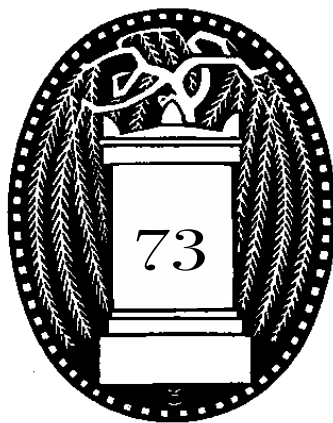


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From the Editors

Learning Disrupted, Learning Derailed: What Doesn't Kill You, Doesn't Make You Stronger

Although for many years one has known childhood trauma negatively affects children's behaviors and their receptiveness to learning, one has tended to talk about trauma resulting from war, natural disasters, accidents, and sexual abuse rather than from adverse or painful events in a child's daily life. In the past 30–35 years doctors and researchers have not only begun to make connections between childhood adversity and physical illness but discovered what one might consider a mild adverse event has the same physical impact in children, especially as they become adults as more extreme adverse events.¹ Some researchers assert only a parent's repeatedly humiliating a child results in a marginally more injurious impact correlating with a slightly increased likelihood of adult physical illness and depression than do other adverse childhood experiences (Walsh, Dalgleish, Lombardo, Dunn, Van Harmelen, Ban, & Goodyer, 2014). Contradicting the adage that time heals all wounds, scientists have also learned wounds a child's brain is too young to retain, his/her body remembers into and, if never healed, throughout adulthood (Walsh et al., 2014). Those childhood wounds manifest as adult-onset organic diseases and mental disorders (Walsh et al., 2014). Many medical doctors and researchers now have biological data evidencing adults' bodies remember even such events as their own difficult birthing, their bodies expressing such events' impact through ongoing illness and disease, many over which doctors continue to puzzle and find difficult to treat (Nakazawa, 2015).

Moreover, since Dr. Vincent J. Felitti first considered childhood adverse events might be responsible for adults' physical illnesses and mental disorders (~1990) and later, with Dr. Robert F. Anda, evidenced the correlation, scientists have uncovered actual, deep-biological changes resulting from childhood adversities: cellular damages causing premature cell aging, telomeres' erosion which effects DNA health, underdeveloped neurological interconnections, decreases in brain size, and decreases in one's longevity, for example (Anda, Tietjen, Schulman, Felitti, & Croft, 2010; Brown, Anda, Felitti, Edwards, Malarcherm, Croft, & Giles, 2010; Dong, Anda, Felitti, Dube, Williamson, Thompson, Loo, & Giles, 2004; Dube, Fairweather, Pearson, Felitti, Anda, & Croft, 2009; Goodwin & Stein, 2004; Price, Kao, Burgers, Carpenter, & Tyrka, 2013; Shalev, Entringer, Wadhwa,

Wolkowitz, Puterman, Lin, & Epel, 2013). That is, rather than “just getting over it,” one’s early-life stories script one’s biology, and one’s biology scripts how one’s life evolves (Myss, 1997). Particularly unsettling, as biological research expanded beyond marking the direct biological changes children’s adverse experiences effected, many scientists began investigating the link to adult organic disease between generations, discovering not merely the “nurture” link, as when a child having experienced domestic violence becomes an adult doling out such violence, but a biological—genetic—link between a parent who experienced childhood adverse events and that parent’s children (Labonte, Suderman, Maussion, Navaro, Volodymyr, Bureau, Mechawar, Szyf, Meaney, & Turecki, 2012; Nelson, 2014; Romans, McDonald, Svaren, & Pollak, 2014; Weder, Zhang, Jensen, Yang, Simen, Jackowski, Lipschitz, Douglas-Palumberi, Ge, Pereplechikova, O’Loughlin, Hudziak, Gelernter, & Kaufman, 2014). These scientists name correspondences among childhood adverse events, brain architecture, immunologic functioning, and adult physical and mental health the new “theory of everything”: one’s emotions become one’s physical biology (Anda et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2010; Dong et al., 2004; Dube et al., 2009; Goodwin & Stein, 2004; Price et al., 2013; Shalev et al., 2013).

Because Felitti and Anda have contributed to many science-research publications corresponding to their numerous studies and because many others have now conducted research concerning different aspects of childhood adverse experiences and the physiological and neurobiological changes that occur in brain and body during childhood that affect adult health and well-being, I can neither include all their work nor problematize researchers’ findings and the conclusions they draw, presenting counterarguments, leaps in logic, and false premises. I can caution that naming all adverse events “trauma,” as do so many physicians, science-researchers, and neuropsychiatrists engaged in this research, is problematic. Placing “everything” under the trauma umbrella might easily lead to victimizing, judging, and blaming children who have experienced adversity and those children-become-adults suffering from organic diseases and mental disorders. Being labeled “victim” or being judged or blamed for things outside one’s control only adds insult to injury rather than helping one achieve physical and mental health and well-being. I also caution that some researchers begin their work with the premise that the population they are researching is particularly vulnerable. Such a premise not only sets the stage for victimizing (rather than targeting a particular population for research), judging, and blaming but for deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010). It means, before even doing the science they aimed to do, these researchers had begun dismantling participants’ agency and imposing that dismantled agency on others navigating similar circumstances outside the study. Although I see problems with how some interpret researchers’ findings and the conclusions they draw and although I have more concerns about how some writing for the general public “translate” the science for public consumption, I am drawn to the 30–35 years so many scientists

have been studying the possible biological links between childhood adverse experiences and adult-onset organic disease and mental disorders and the consistency with which they have been seeing direct connections. I also think educators should be aware of this research and consciously and consistently strive to know about and better children's lives.

Here, I present not an argument, not a problematization, not a philosophy, not a history but information about which many educators remain unaware. I merely highlight correspondences researchers identify between childhood adverse experiences and adult-onset illness, disease, and mental disorders, the physiological changes adverse childhood events incite that lead to health issues in adulthood, and the means by which one's male or female biology dictates the ways childhood trauma may well cause physiological changes to brain and body. I intend this information to serve as the first step in advocating for including information on childhood adverse events and its effects on children and their adult selves in school administrators and teachers' professional development trainings, in education for college educators of future teachers and school administrators, and in pre-service teachers and school-administrators' education programs.

In this article's second block, I touch upon steps to self-healing these researchers recommend. Here, again, I do not problematize; I do not present counterarguments. I write no argument, no philosophy, and no history but present information as a preliminary means of advocating for including education and training for public-school administrators and teachers, for educators of future teachers and school administrators, and for pre-service teachers and school-administrators' education programs. At every level, education administrators and teachers know, usually in the abstract, children experience a range of adverse events. Yet, such basics as learning how to identify a child in need, how to help children de-stress, how to teach children to navigate and heal from adversity remain absent from administrators and teachers' pre-service education and their in-service professional development. By organizing and presenting this information, I advocate for including meaningful, valuable, healing activities in public schools' curricula and for training teachers how to de-stress and heal themselves, to orchestrate and monitor activities for children; for introducing into schools psychologists who specialize in recognizing children experiencing trauma and know how effectively to work with these children one-on-one; and for offering education and training to parents, so to stop or at least curtail the damage many parents and guardians inflict upon their children.

Children's Adverse Experiences and Their Correlation to Adult-Onset Organic Diseases

Although researchers have historically associated childhood trauma with children's experiencing war, natural disasters, accidents, and sexual abuse, some have now correlated and biologically evidenced children's

experiencing adverse events outside the parameters of war, natural disasters, accidents, and sexual abuse to affect their brains and bodies in the same ways. Notably, Drs. Felitti and Anda have discovered children's bodies respond to such events as being repeatedly derided and humiliated, living with a depressed parent, or losing a parent through separation or divorce in the same ways they react to those events historically associated with trauma (Anda, Whitfield, Felitti, Chapman, Edwards, Dube, & Williamson, 2002; Chapman, Whitfield, Felitti, Dube, Edwards, & Anda, 2004; Dube, Anda, Felitti, Edwards, & Williamson, 2002; Edwards, Holden, Felitti, & Anda, 2003; Felitti, 2002). Similarly, such frequent occurrences in western society as one's parent's dying, one's growing up in poverty, being continually bullied, witnessing a sibling's or parent's abuse, living with a mentally-ill or an alcoholic parent, or witnessing violence in one's community activate the body's fight-flight or freeze mechanism that in turn keeps firing because rather than "run and done," the adverse event continues indefinitely, preventing the body's recovery (Felitti, 2002; Felitti & Anda, 2010). Conversely, after animals survive fighting or fleeing, they begin to shake all over, ridding themselves of the hormonal flood the need to fight, flee, or freeze triggered and stopping that mechanism from firing. Some researchers argue because humans' fight, flee, or freeze mechanism keeps firing under chronic stress, childhood adversities alter a child's brain architecture and the ways genes' controlling stress hormones express themselves, triggering inflammation, predisposing one to lifelong disease, and beating down the body for early death (Brown, Anda, Tiemeier, Felitti, Edwards, Croft, & Giles, 2009; Dube et al., 2009; Goodwin & Stein, 2004). These researchers biologically connect adults' suffering from such adult-onset illnesses as autoimmune diseases, migraine, chronic bowel disorders, cancer, back pain, heart disease, depression, fibromyalgia, and stroke at disproportionately high rates with their having undergone adverse experiences during childhood.

The Epiphany Launching the Research

Not only researchers, scientists, and medical doctors but educators and the general public now have access to information concerning adverse childhood experiences and ways one may heal from such events because Dr. Felitti (1991, 1993) noticed and acted upon what he first observed as an oddity among patients in his weight-loss program.² Felitti incorporated questions about childhood adversities into a standardized, comprehensive medical examination and evaluation for 26,000 people at the Health Appraisal Division of Kaiser Permanente's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego. Working with Dr. Felitti, the CDC's Dr. Robert F. Anda traveled between Atlanta and San Diego for several years to collaborate with Dr. Felitti, analyzing patients' answers to childhood adversity questions and those answers against patients' medical histories (Nakazawa, 2015, p. 242).³ Over several years, Felitti and Anda worked to perfect a survey instrument from which they could determine the effects childhood adverse events

contribute to adult disease. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Questionnaire and ACE Study ($n = 17,000$) emerged from Felitti and Anda's collaboration. Comprised of yes/no items designed to measure 10 types of adversity one has experienced prior to age 18, the ACE instrument includes five personal items and five items concerning family members and one's household environment.⁴ Each "yes" answer receives 1 point toward one's total ACE score.⁵

Felitti and Anda expected their respondents' ACE scores to be low because their participants averaged 57 years old, were white, middle-class individuals who grew up in neither disadvantaged nor troubled households, because $\frac{3}{4}$ were college educated, and because most had stable jobs with health benefits. Not only did respondents have higher ACE scores than predicted, but Felitti and Anda's findings revealed a clear scientific link among multiple kinds of adverse childhood events, physical illness, disease, and mental health disorders (Felitti, 2009; Felitti & Anda, 2010, 2014; Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998).

Two-thirds—64 percent—of participants answered yes to one or more categories, meaning they had experienced at least one of these [10] forms of childhood adversity [named in the instrument] before turning eighteen. And 87 percent of those who answered yes to one ACE question also had additional Adverse Childhood Experiences. Forty percent had experienced two or more categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences, and 12.5 percent had an ACE Score of 4 or more. ... Only a third of participants had an ACE Score of zero. (Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 13–14)

Felitti and Anda then (2010) analyzed the data to determine correlations between categories of adverse childhood events each respondent had experienced and the level of illness and disease he/she was enduring as an adult. The total number of adverse, childhood-experience categories a patient indicated (ACE Score) accurately predicted the patient's last-year's doctor visits, quantity of unexplained symptoms, and medical care the individual would need in adulthood (Felitti & Anda, 2010). Immediately, Felitti and Anda (2010) considered the possibility that, having experienced childhood adversity, one might be more likely to turn to such unhealthy, self-coping practices as smoking, drinking, or overeating. While noting some patients had practiced such self-coping to manage their chronic anxiety, those scoring 7 or higher who neither smoked nor drank, whose cholesterol was in range, who were neither diabetic nor overweight, still had a 360% higher heart-disease risk than those scoring zero on the ACE (Anda, Brown, Dube, Bremner, Felitti, & Giles, 2008; Brown et al., 2009; Dong, Giles, Felitti, Dube, Williams, Chapman, & Anda, 2004). Unhealthy coping mechanisms did not explain patients' poor health.

Because researchers represent some findings as odds ratios and others as probabilities, please recall, odds ratios signify the likelihood of one event's happening over another while probability denotes the likelihood of

one particular outcome out of all possible outcomes. For everyday readers, researchers often represent odds ratios as “times” rather than as a regression coefficient. For example, an author may say one is two times more likely to get cancer than not get cancer rather than representing the likelihood of getting cancer vs. not getting cancer as a 0.7 regression coefficient. In contrast, researchers represent probability as percentages: 10–15% of smokers get lung cancer—out of all the other possible outcomes one might have from smoking.⁶ Please note, too, Felitti and Anda base their findings on actual diagnoses; therefore, the number of sufferers likely exceeds the numbers reflected in the data (see Table 1).

Condition	ACE SCORE	odds ratio
cancer	4	2x more likely to get cancer than not get cancer
Condition	ACE SCORE	probability
depression	4	460% higher probability of depression than ACE=0
autoimmune disease	1	20% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 10% for men than ACE=0
	2	40% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 20% for men than ACE=0
	3	60% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 30% for men than ACE=0
	4	80% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 40% for men than ACE=0
	5	100% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 50% for men than ACE=0
	6	120% higher probability of autoimmune disease for women, 60% for men than ACE=0
lifespan	6 and above	almost 20 years' shorter lifespan than ACE=0
heart disease	7 and above with no smoking, no drinking, no high cholesterol, no diabetes, & not overweight	360% higher probability of heart disease than ACE=0

Table 1

Not only have these researchers correlated childhood adversity with an increase in organic disease and mental disorders, they have now evidenced a causal-biological relation between specific adverse childhood events and an array of diseases (Anda et al., 2002; Anda et al., 2008; Anda et al., 2010; Anda, Felitti, Bremner, Walker, Whitfield, Perry, Dube, & Giles, 2006; Brown et al., 2010; Chapman et al., 2004; Corso, Edwards, Fang, & Mercy, 2008; Dong et al., 2004; Dube et al., 2009; Goodwin & Stein, 2004; Price et al., 2013; Shalev et al., 2013). Because Felitti and Anda

recognized and made known their research using ACE exposes only “the tip of the iceberg,” other scientists have been researching how to screen for stressors not assessed via the ACE instrument (Walsh et al., 2014). A second instrument, the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) emerged from their work. Using the CTQ to screen individuals aged 12 and older, researchers have uncovered such childhood hurt or neglect as early medical trauma, family members repeatedly calling one “stupid,” “ugly,” “lazy,” or such other parental or sibling unkindness as neglect, chronic teasing, blaming, shaming, and hazing damage the young brain, triggering organic chemical changes in its gray matter, resulting in later organic illness, disease, and mental disorders (Herringa, Birn, Ruttle, Burghy, Stodola, Davidson, & Essex, 2013; Walsh et al., 2014).

In addition, other scientists not searching for biological links between childhood adverse experiences and adult illness have stumbled upon medical events that result in devastating physiological and architectural changes in brain and body that reveal themselves as organic disease or mental disorders, particularly in adulthood. One example of such research concerns the now-taboo topic of childhood vaccines. Although some have posited childhood vaccinations cause autism and autism’s high rates in the U.S. while others have consistently argued this link’s impossibility,⁷ more recently, researchers have begun examining the 97 vaccines on the U.S.² current, childhood-vaccine schedule, looking at the original clinical work when creating the vaccines as well as current vaccines’ components (Aaby, Henrik, Fisker, Rodrigues, & Benn, 2016; Anonymous, 2022; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023; Children’s Health Defense Team, 2021).⁸ Researchers investigating vaccinations on the childhood schedule have discovered: no one has ever tested against a placebo *any* of the 97 childhood vaccines, including the polio vaccine; no one has tested *any* of these vaccines in combination with each other despite medical personnel’s administering them in combination; and no one has evaluated any of these vaccines to compare what their makers say they will do against what they actually do (Aaby et al., 2016; Anonymous, 2022; Children’s Health Defense Team, 2021). Nevertheless, contemporary manufacturers dump multiple vaccine formulas together, giving them to infants and toddlers *en masse* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023) while the pharmaceutical industry financially incentivizes physicians who get their patients to adhere precisely to the CDC’s childhood vaccination schedule (Aaby et al., 2016; Anonymous, 2022; Children’s Health Defense Team, 2021).⁹ Moreover, after analyzing these childhood vaccine formulas, contemporary scientists have discovered they contain dangerous adjuvants. Any of several chemical substances added to vaccines to enhance the body’s immune response to the vaccine’s sugars or proteins, adjuvants include such unsafe elements as mercury, aluminum, and thimerosal (Anonymous, 2022; Children’s Health Defense Team, 2021).

Although one knows mercury, for example, is bad for human brains and bodies, one may not immediately see the connection between childhood vaccines, their adjuvants, their being given en masse, and childhood adverse experiences resurfacing during adulthood as organic disease and mental disorder. One need only think of how one's own or others' children have responded to being at the hospital for their shots. While some children seem relatively unaffected, others fight and scream themselves into a frenzy, turn red from screaming and fighting, and sometimes turn blue from lack of air during their fights to flee. That is, these children's bodies click into fight-or-flight which in turn triggers their bodies' mechanisms for pushing substances through the blood-brain barrier. Thus, such adjuvants as mercury cross into the brain even as the child is kicking, screaming, and turning blue while parent and hospital staff hold the child down for the shot, sometimes continuing afterwards until the child is too weak to fight. In such cases, then, the child experiences trauma as an emotional event, anticipating, receiving, and following the physical shot, experiences the physical trauma of receiving the shot by fighting and trying to flee while held down, and then, undergoes the physical trauma of multiple antigens and, quite possibly, multiple different harmful adjuvants bombarding his/her brain and body. Because manufacturers have packaged multiple vaccines in a single shot and because, during the child's visit, the "medical professional" inoculating the child administers several different shots, each containing multiple vaccines, not only do multiple antigens flood the child's body but multiple adjuvants then cross the blood-brain barrier into the brain: one emotional plus three different physical traumatic events in one experience. If one follows the last 30–35 years' research on the physiological and neurobiological changes childhood adverse experiences cause, leading to adult-onset organic disease, one can only conclude such actions as I recount add contemporary childhood vaccinations to the adverse events that need researching in terms of their short- and long-term physiological and neurobiological ramifications.

One's Sex, Childhood Adverse Experiences, and Physiological and Neurobiological Changes

I would be remiss if I did not mention the factor researchers name the most significant when determining how childhood trauma affects the body and brain's biology: one's sex. First, researchers repeatedly evidence girls undergo more adversity during childhood than boys (Dube et al., 2009). Second, doctors diagnose far more women with autoimmune diseases and such mental disorders as anxiety and depression than they do men (Dube et al., 2009). As early as Felitti and Anda's publishing their first study's findings, they noticed women are 50 percent more likely than men to have suffered adverse childhood experiences in five or more ACE categories (Felitti & Anda, 1998; 2014). In fact, according to these researchers, the

higher one's ACE Score, the greater chance the individual will suffer organic disease and physical and neural inflammation (Felitti & Anda, 1998; 2014). Researchers and hospitals' heads of medicine now assert U.S. women in midlife comprise the nations' "walking wounded" because women suffer so many more "ill-defined" health problems than men during midlife: more than 100 autoimmune diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, back pain, migraines, chronic pain, hormonal disfunction, depression, and bowel disorders (Cooper, Bynum, & Somers, 2009; DeSantis, Baker, Back, Spratt, Ciolino, Moran-Santa Maria, Dipankar, & Brady, 2011; Dube et al., 2009; Felitti & Anda, 1998; 2010; 2014).

DeLisa Fairweather, Ph.D., Director, Translational Research for the Department of Cardiovascular Diseases, Mayo Clinic, specializes on women and sex differences in relation to inflammation, autoimmune disorders, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and lung disease (Mayo Clinic, 2023). Knowing stress worsens autoimmune symptoms, Fairweather (2009) surmised if an inflammatory condition were linked to childhood stress it would likely be autoimmune disease. She therefore joined Felitti, Anda, and the CDC team during their groundbreaking original Kaiser/CDC study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (1995; $n = 1700$), analyzing for only the 21 most-common autoimmune diseases in their data. Not only did she (Fairweather, 2009) and her co-researchers discover a disproportionate number of individuals hospitalized for autoimmune conditions who had endured childhood adverse events but noted a disproportionate number of those hospitalized were women. They rechecked their data multiple times because the number, particularly of women who had experienced childhood adverse events who also had an adult-onset autoimmune disease severe enough to be hospitalized, overwhelmed them. The higher an individual's ACE Score, the more likely the patient would be hospitalized for an autoimmune condition with women's hospitalization rates twice as high as men's (Dube et al., 2009). Women have a 20% higher probability of autoimmune disease per ACE Score category while men have a 10% probability of autoimmune disease per category (Dube et al., 2009). Because in the science literature one tends not to see the extreme relations researchers saw between the number of ACE categories and the increase in autoimmune disease, these researchers feared other scientists would not believe them (Dube et al., 2009; Cooper, Bynum, & Somers, 2009)!¹⁰

Further, not only does one have a thrice-greater risk of developing additional autoimmune disorders once one has one, one third of adults experiencing adverse events before age 18 develop autoimmune disease within about 30 years, especially rheumatic autoimmune diseases, and 80% of that one third are women (AARDA, 2023; Cooper, Bynum, & Somers, 2009; Jacobson, Gange, Rose, & Graham, 1997).¹¹ Thus, if one has 100 individuals who experienced childhood trauma before age 18, one third

of those would develop autoimmune disease and 26.64 of those would be women (see Table 2). Also unexpected, for women who die before age 65, autoimmune disease places among the top 10 causes for those early deaths (AARDA, 2023; Cooper, Bynum, & Somers, 2009).

Autoimmune disease	Ratio of women to men
Antiphospholipid syndrome	9:1
Hashimoto's thyroiditis	10:1
lupus	9:1
Primary biliary cholangitis (previously, primary biliary cirrhosis)	9:1
Sjögren's syndrome	9:1

Table 2

Beyond women's adult-onset disease concerning girls' experiencing more adverse events in childhood than boys, females' physiological differences—their smaller hearts, lungs, and other organs, their hormone levels, and their hormonal responses to stress—contribute not only to a different response than boys during an adverse event, but some researchers point to data indicating girls' response results yield more serious ramifications for girls in later life than do boys' response results (Hamilton, Stange, Abramsom, & Alloy, 2015).¹² Researching sex differences in the brain, Professor of Neuroscience, Margaret McCarthy, Ph.D. (Bowers, Waddell, & McCarthy, 2010; McCarthy, 2017; McCarthy, Auger, Bale, De Vries, Dunn, Forger, Murray, Nugent, Schwarz, & Wilson, 2009), University of Maryland School of Medicine, hypothesizes women suffer more from autoimmune disease than men because girls undergo more adverse experiences, particularly during adolescence, because, she contends, they experience more interpersonal and other stressors than boys.

Trauma and recovery psychiatrist, Bessel van der Kolk, M.D. (2014) even found female incest survivors have particular immune-cell proliferations that over-sensitize their immune systems to threats; these individuals' bodies would subsequently tend unnecessarily to defend themselves, even to attacking their own bodies' cells. Although McCarthy (2017) points to evidence that, once girls become women, they continue to be more stressed than males and van der Kolk (2014) detects particular immune-cell proliferations that over-sensitize incest survivors' immune systems to threats, neither seem to analyze and interpret their research in light of genetics, environmental toxins, and what reads as physicians and pharmaceutical-industry stakeholders' desire to pathologize everyone so to prescribe more medications. New genetic research, for example, continues to advance. UCLA's Itoh, Golden, Itoh, Matsukawa, Ren, Tse, Arnold, & Voskuhl (2019) revealed finding a "gene on the X chromosome [that] may help explain why more women than men develop multiple sclerosis and

other autoimmune diseases” (UCLA Health, 2019, n. p.). It seems many researchers are working to explain such mystery diseases as autoimmune disease, but no one has yet pooled research from across scientific disciplines to design studies that might reveal how different factors may predict, create a tendency toward, or cause disease.

Professor of Psychology, Louis Cozolino, Ph.D. (2014/2006), attachment researcher, Pepperdine University, asserts the nurtured, not the fittest, survive. When a child’s brain does not receive the love it needs, it cannot grow and strengthen the neural interconnections the child needs to create loving, secure relationships. For example, the people who make the same relationship mistakes over and over again, do not have the neurobiological means to learn from those mistakes because they keep encountering the same neurobiological-interconnection problems they had the first time they failed (Cozolino, 2014/2006; Salvatore, Kuo, Steele, Simpson, & Collins, 2011). Neurobiological interconnections changed or halted during childhood; nothing has occurred to grow and strengthen the neurobiological interconnections childhood adverse experiences interrupted (Cozolino, 2014/2006; Salvatore, Kuo, Steele, Simpson, & Collins, 2011). Thus, although researchers maintain, in such cases as this relationship example, individuals may appear to have behavioral problems, they instead suffer from a neurobiological condition in which their underdeveloped neural interconnections make it impossible to make associations from which to learn from their mistakes (Cozolino, 2014/2006; Salvatore et al., 2011). They assert individuals can strengthen the neural interconnections whose development, strengthening, and growth childhood adverse experience(s) altered or halted (Cozolino, 2014/2006; Salvatore et al., 2011). While these scientists’ findings help explain the seemingly unexplainable reason(s) some people keep repeating things not working for them, I caution, here again, against deficit thinking, judging, blaming, victimizing, or using such research to dismantle individuals’ agency. One needs to take care, too, not to assume someone who makes the same mistakes repeatedly experienced childhood adverse events severe enough to alter or halt neurobiological interconnections.

Although many other researchers studying the link between childhood adverse experiences and adult organic disease and mental disorders have noted physiological changes in the brain, such neuropsychiatrists as Ryan Herringa, M.D., Ph.D. (Herringa et al., 2013; Herringa, Burghy, Stodola, Fox, Davidson, & Essex, 2016; Heyn, Keding, Ross, Cisler, Mumford, & Herringa, 2019), Associate Professor and Director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin, have specifically focused all their studies on the brain. As a result, these researchers not only see clear physiological and neurological changes (in part through MRI brain imaging) resulting from childhood adverse experiences but see how these

changes differ according to one's sex. Herringa and his team (Herringa et al., 2013; Herringa et al., 2016; Heyn et al., 2019) have collected data reflecting changes in the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala (fear and emotion center), the hippocampus, the communications among them, and the way they communicate to the rest of the body. They and other neuroscience researchers (Czerniawski & Guzowski, 2014; DeSantis et al., 2011; Heim, Bradley, Mletzko, Deveau, Musselman, Memeroff, Ressler, & Binder, 2009) evidence how mistreating children impairs children's brains' fear circuitry's regulatory capacity, their hippocampus, neuroendocrine function, and hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis functioning, to name a few effects.

Such researchers as Hilary P. Blumberg, M.D. (2011, 2022a, 2022b), John and Hope Furth Professor of Psychiatric Neuroscience, Yale School of Medicine,¹³ has not only found brain changes that differ according to type of childhood adverse experience but, like Herringa, differences according to an individual's sex. For example, she found girls' gray matter volume decreases in regions regulating emotions and depression while boys' gray matter volume decreases in the brain area controlling impulses and behaviors (Blumberg, 2011, 2022a, 2022b). Blumberg hypothesizes these children's adverse experiences causing brain changes that differ by sex may account for girls' developing more mood disorders than boys while boys develop more impulse-control disorders than girls.¹⁴ Although teachers regularly interact with girls and boys struggling with these disorders, they probably spend more time and energy with boys because children battling impulse control disorders disrupt classroom activities. Too often, as long as the student does not disturb the teacher or other students, teachers pay little attention, so girls with mood disorders become silent bodies occupying space or invisible altogether while teachers have boys suspended, sent to special education rooms, or labeled "at risk" and pathologized. Either way, these children do not find healing paths in schools but more often than not undergo more adverse experiences. If one believes researchers contributing to the thousands of studies over the last 30–35 years on the biological effects childhood adverse experiences have on adult-onset disease and mental disorders, children's adverse experiences in schools would increase children's brains and bodies' physiological and neurobiological changes and magnify the probability they would suffer from adult-onset illnesses their childhood adverse experiences activated.

Children in Schools, Children in Teachers' Care

Once knowing the results these researchers posit on even the most basic level, one may not only wonder why adverse events affect children so powerfully, when western society has so long touted children to be resilient, to "bounce right back," but feel most of us—64% score one or higher on the ACE—are doomed to be small-brained, sick, anxious, fear-ridden, and depressed during our shortened lifespans. One might easily panic

when remembering harsh words to one's children or students, thinking one's abrasive words have damaged these children for the rest of their lives. Psychiatrists reassure that few live their lives without uttering words they regret, especially in contemporary society where stress relentlessly beats one down. Emphasizing words occasionally spouted in anger or frustration when one is tired and stressed do not traumatize children so much their bodies express their childhood wounds as adult organic diseases, psychiatrists advise adults apologize to the children in their care, admit their wrongdoing, and commit to doing better. Unfortunately, many parents, educators, teacher educators, and future teachers think apologizing, admitting to being wrong, and committing to doing better undermine their authority. Having taught in public-school classrooms filled with children from many different backgrounds, I have only experienced positive responses from students when I say I am sorry, admit my mistake, acknowledge having misjudged something pedagogically, and ask if they will move forward with me. As an educator, I know I cannot prevent children from experiencing adversities occurring outside schools, but I can prevent or at least curtail the adverse events a child faces when in school and take ownership for my own misdeeds.

