Pupil v. Z. T. Johnson, et al., Trustees, Shannon School and J. S. King, Co. Sup't, Grayson Co.*
- ⁴¹ *D. M. Thomas, et al. v. Trustees Eagle Cove Dist. #38.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *J. P. Johnson, Teacher v. J. W. Saxon, Co. Sup't, Brazoria County*, 291, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁴⁵ *Ernestina Mark v. Hon. J. R. Monroe, County Judge.*
- ⁴⁶ *Henry Harris, Mark Gordon, et al. v. W. R. Hatbaway*, 275, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1898). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁴⁷ *Angelina Moore v. T. J. Spencer*, 299, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Given the long history of white neglect of Black schooling in Texas, it is conceivable that the trustees could have dismissed the case without regard to evidence.
- ⁴⁹ *Conroe School Board v. W. T. Lee*, 292, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1900). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *J. R. Monroe, Ex-County Superintendent, v. Arturo Saens*, 303, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁵² *Ex parte Arturo Saens*, 312, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1901). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁵³ [*C. C. Gregory et al. v. [name unclear], County Judge, [Wood] County*], 265, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁵⁴ *Angelina Moore v. T. J. Spencer.*
- ⁵⁵ *Ex parte Arturo Saens.*
- ⁵⁶ *Conroe School Board v. W. T. Lee.*

- ⁵⁷ *Miss Janie Helm v. Trustees of Bruceville Public School*, 290, (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1899). Box 4-23/356b, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *N. T. [Neall] for Nat [Neall], Jr. v. Cisco Public School Board*.
- ⁶⁰ *Teachers and Trustees of Ikard School Dist., Clay Co. v. Judge U. S. Hunt, County Judge*.
- ⁶¹ *Miss Janie Helm v. Trustees of Bruceville Public School*.
- ⁶² Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform*, xxiv.
- ⁶³ “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” 20 USC. § 6319, 2008.
- ⁶⁴ “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” Public Law 107–110, US Statutes at Large 115 (2002): 1426; US Department of Education (DE), *Race to the Top Executive Summary*, Washington, DC, 2009, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>

Rollo May, Existentialist Thinking, and the Foundations of Education Classroom

Don Hufford, Newman University

Introduction

In reflecting upon my professional role as a teacher of teachers, I frequently focus on the written works of a creative thinker whose ideas I use to challenge future teachers thoughtfully to consider—perhaps refashion—the foundational principles that undergird their educational *and* life philosophies. A chosen thinker may express his or her ideas as a philosopher, a sociologist, a theologian, a psychologist, an historian, a political scientist, a novelist, a poet, an idiosyncratic educator—the list goes on. In each individual case, there are interpretive insights generated by exposure to the author’s creative writings; insights that have the power to awaken the thoughtful reader to renewed ways of wrestling with dialectically powered ideas. Such ideas—when thoughtfully considered—penetrate the reader’s consciousness in a way that may refresh, revitalize, and even remake one’s receptiveness to open-minded, critical thinking.

Rollo May is one thinker whose intellectual explorations into diverse ways of *being* speak to the intellectually questing teacher today. A humanist-oriented psychologist and an existential therapist, May refers and connects to such thinkers as Paul Tillich, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Sigmund Freud. May premises his therapeutic relationships and life-encounters on aesthetic and philosophical understandings of issues and events. He was a painter. He was a teacher. He was a philosophical thinker who found creative possibilities in life’s intrusive paradoxes, ambiguities, and mysteries. His interpretations of individual life-forces and socio-cultural realities may be used in a School of Education’s social foundations classroom to help future teachers better understand the personal encounters and sometimes chaotic moments that define creative educational ventures.

Nestled within my bookshelves is an impressive lineup of books Rollo May authored, books providing insights into the interpersonal relationships and social dynamics that define a liberating, creative educational process. There are possibilities to be explored. There are ideas that open interpretive vistas into many of life’s persistent questions, questions that should be part of a teacher’s ever-expanding

philosophical search for life-altering ways of being. I am cautiously mindful of a reality about which Rollo May himself has warned: “Many authors have been influenced...by writers whom they only partially understood” (1991, p. 179). Reminding myself that my interpretive borrowing from May’s *oeuvre* may be circumscribed by a less-than-complete understanding of the man and his message, I continue my evolving quest for intellectually fertile ideas to share with future teachers, ideas that may help them rethink and refresh their personal philosophies of education.

Three Themes

Much in Rollo May’s penetrating examinations of life and living may be reused and repositioned for an educator’s intellectual reflections and contemplations on what it means to be a teacher—on the deeper implications of the *why* of teaching. May’s psychotherapeutic, philosophical, aesthetic, and theological musings provide interpretive possibilities that may be woven into the fabric of a social foundations of education classroom. It is in such an academic setting that meaningful *why* questions are explored as counterparts to the more practical implications of the *what* and *how* of pedagogical expertise.

Due to space limitations for this manuscript, it is not possible to dig into all the crevices of thoughtfulness that May has left for intellectual exploration. I have, therefore, narrowed the parameters of this search to three thematic possibilities relating to the intellectual quests that define a course I teach in a School of Education. In preparing the students for the headache-producing thoughtfulness that I expect of them during the semester’s philosophical exploration, I make use of three quotations that give expression to substantive motifs that will impregnate classroom discussions. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who penned: “That which we are we shall teach;” and Paulo Freire who reminded teachers: “Never be too certain of your certainties;” and Albert Einstein who admonished: “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.” These epigrams represent just three of the thematic universes that swirl within the dialectical winds of classroom discussions. They are, however, powerful enough to be continually reinvigorated and reinterpreted in new, sometimes unusual—even creatively idiosyncratic—ways. They are also themes that are woven with many intellectual threads into the writings of Rollo May.

That Which We Are We Shall Teach

In this educational era of standardization and conformity, future teachers need to seek ever-enlarging understandings of who they are and then be truly authentic in the classroom and in the larger society to that self-knowledge. May (1989) reminds us: “Each self is different from

every other self; it is unique” (p. 21). It is that uniqueness—that inner individuality—that makes teacher-creativity possible. May helps us to recognize we should not allow ourselves to be molded to some authoritarian expectation but that each individual should have the inner-courage to struggle “to find his [or her] true self” (p. 28). It is a struggle, a continuing quest to understand the psychological and socio-cultural conditioning experiences that shape who we are.

When May (1975) writes that “thinking and self-creating are inseparable” (p. 99), he helps us focus on the reality that personal growth is an intellectual struggle for both student and teacher, a struggle that expands into “a three-cornered interplay of biological, and individual, and historical-social factors” (May, 1969, p. 26). Even as deterministic socio-cultural forces surrounded us, we also are endowed with the power of existential freedom. May (1991) reminds us that to understand the process of self-fulfillment, we must strive to be in touch with the wholeness of our personality, with our “hoping, yearning, imagination, believing...with the innate dimension of feelings” (p. 61). To achieve this dimension of self-growth, he suggests: “You must look, you must pay attention, you must see in a new way” (May, 1976, p. 72); you must engage in “the human struggle to find the truth about oneself” (May, 1991, p. 82).

Is engaging the student in a search for self a responsibility of a teacher education program? Some would say such a responsibility does not fit into the practical, measurable outcomes that evidence the efficacy and efficiency of a quality program. Others would borrow from May and recognize that in the preparation of teachers “it is the *who* of human existence rather than the *how* for which we are famished” (p. 57). Satisfying this hunger is not to negate the importance of the teaching *hows*, those necessary pedagogical “best practices” that provide the beginning teacher with a running start. Rather it is to recognize an equation that is missing in many formulas for quality teacher education.

Some who reflect upon the education of teachers express a thoughtful anxiety that many who are preparing to enter the teaching profession represent a “me” generation reared to be too focused on the self and who a self-defined, narrow worldview handicap. The concern is that a search by way of a School of Education for the personal *who* of human existence will only reveal a “self” entranced by its own sense of entitlement and enamored by the accoutrements of a personal lifestyle—cultural, religious, social, economic. In cases where entrancement and enamoring may be a reality, the teacher may expose the one caught in the trap of unreflective self-congratulation to May’s (1981) concept of “the duality of selfhood” (p. 179): there is a better self to be found. In Paulo Freire’s (Freire & Macedo, 1995) terms, the purpose then becomes one of self-reinvention. The goal is “precisely to take one out

of the rigid grooves, the narrow compulsive trends, which are blocks to freedom” (May, 1981, p. 185). It is removal of the blocks and the resulting sense of autonomy that make possible a pre-service teacher’s loosening restricting bonds of socio-cultural conditioning and becoming a more open-minded thinker.

Teacher autonomy is something that many see being minimized in today’s renewed stress on “teacher proof” materials and procedures. This top-down approach diminishes one’s “feeling of joy which comes from fulfilling his [or her] own potentialities, from finding and teaching truth as [s/]he knows it” (May, 2009, p. 128). In handed-down, scripted recipes for teaching, we are faced with the issue that “one’s meaning becomes meaningless because it borrows from somebody else’s meaning” (May, 1994, p. 21). “We must rediscover the sources of strength and integrity within ourselves” (p. 53).

It is only from a sense of personal autonomy that creativity flows, and it is creativity that allows a teacher to surpass borrowed, sometimes forced, meaning and to use personal inner-resources intellectually to enliven a classroom. Those who are teachers and those who are preparing to be teachers have reason to listen to advice from Rollo May (1989):

When one achieves one’s own unique selfhood, one becomes autonomous. ... One who has achieved one’s originality...has become part of the infinite creativity of the life process, and it is expressed in the unique creativity of one’s own self. (pp. 155–156)

Teacher educators have a responsibility to stimulate the kind of autonomous creativity that flows from teacher authenticity. There must be encouragement to know who one is, and be who one is; or who one has the possibility of becoming. An elusive and all-too-often academically neglected teacher quality, self-knowledge, will help future educators prepare to use their own creative decision-making to counter passive absorption of authoritatively transmitted, standardized procedures.

Many years ago May (1959) coined a word that reflects much of today’s measurement-oriented, technical approach to education: “methodolatry” (p. 8). Drawing on an existentialist philosophical understanding, May defines “methodolatry” as idolizing the data-driven, technical and methodological aspects of teaching that tend to dehumanize both student and teacher. May helps us reflect upon a philosophy that is more humanist-oriented than based upon measurements and technology: “The existentialists are centrally concerned with rediscovering the living person amid the compartmentalization and dehumanization of modern culture” (p. 14).

“Technique, like data, must be subordinated to the fact of the reality of two persons in a room” (p. 39).

May’s existentialist thinking reminds us that the requirements of “best practice” techniques should not circumscribe teachers. Rather, teaching is an open-ended drama during which one mind penetrates another mind. Teaching is an active engagement of intellects, passions, possibilities, and personal histories. Paradoxically, even in a crowded classroom teaching is two persons in a room; two autonomous individuals engaging in the joy of becoming who they have the possibility of being. This process of mutual becoming is only possible in the classroom where the complicated search for answers to the “who am I?” question is not totally negated by the “push-button...oversimplified mechanical view of the self...an underlying lack of belief in the dignity, complexity, and freedom of the person” (May, 2009, pp. 36–37). When we believe in the positive potentials residing within our own selves, we intensify the possibility of believing in the dignity, complexity, freedom, and perhaps yet-to-be-discovered strengths in the other. For the teacher, this translates into a willingness to seek the best in the student. It means finding personal meaning in the Latin derivation of the word “education”: to bring forth or to pull out.

Never Be Too Certain of Your Certainties

When May (1981) wrote, “We simply do not know the ultimate answers” (p. 126), he was in philosophical harmony with Zen Buddhists. The Zen philosophy incorporates a challenging bit of ambiguous wisdom into a search for ways to engage the vicissitudes of life: “There are no answers, search for them lovingly.” The Zen vision of life is not as pessimistic as it may seem. After all, “there are questions we continually ask and can never answer, but in the asking is the catharsis” (May, 1991, p. 284). It is a questioning attitude toward life that keeps open the possibility of creative alternatives to variously entrenched political, religious, and educational dogmas. A *loving* search for answers precludes closed avenues of investigation. It allows for probing, provocative questioning of the *what is* in an attempt to determine the *what should be*. In May’s (1940) words: “Human personality is that expression of the life process which can bear a tension between what is and what ought to be” (p. 133). Even in *Schools of Education* a need exists for “surprising interpretations, new mysteries, new possibilities” (May, 1991, p. 72). In a self-chosen, loving—not forced—search for interpretive answers, a person opens his or her mind to an intellectual acceptance of new ways of thinking, doing, and being. Positioning this search in the educational arena, May (1988) asserts: “The teacher is happy that the child, or the teen-ager, or the college student glimpses a new truth, learns a new way of looking at human life and its joys and problems” (p. 122).

In a School of Education, it is in the foundations classroom where students are encouraged to build upon or, perhaps, newly develop a philosophy of education that finds intellectual vitality in opening the mind's eye to new truth. Such an openness is often predicated on a willingness to question the truth of pre-packaged, transmitted, dogmatic certainties, for "[t]he only way to widen one's 'blindness' is to analyze one's philosophical assumptions" (May, 1959, p. 9). When faced with reasoned alternative perceptions, one must be willing to doubt one's own socio-culturally conditioned way of perceiving life's joys and problems, successes and failures, beliefs and disbeliefs. May (1988) teaches that one should not necessarily avoid doubt since doubt can open the mind to unsuspected possibilities, especially when it causes one to challenge the certainties of accepted dogma.

Doubting is the symbol of the growing process. One's doubting gives the sense of venture. It opens new trails, to the unknown; one learns new paths; one sees new things on the trip; there are fresh winds blowing from different directions. ... Doubting in this sense is expressive of the courage to venture where one never knows where he [or she] will come out. ... The capacity to doubt creatively is a stimulus for new discoveries, new adventures in learning. (pp. 121–122)

Intellectually sound doubt allows one to understand and make use of many of life's sometimes-paralyzing paradoxes and confusing conundrums. We become alert to the reality that the landscape of life is not painted in black and white but is tinted and shaded in many wonderful hues. We can even understand a concept relating to our own coloring of life: "A curious paradox...we must be fully committed, but we must also be aware at the same time that we might possibly be wrong" (May, 1975, p. 20). If we carry this thought a little further, we may conclude "people who claim to be absolutely convinced that their stand is the only right one are dangerous. Such conviction is the essence not only of dogmatism, but of its more destructive cousin, fanaticism" (p. 20).

One might ask: "What does this have to do with preparing teachers for a future classroom setting?" One answer might be that teaching involves a personal intellectual and emotional encounter between teacher and student. Teaching involves one mind penetrating another mind. It is relationship. Teaching as education—in counterpoint to teaching as training—is "a dynamic dialectical relationship" (May, 1969, p. 146). This kind of teaching relationship can only exist when educators allow and encourage the dialectical, when teachers and students dissect certainties and their inner-workings, expose counter-certainties and uncertainties. The teacher should be an example of openness to diverse

worldviews even as he or she recognizes that “there is antagonism between every worldview and its rival” (May, 1940, p. 23). An openness to rival interpretations and perceptions allows the teacher to understand the student “as [s/]he really is, knowing him [or her] in his [or her] own reality...in his [or her] real world, the world in which he [or she] lives and moves and has his [or her] being” (May, 1959, pp. 3–4). The teacher must penetrate each student’s lived reality in order for real learning to seep through social, cultural, and emotional barriers.

Helping to prepare future teachers for the uncertainties of the real world means creating a social foundations classroom as a constellation of swirling, sometimes tornado-like possibilities where worldviews collide, certainty bumps against certainty, paradoxes, ambiguities, and conundrums reflect the world of education, and conflicting realities seek recognition. May (1989) cautions: “We do not wish to wipe away conflict altogether—that would be stagnation” (p. 40). The goal is to turn conflict into creative tension. In the liberating classroom, “this process of adjustment of tensions...is something dynamic, creative, going on all the time” (p. 48). Not only is “some play of opposites necessary to give dynamic balance to personality” (p. 58), this play is necessary to the dialectical balancing process that inevitably defines the social foundations classroom’s openness.

“All human actions have some ambivalence” (May, 2009, p. 165); teachers should make room in their philosophies for the ambiguous, for an “incompleteness...[that] is part and parcel of the human situation” (May, 1940, p. 130). For the continuing learner, the one who is in the process of *becoming*, this ambivalence reflects a life-altering reality: “acting, loving, thinking, creating—even though one knows [one] does not have the final answers, and [one] may well be wrong” (May, 2009, p. 179). After being so very sure of one’s certainty, coming face-to-face with one’s “wrongness” means experiencing the human condition the ancient philosophers named *aporia*. We face this psychic condition in a classroom and in broader dimensions of life when open-minded reflection on an alternative truth shatters the security of a long-held certainty: “We must be fully committed, but we must also be aware at the same time that we might possibly be wrong” (May, 1975, p. 20). It just may be that “if I listen to my ‘deeper’ self, sooner or later it will speak to me” (May, 1973, p. 95). This “deeper self” listens before it speaks. It does not just hear the other’s words, but listens to and interprets deeper meanings, even if those meanings challenge personal ideas and ideals. Here is the seedbed of personal integrity and authenticity. Too often the authentic self is neglected in the academic preparation of the professional educator.

Outside pressure to conform to patterns, goals, and preset, measurable outcomes too often translate into neglecting the authentic

self in the academic preparation of the professional educator: “conformity is the great destroyer of selfhood in our society in which fitting the “pattern’ tends to be accepted as the norm” (May, 2009, p. 61). Sometimes and in some places future teachers must acclimate and prepare to conform to established norms; to adhere to bureaucratically designed expectations and to proven pedagogical procedures. But a foundations teacher has a responsibility to ask questions, to challenge entrenched dogma, to traverse established boundaries, and to teach toward students’ claiming a greater sense of personal autonomy for themselves as future teachers. Social foundations educators claiming this responsibility want, at some point, to say to the continually *becoming* student: “You went away with a new part of yourself discovered” (May, 1973, p. 28). There must be reason to celebrate the discovery of a deeper self, one who ventures into his or her professional future with a certain rebellious, creative spirit who does not cow before the dogmatic certainty of educational power structures.

Ample justification exists for helping future teachers recognize the creative opportunities inherent in differing educational views. A classroom dialectical encounter between dogmatic certainty and the rebellious, doubting spirit may open doors to new middle grounds upon which both sides may stand as they engage in “a readjustment of the constellations of tensions” (May, 1989, p. 116). Thoughtful educators consider the reality that “no society would survive long without both new vitality and old forms—change and stability” (May, 2009, p. 140) and therefore seek creative possibilities in both traditional and the progressive educational philosophies. We may find personal, intellectual renewal in recognizing the positive potential of holding change and stability in a dynamic, creative tension, for “the process of adjustment of tension...is something dynamic and creative” (May, 1989, p. 48), and is based on the fact that “the creative act is an encounter between two poles” (May, 1975, p. 89).

Opposing political ideologies, differing educational philosophies, cultural dichotomies, and competing power structures generate today’s swirling universe of American education. Only when educators and their students open-mindedly, critically appraise and challenge absolute certainties do they unleash the creative power of ideas, powers of which America’s future teachers should be exemplars.

Not Everything That Counts Can Be Counted, and Not Everything that Can Be Counted Counts

I have recently been involved in “Assessment Training” for university faculty in preparation for assuming such responsibilities as recommending instruments for empirically assessing student learning in newly developed core courses. One section of the core to be assessed,

“The Creative Spirit,” is based on the premise it:

...permeates and transforms the human experience. Through it, we imagine what is possible, recognize its spontaneity, and marvel at the beauty we experience. The creative spirit engages our imagination and expands our senses as it flows through us. (Newman University, 2011, p. 30)

As part of an assessment-dominated educational culture, we were to find ways objectively to assess a semester-long learning experience involving such subjective intangibles as spontaneity, imagination, spirit, and beauty. I question: “Can the incorporeal be measured, quantified, and made part of an instrumentalist academic process?” If so, then perhaps we live “in a world where numbers inexorably take over as our means of identification, like flowing lava threatening to suffocate and fossilize all breathing life in its path” (May, 1969, p. 32). May wrote this perhaps-overheated lava metaphor to shake up the reader’s thought process. As he throws light on an expanding reality, his metaphor reflects Albert Einstein’s concern that not everything that is important can be subsumed within a data-driven system.

For the educator the metaphor means not everything academically meaningful can or should be subjected to standardized, objective appraisal. Even as future teachers are *trained* to make effective use of a pedagogical “mechanization [that] makes use of uniformity, predictability, and orderliness” (May, 1975, p. 69), so also should they be *educated* to focus on “a tension between what is, and what ought to be” (May, 1940, p. 123). Coupling training and education disentangles the subjectivity of the creative spirit from the objectivity of empirical verification. Living in a mechanized, technologically sophisticated world does not mean we subject everything meaningful to measurement, to empirical assessment, to data-driven verification. Those who use a foundations of education classroom to incite a questioning, open-minded, even intellectually rebellious thought process in future teachers challenge “the odd belief prevailing in our culture that a thing or experience is not real if we cannot make it mathematical, and somehow it must be real if we can reduce it to numbers” (May, 1994, p. 94).

It may be too much to expect future teachers to escape “the life-threatening straitjacket of the system of external rules...[and] the artificial, standardized yardstick of conformity” (May, 1989, p. 155). Although rules have their place and conformity to principles that enhance the philosophically and pragmatically “true, good, and beautiful” is to be admired, we want those who define themselves as educators to be first attuned to “the mysterious creativity of life” (p. 126) and to “find a plane of consciousness which will fill the vast

impersonal emptiness of our technology with human meaning” (May, 1969, pp. 308–309). Mystery and meaning are transcending elements in a person’s educational—and life—quests. Mystery and meaning represent that which no standardizing rubric can assess but which should nevertheless be present in our ongoing educational dialogue.

Today’s concern for educational reform is too often focused on recipe-like answers to questions about the *what* and *how* of educational performance, answers that reveal “the tendency to treat man as an object to be calculated and controlled...to make human beings into anonymous units, to fit like robots into the vast industrial and political collectivism of our day” (May, 1959, p. 12). Too often we seem to prepare future teachers to inhabit and conform to an objectified, calculated, and controlled world. Those who pose the penetrating, challenging, heretical questions to the educational orthodoxy are those who represent the philosophical side of the “teaching teachers” equation. Philosophical thinkers provide academic counterparts to that which treats human beings as anonymous units.

Conclusion

For the becoming teacher, there is always something new—a new idea, concept, perception, observation, or viewpoint—upon which to reflect, and it may be that sometimes that newness may involve the revival of what has come before. Robert Gurdin (1990) writes: “Inspiration may be the revelation of something completely new, but it may also be the rediscovery of something always true” (p. 20). This essay represents my attempt to rediscover the critical thoughtfulness of Rollo May, offering recognition of how May’s broad-ranging ideas and his existentially tinged philosophy of life may be used by a School of Education to enliven and enrich the teacher education process.

May’s ideas, introduced into a twenty-first century educational dialectic, can help us more creatively reimagine and redefine the meaning of a “quality education”—for both teacher and student. When faced with top-down, authoritarian expectations, the thoughtful educator will benefit from exposure to ideas that challenge conformist demands. The existentialist thought process which infiltrates May’s writings opens a door to such a self-transforming exposure.

In the present essay I only explore three themes, placing them into an educational context. Other themes, pregnant with possibility, may be found in the works of this philosophically existentialist thinker who challenges dogmatic certainty, worship of technique, technocratic standardization, “arrogant generalization” (May, 1973, p. 22), and the “oversimplified mechanical view of the self” (May, 2009, p. 37). The seasoned educator and pre-service teacher alike have much to learn from the man who reminds us the “decline of teaching as an art...means the

disintegration of our society” (May, 1988, p. 120). An analysis of May’s writings provides aesthetically tinged insights into the deeper dimensions of the human spirit, and the individual’s complex and paradoxical relationship with the other.

May challenges his reader to ask questions about basic life meanings; the self, freedom, destiny, creativity, myth, authentic relationships, and the experience of intellectual venturing. He encourages us to challenge our illusions, to expand our consciousness, to make room for doubt, to question the dominance of an automated society, to continue to become. He refers and connects to deeper meanings found in the writings of such thinkers as Paul Tillich, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Sigmund Freud, among others. May did not write specifically for the educator, but those who find a professional home in the classroom will gain from an interpretive analysis of his broad, visionary thinking.

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Exploring the Surprising Association of a Progressive Woman Educator and G. Stanley Hall

Linda C. Morice, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Introduction

G. Stanley Hall is credited with having an enormous impact on twentieth century US attitudes toward gender and education, largely due to his two-volume work, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*.¹ Published in 1904, *Adolescence* presents a view of female development Hall derived from evolutionary theory, within which he argues the adolescent female is “at the top of the human curve from which the higher super-man of the future is to evolve.”² Hall contends that since adolescent girls are quite susceptible to reproductive organ damage, they should single-mindedly devote themselves to the natural role of motherhood. He also argues the biological differentiation of the sexes at puberty necessitates educators physically separate boys and girls during adolescence.

