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From the Editors

Confronting the Difficulty of Disavowing Belonging

In a recent Sunday *New York Times* op-ed, Ross Douthat¹ argues all claims to the mythical, high-minded, liberal, bastion of cosmopolitanism should be viewed with suspicion and are in fact mired in an exclusionary, exclusive, and (in my reading) racist orientation to the world. Cosmopolitans feel entitled to claim citizenship of the world, claim to be absent what Virginia Woolf² so aptly terms “unreal loyalties,” and claim no tribe. But, Douthat argues in a political era of nationalists versus internationalists, “nativists [versus] globalists,”³ genuine cosmopolitanism has become rare indeed. Today’s elite claim of cosmopolitanism is instead trapped within “a meritocratic order that transforms difference into similarity, by plucking the best and brightest from everywhere and homogenizing them.”⁴ What begins as and claims allegiance to “comfort with real difference, with forms of life...truly exotic relative to one’s own,” actually actively seeks comfort and familiarity, as well as a small tribe ingrained in “common educational experience, [and] their own shared values and assumptions.”⁵ Today’s group of cosmopolitans, of quirky, thoughtful, well-educated outsiders, of comfortable, jolly travelers, is what Douthat boldly confronts as something else entirely: “a nearly hereditary professional caste of lawyers, journalists, publicists, and intellectuals, an increasingly hereditary caste of politicians, tight coteries of cultural movers-and-shakers richly sponsored by multinational corporations”⁶ who “love Afghan restaurants but would never live near an immigrant housing project, or American liberals who hail the end of whiteness while doing everything possible to keep their kids out of majority-minority schools.”⁷ He advances his editorial because historically he has seen such claims to cosmopolitanism before, recognizes today’s cosmopolitans’ disingenuous openness bend “inexorably away from tribe and creed and toward nation-state,” and it looks all-too-familiarly like “a powerful caste’s self-serving explanation for why it alone deserves to rule the world.”⁸ Douthat terms this worldview not cosmopolitanism, but rather “elite tribalism.”⁹

The seductive, madly romantic charms of belonging to an intellectual band of enlightened world travelers are many—not the least

of which is one's claim, if not to an uncommon form of false neutrality, then at least to occupying some far-reaching moral and intellectual high ground. But, in an era of successful populist rebellion I wonder how one remains true to the cause, refuses to assimilate, rather than succumbing to the stealthy siren power? How does one remain a revolutionary and decline simply to seize power? How can we be certain we are still "fighting the good fight" and not instead becoming lazy or corrupt when we win the day? In essence, the question I pose is, "How are we to remain Outsiders?"

Foucault¹⁰ ties delinquency and deviancy to various forms of illegality, but he reveals those inhabiting such identity categories paradoxically as insiders because their illegalities are engineered to build not only the carceral archipelago, but also to fuel the dominant power structure by committing and masking crimes of the bourgeoisie. For Foucault, the outsider, mentioned only briefly through a single story late in *Discipline and Punish*, is another thing entirely. He recounts the story of a 13-year-old boy who "opposed...the discourse of the law that made him delinquent"¹¹ when brought before a judge to answer the charge of vagabondage. This young man consciously, conscientiously refuses the normalizing, civilizing influence of all social institutions designed to confine and control him—much to the confusion of the judge and much to the analytic delight of the *La Phalange* reporter—and indicating "a violent split between the accused and society."¹² This child is sentenced to two years in a reformatory, yet he refuses to be coerced into the power structure designed to confine him, to rob him of what he very clearly sees as the fundamental freedoms—and delights—of personhood. He answers the most elemental social question—"What is your station?"¹³—indicating with reply after reply that, while he refuses utterly "the simplest expression of...established order in society,"¹⁴ he nevertheless transcends "indiscipline"¹⁵ in his extraordinary, ordinary life by working only for self: never for master, never for hierarchy, never for home, never for "secure future."¹⁶ For no matter how much we may criticize—moreover may indeed hate—the omnipresent press of surveillance, residing within our "station" inside the whole, huge normalizing carceral machine offers things of which we cannot get enough: comfort, belonging, tribe, nation, coterie. And so the greatest barrier to outsider-ness and our full allegiance to what Foucault terms "the affirmation of a living force"¹⁷ is the extreme difficulty of disavowing belonging.

In her brilliant epistolary novel and educational treatise Virginia Woolf¹⁸ moves stealthily to crush her reader with ample evidence that upper-class women, the so-called "daughters of educated men,"¹⁹ should

throw off their Victorian societal chains, forsake their patriarchal allegiances, and mount all-out effort to prevent war, critical since women serve as society's conscience, she argues. She proposes an Outsiders' Society,²⁰ insisting it break all convention with the typical "conglomeration of people into [private, honorary] societies" which, she opines, "releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane in the individuals themselves."²¹ Her Outsiders' Society would "have no honorary treasurer, ... no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences," but would consist of "educated men's daughters working in their own class...and by their own methods for liberty, equality, and peace,"²² but first binding "themselves by oath...not to fight with arms."²³ Woolf evidences how, while many honorary societies band together to influence opinion, outcome, or battle, the Outsiders' Society eschews demonstration, display, and ceremony, remaining "elastic" of opinion, anonymous of allegiance, and indifferent of dominion.²⁴ Again, these outsiders must be "anonymous and elastic before everything,"²⁵ for "ease and freedom, the power to change and the power to grow, can only be preserved by obscurity."²⁶ For, should women pridefully follow their countrymen into war, succumb to the press of patriotism, don the sartorial splendor of battle, even figuratively, women cleave violently and permanently female private and male public, disregard how "the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other," and render all of us—women and men—complicit in the construction of "Führer or Duce," moreover render themselves one and the same with these tyrannical engineers of warfare's "dead bodies and ruined houses" rather than remaining in obscurity so as to become architects of the "dream of peace, the dream of freedom."²⁷

For both Foucault and Woolf, outsider-ness rustles just beyond society's influence, along the fringe, occasionally manifests in those somehow comfortable with a lack of power, thrives among those who fly well below the radar of social institutions' many normalizing influences. Both Foucauldian vagabond and Woolfian educated man's daughter are ignored, invisible, cast aside, while the sacrifices of the two are expected, taken-for-granted. Much as Barbara Ehrenreich argues the poor are the great humanitarians of society,²⁸ the catch-work-as-catch-may vagabond's and the uneducated daughter of an educated man's sacrifices benefit richly the classes they serve, but their contributions are largely anonymous, invisible, unheralded—if not out-and-out scoffed at or resented. In many respects, both these groups lead individual, isolated lives cut off from tribe or coterie by a profound lack of "station." For the vagabond, this is because he exists below the social order, and for the educated man's daughter isolation results from social conventions that render her, until married, a ward of her father's home. Neither Woolf nor Foucault cast outsiders as a band, merry or otherwise, but

illustrate outsiders' spectacular or small resistances occurring by singular, oftentimes secreted means, even as "experiment[s] in passivity."²⁹ For the vagabond may only occupy the shadowy spaces open to his caste, and the educated man's daughter those drawing-room corners open to her sex. Yet outsiders, "owing to their comparative freedom from certain inhibitions and persuasions, can carry out much more easily than those who"³⁰ necessarily belong to groups in positions with the public's ear or groups permitted free movement and choice. Neither may claim tribe or enjoy a teeming crowd of their own, because neither may ever lay claim to even the most common vestige of cosmopolitanism: he or she will never belong, never be well-traveled, never be entitled to claim tribe, nation, coterie, never rule the world.

So, I return to the question: What is necessary for a movement to retain its resistance? What does it take for a movement to stay "fresh"? Moreover, when do outsiders who join together to take on a vital cause become instead a group seeking to seize power, thus abdicating their outsider-ness? Is it possible for members of a movement to remain a community without becoming a horde? I ardently hope our humanity precludes us ever from wishing such an isolated fate on any individual as vagabond or educated man's daughter, but Foucault and Woolf teach us—and two forms of evidence (newspapers and biographies found in one's father's library) in Woolf's argument reinforce their reply—, obscurity guarantees outsider-ness. We have come to think of real change coming from likeminded folk banding together, from that surge of strength residing only within numbers helping others to notice and understand a societal wrong, but with the banding of individual outsiders into one movement the Outsider Society comes instead into real danger, for movements must enter systems of power to enact change, must work within systems of power, and then, once inside, the outsider is easily subsumed by the system; indeed systems of power are designed so as to corrupt: to remake outsider into insider, worker, bureaucrat, and hungry drudge from the indisciplined, raw material of outsiders. The reliable processes of social organizations designed and operating as power structures do not simply normalize the outsider, but render the outsider greedy for belonging; Foucault lays out in rich detail the history of the normalizing pull of social institutions such as prison, clinic, army, and school, while Woolf recounts the beguiling whisper of patriotism "For God and the [splendid] Empire,"³¹ greed for a good salary from the professions, intrusions of other "unreal loyalties,"³² and the one-belonging's complicity in the atrocities of war. So it is thereby that movements make monsters.

What can be done? Perhaps we must reconsider some of the perils, the terrors of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism seeks to divide us, to pit us

individuals against one another for finite resources, but what if neoliberalism's division, its isolation, is instead our salvation?: the obscurity of outsider-ness. How can we together confront, call attention to, and change a frightfully inequitable world without becoming just another steamrolling machine in an insatiable search for power? First we must remain individuals with individual stories capable of inspiring empathy in others, remain individuals capable of inspiring, in ourselves and among others, indisciplined acts of bravery. Although neither Foucault nor Woolf utilize the term bravery, it is present in their every example and a critical quality with every right to be listed right alongside obscurity—in the same breath, even. We will need to relearn, reacculturate the term “movement,” rethink how to move together forward as individuals, as outsiders, replete with and made splendid by bravery. As Foucault's vagabond teaches us, “it is indiscipline rather than...criminal offense, that causes...rupture,”³³ and it is through our indisciplined acts as outsiders that the cultural idea of “movement” and its relation to power will at last be ruptured; then we might, as individuals, inhabit fully the bravery usually reserved for whole social movements and “find out new ways of approaching ‘the public’; singling it into separate people” since, as Woolf teaches us, the public as a whole amounts to nothing more than “one monster, gross in body, feeble in mind.”³⁴

As avowed outsiders, we must commit to nonviolence, and in so doing continuously interrogate self as to the nature of power and its relation to nonviolence, the reason being power is always and inescapably violent. Power is always related to “the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy,”³⁵ is always at its base warmongering, is never far from “the distant roar of battle,”³⁶ the horror of “ruined houses and dead bodies,”³⁷ the spectacle of war. Any social movement cannot and should not bury its intent under a deep layer of indignation, cannot and should not paint a thick coat to cover its purpose under good intentions. Let me say it plainly: unless led by tremendous, thoughtful, humane folk who hold peace *absolutely sacred*, as did the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a social movement is a declaration of war, is the deployment of another elite tribe bent on ruling the world. As avowed outsiders, we cannot recreate, must not duplicate the barbarity, the abomination of war under the guise of positive social change, for such a move can only steal our humanity, rendering us not outsider, but savage. Such change will require a keen focus on avowed outsider-ness, will mean we eschew cosmopolitanism, pledge first and foremost never to pick up arms. Our connections to one another will then no longer be rooted in power or intellect, we will no longer be joined by nation or social institution, but rather by a single, human, humane ideal: empathy.

Empathy and compassion keep focus on the individual, cast an individual's story as singular, recognize the humanity of the peaceful, avowed outsider. The act of empathy is what keeps the cause fresh, wrenches our need for belonging away from the unreal loyalties of nation, state, tribe, politic, sex, coterie and resets our comfort in belonging among humanity. Mine is not a new idea, but harkens merely to a recognition of the history of social movements. Outsiders have long been the face of revolution, been responsible for those events that turn the tide of public opinion toward the direction of right, for movements have no chance of bringing about change if their cause cannot inspire empathy. A group might inspire some abstract form of empathy, but true empathy—empathy that can change the way a person sees his or her whole world, empathy that inspires social change—only comes when one person, despite differences in power, politics, or persuasion, sees and recognizes him or herself in another person. In times of social change, empathy resides within a moment between two individuals during which an act of bravery, oftentimes in the face of profound suffering, moves the one-watching to forge a connection grounded in emotional recognition. And it is such change among individuals that eventually culminates in widespread social change. Drawn largely from visual representations of the brave, peaceful, individual acts of avowed outsiders, they become synonymous with a movement's recognition. These everyday people rendered extraordinary come to exemplify the moment when public opinion turns sharply toward equity, away from injustice and toward the common good: in this way avowed outsiders dedicated to peace and social change are made worthy of the term "superhero."³⁸ Loner, outsider, outcast, the superhero may have kept secret his or her superpower before calling upon it to save the world. They are brave, commit selfless acts, do not allow bullies or despots to terrorize their cities. Superheroes are made extraordinary by their dedication to protect the innocent from being crushed by power-mad fascist, secret plot to ruin the world, or the evil rich. In our world of promoting social causes, of peacefully "fighting the good fight," it is the superheroes among us who take the opposition unawares, who use their outsider superpowers empathetically to connect to other individuals who turn history and rewrite how, moving forward, we will be as a people. "Unarmed and unafraid,"³⁸ these members of Outsiders' Society, these vagabonds, heed the call of human suffering and structural inequity and bravely step forward, again and again, to right profound social wrongs.

Stacy Otto
Illinois State University

Endnotes

- 1 Ross Douthat, “The Myth of Cosmopolitanism,” *The New York Times*, 2 July 2016. <http://nyti.ms/29p2xzo>
- 2 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1938).
- 3 Douthat, “The Myth of Cosmopolitanism.”
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., here quoting Peter Mandler who writes, after the Brexit vote, in *Dissent*.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. Alan Sheridan) (New York: Vintage, 1991).
- 11 Ibid., 290.
- 12 Ibid., 291–292.
- 13 Ibid., 291.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid., 290.
- 18 Woolf, *Three Guineas*.
- 19 Ibid., 4.
- 20 Ibid., 106.
- 21 Ibid., 105.
- 22 Ibid., 106.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 108.
- 26 Ibid., 114.
- 27 Ibid., 142–143.
- 28 Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On [Not] Getting by in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001).
- 29 Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 117.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 70.

³² Ibid., 78.

³³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 291.

³⁴ Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 98.

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 308.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 10–11.

³⁸ I draw here from my own general nerd knowledge (via cultural osmosis) on the nature of superheroes as well as from select *Urban Dictionary* entries (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=superhero>). I was also inspired to employ this term by a *New York Times Magazine* piece by Teju Cole entitled, “The Superhero Photographs of the Black Lives Matter Movement: On Photography,” 26 July 2016, <http://nyti.ms/2ads3WI>

³⁹ Cole, “Superhero Photographs....”

In Memoriam



**James J. Van Patten: Remembrances
of a Gentleman and a Scholar**

September 8, 1935–April 20, 2016

When I first met Jim Van Patten at a Southwest Philosophy of Education Society conference, I had already heard about him, Jack Willers, Donna Younker, and Billy Cowart from my professors, Dr. William E. Drake and Dr. George I. Sánchez. This Van Patten-Willers-Younker-Cowart foursome held a special place in their former professors', Drs. Drake and Sanchez', hearts. One of Jim's favorite stories about their activities concerned Dr. Sánchez. Sanchez, who grew up in poverty, always had wanted to own a boat. One year he divulged to their group that he had bought his dreamboat. When Sánchez was to be out of town, he agreed, when asked, to let his students take it out on the lake. Jim recounted, "With Billy Cowart and Donna Younker, we crisscrossed Lake Austin on a sunny day with a clear sky. My outing ended in disaster when the boat ran aground and sprang a leak as it hit the rocky shoreline. Panic-stricken, I worried about completing my doctoral program; I rushed all over Austin trying to find a boat-repair person. Damaging my mentor's boat seemed at the time the worst possible catastrophic event. Eventually, I found a boat repair shop opened on weekends and had the boat fixed, though, in the end, Dr. Sánchez was not at all distressed, and I completed my doctoral program!"

Although he wrecked Dr. Sánchez' dreamboat, many professors voiced their respect for Jim Van Patten, for despite his graduate school

boat-wrecking exploits, Jim was actually a hero and purple heart survivor of WWII's Battle of the Bulge, a battle described on the U.S. Army Center's website as "the greatest battle in American history": "In terms of participation and losses the Battle of the Bulge is arguably the greatest battle in American history" (<https://www.army.mil/both/>). After WWII Jim earned his B.A. in Political Science from Syracuse University, his M.Ed. from The University of Texas at El Paso in Counseling, Economics and Sociology, and his Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Education, Higher Education, and Comparative Education from The University of Texas at Austin. Hired at the University of Arkansas, Jim published over 200 scholarly journal articles and at least 12 books during his tenure there: *A Case Study Approach to a Multi-Cultural Mosaic in Education* (with second author, Timothy J. Bergen; Edwin Mellen Press, 2003); *Higher Education Culture: Case Studies for a New Century* (University Press of America [UPA], 2000); *A New Century in Retrospect and Prospect* (UPA, 2000); *Individual and Collective Contributions Toward Humaneness in Our Time* (with second and third authors George C. Stone and Ge Chen, UPA, 1997); *What's Really Happening in Education: A Case Study Approach* (UPA, 1997); *The Culture of Higher Education: A Case Study Approach* (UPA, 1995); *History of American Education* (Macmillan, 1994); *Understanding the Many Faces of the Culture of Higher Education* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1993); *Academic Profiles in Higher Education* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1992); *Socio-Cultural Foundations of Educational Policy* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1991); *College Teaching and Higher Education Leadership* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); and *The History and Social Foundations of Education* (with first author John Pulliam, Pearson, 1995) which he co-authored through ten editions with John Pulliam, the last appearing in 2012.

In addition to his publishing, Jim founded the respected, academic *Journal of Thought* in 1966 serving as its editor for many years; was awarded Phi Delta Kappa travel grants for travel to England, Spain, Russia, North Africa, and China; taught in American Overseas Schools and in Bolivia for the University of Arkansas' Athens Program; taught Human Resource Development for The University of Alabama in Quito, Ecuador and a course in American Education for students in American Schools in Bogotá, Columbia; and developed a course in Multicultural Education for those same students. Although Jim officially retired Professor Emeritus of Education from the University of Arkansas, he never really retired! Instead, he spent two years as an aide for international development in Cali, Colombia, ten years teaching at Florida Atlantic University, many years continuing to contribute to SOPHE, and much time traveling in part to expand his own education. One of Jim's favorite trips abroad was with his former professor, William Drake, in whose honor he presented the 9th William E. Drake

Lecture organizing this lecture around Dr. Drake's discussions during that adventure: "The title for this [9th William Drake Lecture] was influenced by a Phi Delta Kappa trip which I took with William E. Drake in the 1980s. We traveled over 4,000 miles by bus through Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar. During that trip Professor Drake discussed world problems, issues, and particularly various philosophers whose statues were in Spain and Morocco."

Although I have neither the time nor space to summarize the whole of Jim's life and contributions to academe, to his students, to authors contributing to *Journal of Thought*, to the body of scholarship in history and philosophy of education, education leadership, education policy, cultural and social foundations of education, among others, I can say most describe Jim as kind, helpful, courtly, intelligent, and caring. The following brief tributes reflect these virtues.

Sam Stack: "Such a special person. A great role model for anyone in our profession. I treasure remembrances of his kindness and helpfulness to me at the beginning of my career and his friendship during the years since. The Society of Philosophy & History of Education will not be the same without him. I will never forget him."

Karen McKellips: "I met Jim at my first meeting of SOPHE which was then the Southwest Philosophy of Education Society. At that time, and ever after, I thought of him as a friend and as one who in many ways made the organization an important part of my professional life. He was kind, funny, ever-helpful. His enthusiasm for our profession and the society knew no bounds. A beginner could always find a good listener and a helping hand. At mid-career, he would always show enthusiasm for and provide help with any project or problem we undertook. Through him I learned of many other organizations and publications from which I benefited. In the last few years, as I became one of the oldest of the old-timers, now retired from teaching for 14 years, I saw him as an inspiration for me to keep active and interested in, what for me, and I think for Jim, too, has always been not just a job, but a passion. Jim was a great role model. SOPHE will not be the same without him."

David Snelgrove: "Jim Van Patten was a friend and mentor to some of us for most of our adult and certainly our academic lives. He modeled the role of teacher-scholar in his day-to-day interactions and in his research and writing. He was generous, kind, thoughtful, and optimistic. He accomplished much, founding the *Journal of Thought*, publishing insightful books and papers, mentoring graduate students, and more. I was fortunate to have known him."

Virginia Worley: "Jim Van Patten was lovely to Stacy Otto and me as we began our JoPHE editorship. He always had a kind word and then

did not hesitate to agree when called upon to write the dedication for a particular issue. Jim was also generous with his time at SOPHE conferences speaking with new-comers and the shy at length putting those with whom he spoke at ease by asking questions, listening intently, and making people laugh. He was extremely gracious and funny—something one does not necessarily expect from such a well published, traveled, and respected scholar. One somehow thinks people we treasure may live forever. Jim will...in our hearts and minds as well as in his words in many journals and books. He is already missed.”

We in SOPHE are forever grateful that we had the honor of knowing and learning from Jim Van Patten as researchers, teachers, travelers, and, most especially, as human beings.

Martha May Tevis
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

In Memoriam



Michael Surbaugh

Michael Surbaugh was a gentleman and a scholar, a saintly man, and a beloved friend to many of us. He had a laugh you could hear from a hundred yards away and was well known for his spot-on, spontaneous Julia Childs impression. He died on April 19, 2016.

Michael earned his Ph.D. just before his untimely death, yet he was already a well-published and broadly active scholar in philosophy of education and disability studies with a robust curriculum vitae. He published five double-blind-refereed articles in the highly selective international annual *Philosophy of Education*, one double-blind-refereed article in the *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, and another in the international journal *Revista de Educação-PUC Campinas*. He made numerous research presentations to the Philosophy of Education Society, the American Educational Studies Association, the American Educational Research Association, the Arendt Circle, the Society of Philosophy & History of Education, the Society for Educating Women, and the Oklahoma Educational Studies Association. He earned distinction as OU's Educational Studies Program's Student of the Year in 2016.

His dissertation in Educational Studies, which he defended at a nursing facility in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma on March 28, 2016, is entitled *The Concept of Capability Consciousness: Learning from Helen Keller*. Fellow SOPHE member John Covaleskie along with Bill Frick, Jim Gardner, Joyce Brandes, and I all served on his committee. His highly

original dissertation formulates a concept useful to all educators who aim for students' self-affirmation in the face of limitation and difficulty: "I can." His special education committee members report finding his work engaging and fascinating. His EDS committee members find it worthy of publication as a monograph: elegant and brilliant. The significance of his inquiry lies in proposing a foundation for meeting individualized educational needs in ways that challenge beliefs and attitudes that, in fact, are disabling to students with disability. In his conclusion, Michael proposes the concept of capability consciousness as an educational aim that should accompany any curriculum implementation.

While pursuing his Ph.D., Michael continued his long, full-time, professional service to the Oklahoma State Department of Human Services. He earned his M.Ed. in special education at OU before matriculating in the OU Educational Studies doctoral program. Meanwhile he served as adjunct faculty at OU's Tulsa campus. He is a past president of the Oklahoma Educational Studies Association, and in his presidential address to OESA boldly addressed the issue of LGBTQ youth and education. He served as secretary to the Society for Educating Women for three years.

Michael was a beloved member of the OU EDS family, commuting weekly from Tulsa to Norman throughout the years to attend the EDS colloquium, and we will remember his great, generous intellectual energy that brought much joy to all who experienced it. May Light perpetual shine upon him.

Susan Laird
University of Oklahoma

2015 SoPHE Presidential Address

Glimpsing “Otherwise Undiscoverable Realities”: Biographical Contributions to Educational History

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It is a pleasure to speak to this gathering of educational philosophers and historians at the 2015 SOPHE conference. Looking out at the group, I am struck by the number of colleagues present who have informed and inspired my scholarship over the years. As a longtime SOPHE member, I truly appreciate our society’s interdisciplinary focus. SOPHE continues to afford me new insights as I depict the historical life of a woman who promoted the child-centered philosophies of progressive education.

Those of you who have attended my presentations at annual conferences likely know I am speaking of Flora White, a Massachusetts educator whose life spanned from the Civil War to the Cold War. Today I draw on my research on White to discuss what I have learned about the relationship between biography and history. Some of us characterize biography as a form of historical inquiry; others view biography and history as genres that are distinct yet closely related. Most of you would agree biography and history consume the energies of many SOPHE members! During this talk I hope to illuminate the strengths and limitations of each, as well as the contributions they make to one another.

It will be no surprise to historians in our group that their profession’s relationship with biographers has been mixed, at best. As recently as five years ago Barbara Caine wrote that while historians widely recognize biography’s importance and popularity, “many...continue to express considerable ambivalence about it.”²¹ She quotes David Nasaw who argues biography “remains the profession’s unloved stepchild, occasionally but grudgingly let in the door, more often shut outside with the rirraff.”²²

Caine argues a major concern among historians is biographers’ perceived tendency to give undue emphasis to the individual while

neglecting broader societal forces. Along that vein, Barbara Finkelstein cites historians who have “viewed biography as a demagogic form of history writing that concealed power inequities under the rosy veneer of individual accomplishment.”³ Finkelstein adds that some historians studying marginalized groups have found it difficult to locate important sources such as autobiographies and diaries. Critics of biographers draw the conclusion that individual lives are less reflective of social structure than “an array of statistically more significant social, political, economic and demographic indicators” that could be studied through structural analyses.⁴

Despite these challenges, Caine reports a “biographical turn” in the twenty-first century that has changed the way historians approach their study of the past. This “turn” results from scholarship dating back to the 1970s whose authors suggest broader social developments can be illuminated through the lives of individuals. Over time, scholars have begun to envision how biography can provide a unique lens for seeing how ordinary people “understood and constructed themselves and made sense of their lives and their society.”⁵ While this new approach has been most prominently utilized in depicting women’s lives, it has also been quite evident among historians studying other marginalized groups.