As an aside and for clarity, "the teacher gave me homework," "the teacher corrected my pronunciation," "the teacher put me in a group I didn't want to be in," "the teacher made me revise my essay," "the teacher wants me to come in for help in math," "the teacher made me help put away the art supplies," or other such common grievances students have are not the kind of adverse events to which researchers refer. If the teacher repeatedly humiliates, shames, or derides students when correcting them, grouping them with others, asking for revisions, asking a student to come for help, among other similar actions, then the event can change to adversity that triggers biological change. Making oneself do such things as homework or essay revisions one does not want to do is the kind of "adversity" one might say is good for one's learning to live and function well in the world.

Scientists have not merely researched to discover the physiological correlations between childhood adverse events and adult illness but investigated how adults who experienced childhood adverse events may heal their brains and bodies. These researchers contend one's body can produce new neurons, grow and strengthen neural connections, grow new gray and white brain matter, strengthen telomeres to rebuild DNA, shorten hormonal stress responses, calm inflammation, heal one's immune system, etc. Having read some of the now thousands of published studies on how childhood adverse experiences trigger physiological changes in children that ultimately lead to adulthood organic disease and mental disorders, I also know educators can instigate children's recoveries, so the children in their care may not only begin to heal in the present but begin managing

how adverse events affect them when such events continue to occur. If what researchers say about the body's ability to produce new neurons, grow and strengthen neural connections, strengthen telomeres to rebuild DNA, shorten hormonal stress responses, calm inflammation, and heal one's immune system, among other abilities, is correct, then children's managing how they react to adverse events, particularly as they work to navigate adversity in their lives while recovering from previous events, means they are simultaneously growing new neurons, creating new gray and white brain matter, regenerating their damaged DNA and immune systems, and protecting their brains and bodies from new damage.

In their practices, many therapists have long used paths to healing scientists and therapists studying adverse childhood experiences and adult-onset health issues now suggest; other healing practices they advocate may have long histories, but those advising their use may not have done so in relation to childhood adverse experiences. Although researchers have identified 12 steps to healing one can take on one's own, I only touch upon those one can easily incorporate into public school curricula and daily routines with children of all ages. First, Dr. Felitti has made the ACE Questionnaire available to everyone online, reasoning easy access will help dispel feelings of shame and secrecy concerning one's childhood adverse experiences.¹⁵ Taking the ACE Questionnaire and finding one's ACE Score can be a first step to healing because it makes one aware. Felitti also wants individuals to ask themselves about their childhood adverse experiences after they take the ACE: How old was one when the event(s) occurred or began? Might adverse events have occurred one does not recall? What relationship existed between or among individuals involved in the adverse event? Did one receive support from one's caregivers? Dr. Felitti then asks patients to reveal their individual findings to someone they trust in case those to whom they disclose these findings have further insights. Felitti maintains merely telling another person something adverse occurred when one was small sets one on the path to physical improvement (Felitti paraphrased in Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 151–152).

Step 2 involves another survey instrument, the Resilience Questionnaire.¹⁶ Researchers, physicians, therapists, and pediatricians joined in developing the 14-item Resilience Questionnaire (<http://ACEsTooHigh.com>). Journalist Jane Stevens, founder of ACEsConnection.com and ACEsTooHigh.com maintains one's resilience score helps one understand the things that assisted one's childhood self through adversity and spurs one consciously to incorporate more resilience skills into their adult lives.¹⁷ Having laid the foundation for healing by beginning to process one's childhood adverse events via the two questionnaires, one moves to speak the truth about one's early life by "writing-to-heal," step 3. Although therapists have used "writing-to-heal" for a long time, Bernie Siegel, M.D. (Siegel & August, 2003) has introduced this healing technique to groups of

high-school students using such prompts (paraphrased) as “Write a letter to yourself in which you tell why you love yourself” or, more controversial for public-school teachers and more shocking, “Write a letter to yourself telling why you want to end your life.” After the second prompt, Siegel separated the high-school students’ two groups of letters, showing students the letters for why they should kill themselves was twice as high as the pile of letters about loving themselves (Siegel paraphrased in Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 157, 258). Siegel recalls this demonstration caused the teens to realize they are not alone in how they feel and as a result resolve to start creating their own lives for themselves (Siegel paraphrased in Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 158, 258).

Asking students to write for 15–30 minutes for 3–5 consecutive days, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, James Pennebaker, Ph.D. (1997), The University of Texas at Austin, has created standard instructions for college students he would assign to an experimental group.

For the next 3 days, I would like for you to write about your very deepest thoughts and feelings about an extremely important emotional issue that has affected you and your life. In your writing, I’d like you to really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie your topic to your relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends, or relatives; to forget your past, your present, or your future; or [tie your topic] to who you have been, who you would like to be, or who you are now. You may write about the same general issues or experiences on all the days of writing or on different topics each day. All of your writing will be completely confidential. Don’t worry about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar. The only rule is that once you begin writing, continue to do so until your time is up. (Pennebaker, 1997)

Pennebaker (1997) observes that when he has students write-to-heel, their grades go up. Even if students immediately destroy what they write, when they write about emotional upheavals, they go to doctors less and tests on their immune systems show immune-function improvement (Pennebaker, 1997). Simply writing about one’s secrets positively affects people’s health even when they are struggling with life-threatening disease (Pennebaker, 1997).

Writing is not the only mechanism therapists have long used to help individuals heal. In emails and personal conversations with Nakazawa (2015, p. 258), Siegel relates how he uses not merely writing-to-heel but drawing-to-heel (step 4), often asking his patients to draw anything that comes to mind. Just as students often need help knowing what to draw, Siegel encourages his patients by suggesting they may draw an outdoor scene, their families, or anything else that comes to mind (Siegel

paraphrased in Nakazawa 2015, p. 160). Although Siegel asks patients to put away their drawings, the next day he asks them to analyze them as if they are interpreting a dream and then asks if their dream analysis provides any insights. Sometimes patients draw things that prompt Siegel to ask such questions as, “What happened when you were 13?” Siegel reports once the individual reveals the adverse experience, that patient begins to feel physical pain relief. While research continues on both writing- and drawing-to-heal, researchers do not yet understand how unmasking adverse experiences leads to healing (Nakazawa, 2015, p. 160).

Researchers, physicians, and therapists name the fifth step to healing the best for brain repair, for it is a neurally inspired, behavioral intervention assisting in brain change: mindfulness meditation (Davidson, 2012; Kaliman, Alvarez-López, & Cosín-Tomás, 2014). Scientists have repeatedly demonstrated mindfulness meditation helps one evaluate options, make appropriate decisions, regulate emotions, relieve fearfulness, and respond flexibly to others; it increases one’s self-awareness and ability to self-reflect and empathize by setting into motion an underlying mechanism for regulating and reducing pain (Magyari, 2015). Becoming aware of one’s breath and bodily sensations activates this mechanism (Kerr, Sacchet, Lazar, Moore, & Jones, 2013). Because researchers use brain scans as one data source, they are able to show how brains of those having experienced childhood adverse events have lost or never developed interconnectivity in the brain and how the interconnectivity improves through mindfulness meditation (Kaliman, Alvarez-López, & Cosín-Tomás, 2014). These scientists also monitor physical changes reducing individuals’ stress responses and inflammatory hormone levels (Kaliman, Alvarez-López, & Cosín-Tomás, 2014). The participants in such studies report progress in learning to calm their minds. Thus, although they may continue to experience stress and produce inflammatory hormones, they have learned ways to calm themselves, so their inflammatory hormones reduce more rapidly after an adverse event than they did previously. That is, researchers find one’s hormone production rebounds more quickly, so, importantly, inflammatory hormones bathe one’s bodies and minds for shorter periods (Kaliman, Alvarez-López, & Cosín-Tomás, 2014). Thus, mindfulness meditation seems to have a similar effect for humans as animals’ intense shaking after surviving a fight-flight or freeze event. As a result, those learning to calm their minds have less physical and neural inflammation and therefore reduce their physical disease, anxiety, and depression while increasing their physical and emotional well-being (Kaliman, Alvarez-López, & Cosín-Tomás, 2014).

Dr. Herringa (Herringa et al., 2013; Herringa et al., 2016) demonstrates mindfulness meditation strengthens the same brain circuits in children that it does in adults having had adverse childhood experiences: “When kids practice mindfulness[,] they may strengthen the same circuits of

the brain weakened by early adversity and childhood trauma—including [circuits in and between] the frontal lobe and the hippocampus” (Herringa quoted in Nakazawa, 2015, p. 161). Thus, children who learn how to meditate when in schools may use that meditation not only as a coping tool but to strengthen their brains’ circuits; yet, personnel in so few schools consider incorporating meditation—or other tools for self-healing—into the curriculum: “...meditation may help repopulate the brain with gray matter—and [repopulate] the neurons that may have been pruned... years ago. These are stunning health benefits from a very simple practice” through which one frees oneself from negative inflammatory responses (Herringa quoted in Nakazawa, 2015, p. 161).

In passing, I’d like to mention three other steps researchers have identified as helpful to healing that one can also easily incorporate in school settings: moving meditation (step 6), three types of bodywork (step 10), and compassion meditation (step 8). Moving meditation includes both *tai chi* and *quigong*. Many people find measured, careful, slow, movements over 45 minutes help calm their inner voices and clear their minds, creating a kind of recuperative inner space, enabling them to see more clearly and therefore better manage their insecurities, fears, and stress. Some individuals relate they feel less defensive, blame others less, are able to release the past, and become more compassionate than before their learning and practicing moving meditation (Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 169–170). Such other ways of moving the body as yoga, trauma release exercises, and bodywork (step 10) contribute to healing the body because these kinds of bodywork release stored, physical and muscular tension caused from chronic fight–flight or freeze mechanisms firing during one’s life (Cohen, Wintering, Tolles, Townsend, Farrar, Galantino, & Newberg, 2009). Releasing muscular tension tames one’s inflammatory responses (Cohen et al., 2009). While *tai chi* and *quigong* also help release muscular tension, these practices’ slow, measured movements move one into meditation and its brain-healing effects. As father of U.S. philosophy of education, John Dewey (1916), repeatedly advises, one should neither create nor sustain schools separating mind from body in curriculum, teaching, and learning.¹⁸ For Dewey creating, enforcing, and sustaining such binaries, such false separations of the whole, is an evil business impeding the child’s growth and preventing wholeness. Just as teaching the mind while excluding the body and emotions makes a person neither whole nor educated, healing the brain while excluding the body does not lend itself to full recovery from childhood adverse experiences. One can easily incorporate one or more body-moving exercises into the school day.

Mind–body–medicine researcher, Professor Charles Raison, M.D., University of Arizona College of Medicine, conducts research into neither mindfulness meditation nor moving meditation but compassion meditation (step 8) and its effects. Metta or loving-kindness meditation is the most

well-known form of compassion meditation (Pace, Negi, Dodson-Lavelle, Ozawa-de Silva, Reddy, Cole, Danese, Craighead, & Raison, 2013). This research team conducted a 6-week study in which adolescents participated in compassion-meditation training (Pace et al., 2013). At the end of the 6-week program, the teenagers' inflammatory markers were lower than at the beginning of the program (Pace et al., 2013). Perhaps more astonishing, high-security prison inmates who learned and practiced compassion meditation showed a 20% or more decrease in violence (Pace et al., 2013). Thus, if children learn to meditate when in school, they might not only lower their inflammatory markers, become less violent, and prevent adult-onset organic disease and mental disorders but more easily learn to meditate and be more likely to sustain practicing it than those who begin in adulthood, for children are mentally more flexible than adults and have not yet constructed some of the obstacles adults encounter when learning to meditate. Common obstacles adults face when learning to meditate include: constant distractions, difficulties releasing themselves from racing thoughts, guilty feelings when not entrenching themselves in work (Puritan work ethic), and, having built their lives around the ego—always wanting to do something—their agitation.

Whether what researchers are advancing is correct or not, children's learning to meditate in schools should help lower their stress and anxiety and improve their well-being. If researchers are correct about the biological changes accompanying adverse childhood experiences that later manifest themselves as adult-onset disease and mental disorders and if they are correct that one's brain and body can recover from adverse childhood experiences in part through meditation, then children's meditating in schools should at least help prevent adult-onset disease and mental disorders. Pairing meditation with bodywork means helping school children de-stress, soothe, and heal body and mind in the present if not preventing future illness. One has nothing to lose!

I do not want anyone to think self-healing practices alone will necessarily restore a person's brain and body health. Some adults may be able to self-heal without other interventions; some school children may make significant physiological and neurobiological changes because they write- and draw-to-heal, meditate, do bodywork, and perhaps learn and practice other healing steps in school. However, other individuals may be unable to heal themselves without professional help. School district administrators must, then, hire psychologists who specialize in working with children and with children having had adverse experiences. Those specialists must be able to mentor teachers and remind them not to exceed their limits in working with children who have experienced adverse events but refer them to the psychologist.

Using the now-standard excuse that the state, district, or school does not have funding to finance psychologists specializing in working with

children who have experienced adverse events rings hollow, especially because treating the children experiencing adversity once they become adults enduring organic disease and mental disorders costs far more money, time, and suffering than would hiring qualified psychologists for school-aged children. The number of sufferers and the cost of their healthcare would make any economy stagger and even collapse. Fortunately, some “communities are working together to change organizations and systems to replace blame–shame–punishment rules and policies [such as those in public schools] with understanding–nurturing–solutions and approaches” (Stevens, founder ACEsConnection.com and PACEsConnection.com quoted in Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 233–234).

Although much of the reason for...[making institutional change] is economic—it can save a city hundreds of millions of dollars in reduced costs for health care and social services—it also helps people and their communities to become healthier and happier places to live. (Stevens quoted in Nakazawa, 2015, p. 234)

Indeed, close to 30 states including Iowa, Maine, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin have been collecting Adverse Childhood Experiences data purposefully to develop state health programs whose professionals will address children’s and family’s problems (ACEtoHigh.com). Although public schools are often the last to receive funding for health services, public-school administrators and teachers may certainly ask their schools’ PTAs to bring mindfulness-meditation, moving-meditation, and bodywork training to teachers and students alike, to hire experts to help teachers tailor writing- and drawing-to-heel prompts appropriate to the children they teach. If necessary, principals might solicit assistance from state-level grant experts to hire psychologists until they can get “hard money” to fund these experts all schools need.

Public-school administrators and teachers, teacher and school-administrator educators, and future school administrators and teachers need to be more than simply aware that much research exists pointing to the strong possibility that even seemingly small adverse events in a child’s life may cause physiological and neurobiological changes in body and brain. They should be aware such changes affect a child’s social interactions and receptiveness to learning and a child’s ability to function and learn in a classroom setting. Even if one needs more data evidencing the biological relation between childhood adverse experiences and adult-onset organic disease and mental disorders to consider the correlations adequately evidenced, one knows, nevertheless, many school children daily experience adversity—lack of food, poor shelter, an alcoholic or drug-addicted parent. Children may be living without a parent, living in foster care, being passed among relatives, living in a violent neighborhood, experiencing domestic violence, among other common childhood adversities in the U.S. Aware

so many children face physical and emotional challenges, administrators and educators must act, first learning and practicing self-healing and stress-reducing activities for themselves, for few would not benefit at least from reducing stress. Properly to meet their *in loco parentis* charge, administrators and educators must next learn how to recognize a child in need, learn ways to communicate to all children in their care that the teacher values and cares about them, ensure no child in their care experiences adverse events at school, and bring healing practices into public schools where children spend nearly half their waking hours.

Although many factors contribute to one's childhood and adulthood physical and mental health and well-being, educators cannot always recognize these factors, act to change them, or act to counteract their damaging effects on the children in their care. With little training, educators can learn to recognize a child in need and can incorporate healing activities into the curriculum and their daily routines with students. Healing activities do not "take away from instructional time." They are part of instructional time; they ready students for teaching-learning in content, concepts, and skills, so they are meaningful and of value to students. One's students may remember little to nothing from *Macbeth*, little to no chemistry, calculus, or history, but their bodies and brains' biology will forever remember healing because it changes their futures: "In my beginning is my end" (Eliot, 1943). Changing the beginning through healing opens infinite possibilities for creating oneself, embracing life's wonders, living life well, and changing one's end.

Virginia Worley
Oklahoma State University

Endnotes

- ¹ Please see http://www.wholint/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/adverse_childhood_experiences/en/; <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>; and <http://www.acesconnection.com>
- ² Felitti's epiphany concerning the connection between childhood adversity and adult illness occurred when working with obesity patients in a weight-loss program. The patients were losing at a better pace than expected but then began dropping out of the program. Consequently, Felitti began interviewing his patients individually, wanting to understand why they were dropping out when they were succeeding at their self-identified goal—weight loss. Of 186 "drop-

out” patients interviewed, Felitti learned 55% had experienced sexual abuse. He concluded major weight loss posed a threat to those individuals because they used their weight as protection against potential aggressors. They literally could “throw their weight around” if necessary. Guarding against bias, Felitti asked 5 colleagues to interview the next 100 patients. The result was the same. Presenting his findings at a 1990 obesity study conference where the audience attacked him led to his research with Anda and the CDC and led his thinking beyond childhood adversity obese individuals may have experienced to discovering if childhood trauma might contribute to other kinds of adult health concerns (Felitti, 2010, pp. 24–30; Nakazawa, 2015, p. 242).

- ³ Nakazawa quotes Dr. Felitti from his email to her February 2, 2015. In this email, Felitti explains the backstory of his interest and research into childhood adverse events and their relation to adult illness, disease, and mental disorders. For more details, please see Nakazawa, 2015, p. 242, #12.
- ⁴ Although 5 questions are “personal,” ultimately, all 10 questions address family disfunction.
- ⁵ Dr. Felitti has made the ACE Questionnaire available online. One can find the instrument along with information about the ACE study and current articles concerning the biological link between childhood adverse experiences and adult organic disease and mental disorders.
- ⁶ For a quick, accessible refresher, please see Lisa Chen’s “How to Interpret and Calculate ‘X Times More Likely’ Statistics” in *Towards Data Science*, July 7, 2020, <https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-interpret-and-calculate-x-times-more-likely-statistics-daf538a9e0f4>
- ⁷ One in 36 eight-year-olds are diagnosed with autism in the U.S. as of March 22, 2023 (CDC, 2023).
- ⁸ The more recent interest in and research on childhood vaccines beyond possible links to autism may well stem from the fact that world-renowned physicians and researchers have raised questions about the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 inoculation and its boosters, questions that spurred scientists to investigate childhood vaccines beginning with their origins.
- ⁹ Some physicians with children have been willing to reveal they want their children vaccinated but don’t believe giving so many vaccinations at once can be healthful for their children. These physicians get the vaccinations separated—something not everyone can afford and even physicians may no longer be able to orchestrate.
- ¹⁰ Not only are U.S. researchers consistently seeing the childhood–adverse experiences, adult–autoimmune disease relation, but

researchers' findings globally evidence this striking correspondence (Nakazawa, 2015, p. 99).

- ¹¹ Rheumatic autoimmune diseases include such conditions as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and Sjögren's syndrome.
- ¹² Playing particularly significant roles are the hormones estrogen (a catch-all for multiple hormones and produced in the adrenal gland and ovaries) and glucocorticoids, including cortisol. For a reader-friendly explanation of the physiology involved, please see Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 97–104.
- ¹³ In addition to being Professor of Psychiatry of the Child Study Center, and of Radiology and Biomedical Imaging, Dr. Blumberg is Director of the Mood Disorders Research Program.
- ¹⁴ For more on the unique ways girls' brains are particularly susceptible, please see Nakazawa, 2015, pp. 104–110. For the genetic link between girls' childhood adversity and adult depression, please see Nakazawa, 2015, 104–113.
- ¹⁵ Please see footnote 1.
- ¹⁶ Although psychologists Mark Rains and Kate McClinn developed the 14-point instrument, a group of health advocates, pediatricians, early-childhood service providers, and psychologists at Southern Kennebec Healthy Start in Augusta, Maine worked on the instrument in 2006. Rains and McClinn updated the group's work, arriving at the 14 items for the instrument and decided how to score it in February 2013. The group in Maine did not create the Resilience Questionnaire for research purposes but for parenting education. For The Resilience Questionnaire, please see <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/> (Nakazawa, 2015, p. 257).
- ¹⁷ Please see PACEs Connection and the article on that site, "How Dr. Vincent Felitti, Co-Author of the Ace Study, and Jane Stevens, Founder and Publisher of *PACEs Connection*, Crossed Paths to Accelerate a Movement." <https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/how-dr-vincent-felitti-co-author-of-the-ace-study-and-jane-stevens-founder-and-publisher-of-paces-connection-crossed-paths-to-accelerate-a-movement-1>
- ¹⁸ Throughout his work, Dewey speaks against binaries.

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The 2022 SoPHE Presidential Address

The End of Education and the Existential Grand Canyon

**William Lloyd Fridley,
Southeastern Oklahoma State University**

Introduction

Good afternoon, my friends and colleagues. I attended my first SoPHE conference in, I believe, 2001 at the Sooner Hotel in Norman. When I moved to Oklahoma in 1999, my OVPES friend, Deron Boyles, highly recommended I check out SoPHE and he insisted that I must meet David Snelgrove and Doug Davis, who I remember was at Georgia State at the time. So I did. I have fond memories of these conferences: the generosity of spirit, the supportive colleagues, the stimulating conversations, and a freedom to experiment that I have found to be unique in my professional experience. It is an honor to give this address.

“To put it simply, there is no surer way to bring an end to schooling than for it to have no end.” So wrote Neil Postman (1931–2003) in 1995’s *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of Schooling*.¹ Postman plays with the ambiguity of the word ‘end,’ which can refer to cessation and termination, “this is the end,” “game over,” “that’s all folks.” It can also refer to a goal, an end-in-view, a *telos*. Postman’s thesis is that unless we can find a meaningful and purposeful end for schooling, it will spell the end of schooling as we know it. I will compare Postman’s book with another work, also from 1995, that features this end/purpose ambiguity: Henry J. Perkinson (1930–2012), *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education*,² and I conclude with the story of the existential Grand Canyon.

We will consider questions of identity, place, and purpose in their public, professional, and personal dimensions: my experience of teaching Neil Postman online during the pandemic, and some history and mythology of public schooling and teacher education. This will be an exercise in time binding, individually and collectively: What will we do? What are we doing? What have we done? The last, a question of legacy, is fitting, given that I retired on July 1, after 23 years at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. A thread that runs through this presentation is the use and power of metaphor, narrative, and myth.

Neil Postman and “The End of Education”

Toward the end of finding a meaningful purpose for schooling, Postman proposes several narratives, which he refers to as gods with a small “g”:

A god, in the sense I am using the word, is the name of a great narrative, one that has sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable one to organize one’s life around it. Call them what you will, we are unceasing in creating histories and futures for ourselves through the medium of narrative. Without a narrative, life has no meaning. Without meaning, learning has no purpose. Without a purpose, schools are houses of detention, not attention.³

The narratives include “The Spaceship Earth,” an ecological narrative, stressing our interdependence and collective responsibility to maintain and sustain our planet. “The Fallen Angel,” a parable of humans’ penchant for fallibility and a cautionary tale of the dangers of hubris and the need for epistemic humility. “The American Experiment,” which portrays our nation’s development as a series of arguments and debates that function dialectically to forge compromise and consensus, to cull unsound ideas and practices, and to build new ideas and practices to address new problems. And my favorite: “*The Word Weavers/The World Makers*.” I have used it for years in my classes. Postman was first and foremost a word man. Our engagement with language has strong social, moral, and epistemological dimensions. Our concepts and metaphors function as organs of perception and as guides to action. To promote a facility with language, Postman recommends that educators in any subject (or grade level) focus on three tools of language: definitions, metaphors, and questions. Postman also exposes and debunks several reigning narratives which he labels as “failed gods,” including Economic Utility, Consumerism, and Technology.

Neil Postman and Technology

For over 40 years, Neil Postman was a professor at New York University. In 1971 he founded its graduate program in Media Ecology. The definition of *media ecology* and its accompanying theory build on the work of Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan, who famously stated, “We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us.”⁴ Postman explains, “Technological change is neither additive nor subtractive. It is ecological. I mean ‘ecological’ in the same sense as the word is used by environmental scientists.” “A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything. In the year 1500, fifty years after the printing press was invented, we did not have old Europe plus the printing press. We had a different Europe.”⁵ The same dynamic played out in the U.S. with television, and again with the computer. And, as we can now add, with the internet and social media.

Cusp of the Internet Boom and Online Education

1995 was on the cusp of the internet boom and online education was primarily in the conceptual and speculative stage. For a little context, consider: At the start of 1993 the web had only 130 sites. In 1994, “Jerry’s Guide to the World Wide Web” was founded to keep track of websites and was soon renamed Yahoo. Amazon and eBay were launched in 1995, and in 1996 Jones International University became the first fully accredited, fully web-based university.⁶

Postman has a field day with the claims of early online education enthusiasts, whom he calls “hyperactive fantasies of cheerleaders” predicting the educational wonders that await us with the internet. He notes that these claims do not come from marketers, but from scholars.

Example: *If Little Eva cannot sleep, she can learn algebra instead, at her home learning station.*

Example: *Young John may decide that he wants to learn the history of modern Japan, which he can do by dialing up the greatest experts on the subject.*⁷

Postman skewers these visions of “confident unreality”:

Little Eva can’t sleep, so she decides to learn a little algebra? Where did Little Eva come from, Mars? [He later refers to her as Little Eva, the Martian insomniac.] Young John decides that he wants to learn the history of modern Japan? How did young John come to this point? How is it that he never visited a library up to now?⁸

This is not a new type of education, Postman claims, it is a “new breed of children.” These technophiles seek a technological solution to a psychological problem: “a student who is bored with the real world.”⁹ Postman cites an adage from Lenny Kaye of Apple Computer, “Any problems the schools cannot solve without computers, they cannot solve with them.”¹⁰

Teaching Postman Online

Since 2017, I have taught a master’s-level, accelerated (7-week), online History & Philosophy of Education course using Postman’s *End* as a text, including a class that began in March of 2020, coinciding with the pandemic’s beginning and the national lockdown. In that class I had students in 19 states, and students in the Philippines, China, and Mali. In addition to our weekly virtual meetings, I added an additional half-hour virtual discussion session. Between 15 and 25 students (most of whom were practicing teachers) attended the sessions and shared their work and their hearts, and tales of how they were navigating technology, distance, and the virus.

Most of my students agreed with Postman, that online K–12 schooling is a poor substitute for in-person schooling, and much of the students’ work

demonstrated a recognition of the usefulness of applying Postman's tools and concepts to evaluate the ways they are using instructional technology. Here's one of the short essay questions I use for the final exam:

What would Neil Postman think of this online class? Present your inferences and informed speculations based on specific points on technology and education that Postman makes in *The End*.

I like this question, and there are students who recognize and have some fun with the paradox. And I realize that I have spent a little too much time contemplating Postman's never-to-come approval. I am reminded of Ed Bradley's *60 Minutes II* interview with famed British actor Peter O'Toole. "It seems you don't care if I like you," Bradley commented. O'Toole replied, "You are right. I am much more interested in discovering if I like you."¹¹ In that spirit, all props to Dr. Postman. Thank you for your work. It was timely, applicable, and it worked like a charm in this accelerated online class.

Accelerated Online Classes at Southeastern

I started work at Southeastern (SE) in 1999. I am the only Foundations scholar in their history. I first taught online courses in 2003. To be honest, I was not very good at it, but I have gotten a lot better. In 2016, when we were in a time of financial crisis and enduring years of declining enrollment, SE struck a deal with Academic Partnerships of Dallas, Texas, to market our graduate programs in an accelerated online format. First were the MBA programs, followed by Master of Education (MEd) and School Counseling programs in 2017. At its inception, with fewer than 300 graduate students, SE President Sean Burrage set a goal of 1,000 online graduate students by 2021. By the fall of 2018 we were at 1,287! In the fall of 2019 we had record enrollment of 4,848 students, with over 1,800 online graduate students. I reported on these developments in my 2019 SoPHE presentation on distance and education.¹² At the time Linda Morice noted my presentation was the only instance where she had heard of increases in Foundations classes. Indeed. Graduate enrollment continued to increase and is now approaching 50% of our students.

Our nautical metaphors moved from *shuffling the deck chairs*, to *let's row together*, to *we're going to need a bigger boat*. Our major challenge became how to handle the numbers. It raises some important questions and some vexing problems for the quality of instruction and the wellbeing of faculty. I recognize that the myth of the Faustian bargain pervades this entire project. At the same time, with a nod to Charlie Daniels, I was playing with the intent of maintaining my academic integrity and preserving my pedagogical soul. Fortunately, I was able to do so, by teleworking these last two years.

