

E
D
U
C
A
T
I
O
N

A
B
U
N
D
A
N
C
E

L

The Journal of the
New York State
Foundations of
Education Association

Volume 2 (2022)

EDUCATIONAL ABUNDANCE

The Journal of the New York State Foundations of Education Association
Volume 2 (2022)

Table of Contents

Remarks in Memoriam — Richard Ognibene, Sr. Richard Ognibene, Jr.	1
Teacher Education in a Post Truth Era: What to Expect of University-Based Teacher Education? Todd Dinkelman	4
Education Gag Laws, Post-Truth, and the Constitution of Knowledge Dale T. Snauwaert	12
A Defense of Freedom of Expression in Schools: The Case from Differentiation of Instruction Natalie Alaimo	23
Wake Work: Abolitionist Strategies in the Afterlife of Slavery British Reynolds	29
Overcoming Explicit Stereotyping in Education Luljeta Mati	36
Overcoming Implicit Bias in Schools Danielle Randazzo	42
Learning to Rope: Fancy Jo’s Story Lynett Rock	50
Peers, Power, and Purpose: Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives on the Theory of Peer Social Capital in School Keith Frome	58
A Science-Based Theory of Leadership: Facilitating Continuous Progressive Change in P-12 Schools Jared R. Lancer	66
Schools as Polling Places: Sanctioning the Public in New York State Public Schools Mary Bushnell Greiner	71
U.S. Outdoor Education: Teaching and Learning in Forest and Nature Schools Leigh M. O’Brien	81
Pre-Service Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Math Anxiety and Math Teaching Practices in the Context of COVID-19 Rupam Saran	95

Remarks in Memoriam — Richard Ognibene, Sr.

Richard Ognibene, Jr.
Fairport (NY) High School

Editors' Abstract: With the passing of Richard Ognibene, Sr. NYSFEA lost a founding member, the field of Social Foundations of Education said farewell to a champion, and Dick's companions and colleagues felt — and still feel — the absence of a friend. In the tribute published here, Richard Ognibene, Jr. reminds us of the importance of his father's work as a teacher, a scholar, and a social justice activist and encourages us all to continue our own work in the spirit of the legacy Dick has left us. (Note: A video of Rich Ognibene's memoriam is available at <https://youtu.be/JhnjP5WwIu4>)



Dick Ognibene with his wife, Elaine, and their son, Rich, in 1963, the year that Dick began teaching at John Marshall High School.

Good evening. My name is Rich Ognibene, and I am honored to be here tonight as an educator, a colleague, a friend, and most importantly, as the son of Richard Ognibene Sr., who founded this august group many years ago. One could say I, his child from 1963, is hanging out with NYSFEA, his child from 1971. And as your slightly older brother, I think we've aged quite well.

My dad was a prolific scholar. He was also kind, funny, and incredibly generous. His first job was teaching social studies at John Marshall High School in Rochester, but the bulk of his career was spent in the education departments of Siena College, SUNY Geneseo, The College of St. Rose, and Seton Hall University. Dad joked that he was academically promiscuous, shamelessly bouncing from one institution to another. In reality, he moved from teacher to professor to department chair to dean. He was on track to becoming a college president until a health issue with my mom changed that plan. Even in retirement, Dad continued work as an adjunct instructor and somehow found time to co-author two books, *Change in Early Nineteenth-Century Higher Education in New York's Capital District* and *A Persistent Reformer: Jonathan Kozol's Work to Promote Equality in America*.¹

Like most of you, a large part of Dad's work involved preparing people to be teachers. In broad strokes, that involves studying the *how* and the *why* of education. The *how* is associated with people like Benjamin Bloom, Howard Gardner, Madeline Hunter, and Charlotte Danielson. The *how* focuses on the strategies and technical skills needed to promote learning, whereas the *why* is associated with philosophers, scholars, and pundits across many centuries. The *why* focuses on our *raison d'être*. What is the larger role of education beyond preparing kids to pass state tests? The *why* has been and continues to be a subject of fierce public debate.

Dad knew that the *how* and the *why* work synergistically. A gifted violinist must be able to manipulate her instrument to create the right notes. But she must also know the history of the

¹ Editors' note: New York: Peter Lang 2017 and 2012, respectively.

composer, the intent of the music, and the larger role of violins in an orchestra. So too for gifted teachers. If we don't know the *how*, we fail at our short-term goal of teaching content. If we don't know the *why*, we fail at our long-term goals of helping students self-actualize, producing good citizens, and achieving social justice.

Dad spent six decades in the field of education. Though he was skilled in the *how*, morally, intellectually, and historically Dad was passionate about the *why*, hence his love of the New York State Foundations of Education Association and the scholarly people therein. I learned the *why* of education from Dad when I was a junior in college. The course, circa 1984, was called "Philosophy of Education." It would not be hyperbole to say that taking dad's class was a life-changing event. We analyzed books like *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Summerhill* by A.S. Neill, *Freedom to Learn* by Carl Rogers, and *Cultural Literacy* by E.D. Hirsch.² We compared pedagogical styles. We discussed historical movements. We examined models of human development. We studied issues of inequality. Dad was quietly brilliant in getting us to think about the larger role of education in society.

That larger role, particularly related to social justice, was important to Dad. Part of his passion for social justice came from life experience. Dad's education helped him escape the poverty — both financial and emotional — of his childhood. Another part of his passion for social justice came from our family. My mom, Elaine, was an English professor and a feminist. I am a science teacher and a gay rights activist. My brother Chris is a social studies teacher who always speaks truth to power.



2008, the year Rich won New York State Teacher of the Year and Dick and Elaine retired from Siena College

Through the prism of our careers, Dad saw that teachers could help fight oppression in all of its forms. Dad's passion for social justice also came from his research, especially his work on Jonathan Kozol and the horrific effects of segregated schools on our most vulnerable children. Dad's strong belief that schools should be agents of social change is why this group was so important to him. And likewise, so important to me. Without strong foundations of education, the world is a less equitable place. Without strong foundations of education, the foundations of society start to crumble.

Dad spent the last two weeks of his life at St. Peters Hospital in Albany. Because of COVID restrictions, we were unable to visit, save for one quick FaceTime when he was lucid enough to chat. It was, in a word, painful. At that challenging time, while Dad was dying, my family needed nurses and doctors who were more than technically proficient. We needed people who also understood the *why* of their profession. We needed people with compassion and humanity. We needed people who saw their patients as more than a series of test results. We needed people

² Editors' note: New York: Dell Publishing Co, Inc., 1969; New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1960; Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1969; and Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987, respectively.

who knew the larger role of medicine in society. Fortunately for us, we found them. For those people, and for their teachers, I am eternally grateful.

Dad was professionally active right up until the end. As luck would have it, the last project he worked on was planning this conference with Tim Glander and Shawgi Tell. Your group, your academic work, and your friendships with Dad were animating forces in his life. Your kindness, in allowing me to be here, means more than words can say. Clearly, you understand the *why* of our profession.

On behalf of my father, and on behalf of students everywhere, I urge you to keep up the important work of the New York State Foundations of Education Association. We need teachers who know their content and can deliver effective instruction. Those are important traits.

But we also need teachers who are critical thinkers. Teachers who will love kids and foster human development. Teachers who will advocate and agitate for the least among us because they've been taught the *why* of education. Our work toward that end will make the world a better place. And I can think of no greater legacy for my dad, or for the rest of us, than that.



Dick, Elaine, and Rich in 2017 at the fiftieth reunion of John Marshall's graduating class of 1967.

Teacher Education in a Post Truth Era: What to Expect of University-Based Teacher Education?

Todd Dinkelman
University of Georgia

Abstract: In this essay, I explore the question of how teacher education might respond to political, social, and media developments in the 21st century contributing to a cultural shift towards what has been characterized as the “post-truth era.” The interest in teacher education here is largely college- and university-based teacher education, that formal part of higher education serving as the pathway to initial teacher certification in public schools in the United States. These same features of the contemporary higher education landscape also serve already practicing teachers, those who turn to graduate programs in education for professional development, graduate degrees and additional certifications, and additional steps on teacher salary schedules. Considering both preservice and in-service teacher preparation as the primary mission of education schools, I discuss what might be expected of teacher education in response to the post-truth era.

By post-truth era, I mean a developing social and political context characterized by diminishing influence of objective facts and reasoned argument. I mean a steady and increasing turn by those possessing or seeking power to slogans, emotional appeals, and dishonesty. I mean a political media environment trading in rapid-fire bursts of ideology, imagery, and spectacle. In an academic sense, post-truth might be understood philosophically and bound up with postmodern and related epistemological challenges to reason and truth. These broad and varied academic movements have developed some currency in higher education in different disciplinary departments and in schools and colleges of education here and there, mostly in graduate programs. However, they are not my concern here, in large part because I believe their influence on what happens in schools and on the ways the public sees the world is miniscule. Rather, the sense of post-truth era considered here refers to far more widespread and consequential social and civic challenges made starkly visible in the past decade or so by rapid political polarization, emerging media technologies, and the decline of civil dialogue.