Historian Lawrence Cremin observes that “there is no understanding the present apart from...[Hall’s] contribution,” adding Hall “injected into the mainstream of American educational thought some of the most radical—and I happen to think virulent—doctrines of the twentieth century.”³ Other scholars—most notably Diehl⁴ and Karier⁵—attempt to contextualize Hall’s views. In this paper I seek to add to their characterizations of G. Stanley Hall’s beliefs by associating his work with that of a woman who was affiliated with him: progressive educator Flora White.

A Surprising Association

Based upon their different attitudes toward important educational issues, the association between Hall and White is surprising. Between 1897 and 1914, Flora White founded and operated Miss White’s Home School in Concord, Massachusetts. The school promoted girls’ physical development and academic achievement far beyond the prevailing gender restrictions of the day. Despite the apparent clash of their educational philosophies, Hall supported White’s efforts, and, in fact, two circulars (1900 and 1906) exist from Miss White’s Home School:

both list G. Stanley Hall among the school's endorsers. The 1900 circular includes the following testimonial from Hall, written in 1898:

For some years of personal acquaintance with Miss Flora J. White and knowledge of her educational ideals and large competency for her work, I am confirmed that her school at Concord can be heartily commended to parents for its general methods and scope, and for the devoted personal attention each pupil is sure to receive.⁶

Hall's name is included among the circular's list of other notable civic, academic, religious, and professional leaders—an indication of Flora White's networking ability and influence.⁷

Other documents suggest White's relationship with Hall to be both personal and professional. For example, in 1939, fifteen years after Hall's death, White published the poem, "Redemption," in which she describes a fern growing in the crevice of a rock in a Massachusetts upland. She notes that the poem was "Written for G. Stanley Hall who was with the writer when she found the fern."⁸ In 1942 White published a novel and indicates in a promotional material that she sent an early draft (nearly 50 years before) to Hall and his mentor, William James.⁹ Her claim about the draft is reiterated in a newspaper article in 1947, seven months before White's death.¹⁰

In addition to works cited, I draw from a number of primary and secondary documents including White's published articles and unpublished lectures; Hall's autobiography;¹¹ Ross' biography of Hall;¹² and essays on Hall's educational philosophy by Arnett¹³ and Vertinsky.¹⁴ I argue that while White and Hall share common roots, their association was formed during the child study movement of the late nineteenth century at a time when their relationship was most mutually beneficial. After Hall's publication of *Adolescence*, his differences with White on gender issues become increasingly apparent, and while their careers moved in different directions, their bond was never strained to the point of schism. White has the last word on the matter in her poem, "Redemption," where she describes the importance of a fern (without "floweret or fruitage") to refute Hall's valuing of women primarily in reproductive terms.¹⁵ Her poem can be read as an affirmation of White's belief that she had worth, despite never having married or borne children.

Franklin County Roots

No documentation exists showing when White and Hall first met; however, they grew up within geographic proximity to one another and had somewhat similar backgrounds. Both came from small farming villages in Franklin County in northwestern Massachusetts: Granville Stanley Hall was born in 1844 in Ashfield; Flora White was born in 1860

in Heath, some 20 miles away. Both came from Puritan stock and grew up in modest circumstances; particularly modest were White's circumstances, however, because her father died when she was an infant, leaving her mother with five children and no means of support.

Hall's and White's educational opportunities were dissimilar, in part due to the role gender played in their lives. Hall received a superb education in all-male environments. In 1862 he left Ashfield to attend Williston Seminary for one year in nearby Easthampton; he then entered Williams College and, following graduation, attended Union Theological Seminary from 1867 to 1869. In 1878, Hall became the first American to receive a Ph.D. in psychology (from Harvard). White moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, when she was twelve to attend public school; she lived in the home of a retired Congregational clergyman who became a family friend while serving as a supply minister at Heath. In 1876, she entered a two-year teacher-training course at Westfield, the first coeducational normal school in Massachusetts. White graduated from Westfield Normal School (an overwhelmingly female institution) in 1878. Although she pursued further study at the Seminarium for Teachers in Naas, Sweden, the Sloyd Training School in Boston, and Baron Nils Posse's Gymnastics School in Boston, she never earned a baccalaureate degree, largely as a result of both her limited finances and the restricted opportunities for women in higher education. For example, until Boston University opened its doors in 1873, no women were admitted to colleges or universities in New England. White attended Westfield—an institution serving western Massachusetts' students of modest means—on a small bequest following the retired minister's death.

Both Hall and White had opportunities to travel abroad. Hall interrupted his theological training to go to Berlin where he studied philosophy and natural science in 1876–1878. He returned to Germany in 1878–1880 to study experimental psychology under Wilhelm Wundt. Between 1885 and 1887, White lived in the Cape Colony in southern Africa, where she taught English at a private school for Dutch- and English-speaking boys. During the summer of 1891 she attended the Seminarium for Teachers in Naas, Sweden.¹⁶ There she studied gymnastics and developed her skill in fine motor, gross motor, and cognitive development through Swedish handcrafts known as *sloyd* (pronounced “sloyd”).

Child Study

If Hall and White did not meet earlier through Franklin County connections, their paths certainly crossed by the last decade of the nineteenth century when Hall was the leader of the child-study movement that helped to form progressive education. As early as 1883, Hall publishes—with the help of four trained kindergarten teachers—

“The Contents of Children’s Minds,” a report on his effort to identify the experiences children had in common before they entered school. The results of the study surprised Hall: he discovered, for example, that 65 percent of the children interviewed had no concept of an ant and 55 percent did not know that wooden objects come from trees. Hall concluded that teachers should make no assumptions about what children know upon entering school; moreover, the order in which they acquire concepts depends on the environment. Each teacher or teacher-in-training should, according to Hall, explore children’s minds with all the tact and ingenuity s/he can muster.

Hall scaled back on his study of children in 1885 when he accepted an appointment in psychology at Johns Hopkins University. Within a few years he became president of Clark University, and his interest in child study was renewed following a personal tragedy. In the spring of 1890, Hall’s wife and eight-year-old daughter were accidentally asphyxiated; only a nine-year-old son remained. Meanwhile Jonas Clark, the wealthy benefactor of the university, began to withdraw his support for the institution. After a period of grief, Hall returned to promoting child study with “a new sense of promise.”¹⁷ He assessed the growing interest among professional educators and began to view child study as a part of scientific psychology as well as an exciting pedagogical endeavor. Sensing what his audience wanted to hear, the charismatic Hall announced at the 1894 meeting of the National Education Association (NEA), “Unto you is born this day a new Department of Child Study.”¹⁸ He asserted that child study was, first and foremost, intended to benefit the teacher—“to make her forever young, sympathetic, and professional: only secondarily and almost incidentally would it benefit science.”¹⁹ The same year Hall noted “this new and great movement should be preeminently the woman’s science.”²⁰ He gained the support of enthusiastic teachers to gather data on their students’ physical growth, psychological development, and sexual maturation. The teachers were bolstered by upper-middle-class club women who possessed the education, intelligence, and leisure time to devote to this cause.

Hall outlined the chief goals of child study as promoting child health, helping the teacher to prepare the child by involving as many sensations as possible, and achieving “child psychological unity,” or discovering the child’s personalities.²¹ His views were influenced by a belief in the theory of recapitulation, which holds the development of individual persons passes through stages that resemble their ancestors’ evolution. Child study advocates identified a series of developmental stages (infancy, childhood, youth, adolescence), each with its own unique characteristics and psychology. To child study advocates, the needs of

children could best be met by free play, healthful exercise, and oral instruction, while the needs of youth call for intensive instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Flora White supported Hall by advocating, in an 1896 speech to the NEA, “sane and conscientious child study.”²² When White presented to the NEA, she was an anomaly; according to Rousmaniere, the speakers at the organization’s 1896 annual meeting were “all male, and almost all administrators.... Schoolteachers attended NEA sessions, but they were prohibited from speaking. Their function was primarily to learn from their superiors.”²³ White repeated the call for child study in an article published in 1899.²⁴ Many of Hall’s tenets of child study were incorporated into White’s pedagogical practice including the promotion of child health in hygienic surroundings and the stimulation of senses in the learning process. In her 1896 NEA speech White stated:

Get percentages on joy and exuberance of spirits [i]f you would make safe, and righteous standards for your schools. If the pulses do not beat faster, longings grow stronger, doubts further deepen, and the joy of life tingle along the nerves, of what avail think you will the school and all its bookishness be toward producing a stronger, nobler race [?] ²⁵

She called upon teachers to listen to children, learn of their desires, and value their idiosyncrasies. White was respectful of the stages of child development, being careful not to interfere with natural growth, while at the same time she offered a rigorous academic program to older children lest they be coddled.

Growing Divergence

Ross writes that even though child study was already in decline by the time Hall published *Adolescence*, it was the most influential book that came out of the movement. Hall argues there are fundamental differences between girls and boys, and that adolescence is a critical period in the development of women’s reproductive organs. He also suggests females are not as completely evolved as males and should be taught separately and differently. These attitudes led to Hall’s role as spokesperson for an “anticoeducational movement” during the early twentieth century when 98 percent of US high schools had both male and female students.²⁶ Hall believed girls ill-suited for secondary education, and that exposing them to a coeducational high school threatens their health and ultimately the survival of the race.²⁷

Primary sources reveal White’s growing divergence from Hall on the subjects of single-sex education and coeducation. The 1900 school circular states her school is “organized for girls,” with *exceptions* made when families want to enroll young siblings in the same school.²⁸ The

1906 circular states that Miss White's Home School *will accept* girls under the age of seventeen and *boys under the age of twelve*. Four decades later, Flora White looked back on her career and described Miss White's Home School as *coeducational*, without qualification.²⁹

White and Hall also differ on the issue of higher education for women. As early as 1903, in an address to the NEA, Hall quoted medical opinion that women are in danger of excessive brain work that can harm their reproductive function. He argued that women primarily have a procreative role and should be spared the "illusory" freedoms promised by higher education and professional training.³⁰ Hall viewed the female graduate students at Clark University as "individuals"—that is, they did not represent most women and were the terminal products of evolution since they were both single and childless.³¹ Flora White, on the other hand, offered a rigorous curriculum of "English, Latin, German, French, Mathematics, Drawing, and Science," preparing girls "for higher education and for life."³² Her attitude was apparent when she urged her 26-year-old great niece, Grace Moyer, to pursue a Ph.D. at Columbia University.³³ White subsequently suggested that Moyer consider the possibility of attaining a leadership role in higher education:

You know, Mrs. Dwight Morrow is taking President Neilson's place at Smith this year as he is retiring. She is a grand person and will I am sure make good while she is there. Maybe you are booked to become a college president Grace—who knows—And why not! You made a grand impression on everybody here.³⁴

White's growing independence from Hall is also seen in her attitude about physical exercise for girls and women. Hall favored outdoor activities, provided that they were not excessive, believing girls were suited to being sympathetic spectators rather than participating players. Hall approved of *non-competitive* boating and basketball for adolescent girls but recommended they avoid Swedish gymnastics. At Miss White's Home School, girls received special attention in "the development of physique," which was enhanced by Swedish gymnastics and a "well equipped" gymnasium.³⁵ The school also had a gymnasium in its summer location in Heath, where girls could play basketball or make use of ropes, a climbing ladder, and other apparatus for indoor work. In addition, girls could avail themselves of hiking opportunities for which they were to bring "stout walking boots."³⁶ White's 1906 school circular refers to "natural competition" among her students.³⁷

Redemption

When he wrote *Adolescence*, Hall included a description of the "bachelor woman" that would likely have evoked a negative reaction in White. While acknowledging that the bachelor woman's "mentality"

makes her a “good fellow” and “companionable in all the broad intellectual spheres,” Hall notes that she:

...has taken up and utilized in her own life all that was meant for her descendents, and has so overdrawn her account with heredity that, like every perfectly and completely developed individual, she is also completely sterile. This is the very apotheosis of selfishness from the standpoint of every biological ethics.³⁸

White offers an alternate to Hall’s view by writing “Redemption,” a poem she included in the 1939 publication of *Poems by Mary A. White and Flora White*. Mary (Flora’s sister and companion) had died one year earlier, and Flora dedicated the book to “our former pupils and many friends.” “Redemption” is dedicated to Hall and, like him, White draws examples from the natural world to convey her message:

*There’s a little fern grows—
I’ll show you where—
On the side of a sun-burned upland
in the crevice of rock,
Under the shade of an old maple-tree.
“Well” do you say, “what of it?
What of the fern and the rock and the upland?”
Only this—“There it is—and God is there.
Breath of God—Redeemer of earth, my fern is.”
“Cold, barren rock—Lifeless?” you say—
“What more so?”—Lifeless—Perhaps.
I think not.
But lifeless or not once, it now lives in the
Heart of the fern—rare, unfrowned.
It’s true that once it was earth-bound—
When a wind-blown seedling lodged
in its well-worn crevice.
And the seed was earth-bound, insentient—
Yet the weary face of the rock, cycle-cinctured,
Yielded as for aeons past to the graving chisel
of Time—
Yielded, patiently waiting, a few grains
of its substance.
Little fern, so rare in your beauty—
Breath of the One, all beauty—
Scorning a part, floweret or fruitage as gift,
Your whole self giving to Giver—
Brown threads gold-burnished, stringing
Emerald wings paired for flying,
Gauze-like, ephemeral, mystic-numbered—
Marvel of Grace; born of a rock and a raindrop!
Redeemed is the world forever.³⁹*

In “Redemption,” White offers a religious interpretation to the religiously unorthodox Hall, who once considered a career in the ministry but “lived and felt the tension” between a waning “God-centered world view” and an ascendant “man-centered scientific world.”⁴⁰ White addresses Hall’s singular focus on the reproductive role of women by pointing to a plant that reproduces by alternating generations, with the fern itself serving as the sporophyte that creates asexual spores. White attests to the fern’s loveliness and value even though it lacks—even scorns—the female parts of plant reproduction. The poem answers Hall’s accusation of selfishness by explaining her own life choice: in foregoing marriage and family, she gave her “whole self” to the Creator as a teacher of the young. White’s words recall the traditional ideal of “Republican motherhood” to *redeem* the nation, also asserting the merit of single women who redeem humankind by educating children.⁴¹ In her final years White expressed pride in the contributions of former students she prepared for “flying,” including Mary Ogden Abbott, a respected sculptor and big game hunter; Mary Coolidge, dean of Wellesley College; Henry Howard Brooks, noted New England artist; and Eugene Marais, famed South African naturalist, poet, and writer.⁴²

Conclusion

In 1939—the year “Redemption” was published—White penned an unpublished narrative that is now in the Heath Historical Society. “Life Facts of Flora White and Family” offers many details of White’s personal and professional life, acknowledging she had “many friends” while singling out a few who were most noteworthy during her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.⁴³ Hall is not included in this group. This, plus the periodic citations of Hall over the years in personal and professional venues, suggests while he was indeed an important influence he was not an overpowering figure in her life narrative. Given Hall’s significance in the history of education, and the ongoing attempts to understand him, contextualizing his relationship with White can further inform the study of shapers of progressive education during its formative period.

An examination of primary and secondary sources surrounding the lives of Flora White and G. Stanley Hall underscores their philosophical alignment in important areas of child study. Although they both possessed a passion for the education of children, theirs was also an association of mutual benefit. White helped to promote Hall’s child study movement during a difficult period of his life; Hall gave White the validation she needed to pursue her educational initiatives. With the publication of *Adolescence* their differences become more apparent. Although Hall remained on Miss White’s Home School list of endorsers, his name was featured less prominently than before. Over time, White’s

view of female education and coeducation evolved in a different direction than Hall's, particularly as his focus moved on to genetic issues and the work of Sigmund Freud.

When Flora White died in 1948, her obituary appeared in her local newspaper, the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*. In addition to listing her many accomplishments, the paper reports that White's work "received praise from *men of note* throughout the educational world."⁴⁴ This phrase captures the reason Hall's endorsement remained important to White, a skillful networker who tried throughout life to accomplish her goals from the position of a marginalized female. While there is no evidence of any sexual relationship between Flora White and G. Stanley Hall, in this case marginalization—like misery and politics—created "strange bedfellows."⁴⁵

Endnotes

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- 2 Hall, 1907, vol. II, 561.
- 3 Lawrence A. Cremin, as quoted in Patricia Anne Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), 189.
- 4 Lesley Diehl, "The Paradox of G. Stanley Hall: Foe of Coeducation and Educator of Women," *American Psychologist* 4, no. 8 (1986): 1–20, accessed August 22, 2011, psychnet.apa.org
- 5 Clarence J. Karier, "G. Stanley Hall: A Priestly Prophet of a New Dispensation," *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2009): 35–60.
- 6 *Miss Hall's Home School*, 1900, 7.
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- 8 Flora White, "Redemption," *Poems by Mary A. White and Flora White* (New York: Paebur, 1939), 30–31.
- 9 Flora White, *Bloodroots in the Wake of Circumstance*, publisher's announcement (Kansas City, MO: Burton, 1942). William James sent a letter acknowledging receipt of the manuscript to Flora White, 18 December 1896.

- 10 "Poetess, Educator Lives Quietly in Retirement," *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, 14 July 1947, 6.
- 11 G. Stanley Hall, *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (New York: Appleton, 1923).
- 12 Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).
- 13 Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*: Brilliance and Nonsense," *History of Psychology* 9, no. 2 (2006): 186–197, 206.
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- 15 Flora White, "Redemption," 30–31.
- 16 White's transportation to southern Africa was part of her compensation package. She financed the trip to Sweden by selling a short story to *Harper's* magazine.
- 17 Ross, 260.
- 18 G. Stanley Hall, "Child Study, 1894," 173–179, as quoted in Ross, 288.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 289.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 260.
- 21 Ross, 289.
- 22 Flora J. White, "Physical Effects of Sloyd" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Education Association, Buffalo, NY, 1896), 6.
- 23 Kate Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 106.
- 24 Flora J. White, "Physical Effects of Sloyd," *Sloyd Bulletin* 2 (1899, March): 10.
- 25 Flora J. White, NEA meeting paper, 1.
- 26 Diehl, 6.
- 27 David Tyack and Elisabeth Hanson, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992), 146–148, 154–155.
- 28 *Miss White's Home School*, 1900, 3, 7–9.
- 29 Flora White to Anne Halfpenny, 17 June 1940.
- 30 Vertinsky, 173.
- 31 Diehl, 15.
- 32 *Miss White's Home School*, 1906, 3.

- ³³ Flora White to Grace Moyer, 2 May 1938.
- ³⁴ Flora White to Grace Moyer, 15 October 1939.
- ³⁵ *Miss White's Home School*, 1900, 2.
- ³⁶ *Plover Hill Camp for Girls in Charge of the Misses White*, 1907, 5.
- ³⁷ *Miss White's Home School*, 1906, 1.
- ³⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, vol. II, 633.
- ³⁹ Flora White, "Redemption," 30–31.
- ⁴⁰ Karier, 38.
- ⁴¹ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 57–58, 239. Following US independence, the issue of women's citizenship was handled by giving domesticity political meaning in the ideal of the Republican mother whose role was to redeem the nation by educating sons to be moral and virtuous. According to Evans, the ideal persisted well into the mid-twentieth century when men did the actual work of politics and women's political role was relegated to rearing good citizens.
- ⁴² Miss Pickwick, "Girl About Town," *The Daily Oklahoman*, 9 February 1941, 5.
- ⁴³ Flora White, "Life Facts of Flora White and Family Recorded Mar. 18, 1939." Unpublished manuscript, Heath, MA Historical Society, 14.
- ⁴⁴ "Writer, Educator Miss White Dies," *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, 16 February 1948, 2, emphasis added.
- ⁴⁵ Although "politics creates strange bedfellows" is a common expression, the original reference is from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "[M]isery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows." "The Tempest," in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, act 2, scene 2 (New York, Leavitt and Allen, 1859), 17.

Reforming 21st Century American Public Education: A Case for Changing Schooling Structures

Charles J. Fazzaro, University of Missouri–St. Louis

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.

—Michel Foucault, *Discourse on Language*¹

Introduction

Few would argue that the most important aspect of schooling is the structural relationship between teacher and student. This belief is reflected in present-day US Department of Education (ED) policies that require states to make student academic achievement a major part of any teacher evaluation policy. Unfortunately, the ED's view is predicated on the assumption that teaching is a highly rational function, similar to engineering. It is as if teaching could be reduced to a mathematical equation within which all variables and their relationships have been scientifically determined and that good teachers ought to know when, how, and to what degree each variable in the equation ought to be manipulated in order to maximize student achievement.² The ED's requirement that education policy be consistent with this flawed view of teaching has crowded out any serious consideration of other factors that affect teaching and learning, in particular the function of organizational structures. In this paper I challenge the hegemony of the narrowly focused engineering view of what constitutes ideal teaching/learning structures relative to the historically grounded function of American public education. I focus my argument presented on both internal and external schooling structures.

The Organizational Variables of Schooling

Not unlike other organizations, public schools can be defined by four functional variables: task, people, technology, and structure.³ Simply

defined, “task” is the function (goal, purpose, action) the organization is supposed to fulfill. The “people” variable includes the social actors (participants) who constitute the organization. “Technology” pertains to the techniques the participants employ in accomplishing the task. Although “structure” is the normalized relationship of the participants to one another, for this discussion, I assign structure a broader meaning. Included within the meaning of structure are the relations of the functional aspects of the organization. Regarding schooling, these functional aspects include the relation between sub-task activities and/or technologies and the timing—beginning and ending—of any particular activity or technology.

One can also define organizations according to the problems they must solve and the search for solutions to those problems relative to organizational structures. In an automobile assembly plant, for example, solutions to problems must be highly analyzable so that the assembly line (structure) runs smoothly, without interruptions. This analysis requires a vertical—top down, *bureaucratic*—organizational structure. At the other end of the structure continuum are mental hospitals. Because relatively little is known about curing the many forms of mental illness, the search for solutions to problems is generally unanalyzable. This search requires a horizontal—relatively flat, *collegial*—organizational structure. In short, form (“structure”) ought to follow function (“task”).

Schooling Structures and the Purpose of American Public Education

The teacher/student dyad is the most fundamental and essential structural relationship within the institution of American public education. Through the teacher/student structural relationship within the schooling experience, information, tempered with a socially critical reflection on the importance of moral and ethical judgments, is transformed into *education*. Since at least Thomas Jefferson’s 1779 “Preamble to a Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,”⁴ it can be argued that the function (“task”) of public education in the United States has been to prepare children to assume the fundamental political office of *citizen*—the locus of political judgments in a democracy. Given this function and that the nature of the search for the solution to problems they must solve condition the structures of organizations, what should be the character of public schools’ fundamental structures?

Like mental illness, education is essentially a function of the mind. The intellectual history of humankind is replete with a plethora of explanations of how humans come to know. In brief, Protagoras (490–420 BCE) and the sophists believed that “man is the measure of all,”

that knowledge is merely subjective. His nemesis Plato (429–347 BCE) believed that at birth humans are endowed with ideal forms and that education is merely a process of *anamnesis*, remembering. René Descartes (1596–1650) believed that humans acquire knowledge through a process of “rational” thinking. Descartes’ nemesis, David Hume (1711–1776) rejected the role of any *a priori* “rational” assumptions and argues knowledge can be gained only through experience. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) struggled to forge Descartes’ rationalism and Hume’s empiricism to create Modern thought. By the close of the nineteenth century, confidence in the intellectual scaffolding of Modern thought began to erode. Roberto Calasso notes: “the task of patiently checking the joints, a task undertaken by Kant, led finally to the shattering of the joints, which Nietzsche accomplished with his hammer.”⁵ Following Nietzsche’s reasoning relative to human thought, Wittgenstein reduces “truth” to language arguing language is merely a game. Enter the twentieth- and twenty-first century French “deconstructionists”—Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Julie Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and others. Stanley Fish sums the currently popular deconstructionists’ view in the following:

The Cartesian trick of starting from the beginning and thinking things down to the ground can’t be managed because the engine of thought, consciousness itself, is inscribed (written) by discursive forms which “it”...did not originate and cannot step to the side of no matter how minimalist it goes. In short...what we think *with* thinks us. ... It [the mind] also thinks the world. This is not to say that the world apart from the devices of human conception and perception doesn’t exist “out there”; just that what we know of that world follows from what we can say about it rather than from any unmediated encounter with it in and of itself. ... [O]nly through our descriptive machineries do we have access to something called the world.⁶

In short, relative to what counts as “truth,” humans have come full-circle since Protagoras in their explanations for how humans come to know.

From the brief history of Western thought from Protagoras to the deconstructionists, at least, one can conclude that there is neither a “standard” means of coming to know nor, by extension, a “standard” truth that can serve as universal knowledge. Consequently, educators in such institutions of education as American public schools—more accurately in light of the Free Speech clause of the First Amendment, *especially* educators in American public schools—cannot logically presume that “standard” knowledge and coming to know exists.⁷

Relative to the function (“task”) of schooling, these standards include both the content of what is to be taught and how to teach it; therefore the structures of public schools must be—or at least must approach being—horizontal, *collegial*. Unfortunately, as Raymond Callahan has so thoroughly documented in his classic, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, horizontal collegial school structures have rarely been in place since at least the beginning of the twentieth century.