For your consideration: In AY 2015–2016 Southeastern had an enrollment of 3,500 with 130 full time faculty. In 2021–2022 we had an enrollment of 5,400 with 120 full time faculty, and for good measure, a drop of 50 part-time faculty over that time period.¹³

Henry Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea*

Anyone who can read—or anyone who watches television—knows that public schools have become battlegrounds for serious social conflict in matters like sex education, multicultural education, affirmative action, Afrocentrism, tracking, and creationism. These conflicts are politically undecidable, because they stem from strongly held values that many are unwilling to compromise. So any solution proposed to satisfy one group inevitably harms, or threatens, the values of some other politically conscious group.¹⁴

This list of irresolvable, incommensurate, and interminable conflicts comes from the final chapter of *The Imperfect Panacea*. Perkinson concludes the chapter by saying: “[I]n the twenty-first century, perhaps the only way Americans can shore up their lagging faith in education is to move beyond the public schools.”¹⁵

Comparing Perkinson and Postman on Television and Narratives

I chose to compare Postman with Perkinson for several reasons: both books were published in 1995, both deal with questions of the end/termination of schooling vs. the end/purpose of schooling, and they were contemporary colleagues at New York University who occasionally cited each other's work.¹⁶ An additional point of comparison is their focus on the effects of television on social consciousness and schooling. Postman's best-known work, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) is a powerful critique of the societal and educational effects of television and, in Postman's view, the effects are not good. He compares the classic dystopian novels *1984* and *Brave New World* and concludes that our television culture more resembles *Brave New World*, wherein people are controlled by inflicting pleasure.¹⁷

Perkinson, on the other hand, argues against what he calls the “technological determinism” of television because it removes human agency and reduces humans to passive receptors of messages that shape and mold them. Rather, Perkinson claims, the focus or bias of television is on interpersonal relationships. Television in the '60s and '70s brought to light “the traditional American way of dealing with social problems—through education, that is, by changing people so that they would fit into the existing arrangements—was the heart of the problem itself. Through television, many people became critical of the existing social, political, and economic arrangements. They now perceived them as unfair and unjust.”¹⁸ And this raising of consciousness led to the quest for more equal treatment of Black people, women, non-English speakers, and the disabled. This rise of egalitarianism, according to Perkinson, also debilitated the quality of education in public schools and created more social conflict.

Here is Perkinson's thesis: from pre-Colonial times, Americans have held a great deal of faith in the power of schools to address and potentially solve a wide range of social, political, economic, and environmental

problems through the process of what Perkinson calls “socialization,” i.e., molding people to fit existing social arrangements. Schools have never been able to solve these problems and are therefore an *imperfect panacea*. While Postman believes that meaningful narratives could rescue schools, Perkinson believes public schools are beyond saving. In fact, Perkinson holds that competing administrative interests, bureaucracy, and political constraints preclude the possibility of a guiding narrative for schools. “In this situation, no local school administrator can impose a single-minded, agreed-upon purpose. Local schools can have no direction or goal. The only task is to stay afloat.”¹⁹ The time has come for public schools to close up shop, and Perkinson seems to delight in the prospect. In place of public schools, Perkinson proposes something he claims **will** solve most of the problems of schooling, a real panacea if you will: drumroll please—the market.²⁰

Narrative of Horace Mann and the Common School

As the beneficiary of a public-school education, a first-generation college graduate from a public state university, and a professor of teacher education at a regional state university, I am a supporter and beneficiary of public schooling. Undergraduate students in my Foundations of Education classes deserve a narrative about how public schooling came to be. And for that, I turn to a narrative about Horace Mann, the Father of the Common School.²¹ According to Mann’s model, schools would be publicly funded and publicly accountable through popularly elected school boards. Normatively, the schools would be non-partisan, non-sectarian, and socially integrative, with no privilege or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, or on account of family income. To *sell* his idea of the common school, Mann crafted a messaging campaign that resembles what we would today call *niche marketing*. With a keen rhetorical understanding of audience and purpose, Mann appealed to the business community (common schooling will lead to more informed, reliable, and productive workers), to the churches and clergy (schooling will foster values and literacy to make better Christians), and to the masses (schooling is the great *equalizer* and *democratizer* providing your children a ticket to a prosperous future). You don’t need money. You don’t need fame. Don’t need a credit card to ride this train. It’s the power of public schooling. Get on board!

As we know, in almost every regard public schooling fell short of these normative ideals. For example, the claim of non-sectarianism is belied by the largely unspoken, yet pervasive, Protestant bias that infuses public schooling. In my course I take this as an opportunity to point students to a larger historical understanding by asking the basic question, “what is a Protestant?” This leads to a discussion of Martin Luther and John Calvin’s theological and philosophical insights that fueled a drive for mass literacy. Fast forward to Massachusetts’ Bay Colony and the *Old Deluder Satan Law* (they just don’t name laws like that anymore). On occasion, this can be

augmented with an introduction to the Marxian concept of superstructure and an explanation of how schooling functions to transmit and shape culture. The story of the common school provides a model, a template, a normative foundation, if you will, for understanding, for exploring, and for critiquing schooling. Mann's work in standardizing teacher education provides a similar historical template. Typically, Normal Schools became Teachers Colleges, which then became Schools of Education in universities. This is the exact **evolutionary**—sorry, scratch that—developmental course taken by SE.²² Introducing students to this historical account of their field/profession can serve to foster a sense of being a part of history and hopefully spur active and informed participation in the work of molding and improving schooling. It lays a foundation, and the work continues.

To close this section of the address, I borrow the late Christopher Hitchens' *party* metaphor to describe death—and I apply it to retirement.²³ The party is not over. The party continues, but I will no longer be in attendance. I have shown myself to the door!

The Existential Grand Canyon

Questions of identity, meaning, and purpose: What do I want to do? What do I want to be? What do I want? Thoreau was of the opinion that few people took these questions or their pursuit very seriously and that most lived lives of quiet desperation. In his poem *The Voiceless*, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. laments:

A few can pluck the magic string,
And Noisy Fame is proud to win them,
Alas for those who never sing,
But die with their music in them.²⁴

Consider one of the saddest lines in American literature, found in the last paragraph of Sinclair Lewis' novel *Babbitt*. Set in the early 1920s in the fictive town of Zenith, Ohio, George Babbitt is the prototypical conformist: a well-respected civic paragon and model of conventional propriety. He is vice president of the First National Bank, a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, a member of the Booster Club, has a dutiful wife and two-and-a-half children (not two and a half men—it's a statistical thing), and lives in a beautiful two-story house with a white picket fence. One night, while having drinks and conversation with one of his buddies, Babbitt confesses: "I've never done a single thing I've wanted to in my whole life! I don't know's I've accomplished anything except just get along."²⁵

Compare this with a story Bruce Springsteen would often enact in his 1970s concerts. Seeking career guidance, Bruce and bandmate Clarence Clemons travelled to the darkness on the edge of town to obtain counsel from God. "I need some direction, God, on what to do with my life. My mom wants me to be an author and write the great American novel. And my old man wants me to be a lawyer, to represent people." God: "And what

do you want, Bruce?” “I want to rock and roll!”²⁶ I’ve always admired (and envied) those who knew early on what they wanted to do with their lives and pursued their career path with enthusiasm and focused purpose. Most of us are not so blessed (I raise my hand in solidarity with those to whom vocational direction comes late—if at all).

Doctoral Work at Ohio State and No Clear Path

“Congratulations, Dr. Fridley.” When E. Gordon Gee, president of The Ohio State University (I genuflect at the first mention of my alma mater as required by the alumni agreement) handed me my diploma, it was one of the saddest days of my life, because I had no immediate academic career prospects. I had ticked off some people, burned a bridge or two, and, frankly, I had not given the vocational dimensions of the doctoral program the attention they deserved. That is not to say that I was not working.

Doctoral candidates in The Ohio State’s Foundations programs could serve as T.A.s (teaching associates) and would teach two undergraduate sections of Foundations courses each quarter for a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend. It was a great setup. I taught Philosophy of Education and had complete control of the classes I taught. I soon found that I could teach a third section at any of the remote sites, which included Marion, Mansfield, Newark, and Lima, where instructors were flown out weekly in a twelve-seat jet! Teaching these classes was a remarkable experience. Seventeen straight quarters of teaching, however, were all the university would support. I was faced with the prospect of finishing my dissertation and, as one of my advisors encouraged me, *getting out of here and getting a job*.

For the next six months, while finishing my dissertation and in the year following graduation, I did get a job—sometimes two or three at a time. I unloaded trucks for Roadway Package Services (RPS), and I loaded trucks for United Parcel Services (UPS). I was a Ph.D. GSR (guest service representative) at Fuddruckers. Technically, I was not a waiter because diners served themselves. Rather, the GSR’s job was to greet diners, refill drinks, thank diners, and leave complimentary mints on the table. I was doing flips for dollar tips. For several months I manned a phone in the bowels of the historic Ohio Theater, fundraising and selling tickets for the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. I also did phone sales for the fabled publication *Highlights for Children*, with its classic Hidden Pictures feature and its winning slogan: “Fun with a Purpose.” For a year I served as a “super sub” for Columbus Public Schools (CPS). My assignments included every subject and grade level. As an alum of CPS I met several former teachers, some of whom were administrators, and discovered many students who were children of my old classmates. A perk of being a *super sub* was the \$100 a day pay. A downside was the requirement to take the given teaching assignment, sometimes with only an hour’s notice. For the last month of the school year I received a long-term assignment to teach a kindergarten class. It was an unexpectedly delightful experience. We joined the school’s

other kindergarten class to make masks and costumes, and stage a small production of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

The Trip, the Interpretation, and the Myth

About a year after my doctoral graduation, I received a tip from a fellow OSU doctoral student that there was a Foundations instructor position open at Ball State University. I applied and was hired for the one-year position of Adjunct Assistant Professor. My foot was in the academic door. One person I wanted to share my good fortune with was my Grandma Shriner who lived in Grand Island, Nebraska. Before I was able to call her—in fact, the day after taking the job offer—I received news that Grandma Shriner had died at 86 years old. I drove, alone in my dark green Ford Escort, for the funeral.

I had visited my mother's home of Grand Island three times over the years, and that was the farthest west I had ever been. With a job awaiting me in the fall, I decided this was the time to venture west finally to see the Rocky Mountains and the Grand Canyon. I proceeded west on I-70. The vast expanses reminded me of the line from Clint Eastwood's classic western, *Unforgiven*, "I even thought I was dead, 'til I found out we was just in Nebraska."²⁷ Westward I drove, through the Eisenhower Tunnel, around Denver, and over the Rocky Mountains. As the sun set, I got a room in Grand Junction, Colorado and had a couple drinks at the hotel bar called The Pour House.

Early the next morning I crossed into Utah which, in my uninformed and unexperienced imagination, I anticipated would resemble a giant salt flat. *Au contraire*. The landscape was exotic, surreal, otherworldly. I arrived at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon in late afternoon, at a jutting portion called Angel's Point. As much as I tried, I could not get too close to the edge. Hugging a nearby sapling, then grasping a picnic table, and other attempts to summon resolve were to no avail. I was afraid to get too close. On to Ball State.

With a full-time job came health insurance, and the ability to afford therapy. My first therapist had the coolest name: Dr. Wayne Miracle. *Right on*. As a new hire, I also took up writing some op-ed pieces that were published in the *Ball State Daily News* and in the *Muncie Star Press*. Topics included street preachers on campus and multicultural education, lamenting the moralistic conservative commentaries on the death of Princess Diana, the Ken Starr investigation of Bill Clinton through the lenses of *The Merchant of Venice* and Jesus and the woman taken in adultery (John 8), and a travelogue of sorts on my trip to the Grand Canyon.

It was only after writing the piece that I noticed a pattern; a thread, if you will, of *Grands*: Grandmother, Grand Island, Grand Junction, and the Grand Canyon. I tend to think in mythic terms, and I was determined to make sense of this. Following the clues and tools from Hebrew scripture,

American Indian folklore, and Joseph Campbell, I began my interpretive quest. Grandmother was easy—the source of all life. Grand Island represents the familial and familiar enclave/island that we must leave to make our mark in the world. With a bit of thought, I came to a psychologically satisfying identification of Grand Junction as representing marriage. I was single at the time, and I imagined marriage as being a metaphorical barren salt flat, much like I had mis-imagined the terrain of Utah. As I would find out, some marriages do resemble this section of Utah: strange, surreal, and otherworldly. I was flummoxed at the prospect of identifying the symbolic import of the Grand Canyon and was without explanation for why I was afraid to get too close. This was a job for Dr. Miracle.

At my next therapy session I took a copy of the article and explained my interpretation. Wayne was a student of myth and psychotherapy and he had reignited my interest in Joseph Campbell and validated the therapeutic value of myth. He concurred with my interpretation, and welcomed my question: what does the Grand Canyon represent? “That’s easy,” he said. Do tell, Dr. Miracle. “The Grand Canyon represents the question, *who am I?*”

My lip trembled and I was filled with a feeling of a clear, distinct, and undoubtable confirmation that this was the case. Yes. That is it. As has been said of the Grand Canyon, so it is with the question of “who am I?”. It is deep. It is scary. It is beautiful. And it is one of the few things in life that doesn’t disappoint. Who am I? I am a retired professor, and a grateful soul.

Endnotes

- ¹ Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).
- ² Henry J. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995).
- ³ Postman, *End*, 7.
- ⁴ For an overview of Postman’s work in the field of media ecology and an appraisal of the respective contributions of Postman and McLuhan to the field, see Lance Strate, *Amazing Ourselves to Death: Neil Postman’s Brave New World Revisited (A Critical Introduction to Media and Communication Theory)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).
- ⁵ Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 18.
- ⁶ Corbin Ball, “1962–2022: A 60-Year Timeline of Events Technology Innovation,” *Corbin Ball & Co.: The Meetings Technology Professionals* (2019), <https://www.corbinball.com/article/29-futurism/263-60yeareventtechtimeline>

- ⁷ Postman, *End*, 39. The Eva and Johnny examples come from Diane Ravitch.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid., 41.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ *60 Minutes II*, “A Lion in Winter,” December 19, 2000, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/archives-2000/>
- ¹² William Lloyd Fridley, “Close to You?: Distance and Education,” presented at the 2018 Society of Philosophy and History of Education Annual Meeting in St. Louis, MO.
- ¹³ Enrollment numbers are drawn from the Common Data Set files on the Southeastern (SE) website, <https://www.se.edu/academic-affairs/common-data-set/>. For a discussion about the effects of SE’s accelerated online programs on faculty, see the Faculty Senate Archives of a Shared Governance Forum, “Growing Pains: Stories from the Trenches,” presented by the Faculty Senate on November 16, 2021 (Presentation slideshow, <https://www.se.edu/faculty-senate/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2021/11/FS-SGF-Presentation-11-16-2021.pdf>). Also see the Faculty Senate Minutes of November 17, 2021, 3–4, <https://www.se.edu/faculty-senate/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2022/01/FS-Minutes-11-17-2021-approved.pdf>
- ¹⁴ Perkinson, *Panacea*, 195.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 198.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., “About the Author,” v. Henry J. Perkinson was Professor of Educational History at New York University and author of 16 books including *Teachers without Goals/Students without Purposes*, *Learning from Our Mistakes: A Reinterpretation of 20th Century Educational Theories*, and *Getting Better: Television and Moral Progress*.
- ¹⁷ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985).
- ¹⁸ Perkinson, *Panacea*, 155.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 194.
- ²⁰ Perkinson’s claims for the curative powers of the market include listing eight examples (ripped from the headlines) of problems plaguing public schools “that would be readily resolved or disappear in a market system of education” (196): “in an open market, new schools would appear to supply the kinds of education consumers demand” (197); grievances about standardized testing could be quelled because “In a market system of education, there would be no statewide examinations” (197); and debates and complaints about students’ assessment would be resolved because “In a market system

of education, where parents pay the school tuition, they would be likely to demand an honest and objective assessment of their children's academic progress" (198).

- 21 The sketch of Mann and common schooling draws primarily (and heavily!) from Gerald L. Gutek, *Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education: A Biographical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Pearson, 2000).
- 22 *Wikipedia*, "Southeastern Oklahoma State University," last modified December 12, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeastern_Oklahoma_State_University
- 23 *Christopher Hitchens—The Never-Ending Party*, directed and animated by Frasier Davidson (Brighton, UK; Cub Studio, 2013), <https://youtu.be/rREjrgL6L5o>
- 24 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., "The Voiceless," *Songs in Many Keys*, 5th ed. (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1862), 248–249, [originally published 1858], <https://www.bartleby.com/library/poem/2638.html>
- 25 Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), 401; The Project Gutenberg eBook of *Babbitt*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1156/1156-h/1156-h.htm>
- 26 It appears that the "bootleg" videos of various versions of this concert story have been purged from YouTube.
- 27 *Unforgiven*, directed by Clint Eastwood (Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers, 1992).

The 2022 Drake Lecture

Ridicule in Real Time: How Memes Can Undermine Totalitarianism and Save the World!

Stacy Otto, Illinois State University



Today's address is going to take more the form of a story than a paper. It might be a bit of a wild ride and it might be rough. My hope is we will all still be the same dear friends we have been for these many years and are in this moment when I reach its end. Because from what may seem a light-hearted title springs all the fear and hope I have for what has been happening, for what will happen next, and who and how we will be in future.

I chose to tell this story today for a simple reason: I cannot bring myself to think about anything else. This has been true for some time now. Because the information and ideas I talk about today are what I think about much of my day, every day; they are what I study, whom I read, what I strive to learn, to whom I listen; they are even what I dream about. I suppose at its essence my talk today is about a hugely powerful, intensely difficult proposition, particularly in this sociopolitical moment: it's about the difficult but absolutely vital process of changing one's mind about fundamental beliefs, about questioning deeply, about ardently trying to become aware of and challenge one's blind spots, and about how we must use what we find, and seek truth in ways that challenge what we think—and what the state narrative wants us to think.

To pan back a moment to the wide shot, I believe we are living amidst the most ambitious, wildly successful, and dangerous worldwide propaganda campaign that humans have ever known. We are living in an era of unprecedented censorship, particularly of science and scientists.



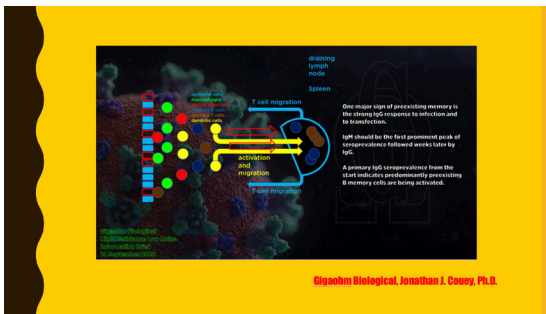
None of this could ever have been possible were it not for social media, this coup never could have been pulled off had we not consented (moreover paid for outright) to carry in our pockets, bags, and hands powerful and powerfully addictive electronics—and before you protest, let me say I am as addicted as anyone.



I'm different from the last time you saw me. I know we all are. But something happened to me, alone in a little house on the prairie for well over two years without even a pet to keep company. I have always been a learner, a tryer, a hard worker. I've always been curious and a person who falls down rabbit holes while trying to get my head around an idea. But when covid happened, I became a person who *had to know*. In part because I was on sabbatical leave when lockdown happened, I started spending time every day trying to understand what was happening and what I should do as a medically complex body to keep myself alive. Like many, I was afraid for my life for a good long time: too long. In fact, my fear for my life should I get covid proved to be a terrible blind spot that took and has taken its toll. I should say that I have always been largely trusting of medical science, indeed I believe I owe my life to physicians and procedures

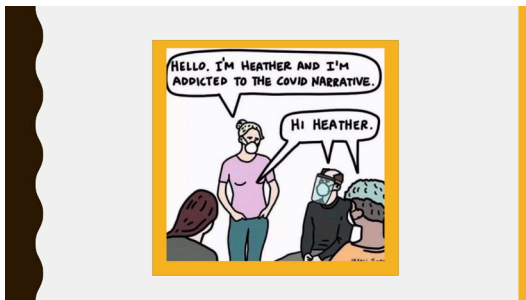
many times over, and I have worked hard to be an informed consumer of medical science and pharmacology. I have participated in short term and longitudinal studies; I've participated in clinical trials. I didn't go to medical school (even though, especially now, I wish I had), but I've picked up quite a bit of useful information over the years, enough to make me think I might like to be a medical advocate in my next career, and I've learned to ask questions and advance hypotheses. I've been going to classes in microbiology because I *have to know*.¹

I feel lucky to have come into this with some basic and a couple of areas of specialized knowledge in those early days of the age of covid. For instance, I knew from the start that it takes an average of 12–14 years for a vaccine to be developed and properly tested. I knew that there had never, ever been a vaccine for any coronavirus (I didn't know then that that's because coronaviruses generally cannot be cultured or passaged, or that coronaviruses cannot replicate competently, that is without making “mistakes” in the genome). And I knew the difference between a sterilizing and non-sterilizing vaccine. You know, in the beginning the state and its media made no bones about the fact that these so-called vaccines were of the non-sterilizing variety. It said so right in *The New York Times*,² in an article and schematic that explained how the jabs (I usually call them transfections,³ because that is their function; the covid jabs are not technically “vaccines”) were designed to work. Practically, I also knew that once done, this jab could not be undone.

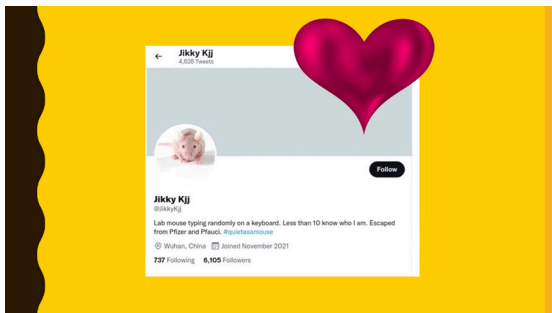


As you likely recall, there was intense pressure to get the jabs, particularly for the “vulnerable,” since the state and pharma told us outright the jabs would “stop the spread.” I am vulnerable and could receive the first jab in the second wave. Briefly, here’s what happened. I studied that schematic many times. A voice in my head said, plain as day, “that’s how you get thrombocytopenia.” I heard that voice loudly; I listened to and heeded it. Since I already have thrombocytopenia that’s in remission, I refused the jab, even though my institution threatened to mandate it for employment (they didn’t mandate it in the end, but our new [and now former] biologist and mRNA-expert university president endlessly shills for the jabs, even

as I speak). So, I remain unjabbed. This past summer I finally got back to my beloved Maine, where I was a real curiosity at a little backyard party. A number of people asked me (with kindness) why I didn't get the jabs, so I told the story of the voice in my head. A woman who herself is vaccine injured and whose husband is a medical researcher and doctor in Boston said to me, quietly, "that voice, that was God." I've never been very religious, but the moment she said it I knew with certainty the truth—and the weight—of her words.



I figured out very early on that covid was coming and, being “vulnerable,” I was motivated by fear, so I was stocked up and locked down by mid-February 2020. I told a few others in texts that began, “you’re gonna think I’m crazy, but...” So, there I was, in the middle of a pandemic, personally bucking “The Science™,” and developing a healthy fear of what the state was going to do to me because of my refusal. I felt keenly how little I knew. But one of my besties, an old beau, had put me on to youTube videos by a financial advisor and peak-oil guru who also holds a Ph.D. in pathology from Duke, Dr. Chris Martenson,⁴ a brilliant guy who, like many, stopped his whole life to turn to digging and analyzing and vetting the data and regularly making youTube videos to instruct those of us who *had to know*. Chris was so far ahead of the curve that he sounded the alarm—put out an APB, more like—to his subscribers on January 23, 2020. I watched his scientifically detailed daily episodes like a religion. His analysis was spot-on, his prognosticating almost always came to pass.





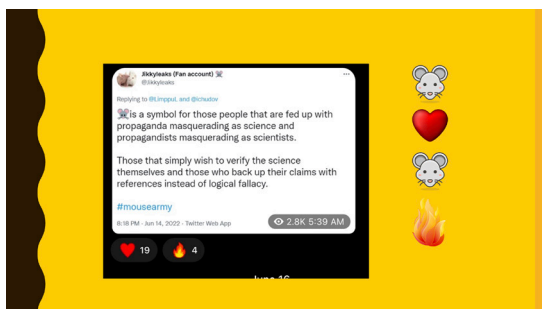
It's through Chris that I learned of an anonymous character on the twitter who went by the curious handle Jikky,⁵ a person who I immediately saw as having the eye and the respect of a good many scientists working on the covid puzzle.⁶ Jikky is a truth-teller, a truth-finder, a person who digs relentlessly and exposes fraud, corruption, and propaganda like no one I've ever seen. Jikky with a mouse-head emoji and more scientific superpowers than I can count. I'll admit it; I was crushing. I still am.

Jikky is nothing short of a wonder: a self-professed lab mouse (with a Ph.D. in microbiology, no less), a scientist digging at the cellular level, and a working M.D. Jikky was calling bullshit on the "official" story we were being fed in ways that I immediately recognized as brilliant, scientifically meticulous, brave, and very dangerous to the state narrative that covid was: 1). a novel virus; 2). arose from a wet market in Wuhan; and 3). going to kill us all if we didn't lock down to "flatten the curve."



Remember that? If we just stayed inside our homes for two weeks, it was all magically gonna be okay. Needless to say, stopping a virus was not what lockdowns were about. The anonymous "anony-mouse" Jikky came to be the leader of a ragtag, worldwide band of folks, largely scientists and physicians. They are microbiologists, practicing physicians, neurobiologists, crazy-knowledgeable laypeople, research scientists, historians, actual investigative journalists (those who are not just mouthpieces for the state narrative), and a few people like me who aren't doctors and who don't

know the cellular-level biology, but who *have to know*, and who are willing to fight to get the truth out there in the open. Jikky's truth-seeking, hard-fighting, truth-finding, ragtag group is called the #mousearmy.



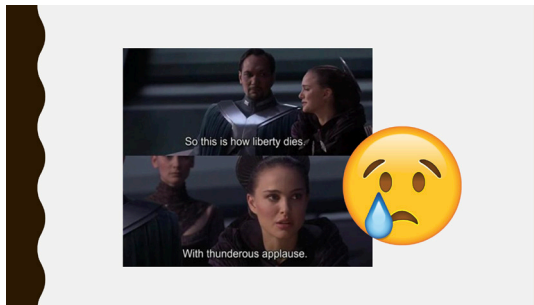
Mouse army members can be recognized by the addition of a mouse-head emoji next to their twitter handle, although the mouse head has been lately appropriated by trolls, imposters seeking to infiltrate the mouse army; many of these impostors have been proven to work for government agencies pushing the vax or are shills for pharma. As Jikky explains, "[the mouse-head emoji] is a symbol for those people that are fed up with propaganda masquerading as science and propagandists masquerading as scientists. Those that simply wish to verify the science themselves and those who back up their claims with references instead of logical fallacy [make up the mouse army]."⁷⁷



Jikky has been banned from twitter repeatedly, reincarnated in many forms (this is a kind of a “test” for mouse army members, by which I mean when someone is kicked off twitter how fast the rest of the mice locate the “reincarnated” account; my personal fave was “Chairman Maouse”), and now resides under another pseudonym on both Substack and Telegram, which are alternative media platforms committed to free speech. The mouse army included me even though their knowledge awes me and dwarfs my own on a moment-by-moment basis; I’m a proud member. #inmousewetrust

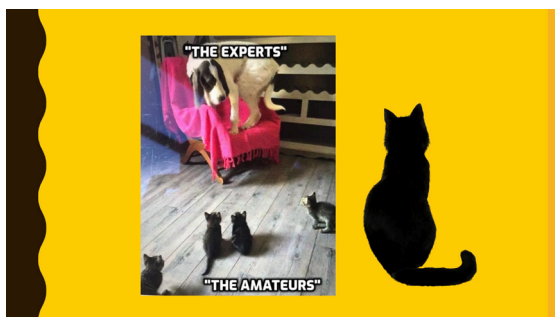


If you are not following and discussing covid on social media in ways that challenge the state narrative, you may not realize the current extent of U.S.-government-inflicted censorship across mainstream social media platforms. Cutting-edge researchers are being banned from twitter for doing no more than posting published, peer-reviewed research articles that just happen to counter the state narrative. The mouse army repeatedly, relentlessly has shown its ability to damage the state narrative; this loosely associated group has worked together and separately to break resounding bombshells: through painstaking reanalysis of published data in highly influential, absurdly faked peer-reviewed publications such as covid's "origin story" published in *The Lancet*⁸; by endlessly poring over and exposing gross scientific fraud and misconduct in tens of thousands of pages of Pfizer clinical-trial documents that, until a judge ordered them released, were to remain sealed for 75 years with the fed's approval; by requesting, reading, and archiving tens of thousands of FOIA'd documents; and by conducting original empirical research. Indeed, you may not realize it, but some incredibly important independent science on the jabs' ingredients and effects, for instance, is now being crowdfunded, not grant supported. Many hundreds of scientists, doctors, investigative journalists, and interested laypeople were permanently banned from twitter during 2022 alone for posting empirical evidence on covid, speaking truth to power, and daring to question the state's motivation and all-court jab push.