This biographical turn has helped to inform my own research on Flora White. Although she is my maternal grandmother’s aunt, I never knew White; in fact, my discovery of her work occurred largely through happenstance. During the summer of 1994 I was traveling in New England with my husband Jim and daughter Sarah. We had embarked on a whirlwind tour of eastern colleges and universities just before Sarah’s senior year in high school. As we drove through the Berkshires along Massachusetts Highway 2, I noticed our planned route would take us only a couple of miles from the small town of Heath, where Grandmother’s family—the Whites—had lived for roughly 200 years. Although my knowledge of Heath was vague, I knew the last person in our family to live there was Grandmother’s Aunt Flora, who never married and had no children. Unaware of her connection to progressive education, I possessed only the anecdotal knowledge that she had had a private school in Concord, Massachusetts, and was well connected to prominent people of her day. I asked Jim and Sarah to indulge my curiosity by making a quick right turn off Highway 2, climbing the hill to Heath. I promised our stay would be a short one.

With its classic town center and isolated eighteenth-century farm homes, Heath appeared to have changed very little over the years. One of the houses had a plaque indicating Flora White had lived there. Intrigued, I inquired at the small post office, the only official-looking

building that appeared to be open. After introducing myself and revealing my relationship to White, I asked the postal employee if she knew anyone in town who might be able shed additional light on my forebear. She listed to me, silently nodded her head, and made a phone call. Within minutes, Pegge Howland appeared. As President of the Heath Historical Society, she gave us a tour of the Heath town center and sold me several of the society's books that contained information on Flora White. As we toured, a man who resided in the town center told Jim that Flora and her sister Mary "blew into the town like a hurricane."⁶ Howland added White had raised some eyebrows by leading her female students in calisthenics on the town green at a time when women were discouraged from engaging in physical activity. Although I read the books with interest, it would be 17 years before I returned to Heath—this time as a researcher. In the interim, I completed a career as a public-school administrator in Missouri, accepted a tenure-track appointment at a state university in Illinois, and revisited the books I purchased in Heath. I would eventually discover Flora White had left a cache of primary and secondary sources that my family had stored since her death in 1948. These sources would be critical to my scholarly work.

My discovery of White's documents happened through an ordinary transition that was underway in many U.S. families at the dawn of the new millenium. Members of the "greatest generation," then in their 80s, were dying or downsizing their living quarters.⁷ Their life changes called for decisions on the disposition of photographs, documents, and artifacts that Depression-era "savers" had accumulated and kept throughout their lives. Two of my aunts (who were moving from houses to retirement centers) asked me if I would be interested in owning their many boxes of documents relating to Grandmother's Aunt Flora. For reasons I could fully appreciate, my aunts' children had declined the opportunity to welcome a large volume of papers of an unknown relative into their homes. One aunt had an extensive collection of documents that were in White's possession at the time of her death; the other had family photographs, correspondence, and her own anecdotal recollections of the summer she spent with Flora White in 1938. I eagerly accepted both offers. My interest had been piqued by the visit to Heath, and I was further motivated by the publication requirements of my new tenure-track position in a department of educational leadership.

Given the difficulty of finding sources on the lives of women, the collections gave me access to my subject in ways that many biographers could only wish for. My newly acquired archive included White's letters, speeches, newspaper clippings, published articles, published books, school booklets, photographs, and family histories going back to the

Puritan migration of the 1630s. In addition to these sources I experienced what biographer Elisabeth Israels Perry calls “a delicious find” when I returned to Heath in 2011 as a researcher.⁸ I discovered a handwritten booklet the Heath Historical Society attributed to an unknown White family member. Clearly penned by my biographical subject, it is entitled “Life Facts of Flora White and Family Recorded Mar. 18, 1939.” The booklet gives a detailed, first-person description of White’s family members and friends and her relations with each of them. Also included are descriptions of her educational experiences, professional activities, religious involvement, writing and travels, and real-estate purchases. These sources are supplemented by census data, school advertisements, and local and institutional histories. Eventually I found interview transcripts of White’s former Concord students (conducted in the 1970s, later made available online through the Concord Free Public Library).

Working with this array of sources, I was able to gain a sense of who Flora White was. Professionally, she was a teacher who rebelled against the industrial model of education that characterized U.S. public schools during the late nineteenth century. White resigned her job and founded her own private schools—first in Springfield, Massachusetts, then in Concord—utilizing child-centered pedagogy. The prominent psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall wrote a glowing endorsement of her work. White’s lectures in Boston alternated every other week with those of Harvard professor William James’. The noted educational reformer Francis Parker offered her a job heading a department at the Cook County Normal School (which she declined, having only recently accepted another position). A strong proponent of active learning (which she called “motor training” in reference to fine- and gross-motor skills), White was especially interested in enhancing the physical development of girls and women. On the urging of the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, she taught gymnastics, physiology theory, and teaching methodology to an overwhelmingly female student body at Westfield Normal School. In Concord, White’s educational program emphasized female physique at a time when scientific and medical authorities discouraged physical activity among women. Defying widely held gender stereotypes, White also encouraged young women’s intellectual growth. Her alumnae include a Dean of Wellesley College, noted artists, and women who became distinguished community leaders.

White’s documents also provide glimpses into her personal life in which setbacks and opportunities combined to give her a desire for *agency*, or the capacity to act autonomously in an environment of

possibility and constraint. She frequently quotes Tennyson in describing her goal of achieving “More life, and fuller” for her students and herself.⁹ Unlike many female school founders of her era, White’s social class defied categorization. She was neither upper-middle class nor consistently middle class. Although White enjoyed racial privilege and came from an old New England family, her father—a farmer—died when she was eighteen months old, leaving Flora’s mother with five small children. It was a devastating loss. Prior to his death, the family exhibited a strong interest in education and social reform. (Flora’s mother studied Latin and Greek with the local minister. Her father studied calculus and served in the Massachusetts legislature, as part of a coalition that sent abolitionist Charles Sumner to the U.S. Senate by a one-vote margin.) But the death of their head of household directly affected the Whites’ livelihood. The family farm was sold, and the Whites fell into poverty. In keeping with limited women’s rights in mid-nineteenth century America, Flora’s mother was named *guardian* of her own children—nearly two years after her husband’s death. Flora’s only brother was bound out to another farmer on his eighth birthday in a condition resembling indentured servitude; he remained there until age 21. When Flora was 12, she moved with her mother and sister Mary to Amherst, to the home of a retired clergyman who had known the Whites while serving as a supply minister at Heath. The intellectual stimulation of his home and the cultural ambiance of Amherst gave Flora social and intellectual capital that fueled her desire for agency. When the minister died he left (along with some household items) money for Flora and Mary White to attend a two-year teacher-training course at normal school. While Flora’s financial standing improved with the advancement of her career, she became poor again late in life, after retirement.

Although White’s papers—particularly her correspondence with her mother and sister—give insight into her family’s pain and insecurity about being poor, the telling of her life story is greatly strengthened by the work of historians who researched broad social and economic trends of which the Whites were a part. For example, in *The Undeserving Poor*, Michael B. Katz shows how the Whites’ declining fortune coincided with a period in U.S. history during which poverty was increasingly viewed not as a temporary, unavoidable setback, but as a sign of personal (even moral) failure. Katz argues this view inspired public policy and private-charity attitudes that were “mean, punitive, and inadequate.”¹⁰ Similarly, Christopher Clark, in *The Roots of Rural Capitalism*, describes the transformation of the western Massachusetts countryside from 1780 to 1860 (Flora’s birth year). He shows the economic stagnation that put pressure on hill towns like Heath, which only exacerbated the Whites’ losses.¹¹ When I read Flora’s words written

as a young adult—words criticizing the U.S. industrial model of public education and urging her sister to resign her teaching position—I found David Tyack’s *The One Best System* helpful in contextualizing White’s frustrations.¹² Tyack demonstrates how unlikely it would have been for female teachers—greatly underpaid with respect to their male peers and barred from leadership roles—successfully to reform the system from within. *The One Best System* helps explain Flora White’s and other women’s decisions to found child-centered schools, thereby helping to usher in the formative period of progressive education.

I can offer many examples of ways historians inform White’s story at various points in her life. However, Finkelstein makes an important point in noting biography also informs history. As she writes—and as the title of my talk suggests—through “the lens of biography...one can glimpse...otherwise undiscoverable realities.” Finkelstein suggests several ways in which this can occur. Today I would like to discuss some of the “otherwise undiscoverable realities” that have important implications for educational history I found while researching White’s life.¹³

One reality was manifest in a small informational booklet in the archive I acquired from my aunts. At first glance, the booklet seems ordinary enough. Written for parents and students and published in 1906, it outlines the student-centered program at Miss White’s Home School in Concord. The booklet also addresses such administrative matters as the application process, fees, and transportation. To encourage enrollment, it provides an impressive list of endorsers including prominent academics, superintendents, clergy, and civic leaders. My grandmother, a sixteen-year-old living in Nebraska at the time, saved the booklet from her one year of attendance during the 1907–1908 school year. Upon discovering it I conducted a thorough internet search, hoping to find a booklet for each year White’s school operated from its founding in 1897 to its closure in 1914, yet I found only one additional extant copy from the 1900–1901 school year. That booklet is held by the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library and the Historic Deerfield Library in western Massachusetts. I contacted the library and received a photocopy.

Although I had read many secondary sources written by historians of progressive education that would help me understand my newly found artifacts, I was puzzled by the introductory sentence in the booklet from 1900–1901. It announces, “This school is an effort in the direction of organic education, and is founded in the belief that a healthy, active organism is the first requisite for a healthy, active mind.”¹⁴ Flora White (the presumed author) did not find it necessary to define *organic education*, seemingly believing her readers would understand it.

(Today we say “educating the whole child.”) White repeats the word *organic* in the introduction to her 1906 booklet, without further explanation. To educational historians the term is famously associated with the School of Organic Education Marietta Johnson founded in Fairhope, Alabama in 1907. Lawrence Cremin calls it “easily the most child-centered of the early experimental schools.”¹⁵ John Dewey visited the School of Organic Education in December, 1913 and devotes a chapter to describing its program in *Schools of To-Morrow*, published two years later. The school continues to be cited in contemporary educational histories. For example, as recently as 2013 Jeroen Staring writes, “only one reformer—Marietta Johnson of Fairhope, Alabama—dared to found a school, its core curriculum sailing under the flag of Henderson’s organic education.”¹⁶ His reference is to C. Hanford Henderson, who gave lectures on organic education in the late nineteenth century and devoted a chapter to organic education in his 1902 book, *Education and the Larger Life*.¹⁷ Henderson appears as an endorser in both booklets of Miss White’s Home School.

I was surprised to find Staring’s statement in light of my evidence White placed organic education at the center of her school program by 1900—seven years before Marietta Johnson. Nevertheless, I remain unconcerned about who established the *first* school of organic education. The distinction likely would be impossible to determine, given the large number of women who founded experimental schools during progressive education’s formative period. Dewey acknowledges in 1915 that, “More and more schools are growing up all over the country that are trying to work out definite educational ideas.”¹⁸ Writing in 1928, Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker emphasize the *ad hoc* nature of the early child-centered schools by suggesting,

...the freer type of education had to be launched almost altogether from outside the school system. It came, after the preparatory years, essentially from laymen, parents of means desiring the best in the way of schools for their children, and enthusiastic free-lance teachers.¹⁹

Still, it seemed odd I could find no recognition of *any* other school of organic education (other than White’s) prior to 1907. Additional questions emerged as I read the work of early twenty-first-century historians on female founders of progressive schools. Although their writing was very helpful in illuminating the larger context of early child-centered education, I could not help but notice their lack of emphasis on New England founders. I wondered where the energy of the region’s reformers could have gone, given New England’s importance in educational history—from Horace Mann of the common school movement, to Elizabeth Peabody of the kindergarten movement, to

Francis Parker, called the father of progressive education. My study of Flora White suggests that energy was very much in evidence during her life. Although Miss White's Home School closed in 1914, her work in Concord helped pave the way for the founding of Concord Academy, today regarded as one of the top secondary schools in the United States.

It took me several years and one sabbatical to discover what I believe is an accurate explanation for both issues my research raises. This explanation is the basis of an article scheduled for release in December 2015 in which I suggest a need for historians to revisit the formative period of progressive education, casting a wider geographic net in the process.²⁰ This need is amplified in the working draft of a full biography of Flora White I have completed and hope to publish shortly. Without getting into details at this time, I want to emphasize that but for my research on White's *individual* life, the information I found affecting larger issues in educational history would have remained both largely undiscoverable and undiscovered.

Before closing, I want to give another example of an "otherwise undiscoverable reality" made possible by a study of the singular life of Flora White. Her relationship with G. Stanley Hall—an early leader of the child-study movement and endorser of Miss White's Home School—became problematic when in 1904 he published a book entitled *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*.²¹ Drawing from evolutionary theory, Hall argues the adolescent female is "at the top of the human curve from which the higher super-man of the future is to evolve."²² He writes that adolescent girls are very susceptible to reproductive organ damage and should single-mindedly devote themselves to the natural role of motherhood. As early as 1903 in an address to the NEA Hall quotes medical opinion that women are in danger of excessive brain-work that could harm their reproductive function. He adds that women primarily have a procreative role and should be spared the "illusory" freedoms promised by higher education.²³ Hall views female graduate students at Clark University (where he was President) as "individuals"—that is, they do not represent most women and are the terminal products of evolution since they are both single and childless.²⁴ He reserves special comment for the "bachelor woman" whose "mentality" makes her a "good fellow" and "compassionate in all the broad intellectual spheres." (This, of course, is the category in which Hall would have placed Flora White.) According to Hall, the bachelor woman had,

...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.²⁵

Hall's theories would have been personally hurtful and professionally awkward for Flora White, especially in light of his endorsement of her school, in which her curriculum championed the physical and intellectual development of young women. Nevertheless, she did not alienate Hall or drop him as a reference. It appears White assessed the benefit of using Hall's name on her school materials and continued to list him as an endorser, albeit less prominently than before. No letter of endorsement from G. Stanley Hall appears in the 1906–1907 booklet as it had six years prior. Instead, his name, title, university affiliation, and city of residence are simply included with the other references. At the same time White made no attempt to scale back her ongoing efforts to develop young women intellectually and physically to prepare them for higher education.

Flora White's most telling assessment of G. Stanley Hall's views can be found in a poem she wrote at an unspecified time and published in 1939 after her sister Mary's death. It is part of a collection entitled *Poems by Mary A. White and Flora White*. Flora introduces the poem, "Redemption," by noting she wrote it for G. Stanley Hall, who was with her when she found a fern in the crevice of a rock, under an old maple tree.²⁶ In her poem, White uses the fern as an example in nature to address Hall's singular focus on women's reproductive role. She points to the life cycle of the fern which—unlike other plants—does not flower in order to propagate. And yet, White notes, the fern is lovely even though it lacks—even scorns—the female parts of plant reproduction. Instead, it reproduces by alternating generations. White's poem asserts the merit of single women who redeem humankind by educating children, even though they did not give birth to them. This attitude is reflected again in her 1941 interview with *The Daily Oklahoman*. The reporter notes that since succeeding generations of pupils came to Miss White's School "now Flora has so many 'children' scattered over the country that her train is met by them in Chicago, Kansas City, and all along the route from New England to Oklahoma."²⁷

White's response to Hall illustrates the difficult terrain she had to navigate in her relationships with prominent men. She needed these men's endorsements to accomplish her educational purpose and enact her own agency—yet in gaining their approval, she was also marginalized. When Flora White died in 1948, one obituary "compliments" her by stating White's educational work had been praised by "men of note."²⁸ White's handling of G. Stanley Hall is another example of an insight that would have been undiscoverable but for a biographical focus on an individual life.

In conclusion, my research on Flora White has convinced me biographers and historians have much to offer one another. Perhaps Barbara Finkelstein puts it best when she writes, “Biography is to history what a telescope is to the stars. It reveals the invisible, extracts detail from myriad points of light, uncovers sources of illumination, and helps us disaggregate and reconstruct large heavenly pictures.”²⁹ It is my hope that SOPHE will continue to be a forum that encourages such heavenly undertakings.

Endnotes

- 1 Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.
- 2 David Nasaw, “Introduction to AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography,” *American Historical Review* 114, (June 2009), as quoted in Caine, *Biography and History*, 7.
- 3 Barbara Finkelstein, “Revealing Human Agency: The Uses of Biography in the Study of Educational History,” in *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York and London, Garland Publishing), 45.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 46.
- 5 Caine, *Biography and History*, 23.
- 6 James Morice, personal communication, September 22, 2014.
- 7 Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).
- 8 Elisabeth Israels Perry, “From Belle Moskowitz to Women’s History” in *The Challenges of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women*, eds. Sara Alpern, Joyce Antler, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Ingrid Winther Scobie (Urbana, IL and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 86.
- 9 White quotes Alfred Lord Tennyson who, in his poem “The Two Voices,” writes, “’Tis Life, whereof our nerves are scant, / Oh, life, not death, for which we pant; / More life, and fuller, that I want.”
- 10 Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: America’s Enduring Confrontation with Poverty* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.
- 11 Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).
- 12 David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).
- 13 Finkelstein, “Revealing Human Agency,” 46.

- ¹⁴ *Miss White's Home School* (1900). Concord, MA.
- ¹⁵ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Vintage, 1969), 148–149.
- ¹⁶ Jeroen F. Staring, “Midwives of Progressive Education: The Bureau of Educational Experiments, 1916–1919” (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2013).
- ¹⁷ Charles Hanford Henderson, *Education and the Larger Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1902).
- ¹⁸ John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 2015), Preface.
- ¹⁹ Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker, *The Child-Centered School* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 48–49.
- ²⁰ The article was subsequently published as Linda C. Morice, “Revisiting *Schools of To-morrow*: Lessons from Educational Biography,” *Vitae Scholasticae* 32, no. 2 (2015): 5–18.
- ²¹ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1904, 1907, 1915).
- ²² *Ibid.*, 1907, vol. II, 561.
- ²³ Patricia Anne Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), 173.
- ²⁴ Lesley A. Diehl, “The Paradox of G. Stanley Hall: Foe of Coeducation and Educator of Women,” *American Psychologist* 41, no. 8 (1986): 15; retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=buy.optionToBuy&id=1987-02390-001>
- ²⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, vol. II, 633.
- ²⁶ Flora White, “Redemption,” *Poems of Mary A. White and Flora White* (New York: Paebur, 1939), 30–31.
- ²⁷ Miss Pickwick, “Girl About Town,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 9, 1941, C5.
- ²⁸ “Writer, Educator, Miss White Dies,” *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, February 16, 1948, 2.
- ²⁹ Finkelstein, “Revealing Human Agency,” 24.

The 2015 Drake Lecture

The Concept of Ubuntu as an Educational Philosophy that Imagines the Possibilities of All Learners

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Introduction

It is indeed an honor—one well beyond my imagined possibilities—to stand here before you giving the 2015 Drake Lecture, in my hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. While growing up in this city, you only saw people of my color in this hotel serving others. One could only imagine a day when....

I reviewed some of the most recent presentations of this lecture in an attempt to determine my approach to today's. Well, after my review of so many great lectures, I decided to heed the words of my good friend, Mike Sacken, who says, "Just don't embarrass the family." So, I will attempt to heed his words while hopefully providing some good food for thought.

Let Us Begin the Work

Ubuntu is the belief people are empowered by other people, that we become our best selves, and best organizations, through unselfish interaction with others.

Setting the Stage

I grew up in a home that seemed to have people in it all of the time. I am the seventh of seven children; some of my siblings had children before I was born and many of my nieces around my age had children while very young. My family is large. My parents welcomed our family members to the *Big House* (an apartment until I was 14) all of the time. They also welcomed their friends, neighbors, people in need of a meal, bath, or a good night's sleep. My parents often asked us what we were going to do about our issues and concerns. Instead of trying to give answers or just a hand-out, my parents would explore options with us as a way to provide a hand-up. Their focus was on empowering instead of enabling individuals to succeed.

My mom would talk about how I would just disappear at times due to the number of people who were always at the Big House. At first she might have found me in the basement reading a book. Later I would find myself at the museum, primarily in the area full of African artifacts. Internally I had to escape the crowds. I often felt like a sardine in a can designed for half of the bodies filling the rooms of our home. My parents didn't have much money, but they shared all they had—and did it with so much love. We lived in a very violent neighborhood, but no one ever did anything negative to my parents or our home. All knew our home was off-limits when it came to negative acts. Even two young men who eventually were sentenced to life in prison would protect my parents with their own lives.

While I often escaped the crowd at home, I grew really to appreciate how my parents embraced everyone. I learned, even before totally realizing it, the value of seeing the possibilities in individuals. I learned to be aware of danger, but to also seek the *why* behind actions. My parents taught me to work hard to avoid making quick judgmental decisions of other people, simply through my personal lens. My parents also demonstrated the value of broadening one's lens each day. My mom believed we all become better people by getting to know others well beyond the stereotypes we are bombarded with each day. My parents' home became a community of people from so many walks of life, yet all were seen as individuals of promise. My parents taught us to live *in the why* and in the possibilities for all of us—and to love the journey. They taught us to embrace and internalize the South African philosophy of *Ubuntu*—human beings empowering other human beings through the collective responsibility of kindness and sharing. Ubuntu speaks the moral responsibility of leaders to recognize others matter.

Mattering

Most, perhaps all, of us want to believe our lives matter in this great nation. We also want to be part of a nation that values, respects, and includes our thoughts and opinions in the decision-making process. Most of us want to feel as though there are opportunities to effect positive change in our great nation, and especially within our sphere of influence. We want to be able to have voice in the decision-making process and be afforded opportunities to work towards desired life goals. In other words, we want equal access to quality education, housing, governance, leadership, safety, career options, technology, and so on. To be sure, most of us desire to be part of a society that values our presence and actively seeks to include us in the daily and long-term activities that support and direct our lives and our country. To be included as valuable **(and valued)** members of this nation is something most of us desire.

Most, perhaps all, of us want to help create an even better nation and future for our children. I would suggest that most, perhaps all, of us want to believe in *The American Dream*. Adams (1931) describes The American Dream as:

...that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and un-trustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances or position. (pp. 214–215)

Is The American Dream really attainable by all Americans? What is our responsibility as Americans to try to make this so? Or is there a belief by most, if not all, Americans that we live in a nation where some pathways are cleared for passage, while others remain full of pot-holes, detours, and other impediments? Are some afforded the opportunity to spin a wheel full of fortune, while others must spin one full of misfortune?

Why? ...and Then, How?

I choose to live in what I call the world of “Why?...and then, How?” This journey into the various discussions of “Why? ...and then, How?,” finds its foundation, for me, within questions regarding the social, political, economic, and educational challenges we face today. For example:

- Why should we make sure more learners have access to a quality education?
- Why should we work to be sure all can afford health care?
- Why should we work to create more jobs?
- Why should we work in support of the Dream Act?
- Why should we support same-sex marriage?
- Why do we continue suffer from un-American acts?

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and

establish this Constitution for the United States of America” (U.S. Const. preamble).

Answers to the questions I pose must support the preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Therefore we must move away from high-stakes, mandated testing practices and move towards more engaging teaching and learning environments focused on connecting (bridging) the existing knowledge of each learner with the information we know they need to succeed in life and as successful citizens of this great nation. We must move away from the economic greed that continues to weaken the ethos of this great nation and move towards the rebuilding of our country through the creation of jobs leading to careers, which will result in more individuals with excellent health care, especially with the enactment and continued support of the Affordable Care Act. *Liberty and justice for all* means just that—for all of us. Included in this premise of liberty must be the right to marry the person of your choice. All other policy and actions that negatively affect these and similar questions are un-American.