As enrollments in public schools increased in the mid-1800s, multiple classrooms were added—exemplified by the opening of the Josiah Quincy School, Quincy Massachusetts, in 1847. The teacher/student structure of the Quincy School did not follow that of the one-room schoolhouse where a single teacher made virtually all of the educational decisions relative to technology. The Quincy school had eight teachers working under the supervision of one principal teacher. Each teacher was assigned to a classroom with 55 desks bolted to the floor in rows. The “Quincy box” was born. By the turn of the twentieth century, virtually every community that had large populations of students had a “Quincy box” schoolhouse. The organizational structures of schools became increasingly bureaucratic with little structural difference from automobile assembly plants. Ideally, organizational structures ought to follow the function (*qua*, “task”). Instead, in Quincy-box public schools, at least, function followed structure. Reason would have it that if the function of public schools is to prepare children for citizenship in a democracy, no “standard” way of coming to know, and no “standard” knowledge, then the structures of schools ought to be *collegial*, not *bureaucratic*. But this reasoning was not to be.

The Control of Schooling Structures

Those who have taught in a public school for any length of time know that teaching is not a highly rational activity. No one has yet found any scientifically verifiable (*qua*, “it must work every time”) answer to how humans learn. Given the complexity of the human mind, there are likely far too many variables to expect any answers soon, or perhaps ever. Regardless of the complexity of the teaching/learning dyadic function, schools deprive teachers control over structural variables they might manipulate in order to help maximize student achievement. In fact, for most of American public schools’ history, classroom teachers have had little or no control over many internal structural variables that affect learning outcomes. For example, to a large extent, administrators control time, space, and materials. Likewise regarding external structural variables, David Berliner reminds us that teachers have no control over such external variables as children’s low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences; inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often

resulting from no or inadequate medical insurance; food insecurity; environmental pollutants; family relations and stresses; and neighborhood characteristics.⁸ Furthermore, studies have shown that in a 98-hour week (given a 14-hour waking day), children in professional-class families are provided with 216,000 words of language experience while those in working-class families receive 125,000 words of language experience, and in welfare families children receive only 62,000 words of language experience.⁹ Considering the fact that children are in school only 1,080 out of their 5,110 awake-hours in a year, it would not be practically possible for teachers to make up for such deficiencies. But some take issue with the view that formal schooling cannot remediate the lack of language facility.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., the sometimes-controversial critic of public school curriculum, argues the most recent drop in the reading and writing SAT scores can be contributed to the change in elementary school curriculum from content-rich to a “content-light, skills-based, test centered approach.”¹⁰ It is likely that both sides of the argument have merit considering John Dewey’s view that teaching has two domains: *knowledge* and *recommending* about knowledge. In short, teachers must know the content to be taught in order more effectively to recommend (in the sense of pedagogy) the content relative to the needs of any particular student. Regardless of either the deprived pre-school experience or the “content-light” curriculum view, structural changes in schooling practices could offer at least some benefit, even if only at the margins.

Examples of Needed Structural Changes

Of the several schooling structures I discuss that need to be changed, none are original.¹¹ Since public schooling became institutionalized in the 19th century, at least a few schools at one time or another have implemented these structures. In some schools that adopted the new structures, the changes persisted over time; in other schools they did not.¹²

School Attendance Structure

Just when a child is legally eligible to begin formal, compulsory schooling and become a part of the formal internal schooling structures has never been a settled policy and varies from state to state. In many states the prevailing view is that a child must begin school after reaching the fifth birthday if the fifth birthday comes before September 1 (or the date when school begins). A child born on August 31 can begin school the day after the fifth birthday whereas a child born on October 31 must wait eleven months before beginning school. It is well established in what is known about child development that considerable mental as well

as physical changes can take place during a relatively short time; such changes are often reported in monthly increments. In light of what is known, it would seem educationally prudent to allow a child to attend school the first school day after the fifth birthday. To accommodate this structural change, schools would have to change another structure: grade levels.

The Grade-Level Structures

The education literature of the 1960s was replete with proposals and projects that challenged the traditional factory system schooling structures that dominated public schools since at least the beginning of the 20th century. Among the most promising proposed changes was the notion of a “non-graded, continuous progress” curriculum structure. In 1971, Philip Kapfer and Glen Ovard listed five justifications for such a structure that remain entirely appropriate for today’s schools.

1. American ideals and democratic traditions emphasize the worth, dignity, rights, and liberties of individuals, not only as sound theoretical principles but also as functioning bases for social well-being and betterment.
2. Children are different in abilities, personalities, readiness, socioeconomic background and the manner in which they learn.
3. Differences among students should be provided for in educational programs that promote varied activities, experiences, and materials.
4. The recent “explosion of knowledge” requires that students receive instruction in concepts, facts, skills, and attitudes in greater breadth and depth than has been possible under the standard school curriculum and organizational structure. The curriculum and program must be so organized [structured] that students, through more selective processes, can progress through school programs without artificial barriers such as grade norms, age norms, and mythical averages.
5. Individuality must be preserved in the emerging, highly organized, centralized, technologically automated society. Although innovations (especially those connected with technological advancements) hold great promise, they also pose the threat of undermining the potential and self-determination of individuals. Properly integrated these innovations may provide the basis for a continuous progress curriculum that promotes individuality.¹³

Teaching Staff Structures

Relative to the assignment of teachers, traditional school staffing structures cannot be justified on either theoretical or practical grounds. The traditional staffing structure assumes that all teachers assigned to

specific grade levels and/or subject matter areas have the same expertise in subject content-knowledge and pedagogical technologies. If teachers in fact have different views and depth of subject matter and pedagogical skills and abilities, then it would be more educationally appropriate to use their differences to the advantage of the learning/teaching dyad. A teaching team or, more appropriately, differentiated staffing approach would be far more reasonable than a one-teacher-teaches-all structure.

Course Scheduling Structures

In high schools, at least, the traditional six of seven 55-minute per class schedule still persists despite attempts by some schools to have at least a modicum of flexibility by using block and/or rotating schedules. A few schools still might be employing flexible-modular scheduling where the school day is broken down into such small blocks of time as 28 fifteen-minute modules or even smaller units of time per module. Why not total flexibility allowing teachers to schedule instruction based on the professional judgment of what individual teachers and/or teaching teams deem appropriate for each individual student? Such a teacher-demand schedule could accommodate different instructional modes and “class” sizes. For example, a Lecture-Demonstration (LD) mode could accommodate a large number of students (up to about 500) for relatively short periods of time (usually 30 minutes); Small Group Interaction (IA) mode where 5–12 students meet with a teacher for up to 90 minutes in such different group-instructional activities as brainstorming, tutorials, inquiry, role analysis, and interactive analysis, to name a few; Laboratory (LB) mode where up to 20 students meet with a teacher to engage in “hands on” learning activities; and Independent Study (IS) mode in which students works independently on teacher-assigned learning activities.

Conclusions

Few if any would argue that the character of both the internal and external structures of American public schools are of primary importance for preparing students for citizenship. As the fundamental internal structure, the teacher/student dyad must be the central concern of those who promulgate education policy. Of particular importance is the fact that there are yet no laws of teaching and learning; therefore, teachers must be afforded considerable latitude in the selection and use of materials and the allocation and utilization of time and space. Because schools have no immediate control over the external structural variables related to the family and society in general and because these variables have life-long effects, teachers should not be held accountable for fully remediating any resulting inequities. On the other hand, by modifying at least some of the present-day schooling structures—such as when a

child starts school, grade levels, and course scheduling—schools could conceivably lessen the negative impact of the external structural variables. For the reforms needed in today’s schools, teachers and administrators need only more critically examine the schooling structures that confront them immediately upon entering the schoolhouse gate.

Endnotes

- 1 Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language” [Appendix], *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 227.
- 2 Even some outside the field of education have recognized the problem inherent in equating teaching to a science. In regards to American education, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt notes, “Under the influence of modern psychology and the tenets of pragmatism, pedagogy has developed into a *science* [emphasis added] of teaching in general in such a way as to be wholly emancipated from the actual material to be taught.” Hannah Arendt, “The Crises in Education,” *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 182.
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- 6 Stanley Fish, “French Theory in America,” *New York Times*, 6 April 2008.
- 7 This raises the question: if there is no standard knowledge, then how can the acquisition of knowledge be measured? For a consideration of this question see: Charles J. Fazzaro, “Freedom of Speech, American Public Education, and Standardized Tests: A Critical Enquiry.” *Journal of Thought* 41, no. 4 (2006): 11–28.

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- ¹¹ During the 1960s there were a plethora of proposed changes to schooling structures and technologies. Included among the many prominent innovators was Dwight W. Allen, a widely published charismatic educator who advocated, among other structural changes, modular class-scheduling; B. Frank Brown, who was widely acclaimed as the innovative principal of Melbourne High School in Florida in the 1960s and as a director with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio; John I. Goodlad, a strong advocate of non-graded schools; and David W. Beggs, III, who promoted the value of independent study time for students.
- ¹² Although the reasons why some school changes persisted while others did not is beyond the scope of this article, the reader may access these reasons in the literature on school change and innovations.

In 1968 the author had the privilege of designing and implementing a highly innovative high school curriculum/program for John Marshall High School, a new, three-year, consolidated, 1,800-student high school located in Glendale, West Virginia. John Marshall opened with a modular schedule, differentiated staff, individualized instruction, and other innovations. Most important, the teaching staff was given almost complete control of time, space, materials, and other variables needed for instruction. This arrangement lasted for at least the next twenty-five years.
- ¹³ Philip G. Kapfer and Glen F. Ovard, *Preparing and Using Individualized Learning Packages for Ungraded, Continuous Progress Education* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications, 1971), 8.

Existentialism as a Framework for Qualitative Research: Understanding Freedom and Choice in Educational Organizations

Lee S. Duemer, Texas Tech University

Existentialism is a distinct philosophical approach which addresses meaning in human existence, the everyday struggle for meaning, and the consequences of actions in everyday lives. From its development in the middle of the twentieth century it has been most closely associated with addressing questions around philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature. Less well understood are the implications for the qualitative scholar. In addition to its philosophical influence, existentialism has some distinct implications in terms of how we develop and understand knowledge arising from our interactions with the world around us. A careful understanding of existentialism reveals strong qualitative ties which provide a framework for understanding the roles individuals play, and how they struggle with those roles in educational institutions.

Little scholarship exists which intersects existentialism with qualitative research. Existentialism is most closely identified with Jean-Paul Sartre who did more than anyone to develop and advance its ideas. One of the reasons existentialism has not been more fully explored is because much of Sartre's work is in the forms of plays, novels, or narratives rather than formatted as the more traditional academic journal article or non-fiction book. Grajales and Gonzales examine methodological implications between qualitative research and several of its philosophical underpinnings; however, existentialism is not among them.¹ Maxine Greene's work examines existentialism in the educational setting framed in terms of teacher empowerment.² She examines how teachers confront their own sense of helplessness under the weight of bureaucratic supervision. Les Todres examines the implications of living in a world of growing technology and the pressures to become more specialized and efficient.³ What remains is a detailed understanding of how existentialism can inform the qualitative scholar about the role of the individual and the human element. This study's contribution to the literature is to examine how existentialism can be used as a philosophical framework for understanding the everyday struggle for meaning, and the consequences of actions in educational organizations. Qualitative

research into organizations is founded on the assumption that people (both as individuals and as groups) develop their own meanings as they interact with the world around them. Such studies therefore seek to develop understanding through interpreting the meanings that people attribute to the world.

Determinism in Organizations

One of the most important characteristics of existentialism is the understanding of how people make meaning of their everyday struggles with freedom and choice. In particular existentialists seek to understand the implications of freedom on human existence and how we overcome the difficulties associated with that dynamic. Few western philosophers have done as much as Sartre in terms of exploring the freedoms and choices we have in our lives. For the purpose of this paper, and consistent with existentialist theory, freedom is defined as social and individual freedom. Humans create social institutions, such as organizations, to facilitate our relations with each other and regulate our actions. Freedom refers to how we act within the confines of those institutions, and whether such institutions do or do not illegitimately constrain the freedom of individuals.⁴

The idea of freedom is central to understanding the role of the individual in educational organizations. The origins of existentialism and freedom can be found in the works of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though they did not use the term existentialism themselves. Both were interested in people's struggles with everyday life and how they make their choices and more importantly how those choices change the identity of those individuals. By understanding their freedom and accepting responsibility for their choices people are able to define their own existence. Martin Heidegger advanced the ideas of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche by suggesting philosophical examinations be grounded in human existence through an understanding of freedom and choice.⁵ A central principle of all these thinkers is that existence precedes essence, meaning that who we are in terms of our essence is decided by our choices rather than through a predetermined state of being that defines us as human. Humans define their own existence and create their own values through the choices they make and how they accept responsibility for those choices.⁶

It is important to note that while Sartre placed considerable emphasis on the role of freedom and choice in existence, in *Being and Nothingness* he rejects any form of determinism, immediate causes of actions or choices, even going so far as to reject psychological explanations.⁷ Determinism seeks to explain choices in a way that suggests an individual is predetermined through their experiences, psychology, and perception of the world to behave in a predictable way and any other action is inconsistent, meaning we have no alternative to

do anything other than that which we actually do. Of course, Sartre completely rejects the concept of determinism as incompatible with freedom.

However, it is equally important to understand that a rejection of determinism is not the same as an affirmation of freedom and choice. Sartre also acknowledges some individuals have more or less freedom to choose than others, and at various times in their lives. While we are responsible for the values we hold there remains some tension between the individual and society since some values are culturally encouraged and complex internal struggles may be necessary to question and reject them.⁸ Nevertheless, they remain our values since we have the freedom to accept or reject them. One of Sartre's major contributions to existentialism in terms of expanding on the works of Nietzsche, Heidegger and others is a better understanding of the limitations of individual freedom through the concept of facticity, or the concrete realities in which one exists such as time, place, language, and previous choices.⁹ It is important to add that individuals experience more or less freedom with respect to the various roles in which we live. For example, tenured faculty are protected by academic freedom and other benefits which somewhat insulate them from both internal and external undue pressures. As a self-selected profession, college and university faculty formulate their own values, rules and rewards. Administrators who do not have tenure have less freedom and protection than tenured faculty in administrative positions; however, even they benefit from the loosely-coupled nature of the academic organization which allows for increased self-determination on the part of individuals.¹⁰

The issues of individual freedom, choice, and determinism raise a host of questions that are well suited to qualitative inquiry. Sartre argues humans are essentially nihilating creatures in that we have the freedom to decide our own actions rather than being dictated by nature how to act. We can use a variety of terms to identify pressures brought on us to act in a certain manner. In the context of this essay I will focus on the educational organization as the source of pressure. Existential philosophers often refer to any outside agency that influences individuals as "They." It is essential to understand the meaning of "They" if we are to understand the relationship between individuals and organizations. Heidegger defines "They" as any group, such as an organization, which forces us to sacrifice our freedom in order to conform to the expectations of the group.¹¹ Contact between the individual and They assumes some degree of conflict over the degree to which the individual will conform in order to become part of the group, and the sanctions the group will bring to bear on the individual in order to compel the desired behavior. The implication for individuals in organizations is that when the individual comes into contact with the organization it pressures the individual to behave in specific ways which

may be contrary to how the individual is accustomed. Those behaviors may also be contrary to what the individual perceives as right or ethical, and may in fact be counter to the best interests of that person.

The process of how individuals negotiate their values in an organization may not be easily apparent to the qualitative scholar. Weick reminds us that relationships and organizational contours may best be visible in a tightly coupled organization, where the relational effect of one area on another is easily identifiable.¹² A second challenge is to keep in mind that an individual's relationship to an educational organization is essentially bidirectional rather than unidirectional. Sartre is careful to point out we negotiate our actions with organizations but organizations also negotiate with us. In other words, organizations have freedom and individuals can affect such freedom. Therefore, in order to better understand the human role in education organizations it is important for the investigator to focus inquiry on the bidirectional relationship between the individual and organization, and the contextual factors that shape the behavior of both.

An example of how existentialist individual freedom affects an organization is in terms of policy implementation. In this sense we can understand organizations as we understand individuals. In the same way individuals always move forward to a future state of existence, the person we want to be, organizations are also in a state of progression toward some future desired form.¹³ The formulation of policy reflects movement toward the desired state of the organization, and the ways in which policy is implemented constitute the actual state of the organization made by choices of its constituent members.

Once an individual or policy-making body sets a policy, there is no guarantee it will be implemented in the same way it was originally intended. Implementation is the means by which policy is carried into effect. Implementation can refer to a one-time effort at enacting a policy, or a continuous process such as strategic planning. The implementation process may involve many different people and levels of hierarchy, any of which change the nature of policy from decision to implementation. In any event, implementation involves the process of moving from decision to operation.¹⁴ Understanding efforts to mutate policy during implementation is essential to recognizing how policy may change through implementation, from its original form. Mutation is more likely when policy is developed in a climate that regards implementation as merely a technical detail.¹⁵ When a governing board directs an institution's officers to implement a new policy, but does not define any operational limitations or delimitations, there is no way to know how implementation will occur or in what manner. Under such conditions it is inevitable that implementation will be influenced by individual perceptions.

Mutation can also occur as policy is processed through the levels of an organization's hierarchy. One way that levels of a hierarchy differ is that some are charged with policy development while others are charged with policy implementation. School district central office administrators develop policy that is then implemented by campus personnel. Policy can be changed or revised by institutional officials from inception to implementation in a manner that more closely meets their conception of what is in their or the institution's best interests.¹⁶ Individuals can surreptitiously undermine a policy or initiative or at least decline to work actively toward its implementation even when they claim to support it.¹⁷

These types of existentialist dilemmas are the type many in education struggle with on a common basis. For example, those of us who work at public universities are under increasing pressure to account for how we use public resources. The basis of this policy is that in times of increasingly scarce resources we should be responsible custodians of taxpayer and tuition funds. At the same time those of us who are faculty feel an equally compelling loyalty to our professional principles which may come into conflict with policy positions. How do we continue to provide high-quality instruction under increasing pressure to enlarge class sizes or convert classes to online formats? For those who live in Texas it is a legal requirement that grade distributions for our classes be electronically available on the university website. In light of this law, how do we combat grade inflation yet still make our classes "marketable" for students who will likely shop around for less-challenging courses? These are merely two examples of daily philosophical struggles which pertain directly to faculty's professional values, and the economic and policy realities of working in academe.

An emphasis on understanding the consequences of individual freedom helps better understand the subtle ways different layers of an organization affect policy. Some education positions enjoy more freedom or autonomy than others through division.¹⁸ Division of labor provides for the development of specialization, separation of responsibilities, and more importantly to my argument, the various levels of freedom accorded to differentiated roles. Autonomy provides individuals with various degrees of freedom to impose their own interpretations on the manner in which policy is implemented.¹⁹ It is important for the qualitative scholar to conceptualize the relationships of people and their functions in educational institutions as strands. Individuals may be connected to each other through an organizational chart; however, we must be cautious about what assumptions we make regarding the degree of relation or control that may exist. The strands that connect the organizational unit may vary from close and strong to distant and flexible. These characteristics are representative of the freedom individuals bring with them to their responsibilities.

Implications for Qualitative Research

An examination of existentialism leads us to conclude that the nature of meaning is self-deterministic, meaning that we collectively shape our own meanings. Such a perspective rejects that idea of a reality preceding human existence or independent of humanity. This should not be taken to the extreme of meaning that nothing would exist without human presence. The physical nature of Earth and the universe will still be regardless of our being. What would not exist would be social meaning. The Rocky Mountains would still be in their present location, though the title “Rocky Mountains” and the meaning of what a mountain range is in comparison to other geological structures would not exist because such expressions and meanings are the result of human thought.

We would be mistaken to assume that qualitative research is a single, cohesive paradigm, rather than a collection of complex philosophical perspectives, strategies, and methods. It consists of a variety of interpretive practices that help us understand the world.²⁰ An existential focus would necessarily require an emphasis on depth of understanding as opposed to breadth.²¹ A study based on existentialist assumptions would require the use of methods that can deeply and reflectively probe for an understanding of the interplay between the subjects and their world, as well as the continuing struggle to interpret and make meaning. In order to make any contribution to knowledge such studies would have to make use of methods that facilitate understanding individuals in their unique contexts.²² Any study designed on these assumptions would require extensive direct time with participants and would also necessitate extensive probing for meaning by the researcher. Case study and ethnographic strategies would be particularly suitable for existentialist studies because they would best present a density of contextual information.²³ The most suitable method for collecting data would be interviewing which is inextricably contextually bound.²⁴ The interview also allows for the maximum amount of interaction between the researcher and subject. Interviewing is considerably more than merely asking questions and receiving answers, it allows one to glimpse into another’s world and better understand how they develop meaning in their life. This is not to suggest that interviewing should not be coupled with other data collection methods if available, but it does advance the notion that direct and meaningful interplay between researcher and subject is essential for an existentialist study to be succeed.

An existentialist conception of qualitative research compels us to pay particular attention to the human factors that influence how individuals and organizations function. They further indicate that human actions, many of which are the output of existentialist conflict in everyday life, are driven by personal values and agendas that are not on

the surface evident to an investigator and are the driving force behind how organizations operate. As researchers this means we must be mindful of the salient in human behavior, as well as what may appear to be quite uninteresting, dull or commonplace. It may be easy for us to assume what happens in a setting may not be of interest to a reader, particularly because it may not be of interest to us. However, it is these mundane behaviors that may reflect some of the most elemental and commonly understood meanings in a culture.²⁵ These personal factors do not necessarily fit into a rational decision-making framework where individual compliance can be expected, and such factors may not be readily apparent to an investigator.

By accepting such assumptions about human actions and how the outcomes of the struggle to make meaning in our lives and work can affect organizations we must therefore logically accept that predicting human actions becomes problematic.²⁶ There would be little need to investigate organizational functions if individuals behaved in the same predictable sense as chemical reactions where human reactions would be testable according to proscribed and predictable formulas; however, human beings do not behave, they act.²⁷ “Actions differ from behavior in that they are born of preconceptions, assumptions, and motives, and these are embedded with meanings.”²⁸ Thoughts, assumptions, and preconceptions are filtered through values, preferences, prejudices, motives, and the like, to produce actions.

Investigations that emphasize the individual element through an existentialist understanding focus attention on individuals’ identification with their own interests and how such actions manifest themselves in organizational actions.²⁹ Philosophical assumptions underlying qualitative research provide a framework for the scholar interested in pursuing an understanding of the “intersubjective meanings and symbolic activities” found in organizations.³⁰ To the qualitative researcher such a philosophical assumption means that one must study an organization in terms of the complex collective process of developing and maintaining meaning.

Endnotes

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The Politics of Education: A Case for Liberal Learning

Eric J. Boos, University of Wisconsin—Fond du Lac

Introduction

Education has always served a dual purpose. As educational theorist Mortimer Adler says, “education is a process that aims at the improvement of humans, in themselves and in relation to society.”¹ Education serves the individual good by improving a person’s rational capacity for happiness² and it serves the common good by providing individuals with the basic tools needed to participate meaningfully in the political economy. The former of these improvements is intrinsic to the individual and the latter improvement is extrinsic. Yet, in either case, a person is made better and therefore education is inherently political as better individuals make up a better society.

All educational structures include a measure of both goods, but the preponderant emphasis is the basis for the liberal/non-liberal distinction in the tradition of education. Emphasizing the individual good and personal, moral development, has traditionally been the province of liberal learning (through the “liberal arts” curriculum) primarily at private institutions.³ This liberal learning has usually been reserved for the few who have the means to pursue it. Emphasizing the common good has been the province of non-liberal learning (through the “servile arts” curriculum) primarily at “public” institutions, for the masses at little or no cost.

Problems arise when these categories are defined too narrowly and educational structures (especially primary and secondary institutions) fail to educate the complete human with a curriculum that integrates both facets of learning. When liberal education focuses too narrowly on the intrinsic value of pursuing intellectual and moral virtue (to the exclusion of practical virtue) and limits itself to specific subjects and disciplines, students have difficulty plugging in to the political economy. When non-liberal education focuses too narrowly on vocational or technical education (to the exclusion of intellectual and moral virtue) students have great difficulty managing their leisure time appropriately and achieving the happiness referenced in the *Declaration of Independence*.⁴

While there is general agreement that a balanced education is the optimal circumstance,⁵ there is great debate about the structure and composition of the optimal curriculum to achieve that proper balance. And because the majority of people are educated “publicly,” the political implications of curricula are extensive and pay great deference to the extrinsic goals of education and hence the “servile arts,” vocational instruction, and technical competence of graduates. These extrinsic goals are easier to assess, reflected in the decades of success the American educational system has had in terms of meeting the needs of a rapidly changing technological and industrial economy. Funding and budgets were linked to this success and began to shape curricula accordingly. More importantly, the measureable success of producing the most highly skilled workforce in the world changed the epistemological underpinnings of our educational system, with less emphasis placed on moral development and critical thinking and more placed on imparting information and increasing knowledge.