[Natalie Portman is in a whole lotta memes.]

Bots have been engineered and programmed to troll researchers who seek nothing more than to uncover truth and, through a lawsuit by journalist Alex Berenson, we recently discovered the U.S. government has forwarded individual names of those they wanted to silence directly to social media companies who cheerfully carried out the fed's orders in the months before Elon Musk bought twitter.⁹ There are other bands of scientists, historians, and laypeople who have founded groups to research covid and to expose the state's and big pharma's lies, among those DRASTIC Research (drasticresearch.org), PANDA (pandata.org), the FLCCC (flccc.net), and Children's Health Defense (childrenshealthdefense.org) headed by attorney [and now presidential candidate] Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Worldwide an astonishing number of scientists and physicians have been fired from their academic posts, institute jobs, or hospitals for daring to challenge the state narrative and for refusing the jabs. If you're not asking by now, "what exactly is our government hiding?" you ought to be. This is not how free speech dies, it is how it is exterminated: through targeted, rampant censorship of voices that dissent and diverge from the state narrative.



Many of the world's most brilliant, critical, scientific researchers censored by mainstream social media have been pushed to new, anti-censorship media platforms like *Substack*.¹⁰ These authors and those who started out in the mouse army on twitter (and, during 2022 in particular, what was left of the mouse army on twitter) are running scientific circles around the state's appointed "experts," getting the word out, and have the state narrative, big pharma, and their relentless hawkers on the run, their many lies and obfuscations now subjected to the beady eyes and brilliant scientific knowhow of a million mice.

This is where memes come in. What's a meme? Well, memes are imagery and text combined in a way that flips cultural messaging on its head and ultimately are used not only to expose truth, but to ridicule the lies that memes attack. The *OED* says a meme is "an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp. imitation."¹¹ I think this is a fancy way of talking about something "going viral" without being "viral."



In his introduction to Susan Blackmore's book, *The Meme Machine* (from back in 1999), Richard Dawkins presciently explains how, "memes travel longitudinally down generations, but they travel horizontally too, like viruses in an epidemic."¹² 'The wicked cunnin' anon Substacker el gato malo¹³ explains memes as

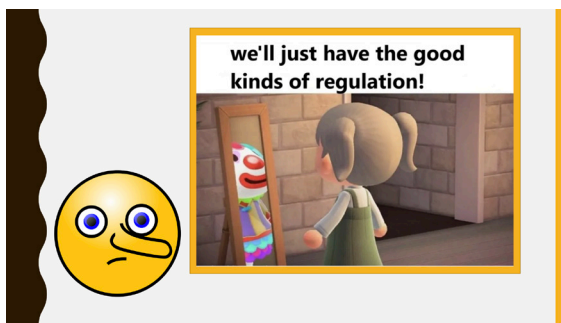
...anti-propagandistic gold. their informational density is surreal and they lay plain not only how shabby [a] trick is but how the trick is done so you can more easily spot the next one. best, they teach away from the provocative image that previously evoked fear or rage and invert it so that the same image in the future now screams "they are manipulating you" instead.

While memes can be funny and fun-making, they are really razor-sharp provocations, certain of which are created to reveal and crush the state's propagandistic narrative.



During the pandemic, memes have been used to lampoon and spear mainstream media's propaganda circus and various nation-states' attempts to criminalize so-called "misinformation" and "disinformation" that push against or dismantle the propagandistic state narrative.

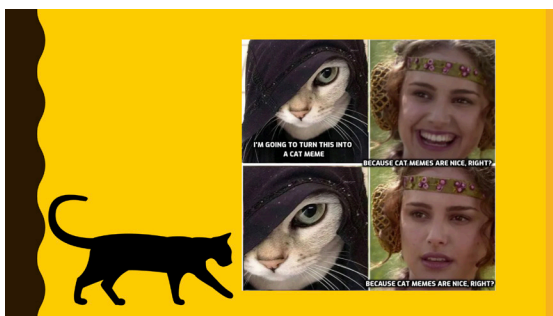
Mememes are used to expose politicians', pharmaceutical industry skills', and public health officials' lies—their denials of empirical science—when that science plainly shows that the state's narrative has no clothes: clown world elevated to the n^{th} degree.



But let me be clear, memes are not jokes, even though they may well make us laugh. According to neurobiologist and 2022 twitter refugee Dr. Kevin McCairn,¹⁵ memes are a form of warfare—and we are at war.



You don't have to be a cool kid to "get" memes, you just have to be inside the culture. You do have to be quick, tho, because meme-world manufactures its propaganda sledgehammers in real time. Herein lies meme-world's superpower. If you're a politician or state mouthpiece or public-health "expert," you can lie, but you can't hide. A battalion of memers are poised with clips and gifs and clicks at the ready, some of which have become classic meme templates, like those swiped from *The Hunger Games* or starring Natalie Portman in *Star Wars*, or the "how it started vs. how it's going" memes.



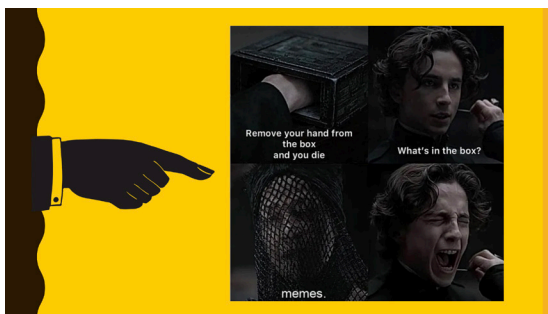
Memes are meta...they appropriate and tap into all the many layers of postmodern ghosts of cultures past, hat-tipping to the past, and the thing that thing in the past tipped its hat to. At their best, most biting, memes reel back and forth in time to make layered references that are immediately recognizable. A meme is “an entire argument, indictment, and informational immune booster in one simple medium.”¹⁶ Meme-world is a modern-day, justice-focused Wonderland; we are all its Alices.



you can now distill an entire ethos into 10 seconds of attention by evoking myriad connections by utilizing familiar content repurposed,” [indeed,] “memes comprise a serious shift in the informational arms race. [although] pictures and soundbites are ruled by emotion...memes rule by informational density and the power of analogy.”¹⁷

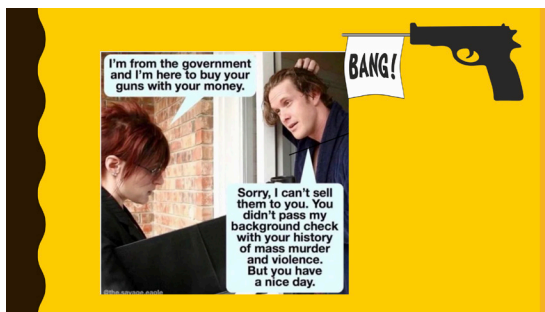
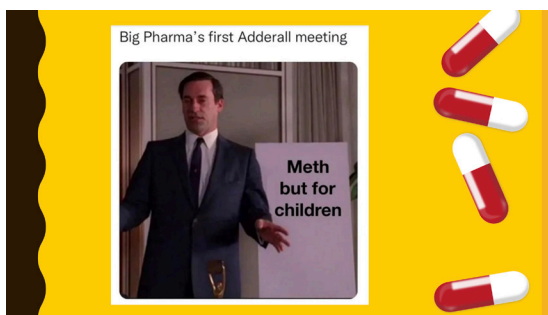
you know the pattern, so you pick up the rest. you fill in the gaps, draw the associations. the true meme does not carry in it all the information it expresses, it's a shorthand code to show you the linkages between things you already know. ... welcome to the age where you can devastate a whole movement with one well-chosen flourish...and cut to the marrow of the flaws and managed mendacities faster than they may be promulgated. **for perhaps the first time in history, we have the template to refute big lies more quickly and more comprehensively than they can be told.**¹⁸





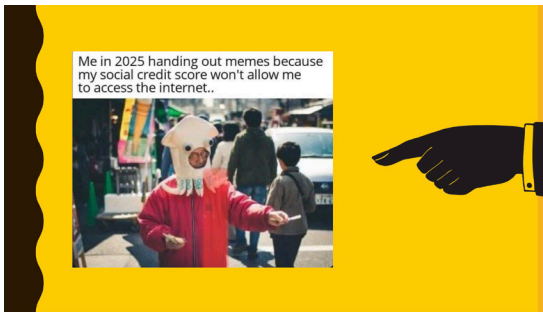
This historical shift, the one ushered in by meme-world, is nothing short of astonishing in its ability instantly to reveal truth, delivered via a cultural slap so savage, so stinging, it has the power to debunk—moreover to ravage—propagandic untruth. Memes reveal in painful seconds exactly how what's behind an image and the accompanying text in the mainstream media are wholly mismatched.

That's why memes are heckling elevated to the status of warfare: *memes are the blitz and the shit, all at once*. And big pharma and government are getting spectacularly punked in meme-world every day, all day. To wit:





[This next one's an Intermission meme... so y'all can catch your breath.]



Why does the use of memes in information warfare change everything? Because not only do memes “spread a different message that cannot be controlled, but [they link] the initial image to the new, repurposed expression. this renders the original image streisand effect, not signal.”¹⁹ Memes are more powerful than the original images they war against because they are intensely memorable. They mutate, not only by retweeting or reposting, but memes become new templates for future memes faster than lightning. In fact, “no sooner do you utter the phrase ‘malign creativity’ than there are 200 memes that have adopted it as their own, gleefully boomeranging it back at you.”²⁰ Perhaps most clever of all, memes win the war because, for those maimed by memes, “fighting humor with stridence is a terrible look; never bring outrage to a meme fight,”²¹ for you will come off so much worse and infinitely dumber than with the initial lie you told that turned the memers on you in the first place. In fact, memes are nothing short of “irrepressibly fecund”—and “the house of lies is [now gloriously] on fire.”²²

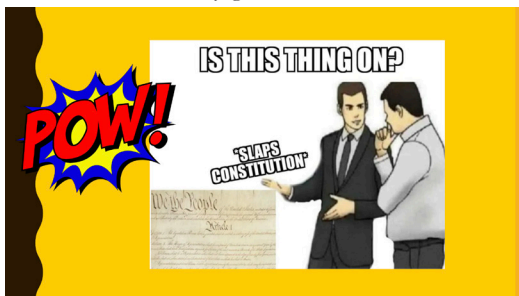
once, the powers that be needed fear only a few cartoonists and voices and could easily suppress their spread. now you must fight against the full force of the insight and creativity of the global myriads and the relentless upvote of the informational

instantiations which best work to convey meaning as infallibly adjudicated by an audience of billions that play off one another like jazz night at birdland.²³



Let me put this as succinctly as possible: I believe memes have the power to save us from totalitarianism, maybe not in themselves, but they signal the formation of a group or groups who are pushing against the propagandistic, oppressive state narrative and, importantly, ridiculing it. Meme-world knows the truth. And memes evidence resistance, *they foretell fight*.

When I talk about the state's power to move and mold us, and memes' power to reveal the state narrative's lies and manipulations, this may be obvious, but I want plainly to say that this phenomenon is not unique to our time, to the era of covid. It's not. But the scale and gall of the covid-era economic/scientific/psychological operation is unprecedented, the massive cover-ups of fraud and greed (and, it seems increasingly possible, *evil*), the cold-war-era censorship on steroids, and the way this phenomenon seems to be coordinated across the first-world world stage has never heretofore been accomplished. The current phenomenon used covid as its launchpad, but we must be aware of this phenomenon as an ongoing governmental enterprise fascistically aided and abetted by industry and particularly featuring the influence of authoritarian-aspiring world leaders affiliated with ghoulish grandpa and anti-pleb Klaus Schwab and his World Economic Forum crew—even though knowing full well it's unlikely that Schwab is the mastermind many give him credit for.



While the covid operation provided a kind of perfect storm, the danger of certain kinds of power grabs is ever-present.

We, the resistance, the dissidents, can take our script, in part, from the Civil Rights Movement and heroes like John Lewis and others who never wavered from the path of preaching diligent attention, the need to search for and know one's blind spots, and to practice the bedrock of the movement: nonviolence and abiding love for our fellow man. We must love one another if we are to get through this. And we have to try with all our might to wake up all those who are still asleep, who still think everything is okay—*because it is not*.



It's also very difficult for a country's people to recognize their homeland as a worldwide villain. We in the U.S. like to fancy ourselves heroes, the ideal, the dream, the good guys in a world of bad guys, the rescuer—a potent blind spot indeed. But now is not the time to get along to get along. The alarming facts and evidence of subterfuge and fraud are coming out in spite of relentless, well-funded government-sponsored censorship, suppression, and relentless propagandizing.



Right now people are divided politically as never before, simmering violence and feeding hatred against the unvaccinated, against those who refuse to buy into the state narrative. These days, people don't ask questions of those on the opposing side to learn more about them as humans or to find commonalities across the divide, they ask questions (or, more often,

make assumptions) in order to gauge how much they should hate one another.



Consequently, instead of interrogating the actions and intent of fascistic and unholy state and industry alliances we blame and set upon each other. Dividing people in this way is fundamental to the handbook of totalitarianism and a hallmark of authoritarian rule. I passionately believe we must wake up, we must come together, or we're done for.



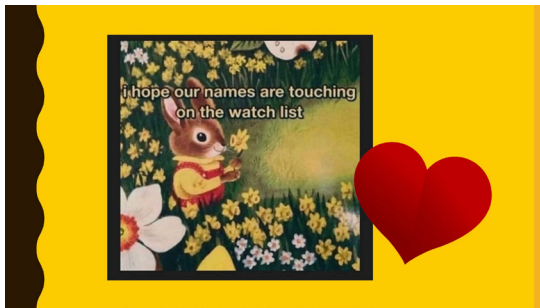
Joost A. M. Meerlo argues, “we must learn to treat the demagogue and aspirant dictators in our midst with the weapon of ridicule. The demagogue himself is almost incapable of humor of any sort, and if we treat him with humor, he will begin to collapse.”²⁴ Václav Havel²⁵ theorizes the formation of alternative social structures that exist within totalitarianism, but which are morally opposed to totalitarianism. Such parallel structures, he observes, have been more effective at combatting totalitarianism than trying to bring about societal change from inside political structures. Parallel group structures, when they emerge en masse, can then join to form a kind of free society, parallel to the totalitarian society, in which the parallel society operates as a creative refuge.

Now, I think it's entirely possible that, at this point, Sam [Stack] would call me a conspiracy theorist,²⁶ and maybe I am.



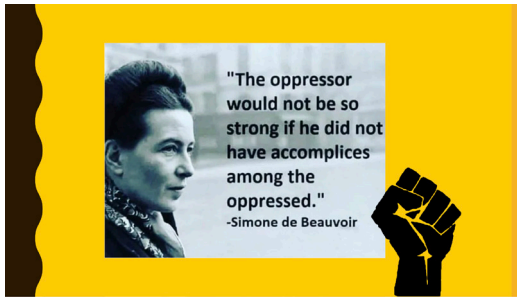
But I want us to consider something, and not just the idea that, these days, conspiracy theories seem to come true at an astonishing rate. It's this: in the U.S., when citizens of other countries disagree with government propaganda and fight back, we call them dissidents and U.S. media regards them as heroes. When those of us in the U.S. disagree with our government's propaganda, the media calls us conspiracy theorists and wackos. This example is the exact sort of contradiction that shows the state narrative's bones as clearly as x-ray vision.

By the way, while we're on this point, let me tell you that these days this is what I consider to be true love:



I was very afraid—for a long time—and I believed if I didn't figure it all out, didn't try as hard as I could to understand the virus and what to do about it, couldn't know the truth and act upon it, I couldn't survive it. In a way I still believe that, and I struggle every day to find the time and the bandwidth to read and digest material that is way, way over my head in terms of the cellular-level biology, and, additionally, is oftentimes soul-withering.

I haven't been truly "afraid" of the virus for a long time, but I have come to be wary and fearful of the ways nation-states all over the world—particularly "democratic" nation-states—are exerting and mandating powerful control mechanisms—controls with no basis in science and increasingly with no basis in democracy.



If you are paying attention, you already know we are in scary territory, but I've learned that above all we must not be afraid, must not become mired in fear. Fear is the state's most efficient, most diabolical weapon used against us, the weapon used most effectively to control us, and the weapon that pits us against each other when we should be joining together, for social isolation is the key ingredient in totalitarianism's receipt (that's Southern for recipe, y'all). Fear will make people do even what they know factually—and morally—is wrong. As Charles Eisenstein argues,



The habits of authoritarianism run deep. Obedience is only the most superficial. Deeper is to look to authority as a source of truth. Deeper still is to look first for “who is in charge” when seeking to understand and change a given situation. ... However, when that outlook becomes a habit, one looks for someone-in-charge as the explanation for every injustice and the key to righting every wrong.²⁷

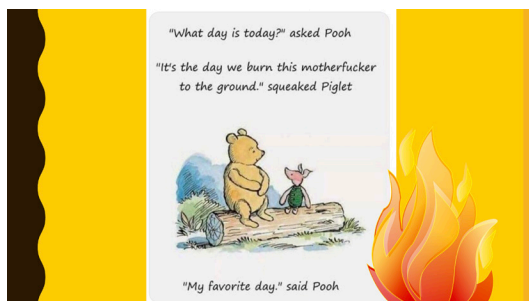


The line of logic Eisenstein lays out is a trap tho, because “fixation on the villain conjures one phantom after another that distracts attention from a broader matrix of causes”²⁸ and leads us to ask what turns out to be absolutely the wrong question: “who can fix this for me?” We cannot allow ourselves to be locked into this simplistic view of looking outside of ourselves to locate either salvation or blame.²⁹ As critical historian and covid sleuth extraordinaire Mark Kulacz, a.k.a. Housatonic, recently wisely cautioned, imagined justice for the injustices inflicted upon us by the nation-state and big pharma is not coming. Kulacz says, speaking to his youTube audience on the 21st anniversary of September 11th:

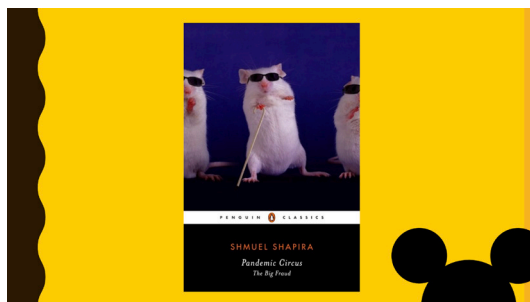
Now what? We could put [all the evidence] together on a silver platter. Do you think all the bad people are going to get arrested? ... Where do we take this? I'm a little bit confused myself about this. I know that...we will become as bad as all [that's happened to us] if we are filled with fear and filled with anger. ... Is it a dead-end because we're not going to charge in and try to get the bad people arrested? I don't believe so...because I know I'm not filled with fear. It's heavy, but I'm not filled with fear. ... I know it's anxiety-causing. But I know many of you are not filled with as much fear as you might have been. You've been trying to figure out what's going on and you need that knowledge. If you don't have it, you ARE going to be filled with fear. And while you're filled with fear and you're reacting and it may feel better, may feel like you have direction, you're actually going in the worst direction possible. ... I don't think this ends with getting the bad people arrested or getting the right guy in the presidency or whatever. ... In the short run, I don't know where this goes, I do know in the long run that those people who can keep their cool, who aren't going to act out of anger and fear...people who can reach out to each other and support each other, this will become a bigger and bigger movement [for truth]. Don't define [our work] as trying to take down the bad guys, don't define it as “we're going to win in the end.” ... Winning is how you live your life...it's not being filled with anger, it's not losing track of the priorities of your family and your health and the local community. And don't believe it's country above anything else, don't believe that. They burned that opportunity.³⁰

So, I implore of you: seek knowledge that emerges from a creative parallel group operating against the state narrative. Seek knowledge that supports the biology—and don't be fooled otherwise. Seek knowledge because knowledge kills fear. When you possess such knowledge, you can make uproarious fun of the lies and subterfuge that permeate the state's narrative. You can keep yourself and your family safe. You can ridicule the lies in the state's narrative in real time, becoming a hero to those happy inhabitants of meme-world...and a hero to democracy.

Of utmost importance, your television is not going to bring you this kind of knowledge, nor is your radio or newspaper. Biologist Dr. Jonathan Couey calls this “skilled tee-vee watching”³¹ and it will enslave you to the state narrative, not free you to find truth.



We all have blind spots, but I think this is one time in history that it's never been more important that we fight to recognize them and how they are shaping our response to this sociopolitical moment and its implications for the future of democracy. For, even when we catch a glimpse of or even come clearly to see evidence of our blind spots, it is ever-so-difficult to change our minds about fundamental beliefs we hold. Why is that? Well, they don't call them “fundamental beliefs” for nothing. They go deep. Take as an example the belief that the U.S. government has its citizens' best interests at heart. Or that the pharmaceutical industry's whole *raison d'être* is to cure us of disease. These are both pretty fundamental beliefs and they hum in the background of all our activities having to do with health, happiness, wellness, security, and even belonging. But, for many, the covid pandemic and the unprecedented mandates, fraud, controls, and censorship exercised over citizens and patients has raised enormous, fundamental questions about the motivations of both the state and big pharma: questions that might have seemed blasphemous in the past—but only if you've never been duped or harmed by either of these institutions. Put simply, it seems today the majority are coming to know the very injustices so long suffered by the minoritized.



Blind spots proliferate wildly, obscuring one's vision during times of extreme political polarization such as in the times we now find ourselves. Some of you know that starting during the early pandemic, I have done a radio show, a music show I do once a week on a community radio station in Maine, WERU. In summer 2021, because I am a volunteer programmer, the station invited me to attend the National Federation of Community Broadcaster's (nfcbr.org) annual meeting, held virtually.³² A keynote session was given by David Isay, founder of Storycorps. He spoke on how Storycorps came to recognize and fear the growing culture of contempt arising from the U.S.' current extreme political polarization. He grimly acknowledged that, historically, democracy has had great difficulty surviving such extreme polarization. Isay was joined by Dr. Peter Coleman, Professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia, who explained political polarization's toxicity and how, when people follow leaders during these times, *they think less*. Most concerning, during such times, like now, people physically move into tribes, self-sort along ideological lines, and this movement predicts intergroup violence, rising hate crime, and political violence. In order to help counter this threat, Storycorps launched a new initiative where people of similar life circumstances but opposing political ideologies have one-on-one conversations conducted in pairs, not to change the other's mind, but to tell each other their life stories, to find commonalities, to meet across the vast political divide. These conversations, recorded, archived, and available to listeners, are emotional; they're incredibly powerful. These conversations were envisioned as one way for exhausted people, alienated from and angry at "the other side" to begin again to see one another as people, as neighbors, as respected friends with meaningful ideological commonalities. Extreme political polarization is a disease, a condition that creates dis-ease, distrust, fear, and that feeds the heinous fire of hate.



The truth is that this vast divide didn't just magically materialize, it was manufactured to divide us, to conquer us, to busy us with hating so we are too afraid, exhausted, and angry to look beyond our differences, too exhausted and afraid to see what the state and the world's evil billionaires have in mind for the rest of us. We can't fall for it. Memes used to ridicule

totalitarian state narratives and practices are a tool that will help us to bridge this divide, to locate our humanity.



I want to close this morning by invoking the wise words of biologist Dr. Jonathan Jay Couey, patch clamp jedi and former faculty member fired from Pitt’s medical school for talking the truth, using data and cleaving propaganda from biology about covid on the youTube. At the end of nearly every Gigaohm Biological stream, where he teaches microbiology to those who remain curious, like myself—and like you—Jay reminds us, and quite rightly so, to:

*Stay focused,
Don't take their bait,
and to
Love your neighbor.*

Endnotes

- ¹ Jonathan J. Couey, *Gigaohm Biological: Cutting Edge Biology for All* (2022), gigaohmbiological.com
- ² Jonathan Corum and Carl Zimmer, “How the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine Works,” *The New York Times*, May 7, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/health/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine.html>; this article has been updated since I first read it.
- ³ I was introduced to this terminology attending “biology class” with Dr. Jonathan J. Couey of Gigaohm Biological. A transfection is “the process of artificially introducing nucleic acids (DNA or RNA) into cells,” in this case in order to force the body to make a protein. I draw this brief definition from “Introduction to Transfection,” ThermoFisher Scientific, <https://www.thermofisher.com/us/en/home/references/gibco-cell-culture-basics/transfection-basics/introduction-to-transfection.html>
- ⁴ Chris Martenson’s youTube channel can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/@PeakProsperity>

- ⁵ Jikky's original twitter account can be accessed at <https://twitter.com/JikkyKjj>; Jikky's current twitter account handle is @Jikkyleaks.
- ⁶ Let me say unequivocally, and with love, that I owe my growing skepticism of the state's narrative and its motives to my nightly talks during covid times and since with Dr. Frank Grill, who not only helped my thinking by introducing me to the work of Chris Martenson, Ph.D., but also to Charles Eisenstein and other learned, witty cynics like James Howard Kunstler who runs the wonderfully candid, oftentimes-wise blog, *Clusterfuck Nation* (<https://kunstler.com/writings/clusterfuck-nation/>). My deep gratitude to Dr. Grill for his good thinking and generous comments on drafts of this address. Additionally, sincere gratitude to Dr. Virginia Worley, who also substantively commented upon drafts.
- ⁷ Jikkyleaks, twitter post, June 14, 2022, 5:18 am, <https://twitter.com/Jikkyleaks/status/1536654334867681281>
- ⁸ For instance, Mandeep R. Mehra, Frank Ruschitzka, and Amit N. Patel, "Retraction—Hydroxychloroquine or Chloroquine with or without a Macrolide for Treatment of COVID-19: A Multinational Registry Analysis," *The Lancet* (2020) (published online May 22), [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31324-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31324-6/fulltext)
- ⁹ Ryan Lovelace, "Writer claims Biden team pushed for his ban from Twitter," *The Washington Times*, August 12, 2022, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/12/alex-berenson-claims-biden-team-pushed-his-ban-twi/>; evidence for Berenson's claims comes from Elon Musk's release of the "twitter files." A recent suit evidences how the Biden administration colluded with social media platforms to target individuals for censorship. See Michael Nevradakis, "Big Victory: CHD Lawsuit Alleging Key Biden Officials Colluded with Tech Giants to Censor Free Speech Consolidated with Missouri Censorship Case," *The Defender: Children's Health Defense News & Views*, July 25, 2023, <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/chd-lawsuit-consolidate-censorship-big-tech/>
- ¹⁰ <https://substack.com/>
- ¹¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) quoted in Richard Dawkins, "Foreword," in Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), viii.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, ix.
- ¹³ el gato malo, "the revenge of the shape rotators (part 1)," *bad cattitude*, July 22, 2022, https://boriquagato.substack.com/p/the-revenge-of-the-shape-rotators?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=reader2; el gato malo pens his missives in all-lower-case text.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*

- 15 Communicated during one of his live streams. His academic work can be accessed here: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kevin-Mccairn>
- 16 el gato malo, part 1.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., emphasis added.
- 19 el gato malo, “the revenge of the shape rotators (part 2),” *bad cattitude*, July 22, 2022, https://boriquagato.substack.com/p/the-revenge-of-the-shape-rotators-735?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=reader2; in case you are unfamiliar with the term, “Streisand effect” refers to the media phenomenon of “when someone decides to ban or censor something, and that attempt to make something go away, makes it even bigger than ever before, or ever planned,” <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Streisand+Effect>
- 20 el gato malo, part 2.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 el gato malo, the revenge of the shape rotators (part 3), *bad cattitude*, July 22, 2022, https://boriquagato.substack.com/p/the-revenge-of-the-shape-rotators-a5e?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=reader2
- 24 Joost A. M. Meerloo, *The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing* (Cleveland, OH, World Publishing Company, 1956), 111.
- 25 Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (New York and London: Routledge, 1985), <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>
- 26 Samuel F. Stack, Jr., “Conspiracy Theory and Pragmatic Inquiry: Is There a Role for Education?,” *Journal of Philosophy & History of Education* 72, no. 1 (2022): 71–84, http://www.journalofphilosophyandhistoryofeducation.com/jophe72_individual_files/Stack_jophe72.pdf
- 27 Charles Eisenstein, “There’s No One Driving the Bus,” *Charles Eisenstein* [Substack post] (2022, September 20), <https://charleseisenstein.substack.com/p/theres-no-one-driving-the-bus>
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- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Mark Kulacz, Episode 91.M: 21 Years after September 11, 2001, *Housatonic Live* (September 11, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ea3BIQaJSX8> or on *odysee* at <https://odysee.com/@Housatonic:0/462-ep-91-m:6>
- 31 Couey, *Gigaohm Biological*.