I call this emphasis on the social, political, economic, and educational challenges before us an educational philosophy that *imagines the possibilities* of each learner. Imagining the possibilities is embedded in an educational philosophy considered by some to be counter to other movements that have been diluted in attempts to make sense of teaching and learning by understanding and classifying learners based on, for example, test scores, gender, culture, race, or socioeconomic status. It can be said such a philosophy of imagining the possibilities of each learner embraces the premise of *Ubuntu*: the belief individuals are empowered by other individuals, that we become our best selves and our best nation, through unselfish interactions with others. Taken further, my success requires me to help empower others towards achieving their dreams in life. I am reminded of Luke 12:48: “*to whom much is given, much will be required.*” In other words, our gifts of talent, wealth, knowledge, and the like should be utilized to glorify God and to benefit others. *Our egos are stroked when we see others also succeed.*

This premise of *Ubuntu* can also inform our successful attempts in teaching and learning environments. To teach using *Ubuntu* as a strong, foundational curricular element, when combined with imagining the possibilities of each learner as your primary point of focus means to understand that every individual has the ability to learn. A teacher’s work then focuses upon making the kinds of connections needed to help empower each learner to take personal ownership of their learning, with the belief that learning is indeed possible. Larry Crabb (1997) reminds us, “Connecting is the center of everything, and a vision for what we could become gives it power” (p. 52). He goes on to tell us that connections result in wisdom: the wisdom to understand right from

wrong, and deeper levels of critical thinking. Parker Palmer (2011), in his book *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, argues how dysfunctional our government and its people have become. It is this high level of national dysfunction that causes even more division, splintering the very core of our strength: unity. Parker asks:

How shall we respond to these cultural trends that diminish all of us? On this question, I, too, have a nonnegotiable conviction: violence can never be the answer. Instead, we must protect people's freedom to believe and behave as they will, within the rule of law; assent to majority rule while dedicating ourselves to protecting minority rights; embrace and act on our responsibility to care for one another; seek to educate ourselves about our critical differences; come together in dialogue toward mutual understanding; and speak without fear against all that diminishes us, including the use of violence. (p. 4)

Palmer goes on to suggest a foundational set of pillars designed to support and empower society to move away from the splintering currently occurring. Palmer's notion of healing moves us toward a more inclusive, engaged, and highly successful democracy focused on bringing us closer to establishing common ground. He cautions:

If American democracy fails, the ultimate cause will not be a foreign invasion or the power of big money or the greed and dishonesty of some elected officials or a military coup or the internal communist/socialist/fascist takeover that keeps some Americans awake at night. It will happen because we—you and I—became so fearful of each other, of our differences and of the future, that we unraveled the civic community on which democracy depends, losing power to resist all that threatens it and call it back to its highest forms. (p. 8)

The five premises Parker Palmer presents and expands on are: togetherness, appreciation of others, holding tensions in life-giving ways, personal voice and agency, and the capacity to foster community.

1. We must understand that we are all in this together.

This premise can be directed at a multitude of challenges we currently face as a nation. For example, the many recent video-captured deaths of Black and brown men and women at the hand of police officers offer one of our most serious challenges. Will the call for more police training resolve many of these challenges? I suggest here and now we need more. We need reflective and engaging conversations and experiences that touch the heart on all sides of the challenges. It is the only possible way to challenge and eradicate stereotypes of the *other* that continue to divide us and provide a human's rationale to kill another

human being. To me, it seems like a Socratic process is needed with much dialogue among participants as individuals are empowered to say “no” to stereotypes, and “yes” to understanding—understanding we are all individuals with gifts that can become critically important components to the success of the whole—all of us, all citizens of this great nation.

2. We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”

Yes, we are all unique individuals. The key word here is *individual*. While we identify ourselves often using group identifiers, our affiliations with these groups vary from person to person. And these variations often change as new experiences affect our thinking, beliefs, and actions. We are ultimately unique, interesting, valuable, and evolving individuals. For example, I am labeled by our society as an African-American or Black male. The generalized stereotypes of being a Black male in this county provide more negative than positive images, at least initially. Some argue negative images of the Black male seem to be much more persistent and pervasive in rural, more isolated, lower-socio-economic communities. I suggest that the actions of those who do live in large cities with very little isolation, and from more affluent socio-economic communities actually think in similar ways to their rural counterparts, but are just a little more politically correct, when needed. Take just a moment to review results of their actions: the perpetuation of these negative images. However, this particular social construction of my identity follows a very narrow and destructive pathway, if I buy into the hype. You see, I am also a husband, father, grandfather, sibling, golfer, scholar, and, most importantly to me, a child of God. It is this last descriptor that helps frame a mind-set for our future attempts to build a better community and nation. While we are different, most if not all of us seek joy, the opportunity to pursue our dreams, peace, limiting stress, and a better future for our next generations. Can we therefore begin relationships with these thoughts in the fore instead of the negative stereotypes that seem to create the kind of perceptual barriers that cause us to vilify *otherness* rather than embrace one another? Now is the time to start anew.

3. We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.

The demonstrators raise signs that say, “Black Lives Matter.” While some say, “Yes,” others among us say, “What?” and still others claim, “All Lives Matter.” The thoughts and opinions of most, if not all, of us fall somewhere along a continuum of thought along these responses. Our task is to find ways to have the kind of meaningful discussions that lead to better-informed understandings of our individual opinions and the opinions of one another. A development of broader understandings,

I argue, helps all of us focus on a better way forward for all involved. Of even greater importance is a continual set of actions leading to a community that utilizes inevitable tensions among us as part of a process leading to more unified and inclusive efforts to clear pathways as we all strive to live The American Dream.

4. We must generate a sense of personal voice and agency.

Building on what I say regarding holding tension in life-giving ways, a major key toward building the community we seek is the inclusion of all voices as a way to make more informed and successful decisions. If I say I have a torn ligament in my knee yet you believe I only have a slight strain, the difference in prognosis will lead to inappropriate remedies that could prove disastrous. One can use my example to bring clarity to the recent shootings and other physical violence leading to the death of Black males at the hands of police officers in Staten Island, partially those caught on video. For example, some Black males may talk about being treated as the enemy, the scourge of society, as less than a man in their almost daily interactions with police. Such negative interpretations almost never end in positive outcomes, especially in the heat of the moment. The same police officers might express their beliefs Black males are lazy, drug-smoking, jobless, boys who are always up to no good, thugs carrying concealed weapons, and individuals who need aggressively to be monitored in order to maintain some semblance of peace and safety. Such negative interpretations almost never end in positive outcomes, especially in the heat of the moment. Educational opportunities, not just *training*, that encourage and support opportunities to come to the table to discuss and work through these kinds of negative and poorly informed beliefs will lead to improved connections and relations between these men and the police. The same process will also lead to a much-improved America.

5. We must strengthen our capacity to create community.

They must become *Us*. A stronger community and nation becomes more possible when *We* no longer set others aside as *Those People*. We must begin better to understand how each of us has a complex individual identity that continues to evolve. Experiences, especially with those outside one's given comfort zone, can help us eradicate generalizations about the *other* that often dominate our thinking. Many of us are flooded with negative stereotypes of the *other* through the media, school and home, most of our lives. We must strive hard to counter these images with ones that are more representative of the individuals who make up this great nation. When *They* becomes *Us*, the invisibility that currently blinds our vision disappears. Such work will indeed lead us toward real community—a community in which all believe lives matter—for what we seek is indeed attainable. This is my prayer.

Schools and Testing

Diane Ravitch (2013) teaches:

Children in the early elementary grades need teachers who set age-appropriate goals. They should learn to read, write, calculate, and explore nature, and they should have plenty of time to sing and dance and draw and play and giggle. Classes in these grades should be small enough—ideally fewer than twenty—so that students get the individual attention they need. Testing in the early grades should be used sparingly, not to rank students, but diagnostically, to help determine what they know and what they still need to learn. Test scores should remain a private matter between parents and teachers, not shared with the district or the state for any individual student. The district or state may aggregate scores for entire schools but should not judge teachers or schools on the basis of these scores. (p. 23)

Numerous reports over the last three decades express concerns about the U.S. educational system. These reports, initially gaining the public's ear with "A Nation at Risk" in 1984, purport to provide data showing great declines in academic achievement among students attending school in this great nation. Responses to these reports have been numerous, but none more damaging than the implementation of mandated, high-stakes accountability measures. This damage was increased when teacher salaries, and even their very careers, became dependent upon test-score results of students in their classes. While teachers, if given some level of autonomy, can control the process, they have very limited control over the actual product, instead school districts have addressed the call for mandated testing and higher scores by restricting teacher autonomy!

There is nothing wrong with testing, especially when results are utilized as a diagnostic tool to adjust teaching practices. However, the interpretation of mandated, high-stakes testing has resulted in more rote learning and less development of the mind; more lecture as a teaching practice and fewer engaging in student-led discussions as a way to explore new concepts and theories; and teaching as a task instead of an exploration into the unknown with the exciting anticipation of new discoveries, and thus making possible higher levels of academic success. Most public-school systems across this country must adhere to this high-stakes testing calamity or face the loss of much-needed federal funding. Yet while proponents of high-stakes testing claim success, traditional, high-achieving private schools continue to ignore adoption of high-stakes testing procedures for their schools. Should we wonder why? No—we know why.

Not being allowed to find a better balance between preparing students to maximize their efforts on assessment tools and helping to

empower them to think more deeply and take on learning as a personal priority causes many excellent teachers to leave our most challenging schools. We must understand that in our most challenging schools the transition from home to classroom can often be very traumatic. The day-to-day structure of the classroom is often very different than life at home. Relationships between the learner and teacher are often shallow and the true identity of each child becomes invisible under the burden of descriptors such as “at-risk,” “poor,” “second-language learner,” or “504 student.” Instead, teachers must spend time getting to know their students in order better to connect life at home with their time in school.

While most, if not all, teachers have command of their subject matter, many lack opportunity in today’s high-stakes testing environment to apply the *art* of teaching in their classroom. The *art* of teaching I reference focuses teachers to utilize a variety of creative approaches to teaching and learning as a way to connect with each individual learner. The *art* of teaching encompasses the ability to build connections between the knowledge students already have with the information we want them to learn.

What can we do to maximize teaching and learning in this environment of mandated, high-stakes testing? How can we best accomplish the mission before us to prepare our learners to reach higher levels of academic acumen? Where do we go for much-needed strength as we seek a way out when there seems no way out?

Answers are found in our hearts and in our very souls. God has *called* us to teach. He will provide a pathway for our success. Our task is to follow this pathway and to avoid the dangerous detours that try to convince us to go another way.

I suggest these same foundational pillars, and this premise of *Ubuntu* can be utilized to form and empower educators towards an educational philosophy resulting in more inclusive, engaged, and highly successful teaching and learning communities. *Ubuntu* provides the focus needed continually to promote the premise that all of us can and do learn. Given the importance of how our environment affects teaching and learning, it is imperative that a focus on community, inclusion, and *Ubuntu* become the driving force—the philosophical premise—behind our thinking, decisions, and actions.

Many experiences fill the lives of learners with ways of life that counter efforts that promote quality teaching and learning. Media outlets also create images of life that diminish the importance of teaching and learning. When we realize a primary difference between successful and unsuccessful learners revolves around the inputs in their lives, it becomes more and more obvious that part of our challenge as educators

becomes countering those experiences. For example, my mom worked most of her adult life as a domestic. She would often bring home old *Look* and *Life* magazines for us to read. These magazines were full of beautiful homes, awesome vacation sites, and great adventures. My mom would tell me there were people who actually lived their lives in this way. She also said a good education would open doors for me to have similar life experiences. My father was a self-taught reader. He would read the newspaper while I read my books. While talking with him about what I read, he would ask why I thought the way I did. He would also ask me to explain my opinions and answers to his questions. Our arguments about our favorite baseball and football teams and players became epic. Most importantly, he invited me into the dialogue of “Why? ...and then, How?”; and now I continue to live in the world of *WHY?* ...and *HOW?*

Teaching and Learning

The utilization of Palmer’s five *habits of the heart* can also empower all involved toward building, sustaining, and growing communities where teaching and learning flourishes—a means to foster compassion and generosity toward others (*Ubuntu*). These five pillars can be turned into *WE WILL* statements and can become a driving force behind turning unsuccessful schools inside out:

1. *We will* always work together to determine next steps with a focus on the academic and social growth of all learners.
2. *We will* value all of the voices/gifts of all learners and connect these gifts with new information as a way for knowledge to be internalized and expanded.
3. *We will* better utilize the tensions within our teaching and learning environments in positive ways to diminish division, welcome community, and grow intellectually.
4. *We will* help to empower all learners with the purpose of utilizing their experiences as a bridge to new knowledge and understand that all of us are learners.
5. *We will* focus on *Us* and *We* as our starting point for the work ahead.

Ubuntu, as I describe, provides the kind of philosophical foundation needed continually to promote the premise all of us can and do learn. Those of us that choose to embark on this journey will work to enrich teaching and learning environments with highly engaged and interactive communities where technology is utilized to bring the world to the classroom. Students who lack the financial resources to explore the world will be able to do so, right in their classrooms. Of even greater value will be the conversations that emerge between students and others

from across the world, in small classroom groups, with their teachers, and at home with family members.

A primary goal within these teaching and learning environments will be the development of deeper levels of thinking about those things that promote the kind of learning needed for academic success and lives full of great promise. I maintain most, if not all, students can think critically; those that know how consistently to disrupt your classroom; those who develop drug-selling organizations; and those who learn to hack your computer must use levels of critical thinking to get their work done. Our task is to connect their abilities to think with the kinds of thinking and doing that promotes opportunities for both their academic and social success.

We understand our nation is only as strong as its weakest links. For those suffering from a system of education that fails to represent some of the weakest links in our great nation, *Ubuntu* brings focus to the work ahead and causes actions leading to a much stronger and successful citizenry. Let us fully embrace and support this philosophy of teaching and learning.

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Deweyan Aesthetics as Experiential Education

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With the publication of *Experience and Education*, John Dewey created a colossal project for education theorists. He conceives of a new kind of education “within, by, and for experience,” and he demands a clear practical and theoretical conception of what experience is (Dewey, 1938, pp. 9–10). Nearly a hundred years later, the project is still in progress. While theorists continue to work with Dewey’s progressive philosophy, his definition of traditional education still captures what happens in practice: “the subject-matter of education consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore, the chief business of the school is to transmit them to the new generation” (p. 5). In this paper, I contribute to the progressive education project first by taking a step back in Deweyan theory to his earlier work *Art as Experience*. Like his progressive theory of education, Dewey’s aesthetic theory is rooted in experience. His aesthetics, however, are more abstract, not specifically a theory of education nor even of art, but rather a theory that may and should permeate all facets of life. I suggest the clear conception of experience needed for progressive education may be aesthetic experience.

My work in this paper should be interesting to education theorists and, particularly, to educators *as* theorists. I demonstrate two things to the educator as theorist: first, that educators may and should engage with established theory actively such that the end result is a personal theory founded on established theory; and, second, that an individual educator in a single classroom may be capable of realizing progressive theory far more effectively than the institution of schooling as a whole. I assert that the possibility of the latter demands the former as an obligation. My argument provides an example of an educator’s personal theory developed from established theory in such a way as to be immediately applicable in a single classroom.

I present Dewey’s theory of aesthetic experience as a progression from presence in a foreign environment to the establishment of a metabolic relationship with the environment, finally culminating in a thoughtful expression by which the individual establishes equilibrium with the environment. Through the lens of aesthetic and metabolic

experience, I read Lewis Carroll's (1865) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a narrative illustration of Dewey's theory and a demonstration of metabolic learning in progress. I then flip the lens and read Dewey's theory through *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In doing so, I expand Dewey's aesthetic progression to include experience in environments not only physical and spatial but also intellectual and psychological. The expansion I advance serves to break down false separations between mind and body showing that the brain is as much involved in experience and metabolism as the rest of the body. I conclude by demonstrating how Dewey's aesthetic theory, expanded through Carroll's novel, may adjust other theories of learning, including as examples Maxine Greene's approach to assessment in aesthetic education and Jerome Bruner's reimagining of Lev Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development.

In Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) he examines the process by which people creatively engage with their environments and the connection between art and the everyday means of living. Dewey's search for the aesthetic experience begins with a "willingness] to find the germs and roots in matters of experience that we do not currently regard as esthetic" (p. 11). Dewey explains these germs and roots originate from environmental interaction.

He refers to metabolic processes as a kind of extra sense by which organisms engage with their environments. "No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are a means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself" (p. 12). The organism does not merely touch, see, hear, taste, and smell its environment; it breathes, consumes, and excretes its environment. The drive not merely to sense but to metabolize the environment comes from a feeling of need that also functions as "a demand, a reaching out into the environment to make good the lack and to restore adjustment by building at least a temporary equilibrium" (p. 12). The most basic impulse to action and therefore to art is the restoration of harmony between organism and environment.

Ultimately, art occurs as an expression out of experience and into the environment. The aesthetic progression is "like breathing a rhythm of intakes and outgivings" by which the "resistance and tensions" felt in the environment are converted into "a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close" (p. 58). Dewey gives the example of a bird building a nest; the nest is both part of her and also her expression. The human, however, is distinct from other animals in that humans act in this way consciously with an understanding of cause and effect, that is, in time (p. 25). It is "not just quantitative, or just more energy, but is qualitative, a transformation of energy into thoughtful

action, through assimilation of meanings from the background of past experiences” (p. 63).

It is important that the aesthetic progression has a culmination in “thoughtful action.” Dewey (1934) uses the term “*an* experience” to differentiate aesthetic experience from other kinds of experience; “*an* experience” occurs “when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment” and therefore is “integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences” (pp. 36–37). The aesthetic progression includes reflection both in the early process (the “assimilation of meanings from background of past experiences”) and in the culmination. *An* experience is neither a “loose succession” of experiences, nor is it experiences held together with only a “mechanical connection” (p. 41). The aesthetic progression involves reflection and thoughtful action from beginning to end. The one experiencing is conscious, aware, and intentional.

Aesthetic experience, therefore, is a progression from presence in an unknown environment and an accompanying sense of need or disequilibrium to engaging in a metabolic relationship with the environment. Because the process is metabolic, it necessarily involves the changing of the individual by the environment and the changing of the environment by the individual. The result of this mutual change is both artistic expression and, at the same time, the reestablishment of equilibrium between the individual and the environment.

On one level, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* provides a nearly perfect step-by-step illustration of this process. The sense of disequilibrium is dramatically illustrated by Alice’s long fall down the rabbit hole. At the bottom she feels the need to reorient herself, to get through the door, to find the key, to become the right size. Throughout the story, she must engage with the dream world metabolically, eating cakes and mushrooms and drinking from dubiously labeled bottles. This process changes Alice, again quite dramatically, as she grows and shrinks and eventually finds a way to restore herself to a reasonable size. Alice’s experience in Wonderland lines up closely with most of Dewey’s aesthetic progression, that is, until it comes time for Alice to express herself in a thoughtfully formulated kind of art. While Alice certainly changes her environment throughout her journey through Wonderland (when, for example, she grows right up out of a house and destroys it), she simply comes out of the dream at a crucial moment in the narrative. There is no conclusion, no culmination, and, arguably, no real purpose to what happens in Wonderland. On this level, it appears to be experience that fails to form art. As an illustration of experiential education, a Deweyan theorist might rightly criticize Carroll’s story as “planless improvisation” (Dewey, 1938, p. 10).

A closer analysis of the complex and thoughtful text of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* reveals another, deeper connection to Dewey's aesthetics. To move from the first level to the second, it is necessary to show two Alices in the story. The first level deals with the Alice who is *in* the dream world and her experiences within that environment. The second level deals with the Alice who is dreaming and who therefore *creates* the dream world. As Alice awakens from the dream at the end of the story, Carroll shifts the narrative point of view from the sleeping Alice to her older sister. The sister looks forward to when Alice will be a grown woman and how she will keep "the simple and loving heart of her childhood: and how she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale..." (Carroll, 1865, p. 60). The narrative shift and the objective perspective of the sister give the reader a new view of Alice. She is no longer a little girl lost in a fantastical dream world. She becomes the creator of the world; she is story-teller, the poet, the dreamer, the artist. To reflect this shift to the deeper level of analysis, I refer to this story as Alice's Wonderland, emphasizing that both the world and the story of the world are Alice's aesthetic expression.

My second, multidimensional analysis of Alice's Wonderland begins with the internal conflict. Alice is not only lost in a bizarre dream world; she also questions her own identity, particularly in relation to her school-learning. After falling down the rabbit hole, she thinks to herself:

"I'm sure I'm not Ada," she said, "for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! she knows such a very little! Besides, SHE'S she, and I'm I, and—oh dear, how puzzling it all is! I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate! ... "I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to go and live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh! ever so many lessons to learn! No, I've made up my mind about it; if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here!" (pp. 7–8)

Alice is neither sure of her multiplication tables, of nursery rhymes, nor even of whether she is herself. She concludes thus, "It'll be no use their putting their heads down and saying 'Come up again, dear!' I shall only look up and say 'Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up: if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else'" (p. 8).

The passage reveals Alice's disequilibrium to be internal, cognitive, intellectual, and psychological, and the foreign environment, against

which she continually tests herself throughout the book, is the subject matter she has learned in school. In the chapter to which I refer, her brain in dreaming processes, her multiplication tables, and her knowledge of geography and poetry ultimately produces something quite original if technically incorrect. The reader follows Alice as she breaks down and reformulates meaning. This is metabolism in its most literal sense, and it occurs throughout Alice's dream.

The most persuasive examples of cognitive metabolism come from the poems Alice creates in Wonderland. At some point in her schooling she encountered Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them," a call-and-response poem between a youth and an old man in which the old man answers successive questions about his advanced age with snippets of wisdom that are simple, bordering on trite. When Alice attempts to recite this poem in Wonderland, what comes out is a sardonic parody that ends with the old man, fed up with being questioned about his age, threatening to throw the youth down the stairs. When she has finished, it occurs to Alice that "some of the words had got altered," and the Caterpillar, to whom she is reciting, responds that it was "wrong from beginning to end." (p. 20). Of course, alteration is a necessary and inevitable part of any metabolic process; "variation...is an indispensable coefficient of aesthetic order" (Dewey, 1934, p. 170). When Alice says, "words had got altered" she indicates she has digested the original poem and produced an entirely new piece of art. The Caterpillar, like so many traditional teachers, fails to recognize the value of this, marking it down as simply "wrong." To most readers, however, it is clear Alice's reformulations of the poems and nursery rhymes throughout the book show creative genius, perhaps more so than the original versions.

Throughout the story, Alice's attempts to reproduce her book-learning result in expressions that have been altered, changed, metabolized. In Alice's Wonderland, even language and sense are broken down and reformulated; what should be simple exchanges of thought come out as complex and often-humorous wordplays.

"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."

"You mean you can't take *less*," said the Hatter: "It's very easy to take *more* than nothing." (Carroll, 1865, p. 33)

What appears to be a sort of madness is the churning of a brilliant brain in the process of digestion. Wonderland is the means by which Alice confronts her sense of disequilibrium in the intellectual environment of her academic subject-matter. She engages with this environment

metabolically: the traditional subject-matter is *changed* to an original product of Alice's just as Alice herself is *changed* in the process of creating it. When she comes out of the dream, the reader understands not only that she has created the original art of Wonderland, but that she has restored equilibrium and become herself an artist. This second level of analysis again reveals Dewey's aesthetic progression, this time with a foreign environment that is intellectual, a metabolic engagement that occurs through the brain, and artistic expression that takes place through the creation of a new world.

A question that arises from the second level of analysis is whether the aesthetic progression can take place in the mind with no final expression in the real world. Dewey's aesthetics are always rooted in direct sensory experience in the environment. He insists the intellectual is always connected back to "the direct sense element" which "absorbs...subdues and digests all that is merely intellectual" (Dewey, 1934, p. 30). Reading Dewey's theory back through the lens of Alice's Wonderland reveals the relationship between the intellectual, foreign environment and the direct-sense element. Alice constructs Wonderland neither from pure fantasy nor even from the purely intellectual material of her schooling but from a combination of fantasy, school-learning, and her immediate surroundings: the garden, the rabbit hole, and all the little creatures in the woods. Though Wonderland is a dream, it retains roots in the "direct sense elements." This is consistent with Dewey's effort to break down the distinction between the intellectual and the aesthetic. He writes the "ultimate matter" and "general form" of both are the same, and that it is an "odd notion" that the artist does not think and that the scientific enquirer does nothing but think (p. 14). Alice is certainly not a scientist, but she is a thinker. She is an artist who "has problems and thinks as she works" (p. 14). Alice's dream is a demonstration of what the mind of a thinking artist does as it works and solves problems, or, more simply put, Alice's dream is a demonstration of aesthetic learning as it happens.

Reading Dewey back through Alice reveals that the brain is among the "subcutaneous organs" through which one interacts with the environment. Alice's brain metabolizes sensory and intellectual input in the same way the lungs metabolize air or the stomach metabolizes food. The brain receives input from the senses and discovers, interprets, and produces (or excretes) patterns and meta-patterns in the sensory data. The brain as the organ that metabolizes patterns is consistent with Dewey's understanding of true aesthetic experience requiring expression that comes out of time and established rhythm. Metabolic processes that happen throughout the body may lead to interactions with the environment, but only when there is an element of time, by which the

brain is included in the metabolic processes, does the interaction become an aesthetic experience. Viewing Dewey's theory through the lens of Alice's Wonderland reveals it is not only possible for the aesthetic progression to happen in an intellectual environment, it is essential the brain is engaged. Two things result: first, the brain becomes a metabolic organ like any other in the body; the intellectual comes down from its pedestal. Second, even as the false elevation of the intellectual disappears, the brain becomes an essential part of the aesthetic process such that art is not art without thought, without some kind of cognitive digestion. This allows for the application of the aesthetic progression to intellectual or cognitive environments, and therefore for the application of Deweyan aesthetic theory to education, especially given that all experience, including educational experience, may and ideally should be aesthetic.