Given the US’ success as the world’s leading economy and the large role public education plays, US processes of education show a consistent tendency to lean toward the objectively measurable and that which is connected to the industrial economy. Consequently, a large segment of the educational establishment tends to treat students as buckets to be filled or blank slates to be written upon—following the *tabula rasa* theory of John Locke based on the epistemological assumption that humans are born without any mental content and all knowledge comes from experience and perception.⁶ This theory is rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle who posits, “what the mind think must be in it just as characters may be said to be on a writing tablet on which as yet nothing actually stands written.”⁷

While this approach proves more than functional in the economic period of industrialization, it has proven inadequate for an increasingly diverse population in a time of hyper-technology and a paring down of industrial manufacturing requiring unskilled physical labor. Curricula based on this basic epistemology, however, will not facilitate the moral growth and development students need to be competitive in a rapidly changing, hyper-technical, global society. Treating the mind in such a simplistic fashion ignores important nuances of both Locke’s and Aristotle’s epistemological theories, resulting in a content-centered approach; putting some “letters on the tablets,” as it were. But if following through the depths of Locke and Aristotle can address the need for critical thinking and communications skills so desperately needed, then we do not need to change so much as we need to improve. But in order to make such improvements, we must first explore how we arrived at this point—the primary goal of this paper.

The reasons this epistemological approach (“filling buckets” or writing on “blank slates”) is prolific in American education vary, but perhaps none is so strong as the politicization of education in the US. From Thomas Jefferson to Barack Obama, politicians have proposed changes and influenced the educational system for the “common good” by emphasizing the need for a skilled workforce without any specific reference to the need for liberal education. Advances in education have therefore tended to focus on standardization of knowledge to produce an educated working class.⁸ These advances in public education assume the availability of liberal education to the select few with the means to participate in private education, but with little public concern for the possible problems of social integration for differently educated individuals.

As a nation, we live with the distinction between “liberal” and “non-liberal learning,” and more to the point, with the somewhat-consistent mantra that only the few should be educated liberally and the masses should receive a standardized, “public” education for the common good. The distinction between these two approaches has never been thoroughly delineated, and the influence of mainstream politics has resulted in even liberal curricula being subjected to accreditation processes that rely on standardized, content-centered, outcomes-based criteria. The result, according to educational theorists such as Mortimer Adler, Martha Nussbaum, Charles Anderson, James Hanlon and others, leaves the US in a precarious social situation with a working class woefully lacking in the critical thinking and communications skills necessary for our complex economy to succeed and a privileged class of liberally educated individuals who have been subjected to a “false liberalism.”⁹

Even economist Alan Greenspan has weighed in on the purported failure of institutional education to prepare students to participate in our economy. In his book, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World*,¹⁰ Greenspan posits the American educational system falls short in pushing students from fourth grade to high school with appropriate skills as compared to other countries. The consequence is a shortage of skilled workers, untenable, according to Greenspan, because our standard of living is ever-more-dependent upon our ability to provide services with conceptual value-added aspects. More importantly, if we do not improve our educational system, avers Greenspan, we will lose commitment to the rule of law and hence, other countries’ respect and investments.¹¹

One example of the negative effect of the politicization of education is the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) act, signed into law by President George W. Bush. NCLB aims at increasing math and reading scores by ushering in a new level of accountability, contributing to a

content-centered method of instruction that undermines the teaching and learning necessary to treat the full range of the human mind's epistemological processes. NCLB was specifically designed to raise standardized test scores in math and reading, a good goal in-and-of itself. However, the idea of attaching punishments to those schools, and even those individual educators, that do not meet goals politicizes curriculum in a most negative way.¹² The potential for punishment leads some educators to "teach to the test," and as a result cheating scandals plague some school districts.

Secondary education is not alone in applying the content-centered method. For their part, colleges and universities have also employed this approach. Education has given way to instruction; aided and abetted by the incorporation of entertaining technologies into the classroom in a vain attempt to keep pace with online programs, accelerated programs, hybrid programs, credit-for-prior-learning programs, etc. Students are viewed as customers and entertainment value is at a premium as tuition-dependent institutions fight for market share. This is not a new phenomenon. In 1941, Adler claimed:

the agencies of education baby the public...they have turned the whole [of education] into a kindergarten. It must all be fun. It must all be entertaining.... We try to make education as exciting as a football game, as relaxing as a motion picture and as easy on the mind as a quiz program.¹³

Watering down the curriculum and increasing the entertainment value and the speed with which a person can get a degree is bad enough, but some colleges and even some law schools have played fast and loose with statistics, such as in reporting the number of graduates employed immediately upon finishing their degree as a recruitment device.

Approaching education as entertainment, or business, and students as customers, or an audience, is premised on the belief that education is "something externally added to the person"¹⁴ or "content added to the bucket." Learning in this context is passive; it amounts to nothing more than a simple transfer of information that may or may not be retained long-term by the student. This is precisely the type of learning favored by a politicized educational system, and precisely the type of learning that Adler fears most: convenient in the sense that it is content-centered, objective, and outcomes-based. It can be assessed easily and students can track their progress according to the completion of required exercises. This passive learning approach reduces the educational act to a basic contract for the exchange of information and the educator bears no responsibility for the use or misuse of the product beyond the context of the course. But this is a system geared toward mediocrity and in Adler's view, a danger to us all. Tragically, Adler's words in 1941 have

never been more true than today. Then he said, “education is the gold brick that is being sold in America today on every street corner. Everyone is selling it, everyone is buying it, but no one is giving or getting the real thing.”¹⁵

In stark contrast to this politicized, content-centered, outcomes-based approach to education is “liberal learning.”¹⁶ Liberal learning involves an “interior transformation of a person’s mind and character,”¹⁷ according to Adler. Liberal learning is always affective because “it can only be effected through the person’s own intellectual activity.”¹⁸ However, such learning is difficult to assess and generally cannot be well accomplished with high student-teacher ratios. Inability to assess creates problems for accreditation and financial stability within the institution. But the alternative, to ignore the education of the complete human person in favor of political and economic expediency, leaves us with a lack of critical thinking and communications skills among graduates. If educational theorists are correct, the cumulative effect on our culture will be catastrophic. As Adler predicted in 1939,

...a generation that has been educated in this manner will pass from a faith in democracy to a faith in fascism simply because outward circumstances will have sufficiently attenuated the one and strengthened the other. In a contest between Hitler and people who are wondering why they should not be Hitlers, the finished product is bound to win.¹⁹

Even if Adler’s dire prediction is hyperbole, the fact remains that our educational system is struggling mightily to produce the kind of graduates our society requires, creating a compelling argument for a return to the principles that treat the full range of epistemological operations of the human mind as rooted in the philosophies of John Locke and Aristotle. A return to such principles would constitute a return to “liberal learning,” much the same as Adler advocated for between 1938 and 1988, and educational theorists such as Nussbaum, Anderson, Hanlon, Palmer, and others advocate for more recently.

Toward a Theory of Liberal Learning Through a More Complete Epistemology

Treating students simply as “blank slates” and attempting to educate them with a content-centered curriculum is wholly inadequate when one considers the deeper and more complex nuances of human cognition. What is necessary for a complete education of the human person is a more complete epistemology. Content-centered education derives from the philosophies of John Locke and Aristotle in the sense that the mind is devoid of content and must be filled from the outside, but does not do justice to the complexities of their epistemologies.²⁰

Locke and Aristotle are similar in their epistemologies. They reject innate ideas, but allow for innate faculties that receive and manipulate the content of experience. The mind thus engages in three different types of action. The first is to synthesize perceptions into complex ideas. Complex ideas are either of substance or mode. Substances are independent existences such as God, angels, humans, animals, plants and a variety of constructed things. Modes are dependent existences such as mathematical and moral ideas, and the conventional language of religion, politics and culture.

For Aristotle, a specific pedagogy emerges of necessity when one considers that human learning is the result of discursive thought, for “the thinking then of simple objects of thought is found in those cases where falsehood is impossible: where the alternative of true or false applies, there we always find a putting together of objects of thoughts in a quasi-unity.”²¹ The importance of this understanding of human cognition is that it requires a dialectic pedagogy that aims at facilitating dialogue. As Aristotle concludes, “falsehood always involves a synthesis...and in every case that which unifies is mind.”²²

The second action of the mind is to compare ideas, whether simple or complex, without combining them, which results in our idea of relations. This mental operation proceeds discursively, not intuitively, and is a directed reasoning. Aristotle uses the example of how we think about things such as “evil” or “black,” saying:

...evil and black are cognized by means of their contraries. That which cognizes must have an element of potentiality in its being, and one of the contraries must be in it. It must be characterized actually by one and potentially by the other of the contraries.²³

This action is important to the formulation of a pedagogy because educators must recognize, “the thinking of the definition in the sense of the constitutive essence [of objects without matter, like evil or black] is never in error nor is it the assertion of something concerning something.”²⁴

By way of example, take this question from a standardized test. “Which one of these things does not belong to the group: a) axe b) saw c) scissors d) wood.” To answer this question moves the student beyond an intuitive response in the sense that a reason must be provided—at least in the mind even if an explanation is not called for (as so many of our test mechanisms fail to do). Analysis of this question reveals students from rural environments might rule out scissors because they see a logical relation between the other three things—especially if one heats one’s home with wood—whereas students from urban environments might rule out wood because the other three are human-

made implements for cutting and wood is a natural, organic substance. Aristotle's response should be clear based on what has been said about his theory of epistemology: the thought process is what matters, not the answer. Thus, we must move education away from the focus on "right answers" to a focus on "right thinking." As he concludes, "in every case, the mind which is actively thinking is the objects which it thinks."²⁵

The third act of the mind is ratiocination, or the production of general ideas by abstraction from particulars. For Locke and Aristotle, this act omits circumstances of time and place which limits the application of an idea to a particular individual. As Aristotle points out,

...that which the mind thinks and the time in which it thinks are only incidentally divisible. For in them there is something which is indivisible and which gives unity to the time; this is found equally in every continuum whether temporal or spatial.²⁶

The main epistemological structure includes the faculties of synthesis, comparison, and ratiocination (abstraction). These faculties must be accounted for in any complete pedagogy, and when they are the educational structure will necessarily lend themselves to "liberal learning" in the sense that students' minds will be "freed" from the contextual limitations by coming to an awareness of their own cognitive operations. Critical thinking is facilitated as students take conscious control of the process of ratiocination, and the end result is a higher degree of autonomy.

For educational theorists such as Adler, the most useful pedagogy utilizes a dialectic approach, as in Aristotle's position on the essential nature of falsehoods leading to synthesis. This theory propels Adler to model curriculum on the great books of Western Civilization as he believed these would lend themselves to the necessary dialectic structure. As Adler says,

Some basic truths are to be found in the great books, but many more errors will also be found there, because a plurality of errors is always to be found for every single truth. One way of discovering this is to detect the contradictions that can be found in the books of every great author.... Skill in reading and thinking is required to find them...and the truth must lie on one or the other side of every contradiction. It is there for us to detect when we are able to resolve the contradiction in favor of one side or the other.²⁷

According to Adler, this is nowhere more apparent than in philosophical and theological works. "If Aristotle's political philosophy is thought to

contain a number of fundamental truths, then errors must be found in Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel,”²⁸ offers Adler.

Such examples serve to demonstrate the right and wrong way to use the great books as the basis of a liberal education because the aim is to teach students “how” to think critically and how to pursue the truth, not “what” to think. Conscious effort should be made to avoid what Adler calls the “doctrinal method,” which aims to read as much truth into a particular author as possible. The liberal learning educator “seeks to exert great influence on students, but only insofar as good use of their minds is concerned and insofar as students develop critical reading skills, attentive listening, precise speech, and reflective thought...and are prepared for continued learning.”²⁹

This paradigm is rooted Aristotle’s view that,

...if happiness consist of virtuous activity, it must be the activity of the highest virtue, or in other words, of the best part of our nature.... We conclude then that happiness reaches as far as the power of thought does, and the greater a person’s power of thought, the greater will be his happiness; not as something accidental but in virtue of his thinking, for that is noble in itself. Hence, happiness must be a form of contemplation.³⁰

So the virtuous life is also the philosophical life and the most fully-human activity in such a life is “the self-conscious and systematic deliberation of purpose,”³¹ says Anderson in his book *Prescribing the Life of the Mind*. This, it would seem, is a recapitulation of the fundamental project of philosophy as expressed by Socrates in two simple axioms: “the unexamined life is not worth living,” and “know thyself.” Anderson continues, saying:

...to be fully human is to be acutely conscious of purpose. This is the first premise of our intellectual tradition. This is a theme that persists through the ages. This is the idea that unifies Aristotle’s thought. This is what Kant celebrated as the capacity for moral and practical reason. This is what the American Pragmatists (Pierce, Royce, James, and Dewey) underscored as the distinctive work of intelligence of the mind.³²

Answering the basic axioms of Socrates is an exercise in practical reason, but the question is how do we come to know these axioms let alone how do we actually go about fulfilling them? Aristotle posits humans by nature desire to know and it would seem that there are two ways of coming to know: discovery and instruction. Socrates emphasizes the necessity of instruction in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* when he,

...wishing to arouse Euthydemus who wanted to be a statesman but [did not] think he needed a teacher, said, if men could not excel in the minor arts and crafts without teachers, it is simple-minded to think that the governing of a state, the greatest of all works, comes automatically.³³

While instruction is clearly necessary for individuals to fulfill their rational potential and approximate happiness (individual good), it also serves an important political end (common good), leading to its institutionalization. According to Aristotle, “the mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts”³⁴ and without proper instruction becoming unmanageable for society. Though the masses are not capable of living the philosophic life, they still benefit greatly from a liberal education because it aids them in finding the right balance (the “golden mean”) of intellectual and moral virtues. “Intellectual virtue,” claims Aristotle, “owes both its birth and its growth to teaching,”³⁵ and moral virtue follows from proper habituation. To attain the balance, “we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth...with the right education.”³⁶ The political benefits of having well- educated and balanced citizens is obvious, as Aristotle concludes, because virtue and political science share the same concern.³⁷

Underlying the choice to educate liberally is a moral question about the very nature of the institutions which hold that goal.³⁸ Do we educate for the purpose of churning out productive and useful citizens (common good), do we educate to increase their autonomy and help them find freedom and happiness (individual good), or do we do one of these in the hope it will result in both being accomplished? Adler’s maintains education must be ordered to the individual good first, given the rational nature of humans, and only when it is so ordered can the common good be served. Where these have been inverted, a false liberalism ensues and neither goods are served—which are the conditions Adler is responding to in his call for educational reform in America. “Unless education makes men free it cannot serve democracy at all,”³⁹ concludes Adler. Adler means “free” in the philosophical sense, not the political sense:

...if democratic citizens must be free men, then they must have free minds, and minds cannot be made free except by being disciplined to recognize...the authority of reason. That discipline is accomplished only when the intelligence is trained to work critically on all matters...and when the mind is freed from all local prejudices and current exigencies.⁴⁰

From Adler’s perspective, false liberalism is the result of inverting the priorities of education and placing the emphasis on serving the common good, the result of education’s politicization. Practically

speaking, we have come to view education as a means to an economic end. For Adler, this vitiates the proper end of the educational process: Aristotle's sense of human happiness. Are we free even to pursue our beliefs about educating others, or are we stifled by institutional structures resulting from social ambiguity regarding the nature and goals of liberal education?

Obstacles to Liberal Learning: the Politicization of Education

The social ambiguity in the need to make liberal education available to all citizens has a long history. In 1779 Thomas Jefferson wrote:

...those persons, whom nature has endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens; and...they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental condition or circumstances.⁴¹

In 1817, Jefferson proposed three years of education for everyone in a bill submitted to the legislature, writing:

...the mass of our citizens may be divided into two classes—the laboring and the learned. At the discharging of the pupils from the elementary schools the two classes separate—those destined for labor will engage in the business of agriculture or enter into apprenticeship to such handicraft as may be their choice; their companions destined to the pursuit of science, will proceed to the college.⁴²

Jefferson's educational program is consistent with the Greek ideals in the sense that:

...the barest beginning of education was for the few who belonged to the ruling class destined for a life of leisure and learning, not for the working mass, destined for a life of labor, necessary to support a society in which machines had not yet replaced the productive power of human muscle.⁴³

Like the Greeks, Jefferson was skeptical of democracy, but did maintain that those with privilege and power had a moral obligation to secure the interests of those in lower classes.

President Abraham Lincoln set out to expand the scope of Jefferson's vision by "promoting the liberal education of the industrial classes in several pursuits and professions in life."⁴⁴ But in spite of his best efforts, "the American University took on settled form in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. It represented a radical break from the prevalent philosophy of higher education of the day."⁴⁵ Up until that time, the dominant tone of higher education had been set by liberal arts colleges whose overriding purpose was the cultivation of

Christian [moral] character. The aim of new universities, in contrast, was the “production of knowledge.”⁴⁶

In Adler’s view,

...only with a sense of that continuity of Western education from the Greeks to the nineteenth century can we fully appreciate the sharpness of the break that has occurred since 1850 CE. During the whole preceding period, education had certain common aims and methods, not unrelated to the fact that it was always restricted to the few. No society up to that time was concerned with the schooling (much less the education) of its entire people.⁴⁷

Lincoln’s efforts to expand the reach of liberal education coincided with serious social changes including the Civil War, continued Westward expansion, and rapid changes in science, technology and industry. Education was seen as in the service of industry but the radical transformation of the conditions of human life extended the political franchise to the democratic ideal of universal suffrage. Thus, we become “an industrial democracy.” Not only is there a quantitative extension of schooling to the whole population, but there is a qualitative alteration to the content of schooling in amount of science and emphasis on technology.⁴⁸

The concern for liberal education was obscured by the rapid transformation of American society reflected in Woodrow Wilson’s statement that, “we want one class of persons to have a liberal education and we want another class of persons, a much larger class of necessity, to forgo the privileges of a liberal education.”⁴⁹ The new university model “organize[s] and rationalize[s] the process of discovery, much as the new industrial corporations were rationalizing the process of production.”⁵⁰ This results in an organization of the curriculum into discrete research disciplines, the idea of the scholar as a specialized professional, the understanding of education either as training in the methods of inquiry or the transmission of the fruits of organized research.⁵¹ This becomes the universal model for all institutions of higher education, and liberal arts colleges no longer have a special role. In fact, liberal arts colleges simply become more intimate versions of the same thing and former teacher-trainer institutions, community colleges and church-affiliated schools all strain to fall in line because the “universality of the model set by the research university tends to confirm its naturalness and its legitimacy. To teach otherwise than is prescribed by the established organized disciplines seems vaguely suspect.”⁵²

A classic understanding is that the life of philosophy, of self-conscious reflection, is the highest of human attainments. Furthermore,

the widespread exercise of self-conscious, critical reason is considered essential to democracy. Yet, as Anderson points out, from Aristotle to modern times, it is typically assumed that the capacity for reflective intelligence is rather unevenly distributed.⁵³ Still, the belief arises that our system of government will flourish best if citizens would generally adopt the habits of thought hitherto supposed appropriate, so though we vastly expand access to higher education, we whittle away at the liberal basis.⁵⁴ We are in a position now where it is impossible to think practically about the university in terms of its present program and structure alone; we now lack the ability to identify the university's essential purpose.⁵⁵ Universities still face the question Adler asked in 1939: What is a good education? Adler proposes two answers: "either it is good for humans at any time and place because they are human, or it is good for humans only as members of a particular social and political order."⁵⁶

As the cost of higher education shifts from the public to individuals attending college, so too does the answer to the question of essential purpose. As the Miller Center Report on the cost of higher education points out, "the share of institutional budgets provided by tuition increase[s] from 22% in 1985 to 36% in 2005. As state budgets slip further into structural deficit, there is no reason to think this trend will reverse itself."⁵⁷ Higher education is traditionally held up as a means to a better life, quite often rationalized by comparing the lifetime earnings of a college graduate compared to a high-school graduate. As the competition for tuition dollars mounts, the financial comparison becomes more pronounced. Colleges are now in the habit of promising gainful employment for graduates, frequently including statistics on how many graduates find jobs immediately upon graduation. This has led to some serious inflation of the facts and now multiple lawsuits have been filed by unemployed graduates suing institutions for false advertising and fraudulent inducement.⁵⁸

What precipitates this condition (connecting education to employment) has a great deal to do with the government's role in education which increases with each major social development from 1890 on. Adler writes,

...along with law enforcement agencies, public health agencies, military forces, the educational system is one of the instrumentalities of government...and education has been distorted by its leading practitioners in almost the same way that it is misused in totalitarian countries.⁵⁹

In the wake of industrialization, two World Wars, and the Great Depression, one of the major emphases becomes, naturally, the role of democracy in facilitating national unity. The problem according to Adler is "some educators are so anxious to save democracy that they are

willing to make the educational process serve no other end than the perpetuation of a form of government.”⁶⁰

The specific danger of allowing the educational system to become an instrument of the government is that the result is a type of indoctrination not only of students, but of teachers as well. As Adler notes, “educators themselves are the products of our schools and their [false] liberalism signifies the extent to which our institutions have failed to accomplish [true] liberal education.”⁶¹ A clear and most disturbing example is found in James W. Loewen’s book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.⁶² Loewen examines the high school history textbook industry finding, in many cases, big-name historians from prestigious institutions who lend their names to books for a fee have no idea what those books actually say. Much so-called history in these texts is purposely vague and leaves out crucial details so that the picture it presents of American culture consistently gives the US the moral high ground. Again, it is worth noting the importance of dialectic pedagogy in educating the complete human person—without it, partial truths become the only truths.

On a different level, the failure of educators to model virtue is in some sense the failure of institutional education, though this is certainly nothing new. Plato identifies the same problem:

What greater proof can there be of a bad and disgraceful state of education than this, that not only artisans and the average sort of people need the skill of first-rate physicians and judges, but also those who would profess to have had a liberal education.⁶³

Because teachers teach the way they were taught, we might ask whether or not we can ever change. Adler again points to teachers as a major part of the problem:

...their [false] liberalism is of paramount importance in sustaining the present deplorable state of affairs, in some cases going even further in the wrong direction, in other cases acting to oppose reforms which seek to institute a truly liberal education.⁶⁴

Yet it is clear, at least in the contemporary educational climate, that teachers have been limited by the politicization of education. This is especially dangerous because, “when educators bend their efforts toward making school and college a training camp for citizenship—insisting even that the organization and administration of the school be a miniature democracy—they turn the curriculum into a scheme of indoctrination.”⁶⁵

Adler’s pessimism regarding the future of education in 1939 and his fears that the politicization of education would result in curricula of

indoctrination seemed prophetic by the 1980s. In 1983 President Ronald Reagan convened the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Its report, *A Nation at Risk*, addresses the question of the quality of education in our democracy, beginning, “Our nation is at risk...the educational foundations of our society are presently eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people.”⁶⁶ And then, as if to wake us from our torpor, the report makes an alarming claim: “if a[n] unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on us the mediocre educational system that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.”⁶⁷ Of course, money for education under Reagan was compromised by our foray into armed conflict around the globe,⁶⁸ and as history bears witness, student performance since then has not improved much if at all.

The most recent politicization of education in the United States is the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.” NCLB has had a direct negative impact on education in America. Educational advocate Bob Schaeffer of FairTest, a group that monitors standardized tests in the United States, states,

...the dictates of NCLB are narrowing curriculum and dumbing-down teaching and learning starting in the earliest grades. Kids are tested now in every grade from three to eight and once in high school in both reading and math. And that’s what’s driving the curriculum and undermining student learning.⁶⁹

Even those who were early supporters of NCLB retreated from their support as evidence mounted it was failing miserably in its basic approach. One such supporter-turned-detractor is Diane Ravitch, Assistant Secretary of Education for the Bush Administration. In 2005 Ravitch wrote, “We should thank President George W. Bush and Congress for passing NCLB. ... All this attention and focus is paying off for younger students, who are reading and solving mathematics problems better than their parents’ generation.”⁷⁰ Four years later, Ravitch changes her mind:

I was known as a conservative advocate of many of these policies, [Ravitch says], but I’ve looked at the evidence and I’ve concluded they’re wrong. They’ve put us on the wrong track. I feel passionately about the improvement of public education and I don’t think any of this is going to improve public education.⁷¹

The basic strategy of NCLB is measuring student performance on standardized tests and punishing teachers if the numbers do not meet a target or threshold percentage. “The result of putting so much emphasis on the test scores,” says Ravitch, “is that there’s a lot of cheating going

on, there's a lot of gaming the system."⁷² So instead of raising standards, "it's actually lowered standards because many states have 'dumbed down' their tests or changed the scoring of their tests to say that more kids are passing than actually are,"⁷³ concludes Ravitch.