- ³² David Isay, “Session IV: David Isay and One Small Step” (Keynote presented at the National Federation of Community Broadcasters 2021 Conference, virtual via zoom, July 21, 2021, <https://nfcb.org/2021-nfcb-unconference-update-and-news/>)

“As American as Apple Pie”: Attacks on the Teaching of History and Social Science, from Social Reconstructionist Opposition to Divisive Concepts Legislation

**Matthew J. Shiloh, Georgia State University &
Chara Haeussler Bohan, Georgia State University**

Philosophy's Role in Society and Education

Last year first author Matthew Shiloh, who works in an urban public high school in Atlanta, co-taught two U.S. history classes. As a general-education history teacher for the past decade, his co-taught classes were shared with a special-education teacher routinely present in his classroom. He had worked with this special-education teacher for several years, and while Shiloh strongly disagreed with his politics, they nevertheless managed to create interesting classes together. This amicable situation changed, however, when Critical Race Theory (CRT) became an often-repeated fiendish talking point on Fox News (this co-teacher watched *Tucker Carlson Tonight* every night). On the topic of race, Shiloh incorporates readings such as Frederick Douglass' *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (2021/1852), Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens' *Cornerstone Speech* (1861), and the first section of Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* (2015), to encourage students to think critically and historically about one of U.S. history's most contentious issues. Then, while teaching a class on the Atlanta Race Massacre of 1906, the co-teacher, without a word, abruptly left the room. Later in the week, Shiloh learned that the co-teacher had walked directly to the chair of the department of special education and told her that he had left the classroom because he believed Shiloh was teaching something “CRT-ish.” Fortunately, the special education department chair, an African-American woman, told the co-teacher, “I taught U.S. history with Mr. Shiloh, and I agree with him 100%.”

Because Shiloh teaches in a racially diverse high school just east of downtown Atlanta, he sees himself as protected, to some extent, in his school's environment, but he wonders what might have happened had he been teaching in another part of the state, perhaps in Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene's district just a 45-minute drive to the north? Or

what if he had been teaching in another state altogether, such as Florida? It is not hyperbole to say that he might have been fired, or at least placed on a Professional Development Plan (PDP), if the special education department chair disagreed with what he taught or if she had not known Shiloh's teaching at all. A few miles to the west of Shiloh's school, a Cobb County fifth-grade elementary teacher of gifted students was given notice of termination in early June 2023 for reading to her students the a book *My Shadow Is Purple*, a book about gender identity. The teacher, Katie Rinderle, had purchased it at her school's Scholastic book fair and her students requested she read it (Tamsett et al., 2023). Rinderle was cited for violating Georgia's divisive concepts law, known as HB 1084. Now, "divisive concepts" legislation can be found across at least 36 states and some reports claim that number is as high as 44 states (Schwartz, 2023; Stout & Wilburn, 2022). Teachers can be fined or even jailed if, in their teaching, they are found to cause "discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress" to any particular student. In fact, Sylvia Goodman (2022), writing for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2022), asserts Delaware is the only U.S. state that has yet to have a single anti-CRT bill introduced.

The purpose of our article is to trace the origin of attacks on the teaching of history and social science, and the lingering impact of these attacks on contemporary teachers such as Shiloh and Rinderle, as well as historic attacks on past educators such as Harold Rugg and Rachel Davis DuBois. In particular, we explore the political animus toward social reconstructionist Harold Rugg and the social studies textbooks he developed, and McCarthyite claims of un-American activities of intercultural educator Rachel Davis DuBois, comparing them to contemporary "anti-CRT" or "divisive concepts" legislation that restricts the academic freedom of history and social science teachers in the classroom. We believe current attacks on teachers may be more injurious than those in the past because of standards, accountability, and legislation that could lead to penalties, job loss, and possible imprisonment. In addition, recent attacks have become more numerous because of the large number of states that have considered or passed "anti-CRT" or "no divisive concepts" legislation. And while such legislation is aimed at restricting any school personnel from promoting or encouraging divisive concepts, the impact on history and social science curricula is assuredly more pronounced than on other school curricula. These content areas, along with Literature, are focused on humanity—and humans have disagreements (e.g., wars, corrupt leaders, social problems, etc.). At the heart of these recent attacks is concern for what teachers should be teaching. But, if education is life itself (Dewey, 1938) and everyday living is full of divisiveness, should not teachers be equipping students to learn the skills of civil disagreement upon which life and democracy rest?

Attacks on Social Reconstructionists and Intercultural Educators

Attacks on those who teach history and social science and on U.S. teachers in general, unfortunately, are not a recent development (Frank

& Latts, 2021). Dana Goldstein (2015) traces the history of attacks on teachers, as does Diana D'Amico Pawlewicz (2020). Often, teachers have become collateral damage of the culture wars. Culture wars involve struggles over differing ideologies, concentrated on what is now called political polarization. There have been documented disputes over ethnicity and the teaching of immigrant students, over race and sectionalism, over textbooks, over religion in public schools, over science and human origins, over sex education, and “cold wars” over teacher loyalty oaths (Zimmerman, 2002). In addition, there have been wars over the nature of teacher work which include: teacher unionization, teacher strikes, teacher tenure, teacher working conditions, teacher merit pay, teacher evaluation, teacher salaries, and even student test scores—never mind fights over the content and pedagogy employed in U.S. public school classrooms (Goldstein, 2015). The “wars” over the teaching of history and social science are particularly pernicious, as Matthew Shiloh discovered. But, why? David Blight (2001) argues that historical memory matters. Indeed, he begins his book *Race and Reunion* by quoting James Baldwin, who says, “History...does not refer merely to the past...history is literally *present* in all that we do” (Baldwin as quoted in Blight, 2001, p. 1). Thus, how people understand the U.S.’ past is a reflection of its present.

History and social science/social studies teachers appear to be more susceptible to attacks than many other academic disciplines, as the very nature of the content they teach can be divisive. For example, the common core standards address math, science, and English but leave out history and the social sciences altogether. Ron Evans (2006) traces the history of social studies, beginning at the origins of the field in the late 1800s. In 1884, several historians came together at the American Social Science Association in Saratoga, New York and founded a separate American Historical Association (AHA) as history had only recently emerged as a distinct field of study (AHA, 2023; Bohan, 2004; Boozer, 1961). At that time, historians considered it an important endeavor to offer guidance on the teaching of history in the K–12 curriculum (Bohan, 2003). Just as the AHA was organizing, the leaders on its executive council established committees to investigate and write reports about how history and government should be taught in schools, and from the very start there was disagreement between advocates of traditional history versus those who favored more-progressive history. New history advocates, such as Lucy Maynard Salmon, maintained political and military history had been overemphasized at the expense of social history (Bohan, 2004).

The field of social studies was firmly established in 1916 with the publication of the *Report on the Social Studies Committee* written by a subcommittee of the National Education Association’s Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. Thomas Jesse Jones, who authored the 1916 report asserted that history should be replaced by social studies (Evans, 2006; Woyshner & Bohan, 2012). Most Social Foundations scholars

agree that Jones' social studies curriculum, which he developed while at the Hampton Institute, had negative racial overtones, such as emphasizing the importance of manual labor for Black children because of his belief that Black children were not intellectually capable of engaging and learning democratic education (King et al., 2012). By 1921, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) was founded. Evans (2006) claims that this new approach to social studies education and the establishment of NCSS would not have occurred without the growth of progressive education.

As Kliebard (2005) and others point out (Davies, 2002; Krug, 1964, 1972), there were several different strains of progressive education, although the term "progressive education" itself is difficult to define and subject to historical and contemporary debate. Lawrence Cremin (1961, p. vii) defines the term "progressive education" as "the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large." Thus, he connects the educational movement to the political movement. Cremin's definition has been scrutinized by radical revisionists (Apple, 2019; Hlebowitsh, 1993), but it serves as a means to provide clarity to a somewhat amorphous term. The "varieties" of progressivism in education include: administrative progressives, life adjustment /social efficiency experts, mainstream progressives, child-centered progressives, and social reconstructionists (Evans, 2006; Kliebard, 2005). Evans argues that of those members of the latter group, also known as social meliorists, Harold O. Rugg was the leading progressive educator.

A substantial body of secondary literature on Harold Rugg has emerged since his passing in 1960 (Bohan, 1997; Dorn, 2008; King et al., 2012; Nelson, 1975; Robinson, 1983). Rugg was born in 1886 in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and the bulk of his professional career spanned from the 1920s through the 1950s (Bohan, 1997; Evans, 2006). Rugg was of modest background, but strong intellect; he graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in civil engineering. When working as an instructor of engineering at James Millikin University, he became interested in how students learn. Continuing his education, Rugg earned a Ph.D. in education and sociology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign under the guidance of one of the foremost educators of the early 1900s, William C. Bagley. He initially worked at the University of Chicago School of Education, but five years later accepted a position on the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University. At Teachers College (TC), he worked with many progressive educators, including Bagley, his former mentor, and former graduate student colleague, George Counts, as well as William Heard Kilpatrick and John Dewey. Rugg, along with his brother Earle Rugg, helped to found NCSS.

During his tenure at TC, Rugg was a prolific author who produced 74 books and more than 150 journal articles (Bohan, 1997). He contributed regularly to *The Social Frontier*, a journal affiliated with the Progressive Education Association (Bowers, 1964; Kilpatrick, 1934). He also worked with several doctoral students to produce social-studies pamphlets. Their

pamphlet series appeared as a themed set of booklets under the title, *Man and His Changing Society*. Over 75,000 copies were sent to teachers and districts in the first years of its initial release, during which time Rugg oversaw production. Then, after Ginn & Co. began marketing the series from 1929 to 1939, approximately 1,317,960 copies were sold in addition to 2,687,000 workbooks (Bohan, 1997; Dorn, 2008). The book series made Rugg a wealthy man.

Many contemporary scholars of Rugg's view his textbooks as novel for their time (Bohan, 1997; Evans, 2006; King et al., 2012). Rather than focusing on rote memorization of military and political history, Rugg organized the books around problems of society. His focus was an issue-centered approach meant to prepare students for life's activities. Advocating for societal change through public education had an obvious appeal during the Depression era. Rugg repeated this theme throughout his life (Rugg, 1931, 1941, 1943, 1947). For example, various books in his series call attention to the disparity between the rich and poor in the U.S., the changing role of women, the abuses of big business, and the preservation of the U.S.' natural resources (Bohan, 1997). Clearly, his books reflect concern for a society that experienced unemployment and poverty as a result of the Great Depression, an event singular in its economic impact. More-recent scholarship criticizes the Rugg textbook series for its failure more fully to highlight Black people's intellect, Black people's accomplishments, agency, and resistance to enslavement (King et al., 2012). Rugg wrote his books at the height of the Jim Crow era when racists in many states lynched Black people. His essential silence on matters of race in U.S. life is revealing. Certainly, his perspective is typical of several progressive white male educators who ascribed to the theory of recapitulation. From a contemporary perspective, these views were inherently ethnocentric and tinged with racism but were reflective of the context of the times (Fallace, 2015; Yacovone, 2022). Indeed, Donald Yacovone (2022) argues in his investigation of educational textbooks from the colonial era to the present that white supremacy has deep-seated roots. Yet, not all progressive-era educators ascribed to white supremacy. Indeed, Jane Addams worked directly with immigrants at Hull House, Chicago, and Rachel Davis DuBois advocated for intercultural education throughout her life (Hight & Bohan, 2019).

As the U.S. armed for entry into World War II, Rugg's books became the center of controversy and conservative groups organized opposition to their use in schools. By the late 1930s and 1940s, these critics became numerous, including the American Legion, the Advertising Federation of America, and the National Association of Manufacturers (Bohan, 1997; Conner & Bohan, 2014; Evans, 2006). Several local school boards across the country, in locations such as Englewood, NJ; Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; and Bronxville, NY voted to censor or discontinue the use of the Rugg textbook series. *The Cleveland Press* provides an account

of a book burning during which Rugg textbooks were destroyed (Rugg, 1941). Although several organizations defended Rugg's work, such as the NCSS and the National Society for the Study of Education, the impact of the conservative reaction was profound. As a result, the series diminished in popularity. Rugg specifically replies to his critics in his book, *That Men May Understand* (1941). In 1942 the Federal Bureau of Investigation opened a file on Rugg, discovering correspondence that included accusations Rugg was sympathetic to Communism and had tried to make students think favorably towards Communist political ideology. Interestingly, the current anti-CRT/no divisive concepts legislation has also led to fury at local school board meetings as well as book bannings and book burnings. Bess Levin (2021) writes in *Vanity Fair* an article on today's book burnings. These book bannings and burnings, she notes, are part of the right wing of the GOP's nationwide push against teaching about race and sexuality in schools. Indeed, Henry Giroux (2023) argues that the current political climate is reminiscent of the rise of Nazi-era facism, which Rugg witnessed in the 1930s.

Rachel Davis DuBois was an intercultural educator, who worked during approximately the same time period as Harold Rugg. She too was accused of Communist sympathies. Born in 1892 in Woodstown, New Jersey, she came from a strong Quaker background. She attended the First International Conference of Friends in London in 1920, and that experience profoundly shaped her career. After teaching briefly at Glassboro High School, she traveled to the U.S. South with the Pennsylvania Committee on the Abolition of Slavery in the South, met George Washington Carver and was introduced to W.E.B. Du Bois (who was no relation to her). She resumed her teaching career at Woodbury High School where she implemented the Woodbury Project, consisting of several school-wide intergroup assemblies designed to foster interracial harmony (Bohan, 2007; Hight & Bohan, 2019). She expanded the Woodbury Project while engaging in doctoral studies at TC and founded the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education in 1934. Her concern for African Americans later grew to include all immigrant groups in the curriculum materials she developed. DuBois's curriculum work led to a CBS radio show in 1938 called *Americans All, Immigrants All* (NYPR archive, 1938; Pinkerton, 2015).

However, by the 1950s Rachel Davis DuBois's Intercultural Education work came under investigation by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Un-American Activities Committee (Bohan, 2007; Cattell, 1971). Although Senator McCarthy eventually apologized, the investigation damaged DuBois's reputation and hurt her ability to obtain further curriculum work. Like Rugg, DuBois (1984) defended her work in the last book she wrote. Nonetheless, ideological attacks on teachers and teacher educators can create lasting harm. We argue the contemporary attacks on Critical Race Theory and the ensuing divisive concepts legislation is designed purposefully to scare teachers and to inflict harm on those who try to circumvent the intent

of the law. These laws create an atmosphere of fear so that teachers will self-censure. We now turn our attention to recent attacks.

Recent Attacks on Critical Race Theory

It is of interest, then, that the current debate over Critical Race Theory is not, in fact, simply an argument about conservative or progressive politics playing out in the nation's classrooms. For all the right's hand-wringing about Critical Race Theory and its alleged assault on conservative values, historically CRT emerged as a *critique of liberal ideologies* regarding race. Derrick Bell, an African-American attorney and professor who worked for the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund, began to form the tenets of Critical Race Theory as a challenge to *his own liberal views* of U.S. race relations, as well as to his work fighting school segregation for the NAACP in the early 1960s. Bell's thesis emerges from a school integration case in Harmony, Mississippi, where, as a young civil rights attorney for the NAACP, he joined the fight to integrate Southern schools. He soon realized that court rulings to desegregate schools "sparked white flight from the public schools and the creation of private 'segregation academies,' which meant that Black students still attended institutions that were effectively separate" (Cobb, 2021). Bell began to realize that despite the apparent gains of the civil rights movement, achievements for African Americans—in terms of income, schooling, economic mobility, and home ownership—remained largely stagnant. He concluded that white supremacy had not, in fact, been overcome through the brave efforts of civil rights heroes such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, or Diane Nash, but rather remained a tumorous, intractable presence in U.S. institutions. Because of this intractability, Bell called "for racial realism or an orientation that recognizes racism as an indisputable force in policymaking" (Buras, 2013).

So, Bell's belief, later articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Cobb, 2021), a student of Bell's, is that racism is both intractable and permanent. Crenshaw adds that "the so-called American dilemma was not simply a matter of prejudice but a matter of structured disadvantages that stretched across American society," (Wallace-Wells, 2021). CRT began as Critical Legal Studies (CLS) before Crenshaw termed it Critical Race Theory in the 1980s. Other aspects of CRT include the use of counter narratives, calling upon the voices of marginalized people to revise narratives that only include dominant cultural voices, as well as interest convergence, meaning that Black people only gain civil rights when white interests converge with what Black people want. So how did the U.S. move from a little-known academic theory taught in a few law schools to its present-day, very public attacks on CRT use in education?

A lot of this shift has to do with a man named Christopher Rufo. Born in Sacramento, educated at Georgetown University, and now living in Seattle, Rufo was worried about the anti-racist messages in professional

development training for local, state, and federal employees. On September 2nd, 2020, Christopher Rufo appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*. “It’s absolutely astonishing how *critical race theory* has pervaded every aspect of the federal government,” Rufo said, while Carlson’s face was set in his signature furrowed brow. Rufo continued,

Conservatives need to wake up. This is an existential threat to the United States. And the bureaucracy, even under Trump, is being weaponized against core American values. And I’d like to make it explicit: The President and the White House—it’s within their authority to immediately issue an Executive Order to abolish critical-race-theory training from the federal government. And I call on the President to immediately issue this Executive Order—to stamp out this destructive, divisive, pseudoscientific ideology. (Wallace-Wells, 2021)

The next morning, Mark Meadows, Trump’s Chief of Staff, called Rufo on behalf of the President. “He saw your segment on ‘Tucker’ last night,” Meadows said, “and he’s instructed me to take action” (Wallace-Wells, 2021). Then Meadows flew Rufo to Washington D.C. to help write an Executive Order that limited what federal contractors could talk about in diversity seminars; it was issued on September 22, 2020. The order says, among other things, “This ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans” (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). The document also coined the phrase “divisive concepts” a term now used in legislation across the U.S. “Divisive concepts” means concepts cannot be taught that claim,

- (1) one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex;
- (2) the United States is fundamentally racist or sexist; (3) an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously; ...
- (8) any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex; or (9) meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or were created by a particular race to oppress another race. (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020)

One particular tweet from Christopher Rufo shows how Rufo and others project a kind of *obscure* legal lens into something that becomes part of the culture wars. His tweet reads:

We have successfully frozen their brand—“critical race theory”—into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put *all of the various cultural insanities under that brand category*. (Rufo, 2021, emphasis added)

It should be no surprise, then, that in the three and a half months that followed Rufo's first appearance on *Tucker Carlson, Fox News* used the term Critical Race Theory nearly 1,300 times (Lahut, 2021). It also should not be surprising that many conservatives do not seem to know the definition or tenets of CRT. Cheryl Harris, a UCLA law professor who teaches a course on CRT states that, "it's a myth that critical race theory teaches the hatred of white people and is designed to perpetuate divisions in American society" and argues Republicans rely on fear-based attacks on CRT so they can win upcoming elections (Anderson, 2021).

There is one other person behind a lot of legislation and state school boards' resolutions: Stanley Kurtz. On June 3, 2021, the Georgia State School Board issued a resolution that affects the state's public high school history teachers, where Matthew Shiloh teaches American history. Allegedly, the resolution is a heartfelt response to Georgia's governor Brian Kemp, who asked the State School Board to "take immediate steps to ensure that Critical Race Theory and its dangerous ideology do not take root in our state standards or curriculum" (Kemp, 2021). However, it is imperative to analyze the *roots* of the policies that are put forth in the resolution. The resolution is not a sincere response to a controversial topic, but rather "copied in large part from a model resolution called 'The Partisanship Out of Civics Act,' authored by a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center," (Tagami, 2021) Stanley Kurtz. To analyze the formation of the policies set forth in the school board resolution, it is important to know who Kurtz is—a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC), a lobbying organization for the Religious Right. The homepage of the EPPC website states, "Founded in 1976, the Ethics and Public Policy Center is Washington, D.C.'s premier institute working to apply the riches of Judeo-Christian tradition to contemporary questions of law, culture, and politics, in pursuit of America's continued civic and cultural renewal" (<http://eppc.org>). Kurtz and the EPPC seem to epitomize what Michael Apple (2006, p. 45) calls authoritarian populism—the ideology of religious right activists that "public schooling thus is itself a site of immense danger."

The Georgia State School Board's resolution purports to be a neutral response to the "indoctrination" of radical, left-wing ideology in classrooms. Therefore, it is worth noting that Kurtz wrote a book entitled, *Radical-in-Chief: Barack Obama and the Untold Story of American Socialism* (2010), as well as the articles "How Dems Will Push Protest Civics and CRT on Schools" (2021) and "Ron DeSantis Can Save America's Universities" (2022). In other words, the author of "The Partisanship Out of Civics Act," the document largely cribbed by the Georgia State School Board in their "honest response" to the CRT debate, is partisan himself. Knowing that Kurtz has a religiously motivated, right-wing agenda, and that he is anything but nonpartisan, we use Critical Race Discourse Analysis (CRDA) as a methodology to analyze several passages of the purportedly neutral school board resolution largely written by Kurtz.

In their resolution, the Georgia State School Board declares,
 ...we will not support, or impart, any K–12 public education resources or standards which (i) indoctrinate students in social, or political, ideology or theory, [but also that the board] believes the United States of America is not a racist country, and that the state of Georgia is not a racist state. (2021, p. 2)

A teacher stating the U.S. or the state of Georgia is racist could potentially be considered to be engaging in indoctrination, and that is part of the reason most teachers would never teach this to their students. Instead, teachers should let students read conflicting perspectives on what occurred in U.S. history (including many racist acts and events that they have rarely been taught), allowing students to come to their own conclusions regarding the U.S.' racism or innocence. But a critical analysis of the resolution must ask whether, if it is indoctrination for a teacher to claim that the U.S. is racist, why is it *not* indoctrination for educators to claim that the U.S. is *not* a racist country? Even more deceptively, the Georgia State School Board is suggesting that not only is making a claim for U.S. racial innocence not indoctrination, but does not constitute an ideology.

The resolution also states that the Georgia State School Board:

...believes that no teacher, administrator, or other employee in any state education agency, school district, or school administration shall approve for use, make use of, or carry out, standards, curricula, lesson plans...or instructional practices that serve to inculcate in students...that, with respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and racism are *anything other than* deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality. (2021, p. 3, emphasis added)

Their wording is specific and deliberately misleads. According to the State Board of Education, teachers cannot teach that slavery and racism are anything other than a divergence from the U.S.' founding principles. To be sure, no one is arguing that torture, rape, family separation, and humiliation of enslavement were not a *profound* betrayal of that alleged, first principle of our country: that *all* men are created equal. But critical discourse analysis encourages us to sit for a moment with the words *anything other than*. Is the State Board of Education suggesting, then, that teachers cannot teach students that enslavement is embedded in the very cornerstone of the country's foundation, the U.S. Constitution? Should teachers redact the U.S. Constitution before they hand out copies of it to their U.S. history students? Should teachers black out Article 4, Section 2, which states:

No person held to service or labor in one State, escaping into another, shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein,

be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due[?]

Should teachers not mention that the 3/5th Compromise delivered the presidency to Thomas Jefferson, a slaveholder, because it gave states like Virginia more electoral votes based on a population that included 60% of residents whom white people had enslaved (and who had precisely *zero political* voice or rights)? If so, to what end? To prove that the U.S. is, in fact, *not racist* as State Board members claim? But, again, how is *leaving out facts* any less of an indoctrination than including previously untaught facts that are uncomfortable? Perhaps the reason the right finds it so outrageous to claim white supremacy is embedded in any current U.S. institution is that they cannot admit that it was embedded in the U.S.' very founding.

Conclusion

Attacks on the teaching of history and social science and the recent anti-CRT/divisive concepts legislation have long histories rooted in U.S. culture wars. These attacks on teachers are not new, as Dana Goldstein (2015) carefully documents and Diana D'Amico Pawlewicz (2020) demonstrates. For example, in the early-20th century, Harold Rugg's progressive textbook series was attacked by the American Legion and other organizations and banned in several states. By mid-century, Senator Joseph McCarthy led a Communist witch hunt that seeped into education and caused approximately 600 U.S. teachers to lose their jobs. As we note, Rachel Davis DuBois and her Intercultural Education Movement came under investigation from McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee. Is this early-21st century attack on teachers any different? Time will tell.

As professionals in the realm of educational history and policy, it is clear that there are many excellent U.S. K–12 public school teachers working diligently despite restrictive, divisive concepts laws proposed, pending, or passed in approximately 44 states. One way to assist teachers as they navigate legislation that imposes regulations on their teaching and curricula is to offer professional development that is academic and content specific. For history teachers, curricula should include the use of primary source materials, artifacts, and field-based locations, as well as provide teachers with opportunities to engage with content-area experts. In the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute for Teachers, "Courting Liberty: Slavery and Equality Under the Constitution, 1770–1870," the authors, along with historians and visiting scholars, created an academic opportunity for teachers (<https://sites.gsu.edu/nehcourtingliberty/2021/11/22/welcome-to-courting-liberty/>). In addition, we used a book by Bohan et al. (2022) based upon the ideas of an NEH Institute which offers chapters on various topics, such as Slavery in Colonial America, African Cultural Retention, Abolition, and Enslavement

and Resistance. In addition, this book provides contemporary historical analysis and corresponding lessons with compelling questions and excerpts from primary-source documents. Because primary-source documents can be difficult for teachers to utilize and students to understand, Bohan et al. offer easily accessible historical content along with pedagogical explanations in each chapter, as well as sample lesson plans that connect to the history. Education for teachers and solidarity can ameliorate the attacks.

In this article, we briefly trace attacks on the teaching of history and social science in the 20th and 21st centuries through the lens of teacher educators and teachers. We find these critiques to be routine and cyclical, ergo “as American as apple pie.” We argue the way to address anti-CRT and “divisive concepts” legislation is with education. Teachers do not need to tell students what to think in their U.S. history courses. They can present students with primary-source documents and allow students to determine how to think historically. Students need to be asked to read, analyze, and contextualize primary sources, to identify the limitations of those sources, and to identify contradictions. Fostering historical consciousness and in-depth understanding is the best way to counter attacks on teachers by those who favor limits on academic learning in the name of a false patriotism. In addition to education, the voices of teachers and students need to be heard in state legislatures where such policy has been turned into law.

In the summer of 2021, Matthew Shiloh assigned the first 25 pages of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me* to his AP U.S. history class during the first week of school. Written as a letter to Coates’ son, the book is partly a memoir about Coates’ life and partly a composition questioning both U.S. history (as it was taught to him) and American ideals. Shiloh expected some angry emails from parents, notably because Coates is one of the authors whose writing has been connected with CRT. However, he only received one email; it came from an African-American mother of one of his students. The mother had read *Between the World and Me* and thanked him for teaching the class (and her daughter) this important text, and told him that her daughter had been talking nonstop about his history class. We wonder what will happen to teachers and to administrators who are presumed guilty for teaching (or allowing educators to teach) divisive concepts. We should also remember that many students, as well as their parents, are expecting their teachers to challenge them to think in ways they have not before and to teach all of the parts of our nation’s history, including deeply unsettling facts, so as to not repeat those errors again. The first amendment must prevail.

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Liberal Education, Philosophy, and Education for Democracy: The American Philosophical Association and Philosophy in American Education

David Snelgrove, Oklahoma State University

Philosophy's Role in Society and Education

In 1943, the American Philosophical Association (APA), founded in 1900, created a committee funded by the Rockefeller Foundation “to undertake an examination of the present state of philosophy and the role philosophy might play in the postwar world.”¹ The committee, in a series of regional meetings, worked on different types of enquiry, philosophy and education, the theoretical impact of philosophy in the community, teaching of philosophy to influence everyday life and education. The APA’s report, *Philosophy in American Education*, published in 1945, focuses largely on the challenge philosophers face in teaching philosophical ideas, concepts, and methods to undergraduate and graduate students who increasingly are interested in the “special preparation for what the student is later to do...that they qualify their products for a job, and the job is specific and practical.”² This vocational training aspect of higher education runs counter to calls for the return to a liberal education model with the study of philosophy as an important component. “We were appointed,” they opine, “to inquire into the present and the possible place of philosophy in liberal education.”³ Modern education, they argue, relegates liberal education to a minor place in favor of preparation for what students are later to do. They maintain that “Philosophy at its best is a long, hard business, and it is by no means always at its best in the chaotic, fragmentary world of contemporary experience.”⁴ Ultimately, the authors sought a philosophy of higher education in which philosophy and professors of philosophy would find a more significant role. In this essay I first describe the origins and content of the APA’s report, *Philosophy in American Education*, I then address its criticisms, especially those of John Dewey in his collected essays, *Problems of Men*, and finally those of Alexander Meiklejohn in his review of *Philosophy in American Education*.

The American Philosophical Association Report

Commissioned to investigate the role of philosophy in society, the APA committee sought to clarify “the demands, the conflicts, the doubts, and the self-criticism that was brewing in the philosophical community.”⁵ They identified the “major demands of philosophy,” suggesting the integration of philosophical study into the curriculum. They thought this would add a philosophical umbrella over the social and physical sciences and provide a broader worldview. In the development of core curricula, they sought to identify the role of philosophy. The integration of philosophy into a core curriculum would serve to make philosophy, they reasoned, more relevant. Second, philosophy can provide the educated of any discipline a mutual intellectual content across vocational specialties.⁶ The third demand of philosophy is a proposed reinterpretation of democracy, that a “positive view of what democracy stands for, of what liberty, justice, equality mean, would seem to be needed.”⁷ The group suggested a philosophy of democracy that would rival the philosophic basis of communism, fascism, or the National Socialist leadership cult and the assumption of racial superiority.⁸ These moves then would allow reinterpretation of democracy in light of the misuse of the democratic processes that subsumed democratic values in ethnocentrism, racism, nationalism, and social megalomania, views to which it seems we are still susceptible. The three demands culminate in a fourth: a request for the development of a life philosophy as a basis for day-to-day living.⁹ This proposed new philosophy rests on the assumption that traditional religious faith and moral idealism are waning, leaving philosophers as the “chief agents of society for clarifying, formulating, and justifying the ends of human life.”¹⁰ To provide this new basis for their philosophy of democracy, or life philosophy, the authors sought the restructuring of education to focus upon philosophical study as the foundation for broader educational ends.