An understanding of the aesthetic learner as a whole self whose mind and body are unified in the exploration, experience, and metabolism of her environment ought to create a ripple effect influencing other theories of learning and adjustments to these theories ought to result in real, effective change in classroom practice—even if only in the individual classroom. Because educators often have substantial influence within strictly limited settings, it behooves each educator to develop and adjust educational theory such that the theory may have the maximum benefit in the arena of each educator's influence. Just as the student engages metabolically with curricula, the educator ought to engage metabolically with theory such that each educator works from a theory that is thoughtful, personal, and grounded in established theory. Perhaps the most important application of my argument is as an example of one educator's theory developed in this way. I now turn to offer additional applications to demonstrate how a core personal theory of education adjusts multiple facets of the teaching and learning process.

The first application addresses assessment. Imagine Wonderland is a final project Alice completes in order to earn a passing grade. How would one go about grading Wonderland? Traditionally, the teacher picks up a red pen, double-checks the objectives, and marks up all the errors. Wonderland is replete with errors: in geography, in mathematics, in language and literature, even in music, dance, and etiquette. Poor Alice would fail every objective, and yet it is obviously and abundantly clear Wonderland is a brilliant success and its creator a genius. This inconsistency reveals a fundamental problem in traditional assessment: the expectation that the student will reproduce learned material *unchanged*. Traditional objective assessments not only require no changes, they test for nothing but the absence of change to the subject matter.

Changes to original elements are deemed *incorrect*. Maxine Greene (2001), an educational philosopher heavily influenced by Dewey, rejects the very possibility of an adequate summation of aesthetic experience: “There can be no packaging of what has been experienced, what has been learned. Indeed, the very notion of packaging—like the notion of a finished product—is antithetical to all that aesthetic education has come to mean” (pp. 35–36). Given the brain is a metabolic organ and learning a metabolic process, assessments must leave room for students to alter the subject matter or at the very least apply it in entirely original ways. To allow for and encourage aesthetic experience, assessments must include space for creativity, originality and an openness to further exploration. As is always the case with a healthy metabolism, what comes out must not be identical to what goes in.

Another example of an aesthetic reimagining of education theory is Jerome Bruner’s (1986) presentation and reworking of Lev Vygotsky’s concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD). In Vygotsky’s ZPD, the teacher is fully capable of using the skill or knowledge, and she adjusts down to where the student has a concept of the skill or knowledge but cannot put into action. The teacher works with the student to practice the skill or knowledge thereby assisting the student in achieving mastery. Learning happens in a zone where the student may recognize and comprehend material but may not quite be able to generate or apply the material (Bruner, 1986). Vygotsky’s ZPD is an effective approach to teaching, but it is more compatible with traditional education than with aesthetic education. In aesthetic education learning is not linear, not hierarchical; the teacher does not sit above the student and assist a climb. It is instead exploratory, active, creative, and metabolic. This raises the question of what the role of the aesthetic educator should be, a question similar to one Dewey (1938) raises as he constructs his progressive theory of education: how to establish contacts between the mature teacher and the immature learner “without violating the principle of learning through personal experience” (p. 7). Bruner (1986) explores the question of how exactly a teacher or tutor may assist a student through Vygotsky’s ZPD, and, in doing so, he reimagines the process in a way more compatible with aesthetic education. Bruner explains how one tutor “turned the task into play and caught it in a narrative that gave it continuity” (p. 75). Consistent with aesthetic experience, this tutor took a relatively concrete task (building a pyramid out of interlocking wooden blocks) and turned the task into a narrative, that is, a world to be explored through play. In a separate essay, Bruner remembers a chemistry teacher who told her class, “It is a very puzzling thing not that water turns to ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, but that it should change from a liquid into a solid” (p. 126). He explains this

teacher was “inviting [him] to extend [his] world of wonder to encompass *hers*. She was not just *informing* [him]. She was, rather, negotiating the world of wonder and possibility” (p. 126). This teacher created a zone where aesthetic learning may take place. A ZPD for aesthetic learning is not the space where the student understands but cannot quite generate; it is rather the space where the wonder of the unknown meets the desire to explore. It is the space across which the student reaches out from herself into the unknown.

Put another way, the beginning of aesthetic learning must be the student’s want of the material—where the term *want* encompasses the feelings of both lack and desire at once. There is a particular and telling moment in Alice’s Wonderland when she reaches the aesthetic ZPD. After the initial shock of falling down the rabbit hole, shrinking to a fraction of her size, and interacting with a host of woodland animals, Alice encounters a bottle for the second time. This time, however, there is no label that reads “DRINK ME.” The imperative, the command is no longer necessary. Alice willingly drinks from the bottle, but not—as would be the situation in Vygotsky’s ZPD—because she has seen an instructor do the same and knows what to expect. Rather, her rationale for drinking from the bottle is as follows: “I know SOMETHING interesting is sure to happen...whenever I eat or drink anything; so I’ll just see what this bottle does” (Carroll, 1865, p. 15). Though Alice hopes to grow larger by trying the bottle’s contents, ultimately she drinks without any clear expectation of what will happen. It is her desire for something interesting that impels her. This is the aesthetic ZPD, the place where wonder touches desire. The role of the aesthetic educator is not to impart knowledge or help in the practice of skills; it is to share wonder, to communicate one’s own sense of lack and desire in order to expand those senses in one’s students. Thus Alice’s sister’s prediction at the end of the story is not only that Alice will be an artist, a story-teller, but also that she will be an effective aesthetic educator, one who shares wonder, one who makes children’s eyes “bright and eager.” In aesthetic learning, the role of the teacher is to give students a sense of the grandness of the world they may choose to explore.

In the phrase “choose to explore” there arises a problem the solution to which is essential to both the theory and practice of aesthetic education. As most educators are well aware, many students do not respond to a sense of lack with curiosity and desire. Many—far too many—sense lack and respond by shutting down. Even the brilliantly creative Alice has her moment, crying herself a pool of tears at the bottom of the rabbit hole. This shutting down is a sign of illness, an illness that seems to match Bruner’s (1979) explanation of why the power of metaphor in art is ineffectual to some:

There is “overanticipation” of what is likely to be internally dangerous; ...the neurotic avoids everything that *might* be dangerous and in the end is immobilized. It is this overefficient pre-emptiveness that makes such metaphoric activity sick, in contrast to the illuminating quality of great myth and great poetry. (pp. 14–15)

Bruner’s explanation of the failure of metaphor suggests students shut down because they see the unknown, foreign worlds of potential aesthetic experience not as filled with wonder but as fraught with peril. The traditional solution is to remove the sense of lack, to reduce the scope and foreignness of the subject matter until the student may grasp it without ever really needing to explore it. Such an approach obviates the need and possibility for the student to have an aesthetic experience and grow healthier by it. In such cases, the educator has the difficult job of walking a fine line between two traumas: on the one hand a sense of lack that is too severely overwhelming and on the other hand the complete removal of the desire to learn. For students insufficiently equipped to manage a sense of lack, educators must carefully adjust until they find just the right amount of disequilibrium to position the students in *want* of learning. The goal is “the ‘touch of disorder’ that lends charm” (Dewey, 1934, p. 173).

The tendency of students to shut down when confronted with a sense of lack or disequilibrium in a foreign environment leads to a final important application of education as aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is directly connected to health such that it both promotes and indicates health. Dewey imagines an “infinitely greater happiness” (p. 84) would attend a society better ordered around aesthetic experience. The psychoanalyst and child psychologist D. W. Winnicott (1986) writes, “creativity belongs to being alive” (p. 41) and creative living “strengthens the feeling that we are alive, that we are ourselves” (p. 43). Educating by aesthetic experience treats the learner as a whole self, and the process ought to promote life, health, and a strengthened identity in students. It is a curative process by which educators may promote the health of students whose sense of creativity is paralyzed or bruised. Furthermore, the aesthetic process may also be diagnostic. For decades, society has demanded to know why the education system has been failing to educate every student. A theory of aesthetic education provides educators a tool with which to cross-examine society. Why are so many students lacking the minimum level of health needed to engage in the natural act of exploration, an act so basic it is inherent to every living organism? Why are so many students “cowed by fear or dulled by routine” (Dewey, 1934, p. 175)? It is the legal obligation of education professionals to report signs of abuse or neglect. If this obligation extends also to the

abuse and neglect of the aesthetic sensibilities, including the senses of wonder, curiosity, and the desire to learn, then there is a great deal of reporting to be done. Understanding education through Dewey's aesthetic theory leads not only to a more-fully-engaged approach to teaching and learning but also to education as an environment that diagnoses illness and ultimately promotes the health of all learners.

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Still Leaving Citizens Behind: Reconceiving the Civic Empowerment Gap as a Democratic Capability Gap

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Introduction

In this essay, I aim to expand the scope of extant theorizing about democratic education beyond formal schooling. To do so, I argue that the effective opportunities children will have as adults to participate influentially in democratic life within their communities are not just matters of political equality, nor are they matters that fall just within the domain of social or political theorizing. Instead, these opportunities must be recognized as part of our understanding of equality in democratic education (broadly conceived) and, therefore, as part of the domain of educational theorizing. I suggest Amartya Sen's capability approach¹ can form the theoretical basis for thinking about equal opportunity for democratic education in this way, and I attempt to demonstrate its value by offering it as a supplement (and, at times, corrective) to the theoretical work in Meira Levinson's² *No Citizen Left Behind* and Amy Gutmann's³ *Democratic Education*.

I begin with an exploration of Levinson's *No Citizen Left Behind*, with particular attention to her argument that a revitalized approach to formal civic education—namely, one guided by an “action civics” model—is essential to efforts to close the “civic empowerment gap” and, thereby, to promote political equality. While I find much value in Levinson's thinking about civic education, I argue that it focuses too intently on formal schooling and gives insufficient attention to the *education*-related importance of non-school institutions. In an effort to correct this shortcoming in Levinson's thinking, I first consider Amy Gutmann's theory of democratic education, noting her clear recognition of the role for non-school institutions as part of nonformal democratic education. However, to my mind, Gutmann ultimately understands the educational role of such institutions too narrowly, as simply helping citizens to cultivate further the democratic knowledge, skills, and values that enable their participation in democratic processes.

I turn, therefore, to Amartya Sen's capability approach (CA) in an attempt to theorize more sufficiently and explicitly nonformal

democratic education in relation to formal democratic education. I argue that the CA helps—indeed, forces—us to recognize, first, that to fulfill their educational role non-school institutions must provide citizens with effective opportunities to participate influentially in democratic life and, second—and here is the explicitly education-related point—that such opportunities for participation are also opportunities for citizens to *continue their democratic learning*. In developing these arguments, I author and advance the concept I call “democratic capability” and illustrate the role democratic education—broadly conceived—must play in promoting this capability and, relatedly, in reducing “democratic capability gaps.”

The Civic Empowerment Gap and Nonformal Democratic Education

In her recent and influential book *No Citizen Left Behind*, Meira Levinson calls our attention to “a profound civic empowerment gap” that exists in the United States “between ethnoracial minority, naturalized, and especially poor citizens, on the one hand, and White, native-born, and especially middle-class and wealthy citizens, on the other.”⁴ Because of this gap—that is, because of disparities in the achievement of ostensibly empowering civic knowledge, skills and attitudes—the former groups are less able and less likely than the latter to participate in and “influence civic and political deliberation or decision making,”⁵ to develop and express “democratic values,”⁶ and generally to be “participatory citizens.”⁷

Thus, insofar as the U.S. is committed to robust and equal political participation as central to the vitality and effectiveness of its democracy, there is good reason, Levinson argues, to be concerned with finding ways to close the civic empowerment gap—and to do so with the same urgency and resourcefulness with which the U.S. has sought to address its more familiar *academic achievement* gap.⁸ And given the long history of schools as important locations of civic education, there is also good reason to consider formal education as one important means to doing so. In particular, Levinson argues, schools must help students to develop “knowledge, skills, pro-civic attitudes, and habits of civic participation for the future.”⁹ The possession of such knowledge, skills, and attitudes is significantly correlated, Levinson shows, with the degree to which children become “active participants in American civic and political life” as adults and, therefore, with the degree to which they come to “influence civic political deliberation [and] decision making.”¹⁰

Importantly, however, Levinson recognizes that to empower children civically and politically requires more than simply equipping them with certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Children must also have opportunities for civic participation in and through their formal schooling. For this reason, she advocates an “action civics” approach—one that not only emphasizes the development of students’ “*capabilities* for

civic empowerment”¹¹ but that also provides and facilitates *opportunities* through which students actually can engage in various forms of civic action, for example by “serving on a mock trial jury, engaging in community organizing, participating in Model United Nations, or interning with a non-profit organization.”¹² These kinds of participatory opportunities are essential to children’s developing sense of civic empowerment. Indeed, they serve two related purposes in Levinson’s overall scheme of formal civic education. First, opportunities for guided civic action enable children to put their civic knowledge and skills to use and to demonstrate their civic attitudes (and to recognize the value in doing so). And second, students’ actualization of these opportunities for civic action promotes further civic learning outcomes, particularly those that “can be difficult for teachers and schools to help students achieve in any other way.”¹³ In other words, the opportunities for civic engagement schools provide and facilitate serve *both* to enable children to begin “acting upon” the civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes they are developing *and* to promote children’s achievement of additional civic learning outcomes.¹⁴

The point is that Levinson recognizes formal civic education must cultivate children’s civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes and, relatedly, it must provide and facilitate the kinds of opportunities through which children actually can begin *being* active citizens and generally *doing* what citizenship requires. She recognizes, in other words, that the ultimate goal of formal civic education is for children to achieve what we might call—drawing on the language of Sen’s CA—civic or democratic *functioning*.¹⁵ To function, according to Sen, is to achieve a state of “being” and “doing,” for instance, riding a bicycle, living as a well-nourished person, or participating in civic action.¹⁶ And the two components of Levinson’s approach to civic education—the knowledge, skills, and values component and the opportunities component—would seem to go a long way in helping students to achieve civic or democratic functioning. Indeed, it is through this action civics approach, Levinson argues, that students can begin to “*do civics and behave as citizens.*”¹⁷

This is all to Levinson’s credit. Both her diagnosis of a civic empowerment gap and her plan for reducing this gap through a revitalized approach to civic education in public schools—one that facilitates students’ achievement of civic or democratic functioning—are valuable contributions to our efforts to remediate inequalities in political participation and influence through formal civic education. But as Levinson herself recognizes, schools—no matter how they conduct civic education—cannot “overcome the civic empowerment gap entirely on their own.”¹⁸ She reminds us there are “powerful institutional, political and other factors” beyond schooling that create “multiple barriers to equal civic empowerment.”¹⁹ In light of these acknowledgements, she

also points to the importance of closing “civic opportunity gaps,” that is, disparities in the opportunities citizens have for meaningful civic participation.²⁰ There are two such gaps that are important relative to the broader civic empowerment gap. The first—what Levinson calls, more specifically, a “civic learning opportunity gap”—I discussed previously: this opportunity gap is the one children face in schools and that Levinson’s approach to formal civic education aims to address by providing and facilitating opportunities for students to engage in civic action in and through formal schooling. The second opportunity gap is the one that those who have typically been civically *disempowered* face “in their neighborhoods” and broader communities.²¹ These opportunity gaps, she argues, are not necessarily eliminated by the work public schools do. Rather, she notes, their elimination seems to demand “numerous changes...across multiple sectors of society.”²² Surely this is correct. Eliminating gaps in the opportunities citizens have for civic and political participation in their communities is a broad social, economic, and political endeavor that would necessarily include, as Levinson notes, an expansive list of social, political, and economic reforms.²³

But this does not mean that this wider gap in opportunities for civic or political participation—the one that exists in neighborhoods and communities—is beyond or separable from the domain of education or educational theorizing. The argument here is that these, too, are civic *learning* opportunity gaps. Indeed, we need only to recall Levinson’s own important recognition—as seen in her discussion of civic education in schools—that civic action is itself educative, and, in fact, that it leads to civic learning outcomes that are hard to achieve in other ways. Unfortunately, Levinson does not extend this point explicitly to the opportunities for civic or political participation that children—as adult citizens—will have (or lack) beyond their formal schooling. She does not seem to recognize that *civic* opportunity gaps in our wider communities—the communities in which children will attempt to exert political influence as adult citizens—are also gaps in *educational* or *learning* opportunities. She does not recognize, in other words, that inequalities in opportunities for civic *participation* are also inequalities in opportunities for (further, non-formal) civic *education*.

Instead, Levinson focuses primarily on civic education in schools and only briefly points to—but does not address sufficiently or in any depth—the role of non-school institutions (and of social, political, and economic reform more broadly) in expanding people’s effective opportunities for democratic participation in their wider communities. I want to expand and try to fill out Levinson’s project by arguing that a theory of civic or democratic education that concerns itself with

educational and political equality and with the relationship between them, as Levinson's surely does, must address more than just *schooling*. It is not enough, in other words, to propose a program of formal schooling that includes and facilitates children's opportunities to engage in guided civic action (or, in Senian language, children's achievement of civic or democratic functioning). Beyond this, our educational theorizing must also address those social, political, economic, and other conditions that effectively restrict people's opportunities to function as democratic citizens beyond the context of their formal schooling and that, as a result, restrict their opportunities to continue their democratic learning. After all, such democratic learning happens not just when opportunities for civic or democratic participation are provided and facilitated through one's formal schooling (as in "guided experiential civic education"), but also when they are provided by non-school institutions, as part of what Sen calls one's "wider political education."²⁴ Engaging in democratic practice, Sen reminds us, is an important means through which people learn "to organize, to question established patterns of authority, to demand their rights, to resist corruption, and so on."²⁵ In other words, people—both children and adults—continually learn democracy, in part, by exercising their effective opportunities to engage in the practice of democracy within their communities.

And so if we are concerned with equality of civic or democratic education—inclusive not just of schooling, but also of this democratic learning-through-practice—our theorizing must address inequalities in the effective opportunities that citizens have to practice democracy beyond the context of their formal schooling and, thereby, to continue their democratic learning. And this means addressing the social, economic, and political conditions that enable or restrict such opportunities and, related, it means addressing the failures of *non-school institutions* to provide effective participatory opportunities to all citizens.

Yet too often—and I think this is the case with Levinson—such broad inequalities are recognized, but their education-related importance is overlooked or given insufficient attention in educational theorizing. As a result, potential theories of democratic *education* are reduced to theories of democratic *schooling*. The latter bracket or ignore questions about the importance of non-school institutions—and of external social, economic, and political conditions more generally—to equality in civic or democratic education. They focus too narrowly on whether or not schools are successful in equipping children with empowering knowledge, skills, and attitudes and ignore the external conditions that restrict adults' democratic participation and, therefore, limit their opportunities not only for political influence, but also for democratic learning beyond schooling. Thus, until we recognize that the external

(i.e., the social, political, and economic) conditions that restrict some citizens' effective participation in democratic life are necessarily part of our educational theorizing, we will continue to leave citizens behind. We will continue, in other words, to equip children with empowering knowledge, skills, and values only to watch many of them emerge from their formal schooling into communities that effectively restrict—or otherwise fail to provide—opportunities for them to participate influentially in democratic life and, thereby, to continue their democratic learning.

Democratic Education as the Promotion of Democratic Capability

Of course, some theorists of democratic education have been more explicitly and thoroughly attentive to the educational role for non-school institutions. Amy Gutmann, for instance, emphasizes citizens' access to culture, since this, too, has educational value insofar as adults “learn from books, plays, concerts, museums, newspapers, radio, and even television.”²⁶ Furthermore, she argues for increased opportunities for citizens to “exercise discretion in their daily work and to participate in democratic politics”;²⁷ she also suggests less “authoritarian” family structures can contribute to schools' achievement of their “democratic potential”;²⁸ finally, she recognizes the problematic effects that “economic...deprivations” have on citizens' effective participation in democratic processes.²⁹ Thus, for Gutmann, successful democratic education in the broad sense depends on the nature and workings of the “cultural, economic, and political institutions” that compose society. Like the institution of schooling, these non-school institutions serve an important educational purpose; they, too, contribute to the democratic education of citizens. And, therefore, they, too, deserve attention in our educational—and not just social or political—theorizing.

But in stating explicitly the precise nature of education-related contributions of non-school institutions, Gutmann (over)emphasizes their role in helping adult citizens to acquire knowledge, skills, and values. Indeed, she tells us, ultimately, that “the primary [educational] purpose of the mass media, industry, and government, like that of schools, is to *cultivate the knowledge, skills and virtues necessary for democratic deliberation among citizens.*”³⁰ In other words, for Gutmann, these and other “cultural, economic, and political institutions” have an educational purpose that is identical to that of schools, namely, to equip (or further to equip) citizens with a sufficient store of democratic knowledge, skills, and values that, according to Gutmann, will enable their participation in democratic processes.

Now, I have argued that the goal of *formal* democratic schooling is better understood as the facilitation of children's achievement of

democratic functioning—a process inclusive of *both* their development of the political knowledge, skills, and values their communities agree are important for effective participation *and* their realization of opportunities to begin to function as democratic persons in and through their formal schooling. By this way of thinking, non-school institutions—if they are to meet their democratic educational purpose—would need to be understood as supporting and extending processes through which citizens can function democratically. The educational role of these institutions, in other words, should not be understood as simply equipping citizens with additional democratic knowledge, skills, and values. Rather, they must be designed—and actually operate—in such a way as to provide all citizens with effective opportunities to continue to exercise or utilize such knowledge, skills, and values in ways that enable them actually to influence democratic life. The question, then, is not whether or how non-school institutions can be designed and controlled so as further to “*cultivate the knowledge, skills and virtues necessary for democratic deliberation among citizens.*” It is, rather, whether and to what degree such institutions ensure all adults have effective opportunities to continue to function as democratic persons—and, therefore, continue to have opportunities to learn democracy—beyond and outside the context of their formal schooling.

So, I think Gutmann is right to address the important education-related role of non-school institutions in a democracy. But she limits the force of her theorizing of non-formal democratic education by arguing that these institutions fulfill their educational role simply by promoting further citizens’ acquisition of democratic knowledge, skills, and values. According to a more thoroughly Senian way of thinking about democratic education, the relationship between schools and non-school institutions would have to be understood as one through which children achieve *democratic functioning* and, as adults, are provided with *effective opportunities* to continue to function as such in their communities (if they so choose) and, thereby, to continue their democratic learning. This is precisely what it means to enjoy what I term *democratic capability*. To have this capability is to have *both* the developed ability or capacities to function as a democratic person (however these are defined) *and* the effective opportunities to continue to function as such in one’s wider (non-school) communities. Our educational theorizing—and our educational and other reform efforts—should aim to address both of these aspects of one’s democratic education. And addressing the latter aspect means identifying clearly and working to address—and not simply bracketing off—the social, political, and economic conditions that restrict one’s effective opportunities for democratic participation.

Consider an example that helps to make clearer this way of conceiving the relationship between formal schooling (aimed at

children's achievement of democratic functioning) and the educational role of non-school institutions (aimed at providing adult citizens with effective opportunities to continue to function democratically). In *Women and Human Development*, Martha Nussbaum tells of an Indian woman who has earned a nursing diploma by taking advantage of "affirmative action programs in education aimed at the lowest castes."³¹ Thanks in part to the affirmative-action program, this woman has been provided with the opportunity to be educated as a nurse. We can presume, furthermore, that she has also received the proper kind and amount of resources and assistance needed to enable her to exercise this opportunity and, we might say, to begin functioning as a nurse within the context of (and with the guidance provided by) her formal education. As a result, she has earned a diploma. This may initially sound like a success story of an educational program meant to improve gender equity in education. But, as it turns out, this woman cannot use her diploma in a meaningful way because "corruption in the hospital system means that she would have to pay Rs. 2,500 upfront money to have a chance at a nursing job." Because the woman cannot afford the payoff, she "sits at home all day doing housework; she keeps the nursing diploma in a box, and shows it sadly to visitors."³²

This woman's example illustrates clearly that, despite her opportunity to be educated as a nurse and her apparent achievement of the functioning—the "beings and doings"—related to nursing, her effective opportunities to function as a nurse beyond the context of her formal schooling are restricted by external factors beyond her control, namely, corruption in the hospital system and the requirement of a payoff she cannot afford. Now, imagine a second woman who similarly earns her nursing diploma but is not forced to make any kind of payoff in order to obtain a job as a nurse in the hospital system. In such a situation both women have, in and through their formal schooling, achieved an adequate level of the functionings relevant to nursing—they have begun, as Levinson might put it, to *do* nursing and *behave* as nurses—and so they have earned nursing diplomas. In this sense, equality has been achieved in their formal nursing education.

But non-school institutions are failing to provide both women with equally effective opportunities to continue to function as nurses beyond their schooling, that is, in their communities. And, importantly, the inequity in these women's opportunities to function as nurses beyond their formal schooling also means one has the chance to further her education as a nurse in ways the other does not. After all, the woman who goes on actually to work as a nurse—that is, the woman who enjoys and exercises the opportunity to continue to function as a nurse beyond

her formal schooling—is likely, as a result, to learn more about her profession and to improve her practice. This is simply to say that actually to function as a nurse is likely to provide her with additional opportunities to learn and improve her practice. We have already, with Levinson’s help, made a similar point about civic or democratic functioning, namely, that to function as a democratic citizen *is itself educative*. It is an important—possibly the most important—means through which a person learns to function more effectively as a democratic citizen. Thus, the *effective opportunities* people have to continue to function in the ways their schooling enables them to function—whether as citizens or as nurses—are important to our thinking about *educational* equality.