The fundamental structure of NCLB constitutes a moral compromise insofar as the remedies and incentives for educators are appeals to self-interest. Ultimately, failure under NCLB results in the loss of one's position. As Ravitch offers,

...when I realized that the remedies were not working, I started to doubt the entire approach.... I started to see the danger of the culture of testing that was spreading.... I began to question ideas that I once embraced, such as choice and accountability, that were central to NCLB.... I came to realize that the sanctions embedded in NCLB were, in fact, not only ineffective but certain to contribute to the privatization of large chunks of public education. I wonder whether the members of Congress intended this outcome.⁷⁴

Profit is a part of the NCLB structure, and perhaps a reason for the continued politicization of education in the United States. As Ravitch points out:

Adult interests were well served by NCLB. The law generated huge revenues for tutoring and testing services, which became a sizable industry. Companies that offered tutoring, tests, and test prep materials were raking in billions of dollars annually from federal, state, and local governments, but the advantages to the nation's students were not obvious.⁷⁵

The Implications of a Politicized Educational System

A quality high school education is, as Adler says, "inimical to democracy." But the content-centered, outcomes-based, standardized edict of NCLB further impairs our collective political judgment and democratic participation. Not only has it resulted in nationwide cheating scandals, but countless young minds have adopted the general disposition that teachers should give them exactly what they need to meet some arbitrary standard. Students assume the posture of "buckets to be filled," or "slates to be written upon." Hence, many students have developed an expectation that grades are to be given in a manner consistent with their ability to receive information and regurgitate it on a test. Aaron M. Brower, the vice provost for teaching and learning at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, concurs: "I think that it stems from their K-12 experiences.... They have become ultra-efficient in test preparation. And this hyper-efficiency has led them to look for a magic formula to get high scores."⁷⁶

This particular politicization of education is a tragedy which defies “education” because the primary goal should be to expand the rational capacity of each person by proper utilization of the full variety of epistemological processes.⁷⁷ The dangers of not doing so were foretold by Adler consistently for fifty years, but evidence that his warnings have fallen on deaf ears has come in the form of “The American Graduation Initiative,” which President Obama introduced by saying, “Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but one that helps us thrive and compete in a global economy.”⁷⁸ He outlined his plan to reform our nation’s community colleges with new initiatives that will “teach Americans the skills they need to compete with workers from other nations.”⁷⁹ The overall goal is to add an additional 5 million graduates by 2020 giving America the distinction of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. His announcement comes one day after the Council of Economic Advisers released a report describing how the US labor market is expected to grow and develop. The President’s initiative states community colleges are essential to “raise American skills and education levels and keep American businesses competitive,” and to help students “learn, graduate, and secure good jobs.”⁸⁰

Politicians consistently link education with employment and colleges and universities have done little to challenge this pairing. If anything, college curricula serve and accommodate the link between education and employment, for, “the university is to be understood, fundamentally, as an administrative arrangement, a holding company for the set of organized disciplines. It is empty of philosophy.”⁸¹ Worse yet,

...the university seems to understand its educational function as the simple transmission of knowledge...to disseminate the fruits of research. This conception of educational purpose, and only this, can explain such otherwise incomprehensible rituals as the large lecture method of instruction, the standardized textbook, and the objective examination.⁸²

Perhaps most damaging to the plight of education is the development of a direct attachment to employment opportunities and income. How often have we heard the mantra from government officials that people with degrees make more money than people without degrees? Employers both private and public conveniently adopt grade-point averages as hiring criteria, and college becomes ultra-competitive. But “viewing society as a gridiron is an elitist obfuscation,”⁸³ conclude Louzecky and Flannery. At the same time institutions claim a connection to liberal arts, and the practicality of their value-based education, they begin touting job-placement records and student scores on state and national exams for the professions. This points to a most troubling

problem. When “education is tied to work and income, group differences become institutionalized and resistant to change.”⁸⁴ This compromises the real mission of liberal education and renders impossible the capacity of students to see themselves as bound to all others. Or, as Nussbaum sees it, the capacity for narrative imagination, (the ability to empathize with others and to put oneself in another’s place), is lost.⁸⁵

The most dangerous aspect of a deficient educational system is the loss of narrative imagination because it necessarily leads to social stratification. And this is exactly what Greenspan and Adler fear most. As we have become increasingly content-centered, outcomes-based, and committed to quantifiable and objective assessment measures, we also increasingly ignore important epistemological dimensions of the human person. Adler’s dream of an enlightened liberal democracy through proper liberal education has become his nightmare of an uneducated populace capable of lapsing into fascism through politicized, content-centered curricula. As Jefferson held, “education is for an unknown future, not preparation for a continuing present,”⁸⁶ and therefore, we must seriously rethink the structure of education and find a way to promote the liberal learning that will prepare students for an unknown future.

Conclusion

The fundamental criticism of American education developed in this essay is that the influence of the political economy has caused education to focus too much on the dissemination of knowledge in content-centered, outcomes-based curricula, ignoring the deeper epistemological aspects of the human person as a rational (moral) being, and compromising the individual happiness required for a good life. The solution to the problem calls for a deeper commitment to the complete epistemology of the human person (*à la* Locke and Aristotle as developed in this argument) and to the principles of liberal learning with due regard for the educational continuum based on moral growth and development.

Though my argument is not intended to supply ready-made answers or solutions to the problems in American education, in general, I posit we need to work toward improving education across the board resulting in a better balance for our students. The process of education must necessarily be dynamic and ongoing as social, cultural, and economic variables continue to change. A starting point would be to encourage politicians and the general public to take the necessary steps to lower student-teacher ratios in all public institutions. Only then can we develop curricula that place more emphasis on rational abstraction and

discussion of ideas followed by written and spoken expression. We should also place less emphasis on memorization and more emphasis on the synthesis of complex ideas into patterned expression and demonstration. We must work to develop more “applied” learning and fewer worksheets. There should be less reliance on objective testing mechanisms and more emphasis on written and verbal expression across the educational continuum. And by all means, we need to end the politicization of education through legislative attempts to punish educators and administrators.

With regard to institutions of higher learning,⁸⁷ we should de-emphasize subject-matter specialization and work with state and federal regulatory agencies to separate out vocational and technical requirements for job performance, placing them in the domain of continuing education and professional development so that liberal learning courses do not get crowded out of undergraduate curricula. Colleges espousing a strong connection to liberal learning should work to eliminate departmental divisions, excessive electives, courses in which grades are given for “covering” a specified amount of content, and textbooks or manuals which set forth what students must memorize to pass true-false examinations. Faculty should comprise teachers all of whom are responsible for understanding and administering the whole curriculum. Didactic lectures should be kept to a minimum and should be of such generality they can be given to the whole student body without distinction of year. The basic precept of pedagogy should be that of lighting a fire instead of filling a bucket. More oral examinations should be used to separate facile verbalizers and memorizers from those within whom genuine intellectual skills are beginning to develop and whose minds have become hospitable to ideas. And, colleges should rethink grading mechanisms and develop portfolio models rather than reliance on traditional grading scales.

Finally, we must work collectively to promote education that concerns itself with the development of the complete human person; we must afford every educator professional development opportunities to study epistemology and experiment with technology to develop innovative ways to engage diverse learners. Finally, we must develop values-centered curricula that treat the complete human person in the fullness of the rational (moral) capacity.

Endnotes

¹ Mortimer J. Adler, “Labor, Leisure and Liberal Education,” *Reforming Education: The Opening of the American Mind*, ed. Geraldine

Van Doren (New York: Collier Books, 1988), 93–113. I follow Adler’s view here that learning refers to an epistemological process of the human person as a rational (moral) being, and education refers to a systematic process that facilitates learning through structured curricula. Adler follows the basic Aristotelian model in which humans have the dual capacity to acquire knowledge and develop understanding. These are two different capacities that occur as a unified process within the person. The former capacity involves experience (sentience) and recollection (memory) and results in “knowledge.” This is “non-liberal” in the sense that the content of knowledge is external to the knower. The latter process involves ratiocination (abstracting universal ideas from particular experience), judgment (comparison to other ideas in the mind by means of the acquisition of knowledge), and synthesis (categorizing the knowledge in the mind) and this results in “understanding.” Understanding something presupposes that a person can “demonstrate” the phenomenon or idea. This is “liberal” in the sense that it demands an extra mental step within the mind (a separate process of abstraction) to demonstrate the idea. Thus, a person can “know” something without understanding it. I know the quadratic equation in math, but I do not understand it. This is particularly important when it comes to “metaphysics,” (first principles or ideas that are fundamental to humans) such as truth, justice, peace, love, courage, honor, dignity, respect, freedom, democracy, etc. The type of learning it takes to “understand” these important ideas is different than the type of learning it takes to build a house. A person can understand how to build a house and yet lack the ability as a human to turn it into a home if s/he does not understand how to facilitate dignity, respect, truth, love, friendship, etc., among its occupants. To be fully human is to engage creatively (i.e., “freely”) in the definition and pursuit of goals appropriate to our nature as rational (moral) beings. This is why Aristotle links human happiness to the intellectual virtues, and Adler follows suit. Education, as a human institution, must ensure both types of learning take place. And education should follow a simple progression from more non-liberal instruction to more liberal instruction as students mature in the process. Adler’s fundamental criticism of American education, which is the thesis I develop in this paper, is the influence of the political economy has pushed education too much towards a “knowledge-based,” “non-liberal” enterprise all the way through graduate school; the consequences of which are disastrous.

² I use happiness here in the Aristotelian sense; the pursuit of which is manifest in the *Declaration of Independence* as an inalienable right. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a complete explication of

Aristotelian happiness (*eudaimonia*, in the Greek), but for a most complete analysis of this concept and its relationship to education see Adler, "Education and the Pursuit of Happiness," in *Reforming Education*.

- 3 Liberal education is an approach to learning that emphasizes personal, moral development and the acquisition of understanding by engaging students in a systematic exploration of ideas that results in extensive ratiocination (see endnote 1). Liberal education is not content-centered, but process-centered. The Association of American Colleges and Universities provides a very useful expression of this idea and its goals in its Liberal Education and America's Promise campaign: "Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings." <http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm>
- 4 As we shall see in the criticisms of American education by Mortimer Adler and others, the problem has been compounded by the fact that non-liberal education which excludes the values of liberal learning has left us with a working class whose minds are not agile enough to cope with the rapid changes in industry and technology. Furthermore, our over-emphasis on non-liberal learning is reflected in a division of labor and a division in earning capacity that is partially premised on intellectual capacity and social relations. This, according to economists such as Alan Greenspan, creates an unhealthy tension in society. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this specific issue, but I return to this point later in the paper when acknowledging that competition in higher education leads most institutions to rely on earning capacity statistics to promote degree programs.
- 5 As Adler points out in "Labor, Leisure and Liberal Education," the goal of all education is the "good life... a life lived in the cultivation of virtue.... The good life depends on labor, but it consists of leisure. Labor and all the conditions that go with labor are the antecedent means of happiness. They are external goods, that is, wealth. Leisure activities are the ends for which wealth is the means. Leisure activities are the constituents of happiness. Leisure activities constitute not mere living, but living well.... It is clear, I think, that liberal education is absolutely necessary for human happiness, for living the good human life. The most prevalent of all human ills are a man's

discontent with the work he does and the necessity of having to kill time.” *Reforming Education*, 108.

- 6 This theory is not without challenge or philosophical alternative. As far back as Plato, there has been a different epistemological view regarding ideas and categories of the human mind. Though this is of great significance in the history of epistemology, it is beyond the scope of this paper. See, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), 163.
- 7 Aristotle, “De Anima,” in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), 429b30–430a2.
- 8 For a more complete account of the evolution of education in America that takes into consideration all the political and economic variables, see Mortimer Adler, “The Schooling of a People,” *Reforming Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1988), 114–138. Adler points out that our educational philosophy has not been able to keep pace with the industrial, technological and economic changes in our society. The impact is felt both quantitatively as the percentage of young people participating in education beyond primary school rose from 5% in 1850 to more than 85% in 1950, as well as qualitatively. Yet, this cannot serve as an excuse for failing “to see clearly the magnitude of the problems themselves,” avers Adler (p. 127).
- 9 *Ibid.*, 47–48.
- 10 Alan Greenspan, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World* (New York: Penguin, 2007).
- 11 Alan Greenspan, “The Critical Role of Education in the Nation’s Economy” (speech given to the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting, Omaha, NE, 20 February 2004), accessed 4 Oct. 2011, <http://www.federalreserve.gov/%5CBoardDocs/Speeches/2004/200402202/default.htm>; last viewed 10/04/2011
- 12 Quantifying and understanding the results of *No Child Left Behind* has been a political issue in its own right. Some conclude because SAT scores are at their lowest in 40 years, NCLB has failed. See Brian Resnick, “Falling SAT Scores, Widening Achievement Gap,” *The Atlantic* [online content] (2011, September 17), <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/09/falling-sat-scores-widening-achievement-gap/245176/>

Others argue this is a dubious assertion given the likelihood of Simpson’s Paradox regarding the complexities of the diversity and growing population of test takers. See David C. Berliner, “If the Underlying Premise for ‘No Child Left Behind’ is False, How Can That Act Solve Our Problems?,” *Iowa Academy of Education Occasional*

Research Paper #6 (2004, March/April), <http://www.education.uiowa.edu/html/iae/iae-z-op-berliner-1-6.pdf>

Berliner's paper is an outstanding resource for understanding exactly what is meant by the politicization of education in America, documenting how the Bush administration selectively interpreted educational statistics without due regard for proper statistical analysis (like controlling for "Simpson's Paradox") in order to compel *NCLB*.

¹³ Adler, 233–234.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁶ See endnotes 1 and 3 for more complete definitions of liberal learning, liberal education and the epistemological underpinnings of the human learning process.

¹⁷ Adler, p. 234

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ As shown later in this paper, others, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, and more recently Charles Anderson, base notions of liberal learning on "practical judgment," consistent with the epistemologies of Locke and Aristotle.

²¹ Aristotle, 430a26–30.

²² *Ibid.*, 430b1–5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 430b21–25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 430b27–30.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 431b16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 430b14–17.

²⁷ Adler, xxvi.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

³⁰ Aristotle, 1178b28–30.

³¹ Charles W. Anderson, *Prescribing the Life of the Mind* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 4.

³² *Ibid.* Anderson goes on to say that "this capacity to create purposes and to define good and evil, excellence and error, is essential to what we call free will and moral agency. It is also what is generally meant by human dignity" (5). Therefore, with regard to the process of liberal education, what instructors really give students is their dignity.

³³ Xenophon, *Memorabilia of Socrates*, Book IV, II.2.

- ³⁴ Aristotle, 1095b19–21.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1103a15–19.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1104b10–14.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1105a10–11.
- ³⁸ Adding to the moral complication of the purpose of education in our society is the problem of money. Education has become a business, and the business aspect has, in many ways, overwhelmed the educational aspect. Plato was the first to postulate the idea that money and education do not mix. In the *Protagoras*, the *Meno*, and the *Apology*, people who charged fees for teaching aroused a moral repugnance in Socrates and he refers to them as sophists. As Adler points out, “this is not a minor matter...it was the first time anyone had ever done so and it raised a very serious moral problem.” Adler, *Reforming Education*, 103.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.
- ⁴¹ David Snelgrove provides an excellent account of Jefferson’s influence on our ideas concerning education in his article, “John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson: Education for Democracy,” *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 61, no. 1 (2011), 195–206.
- ⁴² Adler, 118. Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr (1814).
- ⁴³ Adler, 117.
- ⁴⁴ Abraham Lincoln on the occasion of establishing land-grant colleges under the Merrill Act in 1862. Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP): What is a 21st Century Liberal Education,” accessed 26 April 2012, http://www.aacu.org/leap/What_is_liberal_education.cfm
- ⁴⁵ Anderson, 6.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Adler, 117. Adler distinguishes between “schooling” and “education.” Education comes from the Latin *ex-ducere*, which literally means to “draw out” or “educate.” With regard to the process of [liberal] education, teachers “draw out” that which is potentially but not yet actually “in” the student. Plato demonstrates this process in the *Meno* when he drafts a slave boy and has him completing complex geometrical calculations in a matter of minutes through a series of leading questions. What is important about this example is not that the slave boy goes on to become a geometrician, but that a person’s dignity is affirmed in an educative process underscoring the idea that anyone can be educated, and more importantly, a good teacher can

excite a student about learning. It is likewise a reiteration of the importance of the dialectical method (*elenchus*) of educating a power or knowledge from someone which is at the core of liberal education.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁹ Association of American Colleges and Universities.

⁵⁰ Anderson, 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁴ Increased enrollment and competition in higher education have had two direct impacts on liberal learning. For one, student-teacher ratios have consistently increased over time as more students have entered the college ranks—and this is also true at every level of education. For higher education, this directly limits the instructor’s personal interaction with students and compromises the liberal learning process. Consequently, more college courses have become content driven with less personal interaction. Second, as more institutions have entered the education market, many institutions have had to lower their enrollment standards to remain economically viable. This has also had a negative effect on the quality of classroom education as the number of students who lack the ability to engage completely in the liberal learning process has increased. For a good account of these effects on liberal learning at the college level see James T. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

⁵⁵ Adler puts the blame on the logical positivists and their impact on American education, however the problem appears to be more than just a matter of philosophical influences. Universities are now “big business” and priorities run along economic lines more than philosophical lines. See the University of Virginia Miller Center report on the costs of higher education, http://millercenter.org/public/debates/ed_cost

⁵⁶ Adler, 44.

⁵⁷ University of Virginia Miller Center.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Wood, “Law Schools Face Lawsuits Over Job Placement Claims,” accessed 27 April 2012, http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/02/02/10302339-law-schools-face-lawsuits-over-job-placement-claims?lite

⁵⁹ Adler, 44–45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

- ⁶² James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).
- ⁶³ Plato, "The Republic," Book III, in *Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. 1, ed. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1920), 405.
- ⁶⁴ Adler, 48.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–46.
- ⁶⁶ National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), accessed 17 Sept. 2011, <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ For a scathing review of the disingenuous nature of the Reagan's position, see David Louzecky and Richard Flannery, *The Good Life: Personal and Public Choices* (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1989).
- ⁶⁹ Kathy Lohr, "SAT Reading Scores Reach Record Low," accessed 17 Sept. 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/15/140513396/sat-reading-scores-reach-record-low>
- ⁷⁰ Steve Innskeep, *Former "No Child Left Behind" Advocate Turns Critic, interview with Diane Ravitch* (2010, March 2), National Public Radio, accessed 19 Sept. 2011, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124209100>
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ Max Roosevelt, "Student Expectations Seen as Causing Grade Disputes," *New York Times*, 18 February 2009.
- ⁷⁷ The idea of "education," in the classical sense, means to "draw out" of students the very epistemological processes they have been endowed with for the sake of expanding their autonomy. This is the essence of "liberal learning" as espoused by Adler and others.
- ⁷⁸ Anonymous, "The American Graduation Initiative: Stronger American Skills Through Community Colleges," accessed 26 April 2012, <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Advocacy/aginitiative/Documents/ccfactsheet.pdf>
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ⁸¹ Anderson, 25.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Louzecky and Flannery, 167.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁸⁶ Snelgrove, 203.

⁸⁷ Paraphrased from Adler, 112–113.

“Making Rome Appear More Roman”: Common Schooling and the Whig Response to Jacksonianism

Brian W. Dotts, The University of Georgia

A republican government is the visible manifestation of the people's invisible soul. Through the ballot-box, the latent will bursts out into authoritative action. In a republican government, the ballot-box is the urn of fate; yet no god shakes the bowl or resides over the lot. If the ballot-box is open to wisdom and patriotism and humanity; it is equally open to ignorance and treachery, to pride and envy, to contempt for the poor or hostility towards the rich. It is the loosest filter ever devised to strain out impurities.¹

—Horace Mann

Introduction: Posing Questions

Students of education history have long understood the development of common schools during the early- to mid-nineteenth century as a Whig reform movement supported by such civic leaders as Horace Mann in Massachusetts, Henry Barnard in Connecticut, and Calvin Wiley in North Carolina. The history of nineteenth-century education reform is intimately portrayed by a number of scholars who have written rich historical works illustrating the various purposes of Whig schooling including the development of a common culture, civic virtue, democratic citizenship, national unity, social improvement, respect for republican institutions, and political and religious stability. While his motives and efforts undergo various interpretations, Horace Mann continues to be viewed by historians as the paragon of the nineteenth-century common school reform movement. Previous interpretations of Mann and the common school movement include celebratory works by Ellwood Cubberley, who views the purposes behind Mann's crusade as democratic, as well as subsequent works revealing a less-than-ideal picture of reformers' motives by Merle Curti, Rush Welter, and Michael Katz. We continue to observe in recent scholarship such terms as “democratic,” “democratic equality,” and “democratic citizens” used to identify the purposes driving common school reformers like Mann specifically and the Whigs generally.²

In this paper, I question the historical interpretations that present Whig intentions as democratic, and I conclude to the contrary that the purposes of Whig schooling were driven considerably by a fear of democracy and democratization of the republic. Democratic interpretations of the Revolution had been contested since the separation from Britain, and nineteenth-century Whigs continued to resist democratic reforms. For the Whigs, republican and democratic forms of government remained separate and distinct, and as a response to the democratization of the electorate during the early nineteenth century, they regarded common schooling largely as a remedial institution, intended to correct the problems they were witnessing in a rapidly changing society or as preventative in nature by maintaining order and stability through the teaching of dominant cultural and religious values. Horace Mann, for example, viewed schooling as a bulwark intended to thwart the profligacy he witnessed as a result of the rapidly changing society around him. Mann's advocacy for common schools was a moral crusade rather than a democratic quest. In his 1840 *Lecture on Education*, he depicts ominously and biblically, the consequences of parents failing to educate their children with a proper moral vision.

And now, you, my friends! who feel that you are patriots and lovers of mankind,—what bulwarks, what ramparts for freedom, can you devise, so enduring and impregnable, as intelligence and virtue! Parents...you have not a son nor a daughter who, in this world of temptation, is not destined to encounter perils more dangerous than to walk a bridge of a single plank, over a dark and sweeping torrent beneath. But it is in your power and at your option, with the means which Providence will graciously vouchsafe, to give them that firmness of intellectual movement and that keenness of moral vision,—that light of knowledge and that omnipotence of virtue,—by which, in the hour of trial, they will be able to walk, with unfaltering step, over the deep and yawning abyss below, and to reach the opposite shore, in safety, and honor, and happiness.³

While Mann (and the Whigs generally) viewed common schools as giving greater opportunities for children than they would have enjoyed otherwise, he also viewed public education as a catalyst capable of infusing Protestant and republican virtue and moral harmony amongst a growing and diverse population, an “instrument” of “redeeming” qualities, he asserts, the purposes of which did not embrace *democratic* citizenship.⁴

Common Schooling to Save Our Country

Common school reformers had a much more passive understanding of commoners' status in the community, viewing citizen virtue as obedience to the laws and respecting representative government. Like citizens, students were expected to be docile, to develop self-restraint and self-discipline, uphold moral (Whig) values, accept their status in the community, and learn that liberty must be tempered by conscientious service to the republic. Self-interest and the public interest were to unite for a common cause. In his *Patriot Improvers*, Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., explains that during the early republic, "patriots were understood to be lovers of their country in the best and broadest sense; and those who made improvements, whether in plows, pumps, or barnyards, were applauded for their patriotic services."⁵⁵ This conclusion is consistent with the subsequent Whig ideology. "Patriots were improvers, and improvers were their country's patriots."⁵⁶ It is more than a coincidence that the Whigs' vision for common schooling included a broad institutional approach to educating a nation about such proper moral principles, and since the Whigs remained Federalists in their thinking, there is no reason to believe that they suddenly became democratic in the Jeffersonian sense of the term. Broad-based schooling effectively institutionalized Whigs' nostalgic worldview by inculcating among a diverse student population respect for and adaptation to their interpretation of civic virtue, republican (and not democratic) government, regard for social hierarchy, and, to venerate social custom and moral harmony, all viewed through the Whig lens of evangelical Protestantism. While schooling was expected to provide opportunities for children, Whigs perceived neither democracy nor democratic citizenship as purposes of common education. According to Wilentz, their primary rationale for common education was to "save souls," which required Whig leadership and management, not to create democrats or "democratic equality."⁵⁷ Whigs associated the problems in the republic to a lack of individual morality and respect for traditional authority, "and their solution lay in individual self-reform" within Whig institutions.

Sean Wilentz describes the political conflict as a "moral war" or "essentially a...conflict, not between the privileged and the people or the wealthy and the poor, but between the righteous and the unrighteous."⁵⁸ Whigs viewed democratic reforms as symptoms of moral decay, and broad-based institutionalized schooling could rectify the Whigs' growing anxieties by piloting the ship of state back on course. As Daniel Walker Howe argues, the more democratic the American electorate became, the more difficult it was to mold a national identity, and "the more important moral and religious issues came to be in politics."⁵⁹ As more individuals became detached from the moral roots

the church and family had established, Whigs considered public schooling and other social institutions as propitious substitutes for moral education and social improvement. Mann advocated a system of common schools that were humane and nurturing, established on the belief that all people should have opportunities to develop and pursue their human potential, internalize moral restraint, and refine independent judgment. Once we learn of Mann's childhood and his aversion to the harsh Calvinist interpretations he was exposed to as a child, it becomes clear that his common school crusade exemplified his new commitment to Unitarianism.¹⁰ Like the Transcendentalists generally, Mann celebrated human nature and the ability of schools to cultivate the perfection of this nature, which helps us understand why he was unwilling to maintain local control over education. In other words, such an important crusade could not be left solely to the eccentricities of local officials who often resisted transcending their parochial customs for the larger Whig commitments to the common good. As Donald Warren argues, "the educational campaign that gathered momentum in the Jacksonian and antebellum periods aimed not merely to increase the number of schools."¹¹ More importantly, the effort was intended to refine them. "Schools represented a means to a greater purpose. They were to harmonize a diverse people, soften their antagonisms, and equip them to function as citizens in a changing society."¹² To achieve these goals, "the common school movement represented a battle against localism,"¹³ which illustrates an important distinction from Jefferson's prior vision for schooling.