For many, the post-truth era marks a moment of crisis for both schooling and democracy. Counting myself among this group, as a social studies teacher educator, it is difficult to call the present moment anything but a crisis. So called “divisive issues” legislation. The manufactured threat of critical race theory. Relentless and increasingly successful efforts to chip away at the very idea of public education through school “choice,” charter schools, and voucher initiatives. Attempts to throttle any critical examination of controversial topics in public school classrooms. Worsening working conditions and eroding professional protections for classroom teachers, both problems recently exacerbated by a fractured and divided response to a global pandemic. As have countless others who see public schools for their potential to promote a more just social order, the present post-truth moment has tested my commitments to public education as a democratizing institution. And this perceived moment of crisis occasions the question explored here — how might college- and university-based teacher education respond?

My speculative response to this question stems more from my experiences with the practice of teacher education than from scholarly attention to the institution of college- and university-based teacher education in its own right. In my role as a faculty member in ed school, my research agenda has centered on questions related to social studies teacher education, not teacher education on the whole as a distinct feature of higher education. Those who study teacher

education through more policy-oriented lenses, for example those who study the history, activities, and dominant ideological perspectives supporting teacher education, bring a differently grounded analysis to this question than I do. For all the insights such research affords, I offer consideration that reflective practice in the profession also should be seen as a legitimate means to generate knowledge, pose questions, and inform perspectives in teacher education.

To provide some contextual frame, my work as a teacher educator and researcher is influenced by a critical social foundations approach to making sense of teaching, learning, schooling, and society. In particular, questions and ideas associated with the social reconstructionist reform tradition (Counts, 1932) in U.S. education have been important in developing an interpretation of the ways John Dewey conceptualized democracy and education (Dewey, 1968), an interpretation that centers my work as a scholar and teacher educator. Similarly, my stance as a teacher of teachers has also been influenced heavily by literature on critical pedagogy developed over the last half century (Freire, 1968, Shor, 1992; Apple, 2014). Although I understand that my interpretation is not widely shared (Fallace, 2011), I read Dewey as a forerunner to critical pedagogy in how his associative view of democracy presses the need for critique of the various ways power constrains education. These critical and progressive lines of educational thinking provide the foundations for the vision I have developed of the purposes and practices social studies education might serve in the modern school curriculum (Stanley, 1992).

In my view, the always remote prospects of U.S. schooling moving closer toward the Deweyan democratic educational ideal are further imperiled by a present-day crisis of democracy reflected in contemporary U.S. politics, a state capitalist economic system accelerating income and wealth inequality, systemic racial and gender oppression, and marked ideological polarization. This crisis of democracy accelerates the fraying of social connections in ways that pose considerable obstacles for educators who understand democracy as a “mode of associated living” (Dewey, 1968, p. 87) and as an aim that might direct public education. Perhaps more so now than any period since Dewey, the educational vision of developing in students the capacity to frame their own lives’ purposes and carry them out seems increasingly ancillary to dominant perspectives that center vocationalism and college preparation as the aims of modern U.S. schooling. Through this lens, I offer the following considerations about the response of college- and university-based teacher education to a post-truth era. In doing so, I hope to contribute to what have become ever more urgent and pressing conversations about the role of schooling in U.S. society.

Who Is Responding?

We like to think of teacher education as what happens in departments, schools, and colleges of education. True, preservice teacher education marks out a big part of what happens in these higher education spaces. Yet as someone who has worked for many years in these spaces as a social studies teacher educator, it did not take me long to realize that students who spend time with me in a methods class or in a student teaching seminar typically have spent *a lot more time* across campus in history and social science classrooms. Whether or not they see themselves as such, the instructors and professors my students encounter in the humanities and social sciences *are* teacher educators. What happens in their courses is an important part of what should be seen as teacher education.

Thus, how teacher education responds to a post-truth era is a question of concern not just to schools and college of education. For example, my students learn a lot about the teaching of history through their experiences as learners of history across campus. The “apprenticeship of observation” extends to higher education and likely in more influential ways among students intending to become teachers themselves. And the time spent as students in higher education outside of the halls of schools of education shapes more than simply ideas about pedagogy.

Perhaps more significant, these courses advance or limit the work of teacher education by the ways they help or hinder the understandings future teachers develop about the ways the world works. Though seldom acknowledged, what is considered the formal part of teacher education in social studies depends a great deal on the hidden teacher education provided by previous social science and history learning experiences. Students bring to a methods class or student teaching seminar sometimes less, sometimes far more sophisticated frameworks for understanding society, politics, and history. It matters, for example, if students show up to their teacher education programs with an awareness of functional or critical disciplinary perspectives, or with an idea that disciplines represent a form of epistemic activity at all. Instead, students often define the subjects they hope to teach as bodies of knowledge they simply need to know. My work to have students thoughtfully engage with foundational questions about democracy, society, equity, schooling, and teaching and learning is far more challenging when the teacher education that happens across campus has provided few experiences with thoughtful engagement with foundational questions of how systems of power have operated over time and for whose benefit.

So, any consideration about how teacher education responds to a post-truth era will be partial unless it looks beyond ed schools. Seen this way, the prospects for a proactive response to the present moment dim considerably. Faculty in history and social science disciplines mostly do not see themselves as teacher educators. Though many likely are responding to the present era in their own ways, perhaps by, for example, rethinking course readings or posing different questions about their discipline than they might have several years ago, certainly few faculty outside schools of ed fashion such responses considering future teachers and the particular challenges of teaching in present day school contexts. Furthermore, my experience has been that initiatives to bring subject discipline faculty together with ed school faculty around teacher education are difficult and unsustainable in the absence of financial incentives. Still, how teacher education responds to the post-truth era is a question involving a good part of higher education.

A Singular Teacher Education Response?

That teacher education is not limited to schools of education suggests that any teacher education response to a post-truth era will not be singular. Furthering this point, arguably the better part of the college- and university-based teacher education happens beyond the confines of college campuses. A common perspective long held in preservice teacher education lore is that learning to teach is only minimally influenced by what goes on in college classrooms. What happens in the clinical placements required by initial certification programs, especially the capstone student teaching experience, matters more (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). The use of the word lore to frame my point about the dispersed nature of teacher education is intentional, as the “research base” suggesting clinical placements is where most *real* teacher education happens is far from conclusive, an argument I pick up later in this essay. For present purposes, the diverse and varied school settings essential to nearly all currently configured

teacher education programs mean that anything that might be considered a teacher education response to the current crisis in public education can only be considered diverse and varied as well. Conceptually, the very idea of a singular teacher education response is troublesome from the start.

In thinking about what to expect of teacher education in a post-truth era, there is value in seeing teacher education broadly, as more than what transpires in education programs, including both across campus higher education and clinical placements in schools. Highlighting points about the diffuse nature of teacher education is especially important in light of decades-long attacks on the legitimacy, status, and value of schools of education. Following the twists and turns of these attacks over time, and especially in their contemporary iterations, one can only conclude that the dispersed nature of teacher education is far from obvious to many critics. Acknowledging this caveat, I consider the question of a teacher education response to the present crisis in democracy in terms of a more conventional view of teacher education, what most would consider the explicit purview of education programs, schools, and colleges.

Teacher Education in the Clouds vs. Teacher Education on the Ground

If stereotyping and bias have detrimental effects on adults, it is easy to imagine the absolute destruction they can have on the malleable mind of a child. A vulnerable and impressionable mind must be protected at all costs. Trauma or damage to one's self esteem during childhood has ways of maintaining their impact on a person for a lifetime if not treated with therapeutic intervention. But, sadly, one place where stereotyping and implicit bias run rampant is the classroom setting. Whether one applauds or derides the fact of stereotyping at school, the fact of stereotyping is still getting in the way of high-quality schooling for all. Bias in the classroom infringes on a student's ability to be successful academically and socially.

One approach to thinking more generally about teacher education's response to a moment of social, racial, political, and economic crisis is to turn to the pronouncements and activities of leading teacher education professional organizations and of colleges and universities themselves. What do they say about the field's response? There is no shortage of both language and initiatives from these representatives of the field about their responses. Major educational research and teacher education professional organizations such as AESA AERA, AACTE, NCTE, NAME, and ATE routinely reaffirm their commitments to visions of democratic schooling, anti-racism, cultural responsiveness, and political advocacy for equity, inclusion, critical inquiry, and responsive teacher education. In a post-truth moment tied to social media, the response of teacher education in almost real time response to news events can happen the same day via social media. The same can be said of most subject- or disciplinary-area professional organizations of teachers and researchers, such as NCSS, NCTE, NSTA, and NCTM, in their public pronouncements about teacher education. In the form of news releases, innovative leadership development opportunities, conference themes, lobbying efforts, blue-ribbon panel reports, and other activities, in important ways, these organizations speak for teacher education, sometimes quickly visible in a tweet. Collectively, these activities can be read as clear evidence of teacher education's response to a post-truth era. From this evidence, one might conclude that teacher education is responding rapidly and according to its generally progressive orientation.