Returning to the specific context of democratic education, what this example helps us to recognize is that even when various individuals and groups develop equal (or adequate) *abilities* to function as democratic persons and even when they actually achieve democratic functioning in and through their formal schooling, they may not enjoy equal—or equally effective—*opportunities* to function democratically beyond formal schooling. And, therefore, they would still lack *democratic capability*, which is, as I have illustrated, inclusive of *both* the knowledge and skills required to do or be something *and* the effective opportunities actually to be and do those things. In other words, it depends inescapably *both* on people’s developed abilities (i.e., capacities and skills) *and* on the social, cultural, and other conditions that characterize their various communities. Furthermore—and this conclusion is the explicitly education-related point—the individuals or groups who lack the opportunities to function as democratic citizens also lack additional opportunities to continue learning democracy, since democratic functioning is itself educative. Thus, we have good reason for thinking more carefully about inequality in adult citizens’ effective opportunities to participate in democracy—and about the conditions that cause such inequality—as part of our thinking about *educational* (and not just *political*) equality. In other words, our thinking about democratic education needs to address children’s internal development of empowering democratic knowledge, skills, and values *together with*—not *separately from*—the external conditions that characterize the communities in which they will attempt to (continue to) function democratically as adult citizens and, thereby, to continue their democratic learning.

The current debate over voter identification laws in several U.S. states helps to illustrate further the point about the importance—as a matter of both political and educational equality—of adults’ opportunities and freedoms to participate in democracy (to function as

democratic citizens). As part of its “Democracy Program,” The Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law published a report in 2012 that focused on the enactment of these laws in ten states, including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin, all of which now require voters to show an approved photo identification.³³ Importantly, the states are legally required to provide free photo identification to all eligible voters who do not have one. But the problem is that some citizens face significant difficulties in obtaining such identification. For instance, the report shows that among eligible voters lacking the proper identification, nearly 500,000 of them “do not have access to a vehicle and live more than 10 miles from the nearest state ID-issuing office open more than two days a week. Many of them live in rural areas with dwindling public transportation options.”³⁴ Furthermore, even though the approved identification itself is free, actually to obtain one requires certain documentation, for instance a birth certificate, obtaining a copy of which can cost upwards of twenty-five dollars.³⁵ Thus, these laws effectively exclude certain individuals or groups—typically ethnoracial minorities, women, and lower-income earners—from voting.

To be sure, the citizens directly affected by such laws likely possess the skills, knowledge, and values that would enable them to vote and to be participatory citizens and, in general, to function as democratic persons. For instance, we can presume that they possess—and perhaps have even developed through their formal education—the ability to read and understand the ballot and the process of voting itself and that they can do what is necessary to cast an informed vote, and so on. Furthermore, they still possess the formal opportunity to vote and the legal freedom to do so. But because of the restrictive nature of such laws—particularly in combination with other problematic social arrangements and economic conditions—these citizens’ effective opportunities to vote have been significantly limited. Thus, despite whatever formal education they received and however much it prepared them to function as democratic citizens—even in this most basic way (i.e., by voting)—their capability to function as democratic citizens is not equal to the capability enjoyed by those citizens who are not effectively excluded by these laws. Two consequences follow: First, a democratic capability gap remains between these citizens and those not directly affected by the laws; second, the affected citizens have less chance to engage in whatever learning might take place through the act of voting, and, therefore, they are denied further democratic education. These are, therefore, not just political inequalities but also—and importantly—inequalities in (democratic) educational opportunities.

A *capability*-based approach to democratic education enables—indeed, requires—us to theorize democratic education in a way that accounts more thoroughly for such inequalities. Sen’s CA recognizes that individuals’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, capacities, and other “*internal factors*” or “*personal traits*” tell only half the story about their attainment of capabilities. Beyond this, we must also be attentive to the “*external factors*”—social, economic, political, and even environmental conditions—that enable or prevent one’s attainment of a capability.³⁶ Thus, having a capability—including democratic capability—is a *social* achievement, not strictly an *individual* one. One cannot, therefore, focus attention on internal factors—schooling individuals in certain ways in order to develop an individual’s civic capacities and help him or her achieve democratic functioning—and simply leave the external factors to one side. One’s enjoyment of democratic capability—or any capability—is just as much a matter of the external conditions in one’s communities (and in society more broadly) as it is of one’s internal capacities. Thus, conceiving of equality of democratic education and of political equality more generally in terms of democratic capability necessarily means focusing *both* on the democratic development of individuals (internal factors) *and simultaneously* on the democratization of society itself (external factors). The latter includes (and depends upon) the development and evolution of a robustly democratic culture—what Sen has called a “*culture of political participation*”³⁷—that provides all individuals and groups with sufficient, effective opportunities for democratic participation and, therefore, for continued democratic learning.

Conclusion

I have argued that a Senian approach to formal civic or democratic education generally endorses the idea of “*action civics*”—particularly its emphasis on facilitating the process through which children begin to “*do civics and behave as citizens*” or, as I have put it, to function as democratic persons in and through their schooling. But beyond this, it would also have us adopt the concept related to functioning in Sen’s thinking, namely, the concept of *capability*, or the real freedom—inclusive of the general abilities and the effective opportunities—a person has to function in various ways. From this Senian perspective, the gap we should be concerned with is what we can call the “*democratic capability gap*,” that is, the disparities in the capabilities that some individuals and groups enjoy for meaningful and consequential democratic participation in their communities.

The upshot of this argument is that, when it comes to democratic education, we must ask not just whether schools are doing their part to facilitate children’s democratic functioning. We must also take a broader and longer view by asking whether non-school institutions are fulfilling

their democratic educational purpose, namely, providing all adult citizens with effective opportunities to function as democratic citizens in their communities *and, thereby, to continue their democratic learning*. Inequalities in such opportunities for civic and democratic participation are, in fact, inequalities in educational opportunities. Thus, until children (as adults) come to enjoy equal, effective opportunities to engage meaningfully and consequentially in democratic practices and so come to have equal opportunities to continue their democratic learning, the democratic capability gap will remain. At best, schools will have equipped children with what we might call “diplomas in democracy,” but we will have failed to address the social, economic, political and other conditions that prevent them either from using those diplomas or building on them with additional democratic learning-through-practice.

Going forward, these conditions demand greater and more direct and sustained attention in educational theorizing and research. Indeed, philosophers of education and educational theorists would do well to remember the ubiquity of democratic education.³⁸ In particular, we must theorize more thoroughly and explicitly the democratic educational role for non-school institutions in relation to schools. And we must recognize that restrictions on one’s effective opportunities to participate in democratic processes are also restrictions on one’s opportunities to continue to learn democracy beyond schooling. Thinking more deeply about, identifying and, ultimately, removing such restrictions are, therefore, essential steps not only to political equality but also, and importantly, to educational equality.

Endnotes

- 1 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999).
- 2 Meira Levinson, *No Citizen Left Behind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
- 3 Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 4 Levinson, *No Citizen Left Behind*, 31–32.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 48.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 31–32. The language of “gaps” deserves comment here. In particular, it is worth noting the potential criticism that Levinson’s

arguments—and, perhaps by extension, my own arguments—represent or even endorse a deficit orientation (on deficit thinking see, for example, Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Pushing Past the Achievement Gap: An Essay on the Language of Deficit.” *Journal of Negro Education* 76, no. 3 (2007): 316–323). Levinson herself explicitly rejects the idea that she has offered a deficit-oriented argument because she does not see “gaps” as necessarily implying “deficits” (46). I agree with her on this point—and I am sympathetic in general to her attempt to engage in non-ideal theorizing—even if I am not entirely convinced that she has avoided the problem of deficit thinking. Regardless, my own argument, as I hope will become clearer, moves further away from deficit-oriented thinking, specifically because disparities in what I call “democratic capability” are primarily *opportunity* gaps and not gaps in some *specific* achievement—for instance, the achievement of certain (i.e., privileged) political knowledge and skills. What a community considers essential democratic knowledge and skills (or, in my Senian language, however a community defines what it means to function democratically) should be open to broad and inclusive public discussion that honors the various modes of communication within that community. It should not simply be a reflection of the dominant, privileged mode of political participation. And regardless of the knowledge and skills a community decides are essential to democratic participation, the point is that we must provide sufficient effective opportunities (not just in schools, I argue, but also through non-school institutions) for all persons to learn and to participate in (and thereby to continue learning) democracy. That is what I am concerned with here—disparities or gaps in these *effective opportunities* to learn democracy. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out to me that my initial silence on this question of deficit thinking in Levinson’s work could have been read as an endorsement of what is clearly problematic about such thinking.

⁹ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹¹ Ibid., 33, emphasis added.

¹² Ibid., 216.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 217.

¹⁵ Tony DeCesare, “Theorizing Democratic Education from a Senian Perspective.” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 33, no. 2 (2014): 149–170.

¹⁶ Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

¹⁷ Ibid., 224.

¹⁸ Levinson, *No Citizen Left Behind*, 51.

¹⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 51.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 50–51.

²⁴ Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Development and Participation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 363.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 257.

²⁷ Ibid., 282.

²⁸ Ibid., 284.

²⁹ Ibid., 264.

³⁰ Ibid., 288.

³¹ Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19.

³² Ibid.

³³ Keesha Gaskins and Sundeep Iyer, *The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification* (New York: New York University School of Law, Brennan Center for Justice, 2012).

³⁴ Ibid., 1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ David A. Crocker, *Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 172.

³⁷ Dreze and Sen, *India*, 362–363.

³⁸ I owe this phrasing to an anonymous reviewer.

From Left to Right: The Paradox of Kingsley Amis' Views of University Education in Post-World War II Britain

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In the July 1960 issue of *Encounter* the well-known novelist and poet, Kingsley Amis, wrote, “Nobody who has not seen it in all its majesty...can imagine the pit of ignorance and incapacity into which British education has sunk since the war.”¹ Amis was disturbed by the spread of illiteracy and what he saw as the inability among young British citizens in universities to grasp the fundamentals of their native language. He believed the situation would be exacerbated if those who sought to increase the number of places for students in the nation’s colleges and universities were successful. This complaint was not the first objection Amis uttered about the state of education in the United Kingdom, yet it represents a shift in his thinking about higher education in post-war Britain. A mere six years earlier in his most famous novel, *Lucky Jim*,² Amis offers a thinly veiled critique of British universities in the 1950s and the elitist culture they represent. Through entertaining satire, he tells of a young lecturer in medieval history, Jim Dixon, who does not fit into the stuffy, class-dominated atmosphere of the provincial university in which he works.

Most scholars who have studied Kingsley Amis and his writings are concerned with him as a poet and novelist associated with the post-World War II group of writers called The Movement who rejected Modernist literature and its high-minded concerns in favor of producing works about ordinary people. Many scholars investigate his acerbic criticisms in later novels of British life during the “Swinging Sixties.” Amis’ biographers, of course, treat his literary works as a part of the larger story of his life, and they discuss his shifting politics and ideas about education at appropriate chronological points in their narratives. Historians touch upon Amis as they investigate the post-war era, particularly the 1950s and 1960s. Scholars, however, have failed to investigate Amis’ educational thought and its relation to shifting politics as a manifestation of his evolving critique of post-war, British culture.³

Thus, in this essay I explore Kingsley Amis' polemical writings about British universities and his changing politics from the 1950s to the 1970s in an attempt to explain changes in British society and education that led him to rail against the upper-class nature of universities and their faculties from the Left in the mid-1950s and then, a mere five years later, to begin a decades-long attack from the Right on the increase in the number of places in colleges and universities that would expand educational opportunities particularly for students from the lower-middle and working classes. In order to evidence why Amis made this radical shift in his educational ideals, I first provide a brief look at the post-war economic growth of Britain and the accompanying educational reforms as social context for his criticism of the Left for their upper-class attitudes and only grudgingly accepting at university a growing number of students from the lower-middle class. Second, after describing the government's proposed reforms for post-secondary education in the 1960s, I set the stage for examining Amis' shift to the Right and his frequent criticisms of reform that eventually expanded educational opportunity in Britain. As a result of my investigation, I argue the growing affluence of post-war British society, the resulting expansion of educational opportunity, and the increasingly liberal culture led Kingsley Amis—and other intellectuals of his generation—to shift his politics and ideas about a university education from an anti-elitist, leftist position to one increasingly conservative and elitist that paradoxically would limit educational opportunity for Britons of the very social class from which he came.

Following World War II the Labour government, led by Clement Attlee, struggled to rebuild the economy and expand the welfare state in the United Kingdom. Enormous debt, a fuel shortage, and a financial crisis severely complicated the recovery effort. In response, the Attlee government instituted austerity measures and effectively used the Marshall Plan as the principal source of financial aid for the nation. These austere actions enabled Britain to depart early from the Marshall Plan in 1950 and emerge from the post-war recovery by 1954, when the rationing of goods ended.⁴

Even under the dark cloud of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation, the humiliation of the Suez Crisis in 1956, and the nation's decline as a world power with "the sun setting on the empire," Britons experienced a growing consumer economy in the 1950s to such an extent that on July 20, 1957, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan proclaimed,

Let's be frank about it: most of our people have never had it so good. Go around the country, go to the industrial towns, go to the farms, and you will see a state of prosperity such as we have

never had in my lifetime—nor indeed ever in the history of this country. What is worrying some of us is “Is it too good to be true?” Or perhaps I should say “Is it too good to last?”⁵

The economy, in fact, continued to grow, and by the end of the decade, prosperity and the emergence of a consumer culture were well underway, providing a strong economic base for the expansion of education at all levels.

The reorganization and expansion of education in the United Kingdom began in the mid-1940s when Parliament, at the recommendation of the coalition government led by Winston Churchill, mandated free secondary schooling be made available to all children in Britain. Supplementing the law was a series of reports from committees commissioned by the Coalition, Labour, and Conservative governments, respectively, between the late 1940s and early 1960s. The *Butler Act of 1944* and the *Barlow Committee Report of 1946*, for example, set forth plans for elementary and secondary schooling, and scientific and technological education in universities during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. In its principal thrust, the *Butler Act* called for the expansion of educational opportunity at the secondary-school level under the control of local educational authorities through three types of schools: grammar schools with a curriculum aimed at entry into the universities, technical schools providing vocational instruction, and secondary-modern schools. Indicative of the social-class bias of British society, reformers expected a social-class percentage division of 5:15:80 among the school-age population.

What in fact occurred was a percentage division of 25:5:70 as a result of parents pressuring officials to provide schooling that would prepare their children to enter university. Working-class parents, for example, recognized that secondary-modern schools aimed at conditioning their children for working-class jobs belied the government's claims of equal status among secondary schools. Public dissatisfaction with British schools spread as sociologists and educationists revealed the inequities the educational system produced by distorted curricula from the primary school through the sixth form, the “jungle” of competitive student awards—state scholarships, local authority awards, scholarships and bursaries given by universities and colleges,” and the resulting struggles of many young people seeking admission to a limited number of places in universities, respectively, in a series of reports that exposed the class-based inequities produced by British schools. Many teachers, moreover, thought the narrow tip of the educational pyramid wasted talent leading to university.⁶ It was in this context of educational controversy that Kingsley Amis issued his first critique of British universities. Before I present and analyze his critique,

however, it is important to know who he was and where he came from in order to make sense of his thoughts on British higher education.

Kingsley Amis was born on April 16, 1922, to a lower-middle-class family who lived in Norwood, south London. Educated at Norbury College and City of London, he earned an exhibition to St. John's College, Oxford in 1941 to read English literature. Following military service, he returned to Oxford and completed baccalaureate studies in 1948. There he developed a friendship with the two people in the world he most admired, poet and librarian Philip Larkin and Hillary (Hilly) Bardwell, the latter of whom he soon married. After Oxford he obtained a post as an assistant lecturer in English at University College of Swansea, a civic university in Wales.⁷

At Swansea from 1947 to 1961, Amis experienced university education from the other side of the desk, as it were. There he began to formulate a critique of British university education that had two themes. First, universities consistently admitted a limited number of British students deemed capable of benefiting from the ultimate purpose of a university education—the cultivation of the mind. Second, given the pool of “capable” students had already been tapped, engineering an increase in the number of available places for students in universities would inevitably lower university standards. Soon afterward, in the late 1950s, the higher education reform debate spread to the public at large, Amis sought an audience for his views in popular periodicals, and thereafter repeated these views for the remainder of his life in newspapers, pamphlets, and his *Memoirs*.⁸

Amis gained public recognition in 1954 for his first novel and coincidental initial critique of British universities, *Lucky Jim*, the story of Jim Dixon and his seriocomic experiences as an assistant lecturer in medieval history at an unnamed provincial university. Amis denied the setting resembled the University of Leicester where his friend, Philip Larkin, was a librarian, but the similarities are difficult to overlook. Dixon represented the growing number of lower-middle-class scholarship students who attended a local grammar school and obtained a university degree, in his case from Swansea. His words and comic actions expose the stuffy academic community of the pompous Professor “Neddy” Welch and the social circle of Dixon's superior's pretentious friends and colleagues. He hates the weekend gathering at Welch's home with its group singing, classical music, and fine wine in a social setting in which he clearly feels out of place. At the same time, he recognizes his fate for a second probationary year lies in publishing an article on fifteenth-century shipbuilding techniques despite the essay's “niggling mindlessness, its funeral parade of yawn-enforcing facts, [and]

the pseudo light it threw upon non-problems,” and in giving a public lecture on the vapid subject Welch chooses for him, “Merrie England.” Dixon’s superior also expects him to perform the tedious labor of researching obscure references for one of Welch’s lectures and indexing the notes for the professor’s book manuscript.⁹

In addition to its thinly disguised autobiographical elements *Lucky Jim* is Amis’ critique of the traditional academic establishment that begrudgingly admits teachers and students from the lower-middle class to the universities. What is missing from his criticism of academic culture is any objection to the class structure it represents. Nevertheless, the story of Jim Dixon and his comedic antics quickly gained popularity. In addition, Amis’ critique of the university establishment led journalists to place him among the “Angry Young Men” of British literature in the 1950s, a label he quickly disavowed.¹⁰

Lucky Jim also reflects Amis’ ambivalent leftist political leanings, which he describes in 1957 in a Fabian tract entitled *Socialism and the Intellectuals*. Here Amis complains about the romanticism of 1950s intellectuals who pretend to understand social conditions with which they have no real experience, espousing sympathy for the problems of labor at a union meeting while displaying middle-class habits or deploring military action in Suez and calling for international justice from afar. Admitting his own engagement in politics is limited to displaying a poster or lending his car for a political parade, he insists he regularly has and will continue to vote Labour. He argues the Party would be better off without the romantic intellectuals who, lacking a long-term crisis about which to become incensed, were moving to the right as they complained about what he called “non-political issues”: “the colour bar, horror-comics, juvenile delinquency, the abolition of capital punishment, [and] the reform of the laws relating to divorce and homosexuality.”¹¹ But Amis would soon join the movement to the right when debate over reforming British universities began to heat up in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The “revolution [in higher education] of the nineteen-sixties,” writes historian Noël Annan, originates with the work of Sir David Eccles who issued a white paper in 1956 calling for technological education. Since universities refused his challenge, the Ministry of Education undertook the task of establishing colleges of advanced technology as sophisticated institutions, but not quite universities, that would further technological education beyond that of the polytechnic institutes. Then came the Crowther Report on education of young Britons 15 to 18 years old, the Plowden Report on primary schools, Newsom and Martin on boarding schools, Anderson on competitive

student awards, and, culminating the push for reform, the Robbins Report on higher education.¹²

Amis' skepticism and anti-establishment attitude, however, belied a gradual shift to the right that first appeared in a critique of the 1950s published in the July 1960 issue of *Encounter*. Although Lucky Jim Dixon mentions some concern for expanding university admission, Amis presents the clearest statement of his views on university reform in "Lone Voices: Views of the 'Fifties.'" He begins with a cryptic critique of sociology by lamenting the "sociologizing" of society with its penchant for labeling every aspect of the culture:

Human spontaneity may well appear to have been worse damaged by the labelers than by any of the spectres they so clamorously and repetitively labeled—mass culture, herd values, conspicuous consumption, status seeking, success ethics—and the multiplication of diagnosis itself is coming to the point where it obstructs cure.¹³

He objects to characterizations of society and human behavior in the cinema and on television, as well as the popularity of descriptions of society in contemporary sociological studies by David Riesman, Vance Packard, and William H. Whyte as substitutes for creative literature. Although Amis admits there are problems with the 1950s, he thinks the descriptions of the decade as "...the worst, falsest, most cynical, most apathetic, most commercialized, most Americanised, richest in cultural decline of any in Britain's history..."¹⁴ to be excessive and exaggerated. What he wanted was a lone voice who presented a viewpoint based on experience instead of some sociological study, which was what he purports to do in his soon-to-be-famous critique of the reform of British higher education.¹⁵

Amis' description of British society saturated with sociological pap and philistinism that an anonymous wag labeled "Hoggart-wash," a pejorative reference to Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, provided him with a context in which to flay post-war British education at all levels, but particularly higher education. Writing as a university lecturer, he complains of widespread "ignorance and incapacity," ranging "from the kindergarten to the House of Lords." Alluding to the increase in the number of British universities already underway by 1960, he reserves his most vehement criticism for those who worry about the nation falling behind the United States and the Soviet Union and who use statistics as a basis for calling for more universities and university graduates, technologists, and schoolteachers.¹⁶

Amis insisted the expansion of higher education would result in a lowering of university admission and examination standards. In other words, "MORE WILL MEAN WORSE,"¹⁷ an assertion he repeats

several times in the essay. He writes, for example, that lowering admission standards will "...wreck academic standards beyond repair,"¹⁸ as the result of hordes of ignorant students being admitted to universities—people who intend to study English literature—will come to the university with no knowledge of meter, rhyme, poem, and sentence. Consequently, he cynically opines,

Not only will examination standards have to be lowered to enable worse and worse people to graduate—you cannot let them all in and then not allow most of them to pass—but the good people will be less good than they used to be: this has steadily been happening ever since I started watching in 1949.¹⁹

Amis then admits he does not want to be forced to teach in a second-rate college masquerading as a university. Thus, despite his flawed logic, he fears expansion represents society's rejection of "the idea of a university as a centre of learning."²⁰

In response to growing calls for more scientists and technologists and for the substitution of curricular breadth in place of early specialization in the sixth form, Amis worries about the detrimental effects of such changes on instruction in all disciplines at the undergraduate level, but especially in the humanities. He contends, furthermore, that general courses really mean "...diluted, science and arts, more science for the arts students—oh, and arts for the scientists too, naturally."²¹ He then expresses the ubiquitous fear of humanists everywhere: "...the demand for more science...[will mean] less arts."²² Malcolm Bradbury, then at Birmingham University, later voices the same concern in an essay on one of the "Redbricks," Leicester University.²³

A year after publishing "Lone Voices," Amis solidifies his elitist attitude by accepting a position as a fellow in English at Peterhouse, Cambridge University, a change that further indicates his movement to the political right. Not an unproblematic move, Amis' new colleague, the famous F. R. Leavis, made reference to Amis' novels, declaring the university had hired "a pornographer."²⁴ Amis would leave Cambridge in 1963 for London to continue his literary career.

Soon after Amis took his post at Cambridge, the Macmillan government's select committee on the state of higher education in the United Kingdom confirmed his worst fears about the future of university education. On October 23, 1963, Lord Lionel Robbins, chairman of the Committee on Higher Education in the United Kingdom, announced the result of what was to become the most famous, influential study of British higher education in the post-war era. The Robbins Committee proposed a significant alteration of British higher education that included, among other things, elevating regional colleges and colleges of advanced technology to university status and the

establishment of “Special Institutions for Scientific and Technological Education and Research.” Although the report confirmed efforts already underway, such as the establishment of several new universities, the report clearly reflected many post-war political and social issues dominating the United Kingdom. Britain had experienced the trauma of near economic collapse and the emergence of a welfare state, both of which raised questions of social justice; weakness of its scientific and technological sector, which would have both domestic and international ramifications; as well as the loss of empire and the question of its status among the nations of the world. By the late 1950s, amid growing pressure for reform and recent growth of the economy, the government concluded there was a need to examine the whole of post-secondary education as a basis for potential reform “...in light of national needs and resources.”²⁵ What concerned the Robbins Committee most were the problems of social justice in post-secondary education and the need for scientific and technological development with implications for other issues of the era. For instance, as the Robbins Committee was deliberating and new universities were opening, university Vice-Chancellors spoke of the ideal size of universities in Britain as having 3,000 students, but the Committee surprised everyone by optimistically calling for 10,000 students in an average institution. The Committee also supported the idea of upgrading polytechnics to colleges of advanced technology with university status as well as expansion of opportunities to study science throughout the entire system as a means of fostering growth of science and technology.²⁶

The public response to Robbins was generally positive, at first. *The Times* headlines and articles, for instance, outlined the report’s results and recommendations and complimented the Robbins Committee on its accomplishments. Although the coverage was considerable, it was not wholly enthusiastic: the editorial page contained skeptical commentaries, echoing Kingsley Amis’ warning about the likelihood of declining standards. In contrast, Noël Annan recognized the historical significance of the report, noting that Robbins was the first comprehensive national report to examine higher education as an interrelated system of institutions, “...not a hierarchy of institutions headed by Oxford, Cambridge, and London...” Since that time, historians note the gradual shift in language from “universities” as an all-encompassing word for post-secondary education to “higher education,” implying instead a range of various types of educational institutions.²⁷

Immediately after Lord Robbins presented the report, the Conservative government announced support for the expansion with a recommendation for initial funding to start the effort. In the national

election of 1964, Harold Wilson led the Labour Party to victory on a platform touting a new era of science and technology, one fostered by an expanding system of universities. Not two years later, however, the euphoria had subsided as the economy began to sputter and Labour became very tentative about carrying out Robbins' recommendations.²⁸ The efforts aimed at dramatically reforming education in Britain would form the context of the debate about higher education and Kingsley Amis' evolving views of British higher education.