Questioning the Democratic Purposes of Common Schools

"Rome was no longer Roman," declare the editors of the *American Whig Journal* in 1845.¹⁴ Whigs may have perceived the disintegration of the American republic similar to the way their protagonist Edmund Burke had observed the disintegration of the French Revolution: certainly less violent, but no less radical in spurning the stabilizing forces of tradition. Democrats controlled both houses of the 29th Congress and were victorious in retaking the White House in 1845, an indication that Whigs were waning as a political force in the US. In fact, Democrats controlled nearly every Congress (but for three) during the previous twenty years.¹⁵ Seeing their political power diminish, Whig editors were committed to educating their readers about the country's growing self-indulgence and linking it to the Democrats and the unbridled free market. Indeed, Whigs viewed the election of 1828 (and perhaps the election of 1824 as an augur of what was coming) as confirmation of broad-based moral decay and Andrew Jackson, and his successor Martin Van Buren, as the antithesis of a virtuous republican leader and a consequence of American debauchery. "The standard by which to judge

a nation's greatness," the editors assert, can be found neither in its "materialist" culture (market liberalism) nor in her geographic size (westward expansion). Rather, it is "to be appreciated only by [its composition] of the moral, the pure, the thoughtful, the intelligent, [and the] reflective wisdom" among its citizens.¹⁶ An essential difference between Whig and Democratic politics that helps one understand their actions during the so-called "Age of Jackson" lies in their respective views toward history and change. For example, according to Daniel Walker Howe, both parties viewed the American Revolution in fundamentally distinctive ways. "For Democrats, it represented liberation from history; for Whigs, it was the climax of history." It is understandable, then, that Democrats were more willing to accept change and see it as progressive, while the Whigs naturally resisted any moral or ideological conversion they perceived as weakening traditional social structures. By linking America's decadence to that of Rome's, Whigs were inclined to rely on and have faith in the ability of Whig public institutions to "redeem people," as Howe has fittingly asserted,¹⁷ and aid in their atonement for the republic's growing decadence. "The Whigs have...a character in history," according to Daniel Webster, and this presumption rationalized Whigs' moral authority, which helps one understand their interests in and purposes for establishing common institutions. "All men," Webster proclaims, are "in want of culture" and "knowledge, in want of something to explain to them not only what they may see around them, but their own nature, condition, and destiny." It is "indispensable," he lectures, to develop the "moral necessities of mankind [and] to children throughout...the country."¹⁸ The republic was evolving into an unrecognizable and uncontrollable nation as the economy, immigration, and urbanization were seen as destabilizing local and collective social authority and contributing to large-scale change, illustrated by one of the most palpable junctures, Andrew Jackson's rise to the White House.

Unlike the Whigs, their "Democratic critics" believed that "political life had not yet reached the state of revolution" necessary to subvert the traditional social hierarchies Whigs supported.¹⁹ A shift of this magnitude necessitated a comprehensive and uniform response. Former moral sanctions were being uprooted, and Whigs identified a need for new social institutions that could restrain more broadly and stabilize more effectively the irrepressible changes taking place.²⁰ The Whigs expected common schools to serve as an institutional means of preserving their cultural view of America or making their "Rome appear more Roman."

There were multiple purposes driving Whigs' interest in common schooling including the means to inculcate respect for republican institutions, to instill moral virtue, and to cultivate a common literate

culture—all of which were expected to contribute to social stability and the salvation of Whig social and political expectations for the nation. A few historians, however, identify democratic purposes behind the Whig agenda. For instance, David Labaree concludes that a political goal of common schools represents an attempt by Whigs to realize “democratic equality” or the cultivation of “democratic citizenship” intended “to prepare people for political roles” in the republic, illustrative of the Whig efforts to institutionalize “citizenship training.” While I agree with Labaree’s analysis as it relates to subsequent goals of schooling during the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, I question his use of the terms “democratic equality” and “democratic citizenship” as goals the Whigs sought to realize in their development of common schools.²¹

Rather, I suggest Whigs regarded common schooling as a formal means of counteracting the democratization of the republic. In their eyes, “democracy,” a term they associate with Andrew Jackson (and Thomas Jefferson), was antithetical to republican government. In a Boston oration delivered in 1842, for instance, Horace Mann pointed out that, with an expansion of the franchise that contributed to the election of Andrew Jackson, “a...majority of voters...possessed [n]either the intellectual [n]or the moral advantages of a school.”²² This newly formed electorate, according to Mann, due to “their profound ignorance, will necessarily be incapable of discerning principles, or of appreciating arguments;—accessible through the passions alone; creating demagogues for leaders....”²³ Furthermore, disoriented, short-sighted, and easily led astray as they are, “this class of men,” would be unable to “attach themselves to any one party,” resulting in their constant “shifting” to the “wrong side.”²⁴ In his 1840 *Lecture on Education*, Mann asserts, “The theory of our government is...not that all men, however unfit, shall be voters...but that every man, by power of reason and the sense of duty, shall become fit to be a voter.”²⁵ Republican government could not endure, he continues, “if vicious materials are daily wrought into its frame-work...” It is for this reason, he concludes, that education “must be universal.”²⁶ Given that Whigs viewed the American Revolution as the pinnacle of history, it was reasonable for them to pursue policies they assumed would anchor future developments to a former era illustrative of stability and republican tradition. Jackson’s election illustrated to them a fracture in the Whig worldview. The editors of the *American Review* express this concern in April 1845 in an article entitled “How Shall Life Be Made The Most Of?”²⁷ In this article, strong criticism is directed toward the lack of adequate education among workers in various professions, and the frequent “changing of professions at pleasure.” Both of these “bad habits” were symptoms of a liberal market that was viewed as destabilizing for “all classes of society.” According to the editors, “Every man ought to be educated for his

profession or calling, whatever it be,” and “A man ought to continue through life in the same profession.”²⁸ Whigs did not fully accept the idea of individual self-interest viewing it as “irresponsible,” beyond what was necessary in suffusing within students a strict moral code, a sense of right and wrong through disciplined reflection, internal restraint, and the duty to support the collective good above one’s own self-interest. Whigs knew that republican government could not be truly republican by force; rather, respect for republicanism had to be taught and internalized in the populace. For Mann, “two divine ideas” should remain constant in America: “duty to God and society,” both achieved through the “church” and the “school.”²⁹ This set of ingredients was clearly not intended for democratic citizenship or democratic political participation.

Whig anxieties resulted in what Russell Hanson describes as a “reversal of the classical republican formula” wherein the republic “‘is for the aid of virtue, and not virtue for the’ republic.”³⁰ Concerned about the changes taking place, Whigs deemed it necessary to use institutions to “aid” in the development of “virtue” since families and churches could no longer be relied upon to serve this function effectively. Social changes occurring during the early nineteenth century gave rise to an ideological crisis as Democrats discarded social barriers, and the Whigs responded by trying to preserve them. As one reads Horace Mann’s annual reports, it becomes obvious that he is attempting to develop broad-based common schools founded upon his idyllic New England model. Yet, a new age was proving to the Whigs that liberalism, strongly Democrat-supported, was unequivocally contributing to the growing moral disintegration of the American republic, which resulted in their appeals for comprehensive, state-wide systems of education. A proper education could not be left solely to the dictates of parochial eccentricities or apathy and neglect. Education for the Whigs became a religious mission, a moral calling infused with a strong sense of urgency that rationalized state regulation of individuals and the economy.³¹

The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 confirmed Whig fears of democracy ensuing from the expansion of the franchise. Some even viewed his election as the beginning of the end of the republic. Noah Webster, for example, bemoans the emerging mob rule, viewing it as a death-knell to republican virtue and Christian morality. Through his distinctive spelling books and dictionaries, he may have viewed himself as one of the founders of American custom and habit, and in contrast he considered Jackson and the broader social and economic changes taking place later in his life as dismantling his architectural scaffolding. He expressed such contempt toward Jackson, and so desperate was he to circumvent the democratization of republican government, that he suggests “raising the voting age to forty-five,” according to Wilentz.³² Whigs refer to Jackson as having “made no pretensions to learning or

scholarship of any kind,” and condescendingly describe him as “a politician from choice” as opposed to a selfless, statesman-like figure fulfilling a public duty. He “devoted” his “mind” completely “to political strategy” and a “democracy which...allies itself with infidelity to religion...destructive of every rational plan for the good of the commonwealth.”³³ Nostalgically, Whigs call for acknowledging “the spirit of the Past—the chivalric and thoughtful spirit...when worth was not gauged by the standards of wealth or fashion, and a nation’s greatness was not computed by the arithmetic of numbers.”³⁴ Their necessary remedy requires “preserving a nation in its primitive worth and freedom [through] universal moral education and the...conviction that [an individual’s] duty is [his] interest.” However, in 1845, Whig editors complain, “No man in America is content to be poor...or expects to continue so.”³⁵ The development of “commerce” was becoming “the universal pursuit of man” and “trade is destined to destroy...much of the beauty and happiness of every land.”³⁶ The freedom the market personified and the material interests that it venerated, prevent us from “cultivat[ing] the graces of humanity...and the fear of evil consequences is more influential than the love of goodness.”³⁷ Deterrence rather than obedient commitment to the common good exemplified the uprooting of traditional moral expectations in the changing republic. Furthermore, these anxieties caused the editors of *The American Review* to exclaim, “our social condition makes us wary, suspicious, slow to commit ourselves too far in interest for others.”³⁸ William Ellery Channing, a leading New England Unitarian, makes a similar criticism in his 1840 publication, *The Elevation of the Laboring Classes*, asserting, “Adventurers” are attempting to “escape...the primeval sentence of living by the sweat of the brow” resulting in “the demoralization of the community” by creating “excessive competition, which of necessity generates...fraud.... Trade is turned to gambling; and a spirit of mad speculation exposes public and private interests to a disastrous instability.”³⁹

This necessitated a system of common schooling that would entail, not a direct and obvious form of social and regulatory control, but rather, a system fundamentally established for the purposes of developing of a more subtle method of inculcating self-discipline and moral responsibility in children. Schooling should subdue any individual desire to succumb to hedonistic tendencies to the extent necessary and prevent the student from being lured by the otherwise permissive and unmanageable effects of democratization and *laissez-faire* capitalism. Governing the nation took on greater significance and scope for Whigs as they forged their political agenda in a manner that required going beyond existing republican institutions in order to regulate and prepare future citizens in a fragile and potentially unpredictable, changing republic. In other words, as they witnessed their political power

diminishing within the formal electoral bodies of government, Whigs increasingly advanced reforms that were expected to have permanent and everlasting effects beyond the ephemeral nature of the new democratic politics. They could not leave the purposes of their moral crusade to political caprice or to the volatile nature of party politics. A degree of historical irony exists in this era: the Whigs constructed extra-republican institutions—common schools—in large measure finally yielding to Jefferson’s advocacy for public schooling a half-century earlier but as a response to rather than support for Jacksonian “democracy.” Unlike Jefferson’s schooling, Whig schooling was less a product of the “Enlightenment” than the “Reformation,” as Howe discusses.⁴⁰

The Whigs’ common school agenda comprised institutionalizing their ideological perspectives materially and concretely, which included conserving traditional social and political structures. They viewed the status quo as a harmonious cultural balance that needed to be protected from history’s dangerous cyclical tendencies. Cultural harmony in the republic required relentless nurturing and cultivation of its individual parts in order to prevent imbalance and disequilibrium from occurring. The democratization of the electorate that resulted in Jackson’s and Van Buren’s elevation to the White House convinced many Whigs they must go beyond conventional politics in hopes of memorializing their ideological imprint on the republic. One can appreciate their level of anxiety present among many Whigs in their 1840 publication, *Letters to the People of the United States*,⁴¹ written under the penname, *Concivis*, which provides an extreme indictment against Van Buren and compares him to Rehoboam, King of Judah, who ruled recklessly and ambitiously for wealth and power from 930–913 BC. Throughout this diatribe, the author distinguishes the Van Buren and Jackson administrations from their predecessors, as “a change from dignity to debasement; from rectitude to profligacy; from the peaceful scenes of order, safety and prosperity, to confusion, disaster, and ruin!”⁴² Their rise to the presidency, according to *Concivis*, “should teach us the error...of flattering ourselves that the intelligence and virtue of the people, the excellence of our constitution, the wisdom of our laws,” and “our national glory, are as a matter of course to secure us from the plots of unprincipled demagogues,” who attempt to undermine our institutions, and destroy our freedom.”⁴³ At times, the essay appears to parallel John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as the author refers to Van Buren and his predecessor as having “repulsed the legitimate wishes” and “the rightful demands of the great, the free, [and] the high-minded people, whose creature he is, who voluntarily raised him to the lofty elevation which has inflamed his vanity and ambition into madness, and who can at their will hurl him back in a moment into his original insignificance!”⁴⁴ The

elections of Jackson and Van Buren were evidence the people were wanting of “intelligence and virtue,” and by “undermining” traditional republican institutions, Whigs responded by erecting new institutions to counter the “profligacy” they witnessed.⁴⁵

The educational reform movement was successful in establishing what would become an institutional and organizational framework centralized at the state level functioning as a site of political conflict over issues related to morality, curricula, purposes of education, teacher certification requirements, state and federal policies, and numerous political agendas throughout the history of American education. Ironically, the Whig institutionalization and centralization of education did not isolate schools from political conflict, as the Whigs quickly learned in cities like New York and Philadelphia where religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics erupted. The Whig obsession with institutions and their efforts to establish a uniform culture, a standardized curricula, and centralization at the state level, resulted in their bolstering an organizational framework that social efficiency advocates could employ though the Whigs would have abhorred their many goals for schooling. For example, a primary purpose of Whig institutions was to regulate behavior and maintain social harmony; social efficiency advocates pursued utilitarian goals within the common school organizational framework focusing substantially on preparing students for the workforce and potentially displacing Whig emphasis on the development of moral habits. It was not that moral habits were unimportant during the social efficiency movement; rather, “social utility,” according to Kliebard, “became the supreme criterion against which the value of school studies was measured.”⁴⁶ Although Whigs increasingly recognized immoral corollaries (i.e., competition and self-interest) emerging from an expanding liberal market, it is safe to conclude that the Whigs would have recoiled at the idea of subjecting the purposes of common schools and such other institutions as asylums and hospitals to the dictates and vicissitudes of a free liberal market’s demands and effects. Although the Whigs feared a market liberality lacking moral certitude infiltrating into schooling, that liberality became the *modus operandi* of the very school system they helped design. Their goal was to modernize the market, but to do so with both feet firmly planted in the past.

While various interest groups have vied for control over the curriculum, the growing systemization of Whig schooling contributed to organizational frameworks that facilitated top-down education policies and approaches that persistently subvert and undermine local democratic control. From an organizational perspective, the structure of common (public) schools has transcended the various goals school reformers in different eras pursued serving as an institutional means of supporting the

ideological agendas of politically powerful interests that emerge and then fade away, sometimes to reemerge again. However, while the Whigs would have been disappointed over the utilitarian emphasis of schooling in the late nineteenth century, they were successful in establishing a public institution that would serve as a systematic means of culturally assimilating millions of future students and aiding in their acquisition of right moral character in a rapidly changing society. According to Howe, “The agents of progress were often the enlightened few rather than the tumultuous many,” and “the outcome of [Whig] benevolent social change was greater order, not less.”⁴⁷

Institutionalization of Education Politics and Unanticipated Consequences

While they viewed themselves as the proper architects of benevolent institutions for a variety of reasons, they saw common schooling as a means of paternally communicating and collectively instilling in multitudes of future citizens their reputable worldview—to “redeem” a society increasingly viewed as morally deficient and qualitatively unbalanced. Therefore, while the goals for education shift among groups of reformers during the nineteenth century, the Whigs were responsible for developing a system of schools that would eventually undermine their own educational purposes. While curricular content was modified to serve the demands of influential groups, the structure and organization of common schools enables the development of further standardization, routinization, and assimilation in later decades, structural characteristics that transcend the various purposes of schooling yet facilitate their advance or their retreat. The Whigs’ attempts to develop a homogenous culture are manifest in their desire to create institutions that promoted uniformity in thought and habitual behavior. What they did not realize is that their creation of institutions built the means within which future generations could pursue other ends that would rarely focus on democratic citizenship.

The systematization and institutionalization of schools throughout our history illustrate a pattern of organized social management, of socializing and assimilating students to the normative expectations of dominant and powerful interest groups in society. Whether to produce virtuous citizens, good workers, or self-sufficient adults, institutionalizing common and public schooling beginning with the Whig crusade develops the organizational boundaries that create mass schooling as a formalized and systematized social institution responsible for defining the means to achieving opportunity and success. Whigs were successful in developing institutions that contributed to the uniformity and standardization of culture and social norms. Indeed, what is uniformly taught and standardized in schools is virtually always

contested, but when the pursuits made by special interests congeal into policy, social institutions have a strong tendency to diminish individuality and suppress difference by systematizing processes, patterns of organizational behavior, and upholding formal and informal rules and expectations. Despite the common perception that American culture is deeply individualistic, defined by Seymour Martin Lipset in the 1960s as the “American Creed,” recent historians question Lipset’s conclusions claiming that he makes the mistake of conflating elite and popular values.⁴⁸ To the contrary, recent historians provide significant evidence to support the idea that local communities exhibit “strong communal orientations,” and characteristically discourage individuality in favor of collective obligations.⁴⁹ In addition, this recent research “casts considerable doubt on the claim that liberal individualism was a widely-held orientation...either among the elite leadership of the Revolution or in the general population.”⁵⁰ This is not surprising to many education historians who have long recognized how educational ideas and practices generally parallel the expectations of republican and Protestant leaders and reformers. Histories of schooling in seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century America reveal a relentless pursuit to maintain national unity, cultural conformity, and the assimilation of dominant beliefs. Indeed, all societies need a level of “cultural coherence,” as Bruce Ackerman asserts.⁵¹ This is not to say that individualism is absent in America’s history; rather, it is to point out the fact that society’s political, social, and economic institutions tend to arrest or restrict cultural change. For example, in their study of early America, Grabb and Baern convincingly conclude the “localized values and beliefs shared in common [place] strong emphasis on conformity to communally-sanctioned, rather than individually-determined, standards of thought and behavior.”⁵² For most individuals, the fundamental influence comes from “communitarian religious and family values that prevailed in that period.”⁵³ Since common or public schools generally reflected dominant cultural values, it is not surprising to find among the histories of education confirmation of this strong collectivist or communal purpose of schooling which is certainly compatible with the Whigs’ communitarian, static perspectives.

By the early- to mid-nineteenth century, faced with increasing urban poverty, high rates of immigration, and the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, it is no coincidence that Whigs, the “redeemers of society,” according to Daniel Howe,⁵⁴ look to the common school as an institution that can effectively supplant the traditional church and family in maintaining a cohesive, comprehensive civic culture in an increasingly diverse and politically attentive society. Broadening the franchise and the subsequent election of a Democrat from Tennessee only heightened already existing anxieties among Whigs who often viewed social change,

not as progress, but as social deterioration. It was not that Whigs were opposed to modernization, rather they favored only those modernizing features that yielded to their ideological expectations. Common schools, Mann convinced the business elite, would precipitate a cost-benefit by instilling in future workers the importance of private property, respect for authority and the rule of law, and the overall development of “pliant workers.”⁵⁵ Whigs viewed schooling as an example of modernization; an institutional effort that did not include as one of its purposes the development of democratic citizens. Rather, schooling served as a bulwark against the liberal forces emerging during the period including but not limited to the unintended effects of free market liberalism. As Howe suggests in his extensive research on Whig political culture, “Just as Whig social reforms could serve conservative purposes, so other forms of modernization could represent means to old-fashioned ends.”⁵⁶ For instance, “John Quincy Adams supported measures favorable to business enterprise out of a dedication to the classical humanist ideals of discipline and self-improvement.”⁵⁷

Concomitantly, reformers did not want to leave common schooling to chance by relying solely on local affiliations. State involvement, although initially minimal, followed the growth of common schooling. In order to pursue commonality, states slowly wrested control of education from local communities, contributing to curricular uniformity, structural organization, and the institutionalization of prevailing moral standards. Despite the fact that many Whigs opposed westward expansion and the growing liberalizing effects of industrialization, state legislatures not only acquired more control over education in their state constitutions and statutes, they also became increasingly controlled by business interests seeking to influence state education policies and the purpose of schooling.

It should also be noted that the purposes of common schooling include but are not limited to social management. In addition to providing basic literacy and cultural assimilation, common schooling provides what all social and political institutions attempt to deliver: a functional and efficient increase in social benefits while diminishing “compliance costs.” Richard W. Wilson, for example, argues institutions restrict “social relations” generally “thought of as the complex of norms, laws, and associated practices that undergird social life establishing explanations for status differences and the procedures for maintaining a particular pattern of relationships.”⁵⁸ Although Wilson does not directly refer to public schools, common schools were certainly intended to perform these functions.

In *A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania* (1786), Dr. Benjamin Rush asserts it is necessary

to “convert men into republican machines.”⁵⁹ Indeed, Rush intends to illustrate the importance not only of developing citizens who respect republican government as he understands it but to institutionalize schooling so it can effectively serve as a functional and reliable means for creating unity and cultural homogeneity in the State of Pennsylvania and ultimately the US. Note that Rush does not use the term “democracy” in his description. Of course, although republicanism retained much of its communal focus on protecting the public interest above individual self-interest, society increasingly perceived republicanism as democratic. Indeed, Rush’s expectations were no different from those dominant groups in any society interested in educating citizens sought: to develop institutions for the purpose of perpetuating or socially reproducing dominant ideologies. Throughout our history American schooling has carried out this reproductive goal in a variety of ways, from subtly inculcating civic and moral precepts on the one hand to forcefully excluding or eradicating cultural differences on the other. Fundamentally, state education serves a conservative purpose—to perpetuate a society’s dominant culture while suppressing subcultures perceived as different, dangerous, or irreligious, an anti-democratic purpose in today’s sense of democracy. In other words, following Amy Gutmann’s thinking on this issue, if democracy requires institutional recognition of difference, then the history of American schooling has been profoundly undemocratic. Indeed, one reason early Americans rejected Jefferson’s proposals for schooling was because, like the purposes of republican government, they never conceived the purpose of public schooling to develop a democracy or democratic citizenry.⁶⁰ In addition to providing basic literacy, common schooling was to cultivate cultural unity, political stability, social and economic order, and respect for representative government.

Conclusion

Distinguishing the American from the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, often heralded by Whigs in nineteenth century America for his conservatism, viewed the American Revolution as an attempt to recover time-honored British traditions. On the other hand, he viewed the French Revolution as a gratuitous and violent overthrow of all things French. “Government is not made in virtue of natural rights,” Burke asserts. Rather, “government is a contrivance of human wisdom” that requires “sufficient restraint upon [men’s] passions.”⁶¹ Such restraint requires “the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection,” which Burke believes could “only be done *by [an external] power...subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue.*”⁶²

Liberty can only be enjoyed if tempered by order:

Restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights. But as the liberties and the restrictions vary with times and circumstances, and admit of infinite modifications, they cannot be settled upon any abstract rule....⁶³

And to assume otherwise is naïve, he explains. Burke was not opposed to change; rather, he was opposed to impetuous and reckless disregard of tradition. He viewed the American Revolution as a resurrection of and respect for a well-established British republican tradition. American founders were attempting to re-educate the British on the republican canon.⁶⁴ As for the French, “they had completely pulled down to the ground, their monarchy; their church; their nobility; their law; their revenue; their army; their navy; their commerce; their arts; and their manufactures,” all caused by “the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody and tyrannical democracy.”⁶⁵

Indeed, the Founders were well aware of republican history. It taught them that maintaining a republic was not only arduous but likely to end in failure. Sustaining the proper checks and balances in republics and cultivating ample republican virtue had been consistently and empirically demonstrated for centuries to be a futile exercise in political statecraft. Nevertheless, the American experiment quickly grew from an embryonic to an adolescent stage of development undergoing social, political, and religious anxieties and ideological turmoil over the proper meaning of the Revolution and the purposes of the new republic. For the most part, however, elites were able to maintain respect for the status quo immediately following the conflict by linking the future success of the republic, neither to democracy, which they still viewed pejoratively, nor to democratic citizenship, but to individual and collective obligation and respect for representative rule. Although the initial political battles that transpired represented disagreement between the conventional and the radical, this debate was primarily restricted to elites in the Federalist and Jeffersonian factions. While few people could exercise the franchise during this period, it was taken for granted that elite rule would persist well into the distant future as a source of political and social order. In other words, civic virtue, while difficult to maintain in a republic, appeared to have a relatively firm federal foundation since the constitutional framework would limit rule to the social elite. With few exceptions, democracy was still perceived as ruinous of and harmful to republics. The presidential election in 1828 was considered proof that the American experiment was headed toward a ruinous path.