Not to diminish any of these efforts, these cloud-level statements and activities should be distinguished from the kinds of responses I argue matter far more — the ground-level responses

revealed by the qualities of engagement among teacher educators and future teachers in the hundreds and hundreds of colleges and universities offering teacher education programs. Teacher education does not happen in reports, mission statements, or social media posts. It happens in the countless moments of teaching and learning about teaching encountered by future teachers in their foundations, curriculum, and methods classes, student teaching seminars, and work with cooperating teachers, field instructors, and students in clinical placements. It happens in hallway or online discussions among faculty and students after these classes have ended. It happens in the individual and shared reflections on and in practice as students develop their ideas about teaching and learning in the spaces between classes and field experiences. Although in one sense these moments are points in time, in another sense they connect across the varying and ever shifting contextual frames of teacher education programs. These countless interactions of teacher educators, future teachers, content, and process constitute the reality of teacher education.

What can be said of this more meaningful sense of a teacher education response to a post-truth era? What might come of any identifiable response to the present by teacher education in this moment of crisis? Put simply, my response is we do not know. Nor do I believe we can know the answer to either question. Without doubt, there are many committed teacher educators who are fashioning responses. Many respond in real time by, for example, changing their curriculum to better address topics and questions directly tied to the present crisis in democracy. In the wake of the George Floyd murder, teacher educators formed book and discussion groups or endeavored on their own to learn more anti-racism. Some work together to rethink program designs, community collaborations, school-university partnerships.

In social studies education, one visible response has been growing interest in critical media education in preparing teachers to help their students learn to question text and other media representations of history and current events (Garcia, McGrew, Mirra, Tynes, & Kahne, 2021). Among the commonly held constituent subject-areas of social studies, civic education has garnered more attention in the past decade than ever before (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021). More immediately, my fellow social studies teacher educators in many red states must consider how to teach legislation aimed at both silencing the teaching of “divisive concepts” and promoting “patriotic” civic education. These developments make visible the responses of some teacher educators to the present era. At the same time, it is hard to characterize these responses as typifying a broader and more significant turn in teacher education more generally.

Importantly, research and shared communication opportunities should reveal something of the ways teacher education on the ground is responding. One can imagine, for example, survey research that might offer findings into how teacher educators say they have responded to a post-truth era. Yet even the best research designs can only provide partial glimpses into the here and now of teacher education in these unprecedented times. How widespread are such responses? A more complete picture or one that would allow anything more than speculation about the nature and effects of a more responsive teacher education remains elusive. This is especially true about what any such responsiveness means for the future decision-making of teacher candidates as they move into the teaching profession.

Seeing teacher education through the lens of enactment means the changes teacher educators make in their practice only become meaningful as they shape the actual experiences of future teachers in the myriad contexts of teacher education. In a general sense, the field stands on

unsteady ground in characterizing the nature of these countless enactments, even more so in offering research-based claims about what comes of them. What can we say we know about the influence of teacher education on the beliefs and practices of future teachers? What can we say we know about the differences teacher education makes many years into their careers? Massive volumes of teacher education research might have developed a considerable knowledge base (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009) but provide nothing close to an evidence-based and commonly accepted understanding that addresses these questions.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the mystery of teacher education and what little is known about teacher education on the ground level mean we should turn away from the question of how teacher education might respond to a post-truth era. The question is important. To suggest it may be difficult to identify and describe the ways teacher education shifts in response to social crises is not to suggest we should not try to discern such shifts. That we do not know a great deal about enacted teacher education and its effects does not mean that teacher education makes no difference. If anything, what we do not know about teacher education is as much a call for continued inquiry into its ways and ends, as well as a call for its responsible and reflective conduct. My point about what little we know of the reality of teacher education is offered more as a reminder to approach the question with measured humility, a sort of humility that might lead us to see beyond what we believe we know about teacher education to imagine new possibilities.

Seeing the Past as Prologue?

We do know enough about the development and status of college- and university-based teacher education to glean some clues about how teacher education might respond to a rapidly emerging post-truth era. We can look to its historical development as a feature of colleges and universities (Labaree, 2008). Again, not coming at this question as an educational historian, my experience as a teacher educator provides several observations about how teacher education may or may not respond to changing social and political conditions. First, teacher education is highly bureaucratized. As teacher education solidified its presence in colleges and universities, it took on many of the structural and bureaucratic trappings that come with finding a seat at the higher education table (Labaree, 2004). Of course, the U.S. system of higher education does change over time and is both buffeted by and responsive to societal changes to a degree, although the system can hardly be described as agile and responsive to societal change. Furthermore, teacher education not only reflects bureaucratization from the inside, but also from the outside, beholden as it is to bureaucratic state agencies for approval and authority to offer teaching credentials. These dual forms of bureaucracy temper hopes that teacher education will meaningfully and quickly adapt to the demands of a post-truth era.

Another relevant feature of the history of teacher education is its inextricable tie to the systemic realities teachers face in public schools. On the whole, it is clear that most ed schools trade in the discourse of pedagogical progressivism and democratic education (Labaree, 2008; Zeichner, 2017). Yet, as already argued, we know little about how this discourse plays out in the actual conduct of teacher education, in its quality of enactment, on the ground-level. That teacher education has proven so very limited in promoting a progressive vision of teaching and learning in public schools may reveal something of the disconnect between what teacher education says and what teacher education does. Likely, the apparent ineffectiveness of teacher education as lever of school reform speaks clearly about the incapacity of teacher education to affect the structural realities that shape the working lives of teachers.

The challenging working conditions of teachers in public schools are not the responsibility of teacher education, but teacher education is responsible to account for them. For this reason, teacher education is inseparable from the realities teachers face in the realm of professional practice, including large class sizes, exhausting teaching loads, diminished autonomy in the wake of the accountability and testing movement, virtually no time for collaborative inquiry with colleagues, inadequate school funding, threats to job security, poor compensation, and declining professional status. In one sense, these difficult realities of schooling may exist beyond the purview of college- and university-based teacher education. Yet in another sense the two worlds bond together. Much like cleaning the air on one side of a screened door, ideas of how teacher education might respond to a post-truth era lose their meaning when considered apart from the unsupportive realities most teachers face in modern U.S. schools.

Response-ability vs. Responsibility

My reflections concerning the prospects of teacher education responding to the post-truth era come with a view toward the larger enterprise of U.S. college- and university-based teacher education viewed as a whole. From this vantage, my position is a call to temper expectations for the field. There is little reason to expect that the field of teacher education will respond rapidly, in a coordinated fashion, or in ways that signal grand changes to its essential functioning. Rhetorical responses may abound, but evidence of more substantial, and even systemic, changes to the field will emerge slowly. Teacher education does change over time and very likely will look different in the future than it does today. However, at least in the present moment, changes to college- and university-based teacher education appear less driven by shifts in the ideological and political zeitgeist and more by pressing concerns about declining student enrollment trends, accessibility and cost issues, and the proliferation of alternative certification programs (Zeichner, 2017).

Such speculation about college- and university-based teacher education as a whole is not meant to undervalue the ways many committed and responsible teacher educators have and will respond to post-truth era challenges to liberal, progressive thinking about school and society and, by extension, liberal progressive thinking about teacher education. If anything, my intention is to draw attention to the considerable power of the ground-level responses seen in the work of teacher educators where it matters most — in the lived spaces where teacher educators, future teachers and other stakeholders come together to learn about teaching. Here is where I argue we should look for the response of teacher education to troubling political and social currents threatening the democratic mission of public schooling. By their nature, these responses will be local, context-bound, and difficult to both recognize and characterize.

This discussion of what to expect from teacher education in a post-truth era troubles notions about the “response-ability” of the field as a whole. At the same time, I believe teacher education shoulders enormous responsibility to address threats to democracy. My perspective on what teacher education might contribute to more democratic forms of U.S. schooling draws attention to the responsibility of teacher education in an era where science, reason, evidence, and civil dialogue face relentless assault. Teacher education should work to help future teachers think more deeply about the social and political currents eroding, if not seeking to replace, the democratic mission of public education. Teacher education should work to help future teachers develop visions of the kind of society schools might further, as well as the pedagogical and curricular wisdom to create educational experiences consistent with these visions. These are

responsibilities college- and university-based teacher education carry in the post-truth era. We should expect teacher education to respond.

References

- Apple, M. W. (2014). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. New York: Routledge.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (Eds.), (2009). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. New York: Routledge.
- Counts, G. A. (1932). *Dare the schools build a new social order?* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1968). *Democracy and education: An introduction to philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published in 1916.)
- Fallace, T. (2011). Tracing John Dewey's influence on progressive education: 1903-1951. *Teachers College Record*, 113(3), 463-492.
- Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Garcia, A. G., McGrew, S., Mirra, N., Tynes, B., & Kahne, J. (2021). Rethinking digital citizenship: Learning about media, literacy, and race in turbulent times. In C. D. Lee, G. White, & D. Dong (Eds.), *Educating for civic reasoning and discourse* (pp. 319–352). Washington D.C.: National Academy of Education.
- Labaree, D. (2008). An uneasy relationship: The history of teacher education in the university. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, & J. McIntyre (with K. Demers) (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (3rd ed., pp. 290-306). New York: Routledge.
- Labaree, D. F. (2004). *The trouble with ed schools*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lee, C. D., White, G., & Dong, D. (Eds.), (2021). *Education for civic reasoning and discourse*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stanley, W. B. (1992). *Curriculum for utopia: Social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy in the postmodern era*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Wilson S.M., Floden R.E., & Ferrini-Mundy J. (2002). Teacher preparation research: An insider's view from the outside. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 53(3):190-204.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2017). *The struggle for the soul of teacher education*. New York: Routledge.