In the years leading to the Robbins Report, not all dons opposed university reform, however. After Amis had issued his slogan, the well-known historian Asa Briggs wrote a 1961 essay entitled "Universities for Tomorrow" describing plans for Brighton University, the newest of the "plate-glass" institutions, which he said would entail "...re-arrangements of the map of learning in universities." Brighton was to have schools of English studies, European studies, Asian studies, and social studies. In their first year, students would take general studies, after which curricula would be interdisciplinary. For example, in European studies students would learn a foreign language in association with history, contemporary economy and society, and patterns of culture, all linked with non-European studies in another school. He also mentions plans to add scientific studies in 1962. Unlike his fellow dons, Briggs, who would soon become a university administrator, saw great promise in university expansion and curricular reform.²⁹

Kingsley Amis was like many dons whose legitimate professional concern centered on teaching and research. In the wake of the Robbins Report, dons' letters to the editors of newspapers and periodicals such as *The Spectator* concerned the quality of instruction in universities, the need to preserve the strong tradition of the tutorial characteristic of Oxbridge, whether certain tutors were effective, whether the new universities ought to have tutorials at all, and other professional concerns. With the exception of comments from Peter Townsend of the University of Essex who opined the Robbins reforms potentially would further class divisions, most dons failed to mention the proposed expansion of opportunities for more qualified young people, particularly those of the lower-middle and working classes. University dons seemed blithely unconcerned about promoting social justice. Most of the correspondents were humanists who said nothing of society's scientific and technological needs, let alone of fostering the expansion of education to meet those needs.³⁰

Although Amis was not alone in his criticism of the proposed expansion of higher education, the British public appeared to be of two minds about university reform, particularly the Robbins Report's recommendations for significant expansion. Beginning the day after the Robbins committee issued its report in October 1963, newspapers and

other periodicals carried expressions of support for most of the Robbins recommendations, including reports that the Conservative government welcomed the report and intended to move quickly to implement some of its recommendations. Many on the Left and within the Labour Party also hailed the report, and Harold Wilson later campaigned particularly on its emphasis on science and technology. At the same time, there were expressions of concern about the potential lowering of standards coming, for example, from the editors of *The Times*, comments they frequently reiterated.³¹

Support for reform also came from some university administrators. In 1967, Lord Noël Annan, then Vice Chancellor of the University of London, joined the debate over the reform of education when his international reputation took him to New York where he addressed the Modern Language Association at its annual meeting on the subject of recent changes in British higher education. He sought to inform his listeners of the struggle then underway in the wake of the Robbins Report, and immediately it became clear where he stood in the debate then raging in his home country. With an air of great satisfaction, Annan recalled the visits of more than a hundred American academics in 1964, who had come to observe the first significant results of the post-war reform movement that had occurred just as the work of the Robbins Committee was heating up—seven new universities. By then, he said sardonically, the only opponents of expansion left, still muttering “more will mean worse” were “...that daring, unconventional, swinging novelist, Mr. Kingsley Amis, and that great British daily newspaper that proclaims ‘Top People read *The Times*.’”³² Annan went on to note the irony of change occurring in British and American universities in the mid 1960s. He saw academics in both countries taking trips “through the looking glass”: While the British Alice found a land desperately trying to rid its universities of the traditional hierarchy, with Oxbridge at the top followed in order by the “Redbricks” and the so-called “White-Tile” (another term used to identify the new universities) and rid of overspecialization of the sixth form, the American Alice entered a land where university teachers were finding their students already familiar with the arts and literature, the social and natural sciences, and advanced mathematics.³³

Unfortunately in Britain, laments Annan, the primary force resisting the reform is,

...the middle-class intelligentsia...[that] until recently [sees] Matthew Arnold...[as] the protagonist in spreading an official culture of the upper classes to the lower, the defender of Oxford as the last barricade of age-old prejudice and

untroubled somnolence against the inroads of applied science and of the scientific method.³⁴

This “aristocratic notion of learning and culture,” he continues, is manifest in British universities in myriad ways, which led many dons to fear having to give up the rewards of seeing very high performance of their students in traditional subjects for what they thought was the “dubious advantage of increasing the number of students.”³⁵

The context of this debate over British higher education was the significant economic, social, and cultural changes underway in the period sometimes stereotypically referred to as the “Swinging Sixties.” The growing economy of the late 1950s and early 1960s brought an increase in the number and availability of consumer goods, as well as growing demand for them. The economy also created more opportunities for occupational advancement that led working- and lower-middle-class parents to demand improved educational access for their children. This new affluence and the freedoms it brought also saw the emergence of more liberal values that especially rankled many intellectuals of the generation who had come of age in the 1950s. Citing Amis and Robert Conquest as representatives of that generation, historian Dominic Sandbrook explains that,

[t]he fashionable intellectual values of the late 1960s, which emphasized sensation and spirituality, were very different from the pragmatic detachment they had celebrated in the fifties, while their moral values were affronted by what they saw as the excesses of the permissive society.³⁶

The culture of the 1960s gave Amis, in particular, an obvious reason to reiterate his objection to the expansion of higher education despite the fact it was growing in popularity among the public.

On July 2, 1967, Amis publically explained his shift to the right and his hostility to the culture of the 1960s in *The Sunday Telegraph* in an article entitled, “Why Lucky Jim Turned Right.”³⁷ He begins by noting that after the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, he gradually became annoyed with the Left while remaining a Labour supporter. It was, however, the proposed changes in university education in the early 1960s, first by the Conservatives and then in earnest by Labour, that disturbed Amis the most. He reminds his reader of his earlier claims regarding the expansion of the universities:

I think I was right [when I wrote “MORE WILL MEAN WORSE”]. Not that one had to be specially observant to be right. My prediction was based on the simple fact, well known to any teacher available to all at the cost of a little reflection,

that if you pack your class with thickies you either have to ignore them and teach only the bright people, or, if like most teachers you feel responsible for all levels of pupil, you will compromise, i.e. lower your standards.³⁸

Amis went on to insist that Labour's policy of eliminating "streaming" (tracking in the U.S.) in schools is "almost consciously destructive," and in the long run, it will have a detrimental effect on the universities. He then returns to the larger political context of his complaints to launch an attack on Labour's foreign policy and what he sees as their failure to disavow the damning of the "system" by mindless "Leftys." Finally, in a postscript to the essay published in 1970, he responds to his critics by hammering away at the contradictory positions of Leftists who, for example, strongly protest "...U.S. 'imperialism' in Vietnam," but hardly object to the "...Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia..."³⁹

"Why Lucky Jim Turned Right" was not Amis' final statement on the state of higher education in Britain. Even in the face of the arguments of Lord Annan and other proponents of the Robbins reforms, his objections to university growth were unrelenting. In 1969, for instance, he joined Angus Maude, Robert Conquest, and other opponents of the educational reforms, including one familiar to many American academics, Jacques Barzun, in a series of pamphlets called "Black Papers."⁴⁰ Edited by C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson, the "Black Papers" were written in an effort to counter the introduction of progressive educational methods in schools and what the authors continued to believe were the detrimental effects of admitting more students to the universities. Amis, in particular, objected to the demands from British students who spoke in words familiar to those who lived through the 1960s in American universities calling for "relevance" in the curriculum, elimination of examinations, and student participation in university governance. He called their demands "pernicious participation" and argued students engaged in learning a subject were in no position to determine what bits of knowledge were best to acquire; they were incapable of evaluating their own performance in the acquisition of knowledge; and they were not capable of determining who is most qualified to teach them in their studies.⁴¹

Twenty years later, the clearly conservative Kingsley Amis who supported Margaret Thatcher was still ranting about the dangers of expanding universities in his *Memoirs*, even in the face of growing sociological evidence to the contrary. Recalling his time at Swansea, Amis complains,

...there were quite enough [students] there in the university who should not have been there, in the sense that they were

not capable of benefiting from that kind of education. They had not wanted to be there and did not know what to do when they got there.⁴²

At the same time, he praises the good students whom he had taught whose quality did not diminish, except when degree requirements were lowered.

Thus, at this late point in the life of Kingsley Amis, the growth of educational opportunity amid the affluence of post-war British society and the liberal culture that emerged in the 1960s continued to disturb him. He had become conservative and elitist in his politics and educational thought. In the 1950s, Amis' objection to opening universities to more students paradoxically meant that Britons from the very social class from which he had emerged as well as from the working class would be denied opportunity for higher education. By the 1990s, the paradox of his story had become even more dramatic as Amis still thought colleges and universities were admitting too many unqualified students. What he did not know, however, was that in the last two decades of his life evidence grew that later would undermine his viewpoint: In 2000, sociologists A. H. Halsey and Josephine Webb demonstrated the student population in British institutions of higher education dramatically rose between 1971 and 1991, and standards for admission had become "...distinctly higher in 1991 than they were in 1971."⁴³

Amis' viewpoints on higher education closely paralleled his shifting politics. Having come from the lower-middle class and benefitted from scholarship opportunities to attend a grammar school that enabled him to enter a university, he had taken an ambivalent leftist position in his critique of the elitist nature of universities in the 1950s while never objecting to the class structure of Britain. In the character of *Lucky Jim*, he had aimed his not-so-subtle barbs at the pretentious Professor Welch for whom Jim worked, and perhaps even Swansea where Amis himself worked, roundly criticizing the upper-class culture of universities and their faculties of the 1950s. Soon, however, he began drifting to the right, eerily assuming the perspective of the don he would become in one of the ancient universities known as Oxbridge. The political nature of his objection to opening universities to more lower-middle class students and, much to his chagrin, the working class, was misguided, particularly in the face of contradictory scientific evidence. In fact his dismissal of the potential of the working class was clear in the snide remark about "Hoggart-wash," an overt reference to Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, a thorough analysis of the life and language of working-class Britons by a scholar who originated from the working

class himself. Finally, Amis' drift toward the right is evidenced by his co-authorship of the "Black Papers" and, without question, in his praise for Margaret Thatcher's government.

Although there is much more to be studied in the life and writings of Kingsley Amis in the post-war era, this brief exploration of his political and educational thought carries important implications for understanding how the political and social context of a period can affect an individual's ideas about politics and education. Nevertheless, there is no simple relationship between the two categories of ideas. Such ideas often are more complex than they appear on the surface. In the 1950s, for example, Amis was a Socialist, and in his literary writings, his politics were anti-elitist like others in *The Movement*, an attitude evidenced in his literary work within the character of Jim Dixon and his feelings about being out of place in the pretentious, intimidating atmosphere of a provincial British university. Yet, Amis' politics evidently never led him seriously to question his own class-dominated society. It was only as he moved toward the right that his political and educational ideas became more consistent. Finally, the story of Kingsley Amis' politics and his thoughts about university education indicate the importance of being clear about our political ideas and how they can affect our educational thought and practice as we endeavor to teach others.

Endnotes

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The Community School from the Great Depression to the Present: Is There a Future?

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Introduction

Michael Johaneck and John Puckett write in their historical study *Leonard Covello: The Making of Benjamin Franklin High School*,

The Depression era called forth powerful social forces that galvanized a small but hardy band of progressive educators to keep the reformist vision of community-centered schooling alive in the 1930s and early 1940s. Working in disparate locales and circumstances, their projects often unbeknownst to one another, these reformers, built community schools and educational programs designed to improve the quality of local community life.¹

Although the nature of these progressive schools varied in locale and content, they tended to be characterized by several common beliefs: that the curriculum needed to be grounded in the issues and problems of the local community; that all life was educative rather than gained only through the formal school; and they emphasized participation and activity over passive acceptance and were attentive to the needs of both adults and children in both work and play. Furthermore, these educators envisioned the school as the center of community life leading to the general improvement of community living at large. This often included cooperation “with community health, recreational, cultural, civic, and religious agencies, with the view of having pupils utilize the services of these agencies to carry out and extend activities initiated in classrooms and extra class pupil affairs.”²

In this paper I take an historical approach briefly to describe the gradual transition of the community school in the 1930s from a more citizen-centered focus to a more client-centered or service focus following World War II. I further explore the history of the community school to include present-day discourse surrounding the community school. A successful community school in the 1930s was perceived as one integrated with the community, not detached, and where achievement was much more than the acquisition of book-knowledge,

with attention to the needs and interests of the community and emphasizing flexibility and experimentation.³ School success heavily depended upon teachers and, according to Myles Horton, community school advocate and founder of the Highlander Folk School, teachers needed to be viewed as more than subject-matter specialists and replaced by those,

..who have an understanding of individual personalities and their relationships to the community and to society as a whole. Learning must not be meager, but supplement practical experience. Teachers must live in the community and take active part in community life. They should seek to coordinate the most advanced thinking and become identified with progressive influences.⁴

The Arthurdale Schools and the Benjamin Franklin High School

There was a strong sense of social justice in the community schools of the 1930s, a sense that the traditions and customs of the past had failed and that failure had led to poverty, unemployment, and alienation. For many progressive reformers, including the rural New Deal subsistence homestead planners and educators at the Arthurdale community school in West Virginia and the urban educators at the Ben Franklin High School in East Harlem, New York, the community school was the answer, the one institution that could improve the lives of many and provide services to the community linking educational, civic, social, and social welfare activities.⁵ The Arthurdale Community School, a depression-era, progressive school under the direction of John Dewey disciple Elsie Ripley Clapp and largely supported and funded by Eleanor Roosevelt and Bernard Baruch, sought to meet the needs of its community through a variety of educational, social, civic, and social welfare activities. The community of Arthurdale originated as part of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and was a planned community to house displaced coal-mining families in north-central West Virginia. Following a visit to see for herself the devastation of coal camps in the region, Eleanor Roosevelt returned to Washington and convinced FDR that the first New Deal subsistence homestead project should take place in West Virginia.

Eleanor Roosevelt and federal planners were keenly aware of the alienation experienced by unemployed coal miners and sought a means to aid them. The planned homesteads were designed to be small family farms where people could grow enough food for their subsistence, giving them a sense of accomplishment, but also providing a means for their survival. New Deal reformers, including Eleanor Roosevelt, believed the child in this experimental community needed a special kind of education and sought to create a school grounded in the philosophy

of progressive education. Progressive education in the 1930s consisted of four major philosophical camps: the administrative progressives, the child-centered progressives, the social reconstructionists, and the community-school progressives. It is the latter group that developed the educational program at Arthurdale. Elsie Clapp, a former student of John Dewey's and considered an expert in rural community education was chosen to head the Arthurdale Schools. Clapp described the ideal community school as one fully integrated in the community, attentive to the needs and desires of the people with all stakeholders engaged in the process of education; she did not believe the mere imparting of information was educational. True community education was created "by people, with people, for people."⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt and Elsie Clapp clearly envisioned the Arthurdale Schools as experimental and within an experimental community. They believed the Depression necessitated experimentation in the promotion of new ideas and educational practice.⁷ This experimental attitude was also characteristic of the Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem, New York under the direction of Leonard Covello. A white, Italian immigrant, sociologist, and social activist, Covello is known for his work in ethnic studies, educational leadership, teacher leadership, and urban sociology. Following extensive experience in urban education and obtaining a Ph.D. from New York University Covello founded the Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem. It opened in September 1934 with Covello as Principal seeking to provide service to the community through integrating education with the civic and the social. In essence, the school was designed to restore community life, believed by community school progressives—urban and rural—to be at the center of the alienation of modern, industrial America. Covello attempted to create an environment that moved beyond the individualism of modern society and provided students with the "knowledge, skills, and dispositions to participate in cooperative activity" that both engaged and valued the diversity of East Harlem. Covello envisioned East Harlem as a place where diversity could enrich community rather than fragment it. In a Deweyan sense he saw the community strengthened by common interest for the benefit of the common good and where students best learned this through educational processes. As part of his attempt to understand his community Covello created a Community Advisory Council composed of various committees which kept Covello informed of community issues and problems. With the assistance of the Works Progress Administration, Covello created community and remedial literacy programs along with an adult-education program.

The Arthurdale Schools and the Benjamin Franklin High School approached curriculum in an experimental fashion. In both curriculum development was grounded in the idea of learning basic subject matter, a type of “trying out.” Students learned the basics but in innovative ways connected to their understanding of self and community. For example, in the Arthurdale Schools a great deal of emphasis was placed on the perceived alienation of the former coal camp children. The community-school educators created a curriculum that placed emphasis on identity and place, integrating traditional subject matter with the studies of Appalachian history, folklore, art, music, dance, and drama. Unfortunately, with the onset of World War II and the eventual Cold War conservatism the community school was challenged and although much of the rhetoric remained the same, the community schools of the Depression Era underwent a gradual conceptual change.

The Cold War and Community Schools

Johanek and Puckett refer to the conceptual change in the community school from the 1930s to the war years as one moving from “citizen-centered” to client- or “service-centered.”⁸ They note that beginning in the mid-1940s and continuing into the 1950s,

Community education was swept up in an attack mounted by influential critics who charged that life adjustment education, by now the dominant version of progressive education, was diverting schools from teaching the liberal arts curriculum and depriving the nation of scientists, mathematicians, engineers, and linguists it needed to win the Cold War.⁹

While I argue Johanek and Puckett give too much credence to the overall impact of life-adjustment, certainly its impact on classroom instruction, the post-Depression community school does seem to have lost its curricular concern for social justice and the alienation of the individual, moving instead to foster a less-engaged approach to the thoughtful and critical democratic citizen.¹⁰ The most influential critics of life-adjustment included Hyman Rickover, Arthur Bestor, and Robert Hutchins.¹¹

Lloyd Cook, a sociologist and community school educator at Ohio State, wrote in 1941 that a school is a community school if,

...educates youth by and for participating in the full range of basic life activities such as human needs, areas of living, persistent problems; seeks increasingly to democratize life in school and outside; uses community resources in all aspects of its program, and actively cooperates with other social agencies and groups in improving community life functions as a service center for youth and adult groups.¹²

Summarizing the community school literature in the 1940s, Milosh Muntyan surmised most community schools sought to integrate community life and activity and center their curriculum around the need and interests of the community.¹³ However, by the end of the 1940s the community school paid more attention to programmatic change over the social and political change of the 1930s, yet the original concept of the community school was far from extinct.

By the early 1950s Edward Olsen, formerly of the state of Washington Department of Education could write, “The community school idea has come to involve the most promising ideas and practices in education. The needs-centered curriculum, cooperative planning, interpersonal relations, group processes, problem solving, world-citizenship—are all part of the community school concept now.” While these clearly resemble life-adjustment goals, Olsen concludes his description noting, “One early emphasis which seems to have gone is the matter of improving the social order.”¹⁴ Olsen made his observation in the early years of the Cold War and seemed to understand there was little discussion on improving the social order, a trait of Depression Era community schools and social reconstructionists. Apparently in the opinion of many community school educators the social order had stabilized. Although the language or rhetoric of democracy was still present, democracy in the 1950s often meant cooperation in the form of patriotism—that we must all stand together against a common enemy: the Soviet Union. An example of this kind of “cooperation” took the form of civil-defense preparation, typically a community-based activity centered in schools. Yet at the same time community-school educator Maurice Seay claimed, “The community-school program, in very real sense represents the essence of democracy. It is in part a return to an older practice wherein the adults of the community worked together to improve their school...for the added benefits to the community.”¹⁵ In the 1950s community school programs were conceptualized as classroom studies, student activities, work-experience, school camps, libraries, recreation centers, school assemblies featuring speakers, concerts, plays, and guidance or counseling services.¹⁶ Federal support of the interstate highway system, leading to the growth of suburbs and white flight from cities also contributed to the community school being conceived in geographical terms rather than sociopolitical ones. What had once concerned educators in the sense of place and identity now became associated with where one lived, not who they were and how they lived. While Olsen had noted less attention to reforming the social order, Paul Hanna and Robert Naslund reiterated in 1953 many of the concerns addressed by community school educators in the 1930s and noted the important contribution of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*

(1916) as key to “the establishment and organization of the community school.”¹⁷ Hanna and Naslund emphasized “the role of schools as agents of social and democratic revitalization.”¹⁸

The Mott Foundation

Strangely, the demise of the Progressive Association and its mouthpiece, the journal *Progressive Education* in the 1950s did not eliminate discussions on community schools.¹⁹ Community education in the 1960s and beyond was greatly influenced by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Frank Manley, director of physical education and recreation for the city of Flint, Michigan, proposed to General Motors founder Charles Stewart Mott a plan to make full utilization of the Flint public school grounds and city parks beyond school hours. Manley was concerned about keeping youth busy and active and the school plans provided public facilities to accomplish that goal through various programs. While the programs eventually included art, music, language, and citizenship classes, there did not seem to be a deep philosophical underpinning for the programs. However, like the many of the programs in the 1930s they did provide medical and dental care for poor children. With support from the Flint community, and matching funds from the Mott Foundation, the city was able to build nine elementary schools.²⁰ Under the direction of Ernest Melby, the Mott Foundation continued its support and created the National Center for Community Education which served as a training ground in educational leadership. By 1970, influenced by the work of the Mott Foundation, community education programs were established in Michigan, Florida, Utah, and Maryland.²¹ By the early 1970s the Mott Foundation had relationships with 46 colleges and universities and was providing training, consulting, conducting research, and working with “local boards of education in financing and establishing community education programs.”²²

Others called for the community school to provide academic and vocational instruction for children, youth, and adults, provide a meeting place for social and civic groups, and serve as a place for the discussion of community problems.²³ As community education moved into the 1970s, Bert Greene sensed the lack of a philosophical foundation for the community school and called for greater clarification in what was meant and desired in community education. Sensing the lack of direction in the discourse of community schools, Greene concluded, “Unlike what has been done in the past, these definitions must be specific, concrete, and touch upon the lives of the people or are we simply engaged in a word game.”²⁴ Some called for the decentralization of schools and smaller schools, changes in the curriculum, attention to work study, and apprenticeships.²⁵ Reminiscent of the 1930s, some looked to community for the resolution of the alienation in U.S. society at a time when U.S.

culture seemed at a breaking point due to social and political unrest stimulated by the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. Community was believed to nurture trust, a collective identity, and a “desire for engagement—the wish to come directly to grips with social and interpersonal problems and to confront on equal terms an environment which is not composed of ego-extensions.”²⁶

Stirred by the social unrest of the late 1960s early 1970s and in a most Deweyan sense of community, Ernest Melby reemphasized in 1971 that people in rural/agricultural societies experienced closer human relations and “developed a feeling of community, and a sense of identity in relation to other human beings. They developed a feeling not only of belonging but of respect for themselves.” Melby believed during the 1970s it was more difficult for children to develop their own identity or a sense of community and that people were searching for these qualities. Melby believed, “Community educators must take on the responsibility of supplying our children and our people with this lost sense of community, of self-identity.”²⁷ In general, community education for Melby was about people working together to identify common needs, problems, and concerns, “to gain a greater sense of influencing what goes on about them as well as gain control over themselves.”²⁸ It is a place “where living and learning meet. Where the intellect and the environment interact to seek resolution to the problems of humankind, individually as well as collectively.”²⁹ Melby seemed to be bringing back the economic, social, and political concerns of the more civic-minded community educators of the 1930s.

Education Reform and the Community School

The Reagan era ushered in a more politically conservative ideology and through its publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) began the foundation of current educational reform. Reagan had sensed the frustration of many Americans with the unrest of the 1960s and 1970s and argued strength and attention to market-based values could restore U.S. greatness. This ideology stressed individualism over community and competition over cooperation, clearly a challenge to public schools and certainly community school advocates.

This conservative approach to educational reform did not destroy or dampen the interest among some in community education and many seemed awakened by the growing competitive nature of the school and the focus on the individualism and efficiency rather than working together for the common good. Regardless of the community-based rhetoric, often masked through the emphasis on local autonomy and control, educational reform took on a national aura, shifting away from the local community. There was an ever-emerging sense among community educators that it was “a sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values” that made our lives

‘meaningful and significant,’” far beyond that of merely contributing to the global economy.³⁰ Writing in the 1990s, Thomas Sergiovanni concluded for successful community building to take place the school needed to define for,

...itself its own practice of schooling. This inside-out strategy requires a considerable amount of searching and reflection as teachers struggle with such issues as who they are, what they hope to become for the students they served, and how they will decide, organize, teach, learn, and live together.³¹

Sergiovanni sensed an identity crisis among teachers, which is understandable based on the lack of teacher voice from *A Nation at Risk* (1983) to *Race to the Top*. Teacher identity has been submerged into the role of the technician who is simply told what to do rather than being allowed to practice their craft, teaching.