Such an education would be based on “the metaphysics of ancient and medieval thinkers and have it proceed exclusively by study of great books of the past.”¹¹ Such a

...liberal education is the sort of education that fits a man, who has power in the community and is free to employ his time as he chooses, to employ it in a manner worthy of the responsibilities that go with the privileges of his position.¹²

A liberal education provides the privilege of position appropriate in a stratified society, the personal, social, and economic traits of the educated.¹³ Others, those of

...inner bondage...[are slaves] to the passion, the impulse, the whim, or the temptation of the moment. Man gains freedom from this sort of slavery in proportion as his various desires,

interests, and powers become integrated with one another. ... Thought, by coordinating man's impulses, tends to free him from blind bondage.¹⁴

A philosophy-based, liberal education, therefore, consists of the freedom that comes from the

...liberation of man from the bondage that arises from ignorance, prejudice, and narrowness...possession of a comprehensive view of the variety of human discoveries, achievements, and capacities; and appreciative insight into the typical values for which men live—in short, it means possession of perspective.¹⁵

The goal of such a liberal education would be self-disciplined graduates who accept that learning is lifelong. Education does not end with graduation. Indeed, a college education should provide a basis for the continuous exploration of the social and cultural fields which make up their experience.¹⁶ As for educational philosophy, the report authors defer to Aristotle. Not the scientific Aristotle whose “admirable powers of scientific observation, criticism, and theoretical construction employed so effectively to push forward the knowledge and thought of his time,”¹⁷ but the metaphysical Aristotle, for whom the slave class exists by nature of birth and is fit only for training. This class, say the authors, “are actually more ignorant, undiscerning, selfish, unskilled, weak, insensitive, clumsy, callous, sickly, cruel, uncouth, wanton, and unjust than human beings need be.”¹⁸

These demands on philosophy consist of many conflicting viewpoints and issues concerning philosophy's place in society. Philosophers find contentment in the abstract minutiae of the academic studies of philosophy and philosophical systems more than in the realities of day-to-day life. They take a kind of metacognitive role in seeking insight into truth, reality, beauty, morality, thinking, logic, and knowledge. The debate is over the nature of philosophy itself, is it contemplative or active? What is the social function of philosophy and philosophers? Is philosophy a discrete study or does it attach to other disciplines? Why do most philosophers avoid meaningful engagement with society?

Individuals analyzing or responding to antecedent thinkers and creatively adding their own ideas caused philosophy to devolve into systems: fields of study with discrete assumptions, methodologies, and enquiries. Reviewers of the APA's report often provide a standard restatement and summary. Marten Ten Hoor (1890–1967) believed most philosophy professors would find themselves in agreement with the APA's report, while recognizing there would be considerable disagreement about how to reach the report's stated goals. Finally, Ten Hoor emphasizes the thoughtful planning of students' course programs in philosophy and the absolute importance of great teaching.¹⁹

APA Report: Critique of Pragmatism

The APA authors began with a pessimistic view of U.S. culture given the decay of the authority of religion, the family, and society. They found “confusion and relativism, and the waning of common standards of behavior,” lamenting that “communication too often seeks the level of some lowest common denominator—taxes, the Dodgers, or the weather.”²⁰ Philosophers, then, have the responsibility to become “the intellectual conscience of the community.”²¹ In the authors’ view “philosophic judgement is most weighty and most needed” in the search for “general standards of right and wrong, the nature of justice, the very continuance of the conditions under which a rational life can be lived.”²² And while they admit a love for abstraction and a tendency only to communicate with themselves, they are satisfied with their standing in such a historically respected endeavor.²³ They focus on the old ideals and absolutes. They deny that philosophers accept pragmatism as a part of professional philosophy since pragmatism does not accept that the problems of philosophy are beyond that of experience. They hold that “hard and exact thinking in which ideas that lay claim to philosophical validity are submitted to distinctively philosophical tests of clarity, comprehensiveness, and ultimacy.”²⁴ Such clarity, comprehensiveness, and ultimacy are obtainable through a strengthening of the liberal-education schema focused upon the wisdom of philosophical reflection. This critical analysis of Pragmatism was nothing new. Therefore, *Philosophy in American Education* authors focused more intently on the teaching of philosophy in higher education than on the status and role of philosophy in postwar society.

Pragmatism was based on the thought of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) who, in the early 1870s, coined the term pragmatism and later (1877–1878) examined its place in philosophy and logic in a series of *Popular Science Monthly* articles. William James (1842–1910) began to refine pragmatic ideas with his 1898 California lecture, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” in which he notes that “they can always bring down the effective meaning of any philosophic proposition to some particular consequence, in our future practical experience.”²⁵ The authors of *Philosophy and American Education*, though, found Pragmatism wanting as a means to “recover philosophy.”²⁶ In criticizing Pragmatism, the report’s authors state that Pragmatism seems “a subordination of the ‘highest’ human functions to ‘lower’ and more mundane interests.”²⁷ The pragmatist, they continue, has had to “defend the ultimacy of this human standpoint—man as the intelligent planner of his own destiny through social co-operation in a natural world—against all those philosophies which seek to transcend it in some absolute and antecedent reality.”²⁸ They accuse the pragmatist of trying “to carry his teachings beyond the limits of ‘professional philosophy’ and to see them to solve the ‘problems of men’ wherever philosophy can be of constructive use in their resolution.”²⁹

This criticism in *Philosophy in American Education*, was the latest (in 1945) among critiques from the rationalist, idealist, absolutist, and transcendental philosophers that began in earnest with Josiah Royce who, in his 1903 Presidential Address at the American Philosophy Association, “The Eternal and the Practical,” wrote, “Everything is practical; and everything seeks nothing whatever but its own true self, which is the Eternal.”³⁰ He castigates Pragmatism for its dependence upon experience and its denial of the eternal, ideal, or transcendent conception of truth. Royce’s ideas concerning the role of philosophy focus on a new synthesis of his conception of voluntarism and absolutism which did not allow for the type of integration envisioned by the authors of *Philosophy in American Education*.³¹ In Dewey’s response to Royce in his own 1905 APA Presidential Address, “Beliefs and Realities,” he finds that “thinking is inquiry, and that knowledge as science is the outcome of systematically directed inquiry.”³² He says,

The radical empiricist [William James], the humanist [F. C. S. Schiller], the pragmatist...believes not in fewer but in more realities than the orthodox philosophies warrant. He is not concerned, for example, in discrediting objective realities, or logical or universal thinking; but in such a reinterpretation of the sort of reality which these things possess as via authorize the accrediting, without depreciation, of concrete empirical conscious centers of action and passion.³³

Dewey considered the APA report and the subject it considered of minor importance to the public in relation to possibilities open to the field of philosophy and the work of philosophers if they would simply focus on knowledge gained through experience instead of ultimate reality and abstract theories of meaning.³⁴

John Dewey’s Rejoinder to Philosophy in American Education

Dewey considered the work of the APA authors to be out of touch with the contemporary situation in U.S. higher education. He laments the work of the APA’s committee, their regional meetings which largely excluded pragmatic thinkers, and the irrelevance of what passes for higher education in philosophy. His response to the APA’s report, is *The Problems of Men*, a collection of essays written, with one exception, between 1935 and 1945, that touch upon the issues raised by the APA committee’s report. His introduction, “*The Problems of Men* and the Present State of Philosophy,” sets out his ideas concerning the report. The title of his collection, *Problems of Men*, comes from Dewey’s “The Democratic Faith and Education,” an essay that an APA author quoted to allude to pragmatic philosophy.³⁵ Dewey believed the subject matter of philosophy taught in colleges and universities were only of “slight importance”³⁶ to the public. He argues, “the philosophical tenets that are presented in the Report cling largely,

although not exclusively, to the view that the primary aim of philosophy is knowledge of Being or 'Reality.'³⁷ This creates a dualism between the religious and scientific, the absolute and the relative, and between the pure and the tentative basis of knowledge and truth. Dewey advocates for the use of science and the scientific method to search for wisdom and to enable social change and the "search for the ends and values that give direction to our collective human activities."³⁸ The danger of absolutist thinking is that it leads to the disparagement of all other thought, resulting in fanatical beliefs "too absolute to be subject to doubt and inquiry."³⁹ He writes

Not "relativity" but absolutism isolates and confines. The reason, at bottom, that absolutism levels its guns against relativity in a caricature is that search for the connection of events is the sure way of destroying the privileged position of exemption from inquiry which every form of absolutism secures wherever it obtains.⁴⁰

The "need," writes Dewey,

...is that there be now the kind of systematic and comprehensive criticism of current methods and habits and the same projection of generous hypotheses as, only a few hundred years ago, set going the revolution in physical knowledge...to make evident the social conditions—economic, political, moral, and religious—which have restricted scientific inquiry.⁴¹

Breaking down the separation between the utilitarian and the liberal is, for Dewey, a necessity. Such "dualism," he writes,

...is a further projection of pre-scientific, pre-technological, pre-democratic conditions into present philosophy in a way so obstructive as to demand total obliteration.... The belief that "vocational" education cannot be humane is an illustration that would be humorous were it not so disastrous in effect.⁴²

Dewey describes the tone of the APA report as elitist and undemocratic, arguing that the absolutist, idealist, and metaphysical bases for philosophy and for education are rooted in historical epochs that should have been left in the past. Social and economic conditions dictated "citizens" had the advantage of a "liberal" education, while the lower classes had vocational learning only to facilitate their servitude. Those ancient and medieval ideas about the menial and the free and ideal, the vocational and the liberal, persist. The APA authors advocate a heavily liberal, literary, arts-based system of higher education. Dewey writes,

They propose we turn our face to the medievalism in which so-called "liberal" arts were identified with literary arts: a course natural to adopt in an age innocent of knowledge of nature, an age in which the literary arts were the readiest means of rising

above barbarism through acquaintance with the achievements of Greek–Roman culture.⁴³

Professional and vocational studies were to be separated into schools focused on specialized content and skills. Such elitist, anti-science, and anti-technological thoughts were, to Dewey, a danger to democracy. The “successful maintenance of democracy,” writes Dewey,

...demands the utmost in use of the best available methods to procure a social knowledge that is reasonably commensurate with our physical knowledge, ...[that] applications of intelligence in a multitude of fields to a vast diversity of problems so that science and technology may be rendered servants of the democratic hope and faith.⁴⁴

While the APA authors argue the under-classes do not deserve democracy, Dewey counters,

...even if he is not literate or sophisticated in other respects, the idea of democracy as opposed to any conception of aristocracy is that every individual must be consulted in such a way, actively not passively, that he himself becomes a part of the process of authority, of the process of social control; that his needs and wants have a chance to be registered in a way where they count in determining social policy.⁴⁵

Dewey posits that “asking other people what they would like, what they need, what their ideas are, is an essential part of the democratic idea.”⁴⁶ A primary function of the school as a social institution is the preparation for democratic participation in a free society. In *Freedom and Culture* (1940), Dewey warns that democracy and democratic institutions are not self-sustaining. The society and its institutions are responsible for the maintenance of democratic, non-authoritarian, totalitarian, and personality cult ideals.⁴⁷ For Dewey tolerance was an insufficient goal for a pluralistic society. He queries,

What are our schools doing positively and aggressively and constructively to cultivate understanding and goodwill which are essential to democratic society? What are we doing to translate those great ideas of liberty and justice out of a formal ceremonial ritual into the realities of the understanding, the insight and the genuine loyalty of the boys and girls in our schools?⁴⁸

Alexander Meiklejohn and Liberal Education

Alexander Meiklejohn, proponent of liberal arts education, professor of philosophy and Dean at Brown, former President of Amherst, former Director of the University of Wisconsin experimental college, and founder of the San Francisco School for Social Studies also found fault with *Philosophy in American Education*. While at Brown, Meiklejohn wrote that

"the aim of the American college...is to open up the riches of human experience, of literature, of nature, of art, of religion, of philosophy, of human relations, social, economic, political, to arouse an understanding and appreciation of these...the arousing of interests."⁴⁹ Philosophy would serve as an aspect of such a liberal arts education, the focus being the cultivation of intelligence. In 1922, as President of Amherst, Meiklejohn began an undergraduate Course of Study in Social and Economic Institutions, exploring U.S. civilization and "making minds."⁵⁰ The Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin begun by Meiklejohn in the Fall semester of 1927 was a two-year liberal-arts-based curriculum with study of Ancient Greece as the first year, and the study of contemporary America in the second, requiring extensive reading of primary-source books, discussion, and reflective writing. Meiklejohn described it as "a college run without classrooms, lectures, or text books; founded on a theory of education the purpose of which is to find and to teach a new way of life."⁵¹ The San Francisco School for Social Studies begun in 1934 was a network of adult education groups meeting at various sites in San Francisco and Sonoma County.⁵² As a liberal educator and theorist, Meiklejohn had no peer.

Joining Dewey, with whom he disagreed on almost everything, he claims the APA authors missed the mark by focusing too much on the institution of education and neglecting the role of philosophy in broader society. But where Dewey focused upon the practical application of philosophy and the lack of relevance, the absolutist focus of college philosophy courses, Meiklejohn considers the segregation of philosophic study from the unified study of society and social conditions. He especially considers the importance of philosophy as a substitute for the decreasing importance of religion in matters of values and ethics. Meiklejohn was especially unimpressed with Section III, "The Teaching of Philosophy—Things That Can Be Done," which discusses the current teaching of philosophy. He writes, "one cannot help wishing that this part of the book had not been written. The evidence presented by the commission strongly suggests that the time has come for radical revolution in the philosophy of liberal education."⁵³

Without offering an alternative, the report authors allow the discussion to become focused on methods without considering the basic question of its "aims and proper content."⁵⁴ Meiklejohn notes that "representatives were called upon to make recommendations. But the only basic agreement accepted by all of them is that, as a working group, they have no joint recommendations to make."⁵⁵ Instead of coming to some kind of consensus on the condition of philosophy and the study of philosophy in the U.S., each author speaks for himself and, even worse, provides a "false analysis of the significance of 'differences' in philosophy"⁵⁶ This has a disastrous effect on educational planning such that

...liberal education in the United States can have no concerted understanding of what it is doing? ... [I]f it be true that a commission of philosophers, chosen for the specific purpose, can make no plans for the cultivation of the national intelligence, then it follows that no one can do it.⁵⁷

Where the authors found the lack of agreement among teachers on the basic issues to be a detriment to creating meaningful curricula, Meiklejohn sees lack of agreement as a strength. He asks, "What is the evidence that teachers who differ on 'fundamental issues' are, for that reason, unable to cooperate in the making of a common plan of teaching?," responding that,

...on the level of common sense, the inference here involved seems invalid. The disagreements of minds engaged in "the rational pursuit of truth" are not impediments to the thinking out of a liberal curriculum. On the contrary, those differences make cooperation in teaching both necessary and possible.... If there are "fundamental issues" about which intelligent men disagree, then all intelligent men must learn to think about them. The cultivation of such thinking is, essentially, the content of a liberal education.⁵⁸

Meiklejohn finds three basic principles in education he argues must be taken into consideration: 1. The fragmentation of knowledge, 2. The lack of a required curriculum, and 3. The inclusion of all students in the goal of a liberal education. Problems arising from these principles include a lack of liberal education among the current faculties, an avoidance of teaching that he calls "the principles and the practice of freedom and social responsibility,"⁵⁹ and a lack of exposure of all students to liberal teaching and liberal learning, which is, for Meiklejohn, "higher in the democratic sense in which common responsibilities are more significant than are special interests."⁶⁰ Ultimately, Meiklejohn wishes the authors and the philosophers they represent to lead in the exploration of the development of the liberal college, to "become, as they should be, the intellectual guardians of our national life."⁶¹ If not, philosophers become unimportant to anyone but themselves.

Dewey and Meiklejohn

As president of the APA in 1925, Meiklejohn spoke of the philosopher's task to be a source of wisdom only to accuse his colleagues of having retreated into the "temple" to devote themselves to focus upon their own ends. He posits the philosopher is responsible for decisions on what should be taught in an objective and disinterested way: honestly to describe the world as he sees it. He warns philosophers "not [to] allow their own proper work to fall into other hands or into no hands at all."⁶² Meiklejohn stresses that modern, industrial societies that focus on industrial efficiency and intellectual pursuits are subsumed by their endeavors. Philosophy is,

for Meiklejohn, inwardly directed towards self-understanding. To have an impact teaching and thinking must be structured around their consequences and life values must be a goal. Meiklejohn finds philosophy to be a thing apart from other disciplines, yet focused upon the wider world,

...a great community of minds through which that understanding has run from end to end, binding men together by knowledge of each other, by knowledge of the common faith, the common circumstance, the common goal, amid the differences of individual taste and interest and value.⁶³

He considers the most urgent duty of philosophers as clarifying that plan for human living we call democracy.

Meiklejohn, whose interests were in higher education and adult education, finds report authors too focused on the place of teaching philosophy instead of on the broader question of a liberal educational institution's educational philosophy. He reminds authors and, by extension, APA members that Kant requires scholars be well-rounded, conversant in mathematics, the sciences, and metaphysics, and allows that "they," writes Meiklejohn,

...have not examined the philosophical principles which underlie all genuine educational planning. They have not asked how educational judgments are possible. They give no criteria for separating, in this field, the true from the false. In a word, their study [though they are philosophers] is not philosophic.⁶⁴

He reminds them of Comenius' statement that "if we find the education of pupils faulty, the most probable explanation of that fact lies in the faulty education of those by whom the teaching is done."⁶⁵ Unless and until we have a clear philosophy of liberal education our efforts will come up wanting.

Dewey focuses upon education in creating citizens with the attributes necessary for democracy, prosperity, and social understanding. He finds no reason to divide the scholarly and learned professions from trade and service occupations, finding such a separation a legacy from the historical class structure and a denial of democracy.⁶⁶ Ultimately, the individual is responsible for determining what they want, what their needs and troubles are. Individuals in a democracy become an important component of authority. As social conditions change, Dewey writes,

...the problem of maintaining a democracy becomes new, and the burden that is put upon the school, upon the educational system is not that of stating merely the ideas of the men who made this country, their hopes and their intentions, but of teaching what a democratic society means under existing conditions.⁶⁷

For Dewey the primary goal of education is to find ways to promote richness and fullness of the democratic way of life and progressive education was the institution to accomplish such a goal.

Dewey, who focuses more on common education, sees the APA attack along three fronts: first an attack on Pragmatism and science, then an attack on schools, and, finally, an attack on democracy. For Dewey the chief problems of philosophy stem from the variety of ways knowledge is conditioned. Experience is, for the absolutists, an insufficient basis for knowledge. They establish, Dewey writes, “conditions of knowing set up before knowing can take place.”⁶⁸ But Dewey regards such ideas as dated since, “the applications of science in life by inventions and technological arts have been going on at such a rate that the alleged problem of its foundations and possibility of knowledge are of but remote professional concern.”⁶⁹ APA report authors long for a return to the past’s liberal education which divided the liberal from the utilitarian, the scholarly from the vocational, and the abstract from the practical. Calling upon schools to return to the linguistic, literary, and metaphysical would, in essence, create a dual social institution of education. Dewey simply observes that “The belief that ‘vocational’ education cannot be humane is an illustration that would be humorous were it not so disastrous in effect.”⁷⁰ Finally, Dewey establishes the idea that the meaning of liberal has changed. Where once it was confining, now it becomes liberating. For Dewey,

To define liberal as that which liberates is to bring the problem of liberal education and of the liberal arts college within the domain of an inquiry in which the issue is settled by search for what is actually accomplished. The test and justification of claims put forth is found in observable consequences, not in a priori dogma.⁷¹

In the final analysis, science and technology must be integrated into the linguistic, literary, and metaphysical studies, the liberal arts, so that they “may be rendered servants of the democratic hope and faith.”⁷² The schools (for Dewey), the colleges and universities (for APA), or adult education (for Meiklejohn) can provide such education. However, a dualistic view of education—liberal arts education on the one hand and education for professions, vocations, and self-fulfillment on the other—is simply not acceptable as a model for education in a democracy. The APA’s report eventually fell victim to history. The GI Bill of 1944 made colleges and universities accessible to returning service-men and -women. Higher education institutions were then required to reconsider their mission in relation to the needs of their expanding student body.

Endnotes

- ¹ Brand Blanshard, "Preface," *Philosophy in American Education: Its Tasks and Opportunities*, eds. Brand Blanshard, Curt J. Ducasse, Charles W. Hendel, Arthur Murphy, and Max C. Otto (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1945), vii.
- ² Brand Blanshard, "Climate of Opinion," *Philosophy in American Education: Its Tasks and Opportunities*, eds. Brand Blanshard, Curt J. Ducasse, Charles W. Hendel, Arthur Murphy, and Max C. Otto (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 3–42, 14.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁴ Arthur Edward Murphy, "The Situation in American Philosophy," *Philosophy in American Education: Its Tasks and Opportunities*, eds. Brand Blanshard, Curt J. Ducasse, Charles W. Hendel, Arthur Murphy, and Max C. Otto (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945) 43–65, 64.
- ⁵ Brand Blanshard, "Climate of Opinion," 9.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ¹¹ Curt J. Ducasse, "The Colleges, Liberal Education, and Philosophy," in *Philosophy in American Education: Its Tasks and Opportunities*, eds. Brand Blanshard, Curt J. Ducasse, Charles W. Hendel, Arthur Murphy, and Max C. Otto (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 118–142, 122.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 130.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 131.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 138–139.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.
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Sun Tzu's "The Art of War": Interpretations for Faculty Life

Lee S. Duemer, Texas Tech University

Introduction

A careful reading of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* reveals a book full of timeless life lessons, and an oddly contradictory purpose.¹ While the book is about how successfully to wage war, it is as much about how to avoid war by careful planning and thoroughly understanding one's opponents and environment. The central lesson of *The Art of War* is how to outwit an opponent in order to minimize the actual violence and carnage of warfare so that a victory can be won quickly, easily, and at the least cost of lives to both sides.

However, if we pry more deeply into Sun Tzu's writing as it spans across his book, it becomes evident that *The Art of War*'s most important lesson is how to succeed in an organization during changing circumstances, and how one can best apply oneself to developing their potential within an organization. The purpose of this essay is to examine Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* with respect to his ideas about how to foster individual success in organizations, and to find applications for faculty's work in contemporary academe.

Most modern interpretations of *The Art of War* have been applied to the business world.² Other applications have been in law and legal advocacy.³ In education, the only study to draw connections to *The Art of War* is an autobiographical reflection in the form of a diary in the author's attempt to find implications for professional development.⁴

Historical Background and Theoretical Framework

Sun Tzu's thinking differs starkly from that of conquerors in more recent Western history such as Napoleon, Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, and even Putin. Unlike Sun Tzu, these were figures who set out to learn and master the principles of leadership purely to conquer territory and without regard to human cost. In contrast, Sun Tzu's philosophical approach is more applicable to smaller forces trying to defend themselves from conquest or who are fighting for independence.

There have been several examples of books written centuries ago that still have contemporaneous lessons for readers. Niccolò Machiavelli's *The*

Prince is among the best-known. Machiavelli served as a senior civil servant with responsibilities in diplomatic and military affairs. *The Prince* was written in 1532 as a gift to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, and conceptualized as a way for Machiavelli to try to ingratiate himself back into good favor after having been exiled upon Florence, Italy's change in leadership. A less-well-known text, *The Book of Five Rings* by Miamoto Musashi, was written around 1645. Musashi is considered Japan's finest swordsman; however, his book focuses more on battlefield and sword tactics rather than offering a wider strategic perspective or philosophical foundation. Therefore, *The Book of Five Rings* is lesser-known outside Japan and so contains fewer lessons that can be applied beyond the battlefield.

Both *The Art of War* and *The Prince* are based on personal observations by their authors, both of whom lived lives immersed in their respective topics. Both authors also draw heavily from social science disciplines such as politics, psychology, sociology, and history, in addition to economics and geography. Indeed, these two volumes are considered among the earliest examples of personal-experience narratives intended to pass on practical life lessons. *The Art of War* continues to be one of the most essential texts among militaries throughout the world. In 1939 it experienced a resurgence in popularity when issued to all soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army.⁵ It continues to be required reading at nearly every military academy in the world, including all U.S. service academies, as well as at Sandhurst, the United Kingdom's military academy.⁶

Sun Tzu's philosophical approach, when combined with an awareness of human behavior, results in a text which can be applied and interpreted across time and cultures. If we accept that some human behaviors span cultures, then we must likewise accept that lessons within *The Art of War* are widely transferable. William Shakespeare's work, for example, has been recognized for its awareness of the human condition which makes Shakespeare's works valued for their literary artistry as well as his portraiture of human motives and frailties. "The human condition" refers to central aspects of human life that span culture and time and have been examined through a variety of lenses in both the scientific and literary worlds.⁷ *The Art of War* addresses aspects of the human condition through an understanding of the role of individuals in institutions and how to foster success,⁸ which render Sun Tzu's views on leadership inseparable from a keen understanding of the human condition.

In the present essay I use cultural concepts to analyze aspects of *The Art of War* in order better to understand how a classic historical text grounded in the human condition can be used to interpret contemporary organizational problems.⁹ Because the purpose of this essay is to find applications for faculty life, I focus my analysis on those parts of the text that pertain to leadership and fostering success, including survival and adaptation. To

derive meaningful current-day lessons from *The Art of War*, it is necessary first to identify principles that cross cultural boundaries.¹⁰ I therefore focus my analysis on Sun Tzu's writings about broader philosophical principles rather than those addressing military tactics. Where tactics are included, I have done so because I deem that specific tactic a key part of a larger philosophical lesson.

Analysis

The Art of War is organized into 13 chapters. Most chapters pertain to avoiding military conflict and war through preparation and planning. Those chapters dedicated to military warfare are nevertheless heavily infused with advice on how to win at minimal cost to one's own forces, as well as those of the enemy. A careful read through *The Art of War* reveals several distinct themes that span multiple chapters. For example, the theme of planning is infused across all 13 chapters, yet some of Sun Tzu's thoughts on planning are more philosophical in nature, while other references are specific and do not apply once off the battlefield. The guiding purpose of my analysis is to find themes that span multiple chapters and that are sufficiently philosophical in nature broadly to inform organizational leadership.

Organizational Values

Confucianism is the primary philosophical perspective underlying *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu posits, "The Way causes men to be of one mind with their rulers, to live or die with them, and never to waiver."¹¹ What he refers to as The Way is perhaps the most important of his lessons because The Way shapes how humans relate to organizations. Confucianism emphasizes human work and discipline in order to become complete and functioned as ancient China's operating system for establishing laws and managing institutions.¹² This manner of following a right or proper way of existence is referred to as the "Tao" or "The Way."¹³

The Tao contrasts with De (sometimes written as Te) which encompasses one's character, virtue, and ethics.¹⁴ The term is difficult to translate because of its shifting meaning over time; however, it broadly refers to the spiritual aspect of Confucianism.¹⁵ The Tao is the principle emphasis of *The Art of War*, yet De is also important in that Sun Tzu considers the principled application of leadership in warfare a moral mandate. This idea is particularly potent because virtuous leadership promotes self-regulation, loyalty, and good morale. Tao and De reflect different aspects of Confucian thought, although they share a common emphasis on the development of positive control over institutions and the self.

When an individual becomes part of an organization, some sort of transaction inevitably takes place. At a minimum, we trade our services in exchange for compensation—and ideally career advancement. Our success is largely determined by how well we provide the organization with the

things expected from us as part of that transaction. Succeeding in *The Way* means understanding the values and expectations of an organization and incorporating them into our performance and priorities. *The Way* represents the mission and culture of the institution in daily practice, and is the living creed behind its mottos, badges and slogans. For *The Way* to be realized, all members of the institution, including its students, need to practice equal commitment. For this to happen, the institution must skillfully transfer organizational values to all who become associated with it.

One's deep understanding of *The Way* would be incomplete if focusing on optimizing behavior only for individual advancement. Members of higher education organizations, as faculty we also are charged with transmitting the organization's values and expectations to students. In this sense we play an essential formal and informal organizational role in shaping students. For example, I only teach graduate students, primarily doctoral students. A large part of my teaching is based on a series of qualitative research courses designed to instruct students in the philosophy of qualitative research: research ethics, design, data collection, identifying appropriate data sources, trustworthiness, data analysis, and data reporting. My work also involves serving on dissertation committees, mostly as a methodologist.

As a Carnegie R1 university and research institution, Texas Tech expects its doctoral students who complete the Ph.D. are prepared to embark on a career in social-science research. Indeed, many of the Ph.D. students who graduate will pursue faculty careers at similar institutions to Texas Tech. Therefore, my overarching role could be described as acting as transmitter of the university's values and skills to my students. This formal aspect of information transmission takes place in the classroom, on dissertation committees, and, as well, means involving students in their major professor's own research so students will have practical experience in social-science research before beginning their dissertation.