Education Gag Laws, Post-Truth, and the Constitution of Knowledge

Dale T. Snauwaert
University of Toledo

Abstract: Education gag laws offend basic constitutional freedoms and basic principles of the constitution of knowledge. Exposing students to diverse points of view and engaging them in the processes of critical scrutiny is the essence of education in a free and open society. Education gag laws interfere with these essential processes of inquiry, thereby betraying the fundamental value of authentic learning and education. The key to settling and establishing knowledge is to submit our beliefs to processes of public critical scrutiny and disconfirmation through application of replicable methods and standards of inquiry. Teaching diverse points of view is not disruptive nor divisive; it is an essential element of a thorough and efficient education.

There is a significant effort underway by Republican state legislators to prevent or at least significantly impede free academic inquiry in schools and universities, especially around the issues of systemic racial injustice. Numerous states have introduced legislation that would restrict K-12 teachers and college faculty from talking about “divisive topics” and teaching about the role of race in US history and society. As of March 2022, 31 states, including New York and Ohio, have proposed legislation limiting the teaching of principles regarding race, gender, and other “divisive concepts” in public schools. The purpose of this paper is to situate this movement within the basic question: “Whose Truth?” and against the background of the emergence of the idea of post-truth. It will be argued that this effort violates constitutional rights to freedom of thought and expression as well as the basic tenets of the constitution of knowledge. By doing so, it offends the very idea of an authentic education, in the sense that it is an attempt to undermine the educational development of knowledge, self-reflection, and critical thinking among future citizens.

Education Gag Laws

As of March 2022, 31 states have proposed legislation limiting the teaching of principles attributed to Critical Race Theory in public schools. One hundred and thirty-two pieces of legislation have been introduced.¹ The following is a brief summary of proposed legislation in New York and Ohio, which are indicative of the general cast of this legislation.

New York Bills A08253 and A08579 prohibit both instruction on as well as courses in critical race theory from being taught in schools. The proposed bills stipulate the following:

1. No teacher, administrator or other employee of a school district, charter school or city school district shall require or make part of a course the following concepts:
 - a. one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex;
 - b. an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously;
 - c. an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race or sex;

¹ Robert Kim, “Under the Law: ‘Anti-Critical Race Theory’ Laws and the Assault on Pedagogy,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 1 no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217211043637>

- d. members of one race or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race or sex;
- e. an individual's moral character is necessarily determined by his or her race or sex;
- f. an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex;
- g. any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex; or
- h. meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or were created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race.

This legal action is justified in the proposed bills on the grounds that “Critical Race Theory material distracts educators and students away from rigorous learning content, while also teaching ideas that undermine the value of individual liberty and America’s founding ideals, further embedding the concept of systemic racism in the public conscious.”

Ohio House Bill 327 prohibits teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts. Section 1. (B) (1) stipulates: “No school district shall teach, instruct, or train any divisive concepts, nor shall any school district require a student to advocate for or against a specific topic or point of view to receive credit for any coursework.” The bill requires the Department of Education to withhold funding from a school district or school that violates the bill’s provisions.

The bill defines divisive concepts as follows:

The United States is fundamentally racist or sexist.
 An individual, by virtue of the individual’s nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex.
 Meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or were created by a particular nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex to oppress another nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex.

Ohio HB 322 pertains to the teaching of certain current events, race, and sex: Sec. 3313.6028 (A) stipulates that “No state agency, school district, or school shall teach, instruct, or train any administrator, teacher, staff member, or employee to adopt or believe” a variety of concepts including:

- (10) The advent of slavery in the territory that is now the United States constituted the true founding of the United States;
- (11) 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.

There exists a significant similarity across these proposed bills, as well as those proposed in various states across the country.² This uniformity clearly indicates that this effort is being coordinated nationally.³ In fact, the legislation is based upon a framework articulated by a conservative think tank.⁴ It is important to place this legislative effort in the context of the basic question of the rational basis of the adjudication of conflicts of knowledge and belief, that is, the question of: “Whose Truth?”

Whose Truth?

A basic issue for every society is the question of how and on what basis conflicts of knowledge and belief should be resolved.⁵ As Jonathan Rauch points out: “The problem of maintaining peace in the face of ideological conflict is an existential challenge for every human society: no society can long exist without managing it.”⁶ What should be the basis of the determination of truth? Who should decide on what counts as knowledge and thus have the power to adjudicate truth conflicts? How should the question of belief be settled? How and who should decide what is valid? As Rauch suggests, “Any system for deciding who is objectively right is a social system and so has political consequences.”⁷ In other words, epistemology is political: It is about power.

The recognition that knowledge is power, and therefore political, pertains more specifically to who has control over the space of reasons that serve to justify knowledge claims. As Rainer Forst suggests, power is found within the space of reasons, the realm of justifications. Power is essentially noumenal and discursive.⁸ To be subjected to power is to be motivated by reasons that moves one to think or act in the way intended by the person giving the reasons.⁹ Power can therefore be defined as the capacity and authority to settle truth and knowledge. Political and epistemological power is the ability to “determine the space of reasons within which social or political relations are being framed.”¹⁰

Post-Truth

For the purposes of the political subordination of reality, post-truth is the “conviction that facts can always be shaded, selected, and presented within a political context that favors one interpretation of truth over another.” So-called “alternative facts.”¹¹ It is disposition to accept

² See the AAUP Educational Gag Orders dashboard for a data base of legislation.
https://www.quorum.us/dashboard/external/kVINYNvBHHPHjVgaWbqW/?link_id=1&can_id=3c0ca0b31ef9e0745ecea23436abc424&source=email-the-aaup-is-fighting-education-gag-orders-join-us-2&email_referrer=email_1462812&email_subject=the-aaup-is-fighting-education-gag-orders-join-us

³ Nate Hochman, “Will 2022 Be the ‘Greatest Year for Education Reform in a Generation’?,” *National Review* (2021).

⁴ James Copland, *How to Regulate Critical Race Theory in Schools: A Primer and Model Legislation*, Manhattan Institute (New York, 2021).

⁵ Jonathan Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of the Truth* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 2021).

⁶ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, 39-40.

⁷ Jonathan Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought*, Expanded Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 12.

⁸ Rainer Forst, *Normativity and Power: Analyzing Social Orders of Justification*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁹ Forst, *Normativity and Power*, 38.

¹⁰ Forst, *Normativity and Power*, 49.

¹¹ Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), 6.

only those facts that justify and/or cohere with one's ideology; in this sense, facts are subordinate to ideology, giving ideology supremacy. One's affirmed ideology becomes more important than truth confirmed through processes of public critical scrutiny.

Those who seek to concentrate and consolidate political power attempt to control the space of reasons by trafficking in disinformation that distorts the space of justification. Unjust social structures, including controlling political power, are sustained by invalid justifications and patterns of thought. They often involve attacks on truth, expertise, freedom of thought, language, and education. The delegitimization of the method of science and the constitution of knowledge and truth, expressed as hostility to the very idea of truth itself, is a prominent feature of attempts to distort and undermine the space of reasons of justification. It is often executed by repeated dishonesty and the advocacy of conspiracy theories. Furthermore, there is a concerted effort to delegitimize institutions that promote and sustain independent thought, in particular, universities and the free press, which undermines the value of critical scrutiny as the means to settle truth. This attack on truth and its institutions leads to the delegitimization of valid moral, legal, and epistemological norms. This normative delegitimization degrades and debases public deliberation, turning it into mere sloganeering and appeals to fear and anger, rather than reasoned argument.¹² The purpose is not merely to deceive, but to rule — not to communicate information, but to get us to “pick a team” in an attempt to seize authority over the truth itself.¹³ As General Valery Gersimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces suggests:

Of great importance here is the use of the global internet network to exert a massive, dedicated impact on the consciousness of the citizens of states that are the targets of the aggression. Information resources have become one of the most effective types of weapon. Their extensive employment enables the situation in a country to be destabilized from within in a matter of days.... In this manner, indirect and asymmetric actions and methods of conducting hybrid wars enable the opposing side to be deprived of its actual sovereignty without the state's territory being seized.¹⁴

The strategic aim is to undermine the possibility of rational discourse among citizens, including reasonable disagreement. As the historian Timothy Snyder noted: “Post-truth is pre-fascism.” Sowing confusion, doubt, and division is foundational to the establishment of political authoritarianism.¹⁵

The Constitution of Knowledge

In exploring the question of “Whose truth?” Charles Sanders Peirce's four methods of settling beliefs and opinions can be employed: tenacity, social acceptance, authority, and

¹² David Frum, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018); McIntyre, *Post-Truth*; Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, First edition. (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017); Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018); J. Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018).

¹³ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*, First Edition. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020).