Desiring to be attentive to the unrest of the late 1970s rather than submerge that unrest as Reagan desired, historian and community educator Mary Anne Raywid (1980) expressed in a *Teachers College Record* article the need for a sense of “rootedness and social cohesion,” and asserted that “the quest for community had been the dominant social tendency of the 20th century.”³² Raywid notes,

The constitutive features of community...include the following: interaction and mutual dependence, the intention of longevity and permanence, experience ties, communication, common and mutual sentiments, shared beliefs, and an ethic in individual concern and sympathy. The impacts of these features on members are said to include the shaping of individual identity, an acceptance of group standards and a desire to abide by them, commitment, a sense of place, and identification with the group, along with a sense of consciousness of kind.³³

In the tradition of the social/pedagogical progressive predecessors like Clapp and Covello, Raywid suggests the school is the key institution to build community.

Unfortunately, learning has become something that can be assessed with little attention to value of the experience, the culture, or the community students live in and how that might affect their learning. Today student achievement, largely defined in the area of high-stakes testing, has hurt the rural and urban poor who do not have the cultural and social capital middle-class children bring to school. Can a more community-based education help these children? There is a growing body of literature that suggests community schools need to be seriously considered or perhaps reconsidered. Some research suggests that when urban students are part of a community school they perceive themselves

as better connected to school and they report “feeling safer, more empathic, and less harassed.”³⁴ Julie O’Donnell notes, “It is difficult to engage low-income, diverse parents onto school campuses even when they are involved in their children’s education at home.”³⁵ Yet, she emphasizes this engagement and partnering between the school and family is important because parental involvement at school increases children’s academic achievement. Low-income families are typically genuinely concerned about the success of their children in schools so schools need to be imaginative in creating strategies and involvement opportunities.³⁶ Barriers for low-income parents can include lack of transportation, work schedule, lack of child care, language, and culture. In 2004, a report sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences noted: “The instruction typical of most urban high schools...fails to engage students cognitively, emotionally or behaviorally. Evidence indicates that when instruction draws on students’ pre-existing understanding, interests, cultures, and real work experiences, the curriculum becomes more meaningful to them.”³⁷ Findings from this report are informative, but not surprising to community-school educators who certainly have been concerned about and acting upon these issues since the 1930s. It seems like community educators have always known that community vitality, school effectiveness, family engagement, and student learning are all enhanced in a community-school environment.³⁸

Schools must seek to be partners in the community, not isolated institutions only accessible during special events or athletics. For successful partnering to take place collaboration is necessary and attentive to the social, political, economic, and cultural characteristics and needs of the community. A community school seeks to involve all stakeholders, resisting top-down approaches from social service agencies or school officials.³⁹ Collaboration can and has led to better teacher and student relationships, and a more positive school climate that is inviting.⁴⁰ Successful partnerships are often teacher initiated. Support by educational leaders is also essential for success.⁴¹ C. Warren Moses writes,

The community school model demonstrates that by partnering with parents and community institutions in various and professional collaboration, we are about not only to deliver effective programs and services but also to transfer the institution formally known as the school into one that is multidimensional, vibrant, and alive—the community school.⁴²

It seems today that the school is far more unidimensional and far from vibrant, what philosopher Kenneth Strike refers to as “yoyo” or “you are on your own” rather than engaging a “witt” or “we are in this together” view to describe the contemporary plight. “Witt” requires a

“strong sense of the dignity and worth for each member of the school community, a strong commitment to the common good and a strong desire to include everyone because everyone is valuable.”⁴³ Our current schools are a reflection of the values perpetuated in U.S. culture that link education to job acquisition and material accomplishment. In contrast, one can still be personally satisfied and accomplished and still desire and contribute to the benefit of the common good. As Johaneck and Puckett suggest we live in a society that stresses the need for us to be served rather than us becoming servants.

John Dewey and Community

John Dewey was clearly concerned about the perceived loss of community in a society he believed fostered rampant materialism and individualism. He envisioned community as a form of shared interest and it was this shared interest that gave life to the community. Consequently, his ideas influenced both the Arthurdale Schools and the Benjamin Franklin High School. We come to an understanding of shared interest through freedom of inquiry and the willingness and desire to communicate. Freedom of intelligence can hardly occur without freedom of speech and inquiry, fundamental values of a democratic society that form the basis of community. Agreement is not a necessity, but the willingness to listen and interact is.⁴⁴ “Education should create,” Dewey emphasized, “Our interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the condition of others.”⁴⁵ Clearly his notion of happiness is not conceptualized as momentary joy, material acquisition, or as enhancement of the individual ego. For Dewey, ideally we find ourselves not in a culture of “yoyo” but of “witt.” Dewey describes individualism as “inequity, harshness, and retrogression to barbarism (no matter what veneer of display and luxury) unless it is generalized individualism: an individualism which takes into account the real good and effective—not merely formal—freedom of every social member.”⁴⁶

In *School and Society* Dewey claims, “A society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with references to common aims. The common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling.”⁴⁷ This “growing unity of sympathetic feeling” does not develop overnight and must be nurtured and embodied in sympathy in both caring and trust. This “unity of sympathetic feeling” is made more difficult in a culture defined by reality TV, growing cynicism, distrust, and political disengagement that threatens not only classroom but also democratic society.⁴⁸ There is no question that current educational reform fails to meet the goals of most

community school advocates, even those less philosophically sophisticated where education has come to be more of a credentialing process and ritual with little meaning in what it means to be a part of the human narrative. Our students acquire knowledge but often fail to know how to use it and we provide little help or guidance on “how wise choices are made and what is worthwhile.”⁴⁹

Conclusions

Since its onset, the community school has come to mean many things and this has often reflected the time and place of the communities in which they originated. The Depression Era, accompanied by social, economic, and political upheaval led to the unique experiments of the Arthurdale community and its community schools and the Benjamin Franklin High School in Harlem. These schools were concerned with what William H. Kilpatrick characterized during the Depression as an,

...antisocial and selfish individualism, in an economy of interdependence, the common welfare comes first as the necessary, prerequisite means to the welfare of the individual. Democracy, then, in order to be itself, must henceforth stress cooperative efforts for the prerequisite common good.⁵⁰

The most fundamental characteristic of the community school is to prepare participatory citizens for a democratic society, what some have called a citizen-centered community school rather than the service-centered community school. It is the service-centered model which seems to have dominated the community-school movement since World War II.⁵¹ In reality the community school must integrate both citizen and service components, for to be a good citizen is to serve the common good. Community schools must nurture intellectual inquiry as part of preparation with attention to the local community and its culture in designing curriculum. This preparation must take place in an environment of freedom which allows for the trying out or testing of ideas which may work in some communities and not others. This makes experimentation essential and heightens the need to listen to many voices. The community school not only involves but engages stakeholders and includes parents, students, teachers, educational leaders, and citizens in the community.⁵² All need to share in the construction of the educational experience. In this type of school Ken Strike describes,

Shared goals are expressed in a publically shared project; curriculum is coherent and expresses shared goals; teachers are more generalists than subject matter specialists [quite contrary to the current trend]; where students understand and make the decisions to work together grasping that “knowing is more

than a commodity but for justice and citizenship, tracking is minimized; behavioral norms flow from school goals and aspirations; caring and trust come from this understanding of shared commitment.”⁵³

A community school is a place where one can seek an identity and sense of place; a place where one feels one belongs. It is a place where faith, hope, and tolerance are built and education is directed to nurture the whole person.⁵⁴ These goals are worthy of consideration for the contemporary school is far too alienating for too many students, particularly the rural and urban poor, and where a good or excellent education is measured by increasing test scores eventually leading to securing material prosperity regardless of the choices made to get there. The contemporary school with this focus does nothing to support the truly educated individual or civic-minded participant in a democratic society. Contemporary community-school advocate and practitioner Deborah Meier writes, “Democracy assumes the prior existence of communities of people with shared loyalties, confidences, and understandings. It doesn’t create them—they are far older and more persistent than modern (or even ancient democracies). We have always taken such communities for granted.”⁵⁵

In conclusion, the community schools of the 1930s, although far from perfect, attempted to create a viable communal life and spirit of cooperation.⁵⁶ There is still much to be learned from communities and schools like Arthurdale and the Ben Franklin High School in terms of where they created community and where they failed. Perhaps that sense of experimentation in building and nurturing community schools and hope in education is worthy of an effort once again.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael C. Johaneck and John L. Puckett, *Leonard Covello and the Making of Benjamin Franklin High School* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 77.
- 2 See Samuel Everett, *The Community School* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1938), 435; Paul Pierce, “The School and the Community It Serves,” in Samuel Everett ed., *The Community School*, 89; and Leonard Covello, “The School as the Center of Community Life in an Immigrant Area,” in Everett, *The Community School*, 127. William Wattenberg, “Annotated Bibliography,” in Everett notes Clapp’s work in Kentucky, 468–469. In the same volume see Samuel Everett, “An Analysis of the Programs,” 435–462, and H. A. Tape, “A Consolidated Laboratory School,” 340–376. In Paul Hanna, *Youth Serves the Community* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936 Hanna refers

- to Clapp's article, "A Rural Community School in Kentucky" *Progressive Education* 10, no. 3 (March 1933): 123–128.
- ³ Paul Misner, "A Community Educational Center," in Everett, *The Community School*, 70.
- ⁴ Myles Horton, "The Community Folk School," in Everett, *The Community School*, 265–297.
- ⁵ Johanek and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 111.
- ⁶ Elsie Ripley Clapp, *Community Schools in Action* (New York: Viking, 1939), 67.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 151. John Dewey was a member of the Arthurdale National Advisory Committee which served to advise Eleanor Roosevelt and government planners, particularly in regard to the educational project at Arthurdale. For details on the Arthurdale School see Sam F. Stack, Jr., *Elsie Ripley Clapp (1879–1965): Her Life and the Community School* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 187–210, and *The Arthurdale Community School: Education and Reform in Depression Era Appalachia* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016). Also see Daniel Perlstein and Sam F. Stack, Jr., "Building a New Deal Community: Progressive Education at Arthurdale," in *Schools of Tomorrow, Schools of Today*, eds. Susan F. Semel and Alan R. Sadovnik (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 213–238.
- ⁸ Johanek and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 12.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ¹¹ Arthur Bestor, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our School* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1953); Robert Hutchins, *Some Observations on American Education* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1956); Robert Hutchins, *Education for Freedom* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1943); and Hyman Rickover, *Education and Freedom* (New York: Dutton, 1959).
- ¹² Lloyd Cook, "School and Community," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 1002. See also Edward Olsen, *The Modern Community School* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), 193. Olsen's book was essentially a sequel to Samuel Everett's, *The Community School* originally published in 1938. It contains various examples of community schools in the late 1940s and early 1950s. See also John Lund, "Education Can Change Community Life," *School Life* 31 (November 1948): 11–12, and William K. McCharon. *Selected Community School Programs in the South* (Nashville, TN: George Peabody, 1948), Chapter Two.

- ¹³ Milosh Muntyan, "Community School Concepts in Relation to Societal Determinants," *Journal of Educational Research* 41, no. 8 (April 1948): 597–609.
- ¹⁴ Olsen, *The Modern Community School*, 200–201.
- ¹⁵ Maurice Seay, "The Community School: New Meaning for an Old Term," in *The Fifty-Second Yearbook of the National Society of the Study of Education Part II: The Community School*, ed. Nelson Henry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287. Henry's yearbook gives a sense of the community school movement in the post-war years. For an extensive bibliography on community school literature prior to 1954 see Edward G. Olsen, *School and Community* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1954).
- ¹⁶ Edward Krug, "The Program of the Community School," in Nelson Henry, *The Fifty-Second Yearbook*, 83. For other articles of interest in this volume see Harold Drummond, "The Staff of the Community School," 100–126; James A. Lewis and Russell Wilson, "School-Building Facilities for Community Schools," 145–155; Paul Hanna, "The Community School and Larger Geographic Areas," 228–237; Maurice Seay and John A. Wilkinson, "Overcoming Barriers to the Development of Community Schools," 265–287; and L. D. Haskew and Geneva Hanna, "The Organization and Administration of the Community School," 127–144.
- ¹⁷ Paul Hanna and Robert Naslund, "The Community School Defined," in *The Fifty-Second Yearbook of the National Society of the Study of Education Part II: The Community School*, ed. Nelson Henry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 62.
- ¹⁸ Johaneck and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 10.
- ¹⁹ Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education (1876–1957)* (New York: Vintage, 1964), 348–353 for discussion on the demise of progressive education.
- ²⁰ Johaneck and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 236. Charles Stewart Harding Mott, the son of Charles Mott recalls the events that led to the Mott Foundation and its association with community education in William Grimshaw, "Mott Foundation Announces Creation of a Community Education Board of Advisors," *Community Education Journal* 4, no. 2 (March–April 1974): 32–33. Grimshaw was director of information for the Mott Foundation. Terrell Bell, Secretary of Education during the Reagan Administration when *A Nation at Risk* was published was a member of the Mott Advisory Board. See also "In Memorium," *Community Education Journal* 2 (November 1972): 5, written after the death of Frank Manley.

- ²¹ Johaneck and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 236–237.
- ²² Grimshaw, “Mott Foundation Announces,” 33.
- ²³ Leslie Purdy, “Serving the Community: A Literature Review,” *Community Education Journal* 5, no. 1 (January–February, 1975): 13.
- ²⁴ Bert Greene, “Another View of Community Education,” *Community Education Journal* 3, no. 5 (September 1973): 42. See also C. S. Harding Mott, “Community School Development Act,” *Community Education Journal* 3, no. 5 (November 1973): 39–42.
- ²⁵ Robert Whitt, “Accountability, Commitment and the Community School,” *Community Education Journal* 1, no. 1 (February 1971): 22. See also Clyde Letarte and Jack Minzey, “Community Education and the Neighborhood School Concept,” *Community Education Journal* 1 (February 1971): 2.
- ²⁶ Peter Hackett, “Comparative Perspectives on a Sense of Community,” *Community Education Journal* 5, no. 4 (July–August): 34. See also Phillip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at a Breaking Point* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 5.
- ²⁷ Ernest Melby and Clyde Campbell, “Community Education: America’s Hope for the Future,” *Community Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (August 1971): 33. Melby’s perceptions of alienation are similar to those of the reformers who were behind the subsistence homestead movement that led to the formation of Arthurdale. See Lewis Harris, “Community Schools: Motivating the Unmotivated,” *Community Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (May 1971): 16, for a more democratic perception of the community school and that one learned democracy by participating in it and that it could not be “accomplished in a course of civics.”
- ²⁸ Melby and Campbell, “Community Education,” 33.
- ²⁹ Lou J. Piotrowski, “The Third Century Educational Process,” *Community Education Journal* 5, no. 6 (November–December, 1975): 14.
- ³⁰ Thomas Sergiovanni, *Building Community in Schools* (New York: Jossey Bass, 1994), xiv.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, xv.
- ³² Mary Anne Raywid, “Community and Schools: A Prolegomenon,” *Teachers College Record* 90, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 197–210. Raywid quotes Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethic of Order and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 45.
- ³³ Raywid, “Community and Schools,” 198–199. She mentions Eric Fromm, Erik Erikson, Urie Brofenbrenner, and Abraham Maslow were also interested in the concept of community and how the lack of it can affect students in schools.

- ³⁴ Constance Perry and Walter McIntire, "School Connection as School Reform in Rural Schools," *The School Community Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 2001): 63–64.
- ³⁵ Julie O'Donnell, Sandra L. Kirkner, and Nancy Meyer-Adams, "Low-Income, Urban Consumers' Perceptions of Community School Outreach Practices, Desired Services, and Outcomes," *The School Community Journal* 18, no. 2 (2008): 147.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 149, 161.
- ³⁷ Martin Blank, "Reaching Out to Create a Movement," in Joy G. Dryfoos, Jane Quinn, and Carol Barkin, *Community Schools in Action* (New York: Oxford University, 2005), 257. See also National Academy of Sciences, *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2004).
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 251. See also Martin Blank, et al., *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools* (Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, 2003). Blank mentions the significance that Dewey played in helping generate the wider idea of the community school as well as Jane Addams and the settlement house, 244.
- ³⁹ Linwood H. Cousins, Roslyn A. Mikelson, Brian Williams and Anne Velsaco, "Race and Class Challenges in Community Collaboration for Educational Change," *The School Community Journal* 18, no. 2 (2008): 34.
- ⁴⁰ O'Donnell, et al., "Low-Income, Urban Consumers' Conceptions," 148. See also Diane Ciuffetelli Parker, Heather Grenville, and Joseph Flessa, "Case Studies of School Community and Climate: Success Narratives of Schools in Challenging Circumstances," *The School Community Journal* 21, no. 1 (2011): 147.
- ⁴¹ Catherine Hands, "It's Who You Know and What You Know: The Process of Creating Partnerships Between Schools and Communities," *The School Community Journal* 15, no. 2 (2005): 63, 76. Hands discusses the importance of teachers in the partnering process.
- ⁴² C. Warren Moses, "History of the Children's Aid Society Model," in Dryfoos, *Community Schools in Action*, 23. The Children's Aid Society model is an attempt to involve parents, maintain after-school enrichment programs, early-childhood programs, health services with the aid of school administration.
- ⁴³ Kenneth Strike, *Small Schools and Strong Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 62. See also Diane Johnson, "Faith, Hope, Tolerance, and Sense of Community," *The School Community Journal* 21, no. 1 (2011): 151–170, and Cousins, "Race and Class Challenges," 29–52.

- ⁴⁴ John Dewey, *LW* 1: 138. See also Feodor Cruz, *John Dewey's Theory of Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) for a thorough discussion of Dewey's thoughts on community and also James Campbell's "Dewey's Conception of Community," in Larry Hickman, ed., *Reading Dewey: Interpretations for a Postmodern Generation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 24, and James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995).
- ⁴⁵ John Dewey, *LW* 7: 243.
- ⁴⁶ John Dewey, *LW* 5: 423.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ⁴⁸ Blank, "Reaching Out to Create a Movement," 253.
- ⁴⁹ Strike, *Small Schools*, 10; and Raywid, "Community and Schools," 202. See also Michael Sedlak, *Selling Students Short: Classroom Bargains and Academic Reform in the American High School* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986), 4, 9. See Parker, et al., "Case Studies of School Community and Climate: Success Narratives of Schools in Challenging Circumstances," 129–149. On the issue of credentialing see Randall Collins, "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification," *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 6 (December 1971): 1002–1019.
- ⁵⁰ William H. Kilpatrick, "The Underlying Philosophy of Cooperative Activities for Community Involvement," in Paul Hanna, *Youth Serves the Community* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936), 6.
- ⁵¹ Johaneck and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 227.
- ⁵² N. L. Engelhardt and N. L. Engelhardt, Jr., *Planning the Community School* (New York: American Book Company, 1940), 98.
- ⁵³ Strike, *Small Schools*, 36.
- ⁵⁴ Johnson, "Faith, Hope, Tolerance, and Sense of Community," 167. Johnson makes note of the significance of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916) in understanding a school community "that prepares students to find community with their fellows and to continue to grow together wherever they find themselves," 165. These themes can also be found in the work of Benjamin Barber, *An Aristocracy of Everyone: The Politics of Education and the Future of America* (New York: Ballentine, 1992), and Robert Bellah, *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage, 1991).
- ⁵⁵ Deborah Meier, *In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 178.
- ⁵⁶ Johaneck and Puckett, *Leonard Covello*, 40.

Foucault, Sexuality, and Manet's Visual Discourse

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Introduction

Many agree contemporary U.S. society privileges the visual—film, television, the internet, cell phones, and billboards to name a few—, that with this privileging comes the need for analytic and interpretive skills to navigate power structures imbuing these visual discourses, and that competing for resources has eliminated such humanities-related content areas as visual studies to give more to STEM and STEM-related studies. Although creating STEAM programs seems an attempt to placate arts supporters, many educators maintain STEAM programs tend feebly to connect with the arts and with visual studies in particular and that such programs may well be another ploy to justify purging public schools of arts education. Interestingly, teacher educators at least give lip service to the importance of teaching PK–12 students some aspects of visual literacy particularly within 21st-century literacies contexts, but this emphasis has not been expanded into public schools. Apparently, in PK–12 public schools, “many teachers are hesitant to address aspects of visual literacy, perhaps because they themselves had little training in the concepts” (O’Neil, 2011, p. 214).

I posit visual discourse is at least as important for students to recognize, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and engage as are other discourses and that learning to navigate power structures embedded within visual discourses is essential to PK–12 students’ learning to survive and function well in the world. To reveal visual discourse’s importance and power, I make a piece of visual art central to my argument, selecting a work that shook the Parisian art world when it went on display: Édouard Manet’s (1863) *Olympia* (Fig. 1).¹ By analyzing Manet’s *Olympia* using Michel Foucault’s (1978) concepts of secrecy, visual and sexual discourses, and power, I illuminate Manet’s painting as more than visual art—as indeed discourse that anticipates and exemplifies Foucault’s concepts. I demonstrate this painting disrupted the accepted 19th-century, French rules of visual and secret, sexual discourses; that visual discourse is indeed a significant power mechanism capable of holding the mirror of hypocrisy steadily before viewers’ eyes questioning viewers beliefs, behaviors, and values; that altering the *status quo*—calling it into

question—may result in changing accepted social conventions that merely disguise society’s seedy underbelly; and that bringing visual discourse into public schools for study is not only worthy but necessary and valuable in teaching students how to read, understand, and survive their worlds. First, I outline tenets of visual discourse and define and explain Foucault’s (1978) concepts of visual and secret, sexual discourse (repressive hypothesis), aligning 19th-century Paris with Foucault’s historical analysis. Next, positioning Manet and Manet’s *Olympia* within art history, I set the stage for describing the risqué, 4' 3" x 6' 2¼" oil on canvas that scandalized the 1865 Parisian viewing public. I then analyze *Olympia* through this Foucauldian theoretical lens elucidating *Olympia* as visual, sexualized discourse that contributes radically to shifting 19th-century Parisian mechanisms of power. Finally, I identify the meaning and value of my analysis and its implications for education.

Power, Discourse, and the Visual

Power cannot be possessed but rather exercised by various, fluctuating relations from a myriad of positions with a multitude of goals (Foucault, 1978). Origins of power often are ambiguous, but “where there is power, there is resistance” and resistance can be exercised from many areas becoming part of the network or “relations of power” (pp. 95–96). Foucault emphasizes power relations should be problematized and views power’s existence as depending upon resistance which offers a tool with which to question and resist existing practices in society (Freie & Eppley, 2014). Relational power transforms itself depending on environments, relationships, and knowledge. Power and knowledge co-exist: “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Foucault links power to knowledge—those who have it and those not allowed to have it—, but this “power-knowledge” distribution can shift, modify, and transform (Foucault, 1978). Power-knowledge distributions continually modify resisting immobility which Foucault calls “matrices of transformation” (p. 99) that should be analyzed. Power and knowledge coalesce in discourse and various discourses (accepted or resisted, dominant or dominated) that have their own objectives.

Foucault asserts: “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart...” (p. 101). Discourse drives societal viewpoints and perceptions which provide influence that direct policy and procedures that are written down or talked about (Nainggolan, 2007). Leading discourses have alongside them subjugated discourses that can rise up when disturbances or dilemmas occur (Foucault, 1978).

Counter-discourses do not have to come from the top down, but can come from various directions and can lead to either positive or negative change (Foucault, 1978). What society discusses and does not discuss produces routine discourses—routine practices: “As practice, [routine discourses re/produce] knowledge and power simultaneously” (Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2013, p. 158). Knowledge forms through discourses that transform and define it.

Throughout the history of western civilization, humans have used images to promote ideals even while glossing over cruel realities. Barry Sandywell (2011) explains that, although people have long created images, contemporary society’s desire for attaining knowledge quickly through images and the contemporary corporate world’s mass-production of alluring images has increased visual images’ importance within society. Indeed, an image is “inherently communicative” (Hepworth, 2016, p. 281), for images essentially become another language, a universal language “inextricably bound together with power, knowledge and governance” (p. 281): “We now understand that such ‘visions’ were also inevitably *languages*—rhetorics, events, *discourses of power*” (Sandywell, 2011, p. 6, emphasis in original), and that institutions of power often create images. Visual discourse is a persuasive tool that produces social beliefs and attitudes and, like other discourses, can either challenge or support prevailing knowledge and discourse. For instance, culture categorizes or frames nudes depending on where one sees them—in a pornographic magazine, a medical journal, *National Geographic*, or an art history textbook—and “the way these nudes are framed help individuals to construct meaning” (Eck, 2001, p. 609). Images viewed outside the context of what society at the time considers “acceptable” become ambiguous with the potential power to change discourse.

Visual discourse analysis is a methodology that explores and reveals perceptions through visual artifacts presented as conceptual objects (Naingolan, 2007). “The distinct feature of Visual Discourse Analysis rests on its usefulness in visualizing drivers, mediating factors, processes and impacts or outcomes which are inherent to any complex and dynamic socio-environmental systems” (p. 1). Yet visual materials have taken a backseat to written materials in discourse analysis methodology in historical research despite the visual’s unique possibility of serving as “direct objects of study” and the abilities to communicate “history in ways other artifacts and documents cannot” (Hudson, 2009, p. 138). Anabela da Conceição Periera (2015) extends images’ power to give them agency. By analyzing the discourse the visual uniquely provides, she,

...considers the objective and subjective conditions of interpreting and experiencing images, showing how the

construction of their meaning, acceptance and artistic status is a process concerning not only certain systems of meaning, ways of seeing, and the agency of the visual object, but also human perception. (p. 34)

Moreover, philosophically analyzing visual discourses art produces stimulates understanding the power relations at play perhaps more than traditional textual discourses can (Tanke, 2008).