The faculty member's informal role, equally important, involves transmission of a variety of dispositions that can be loosely grouped under the term "collegiality." These days, there is a widespread sense among university faculty that collegiality is in decline—and that concern goes beyond the walls of academe. There is considerable controversy in university settings about how or even whether collegiality should be used to evaluate faculty performance. "Collegiality" has historically been associated with promoting faculty homogeneity, and its use in appraisal processes seems contrary to the increased heterogeneity of academe and of society in general. Importantly, an emphasis on collegiality in appraisal processes can have a dampening effect on free speech and the free exchange of ideas. Fear of being labeled "un-collegial," especially among untenured, probationary-period faculty, has been known to stifle freedom of expression and

encourage silence among those who would dissent. Nevertheless, faculty continue to consider collegiality in promotion and tenure decisions, for a faculty member's ability to work with others in a collegial manner proves helpful for a variety of reasons. We in academe have all likely observed over the course of our careers how some colleagues thrive, and others fail. Some seem to mesh well with the organizational power structure and with colleagues while others find themselves in a constant state of conflict with everyone around them. For this second group, promotion and tenure prospects remain highly uncertain and advancement into administrative ranks often becomes even more difficult.

In the university setting, collegiality typically falls into one of two subcategories: exclusionary vs. aspirational. Exclusionary behaviors are considered undesirable by the organization. Aspirational behaviors are those that are desired, encouraged, and should be actively pursued rather than performed at the level of minimal expectation. However, an aspirational definition proves more useful to the organization because aspirational collegiality fosters individual and community growth rather than merely focusing on prohibited behaviors. Many scholars who study collegiality focus purely on its function: helping academic organizations work most effectively. Yet, collegiality becomes imperative to the continual process of improved institutional effectiveness if we apply Sun Tzu's emphasis on helping an organization function cohesively. Collegiality is also essential to self-improvement, inspiring workers to be better individuals, citizens, and professionals. Such a definition interprets collegiality as benefitting both the organization and the individual.¹⁶

Sun Tzu reminds us that, "When you surround an army leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."¹⁷ We have all likely encountered a colleague who approaches difference of opinion as a battle that must be won at all costs. Particularly in higher education institutions, Sun Tzu's advice about allowing an opponent an escape can be understood as taking particular care during such encounters to frame our remarks on a person's ideas rather than their identity. Disagreeing in a way that allows one to retain their dignity and sense of security provides a pathway to minimize potential to make long-term enemies or damage working relationships.

Understanding Oneself

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.¹⁸

A common adage is "information is power." In academe, one can liken this adage's meaning to the practices of data-driven decision-making and

strategic planning. Collecting information that will aid in one's success is no less important. In order to succeed it is essential for the individual to understand the values and priorities of their organization. For example, what are the institution's expectations for advancement in rank and earning tenure? While obtaining information may be easy, sorting out sometimes-contradictory information is a much more complicated task, and should itself be a source of concern.

For example, when interviewing for a faculty position, it is advisable to ask other faculty if the institution's expectations for promotion and tenure are clear? If one learns the standards are unclear, or receives wildly differing interpretations, one would be wise to be cautious about accepting employment in that organization—as cautious as a general would be to engage in battle with an unfamiliar enemy.

Sun Tzu teaches us that, "Collapse occurs when senior officers forget their responsibilities and take personal affront at the enemy."¹⁹ Another dimension to understanding self is found within the concept of self-regulation. A scholar's work dispositions are founded in the idea and practice of self-regulation that apply to being a member of a loosely coupled organization such as higher education institutions. Universities are frequently characterized by high levels of decentralization and individual autonomy resulting in low levels of agreement on priorities or policy implementation. Non-profit higher education institutions typically are characterized organizationally by unusually high levels of decentralization and disorganization and abnormally low levels of coordination, consensus, and control.²⁰ Unlike organizations where roles are tightly coupled and boundaries are clearly defined for its members, academe is particularly susceptible to individual influence. Human actions, driven by personal values and agendas, are sometimes the driving force behind how organizations operate.²¹ In tightly coupled organizations, a more rigid hierarchical organization with extensive means to regulate the behavior of its members, personal factors do not necessarily fit into a rational decision-making framework where individual compliance can be expected.²² Self-regulation, codified in behavioral expectations that can be termed "professional dispositions," are essential to counterbalance the tendencies within loosely coupled organization such as academe to act based on individual interest, informal structures, and personal conflict, all of which limit organizational effectiveness.²³

"Knowing when to fight and when not to brings victory."²⁴ It is essential that faculty possess a sense of self-restraint used frame their actions. Such a sense contributes to the effectiveness of organizations. Like civility, self-restraint can be defined in either exclusionary or aspirational terms and may include such actions as helping peers achieve success. One's degree of self-restraint may also pertain to how faculty cope with inconveniences

or contradictory directives and how they represent the organization externally, or the degree to which they may volunteer to take on additional responsibilities.²⁵ Individuals are more likely to engage in external activities when they find fulfillment in their work that is internal to the organization, and when they feel fairly treated by their organizations.²⁶ Individuals who embrace and practice civility and self-restraint tend to be those who put the interests of the organization ahead of their own egos. This means sometimes following the organizational mission when it goes against one's own priorities or interests. Sun Tzu describes such individuals as those who "advance without thought of personal glory, and retreat without a care for disgrace. Such a man is a treasure beyond price to his country."²⁷

Planning and Flexibility

Planning and flexibility are quite possibly the most important foci in *The Art of War*. "While heeding the profit of my counsel, avail yourself also of any helpful circumstances over and beyond the ordinary rules."²⁸ In fact, Sun Tzu argues he could predict who would prevail in any conflict based solely on observing their preparations. As social-science researchers this point should easily be appreciated.

In one research course I regularly teach, Michael Moffat's book *Coming of Age in New Jersey* is required reading. As well as being an excellent example of contemporary ethnography, Moffat's work also illustrates to students the pitfalls of a lack of planning. Moffat studies undergraduate student life in a residence hall. He first poses as a non-traditional student—plausible because at the time he was in his early thirties, and claimed to look much younger. Entering the research setting he did not have a plan for how he would deal with students who might ask him about his background, or the age difference between himself and the freshman students with whom he lived. When first asked he lied and said he was returning to college having taken some time off work.

Deception was never part of his research design, nor had deception been approved by the Institutional Review Board that approved the study. Moffat nevertheless practiced deception with his participants such as when, in order to learn more about student life, he went out for drinks with a female freshman student without disclosing to her his identity or purpose. Another ethically problematic event involved him disclosing to the Dean of Students a disturbing practice among some of the students in the residents known as "the wedgie patrol."²⁹ Before he entered the field, he had never considered what he would do if he witnessed or learned of behavior that was illegal, unethical, or a violation of institutional policy. In other words, going into the research setting he did not anticipate what he would do if his role as a researcher conflicted with his role as a citizen. His lack of planning resulted in his making some decisions that damaged relationships with

the population he studied and, more importantly, was ethically troubling behavior in a researcher.³⁰

Sun Tzu argues one should always develop a clear plan and conduct exercises that anticipate problems. The more exercises one conducts, the more likely one will be to uncover potential problems and build contingency plans. Planning exercises should be used to develop a sound, detailed plan that is also flexible enough to deal with the fluid nature of events in the field. Former professional boxer Mike Tyson cautioned against fighters having too rigid a plan when he said, "Every boxer has a plan until he gets punched in the mouth."

Leadership

The ideals of leadership are infused throughout *The Art of War*, for Sun Tzu emphasizes that leaders are accountable both for victory and defeat; "A leader must understand the priorities of the local nobles before he can make profitable alliances."³¹ Rather than blame soldiers for failure, he attributes their general's treatment of his soldiers as one of the most important factors in their performance. In academe we see this manifest within how leaders try to change organizations. Sun Tzu urges generals to lead by motivating their followers through appealing to a sense of shared goals and interests. Such leaders empower their followers, reward those who take initiative, and promote subordinates and colleagues based on competence.

"A general who punishes his troops before he has won them over will never be accepted by them and they will be useless to him."³² Essential to the success of a hierarchical organization, all levels must share the organization's goals and values. In the business world, this is commonly referred to as "buy in."³³ Leaders must make it clear why they support change, and ground that change securely in the organization's culture and values. Leaders, like generals, need to stress that the organization's mission is in everyone's best interest and that all levels of the organization are working together toward a shared goal. Any idea with "buy in" among all members of an organization should be easily defended against criticism.³⁴

A third important principle that Sun Tzu proposes is that leaders must be realistic about expectations for their subordinates.

Equally to be considered is that if you force the men on long marches...the stronger ones will surge ahead and the weaker ones fall to the rear, and only a tenth of your strength will reach the destination on time.³⁵

A leader's unrealistic expectations will result in only a small portion of one's team achieving their goals, thus undermining the efforts of the entire organization. It will also consequently result in such problems as a collapse

of morale, lack of trust in leadership, and the eventual collapse of order and organizational cohesion.

Conclusion

One of Sun Tzu's observations about success is that individuals who see victory from outside the army were only aware of the victory itself, not the necessary careful and laborious planning.³⁶ Because *The Art of War* is intended to help one prevail in a competitive environment, I argue the work provides faculty with a framework to confront and negotiate challenges and uncertainty. "How will we allocate increasingly limited resources?" is a critical question that must be understood and justified. With reduced allocations from their respective state legislatures, public institutions now are forced to be increasingly resourceful about how they spend what budget they are granted while experiencing heightened pressure to compete with other institutions for money from other, external sources.

Planning is the single most important theme in *The Art of War*, and it underpins every successful course of action. Sun Tzu's work also provides faculty with strategies to be more likely to succeed in their careers. Detailed planning, combined with carefully collected and analyzed knowledge can be combined to prepare one for any challenge and set a path for career success. However, Sun Tzu also cautions readers that planning and information are still not enough to be victorious. He reminds us that overconfidence, arrogance, and anger can undermine even the best-laid plans. His understanding of the intersection between science and the human condition reveals a keen awareness of how we can become our own worst enemies if we fail to have a clear understanding of our own strengths and weaknesses.

Endnotes

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 - ¹³ Michael LaFargue, *The Tao of the Tao Te Ching: A Translation and Commentary* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992).
 - ¹⁴ Alvin P. Cohen, *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 32.
 - ¹⁵ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way: A New Translation by Victor H. Mair Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-Wang-Tui Manuscripts*, trans. Victor H. Mair (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 133–134.

- 16 In moral philosophy it is important to distinguish between actions that have instrumental value versus those that have intrinsic value. Actions that have instrumental value are desirable because they are a means to an end. Intrinsic value is grounded in the idea that some behaviors should be pursued for their developmentally continuous ends, such as fostering virtue and wisdom.
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- 30 Ibid., 25–27.
- 31 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. James Trapp, 73.
- 32 Ibid., 99.
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In the Face of Normality: An Analysis of One Person's Encounters with School Power across a Lifespan¹

**Thomas V. O'Brien, University of Southern Mississippi, and
Tommie Killen, University of Southern Mississippi**

Introduction

In the last century, scholars have paid much attention to the role formal education played in “Americanizing” immigrant and first-generation children and carrying them into mainstream culture.² Joining this scholarship are memoirs and novels about early schooling experiences, often written later from the viewpoint of the adult.³ Many accounts speak to the pain, isolation, and sometimes even the rewards the authors encounter as they negotiate their way in settings with customs far different than those in their homes and communities.

In contrast, fewer accounts examine how immigrant and first-generation children—who stayed in the education enterprise over the course of a lifetime—fare in their long-term relationship with modern schooling.⁴ How did their sense of self and identity adjust with their increased familiarity with—or mastery of—the official and hidden school curriculum? How did they reckon, over time, with the public “knowledge” and “know-how” gained at school? If schools are powerful, sanctioned sites of regulation, how do those who developed in them over a lifetime, “make sense” of and manage schooling’s normalizing powers? Given one’s increased cognitive command and selective memory over time, what does one say, as an adult, about one’s reckoning with the enterprise? What other normalizing factors beyond the school are in play?

In an attempt to shed some light on these questions, in this paper we focus on one person, Catherine Angela Chessa: a first-generation U.S. citizen and daughter of Italian immigrants. We follow her as she enters public school and later college in the mid-20th century. Relying on unrecorded accounts about Catherine’s family and using evidence from a diary she kept as an adult in 1981, we analyze her later reflections on schooling, and her contemporaneous thoughts and experiences as a public school teacher, and later as adult outsider studying the Montessori method in her parents’ country of origin.⁵ In our analysis, we also consider these experiences as they intersect with her personality and identity as a youth, mother, wife, and adult learner.

To help guide our analysis, we turn to Michel Foucault and his writings and lectures in which he theorizes the dynamics of institutional power/knowledge. Foucault's concept of normalization refers to the processes through which societies and powerful actors use institutions to establish and enforce norms, standards, and expectations that shape people's behaviors, identities, and thought processes. Foucault documents how people in institutions tend to accommodate themselves to an institution's/actor's normalizing powers, and internalize existing norms, standards, and expectations. Foucault argues this process systematically reduces an individual's agency and sense of self, is used to control the behaviors of individuals, and leads to the reproduction of institutional power and social hierarchies.⁶

We also are guided by critical studies scholar Susan Douglas Franzosa, who studies the power of normalization on children in the school setting. Franzosa draws from Foucault's theory, interpreting normalization as harmful to the individual, also recognizing that individuals do not always submit to normalization; as Foucault documents, individuals sometimes resist or subvert an institution's normalizing forces.⁷ Franzosa theorizes the concepts *accommodation* and *resistance* as relating to stories adults tell about their early schooling. She and other educational scholars problematize the influence of universal schooling on the individual and highlight the "coercive and partisan nature [of schools'] socialization practices."⁸ These scholars focus on the "the legitimacy of the school's traditional warrant to regulate individual identities."⁹ As an intervention, Franzosa suggests recorded memories of prior schooling episodes, told later by adults in their own voices, might open a pathway toward self-authenticity. Also important, Franzosa asserts telling such stories can help expand and clarify our understanding of the normalizing powers of schooling.¹⁰ Using her theoretical concepts of accommodation, resistance, and normalization, we turn our attention to analyzing one woman's history, Catherine Angela Chessa, and examine her lifelong relationship with formal schooling. Beginning with the time during which she was a child, through her high school and college years, and into adulthood, Catherine's story offers compelling insights into processes of self-reckoning given the power of normalizing forces. Catherine's educational biography across her lifespan is a nuanced variation on what Franzosa, drawing from Foucault, and others conclude about the effects of schooling's normalization.

Catherine Angela Chessa

Catherine Angela Chessa was born in Greenwich, Connecticut in 1932 to immigrant parents from Siligo, a village (then with a population of roughly 600 inhabitants) in the region of Logudoro in northern Sardinia. Catherine grew up in an Italian home and neighborhood and eventually assimilated into the English-speaking American mainstream. She came of

age in Italian-American culture—and transitioned away from that language and culture—eventually becoming an elementary school teacher, and later a special-education teacher in a public school system on eastern Long Island, New York. En route, in the 1970s she earned a master's degree in special education. In 1979, she won a sabbatical and Rotary International scholarship to live in Bergamo, Italy (August 1980–July 1981) where she studied the Montessori method with native connoisseurs of the approach.¹¹ Remarkably, during her sabbatical she kept a diary. Along with stories and artifacts from her past remembered and collected by her family,¹² her diary allows us to explore themes of accommodation and resistance as she negotiated her formal education over key moments in her lifetime.

In what follows we briefly provide additional background on Catherine's family and early schooling in the U.S. Here we find parallels between her experiences and those of Mary Antin, a Jewish-American immigrant from what now is Belarus, and whose family settled in Boston in the 1890s.¹³ Like Antin, Catherine's recollections of institutional normalization were initially unsettling and confusing, but later transitioned into mostly positive memories that integrated to a considerable extent into a larger sense of personal and desired identity. Her transition also grew her sense of purpose and agency. After a bumpy start, Catherine adjusted to school culture and seemed, in retrospect, to embrace it. This acceptance of the school *in all its power*, however, was accompanied by a significant rejection of her ethnic home life and may correlate with the onset of particular dispositional traits. To the extent that Catherine accommodated the school's normalizing influence, she seems to have partially resisted her parents' authority, and this resistance persisted into adulthood.

In the second part of the paper we attend to Catherine as an adult, first as a teacher and then an adult student. Unlike her relationship with formal education in the first half of her life, when accommodation was her *modus operandi*, her approach to education as an adult involved elements of redirection, refereeing, and resistance. These strategies operated powerfully in her relationship with schooling. For example, comparable to Leonard Covello's work as a teacher in New York City,¹⁴ during Catherine's work as a special educator, she developed a type of instruction that offered hope and direction to her students. She gave support and concrete guidance to many, especially those most vulnerable. Her work as a teacher stands out because Catherine was able to channel and redirect the institution's well-established socialization powers into realistic lessons and relatable opportunities for her students. In contrast to much of the critical scholarship about the oppressiveness of formal schooling, Catherine filtered and used aspects of schooling's normalization as a form of empowerment, both for her students and herself. Also, in her capacity as an adult student, she resisted aspects of schooling she found unjust. For example, rather than fully comply with unwritten school rules about a dress code for teachers, she confronted her

supervisors, and was pivotal to achieving a policy change. Later, rather than fully comply with Montessori professors and adjust to normalization's forces in Bergamo, she chose to resist, openly, but also unobtrusively. Her inner and outer journey as an adult learner was one of agency and purpose. But it also came with rebellion and sometimes with anger, impatience, and self-doubt. The contrast between the younger Catherine's accommodation of school norms, on the one hand, and the older Catherine's redirection and challenge of these norms on the other, is significant because it suggests that addressing schooling's normalizing power requires experiences in the setting. Likewise, Catherine's approach suggests that normalization's power may not always be as toxic or iron-clad successful as is often portrayed in literature.¹⁵ Indeed, normalization can sometimes be accommodated for survival or refereed for "the greater good."

While her early agency as a child cannot be ruled out, our analysis suggests that when compared with her early educational experiences, Catherine's later educational encounters both as a special educator and adult studying Montessori occurred with agency, "truth to self," and with a keener, more-conscious understanding of the school's power to normalize. Her encounters also resulted in success, stability, and upward social mobility. However, the evidence suggests that her experiences as an adult student in a different learning environment prompted moments of self-doubt and perceived failings as a learner, and as a mother and wife.

Filial Influence

Catherine's parents were born into large families in the village of Siligo on the island of Sardinia: Vittorio Chessa in 1900, and Biagina Manca in 1910. Vittorio attended primary school through grade 4, and Biagina through grade 6. As such, Catherine's parents' early schooling was only a small part of their socialization into Sardinian culture. In their youth both worked for the family, Vittorio as a goat herder, and Biagina as the primary caretaker for her younger siblings (due to the premature death of their mother during the birth of her youngest sister, Nangela). Vittorio, alert for better options and unsatisfied with his days in the pasture, enlisted in the *Arma dei Carabinieri*, a service of the Italian armed forces, at the basic level. Then, at age twenty (c. 1920) Vittorio—like many Italians others who left during the Great Migration—ventured to North America to try his luck along the U.S. northeast coast, eventually rooming with his older brother in New York City.¹⁶ Unsuccessful and in need of resources and a new plan, Vittorio returned to Siligo in the late 1920s, where he courted Biagina. In May 1929, shortly after their marriage, he reentered the U.S. with proceeds from the dowry but without his wife.¹⁷

After living alone for two years in Siligo, Biagina, age 20, boarded a vessel in Porto Torres to Genoa, and then an ocean-liner to Ellis Island.¹⁸ In November 1930 she reunited with Vittorio in New York City, where he

had been working odd jobs yet not acquiring the money or advancement that he sought. When she arrived, he was tending bar at a speakeasy in lower Manhattan. They soon relocated to Greenwich, Connecticut, where Vittorio worked seasonally on private estates as a “yard boy” and tended bar at a small tavern near the town center in the evenings. Fifteen months after Biagina’s arrival, Catherine was born.¹⁹

The Young Catherine

The Chessas, like most Italian immigrants, remained Catholic, at least in culture. Little is known about Catherine’s first four years of life. She recalled her father as a harsh disciplinarian, while her mother undertook the daily tasks of preparing meals and housekeeping.²⁰ Biagina practiced a style of childrearing she had witnessed in Siligo. Rules and chores were set forth. Physical punishment—mostly by Vittorio—was typical for all, but less so for Catherine’s only sibling, Maria (born c. 1933).²¹ With limited resources and minimal ability self-assuredly to speak or write in English, her parents never invested in a car or secured drivers’ licenses. Consequently, as the older child, Catherine was called on to run errands for the family. As early as age seven she regularly boarded the city bus go to buy groceries and other necessities. Catherine’s early memories of her journey to integrate into American culture also reveal a sense of apprehension. Living within the confines of an immigrant family of four with few resources only heightened her sense of worry. Her parents were the only two in their families to immigrate abroad; Biagina was the only sibling of five to move away from the village of Siligo permanently.²² While the family befriended other Italians (but relatively few Sardinians) nearby, they were less successful at replicating the community of family and *paesanos* from Siligo. Italians who were financially or situationally better-off tended to stay home in the old country and usually maintained regular family ties. Those with less security and fewer resources or opportunities (like Vittorio) left with ambitions for promised lands—places like Argentina, Australia, and U.S. For those who left, travel back to the homeland was costly, both in terms of money and time away from paid labor. Only once, for three weeks in 1957, did Biagina and Vittorio return to Siligo to reunite with family.²³

At age 5 or 6, Catherine began half-day Kindergarten in a progressive, child-centered classroom at a public school in Greenwich. Catherine later recalled her sense of opportunity and delight in her new learning environment. Though she could not speak English (like most of her classmates), she recalled her teacher as kind and encouraging; Catherine loved to play in the sandbox. Not knowing how to request permission to use the restroom at school, Catherine would race to the bathroom to relieve herself once back in the family flat. One school day, however, she could not wait, and, in tears and to her great embarrassment, she wet herself. The teacher, she recalled, was quick to assist and provided a change of clothing,

but the episode stuck with the young girl. Upon returning home, she cried again, and in anger yelled to her parents that she would not speak another word of Italian, ever. Over the years, Catherine broke this promise many times. But at that moment, and as a child she faced a most challenging situation; one that she did not fully understand, but one that would have lifelong consequences. She felt compelled to choose between a new culture or staying true to her parents and their culture. Before her were two paths.



Catherine Clessa (seated, right) with her sister, Maria (standing, left), Greenwich, Connecticut, c. 1937. Photographer unknown.

Catherine lived day-to-day. Any school building functions to unify a disparate group of youngsters, functioning as a closed system, and complete with normalizing routines: attendance requirements, clocks, periodic bells, hallway lines, and grading systems among those. For young Catherine, school was not a place to resist, but instead to settle into: to study, to become familiar with. At home, with few ways to dodge the full influence of her parents and neighbors, she took time to reimagine herself as less-Italian.²⁴

Later at school, when pupils shared family stories about meals, Catherine once fibbed about eating a satisfying American breakfast of pancakes, syrup, bacon, and orange juice that her mother served, rather than her actual breakfast of bread and leftovers from the night before.²⁵ These types of experiences must have been distressing. School experiences negotiated this way can be seen as indicators of the normalizing power of public schooling in mid-century America. They parallel the recollections

of other immigrant and first-generation adults about their early schooling, notably those of Mary Antin, but also Richard Rodriguez and Leonard Covello. Also, they contrast sharply with stories that Vittorio and Biagina would likely have reported about *colazione* (breakfast at home) at primary school in Siligo (if asked).

More Schooling for Catherine Chessa

About 1946, Catherine's family relocated to the city of Waterbury, Connecticut where Vittorio took a job in maintenance with the city and Biagina found employment on the floor of the Scovill Brass Works. This doubled the family income.²⁶ Catherine soon enrolled in the college preparation track at Crosby High School on East Main Street. She recalls being tracked with "the 'bright students,'" studying Latin and struggling with Algebra. She graduated in 1950 and then matriculated at Teachers College of Connecticut, New Britain (now Central Connecticut State University), 25 miles northeast of Waterbury. In her first year of college, Catherine's Italian accent had disappeared, assisted by distance from family and an unspoken word to herself that schooling was a force of good, which she would continue to prioritize and accommodate. Her husband recalls her as "outgoing" and a member of "a few of the women's clubs" on campus.²⁷ Along the way, she fell in love with reading, and this too accelerated her transition. Catherine was well on the way to her goal.

Unlike the recollections Franzosa references in her important article, where resistance was the common theme in response to the school's normalizing power, we do not find much evidence in Catherine's recollections that she contested the power of school's normalizing forces in her teenage and college years. For example, in sharp contrast with Dick Gregory's reflection on the wickedness of school and the sanctity of home ("I never learned hate at home, or shame. I had to go to school for that," writes Gregory²⁸), Catherine's recollections about school carried no animus. Although she found the college preparatory track at Crosby (and perhaps some of her classmates) intimidating,²⁹ school remained, implicitly or not, her chosen path into the U.S. middle class; she acquiesced to its power to get her there.

In college, she noticed clear differences between immigrant and first-generation Italian-Americans and other first- and second-generation college-goers, but processed these variations as a normal part of mid-20th-century college life for those, like her, who sought advancement and stability.³⁰ Although we can only speculate, in Catherine's mid-century mind, questions about the legitimacy of school normalizing powers were likely not fully considered or entertained, at least not consciously. To the extent Catherine recognized normalization at all, she may have presumed that the school's authority was legitimate, and its power benevolent and advantageous for all who could find a means to run with it. The subconscious dimension

of Catherine's school experiences may add to our understanding of the power of normalization. Notably, it is possible that well into adulthood one may not realize normalization's power because it is invisible and often unstated. It may appear simply natural.

During her time student teaching in New Britain after earning a bachelor's degree and securing a teaching license in early childhood education, Catherine worked in the college's "child-centered" laboratory school, and afterward in Waterbury, teaching children in a public primary school one mile from her parents' house on Town Plot. Her future husband (an Irish-American Catholic man whose last name she took upon marriage) whom she met in her second year of college, was still completing his elementary-school teaching degree in New Britain. Upon his graduation they moved to eastern Long Island and carved out long, successful teaching careers in public schools: Catherine for 33 years (with time off to give birth, mother five children, and earn a master's degree in special education), and her husband for 35 years.³¹



In 1979, at age 47, Catherine was well-respected as a tenured special-education teacher and elected representative of the teachers' union. Three of her children were in college, one in high school, and one in middle school. (Notably, none spoke Italian or Sardinian.) By this time, she and her husband were homeowners. Also, because of his self-described "wanderlust," they started traveling the world. First, they lived on Oahu, Hawai'i (where he was an exchange teacher and where she gave birth to their fifth child) from July 1967 until August 1968. After returning to Long Island for work, the family traveled in the summers of 1973 and 1974 to southern and northern Europe. Travel in 1973 included short visits with Catherine's aunts, uncles, and cousins and their families in Italy, people whom Catherine had never met, but had spoken to on the telephone and heard much about from Biagina. Catherine saw these encounters with Italians in their homeland as educational, and enriching for her boys, but, perhaps due to her ambivalence with her ethnicity, taxing on herself.³² Later, and with her husband's encouragement, she applied for and received a Rotary International scholarship to study the Montessori method in Bergamo, Italy for the 1980–1981 academic year.³³



Initially, the school milieu was foreign and sometimes puzzling to Catherine, but over the years she accepted the institution's power exercised to normalize her behavior and shape her identity in exchange for what she perceived to be upward social-class and economic mobility. As we note previously, she perceived schooling as the superior path forward, but also saw schooling as largely incompatible with her parents' culture, social class,

and home life in Connecticut. In Catherine's mind, Italian-American culture was part of a class to which she did not want to belong: factory workers, mechanics, maids, bricklayers, janitors, restaurant and hotel workers, bus drivers, and the like.³⁴ We now turn to the second half of her educational life.

Catherine as Teacher

From the mid-1960s until her retirement in 1997, Catherine seems to put much of her ethnic identity and first language on the back burner. To be sure, her nuclear family encountered her extended family in Italy during the summer of 1973. They also visited Catherine's parents in Waterbury for short stays (and substantial family meals) twice a year.³⁵ But otherwise, Catherine steered clear of her Italian-ness. During these years, her family life was demanding. She periodically gave birth and took time away from teaching to care for young children. As a practicing Catholic until the early 1970s, Catherine took no birth control until after her fifth child was born and subsequently left the church.

Throughout her busy years of young motherhood Catherine also blossomed into a committed and engaged teacher. Starting in the early '70s, Catherine returned to the classroom full-time and taught special-needs children at the central county facility (Board of Cooperative Educational Services, BOCES) in eastern Suffolk, Long Island. After her first year, she took the bold step of wearing pants to school instead of a dress or skirt and, after some turmoil, other women faculty began to do the same. This successful protest helped make Catherine the unanimous choice for representing her unit in the New York State Union of Teachers.

Her work at BOCES started before the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and she continued at BOCES afterward, shifting to teaching special-needs teenagers and adults. In her various roles, she worked with students with moderate-to-severe physical, developmental, and emotional disabilities—students deemed inappropriate for more-integrated environments in mainstream classrooms. In addition to her work in the classroom, she earned a reputation for going the extra mile for her students and undertook activities that few others at BOCES dared. For instance, after school hours she visited her students' homes—many of them in Riverhead's so-called "rough neighborhoods." She showed great sympathy, particularly for her students of color. She would sometimes resort to a "tough love" approach when she thought necessary.