¹⁴ Cited in Malcom Nance, *The Plot to Destroy Democracy: How Putin and his Spies Are Undermining America and Dismantling the West* (New York: Hachette Books, 2018), 223-24.

¹⁵ Snyder, *On Tyranny*.

science.¹⁶ The method of tenacity is the attempt to hold on to one's belief by avoiding competing reasons that would challenge it. It is a kind of reasoning by avoidance. The method of social acceptance is an appeal to reasons that are generally accepted in one's social and cultural context and taking the validity of what is accepted at face value without any further reflection or critical scrutiny. The method of authority is for a recognized elite to supply and validate belief and to enforce it by force or coercion if necessary. The method of science, broadly defined, is to subject belief to critical public scrutiny grounded in established and recognized methods and standards of inquiry. Beliefs that survive such inquiry become settled and established.¹⁷

The method of tenacity is based upon the attempt to hold to one's favored belief in the face of disagreement by closing it off from competing claims and ideas. When in conflict with competing differences of opinion and belief, differing beliefs are dismissed to avoid cognitive dissonance. This avoidance often manifests as confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is the process of giving more weight to evidence and ideas that confirm one's preexisting beliefs, thereby choosing to give validity to only those reasons that confirm one's existing belief.

The problem with tenacity is that it leaves one positionally confined to one's already existing belief and not open to the possibility that one may be mistaken. One claims to be correct on the grounds that the mere fact that one believes in the validity of one's belief is a sufficient justification for its validity. This method is solipsistic and thereby relativistic; it claims validity of one's opinion merely on the grounds that one holds that opinion to be valid. Given its solipsism and relativism, the diversity of belief can never be settled through the method of tenacity. Its tenets do not address the core issue — how to come to an agreement among diverse points of view. The claim that one knows the truth without verification from others is baseless. Knowledge is always in some way public. A proposition is not knowledge unless it is made public.¹⁸

A second method of settling belief is appealing to beliefs that are widely shared and socially accepted as the means of justification of the validity of those beliefs being true, and therefore accepted as valid knowledge. The social fact that the belief is widely shared and accepted is seen to be sufficient justification for its validity. It is true because we, not I, believe it. Beliefs are necessarily positional; they are structured relative to one's position. The method of social acceptance suggests that validity is defined as invariance of observation when the position of many observers is fixed. Validity grounded in social acceptance is person invariant but position relative; to say that a view is valid is to say that there exists no variance in observation if the position of the observers is the same.¹⁹ We do not have direct epistemic access to the world; our experience of the world is always conditioned and shaped by the mind. Knowledge is therefore always framed in terms of propositions about the world and not direct apprehensions of things in themselves.²⁰ Therefore, the propositions, beliefs, that are shared in our social group shape how we make sense of the world. However, as Amartya Sen points out, there exists the possibility of positional objective illusions: Many observers occupying the same position standing on an ocean beach will agree that the moon appears to be larger than the sun and that the earth is flat! These

¹⁶ Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12, no. November (1877): 1-15.

¹⁷ Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief."

¹⁸ Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*, Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*.

¹⁹ Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

²⁰ Karl Raimund Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 6th impression revised. (London: Hutchinson, 1972).

observers suffer from an objective illusion. There can be intersubjective agreement from the same position, however, that agreement can be mistaken. Socially accepted beliefs can be wrong, false, mistaken.²¹ Moreover, regarding our social knowledge, perceptions and understandings of others are shaped by inferences regarding the attributes of groups, and the individuals that comprise them, structured by in-group and out-group categorizations.²² Group categorization is the way we tend to create the social boundaries which shape our self-identity, orienting us to the social world.²³ We have a basic need for both inclusion in our in-group and differentiation from out-groups.²⁴ Our need for social belonging, and the possibilities of in-group bias and positional confinement that goes with it, suggests that even if something is believed by all the members of a social group, the shared belief does not provide sufficient justification that it is correct to believe it, for such belief, even though widely shared, can, and historically often has been, mistaken. While social acceptance, intersubjective warrantability, is essential for knowledge, the fact that a belief is widely accepted cannot alone justify its validity. The method of social acceptance for settling and justifying knowledge is insufficient.

A third method for settling the validity of truth and knowledge is to appeal to the authority of an epistemological and cultural elite.²⁵ The ancient philosopher, Plato, the inventor of the method of authority, argued that justice and social order were contingent upon truth and knowledge. For Plato, how can it be assured that society is ruled by those who possess the truth? Plato's answer is that those who are in possession of the truth should govern society. His answer, as Jonathan Rauch suggests, was a potent "intellectual authoritarianism ... he saw no other way to resolve the difficult political problem of intellectual conflict. ... we are obliged to put truth-identifying power only in the hands of our very wisest citizens. ... appoint the extraordinary thinker as arbiter of truth. Plato's logic stood dominant for two thousand years."²⁶ For Plato, the key to a just and peaceful society was the establishment of political authority to resolve truth conflicts, an authority based in the possession of truth.²⁷

There are, however, at least two problems with an appeal to authority as a method of justification/settling belief: (1) the claim of epistemological certainty is untenable, and (2) the question who can validate that the elite have attained the truth relies on power. In the method of authority, the persons with power are the arbiters of the truth; they may however be prone to error, as all human beings are. The fact that a belief in the truth is proclaimed by an elite authority alone cannot justify its validity. Nor can the fact that an authority has the political power to impose a belief provide justification. Historically, such truth claims have been enforced by coercion by political authorities, including governments as well as cultural institutions such as religious organizations. By dint of political power, it has often been claimed that authorities have

²¹ Sen, *The Idea of Justice*.

²² Henri Tajfel et al., "Social Categorization and Intergroup Behavior," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1, no. 2 (1971): 149-78.

²³ Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2020); Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 25-73.

²⁴ Marilyn B. Brewer, "The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 17, no. 5 (1991): 475-92.

²⁵ Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*.

²⁶ Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*, 41.

²⁷ Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*.

the right to coercively impose the truth. “Believe or die!” has been a historically common edict. Both problems relate to the fallibility of reason.

As David Hume demonstrated, the certain truth of generalizations from experience can never be verified by inferring them from experience (commonly known as the problem of induction).²⁸ This is the case since verification would logically require a complete set of facts about the world, which is not possible. Secondly, claims of certainty assume that nature is uniform in the sense that future experience will resemble past experience, and this allows us to infer causal relations. However, this uniformity of nature and experience is precisely what needs to be established for certainty. Thus, there is no rational basis that confirms the validity of induction. These problems demonstrate that certain verification of hypotheses, theories, or general laws of nature is not possible. Only a degree of confirmation in terms of probability, rather than certain verification is possible. We can claim only provisional knowledge, not certainty.

Uncertainty implies that we may be mistaken, that our understanding is always open to error and correction. Furthermore, the problems of uncertainty and fallibility are exacerbated by what John Rawls referred to as the “burdens of judgment.” John Rawls identified elements of human reasoning that can lead to disagreement: “... the sources of reasonable disagreement — what I call the burdens of judgment — among reasonable persons are the many obstacles to the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgment...”²⁹ Moreover, the exercise of reason is influenced by what we want to believe (i.e., motivated reasoning), and what we believe colors our perception of what actually is true in the following ways: confirmation bias, or giving more weight to information that confirms our preexisting beliefs and thereby to choosing to give validity to only those reasons that confirm our existing beliefs, and conformity bias, a tendency to socially conform to the beliefs of others in our in-group and to reject the beliefs of out-groups. Furthermore, conformity bias is also identity protective in the sense that it preserves one’s status in the group thereby protecting one’s identity.³⁰ The problem of induction and epistemological uncertainty, acknowledging the burdens of judgment as well as the prevalence of motivated reasoning, in addition to the historical practice of imposing belief onto others, casts significant doubt upon the capability of the method of authority to settle and justify truth. In fact, in a liberal democracy, we firmly hold that political authority should not be the arbiter of truth.

Given the seeming failure of the methods of settling belief above, Peirce asks on what basis can belief be settled, in other words, “On what basis can knowledge be validated?” What is the rational basis of justification of provisional propositional knowledge under the conditions of fallibility, bias, and uncertainty outline above? Perhaps the only (or at least one) way to justify the validity of propositions under these conditions is to check for error, to subject our claims to critical scrutiny, that is, to attempt to disconfirm or falsify our knowledge claims. Those propositions that survive, we can intersubjectively agree are warranted. Their validity stands until the time they are falsified/disconfirmed. Established knowledge claims are those that have

²⁸ David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Third Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1777]).

²⁹ John Rawls and Erin Kelly, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 35-36.

³⁰ Klein, *Why We’re Polarized*; Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); McIntyre, *Post-Truth*.

withstood scrutiny over time; however, they remain provisional because they remain open to disconfirmation.