Sexual, Visual Discourse, Secrecy, and Censorship

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) analyzes secret, repressed, sexual discourse in western history highlighting the “repressive hypothesis,” or contemporary western society’s perception that the 19th-century bourgeoisie were sexually repressed. Foucault (1978) posits one should doubt the “repressive hypothesis” and should indeed question 1) sexual repression’s historical accuracy, 2) 19th-century, power-systems’ responsibility for repression, and 3) sexual discourse’s contribution to repression.

Although modern puritanism in the U.S. imposed against sexuality and sexual discourse the “triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (Foucault, 1978, p. 5), puritanism never existed in France and therefore had no repressive hold over the 19th-century, French bourgeoisie. Instead, the early, 19th-century, French bourgeoisie were preoccupied with self and sought sexual knowledge to insure future class superiority (Foucault, 1978). Viewing sex as a power tool with certain rules that would lead to self-policing (Fraser, 1983), Foucault (1978) explores the fixation on and increased discussion of sexuality and the powers behind sexual discourse. In 19th-century France physicians analyzed sexual conduct for medical knowledge believing it would lead to theoretical sexual discourse and ultimately contribute to the public’s well-being. Indeed, authorities devised rules for what was normal or deviant, was allowed or disallowed, discussed or not discussed (Foucault, 1978). Confessions about sexuality were allowed and even encouraged but only to such proper professionals as doctors in professional settings: “Only in those places would untrammelled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms of reality, and only to clandestine, circumscribed and coded types of discourse” (p. 4). Therefore, sexual discourse was constructed through secrecy, and the 19th-century, French bourgeoisie was expected to follow the rule of secrecy to the letter.

More than a go-between among power relations, secrecy is a power technique and mechanism used to dominate but also to undermine power and offer a sense of freedom, making discussing and analyzing sexuality especially appealing as one sought to uncover its secrets (Foucault, 1978). The effort to control sexuality and sexual discourse

through secrecy, silence, and prescribed circumstances in which one might engage in sexual discourse actually produced a kind of pleasure in the secret talking, listening, and resulting illicit, sexual knowledge one constructed (Foucault, 1978). Given strict rules governing sexuality and sexual discourse, censorship necessarily increased to enforce compliance to these rules and, with that, censorship, pornography, peep shows, and brothels crescendo (Weingarden, 2011). Synthesizing the visual and the sexual in 19th-century France in pornography, peep shows, and brothels supports my choice to analyze Manet's *Olympia* as visual, sexual discourse. As further support, although art in 19th-century France tended to be somewhat protected from censorship because of its elevated status (both epistemically and through its relegation to high social status), authorities nevertheless censored even the arts to determine what was or was not suitable and therefore allowed or rejected for public viewing and entering the public discourse. Indeed, by 1841 the Ministry of the Interior or the Prefecture of Police particularly targeted nude photographs for censorship deeming them either acceptable or unacceptable and therefore allowed or banned for photography market, public viewing, and public discourse (Weingarden, 2011). Consequently, the nude photography market, like much sexuality itself, went underground secretly to flourish. Even poetry, previously considered too high a form of art for most to understand and therefore left uncensored, now came under censors' review, perhaps most notably six poems from Baudelaire's (1857) collection, *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du Mal*) as well as Baudelaire himself (Weingarden, 2011).

Foucault on Manet

Édouard Manet (1832–1883) so intrigued Foucault that Foucault agreed to a lecture series on Manet's paintings delivered in Tunis in 1971 (Soussloff, 2011), only recently brought to light and published. Analyzing art differently than art history's analytic tradition of discovering meaning by interpreting the subject, images, and the artist's intentions (Soussloff, 2011), Foucault was interested in the artist's manner of media application and the knowledge that exercise produces. He viewed paintings historically and materially contending paintings are a type of discourse that can "use some of the notions formed in the analysis of discursive regularities to describe the stylistic patterns found in the history of art" (Tanke, 2008, p. 382), and that one can apply to ontology and epistemology: "For Foucault painting is a different discursive practice, embodied by the techniques and the effects of the painted representation, and with a theoretical shape unlike the sciences and philosophy" (Soussloff, 2011, p. 114).

Although when Foucault analyzes a painting he does not identify the subjects portrayed so recognizing and judging the subjects would not

cloud his vision, he could not effectively use this approach “without a profound knowledge of the history and theory of art from the Renaissance to his own day” (p. 117). Foucault also analyzes paintings in terms of what is absent or apparently hidden and the knowledge emerging from such an analysis: the “hermeneutical opposite of the most commonly used methods of art history” (p. 119). The viewer—absent from the painting itself—is very much an active participant—a concealed subject—in observational knowledge of *Olympia*. Foucault focuses on how art affects societal behavior and its role in the “processes of social differentiation, of exclusion, assimilation and control” (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 13).

Manet and His *Olympia* in Context

Manet, often considered the originator of modernist painting, was active in 1860s Paris where bourgeoisie and poor were separated, where censorship was prolific, and where mass consumerism was in full swing (Reed, 2003). He was one of the first artists to reject traditional painting conventions by eliminating halftones—light and shade, rather imposing bold *chiaroscuro*—, ignoring pictorial spatial traditions, and painting controversial subjects, all of which future artists emulated. “Modernist painting since Manet is an equally persistent elaboration of the medium itself: the flatness of the canvas, the structuring of notation, paint and brushwork, the problem of the frame” (Huysen, 1986, p. 54). Manet enjoyed painting’s narrative aspect along with referencing art from the past (Fried, 1996). Although customary for artists from Manet’s time to allude to previous artists’ work in their own creations, one sees “Manet’s involvement with the art of the past...in relation to some of the most important intellectual and spiritual currents in nineteenth-century France” (Fried, 1996, p. 27).

Along with other artists of his day, Manet submitted paintings for possible acceptance to be exhibited at the Salon, the government-sponsored, official venue for the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture exhibitions.² The Académie Royale set standards, policies, expectations, and recognition opportunities for artists, virtually monopolizing public taste and opportunities for official patronage in 19th-century France, serving as “the marketplace where painters could make or lose their reputations and livelihood” (Reed, 2003, p. 27). The 19th-century Académie Royale jurors possessed tremendous power and set the artistic norms concerning subject and style. “Whether in genre or history painting, subject matter was of primary importance according to both academic norms and the public eye” (p. 33).³ The time’s convention of exhibiting paintings was for artists to create and for critics and the public to interpret stories drawn from classical, historical, or everyday-life categories (Reed, 2003).

Until the 19th century, painters and sculptors of female nudes generally followed the convention of an idealized Venus, the classical female nude. The 19th-century, bourgeois society associated the classical female nude with purity, beauty, and subservience: “‘She’ functions as an artistic policy of (re)assurance: perfect body and distant eyes beckon the hidden owner-man beyond the frame; ‘she’ is his but he is not ‘hers’” (Komins, 2001, p. 53). Classical, idealized, and pure, the mythological Venus, object of personal fantasy and desire, met the Académie Royale’s guidelines for nudes.

Manet was one of the first visual artists to subvert the rules of female nudity—nude but pure, beautiful, subservient woman or Venus—with his 1863 submission, *Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe* (*Lunch on the Grass*), a nude woman eating a picnic lunch on the ground in a park with two clothed men. After Académie Royale jurors responded negatively to *Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*, rejecting it outright, Manet hesitated, waiting two years until 1865, before submitting *Olympia* to their scrutiny (Seibert, 1986). Concerned about accusations of unfairness toward particular artists, Académie Royale jurors accepted for exhibit and placed Manet’s *Olympia* in the 1865 Salon exhibition.

Manet’s *Olympia* is often compared to Titian’s (1538) *Venere di Urbino* (*Venus of Urbino*) (Fig. 2)⁴ that embodies the male’s fantasy of idealized female sensuality, a painting Manet copied having visited the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence (Armstrong, 2002). This richly colored 2' 1⁵/₈" x 3' 10⁷/₈" oil on canvas (1538) features a flawless, creamy-skinned, nude woman with a sensuous gaze reclining in the painting’s foreground on a lushly painted, plush maroon daybed with crumpled white sheets. Propped up on her bracelet-adorned, right arm, she clutches a few pink flowers, one of which has fallen and lies on the bed. Titian’s Venus looks from the painting with what can only be described as “bedroom eyes,” while her golden curls fall loosely over her shoulder accenting her softly modeled, unblemished skin. Positioned over her pubic area lies her ringed, left hand, curved and relaxed. At the foot of the bed, a small, cream-colored, spotted dog sleeps contently, seeming to mirror Venus in position, light and shade falling on the dog as the Venus, in similar locations. Two servants in the painting’s middle-ground (against the back wall), one a girl on her knees and the other a woman standing seeming to supervise, retrieve or replace garments in a chest positioned in front of a large window that partly frames a serene, outdoor scene of topiary and classical column. Soft light, soft modeling, perspective, and lush glazes of color add to the painting’s sensual luxury and depth of field.

Manet's *Olympia*

Housed at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, *Olympia* (Fig.1), Édouard Manet's 4' 3" x 6' 2¼" oil on canvas, is not a nude, idealized Venus reflecting classical art and woman's purity, but a painting seemingly after Titian's *Venus* yet within which Manet replaces the idealized Venus with a nude prostitute. In the painting's foreground, the daybed takes up the canvas' width, is covered with ruffled, white sheets, and is positioned horizontally across the canvas. Reclining on the bed with her left leg casually crossed over her right, Olympia props up slightly on two pillows on the left side of the canvas as she looks straight at the viewer with an ambiguous gaze, unabashed confidence, and complete shamelessness. Her flared out left hand covers her pubic hair, seems pressed determinedly to her thigh while her right, clutched hand rests on the bed at her side. On her otherwise naked body, a pink flower adorns her pulled back hair; stylish, heeled slippers embellish her feet, one on and one off—perhaps an allusion to streetwalking (Kleiner, 2013); a gold bracelet adorns her right arm; and a slender, black ribbon graces her neck. Just one or two shades darker than the white sheets, her extremely pale skin seems to glow, to pop, because a strong, dark, modern contour outlines her figure. With consistent modeling on only her face, feet, and hands, her body appears flat, contrasting markedly with the modeled sheets upon which she lies. Standing behind her to the right, a Black maid presents Olympia a flower bouquet, presumably from a client. A small black cat, considered a symbol of sexuality, stands, back arched, at the foot of the bed. Behind Olympia and her maid, a muted, brown, floral-patterned wallpaper and pulled-back, green curtain contribute to the composition's overall flatness. *Olympia* exhibited at the Salon in 1865 as a major work of art, and is regarded as the first nude of a modern woman from this time period depicted with reality and individuality—markedly unlike the generic or mythological nudes that came before (Hughes, 2013).

The Scandal: Subverting Secrecy and Censorship through Visual, Sexual Discourse

Beyond upsetting conventions and overturning contextual expectations, through his *Olympia* Manet so shook Parisian society that Académie Royale jurors, concerned with shocking pregnant women into miscarriage, warned them not to view the painting (Northern, 2003). The painting outraged some French viewers to the point of wanting “to put their umbrellas through it” (Foucault, 2009, p. 63). *Olympia* received critical judgment not only from the public, but from critics and press. Of the 60 art critics viewing the painting, only four reacted positively (Clark, 1980). Manet broke convention not simply with accepted methods and techniques. *Olympia* incited criticism chiefly because the subject's lower

social-class as prostitute was considered a disreputable, unacceptable, and taboo subject in the art world (Witkin, 1977). For, “though serious art appreciation has always tried to rise above the reclining nude’s link with the base reality of the bedroom, some works refuse to keep quiet about it. They do this in a fascinating variety of ways” (Borzello, 2002, p. 44).

Viewers had certain expectations of paintings portraying female nudes, and paintings taking as their subject prostitutes was not among those. Of course, in 19th-century Paris, prostitution was prolific and considered necessary but not something to display openly unless perhaps as “upper-class prostitution.” For example, the French press wrote about prostitution clearly in sight, but focused only on rich and charismatic courtesans: the “parallel between the prominent, powerful courtesans of the period and the more vocal, independent feminists who were [paradoxically], spurred to action in part by the very prevalence of the courtesans and prostitutes in French society” (Flescher, 1985, p. 31). The courtesan became a symbol for many groups depending on whose needs the courtesan as symbol best could serve. Perhaps most jolting about Manet’s painting *Olympia* as prostitute is his depicting a woman in complete control of both her body and her destiny, directing her gaze at the viewer with full knowledge of exactly who looks back at her: “It is a gaze which gives nothing away, as the reader attempts to interpret its blatancy; a look direct and yet guarded, poised very precisely between address and resistance” (Clark, 1980, p. 34). Manet’s *Olympia* depicts a self-confident “contemporary female type, a courtesan-prostitute, but with perhaps a touch of the defiance and independence of the emerging Parisienne” (Flescher, 1985, p. 31).⁵

Interested in how people interpret and understand nudes, Beth Eck (2001) makes the important point that context dictates the acceptability of different categories of nudes: “It is context that helps individuals decide whether a nude image is artistic, pornographic, or informational; acceptable; sacred or profane” (p. 604). As I argue previously, the context helps determine the acceptable or unacceptable, the viewed or not viewed, the discussed or not discussed. Viewers perceived and interpreted *Olympia* within *Olympia* as sex object rather than art object. Therefore, Manet’s nude was out of context, an unfamiliar, unacceptable sight at an important, powerful art exhibition unworthy of viewing and discussing in a place established for a classical Venus.

Involving more than nudity, depicting prostitute rather than classical Venus and presenting that depiction in the inappropriate, Salon context, the scandal also included aesthetics, for in *Olympia* Manet subverts established order and undermines both convention and accepted method and technique (Tanke, 2008), even while he upholds

them. For example, in traditional nudes, artists depict hair in a particular way Manet fails to emulate; other painters are discrete while Manet places Olympia's left hand to allude to her pubic hair and reveals hair in her armpit (Clark, 1980). Critics berated not only the obscenity of Manet's painting and his failure to follow convention, but his method; they accuse him of painting Olympia with dirty hands and feet calling the painting ugly and literally dirty (Weingarden, 2011). Indeed, analyzing art through an archeological lens focuses on breaks from regularly accepted convention by comparing the elements of a piece of art—line, color, value, texture, shape, space, form—to determine whether the artist altered established rules which would ultimately mean, of course, establishing new convention (Tanke, 2008). Rather than a smoothly painted surface, Manet employs rough brush strokes—deemed crude, infantile, and primitive.

Foucault (2009) focuses on Manet's painting technique, especially on how Manet uses light, arguing light not nudity provoked public scandal. Comparing the light in *Olympia* to the light in Titian's *Venere di Urbino*, Foucault (2009) notes *Venere di Urbino* lights up softly from the canvas' upper left and from the painting's window lending the scene a natural, luminous, golden light: "Here is the nude, dreaming of nothing, looking at nothing, and there is this light, which, indiscreetly, strikes or caresses her, and us viewers who surprise the game between this light and this nudity" (p. 65). Conversely, harsh light from outside the painting "strikes [Olympia] here, full shot" (p. 65) rather than emanating from a natural source within. In other words, the viewer—or more precisely, the viewer's gaze—functionally becomes the light: "For Manet, the act of looking was never innocent or impartial, even though at first glance it may seem to have been so" (Rubin, 1994, p. 36). The viewer therefore becomes part of the scandal—an active participant, the source illuminating the nudity, the pimp and the john; "*Olympia* demonstrates how the transformation of painting's rules of formation compounds the affront contained in its subject matter, by implicating the viewer in the visual exploitation of its subject" (Tanke, 2008, p. 389). By not remaining silent to the realities of 19th-century French society, Olympia seizes power and her own sexuality with self-assurance, exposing the hidden client—bourgeois men—, the very ones who wanted to keep her out of sight and silent.

Secrecy Exploded: Visual, Sexual Discourse's Revelation

Analyzing Manet's *Olympia* through Foucauldian concepts of visual and secret, sexual discourses reveals *Olympia* as a work of visual discourse "speaking" openly to subvert imposed secrecy, silence, and artistic convention in 19th-century Paris. Painting a prostitute, a taboo subject, and displaying it in the Salon, Manet provoked change in 19th-

century Parisians' discursive practices surrounding sexuality by using the visual to force sexual discourse out of the darkness, out from behind closed bedroom doors, into the public realm, and into public discourse. Reluctant to use the word, "prostitute," to describe *Olympia*, critics chose "a vocabulary of uncleanness, dirt, death, physical corruption and actual bodily harm" (Clark, 1980, p. 23). Such allusions within the painting to prostitution as the cat, walking shoes, and a servant presenting flowers (from a client) make it difficult to deny Manet depicts a prostitute. Even the painting's title, *Olympia*, seems to reinforce Manet's desire for viewers to see the central figure as prostitute—a real woman in the real world of 19th-century France. In her analysis, Sharon Flescher (1985) notes some critics of the time thought Manet alludes to the well-known, Renaissance courtesan, Donna Olimpia Maldachini; she further postulates Manet's character, Olympia, might also allude to Alexandre Dumas' character-courtesan, Olympia, from his 1852 play, *La Dame aux Camélias*. Flescher (1985) supports her supposition by noting the French counterpart to the name "Olympia," "Olympe," was a common name among French courtesans. Perhaps wishing to ensure the public fully understood his intentions, Manet moved beyond the title including five lines from his friend Zacharie Astru's poem, "Olympia," in the Salon's 1865 catalogue (Flescher, 1985):

When, weary of dreaming Olympia awakes,
 Spring enters in the arms of a gentle [B]lack messenger,
 It is the slave who, like the amorous night,
 Comes in and makes the day delicious to see with flowers:
 The august young woman in whom the flame [of passion]
 burns constantly.

(translation by Clark in Flescher, p. 21)

Although much evidence points to Manet's choosing the name, "Olympia," as a means of reinforcing the visual clues identifying her as prostitute, Flescher (1985) contends Manet's Italian rather than French name "gives [the painting] a classical or Italianate flavor" (p. 27). Perhaps the name is part of Manet's nod to classicism, his nod to Italian painting and the artist from which he models *Olympia*: Titian's *Venere di Urbino*. Similarly, Manet's nod to classicism may include the female type, Olympia, characteristic in operas (Flescher, 1985). These questions surrounding the painting's name show Manet's adherence to certain convention and public expectation even as he subverted them confused some art critics who objected to his classical connotations. Other critics simply ignored the name. I assert Manet purposely tried to confuse Académie Royale jurors, critics, and the public by choosing the name and spelling to play with his critics, artistic conventions, and discourse

itself: is she the acceptable classical nude or the unacceptable prostitute? ...is she viewable or not, discussable or not, in context or not?

Again, *Olympia* (1863) seemingly follows the convention of alluding to classical works by—in many ways—mirroring Titian's *Venere di Urbino*; however, with *Olympia* Manet does not follow the accepted convention of an idealized, submissive beauty stretched out in an idealized setting giving no resistance to those who gape leisurely over her body and whose own sexuality is owned by her alone (Borzello, 2002). Certainly, the similarities between Manet's *Olympia* and Titian's *Venere di Urbino* are obvious. Viewers accept and encourage the enticing, powerful, and persuasive fantasy Titian's *Venere di Urbino* evokes:

...the woman appears both above and below the man. On the one hand she is a goddess whose body and “favor” provide access for the man to a transcendental home in the world of values and solidary relations; on the other, she is a servant of the man with no thoughts of her own that he has not put there. (Witkin, 1977, p. 106)

Despite the similarities between *Venere di Urbino* and *Olympia*, opposition between elements of the two paintings dominates discourse. Rather than portraying a peaceful, sleeping dog, a symbol of fertility and faithfulness, Manet paints an agitated, black cat, symbol of the night and sexual wantonness. Instead of idealized, subtle, pink-modeled flesh, he paints harsh, flat, un-modeled white skin. He paints no seductively curved hand gliding over her pubic area in *Olympia*, but instead depicts her hand stretched out firmly. Unlike Titian's naturalistic perspective, Manet makes the figure of *Olympia* flat—ignores proper perspective, plays with space, only transforming Olympia from two-dimensional to three with the viewer's participation. In other words, by the viewer's very presence a third dimension is created by virtue of the one-viewing—a third dimension that otherwise does not exist in this flat, modernist depiction of a woman. No glowing natural lighting emanates from *Olympia*, but rather a harsh, exploitive torch lights her from beyond the painting's plane, implicating the viewer as pimp or john, shattering the expected conservative visual and sexual discourse among painter, painting, and viewer.

To this point, conventions of lighting in paintings were rendered in such a way as to keep with the illusion of natural three-dimensional space “...where a viewer could be displaced...” (Foucault, 2009, p. 30). Manet rejects this illusion of natural light and instead casts harsh light on nudity, keeping other parts of the painting so dark that the source of light must come from outside the picture's plane, rendering the viewer the source of illumination and, too, illuminating societies' taboo concerning sexuality and prostitution. The viewer becomes complicit in

revealing 19th-century France's dark, seedy reality—not the artist. The contrast between the two paintings' female forms angered the French public intensely, thereby inciting change in visual and sexual discourse in part by breaking the code of secrecy concerning the realities of society and sexuality and what was accepted for visual discourse at the time.

Manet shook 19th-century, French, artistic convention and, ultimately, visual and sexual discourse convention. The visual discourse *Olympia* produced resisted the power mechanisms in place (silence, censorship, and control of whom and where one could view particular visual representations of nudity) and presented a new technique of power. Manet problematized bourgeois society's power that demanded a certain type of silence concerning sexuality, prostitution, and accepted artistic conventions of how a nude was to be rendered. Through *Olympia*, Manet subverted discursive practices of the secret, the sexual, and the censored by creating a "visual" discourse born in reaction to increased censorship where the secret, sexual, and visual converged, revealing the raw reality of prostitution polite society saw fit to ignore. Such revolutionary visual discourse confirms Foucault's contention that power and knowledge exist and function in tension, and that the source of power is often unknown and ever-changing. Manet rebelled against artistic convention concerning aesthetic rendering and subjects, positioning the taboo as focal point and turning visual, secreted, and sexual discourses on their heads. He exposed the secret; revealed the hypocrisy; made visible the invisible; highlighted the forbidden—but often indulged—pleasure of bourgeois society evidencing Foucault's (1978) theory that silent discourse often leads to opposition.

Visual Discourse: Offering Tools of Knowledge

Manet shattered the fantasy, the artistic ideal, by forcing society to look at reality, not as an uninvolved observer, but as an active participant. Creating *Olympia* as work of visual discourse, Manet subverted power relations and the power-knowledge tension surrounding the 19th-century Académie Royale, its rules of propriety, aesthetics, and power-knowledge surrounding secrecy, sexuality, and the visual (that in *Olympia* as well as in pornography, peep shows, and brothels merges with the secret and the sexual). As visual discourse, *Olympia* becomes another instrument of power by revealing the secret of prostitution the bourgeoisie did not want, revealed and displayed in the Académie Royale no less, the very place the bourgeoisie assembled to view the art of their class. *Olympia* brings to light, despite or perhaps because of the scandal it provoked, the acceptance of a visual discourse in place of or over textual discourse and resistance to power mechanisms.

Analyzing *Olympia* through a Foucauldian lens provides an apt example of how critically analyzing art teaches the power of visual discourse in highlighting the embedded social power structures and the points of resistance not obviously apparent when first viewing an image. Recognizing strategic missions of visual discourses—what is visible, what is absent, what is hidden—remains a valuable tool not only for imparting awareness of present strategies of power but awareness of potential oppositional strategies as well. Educators can empower students with knowledge of how to examine images in their entirety as possible visual discourses so students can recognize not only what is seen, but, just as importantly, what is not seen—what is being kept secret—in order to make more thoughtful, well-informed judgments. Having ready the tools to analyze mechanisms of power in visual discourse allows students to decipher relational strategies at play, whether the discourse supports or resists the dominant power relations in society so they may knowingly decide, construct, and perform their role as active, passive, or resistant participant within power relations.

Analyzing Manet's *Olympia* and the public reaction to its exhibition demonstrate the power of the visual in evoking outrage, fear, and social discourse. It is at our peril we ignore the visual's discursive power in this contemporary, visually dominated world. At a minimum, teachers should be made aware of visual discourses' power (exercised freely in part because of its privileged position in contemporary society), complexity, and relation with others such as sexual discourse and secrecy; should support the visual's study in schools with the knowledge that learning how to recognize, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and engage in visual discourse is necessary, meaningful, and valuable to students' learning how to survive and succeed in the world; and should not only welcome but encourage state-, district-, and school-level changes that teach and promote such learning.

Endnotes

- 1 In the collection of the Musée d'Orsay (http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&numid=712).
- 2 The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, established by King Louis XIV in 1667, was later referred to as the "Salon," a term taken from the Salon d'Apollon in Musée du Louvre where art exhibitions were held.

- 3 The term “genre painting” refers to paintings that take as their subject everyday people in scenes from ordinary life, most often portrayed in a realistic style and depicting domestic scenes. The term “history painting” refers to paintings usually portraying part of a narrative with biblical or mythological origins.
- 4 In the collection of Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (<https://www.virtualuffizi.com/venus-of-urbino.html>).
- 5 “Parisienne” refers uniquely to the female Parisian.

Figures



(Fig. 1) Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



(Fig. 2) Titian, *Venere di Urbino* (Venus of Urbino), 1538, oil on canvas, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

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