Growing out of an initial anxiety over parochialism and insular interests, George Washington proposes “the assimilation of the

principles, opinions, and manners of our countrymen...from every quarter.... The more homogeneous our citizens can be made in these particulars the greater will be our prospect of permanent union.”⁶⁶ Although it would be decades before common schooling emerged, many republican leaders during the late eighteenth century understood the importance of developing a common civic virtue that included harnessing one’s self-interest and suffusing students with a sense of selflessness and an attentiveness toward the public good which, at the very least, translated into maintaining the cultural status quo. Schools were born amidst political conflict, and Whig reformers expected common schools as public institutions to fortify what they perceived the American Revolution to have achieved—a confirmation of their ideological perspective of the revolution. Whigs expected schools to stifle democratic conflict, stabilize a rapidly changing society, and maintain a sense of order among an increasingly diverse population. Whigs developed common schools to serve as a bulwark against change, firmly to anchor in the hearts and minds of future citizens the Whig, undemocratic worldview. Time would reveal however, that rather than tempering democracy and shielding society from democratic politics as the Whigs had hoped, common schooling would serve as a new battleground upon which new political conflicts would be fought.

Endnotes

- 1 Horace Mann, “Inadequacy of Existing Schools and Education,” *The American Journal of Education* 19, (1870): 840.
- 2 Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934); Merle Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (Paterson, NJ: Pageant Books, 1959); Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Michael Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001); David F. Labaree utilizes these terms to describe the political purposes behind the common school reform movement. See his “Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals,” *American Educational Research Journal* 34, no. 1 (1997, Spring): 39–81. While I agree with Labaree’s broad analysis of later goals, including “social efficiency” and “social mobility,” I question his use of these terms.
- 3 Horace Mann, *Lecture on Education* (Boston: Gale Sabin Americana, 1840).

- 4 Horace Mann, "Reply to the 'Remarks' of Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters on the Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education" (Boston: Gale Sabin Americana, 1844).
- 5 Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., *Patriot Improvers: Biographical Sketches of Members of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997), xiv.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 488–489.
- 8 Ibid., 488–489. Regina Morantz determines through an extensive newspaper analysis that 63% of newspapers from 1820 to 1850 considered themselves to be "Democrat" or "Democratic." While this evidence confirms a developing Democratic party, it also reveals a party ideology in opposition to the Whig coalition which was very much anti-democrat. Morantz's 1971 dissertation is cited in Russell L. Hanson, *The Democratic Imagination in America: Conversations with Our Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 88.
- 9 Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (1991, March): 1218.
- 10 For a brief description of Horace Mann's childhood, see Barbara Finkelstein, "Perfecting Childhood: Horace Mann and the Origins of Public Education in the United States," *Biography* 13, no. 1 (1990, Winter): 6–20.
- 11 Donald Warren, "Original Intent: Public Schools as Civic Education," *Theory into Practice* 27, no. 4 (1988, Autumn): 245.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid. For a brief discussion of Transcendentalism, its similarities and differences with Unitarianism, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 617–657. For an account of Mann's support for centralization of common schooling, see Jonathan C. Messerli, "Localism and State Control in Horace Mann's Reform of the Common Schools," *American Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1965, Spring): 104–118.
- 14 "Our Country," *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* (1845): 275.
- 15 For election results see Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788–1997: The Official Results* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 139–145; and Michael J. Dubin, *United States*

- Presidential Elections, 1788–1860: The Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 83.
- ¹⁶ “Our Country,” 275.
- ¹⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 36, 70; Daniel Walker Howe, “Introduction,” *What Hath God Wrought*.
- ¹⁸ Daniel Webster, “Speech at Boston, July 4, 1844,” and “Remarks on Sunday Schools, 1831,” *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster: Writings and Speeches Hitherto Uncollected*, vol. 13 (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1903), 39, 238.
- ¹⁹ Christine Oravec, “The Democratic Critics: An Alternative American Rhetorical Tradition of the Nineteenth Century,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 4, no. 4 (1986, Autumn): 409–410.
- ²⁰ An article that focuses on this change is Jordon B. Barkalow, “Changing Patterns of Obligation and the Emergence of Individualism in American Political Thought,” *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2004, September): 491–500.
- ²¹ Labaree, “Public Goods,” 43–44.
- ²² Horace Mann, *An Oration Delivered Before the Authorities of the City of Boston, July 4, 1842* (Boston: W. B. Fowle and N. Capen, 1842), 59.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Horace Mann, *Lecture on Education*.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ “How Shall Life Be Made the Most OF?,” *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* 1, no. 4 (1845, April): 413.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Horace Mann, “Tenth Annual Report to the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education,” in *The Republic and the School: Horace Mann on the Education of Free Men*, ed. Lawrence A. Cremin (New York: Teachers College Press, 1957); Horace Mann and M. Tyler Mann, *Annual Reports on Education* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 529.
- ³⁰ Russell L. Hanson, *The Democratic Imagination in America: Conversations with Our Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 138–139, note 9. The term “irresponsible individualism” is used by Jonathan C. Messlerli, “Localism and State Control in Horace Mann’s Reform of the Common Schools,” *American Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1965, Spring): 116.

- ³¹ On the growth of state regulation see Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 154–155. On Mann’s moral quest, see Mark Groen, “The Whig Party and the Rise of Common Schools, 1837–1854,” *American Educational History Journal* 35, no. 2 (2008): 253–255. On Whig concerns over “social harmony” based on traditional “deference” to authority, see J. V. Matthews, “‘Whig History’: The New England Whigs and an Usable Past,” *The New England Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1978, June): 193–208.
- ³² Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 3–4; Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979).
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ “Our Country,” *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* 1, no. 3 (1845, March): 275; “Influence of the Trading Spirit Upon the Social and Moral Life of America,” *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* 1, no. 1 (1845, January): 94.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ William Ellery Channing, “On the Elevation of the Laboring Classes” and “The Ministry of the Poor,” *The Works of William Ellery Channing* (New York: Lenox Hill Publishing, 1970), 40, 79.
- ⁴⁰ The intellectual parallels between the Reformation and the Enlightenment are discussed in Daniel Walker Howe, “Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 1 (2002, Spring): 1–24.
- ⁴¹ G. H. Belden, *Letters to the People of the United States* (New York, Gale Sabin Americana, 1840/2012).
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893–1958*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 78.
- ⁴⁷ Howe, *The Political Culture*, 74.
- ⁴⁸ Edward Grabb, Douglas Baer and James Curtis, “The Origins of American Individualism: Reconsidering the Historical Evidence,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 4 (1999): 512.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 512, 524.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 524–525.

⁵¹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); Bruce Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 139–167; cited in Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 35.

⁵² Grabb et al., 526.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Daniel Walker Howe, “The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System,” *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (1991): 1218.

⁵⁵ Donald Warren, “Original Intent: Public Schools as Civic Education,” *Theory into Practice* 27, no. 4 (1988): 246.

⁵⁶ Howe, *The Political Culture*, 183.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Richard W. Wilson, “American Political Culture in Comparative Perspective,” *Political Psychology* 18, no. 2 (1997): 484–485.

⁵⁹ Benjamin Rush, *A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania; To Which Are Added Thoughts upon the Mode of Education, Proper in a Republic: Addressed to the Legislature and Citizens of the State* (Philadelphia, PA: Printed for Thomas Dobson, in Second-Street, Two Doors above Chestnut-Street, 1786), 27.

⁶⁰ For example, Amy Gutmann defines democratic education as “a guiding principle of deliberative democracy [that] is recipr[ocal] among free and equal individuals....” She views schooling as a public institution responsible for “cultivating” among students a respect for “deliberative democracy” and “conscious social reproduction in its most inclusive form.” *Democratic Education with a New Preface and Epilogue* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), xii, 42.

⁶¹ Edmund Burke, *Substance of the speech of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in thr [sic] debate on the army estimates, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, the 9th day of February, 1790*, 2nd ed. (London: Debrett, 1790), 8.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Edmund Burke, 12.

⁶⁶ Warren, 244–245.

Channeling Plato: Curriculum Differentiation in the American Comprehensive High School

Suzanne Rice, University of Kansas

Introduction

By the time they have reached the age of fifteen or sixteen, most students in the United States have had some firsthand experience in a comprehensive high school. Curriculum differentiation, while not unique to the comprehensive high school, is a defining characteristic of this institution. While the practice of curriculum differentiation varies somewhat across schools (and between classrooms within schools), typically curriculum differentiation involves delivering different subject content to different students, teaching students differently, or evaluating student learning differently. The primary rationale for differentiating curricula is better to meet the perceived needs of students who differ in various ways deemed educationally significant. Today, practices and programs associated with curriculum differentiation include gifted education, special education, ability grouping, tracking, college prep, vocational, business and practical math and English, and advanced placement, among others. Any comprehensive high school typically includes several such practices and programs.

I undertake this essay in the tradition of critical theory and, consistent with the Frankfurt School, I draw upon several disciplines, particularly history, sociology, and philosophy (Calhoun, 1995). I first illustrate how the practice of curriculum differentiation has intellectual roots in the philosophy of Plato and how, on American soil, these philosophical roots have nourished the educational thought of such influential philosophers and policymakers as Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, John Dewey, Charles W. Eliot, Ellwood Cubberley, and James B. Conant.

Beyond illuminating the philosophical and historical origins of curriculum differentiation, consistent with the critical tradition, I also seek to show how this practice becomes implicated in the reproduction of unequal social relations within schools. To this end, I employ the concept of “ideology.” By examining the roots of curriculum differentiation, the practice may be historicized and thereby its seeming naturalness and inevitability as an organizing principle for curricula can

be drawn into question. Such an unmasking is meant to provide an opening for thinking anew about the consequences of how curricula and the knowledge it embodies are distributed.

The Rise of the Comprehensive High School

Historians of education trace the idea of curriculum differentiation to the Progressive Era of education—ranging roughly between 1890 and 1920—when secondary schools, such as they existed at the turn of the last century, begin to be thought inadequate to educate a growing population of US born youth, let alone the huge numbers of immigrant youth entering the country. Additionally, massive social and economic upheavals accompany industrialization; not only does industrialization change the nature of work for millions, but also increases human misery in large urban centers. In perhaps the greatest demonstration of faith in the power of education in US history to date, different factions—factions with oft-competing interests—see the reformed high school as a possible solution to disparate problems. Jeannie Oakes (1986) provides a succinct description of the range of hopes different groups pinned on the high school.

Colleges and universities wanted a more sophisticated pre-collegiate education. Many of the middle class called for free public education available to all youth. Poor and immigrant families were eager for the economic benefits they believed schooling would provide their children. Businessmen were interested in acquiring a more productive and literate workforce. Organized labor was concerned about who should control the training of workers. Progressive reformers sought humane solutions to the immense social problems confronting the burgeoning population of poor and immigrant youth. But most of the population increasingly feared the potential dangers that could result from what was seen as an unrestrained horde of urban immigrants, and a perception of a need for the exercise of greater social control was widespread. The public high school, already struggling, was seen as a means to all these ends. (p. 20)

Why all these groups suddenly look to schools to address their desires and fears is not entirely clear, but given that they *do* look to schools, it is not surprising that, in most cities, the institution that takes shape is specifically the *comprehensive* high school, a school that “that did not promise the same thing for everyone. Gone was the nineteenth century notion of the need for common learnings to build a cohesive nation” (p. 21).

Curriculum differentiation takes many forms, but the most common are “ability” grouping in elementary schools and its corollary, tracking,

common in middle schools and pervasive in comprehensive high schools. A manifestation of ability grouping that likely will be familiar to most readers is the elementary school reading group. Students in a single classroom are typically divided into three groups based upon their perceived reading ability; these groups are often given names: for example, eagles, robins, and starlings. Tracking entails grouping students on a much larger scale and is accomplished in a variety of different ways. In a typical high school, students are grouped for required courses of study, such as English, math, and history. In each of these subjects, there are usually three groups: honors, college prep, and basic or “business.” In some districts, basic subject groups are “chunked,” and students take honors, college prep, and basic courses in *all* required courses. In other schools students are grouped within distinct programs, such as college bound, business, or vocational/technical.

Those student characteristics upon which grouping decisions are made also vary somewhat in the particulars, but according to Oakes, three considerations almost always come into play: “scores on standardized tests, teacher and counselor recommendations (including grades), and students’ and their parents’ choices” (Oakes, 1986, p. 9). What these considerations boil down to are teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of a student’s abilities and likely future employment options, both of which are most often dictated by the students’ social class and race.

The belief in—and the corresponding practice of—curriculum differentiation remains largely unchallenged since the Progressive Era when the comprehensive high school emerged as the dominant model for secondary education. Reflecting on the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, Angus and Mirel (1999), conclude that despite all protests against educational practices of the time, very little changes in relation to curriculum organization, instead “high schools were islands of stability in terms of the philosophy that guided their policies and the nature of student course taking” (Angus & Mirel, 1999, p. 159).

Why Does Curriculum Differentiation Persist?

Although the broader society in which they are embedded has changed in significant ways since the Progressive Era, in terms of curricular differentiation, schools have not, raising the question “What gives the idea and practice of curricular differentiation its remarkable staying power?” Oakes (1986) answers this question by positing curriculum differentiation has become a part of school culture, and I suggest one might utilize the concept of ideology to help unpack her answer. Specifically, the concept of ideology helps explain teachers’ (and to a large extent parents’ and students’) beliefs about curriculum differentiation, including ability grouping and tracking, since one’s

ideology constitutes a kind of a lens that helps one make sense of the world and one's experience within that world.

One's ideology comprises one's beliefs, attitudes, justifications, explanations, and assumptions, among other attributes, that shape and color perception. Ideologies often appear "natural" or beyond question—if they appear at all. One characteristic of very well established ideologies is that they are hard to perceive *as* ideologies (Eagleton, 1991; Geertz, 1973), and the less apparent an ideology is, the more easily it is reproduced over time. Usually, ideologies are tightly woven into the fabric of day-to-day experience in the form of language and common, unremarkable practices. To count as an ideology, one's complex set of beliefs, attitudes, justifications, etc. must inform one's perceptions of a wide range of phenomena. When we are "informed" that some aspect of the world is thus, we help *make* that aspect of the world conform to the explanation that has been given. Ideologies in this sense are creative forces. One simply is not moved to question, let alone resist, that which one does not perceive as being problematic.

Curriculum differentiation functions like an ideology in the sense that it helps explain the unequal distribution of educational goods—in this case curricula—while also serving as a mechanism whereby educational goods are *unequally* distributed. Once placed in the differentiated system, students tend to prove their "need" for advanced, average, or watered-down curricula, just as initially predicted. The effectiveness of this organized system of educational inequity is supported by the widespread understanding of "intelligence" and "ability" as static characteristics. Curriculum differentiation also functions like an ideology since it appears logical, even natural, given the pervasive belief that human differences originate in individual persons rather than in an array of social relations and practices that find expression in individual children.

Curriculum differentiation results in giving different groups of students access to different kinds of knowledge. The distribution of that knowledge is a matter of great importance because different kinds of knowledge are valued differently, in school and across society more broadly. With few exceptions, knowledge associated with intellectual work enjoys higher status than that associated with physical work and is generally rewarded accordingly (Rose, 2009). In schools, compared with students taking vocational, business, or "regular" courses, those taking high-status honors and advanced placement courses are often awarded additional grade points (above and beyond a "perfect" 4.0) for their perceived innate abilities. There is also plentiful evidence that advanced and honors courses generally offer more engaging coursework (Anyon, 1980, 1981). Students in advanced and honors courses are far less likely than their peers in so-called "practical" courses to be fed an academic

diet of drill and practice. Beyond high school, students placed in academic tracks have greater access to funding for post-secondary education, and subsequently, to better paying, higher-status jobs and their associated benefits.

Given the advantages available to those who are well-placed in the school hierarchy, one may wonder why more students (and their parents) do not press school personnel for access to top-tier courses and tracks. Within the fact that they do not, one sees ideology at work. Few parents or students take issue with placement because such placement appears objective and scientific since from the moment students enter schools, judgments are made about their abilities, and when such judgments are informed by “objective” measures or the “expert” opinion of teachers and school psychologists, those judgments take on the air of legitimacy. Tests and expert opinions then are used as a basis for determining students’ curricular needs and the placement thought most likely to meet those needs.

Once judged and placed within the differentiated system, over time students tend to confirm their “need” for advanced, average, or watered-down curricula, just as was initially predicted; moreover, students’ own beliefs and choices tend to confirm the accuracy of the original placement. According to the psychological theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy, children’s beliefs about their own abilities will generally conform to authorities’ judgments about these abilities (Hatt, 2012). Their beliefs are manifest in schools through, among other means, students’ choices, since one’s perceptions about abilities have material consequences. To pick just one example, children who are placed in a low-ability math group (and informed of their low ability) in elementary school rarely end up choosing calculus classes later when they attend a comprehensive high school. Years spent in remedial groups with other “slow” students actively create young people who are not proficient in math—regardless of “ability” had early in life. Most young people who experience year upon year of remedial courses most often judge themselves poor students—and at some point, that judgment is, sadly, often correct.

The ideas that humans possess inborn, static abilities, that some innately possess more abilities than others, and that their abilities should determine educational experiences have not always been part of commonsense governing education. Earlier versions of these ideas are worked out—by many thinkers across many times and places—but certainly and enduringly by Plato.

Plato’s Republic

As Plato’s interlocutors begin imagining the ideal state, they immediately agree that the basis of any state is the shared need for goods

that no human alone can supply; food, shelter, and clothing, are the bare necessities. Thus even a very simple state, it is reasoned, would require animal husbandmen, builders, and weavers. Immediately it is recognized that workers such as these are not self-sufficient, but their need for tools and supplies is dependent upon additional workers, so carpenters and many other types of artisans are added to the city. Since there are few locales where workers can readily find all the supplies required for their crafts, the need for traders is realized and soon after that, the need for merchants and retailers. Before long, a simple city has become complex and luxurious, with musicians, poets, and artists of various sorts added to the population of workers and craftsmen. No doubt, such a state would be envied and vulnerable to attack and assault from within, hence a further need—guardians—a cadre to safeguard against external enemies, but also against potential internal enemies. Therefore guardians occupy a special role in the Republic.

How a society might best organize work is a perennial concern among philosophers and Plato envisions a society in which each person does the work for which he or she is best suited. Plato (1974) asks rhetorically:

[D]oes a man do better if he practices many crafts, or if, being one man, he restricts himself to one craft? ... Both production and quality are improved in each case, and easier, if each man does one thing which is congenial to him, does it at the right time, and is free of other pursuits. (p. 40)

As a corollary to his proposed division of labor, Plato recommends a meritocratic system of education. In the nature *vs.* nurture debate, Plato comes down on the side of nature, believing the intellectual and physical attributes each person possesses are inborn. His belief in inborn characteristics is reflected in his comments about future guardians; they must be lovers of wisdom, high-spirited, and strong *by nature*.

Once Plato reveals guardian's nature, his dialogue turns to the question of their education (and education more broadly), rejecting the idea that accidents of birth should determine individuals' futures, noting that sometimes geniuses are born to intellectually average parents and athletes to parents who are weak and slow, and vice versa. Furthermore, regardless of parents' social standing or wealth, children should be educated in a manner that accords with their natural abilities. Dramatizing his point, Plato recommends all children be raised communally rather than in private families, for within a communal enterprise children can be extensively observed for evidence of their intellectual and physical abilities so no child will be unfairly advantaged based upon parentage. This extensive observation goes on for years, if necessary, in order to accurately assess each child's strengths and weaknesses.

As a result of observation, children are divided into two ability groups. The education of children who demonstrate average or below average intelligence and physical strength and grace is given over to practitioners in the various skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled vocations, trades, and labor. These youth receive something akin to vocational education or apprenticeships. The education of children who demonstrate above average intelligence and physical strength and grace is far more liberal, with emphasis placed on “music” which includes art, mathematics, and literature, and “gymnastics,” which includes a great variety of physical and strength training. Children’s education, given the class of future guardians, is accompanied by still more testing in order to determine the few youth among the promising group who are the most gifted of all. The guardian class itself is thereby divided into two smaller groups, one of which receives education in preparation for guarding the city, and one, the “auxiliaries,” who prepare to become rulers—the philosopher kings.

Plato realizes that creating and maintaining a republic such as the one he envisions requires the consent of the ruled, for rule by brute force can be sustained only so long. In one of the most famous passages in the *Republic*, the “myth of the metals,” Plato recounts a story intended to provide a rationale for the particular social order he envisions, proposing this myth be widely promulgated: regardless of what we all think to be true, we are only dreaming, and the reality is we all are brothers and sisters who share a common mother, the Earth. While developing inside our common mother, God infused each of us with a certain metal: gold, silver, or iron or bronze. Once born, our abilities vary depending on the metal with which we were infused. Children of gold are born with those attributes needed for ruling; children of silver with attributes needed for guardianship; and children of bronze or iron, with attributes needed for physical labor, farming, and craftsmanship. Yet despite those God-given differences between us, we must always remember we are brothers and sisters who share a common mother, and must defend one another as such.

Plato and his companions acknowledge such a myth is unlikely to be perceived as truth by those who first hear it, but as the myth is told to each new generation, it will pass more and more easily as truth, becoming *commonsense*. This commonsense—or “ideology”—is at the core of curriculum differentiation.

How Does Plato’s Dialogue Inform the American Ideology?

The dialogue of Plato’s *Republic* echoes throughout much of *A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* within which Jefferson argues educational resources ought to be allocated on the basis of merit rather than inherited wealth or other means of influence (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1997). In Jefferson’s plan, differentiation and meritocracy are

corollaries: those least academically able students receive just three years of instruction in what today would be called basic skills, while the brightest receive a college education and instruction in a range of subjects. Although Jefferson did not live to see the widespread establishment of tax-supported schools, let alone the Progressive Era, his ideas about education were widely debated and became increasingly familiar (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1997, pp. 52–53).

Horace Mann, following Jefferson, expressed the idea of meritocracy in his claim that education is the “great equalizer” (Mann, 1848). Education equalizes when it enables children from all walks of life—regardless of inherited advantages—a better economic lot in life than that of their parents and grandparents. Mann’s great contribution to the spread of Platonic ideas within public education is the successful championing of the cause of public education, ushering in the common school and setting the groundwork for compulsory schooling in the US.

Influential Progressive Era reformer Charles W. Eliot defends the idea that different groups of students should receive different kinds of education in his appeal for a particular understanding of “democracy.” His understanding is invested in a static concept of “ability,” in which intellectual characteristics are present at birth and remain more or less constant throughout life.

An important function of the public school...is the discovery and development of the gift or capacity of each individual child. This discovery should be made at the earliest practicable age, and, once made, should always influence, and sometimes determine, the education of the individual. ... There is no such thing as equality of gifts, or powers, or faculties, among either children or adults. (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1997, pp. 113–114)

Ellwood Cubberley, a contemporary of Eliot, makes explicit the goal of using schooling as a means of sorting students into their future roles within the social order.

In our high schools and colleges the more promising of our youth must be trained for leadership and service to the State. ... [T]hose who labor must be trained for vocational efficiency, and given a sense of their responsibility for promoting the national welfare. (p. 114)

Even John Dewey (1916), whose ideas differ in many important respects from other Progressive Era reformers, endorses Plato’s thought on the matter of natural ability claiming “it is the business of education to discover the aptitudes and progressively to train [students] for social use (p. 88). While Dewey opposes inflexible ability grouping practices, he nevertheless appears to ascribe to a key element in the Platonic rationale:

society benefits when individuals work within the roles for which they are best suited.

Of all the post-Progressives, perhaps James B. Conant's ideas most clearly represent a Platonic orientation toward education. Conant is quite explicit in his insistence on identification of the "best and brightest" students to ensure they receive an academically rigorous education commensurate with their abilities. Less able students should be helped to identify a course of study that will equip them for whatever useful role they might take on as adults. Consistent with his Platonic predecessors, Conant believes a healthy society requires an educational investment in the most able youth and social arrangements whereby those youth will grow into positions of authority. He thinks it positively dangerous to educate all youth equally without regard for ability. Conant also sees a need for social stability, which can be aided by educational meritocracy and aided further still by the mixing of young people in high schools, "promoting social stability and thus greatly enhancing national security" (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1997, p. 225).

The examples I include can be multiplied to include the work of post-World War II policy makers, since while the particulars of differentiated curricula may have undergone modifications and refinements, the practice as a whole remains intact. Surveying the educational landscape in the 1980s, Oakes (1986) documents change within schools, but in regard to one of its most striking manifestations of curriculum differentiation, tracking, she observes "the deep structure of tracking remains uncannily robust" (Oakes, 1986, p. xi).

A Brief Recapitulation

In the US, public high schools are not intentionally modeled on Plato's design; indeed whether by intention or accident the comprehensive American high school deviates considerably from the Platonic ideal, yet important elements of his thought are part of a widespread and rarely questioned commonsense. Most notably, Plato posits education should be differentiated on the basis of what he understands to be a student's natural abilities, with different groups of students receiving different educational goods in preparation for different adult roles.