From within this perspective, the task of knowledge inquiry is not to search for certainty but to search for and find error. In other words, the process of inquiry should be understood as seeking disconfirmation of the truth of one's propositions based upon established methods and standards of inquiry.³¹ Similarly, philosopher of science Karl Popper maintains that the rational basis of inquiry is the testing of hypotheses in order to determine whether they survive attempts to falsify them.³² The method of inquiry is falsification. Based upon the above reasoning, knowledge pertains to sets of propositions which have survived critical scrutiny and thus have been validated. They have been truth-tested.³³ The propositions that can survive critical scrutiny are those we take, provisionally, to be validated, established knowledge. Knowledge is grounded in intersubjective agreement generated from a process of critical reasoning. In order to be established as knowledge, a proposition must be scrutinized from the perspective of multiple viewpoints.³⁴ According to Peirce, "the method must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same. Such is the method of science."³⁵ In other words, the key to settling and establishing beliefs and opinions as knowledge is to submit them for checking and testing, subjecting them to the processes of critical scrutiny and disconfirmation through the application of replicable methods of inquiry.

This method also implies that no one is above error and that no individual can claim authority. The method of science is a social enterprise, a network form of epistemology wherein propositions are subjected to public critical scrutiny.³⁶ This method is an appeal to public reasoning and not to individual belief, social acceptance, or authority-based certain knowledge. It is an appeal to a more valid type of social acceptance: intersubjective agreement based upon critical public reasoning.

The method of science has been institutionalized in terms of an academic and professional social network of institutions.³⁷ This social network of institutions and practices constitutes an "epistemic regime."³⁸ It is one of our most important institutions, for it allows for the nonviolent resolution of conflicts of knowledge and belief within and across societies. This epistemic regime of critical, knowledge-checking practices has been organized from the academic disciplines (ranging from the natural and social sciences to the humanities) to the professions (ranging from journalism and law, to medicine, etc.). Each of these disciplines and professions has its own logical structure. However, each disciplinary structure is grounded in and embodies the method of science/scholarship as public critical scrutiny. As John Dewey put it: The knowledge most worth knowing is "knowledge of the ways by which anything is entitled to be called knowledge instead of being mere opinion or guess-work or dogma."³⁹ It is "what is required in the way of thinking and of search for evidence before anything passes from the realm

³¹ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*.

³² Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

³³ Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*.

³⁴ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*.

³⁵ Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," 10.

³⁶ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*; Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*.

³⁷ Rauch, *Kindly Inquisitors*; Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*.

³⁸ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, 75-76.

³⁹ John Dewey, "Science as Subject-Matter and as Method," *Science and Education* 4 (1995 [1910]): 395.

of opinion, guess-work, and dogma into knowledge.”⁴⁰ This social network of knowledge creation, operating as public critical scrutiny in the various forms of disciplines and professions, consists of core values and rules. Rauch maintains that “What sets it apart is not that it is distinct from all other communities but that its members operate and interact on the basis of generally shared (if sometimes also disputed) values and rules; they embrace the authority of those values and rules, rather than the authority of any particular individual and tribe; and they hold each other accountable.”⁴¹ There are two basic rules: what Rauch refers to as “the fallibilist rule” and “the empirical rule”

The fallibilist rule maintains that propositions, beliefs, opinions are validated as knowledge only if they are open to falsification/disconfirmation/public critical scrutiny. This rule assumes that every proposer of propositions is fallible and that even if a proposition is validated, that validation is not final; it is open to further scrutiny, which may lead to its subsequent rejection. Therefore, fallibility assumes also that knowledge is always provisional. Furthermore, it suggests that no one gets the final say; the pursuit of knowledge is open ended.

The empirical rule maintains that the method used to check propositions must give the same result independently of both the proposition’s source and those who are checking. In other words, no one has personal authority in the realm of knowledge and truth; in this context, “who you are does not count.”⁴² This rule defines what properly counts as scrutiny: “It requires that propositions are contestable, subject to systematic, organized comparison and criticism from diverse points of view.”⁴³ The empirical rule also identifies what is not valid scrutiny: Claims to authority by dint of personal or tribal privilege are not valid. The empirical rule is a social principle, in that it gives authority not to any one person or group but to communities of discourse that are open and global. Furthermore, it should be noted that this approach to settling knowledge assumes that bias is inescapable (for the reasons already discussed above); however, it uses bias against itself, in the sense that the employment of public critical scrutiny engages a community of checkers working to uncover and correct each other’s mistakes and distortions.

The “method of science” for settling and establishing truth and knowledge (distinguishing truth from falsehood) presupposes these two basic rules of the constitution of knowledge. These rules, in turn, are supported by several values and principles. For this social network of critical public scrutiny to work it needs to be supported by an architecture of principles of justice (and in that sense it is a normative enterprise as well as an epistemological one). It requires the protection of several rights, including rights to academic freedom, freedom of thought, conscience, inquiry, speech, and association – in other words, a basic scheme of liberty. This epistemic system can only work if people are able to assert their propositions free of any type of coercive interference or suppression and able to freely engage in critical scrutiny of those propositions in public forums. No propositions, even apparently offensive ones are suppressed as such; every proposition is critically checked and scrutinized based upon established standards of inquiry and evidence. Freedom is essential for the pursuit of and the settling of truth and knowledge.

⁴⁰ Dewey, “Science as Subject-Matter and as Method,” 396.

⁴¹ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, 70.

⁴² Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, 89.

⁴³ Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, 90.

Furthermore, the basic scheme of freedoms of thought suggests that toleration is also a value in this context. There is continual disagreement about propositions and beliefs; this disagreement is a feature of a free system of knowledge creation. Freedom of thought, conscience, inquiry, speech, and association generates diverse points of view and thus disagreement. However, for the knowledge system to work, it requires diverse points of view and disagreement generated through protected freedom. As noted, it uses this diversity of opinion as a means of public critical scrutiny. Pluralism (diversity of points of view) is a fundamental value of the constitution of knowledge, and a respect-based conception of toleration of diverse points of view and diversity of opinion is essential.⁴⁴ Respect-based toleration is grounded in reciprocal, horizontal recognition across differences and thereby respects citizens as equals. Mutual toleration is grounded in a shared moral basis of respect for persons as expressed in mutually affirmed values and principles.

Education Gag Laws — Analysis

In keeping with the constitution of knowledge articulated above, the U.S. Supreme Court has strongly upheld basic First Amendment rights of students and teachers in schools. In *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), for example, the court held: “First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. This has been the unmistakable holding of this Court for almost 50 years” (393 U. S. 505). In *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943), the Supreme Court articulated a fundamental principle of education in a constitutional republic: “The Fourteenth Amendment, as now applied to the States, protects the citizen against the State itself and all of its creatures — Boards of Education not excepted. These have, of course, important, delicate, and highly discretionary functions, but none that they may not perform within the limits of the Bill of Rights. That they are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual, if we are not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes” (319 U. S. 637).

These opinions are based upon the general proposition that “state-operated schools may not be enclaves of totalitarianism. . . . In our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate” (*Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U. S. 503, 511 (1969)). The Court in *Tinker* thus rejected the view that “a State might so conduct its schools as to ‘foster a homogeneous people’” (*Id.*, at 511, quoting *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U. S. 390, 402 (1923)). Similarly, in *Keyishian v. Board of Regents* (385 U. S. 589 (1967)), the Court held that “[t]he classroom is peculiarly the ‘marketplace of ideas’”; the First Amendment therefore “does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom” (*Id.*, at 603). The Court therefore rejected the idea that the imposition of “ideological discipline” was a justifiable practice of school authorities, including State governments. These considered opinions yield a general principle: “the State may not suppress exposure to ideas absent sufficiently compelling reasons.” The school must perform all its functions “within the limits of the Bill of Rights” (*West Virginia v. Barnette*, 319 U. S., at 637).

⁴⁴ Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*, trans. Jeffrey Flynn, New Directions in Critical Theory, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Rainer Forst, *Toleration in Conflict: Past and Present*, Ideas in Context, (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

It can be argued that the proposed education gag laws offend these basic constitutional freedoms and the basic principles of the constitution of knowledge. Exposing students to diverse points of view and engaging them in the processes of critical scrutiny, reasoning, and inquiry is the very essence of education.⁴⁵ The proposed education gag laws interfere with these essential processes of inquiry, thereby betraying the fundamental value of authentic learning and education. As discussed above, the key to settling and establishing knowledge is to submit our beliefs, hypotheses, hunches, and opinions for checking and testing, subjecting them to the processes of public critical scrutiny and disconfirmation through the application of replicable methods and standards of inquiry. In a free and open society, pluralism (diversity of points of view) is a fundamental value of the constitution of knowledge and of authentic education. The teaching of diverse points of view is not disruptive nor divisive; it is an essential element of a thorough and efficient education. As Justice Brennan stated: “The vigilant protection of constitutional freedoms is nowhere more vital than in the community of American schools” (*Shelton v. Tucker* 364 U. S. 487 (1960)). The classroom is peculiarly the “marketplace of ideas.” “The Nation’s future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection” (*Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 385 U. S. 589, 385 U. S. 603, respectively). The proposed education gag laws offend the basic constitutional rights of freedom of expression as well as the authentic processes of inquiry and learning, thereby undermining the very nature of an authentic education based upon the constitution of knowledge.