Catherine's work as a teacher sharpened her personality and identity as an adult and gave her life meaning. It was a means for expressing her agency.³⁶ Teaching also formed a bridge between her accommodation of formal schooling in her early life with clever use of and sometimes resistance to its authority during the second half of her life.³⁷ Significantly,

through her work as a teacher (rather than her obedience as a youngster), she channeled the school's normalizing influence into opportunities for her students to achieve success—some victories were of course more substantial than others—in and outside of school, as learners and as wage-earners. Some lessons were simple, like learning to tie one's shoe, or counting to make sure you received the correct change back from a cashier, and, if necessary, confronting the cashier if the change returned was incorrect. Some were more complex, such as completing a work/leisure schedule for various chores and activities at home. Other tasks carried greater consequence, such as practicing for a job interview, or routinely preparing a meal for the family. These lessons, while requiring compliance and normalizing to some degree, were positive and productive in value, and far more empowering than coercive for her special-education students. This part of Catherine's story suggests that if adjusted to, mediated, redirected, or refereed, normalization may prove helpful to the individual and society. As many scholars have concluded, schools can be sites of oppression, in part, due to its normalization powers.³⁸ We do not disagree with this assessment. But our analysis of Catherine's life story suggests that schools can also be sites that offer opportunity and space for growth, as well as for status and social mobility. Although we consider only one person, our work suggests that those who hold some power in an institution can play a key role in reckoning with schooling's power to normalize.



Catherine at John F. Kennedy Airport, Queens, New York, circa 1974. Photograph by her husband Tuck.



Through her extensive reading and while earning her master's degree in the late '70s, Catherine encountered the Montessori method, and saw it as a way to enhance her professional work at BOCES. Maria Montessori

(1870–1952) was a Roman physician and pedagogue and by the 1930s had become world-famous for her work in the capital city teaching children with learning impairments (cognitive delay, illness, or disability; students with these conditions were at the time called “phrenasthenic children,” which refers to weakness of the diaphragm). She also gained renown for her later work at *Casa dei Bambini* with youth from economically disadvantaged families. Throughout her life, Montessori developed, applied, and lectured widely on innovative, hands-on, student-focused learning and materials; these became central features of her method of instruction.³⁹ The evidence suggests that Catherine-the-Teacher wanted to improve her pedagogical strategy and options by incorporating the Montessori method into her pedagogy.⁴⁰

Catherine as Adult Learner

Catherine spent the academic year 1980–1981 in Bergamo, Italy, where she resumed the role of a student and studied Montessori under the direction of Italian practitioners. During her residency she maintained a diary, which we use to evidence our argument.⁴¹ Our analysis of her diary—using Franzosa’s theoretical concepts of accommodation and resistance—yields three prominent foci related to her experiences in Bergamo: (1) Catherine’s academic insecurities as a student, (2) her reflections on acclimation to the residency, mothering, and separation from family, and (3) her reactions to the andragogy of Montessori professors. Unlike her life narrative to this point—a retrospective account based on school stories that Catherine told her family and friends—the diary gives us a means to access to her immediate voice as an adult learner in an unfamiliar setting.

Catherine’s Academic Insecurities

Catherine’s diary reflects moderate-to-extreme degrees of academic insecurity and uncertainty about her ability to pass the Montessori method course of study. She frequently expresses concerns over the events in class and fears that she will not be able to master the material. Many times, she raises the possibility of switching her status to “audit” and several times mentions she will contact Rotary International for permission forgo her official diploma:

[M]aybe I can't deal with this because I'm not up to par. I was beginning to think I was on top of it all. I am beginning to understand most of it and am beginning to see the order, organization etc. I am also starting to extrapolate out the important parts, etc. But now after the Geo charts and poor album check, I can't deal with it. And auditing is not the answer. I will be a flunk out. A loser. God what a feeling. Can't sleep. 1:20 A.M. Depressed, worried, am undecided.

I think I've made up my mind to audit—audit I think it's final. Not sure can't put up with bullshit thrown around in spite of all that's said. I don't want to cop out....

Here we see Catherine-the-Teacher as a resistant learner—*Not sure... can't put up with the bullshit thrown around*—and an impulse to escape—*I've made up my mind to audit*—a characteristic not uncommon among those in the profession.⁴² We also speculate that her preoccupations with content mastery and grades link back to anxieties she may have experienced as a child: in grade school when he was learning to speak English, or in high school when she was in the competitive college-prep track.⁴³ Despite her ultimate academic successes, childhood and adolescent strains may have persisted into adulthood. Whether they did or not, her comparison of self to others, her feelings of not being “up to par,” and her doubts about making the grade reveal schooling's continual power over a learner—even an adult student. Catherine's diary evidences how her first encounter with the Montessori method instructors undermined her academic self-confidence.

Catherine's Reflections on Acclimation, Mothering, and Separation from Family

In other parts of her diary Catherine compares her adjustment to her new educational environment to her oldest son's recent move to New York City.

Thought about David and how he had to acclimate to N.Y.C. I wonder if he had as hard a time as I did here in Bergamo?

She also reconsiders her parents' plight as immigrants; perhaps with newfound empathy for them, she reimagines their struggles to persist in the new world:

Thought about my parents and their immigration. My God that must have been difficult. I almost flipped out the first few days here and I understood & spoke the language. How did they manage?

Catherine also writes frequently about her children, her past child-rearing practices, and her loneliness and desire to reunite with her family.

Tomorrow is Thom's 23rd birthday and David's 24th May 14 and I am sitting regretting my loss of patience with them when they were little. I remembered severely spanking (no beating) David when Tuck's [her husband's] aunts visited—a summer day when his curiosity prevented him from sleeping and I being nervous and impatient went up [to] the room on Soundview Ave and beat the shit out of him. I did same thing to Thom once on the way to the beach. He grabbed his bathing suit and I lost patience and spanked hard. I can't begin to tell how often I attempted to really spank Chris but his tenacity prevented me. I wonder what they remember of my battles, my spanking hands. Douglas once told me or was it Greg that I beat him and I thought I never touched the younger two. Oh had I to do it over again. I wouldn't touch them. I lost a youth somewhere. I lost my patience.

Here we see Catherine's misgivings about her use corporal punishment as a young mother. Notably, while she resisted the Montessori pedagogy, she was nevertheless being affected by it, which led her to reexamine her mothering on some occasions. Catherine's sons remember her saying in her later years as a grandparent, statements such as, "don't criticize the child, criticize the behavior."⁴⁴ These lessons learned—that distinguish between criticisms directed against a person rather than the position the person is maintaining or the action they are taking—came not from her home, but from Catherine's training as a teacher.

These last two sentences of Catherine's seem to speak to her loneliness and her sense of loss as a youth.

May 4 1981, Happy Birthday Thom I love you.

Tomorrow is David's Birthday, May 14. I love you David.

I write that above especially for David. I was very harsh on Him. I didn't know any better. I wasn't trained to be a mother. I wasn't trained to unite. No one has training, some do a better job than others. May David and Thom and Chris (Oh did I get mad at Chris) Doug and Greg forgive me.

Catherine's words here further detail her insecurities and self-doubts as a mother. She also hints that training for motherhood, perhaps, if it was something akin to teacher training, would have helped her as a caregiver.

Catherine's next words confirm her independent streak, a salient feature of her distinctiveness. *I've had enough of a being alone & proving my independence.* As a child, she also demonstrated autonomy refused to speak her parents' language and as a teacher in defiance of BOCES's policies, she resisted the system's dress code for female teachers. She also found confidence and agency as an adult in the school setting as a teacher who would not cow to superiors. Notably, over her educational lifespan, Catherine resisted forces of normalcy that originated in her home and her school.

Yet, confrontation and independence—as allies of resistance—sometimes came with a price; she encountered what might be described as emotional side-effects, such as loneliness, impatience, anger, a quick temper, heightened reactions, regret, and more. These aspects of resistance, perhaps, filtered into her adult identity and affected her reflections on childrearing and relationship with her husband:

I feel blue. I miss my family. I want to go home. I can't sleep and want the reassurance of Tuck. God help me. 2 more months to go. I hate weekends. Too much time on my hands.... I want my family. I regret wasting my time when I was with them. Shall I change from now on? Shall I be more patient—less angry, less hostile? I don't know.

Here Catherine refers to her nuclear family in New York, not her family in Waterbury. It is notable that in the diary she expresses no lonesomeness from her distance from Biagina, Vittorio, or Maria.

Montessori Professors' Andragogy

Diary entries about the professors' methods for teaching Montessori suggest that Catherine was periodically caught off-guard by their approach to instructing adults. Perhaps she mistakenly anticipated their instruction would be an extension of her earlier experiences with progressive education as a pupil in kindergarten, or later as a progressive teacher at the New Britain Teachers' College laboratory school. In contrast, lessons at Bergamo were delivered top-down by self-described "experts." Consistent with the founder's approach, her professors kept tight control over how the method was practiced, absorbed, and taught to teachers, as well as over the production and use of learning materials.⁴⁵ This precision presented a challenge for Catherine:

I start tomorrow & we are to be kept very busy. It's an extensive course—Montessori is an -ism—almost a cult I was warned not to say anything at all at the lecture or in class—no comments—questions.

She describes the Montessori professors as "fanatics," obsessed with perfection, and dismissive and rude to students:

Montessori[ans] are compulsive, paranoid and so dedicated to specific tiny details. Grazzini is a bantam cock. Strutting around with his tail feathers. Yesterday he humiliates [sic] the Japanese men and today he tried to awe us by his math.

Tonight Grazzini victimized us for 3 hours by dictating very fast a story about the Mayan civilization. He was absolutely obtuse—speaking too fast and taking great liberties with the story, I think Wish I could check—anyway when asked to slow up he only went faster or so it seemed. ... How can he have expected all of us to sit & write for 3 hrs. is beyond me—why couldn't he have xeroxed [his lecture notes] at least. I'm fed up—with the GD Montessorians. They're full of it.

As an experienced and accomplished teacher of children and adults, Catherine refused to accept the delivery of the content whole-cloth. As noted above, teachers often make resistant learners just as doctors sometimes make the worst patients.⁴⁶ She saw Montessori andragogy in Bergamo as bullying and belittling of learners even as she names herself a bully in her own mothering. In her criticism, Catherine also shows empathy for her classmates whom she felt were also beaten back by the professors' andragogy.

...the people (students) are all really (with few expectations) cowed by him, his assistant Mrs. Honiger (another horror) and all the Montessori mat[erial]. It is, I'm convinced, a cult & religion. The materials are great—Sequential, clear and adaptable, but the prescribed presentation is a bit much. Too stilted. Maybe it's because I'm undisciplined myself—but the method grates on my nerves.

Catherine's comments are not inconsistent with the critical (and even dismissive) views on aspects of Montessorism that earlier-20th-century U.S. pedagogical progressives held.⁴⁷ They also stand out as statements of resistance to an authoritarian teaching method and instruction style that Catherine, as an adult learner, labeled illegitimate and absurd. Yet, even as she pushed back, the power of the Bergamo program's normalizing qualities were potent. Those qualities led Catherine to question her academic prowess: *Maybe it's because I'm undisciplined myself.*

Catherine's Adult Classmates in Bergamo

Catherine had classmates from the U.S. and beyond to whom she, at times, complimented, criticized, and compared herself.

The young people are nice: John (Phil. Major) from Chicago. Linda from Cleveland, Betsy from Philadelphia. Phil and Sherrie from Kentucky going to Houston. John bright, Linda, bright, Betsey bright—Phil and Sherrie ok too. O.K. I'll be the dumbest in the class.

Along with self-doubt, Catherine's entries are evidence of a social life she experienced with her peers. As such, the entry below points to the power of the peer group to normalize, and illustrate instances that Catherine an adult, selectively accommodates and resists.

Went to get together with Montessorians and friends—had a good time. Elveria went with us—She told me that she had terrible sex with a man—It didn't go any further but rumor has it that she was married and must stay here because of annulment protocol. Too bad, she's pretty and nice. Sheila drank too much and arrived here quite inebriated [from Japan]—gave a magic show doing a takeoff on Honig's black thing. (the phallic-like carbon experiment). Met some Italian students. The boy and girl were very snotty, but one girl was very nice—The Italian boy really only wants to get into Betsy's pants—& I think he just may do that—I've changed my mind about a couple of these people. John Fowler—a real do-nothing guy who really isn't as nice as he wants everybody to believe. They tell me he's after Betsy, instead of the other way around. Betsy—has been on pill since she was 16—been around and I think she's got moxie. Sheila—really mixed up about lots of things—mostly men. She's got no money to live on. I give her money to borrow & she blows it all in a few days. I think she does this a lot. Very mixed up emotionally immature. ... Damine 30—who, lives with Helen 56 yrs. old & is he being kept by her? Who knows—I like him. He's effeminate but may or may not be gay. Christina (Sandy's roommate) a real cool—distant Swede only 21 yrs. old & very cool. Has been many places—Is cute but chubby—Bright—Sandy can be dogmatic but I like her most of the time. Very pretty no make-up. 30 yrs. old. The Swedes Gumila and Britt I don't especially care for they're very aggressive with the Mont. material.

Perhaps reflecting on her own her outsider status a moments of her educational life, Catherine expressed understanding for her classmates from Japan.

Went to another get together last nite for 1 hr. People are lovely. The two Japanese men don't speak Italian or English. They really feel lost. Wonder why they were accepted. Nama should marry Takene and go to Japan to live—She could do worse.

Tanabe Japanese men Quiet—Was humiliated by Grazzini and I felt for them.

Catherine's diary entries reflect her personality and provide us with insights about her identity. They also express a challenging, yet meaningful time in her adult life. Importantly, her residency gave her time to write and reflect about her experiences in Bergamo and her circumstances as a mother, wife, and adult learner. These immediate reflections map nicely onto her other school stories that relate to her childhood, family, and Italian-American culture. Episodes from Catherine's diary document how the program in Bergamo tested her determination and self-confidence and threatened her sense of belonging. Despite these doubts and moments of indecision (that seemed to interfere with her success), she accomplished her goal and gained her Montessori credential.

Conclusion

Catherine's recollections and diary entries speak loudly. However, even taken together, they give us only a glimpse of her life and identity in education over a lifetime. Because the evidence in play is imperfect—finite, subjective, dated, and much of it unrecorded, readers may call the accuracy of our narrative into question. That said, Catherine's life-long experiences in school provide a distinctive example of the still not-well-understood power of normalization in formal schooling.

On a macro level of analysis, Catherine Chessa's educational story fits nicely into Foucault's archeology of modern social institutions' normalizing powers. To a large extent, Catherine accommodated herself to these powers and internalized some of the institution's norms, standards and expectations. Also at the macro level, even as Catherine resisted the school's normalizing powers as an adult, her actions seemed to do little to alter the reproduction of prevailing power structures and social hierarchies in schooling writ large. The evidence suggests that on a micro level Catherine accommodated many of these forces early on and internalized them into her sense of self as a white, middle-class American. Thus, Catherine's story has parallels with Foucault's and Franzosa's examinations of schooling's powers of normalization. Notably, as Catherine accepted schooling's normalizing powers and partially rejected or deflected much of her family's way of living, she missed an opportunity to integrate these two "pulls" into

a holistic one. To the extent that this divide resulted in pain, loss, and a sense of isolation in order to “become educated,” Catherine’s story can be read as heartbreaking, as a tragedy.

Employing this thesis across Catherine’s educational biography no doubt has its advantages. By placing our analysis in this context, the value of our effort becomes clear. Importantly, this approach sends a vital message to teachers and teachers-to-be that there are potentially grave consequences for students who adopt an accommodation-only approach as a means to “becoming educated.” In 2023, students should not have to choose between their family and culture vis-a-vis the school’s culture. There is much evidence that there need not be choice at all.⁴⁸ Well-trained teachers can and should help students who desire it take a route toward integration. Notably, teachers should realize their significance as mediators of power in school settings and their position to deliver on both fronts. All school personnel play a powerful role in schools. Although they may do otherwise, they can help students develop tools of critical literacy to understand and act upon the society in which they live. Educators can also contribute to the construction of positive identities on students’ own terms and their sense of agency and collective responsibility.

But school personnel who do take this route, and who not embrace an inclusive partnership that connects home, culture, and school may inadvertently (or even willfully) press children to choose between home/culture and school; in other words to become educated through compliance but alienated from their roots rather than educated and integrated with their roots. Such teachers may place their students at risk, especially those whose home lives and cultures appear to be a mismatch between the home/culture and the school. This is some of what Catherine experienced across her educational lifespan.

Yet reading Catherine’s story through the concepts we chose also runs the risk of homogenizing it; placing it *a priori* in line with the observations of Franzosa, Roland Martin, and other educational researchers. Said another way, this approach “normalizes” Catherine’s story by paradoxically placing it securely into the critical scholarship on schooling’s overbearing, rigid normalizing powers. As we note, our analysis confirms much of what appears in critical research on the effects of schooling’s normalization. However, our work also provides an example of how the power of theory can simplify or restrict the narrative, or perhaps more accurately over-emphasize parts of the narrative that “ring true” with previous conclusions about the tragic consequences of giving into schooling’s normalizing power. Catherine’s life story challenges such a conclusion because, among other things, it complicates one’s understanding of the nature and contours of normalization. Forces of normalization that compete with those of the school rarely are made explicit in critical scholarship on schooling’s normalizing’s powers, but may have been salient in Catherine’s story. One

can argue, then, that Catherine felt forced to behave and think a particular way at home, yet claimed agency to counter the power of home. Her strategy was in her partial rejection of a home life; and she is likely to have done so justifiably because her home life was far from idyllic. It is quite possible that the young Catherine found school culture and its normalizing powers preferable to her home culture and its normalizing powers. Or to the extent that she understood both to be limited or potentially damaging options, she may have picked the lesser poison. Also, Catherine erred in her resistance to home by bundling together her home life and her family's ethnic culture. The two, of course, are related and for a while may have appeared undistinguishable, especially to a child. But over time, it became apparent they were not the same. The adult Catherine recognized this distinction but nevertheless struggled to reconcile the two. Although we can only extrapolate from the thin evidence on hand, with regard to accommodation of her early schooling, it is possible that Catherine felt more comfort as a child in school than at home or in her neighborhood. And this relative comfort might this have persisted into her later school experiences. As far as resistance goes, it is also possible that Catherine's confrontation with the school dress policy as a teacher and her resistance to the top-down instruction in Bergamo connected to her earlier sense of agency when partially rejecting her home life. Also, as an adult, is it possible that her feelings of alienation and self-doubt came from other sources, including but not limited to schooling. Exploring these possibilities takes us beyond our chosen frame, broadens Catherine's distinctive narrative.

Catherine's life as a teacher deserves attention. In a position of relative power as a teacher, Catherine found a sense of purpose and honed her identity in a space between her students and the school administration. She did this, in part, by attending to those in the social hierarchy below her. By channeling schooling's normalizing powers into learning opportunities that gave her students a chance to succeed, a chance to feel the joy of reward that comes with completing a task, Catherine-the-teacher mediated the school's power over her students and highlighted for them clear and manageable steps to advance. To complement her work in the classroom, she made visits to families and met with guardians, blurring the divide between her student's home lives and her classroom. She accomplished all of this without taking an explicit position on cultural pluralism (defined as a condition in which minoritized groups participate fully in the dominating society, yet maintain cultural difference). Catherine's story as a teacher shows that adults in schools bear a great responsibility in mediating a school's normalizing power for the learner's greater good.

Moreover, Catherine as a teacher looked both ways at the intersections in the school's social hierarchy. As a teacher, she challenged those above her, and successfully resisted the school's normalizing power. She also

used her relative power as a union representative to advocate for teachers and students in her school. Her actions helped to keep BOCES teachers' salaries on par with other public-school teachers in the county. While this aspect of Catherine's education story aligns with Foucault's description of the outsider who resists the power of social institutions, it also adds nuance because it provides an example of resistance and survival *within the school culture*. At key moments, Catherine resisted and redirected certain of the school's normalizing powers, but she did not leave the school, nor did she reject the school and all its powers. In her actions, Catherine sought to maintain the good parts of school culture, but challenge or deflect what she critically saw as problematic. Catherine's story suggests that those who work in schools are positioned to intercede, redirect, challenge, or even soften schooling's powers in relation to their impact on student behavior, interactions, and identity at both the individual and collective levels. Additionally, teachers may be able to identify, reckon with, and rebalance other forces of impact outside of a school's walls.

Catherine's story, then, provides nuance to Franzosa's theory, and to calls for culturally sensitive approaches to teaching. It raises questions and possibilities that can expand our understanding of the nature and sources of normalization, accommodation, and resistance in schooling. And, beyond these aspects, Catherine's story tells the tale of one person's distinctive educational journey across a lifetime in the U.S.; getting to forks in that road, walking on, making mistakes, and claiming victories. Catherine experienced challenges, setbacks, and triumphs in the school setting in ways shaped by history and culture, but she also undertook much of her journey on her own terms.

Endnotes

- ¹ We are grateful for the feedback and suggestions received on earlier drafts of this study from Nicolle M. Jordan, Joseph A. O'Brien, and the editors and blind reviewers of this journal.
- ² Julius Drachsler, *Democracy and Assimilation: The Blending of Immigrant Heritages in America* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1920); Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); Laurie Olson, *Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools* (New York, NY: New Press, 1997); Pedro A. Noguera, "Social Capital and the Education of Immigrant Students: Categories and Generalizations," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 77, no. 2, (2004): 180–183; Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

- ³ Michael Gold, *Jews without Money* (New York, NY: Horace Liveright, 1930); Richard Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); Virginia Hampl, *A Romantic Education* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981); Valerie Walkerdine, "Dreams from an Ordinary Childhood," in *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing up in the Fifties*, ed. Liz Heron (London, UK: Virago Press, 1985); Kate Douglas Wiggin, *My Garden of Memory* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1923).
- ⁴ Among the best-known memoirs that cover a lifetime of education are Leonard Covello's *The Heart is the Teacher* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2013); Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1983); and Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1912).
- ⁵ The original, handwritten diary is in the possession of the first author. A transcription of the diary is available upon request. For much of the first section of this paper, we rely on unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
- ⁶ See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1977).
- ⁷ Specifically, Franzosa attends to how adults—writing about their early experiences in schools—later express resistance to schooling's NSEs (by questioning authority, expressing dissenting opinions, adopting different ways of thinking, etc.), which she argues allows them to recapture a sense of agency and self-expression. She names this process "authoring the educated self."
- ⁸ Susan Douglas Franzosa, "Authoring the Educated Self: Educational Autobiography and Resistance," *Educational Theory* 42, no. 4, (1992): 395–412. Citations in our paper correlate with the reprint of Franzosa's article at <https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/education-facultypubs/4/>, 14. See also Jane Roland Martin, "Becoming Educated: A Journey of Alienation or Integration?," in *Critical Social Issues in American Education*, 3rd ed., eds. H. Svi Shapiro and David. E. Purpel (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 195–209.
- ⁹ Franzosa, "Authoring the Educated Self," 14. Also informing our study is work undertaken in the multidisciplinary field of "normology." For more on the general concept, see Michael W. Morris et al., "Normology: Integrating Insights about Social Norms to Understand Cultural Dynamics," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 129 (2015): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2015.03.001>
- ¹⁰ "A story [that] is written or told to explain, [or] to make sense of some problematic [past] event or experience," she writes, can possess value and meaning. The story's worth, Franzosa concludes, is that

it “can tell us about an individual’s inquiry into what it means to become an educated self” and, in addition, *bring the rest of us to a greater understanding of the “continuity of schooling’s power of normalization.”* Franzosa, “Authoring the Educated Self,” 14.

- 11 Riverhead News-Review, *Obituary for Catherine Chessa O'Brien*, February 14, 2014, <https://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/2014/02/51514/catherine-chessa-obrien/>
- 12 Much in the first half of our paper draws on unrecorded stories from and about the Chessas, Mancas, and the first author’s family.
- 13 Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1912).
- 14 See Covello’s *The Heart Is the Teacher*. Covello describes a pedagogical strategy he developed to meet the needs of Italian immigrant students. Covello differs from Catherine in his explicit embrace of cultural pluralism and his call for language and cultural retention for the first-second- and third-generation children of immigrants.
- 15 For example, see James Ryan, “Observing and Normalizing: Foucault, Discipline, and Inequality in Schooling: Big Brother is Watching You,” *Journal of Educational Thought* 25, no. 2 (1991): 104; Cristina L. Lash, “Making Americans: Schooling, Diversity, and Assimilation in the Twenty-First Century,” *Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2018): 99–117, <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSE.2018.4.5.05>; Lisa M. Wexler, “Learning Resistance: Inupiat and the U.S. Bureau of Education, 1885–1906: Deconstructing Assimilation Strategies and Implications for Today,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 45, no. 1 (2006): 17–34.
- 16 Discendenti di vecchi parenti, *Discendenti di vecchi parenti tuttogenealogia*, <https://www.tuttogenealogia.it/viewtopic.php?t=4855>
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
- 21 Discendenti di vecchi parenti.
- 22 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 In the kitchen, when she warned her mother she would only speak English (after she wet herself at school), Catherine provided Biagina with a few examples: “*Questo non è un tavolo, è un table! Questa non è una*

- sedia, è una chair!*” Catherine Chessa, unpublished and unrecorded oral statements remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
- 25 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
 - 26 During WWII, Biagina continued working at Scovill Industries, which pivoted to making bombs and munitions to drop on enemy combatants. Although they were on opposing sides, Biagina wrote regularly to her sisters in Siligo, and they to her.
 - 27 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
 - 28 Dick Gregory, *Nigger: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Dutton Press, 1964), 114.
 - 29 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others in the Chessa family, and remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
 - 30 Ibid.
 - 31 Riverhead News-Review. *Obituary*.
 - 32 One of her sons studied French in high school; he communicated with a few of the Sardinian relatives who also spoke French. But as the only speaker of Italian, Catherine was put in the laborious position of translating for her family. She expressed relief when the visits ended. Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others, circa 1973–2014.
 - 33 Catherine C. Chessa O’Brien, *Find a Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/124702349/catherine-c-o'brien/photo>
 - 34 Unpublished and unrecorded oral statements told by Catherine and others, circa 1973–2014.
 - 35 During these visits, Bengina would often speak with her daughter in Italian, but Catherine would typically answer in English. Briefer exchanges with Vittorio—who unlike Bengina, never mastered English—were in Italian. Loud exchanges were common, arguments not infrequent and the latter erupted in Italian. Also, among her adult friends in New York, Catherine became known as a maestro in the kitchen, preparing Italian food. Catherine Chessa, unpublished and unrecorded oral statements remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
 - 36 Said another way, her teaching allowed her to exercise agency and be truer to herself.

- 37 Catherine Chessa, unpublished and unrecorded oral statements remembered by her family and friends, and colleagues, circa 1973–2014.
- 38 See for example, Rita Kohli, Marcos Pizarro, & Arturo Nevárez, “The ‘New Racism’ of K–12 Schools: Centering Critical Research on Racism,” *Review of Research in Education* 41, no. 1 (2017): 182–202; Gregg D. Beratan, “Institutionalizing Inequity: Ableism, Racism and IDEA 2004,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2006): 3–33; Barrie A. Irving, “Career Education as a Site of Oppression and Domination: An Engaging Myth or a Critical Reality?,” *Australian Journal of Career Development* 20, no. 3 (2006): 24–30.
- 39 Piotr Podemski, *Against Two Titans and Three Prejudices? John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, and the Reasons behind the Initial Rejection of the Montessori Method in America (1912–1918)* [preprint], (2021), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348298677>
- 40 Catherine Chessa, unpublished and unrecorded oral statements remembered by her family and friends, and colleagues, circa 1973–2014.
- 41 A comprehensive analysis of Catherine’s Bergamo diary is beyond the scope of this paper; scholars of gender studies, feminism, and sociology, for example, might produce compelling work in the future.
- 42 This point comes from one of the editors of this journal. See for example, Alberto J. Rodriguez, “Teachers’ Resistance to Ideological and Pedagogical Change: Definitions, Theoretical Framework, and Significance,” in *Preparing Mathematics and Science Teachers for Diverse Classrooms Promising Strategies for Transformative Pedagogy*, eds. Alberto J. Rodriguez and Richard S. Kitchen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).
- 43 See endnote 24 regarding Catherine’s embarrassment at age 5 after she wet herself in kindergarten. Catherine Chessa, unpublished and unrecorded oral statements remembered by her family and friends, circa 1973–2014.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Rita Kramer, *Maria Montessori* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
- 46 This point comes from one of the editors of this journal.
- 47 Such comments came from members of the National Kindergarten Association and, notably, progressive educator and Dewey disciple William H. Kilpatrick. Faultfinders like Kilpatrick allege that, among other things, the method is overly rigid; gives a narrow allowance for imagination, social interaction, and child play; and is “thirty years behind our time.” Kramer, Maria Montessori; Podemski, footnote 81.

- ⁴⁸ See for example, James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, 10th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2019); Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Asking a Different Question* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2021).