The concept of ideology helps explain why one need not ever have read Plato, or for that matter, Jefferson, Mann, Dewey, Conant, or any who have drawn on Platonic philosophy in order to be influenced by it. Once Plato's ideas take root in actual educational practices—including elementary school ability-based math and reading groups and the tracked comprehensive high school—his ideas were *lived* and thereby known even to those who had never encountered either Plato's writings or subsequent philosophers and theorists. Whereas there is an "of course-

ness” in the view that different students have different abilities and that education ought to be organized in a way that matches their abilities, a significant problem with this commonsense view is that it is implicated by the reproduction of existing patterns of advantage and disadvantage within schools. Depending upon their placement within a differentiated system, children are “made” more or less able. While critical theory does not lead directly to any particular alternative to existing school practices, by offering new ways of thinking about existing practices, in this case curriculum differentiation, we might facilitate the process of developing alternatives.

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Mysticism, Heresy and Theosophy in the Philosophy of Education

David Snelgrove, University of Central Oklahoma

Introduction

The philosophy of education has always been influenced by religious thought. With education's origins arose its philosophy and attachment to religion. A number of reasons account for this attachment beginning with the transmission of sacred knowledge in pre-literate societies. In early literate societies, religious leaders were required to be able to read the sacred texts to be able to interpret them for their followers. Religious institutions then were to instruct their leaders in the appropriate dogma and its members in the catechism, and all members made able to read the holy books in more modern and literate societies. For much of history the primary reason for education was religious instruction. The Egyptian temple schools, the Jewish synagogues, Spartan barracks, Athenian gymnasia, Roman households, Christian parishes, monastic, and cathedral schools of the ancient and medieval periods all laid a foundation for the influence of religion in education. With the rise of nation-states schools became more secular but the influences of religious thought remained. The growth of education as both a secular and religious enterprise has resulted in the continuous call for its reform and many reformers were mystics, heretics, and theosophers.

Education and religion have always had a very close relationship. Priests were the first teachers of anything beyond the day-to-day skills required in primitive societies and even in literate societies had much to say about what was to be taught, how it was to be taught, and to whom it would be taught. Perhaps it should not be surprising then that many educational thinkers might also be considered in light of their relationship to religious practice and thought. In support of such pedagogical initiative is a whole history of educational reform. There are other forces, religious and secular, that affect educational reform and educational change but my focus here is on the role of religious thought in educational philosophy with a special view toward the role of religious and educational thinkers who are, shall we say, outside the mainstream of religious and educational thought of their contemporaries. These thinkers—mystics, heretics, and theosophers—all desired change. I posit educational change and reform often come about through the actions of reformers whose religious views are mystical, heretical, or theosophical

thought. This is not to suggest that the resulting educational reform or change was necessarily mystical, heretical, theosophical, or even religious, though it was always focused on education. We should realize that there were also the orthodox reformers, inquisitors, counter-reformers and fundamentalists, not to mention the secular reformers for whom religious influences are secondary. What follows is an argument about how Western mysticism, heresy, and theosophy relates to educational philosophy. For each exemplar are provided of individuals who influenced education and educational philosophy. My focus here is on western education and religion.

Mysticism

Mystic religious thought is very personal. The mystic is not overly concerned about what others believe but seeks only his own relationship with God. Mysticism has become a catchword for various religious experiences. Without putting too fine a point on it, suffice it to say that mysticism now encompasses every facet of thought from numerology to occultism and parapsychology. The belief is that everyone is capable of mystical experience and thought and everyone can learn to be a mystic. Most of what now passes for mysticism is related to Eastern religions and philosophies. Mystics have long been recognized in Catholicism and even sainted by the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The assumption I put forward in this paper is that mystic belief is both rare and profound. One does not become a mystic by desiring to be one; it is a highly idiosyncratic attribute resulting from a profound and personal religious experience and as such varies from individual to individual. There is no path to mysticism, no twelve-step program. Mystics become mystics by responding to an inner religious need. Mystics appear in all religions if not in all sects or denominations. Evelyn Underhill writes, "We cannot honestly say that there is any wide difference between the Brahman, Sufi, or Christian mystic at their best. They are far more like each other than they are like the average believer in their several creeds."¹ What is mystical experience then if it is so personal, profound, idiosyncratic, and universal? Underhill says the central fact of the mystic's experience...is an overwhelming consciousness of God and of his own soul...which absorbs and eclipses all other centres of interest."² Often a mystical experience is either a negative or positive response to accepted religious practice, for any obstacle to the mystic's union with their deity is rejected. So the mystic goes through a process of detaching the will from the senses through an ascetic exercise out of the body but of the mind to reach a state of mortification, rejection of those impulses that deflect one's soul from the straight path to God. After the purgative way comes the way of illumination through contemplation and experiencing the revelation of reality leading to the third stage, the contact with ultimate reality and God.³ Underhill says, "Mysticism is the art of union with

Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment.²⁴

We are familiar with a number of mystics—Krishnamurti, Tagore, Suhrawardi, Gibran, de Chardin, and many others—who have influenced education in various ways. Indeed many early educational thinkers and philosophers were also religious mystics. The Judeo-Christian heritage is important as the historical foundation of western education. But early historians of education disagree. Frederick Eby and Charles Flynn Arrowood provide a detailed description of the development of Hebrew education.⁵ Earlier Paul Monroe neglects Hebrew education entirely. Paul Monroe, however, includes a section of a chapter on Christian mysticism. Eby and Arrowood did not find the impact of mystic thought important and leave out not only Jewish mysticism of Kabbala and Hasidism but also the mystical traits of important early educators like St. Benedict, St. Francis, and Boethius in the West and Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Basil the Great in the East. Mystic thought and practice survived monastic, scholastic, and humanist periods into the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The Reformation emphasized the possibility of change. Hus, Wycliffe, Luther, Erasmus, Loyola, Jansen, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox all view scholastic and humanistic education as inadequate and look to education as a means to an improved relationship with God.⁶

It is Jan Amos Comenius who believed he had discovered the universal method for teaching. Comenius' most important mystical work is his allegory *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*,⁷ written in 1623. It is the story of an everyman who in trying to decide his life's work examines the entire world. The monarch of the world is vanity; the everyman's guides are impudence and delusion. In this way Comenius illustrates the pitfalls presented to anyone who seeks the good in society and is deluded into thinking that what he sees is good, not that everything is built on vanity and contains more evil than good. All is not lost, however, for in the end the pilgrim receives the vision of the kingdom of heaven and instructions as to how to live out his days on earth with wisdom, virtue, and piety.

Comenius comes to teaching in the traditional way. As a preacher in the Moravian Brethren Church, he has no parish when he finishes his studies. While waiting for assignment to his own church, he teaches in the school of Prerov, Moravia. He was then assigned to Fulnek where he is pastor and teacher. His experiences during his own education and during his service as a teacher lead him to seek a better pedagogical way. The Thirty-Years War forces Comenius and the Brethren into exile at Leszno in Poland where he is pastor and teacher. His *Great Didactic*, teaching-methods books, and textbooks written while in Leszno,

propose new teaching methods, a new view of students and an expanded role of education. Comenius is interested in the mystical religious life and believes the end of education is religious since all of life is progress toward a personal relationship with God. In the *Great Didactic* he writes,

It is evident, then, that the ultimate end of man is eternal happiness with God.... From which it is plain that man is situated among visible creatures so as to be (i) A rational creature, (ii) The Lord of all creatures, (iii) A creature which is the image and the joy of its Creator. These three aspects are so joined together that they cannot be separated, for in them is laid the basis of the future and of the present life.⁸

Comenius' goals for education are "wisdom, virtue, and piety." He proposes:

(i) All the young shall be educated (except those to whom God has denied understanding); (ii) And in all those subjects which are able to make a man wise, virtuous, and pious; (iii) That the process of education, being a preparation for life, shall be completed before maturity is reached; (iv) That this education shall be conducted without blows, rigour, or compulsion, as gently and pleasantly as possible, and in the most natural manner (just as a living body increases in size without any straining or forcible extension of the limbs; since if food, care, and exercise are properly supplied, the body grows and becomes strong, gradually, imperceptibly, and of its own accord. In the same way I maintain that nutriment, care, and exercise, prudently supplied to the mind, lead it naturally to wisdom, virtue, and piety).⁹

Nikolai Berdyaev calls his philosophy personalism, centered on the problem of man. He reports that Jakob Boehme had tremendous significance on his spiritual development. In the introductory essay to a book of Boehme's writing that Berdyaev edited, Berdyaev describes Boehme as a mystic of the Gnostic type, "He speaks of what pertains to God, the world, and man, and not of what happens to himself; he does not write a word about his own soul, nor about his spiritual way."¹⁰ Berdyaev could have been describing himself. For Berdyaev, "Religion is the connection between God and man. God is born within man, and man is born within God. God awaits from man a creative and free answering. With this is connected the mystery of God-manhood, of unity within duality."¹¹ With the personalist perspective in mind Berdyaev, in exile in Paris, organizes inter-confessional meetings of leaders from all faiths and sects, the first in modern times.¹²

Berdyaev's educational philosophy begins with the problem of the individual in society. A religious mystic, Berdyaev describes his philosophy as existentialist. Traditional education destroys the integral

wholeness of the individual transforming him into a functionary: objectivized, insignificant and subordinate. Personalist education requires the society become a part of the person, the social part. "An objectivised society, suppressing the person, arises from the disassociation of people, from their sinful egocentrism."¹³ Berdyaev's academy focuses on the individual, the relationship of the individual with God, and the relationship of the individual with society.

Martin Buber was also a student of Jakob Boehme whom he calls the individualist of German mysticism. "The basic problem around which all of Boehme's thoughts revolve is the relation of the individual to the world."¹⁴ The world for Buber is not a creation that is completed in a single act but, rather, a constant unfolding of god, a self-revelation in which man consciously or unconsciously, participates.¹⁵ The Hasidic tradition is also an important influence on Buber's mysticism. Buber's collection and publication of Hasidic texts are intended to illustrate the immovable central existence of values and its teachings of the relation of man to God and the world through his participation in its creation.

The most recognizable impact of Martin Buber on education is through his conception of the life of dialogue based on the mystical relationship of the *I* and *Thou* which, in its simplest form, forbids us to objectify others. For true teaching and learning to occur there must be an appropriate interpersonal relationship. Buber's purpose of education is to develop the pupils' character, to show the pupil how to live humanly in society. Genuine education of character is genuine education for community. For educating character you do not need a moral genius but you do need a person who is fully alive and able to communicate directly to his fellow beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them.¹⁶

For these mystics it is the process of seeking a more personal relationship with God that makes education an important endeavor. Mysticism was not necessarily the basis of pedagogy so much as the attribute of the pedagogue. Comenius' *Great Didactic* presents his method for teaching and for establishing and running schools. Berdyaev's *Slavery and Freedom*, and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, and *Between Man and Man* also give ideas on the place and importance of education as a social and personal endeavor.

Theosophers

Theosophy is a difficult term precisely to define. Like mysticism it is very personal, eclectic, and idiosyncratic. I use the term theosophy here since there is no other word describing the application of science to religion and religious institutions. The theosopher looks at religion in the abstract, interested intellectually in the role of religion and its place in

society. This type of theosophy “indicates knowledge of divine things or knowledge derived from insight and experience as well as intellectual study.”¹⁷ The problem with theosophy is that it has been taken as the name for an organization—actually two organizations since a rift occurred. The Theosophical Society, heavily influenced by Tibetan, Hindu and Buddhist thought, teaches that reincarnation and karma help explain our current condition. “The chief aim of the...Theosophical Society [is] to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities. We are, therefore, personally responsible, and “no one else—divine or human—can take away or neutralize the results of any of our actions. We are responsible for our own lives.”¹⁸ Theosophers view religion intellectually or scientifically as an institution of society which varies from one society to another or from one historical period to another. What matters is the presence of an institution like religion to provide ethical and moral guidance for a society.

Jean Jacques Rousseau’s thought represents one of two possible responses to the problem of civilization. On the one hand are those who support reason and science to improve the human condition. Rousseau, however, holds that scientific control leads to more misery, inequality, and injustice.¹⁹ Rousseau views nature as the measure. He writes in *Emile*, “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of things, everything degenerates in the hands of man.”²⁰ Rousseau, born a Calvinist in Geneva, was forced to convert to Catholicism when he moved to Savoy. He later returns to Calvinism as a condition of regaining Genevan citizenship. Rousseau comes to believe in religious toleration, devising what he calls “civil religion.” He writes in *The Social Contract*,

The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple, and exactly worded, without explanation or commentary. The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas I confine to one, intolerance....²¹

Rousseau thinks himself unique. In his *Confessions* he writes,

I have studied mankind and know my heart; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature has acted rightly or wrongly in destroying the mold in which she cast me, can only be decided after I have been read.²²

Rousseau's educational ideas based on nature are well known. He views education as primarily the inward growth of children and that children develop in a systematic and natural way from infancy through savage, rational, and social stages, all in preparation for the patriarchal family system not unlike the one envisioned by John Chrysostom in later Roman times. But Rousseau's educational program avoids any mention of religion—let alone teaching catechism—until adolescence. Rousseau's goal is the preservation of the natural goodness of the individual and harmony of society.

Thomas Jefferson consistently supported the idea and the ideals of freedom, political freedom, religious freedom, and educational freedom. Jefferson characterizes himself as a Christian but a Christian on his own terms. He rejects much of the dogma and orthodoxy of established churches, edits his own Bible and is opposed to state religion. His "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" does not limit the concept of religion to Christianity but is universal.²³ Even Jefferson's support for the Constitution is diminished by the lack of mention of personal rights and freedoms including the freedom of religion. He writes,

The absence of express declarations ensuring freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of the person under the uninterrupted protection of the Habeas corpus, and trial by jury in Civil as well as in Criminal cases, excited my jealousy; and the re-eligibility of the President for life, I quite disapproved. . . . Those respecting the press, religion, and juries, with several others of great value were accordingly made; but the Habeas corpus was left to the discretion of Congress, and the amendment against the re-eligibility of the President was not proposed.²⁴

For Jefferson democracy is the system that will diffuse and limit the powers of the central government.

Jefferson's democratic government is predicated on education and the access to information whether through free discussion, the free press, or the schools. Jefferson supports the creation and expansion of public education from elementary through higher education. His "Act for Establishing Elementary Schools" proposes elementary schools be placed within three miles of their students, district colleges (county secondary schools) within a day's ride, and a central university teaching all the useful sciences in their highest degree.²⁵ Jefferson thinks his *alma mater*, William and Mary College, can become a state university but not only does the legislature refuse, concerned with the religious tradition of the college and not pleased with the location in Williamsburg, but the College refuses to give up the adherence to the thirty-nine articles and the Anglican catechism. But Jefferson is not to be denied. He founds the

University of Virginia, the central university in his scheme of education designing himself everything from the architecture to the curriculum, to teach and illustrate the right of man to think—and to think without restraint or interference.²⁶

For John Dewey religion is one of the conditions of social culture and is to be understood relative to that culture. He was raised by an ardent evangelical mother who often enquired about the condition of his soul. During his years at the University of Michigan he was involved in the religious life of the campus. But even in his early religious writing Dewey declares his faith in democracy. Dewey writes in 1892,

It is in democracy, the community of ideas and interest through community of action, that the incarnation of God in man (man, that is to say, as organ of universal truth) becomes a living, present thing, having its ordinary and natural sense.²⁷

Dewey's training is in philosophy but that does not mean he has no religious influence. He writes of his time at the University of Vermont saying, "teachers of philosophy were at that time, almost to a man, clergymen; the supposed requirements of religion, or theology, dominated the teaching of philosophy in most colleges."²⁸ Speaking of religion and theology, Dewey firmly establishes himself as a philosopher with a philosopher's duty to provide interpretation, criticism, mental readjustment, and reconstruction.²⁹ Dewey does not discuss his movement away from religion as such but he does talk about his movement away from absolutism; may we assume both religious and philosophical?³⁰ As a part of the quest for certainty, the relationship between religion, philosophy, and science is always problematic.³¹

Dewey, like Jefferson, thinks of education as the necessary institution for democracy and the school as a community in which existing life is made accessible to students in an active and productive way beginning with "a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits."³² The school becomes an extension of civil society and students are encouraged as members of the school community, pursuing their own interests while cooperating with others. This process of self-directed learning, assisted by teachers and classmates, best prepares students for life in a democratic community. In this way, the school is, in microcosm, the society, and continuous learning is the process of democratic social life.

Heresy

If the mystics were more interested in their own personal religion than the religion of others, the heretics were sure they had discovered what was wrong with the church and knew how to fix it. The heretic is engaged with the social aspects of religion, changing the creed,

sacraments, and dogma to somehow improve the church. Heretics do not recognize themselves as heretics; it is the hierarchy of the church that labels them. Heretics see themselves as loyal dissenters while the orthodox religious leaders, with whom the authority of the church resides, find them to be a threat to the authority of the church. Heresy is, beginning in the fourth century, punishable by death.

Jan Hus is burned at the stake at the Council of Constance in 1415 for heresy, but he does not want to destroy the Church; he just wants some changes made. Hus is among the early leaders who support the movement of the church away from dogma, doctrines, sacraments, and status toward the individual believer and stressing the quality of life, ethical conduct, and availability of the scriptures in vernacular language. Never a rebel against the authority of the church, Hus speaks against the abuses of the clergy and hierarchy, requiring the pronouncements of church officials—from the local parish priests up to and including the pope—conform to the scriptures. At Charles University Hus serves as Dean of the Philosophical Faculty and Rector where he lectures on Aristotle and Wycliffe. Hus becomes pastor of Bethlehem Chapel, founded by Prague tradesmen who required sermons in the Czech languages. Hus gains fame as a preacher. His sermons are delivered in Czech and accompanied by hymns, many of which are translated or composed by Hus. He becomes confessor to Queen Sofia. Hus is appointed to the synod where he speaks against Church excesses and vices of the clergy, supporting lay preachers. His disagreements with the archbishop lead to his excommunication and eventually to his summons to Constance.³³

In education Hus revises the written language of Czech with his *Orthographia Bohemica*. He writes other primers, texts and catechetical treatises for the parish schools as well as for his parishioners, including the women of his church, at a time when very little attention is paid them. Hus formulates a developmental psychology, dividing life into nonverbal, youth, full grown, able, old, and aged stages. It is this psychology that Hus uses to vary the content of his lessons and sermons, and books to reach the various age groups or developmental stages of his parish.³⁴

When Martin Luther nails his ninety-five theses to the church door in Wittenberg he is taking a stand against the sale of indulgences. Luther opposes a number of questionable practices of the Church, its hierarchy, and other members of the clergy such as penance, absolution, and salvation by works not faith. Luther insists on the priesthood of believers which aides the democracy of religion in elevating the individual worshiper to a direct relationship with God, not needing intercession.³⁵ At the Diet of Augsburg, Luther denies the authority of the Church hierarchy. He is excommunicated and at the Diet of Worms

a warrant is issued for his apprehension and punishment as a dangerous heretic. Luther escapes capture and after seclusion returns to Wittenberg to organize the new church.

Luther's education stresses the beginning of education as the instruction received at home. He rejects scholastic ideals that subordinate independent judgment to the teachings of the Church and supports education that stresses personal religion; he translates the Bible and the Catechism to German. He supports the teaching of Latin, history, and music. Luther is a strong supporter of music in the curriculum as inspiration for moral sentiments. The main aim of the university is spiritual, the preparation of clergy. For Luther "the human community ... exists and survives because it limits chaos and evil and convicts us of our sinfulness."³⁶

In response to the Reformation, the Catholic Church undergoes a period of reform. The difference between heresy and reform is probably just a question of timing. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, is an educational leader of the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuits are missionaries and teachers. Perhaps the most important aspect of Jesuit education is the emphasis placed on the preparation of teachers. No longer are teachers just priests waiting for a parish, they are thoroughly trained based on the *Ratio Studiorum*, which "sets up the framework, gives statements of the educational aims and definitive arrangements of classes, schedules, and syllabi, with detailed attention to pedagogical methods and, critically, the formation of teachers."³⁷ Jesuit schools emphasize the humanities and the sciences. Development of the spiritual and intellectual ideals of students is accomplished through the study of the classics. In short, Jesuit education "gave order, hierarchy, structure, unity, and methodology to education."³⁸

Conclusion

In 2009 *Teachers College Record* publishes a series of articles on quasi-religious experiences with articles on reverence, mindfulness, spirituality, and self-awareness³⁹ assuming that mindfulness, reverence, spirituality, and self-awareness (as opposed to religion) are good things. This interest in such an affective aspect of education is encouraging and at the same time disturbing. Encouraging because it questions the teach-and-test ethos; too often the value of such non-goal-directed activities is discouraged at best and often forbidden as inappropriate. Disturbing because this new "spirituality" can easily become another educational dogma like multiple intelligences, or any of a number of other techniques. Just wait until some Madeline Hunter comes along to include it in a new classroom model complete with lesson plan templates and best practices guides.

The impact of religion on the philosophy of education is pervasive with a wide array of reform-minded educators in existence. I suggest four categories of Western European and American educational reformers based on my judgment of the role of religion in their educational thought. If we could graphically view these categories with exemplars, one quadrant, mysticism, might be represented by Jacob Boehm, another, the orthodox, might be Francis of Assisi, the third, heretics, might be Martin Luther, and the fourth, theosophers, might be Thomas Jefferson. So where might we put Paulo Freire in the matrix? Probably within the theosopher quadrant with Henry Giroux and other critical theorists, neopragmatists, neomarxists, Frankfurt School, and New School for Social Research with the exception, perhaps, of Horace Kallen. The orthodox might be Mortimer Adler, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Diane Ravitch, and Kliebard others. Maybe the heretics would include Liberation Theology, Deschooling Society, and Social Reconstruction. What about the mystics? Well, self-identified mystics are aplenty but I think Martin Buber would say that self-proclamation probably negates the assertion. I am not sure the spirituality-in-the-classroom folks qualify either, but that might become a future topic. Maybe we just return to Underhill's description of the mystic as "a person who has attained that (spiritual) union in greater or less degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment."⁴⁰

The coincidence of different religious thought and the desire to reform education provides the initial impetus for this project. The role of religion in the changing philosophy of education remains of interest. The individuals mentioned in this essay primarily focus on the improvement of content and method of instruction. An interesting aspect of education is that it seems to be a process of continuous reform if not reconstruction. The focus of my essay is on mystics, heretics, and theosophers, but orthodox reformers also exist as well as secular reformers and their work is also important. The interest in reform has many variations and motivations from existential to idealist, from religious orthodoxy to atheist and from altruist to capitalist.

There appears to be a growing reconsideration of the roles of borderline religious and metaphysical thought on the philosophy of education. This does not mean the role of the Christian conservative intervention and its influences in public education or the role of parochial education, but the growing interest in the transcendental nature of teaching and learning with its social and moral implications. It is the search for something more in education than the continuous desire for improved test scores; the need for schools to be places of personal social and moral development.

Endnotes

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- 2 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 14–21.
- 4 Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism* (London & Toronto: Dent & Sons, 1914), 3.
- 5 Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, *The History and Philosophy of Education, Ancient and Medieval* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1940), 108–159.
- 6 Paul Monroe, *A Textbook in the History of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 279–284.
- 7 Jan Amos Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, accessed 22 March 2011, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/labyrinth/bookE.htm>
 The extension of the title is instructive of its content, "that is, a book that clearly shows that this world and all matters concerning it are nothing but confusion and giddiness, pain and toil, deceit and falsehood, misery and anxiety, and lastly, disgust of all things and despair; but he who remains in his own dwelling within his heart, opening it to the Lord God alone, will obtain true and full peace of mind and joy."
- 8 Jan Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, trans. and ed. M. W. Keatinge (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), 36.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 10 Nicolas Berdyaev, "Unground and Freedom," in *Jakob Boehme, Six Theosophic Points and Other Writings*, ed. Nicolas Berdyaev (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), vii.
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- 13 *Ibid.*
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- ¹⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men*, accessed 6 Sept. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq.txt>
- ²⁰ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Emile*, book 1, sec. 10, accessed 6 April 2012, <http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/Contents2.html>
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- ²² Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, book 1, accessed 6 April 2012, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rousseau/jean_jacques/r864c/
- ²³ Thomas Jefferson, "Autobiography," in *Complete Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, DC: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1853), 66, accessed 6 Aug. 2010, <http://www.constitution.org/tj/tj-chron.htm>
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117–118.
- ²⁵ Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to J. Correa De Serra," 25 November 1817, *Complete Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 155–156.
- ²⁶ Albert Ellery Bergh, "Jefferson's Contribution to a Free Press," *Complete Writings of Thomas Jefferson*.
- ²⁷ John Dewey, "Christianity and Democracy," *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898* (Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), vol. 4, 3–10.
- ²⁸ John Dewey, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1929–1953*, (Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), vol. 5, 150.
- ²⁹ John Dewey, "The Relation of Philosophy to Theology," *The Early Works of John Dewey*, vol. 4, 367.
- ³⁰ John Dewey, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1929–1953*, vol. 5, 148–161.
- ³¹ John Dewey, "The Quest for Certainty," *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1929–1953*, vol. 4.
- ³² John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1895–1898*, vol. 5, 87.
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