⁴⁵ Numerous sources from a variety of philosophical traditions could be cited here, for example, Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, “From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education,” *Change* (November/December 1995); Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Text-book series in education, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970); Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind* (New York: Penguin, 2000); Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978); Maxine Greene, “What Counts As Philosophy of Education,” in *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education*, ed. Wendy Kohli (New York: Routledge, 1995), 3-23; Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, revised edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1999); David Hansen, *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies In Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007); Paul H. Hirst, “Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge,” in *The Philosophy of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973): 87-111; Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943); Werner Jaeger, *The Greeks and the Education of Man* (Annadale, NY: Bard College Papers, 1953); Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016); Michael Oakeshott, “Learning and Teaching,” in *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being*, ed. Richard M. Gramble (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2007 [1965]): 636-651; Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993); Betty A. Reardon and Dale T. Snauwaert, “Reflective Pedagogy, Cosmopolitanism, and Critical Peace Education for Political Efficacy: A Discussion of Betty A. Reardon’s Assessment of the Field,” *In Factis Pax: Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice* 5, no. 1 (2011), <http://www.infactispax.org/journal/>; Betty A. Reardon and Dale T. Snauwaert, eds., *Betty A. Reardon: A Pioneer in Education for Peace and Human Rights*, Springer Briefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice (London: Springer, 2015); D.N. Rodowick, *An Education in Judgment Hannah Arendt and the Humanities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021).

A Defense of Freedom of Expression in Schools: The Case from Differentiation of Instruction

Natalie Alaimo

College of Staten Island/City University of New York

Abstract: A basic principle about freedom of expression says you can morally constrain freedom of expression only if you can show some person(s) freely expressing themselves have a duty to stay quiet. Freedom of expression benefits the teaching-learning process when teachers use student voices to harmonize lessons with student learning needs, student interests, and students' outside of school lives. Therefore, freedom of expression should be allowed in schools unless it can be shown that some act of freedom of expression will do harm to the education process by silencing/subverting student voice. Focusing on the education process as benefitting from free exchange of information and ideas between teachers and students provides an example to follow when developing educationally relevant rules/reasons for permitting/limiting freedom of expression in schools.

The American Bill of Rights is founded upon freedoms comprising freedom of expression, but when it comes to one's education, freedom of choice and freedom of expression are conveniently omitted. "Freedom of expression refers to the ability of an individual or group of individuals to express their beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and emotions about different issues free from government censorship. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the rights of individuals to freedom of religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly. Some scholars group several of those freedoms under the general term "freedom of expression" (Freedom Forum Institute, n.d.). "The freedom of expression is vital to our ability to convey opinions, convictions, and beliefs, and to meaningfully participate in democracy... freedom of individuals to express their opinions, convictions, and beliefs is often imperiled (endangered) when states are not required to meet a substantial justificatory burden when limiting such freedom" (Gunatilleke, 2020, 91). This paper will seek to explore how schools might reasonably handle "a substantial justificatory burden" of permitting and limiting freedom of expression in cases of instructional innovation.

Currently, as Brophy, et al. (2018, 10 and 15, respectively) observe, "with the increased pressures of standards and testing, there is much debate about whether planning is part of teachers' professional practice or has been coopted by district or school administrators." This deprives opportunity for teachers, Brophy continues, "[to] create powerful, meaningful, deep units of study that go beyond what is required and create well-rounded students who are excited about learning and school." Concern about that threat compelled Bixler (1954, 18) to argue, long before Brophy's complaint, that teachers need the freedom to teach, and students need the freedom to learn, and schools will be all the better run "if all of us would go to work at obtaining and maintaining those freedoms."

We must give educators the freedom to choose their lessons and teaching styles since they are the only ones who truly know their students. Without academic freedom, there is little room for teachers to be able to differentiate their lessons to meet the academic, personal, and developmental needs of their students. This does an extreme disservice to students and hinders their learning because it does not provide an opportunity for students to challenge themselves. This is particularly important when teachers are teaching in multicultural contexts. A downside of this is, in most classes, students rarely or never have opportunity to share about their cultures. However, when a teacher's directions in the classroom are in harmony with students' cultures,

these instructions may enhance the students' achievement and confidence due to increased comfort in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020).

As part of a study conducted to find out what makes a good teacher (Devine, et al., 2013), 73 teachers were asked about how important it is to teach diversity in their classrooms. Recognizing the individuality of each student was found to be "Important" by 53.2% and "Very Important" by 37.1% (90.3% in the combined categories). Understanding the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of students was found to be "Important" by 64% of teachers surveyed and "Very Important" to 13.6% of teachers participating in the study (77.6% overall). In a study conducted on college students (Roska, et al., 2017), 2,500 students were interviewed from a 4-year institution where 43 percent of African American students reported having a "high" number of negative diversity interactions, as well as 37 percent of Hispanic students and 40 percent of Asian students. Twenty-five percent of white students said the same. Negative diversity experiences reported by the students in Roska's study made participants feel "their ideas and opinions were shut down due to prejudice and discrimination; when they felt insulted or threatened based on their racial, religious, ethnic or gender identity; or when they had hurtful, unresolved interactions with diverse students (304)." On the other hand, positive diversity experiences reported by the students Roska surveyed promoted constructive conversations, meaningful experiences, and friendships between those of different backgrounds, and allowed students to challenge each other's viewpoints and consider complex issues. "It's one thing," Roska notes, "to have a diverse student body – that is a crucial first step – but you have to ensure that interaction between groups is positive (319)." Schools should, without a doubt, give their teachers the freedom to explore both the positive and negative cultural and racial experiences of students to better understand their situations and provide an environment where students from different backgrounds can be brought together and enjoy and benefit from diversity in the classroom.

Arguments like ones given in defense of adapting teaching to cultural/racial diversity extend to differentiated learning at the individual level, as well. Conducting research and using data is an effective way in which teachers can assess student learning and use that information to differentiate their instruction to meet students' needs. In a study conducted across 62 public charter and district schools (Pane, et al., 2015), researchers concluded that, "compared to peers, students in schools using personalized learning practices are making greater progress over the course of two school years, and those students who started out behind are catching up to perform at or above national averages." The study found 1) teachers at most schools were using data to understand student progress and make instructional decisions, and 2) all schools offered time for individual academic support, and the use of technology for personalization was widespread. The schools who saw these results used effective student grouping strategies driven by data to effectively pair students with programs run by the school to help achieve learning goals. They also reassessed whole group strategies and created individual learning pathways. Thus, Pane provides statistical evidence that the academic achievement of students improved with the addition of differentiated learning.

An even more radical form of freedom of expression that promotes differentiation of instruction is giving students the freedom to choose curriculum and freedom to choose how to exhibit what they have learned about what they are studying. According to Usher (2019), "Elementary students have a better chance of showing what they've learned when they have a choice about how to show it." Usher suggests that "differentiation is key because it's about

giving more opportunities for students to grow to their highest potential, and it is beneficial for all students... Giving students a choice allows them to take ownership of their learning as well as create a product that feels authentic to them. They work on something that they're good at creating or try something they want to get better at." Studies show that providing students with a choice "benefits all learners and lowers classroom behavioral problems since students are more engaged in subject matter." (Latz, et al., 2008, 30). An interview with students from Elizabeth Cleaners Street School in New York City, a school that conscientiously let students guide curriculum development, revealed "[t]he students raise the question of collective rights and responsibilities of students to control their own education within the context of a more direct relationship with the urban community of which they are part... According to the students, teachers alienate children by acting authoritarian and superior to them when control of schools has been placed in the hands of the bureaucratic administrators" (Interview, 1970, 613).

The benefits of teacher academic freedom as a form of freedom of expression make clear the importance of the right of teachers and students to negotiate curriculum content, lesson delivery, and assessment of learning. This provides material to construct a principle for when freedom to plan lessons should be allowed and when it should be limited. The focus of this principle when used in specific school contexts must be on what ways student choice may be made the best guide to quality lesson planning. Schools should promote teacher differentiation in lesson planning, etc., so long as it can be shown that the planned lessons may reasonably be expected to improve quality and quantity of student learning. On the other hand, schools should limit teachers in lesson design if and only if evidence of reasonable expectation of improved learning is not available or evidence exists to suggest differentiation would deter student achievement. This principle articulates a "substantial justificatory burden" schools must bear to limit freedom of expression among students and teachers.

Two objections to this line of thought, one that questions student capacity to negotiate differentiation and one that questions teacher capacity to differentiate, serve only to strengthen support for teacher-guided, student decision making about schooling. First, Vopat (2010), arguing specifically about issues of freedom of expression in schools surrounding use of school uniforms, makes two general observations questioning the capacity of students to guide decision-making about their school lives. Vopat distinguishes between "mere expression" and "substantive expression." Mere expression concerns rights that protect mere choices. Substantive expression concerns rights that protect substantive interests. Using this distinction against arguments for student choice, Vopat (209) concludes "most children, particularly those in the preteen years, lack the cognitive ability to exercise the latter [substantive expression]." Kids, that is, can't tell the difference between what they want and what they need. However, even if we grant Vopat's potentially prejudicial view of student capacity to make decisions about their schooling, the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process undercuts his conclusion. In discussion with teachers about curriculum, students will learn the difference between mere expression and substantive expression as they learn to distinguish whim from wisdom in working with their teachers to differentiate instruction.

Second, the capacity of teachers to make wise decisions about differentiation may similarly be questioned. In the absence of general principles describing effective differentiation, teacher-student decision-making may take on the feel of mere expression rather than substantive expression. Negotiations about differentiation may be no more than a process of teachers and students making things up as they go along. That is why reasons offered for differentiation of

instruction may seem not only inadequate, but arbitrary and even unfair. However, this objection misses the point. Allowing, for the sake of argument, that there are no general theories guiding decisions about differentiation, developing sound principles to guide differentiation becomes a matter of empirical importance. That is, we must experiment with differentiation to discover how best to do it. This adds a sense of urgency to exercise of freedom of expression in differentiating instruction so that teachers may become adept, even expert, at optimizing learning for students in schools.

When all is said and done, it becomes clear that schools have a moral duty to differentiate instruction insofar as differentiation improves the process of teaching and learning. Conversely, therefore, schools bear the burden of showing that freedom of expression will somehow impoverish the teaching-learning process before restricting freedom of expression. Schools cannot assume from the start of deliberations that freedom of expression is wrong or dangerous or inappropriate. Rather, educators have a moral responsibility to support freedom of expression as educationally beneficial practice and to determine how best to implement freedom of expression to optimize learning in specific school contexts.

An environment that promotes freedom of expression helps to cultivate a classroom of students who feel comfortable to speak up because they know they are being listened to. Thus, when students exercise free speech; teachers are obligated to listen. According to Brophy et al. (2018, 137), “A community culture supportive of free expression of ideas is also critical to fostering productive classroom discourse, particularly discussion. In a classroom where students feel comfortable with and trust each other enough to take risks in the kinds of things they say, substantive discussion (including civil disagreements) can occur. Students need to understand that even though they may disagree with one another, they can still be friends (a notion with which young children, in particular, have difficulty).” As Doda and Knowles (2008), speaking specifically about teaching adolescents, remind us, “...students want quality relationships with their teachers and peers. Students feel teachers too often underestimate or overestimate the capacities of young adolescents, and, at times, use the perils of puberty to dismiss student disengagement; but students from classrooms that explicitly value and engender student voice perceive middle-school relationships and learning in qualitatively different ways” (30). Rose, Dix, and Farrington (1902) made similar comments more than one hundred years ago. As they pondered in the pages of *The Journal of Education* the titular question, “How Can We Cultivate the Power of Expression in Class?”, Rose, Dix, and Farrington, respectively (216, 216, 217), offered the following tidbits of practical advice: “...stop the teacher from talking too much and be patient as the student tries to say something;” “...students should be encouraged to say something;” and “...a friendly relationship between teachers and students should be maintained to stimulate expression in the school setting.”

If it is true we are morally justified to take away freedom of expression only if there is evidence to prove that freedom of expression is harmful, *and* it is true that freedom of expression in support of differentiation of instruction is mostly beneficial, where the pros highly outweigh the cons, then schools have a moral obligation to encourage freedom of expression and a moral responsibility to justify in educationally relevant terms any limitations they impose upon freedom of expression. Despite pockets of resistance, the law is beginning to align with the ethical on the issue of freedom of expression in schools. In their review of case law concerning freedom of expression in schools, Clarke and Trask (2014) see recent opinions trending towards the legal conclusion that “... in the absence of evidence of harm to students, school boards cannot

justify limiting such expression” (105). Similarly, in a study of Canadian law and policy on freedom of expression in schools de Britto (2018) frames the issue by saying, “...the ethical duties of preventing harm to students and engaging in responsible pedagogy circumscribe [teachers’] freedom of expression” (803). Finally, to make the strongest case for the moral propriety of freedom of expression in schools, Chasi (2014) borrows an idea from indigenous peoples of southern Africa, *ubuntu*, (meaning ‘humanity’ or ‘humanity towards others’ but more adequately translated as ‘I am because we are.’ or ‘I am because you are’). *Ubuntu*, Chasi observes, conveys the fundamental truth of social life that “[f]reedom of expression enables everyone to be respected and governed in ways that are associated with the establishment of communities where everyone can be the most they can be” (508). That may be the happiest future we can project for schools and classrooms. If we wish to make teaching as effective as possible by enjoying the benefits of differentiated instruction, we must enjoin teachers and students to engage fully in freedom of expression in classrooms, to see and treat one another as real and important persons in the learning process.

Bibliography

- Bixler, P. (1954). Freedom of the Teacher to Teach and the Student to Learn. *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals* 38 (204):15–22.
- Brophy, J., Alleman, J., & Halvorsen, A-L (2018). *Powerful Social Studies for Elementary Students*. 4th Edition. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Chasi, C. (2014). ‘Ubuntu’ and Freedom of Expression. *Ethics and Behavior* 24 (6): 495-509.
- Clarke, P. & Trask, R. (2014). Teachers’ Freedom of Expression: A Shifting Landscape – Part Two – Curricular Speech and Recent Developments . *Education and Law Journal* 23 (2): 85-120.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B. & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science* 24 (2): 97-140.
- de Britto, T. F. (2018). Neither Hired Mouths nor Class Monarch: The Scope of Schoolteachers’ Freedom of Expression in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education* 41 (3): 783-807.
- Devine, D., Fahie, D., & McGillicuddy, D. (2013). What Is ‘Good’ Teaching? Teacher Beliefs and Practices about their Teaching *Irish Educational Studies*, 32 (1): 83–108.
- Doda, N. & Knowles, T. (2008). Listening to the Voices of Young Adolescents. *Middle School Journal* 39 (3): 26-33.
- Freedom Forum Institute. (n.d.). *What Is Freedom of Expression?*
<https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/about/faq/what-is-freedom-of-expression/>
- Gunatilleke, G. (2020). Justifying Limitations on the Freedom of Expression. *Human Rights Review* 22 (1): 91–108.
- Interview. (1970). Another Look at Student Rights and the Function of Schooling: The Elizabeth Cleaners Street School. *Harvard Educational Review* (40): 596-627.
- Latz , A. O., Neumeister, K. L. S., Adams, C. M. & Pierce, R. L. (2008). Peer Coaching to Improve Classroom Differentiation: Perspectives from Project CLUE, *Roeper Review* 3 (1): 27-39,
- Pane, J., Steiner, E., Baird, M., & Hamilton, L. (2015). Continued Progress: Promising Evidence on Personalized Learning. *Rand Research Reports*
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1365.html
- Rose, G. E., Dix, A. J. G. & Farrington, A. E. (1902). How Can We Cultivate the Power of Expression in Class? *The Journal of Education* 55 (14): 216-217.

- Roska, J., Kilgo, C. A., Trolan, T. L., Pascarella, E. T., Blach, C., & Wise, K. S. (2017). Engaging with Diversity: How Positive and Negative Diversity Interactions Influence Students' Cognitive Outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 88(3): 297–322.
- Usher, K. (2019). Differentiating by Offering Choices. *Edutopia*.
<https://elearning.salemstate.edu/courses/1310602/modules/items/15894367>
- Vopat, M. C. (2010). Mandatory School Uniforms and Freedom of Expression. *Ethics and Education* 5 (3): 203–215.

Wake Work: Abolitionist Strategies in the Afterlife of Slavery

British Reynolds
University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract: Data from an ethnographic study of a no-nonsense charter high school with a predominantly Black student body support theoretical claims that Black students still live in the wake of slavery and fit as comfortably into school environments as did slaves in the holds of the ships that carried them to America. To improve the school environment for Black students, schools are well-advised to move from a carceral disciplinary approach to a disciplinary approach based on relationship- and community-building. Wake work that connects students and teachers as persons promises to help students not only survive the wake of slavery but swim free of it as well.

Because Black children are not seen as children and the corral of “urban youth” holds them outside of the category of the child, they are offered more trauma by the state and state actors and not the therapy that... [is] necessary. And they are certainly not offered the new world or ways towards imagining it that their, that our, circumstances demand. – Christina Sharpe (2016)

Despite the rhetoric of American educational equality and equity, the schooling experiences of Black students in the U.S. have demonstrated the public school system to be inequitable (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These inequitable experiences of Black children follow upon a history of enslavement that impacts the present. Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016) describes the wake of slavery as it relates to schooling in the present in terms of structural and systematic anti-blackness arising from a history of enslavement. This article examines the experiences of being in the wake, particularly as it occurs in the schoolhouse in the lived experiences of those students who have been captured within the wake. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a no-excuses public charter school (in the process of redefining its approach to student and staff discipline), I argue that classrooms function in this context as the hold of the slave ship. In a society designed for Black death, in body and in mind, the hold and the classroom are both spaces of detrimental, destructive anti-blackness. This must change.

The promise of education “for every child” as an equalizer guaranteeing greater advantages in life is as longstanding in the history of education in the United States as it is long deferred for Black students. Horace Eaton, governor of Vermont in the 1840’s and contributor to the formation of state superintendencies for systems of public schooling, proclaimed, “let every child in the land enjoy the advantages of a competent education at his outset in life and it will do more to secure a general equality of condition than any guarantee of equal rights and privileges which the constitution of laws can give” (Eaton, 1846). Eaton reminds us with this statement that education powerfully positions people to exercise beneficial rights constitutionally guaranteed them. Indeed, Whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time these expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law (Harris, 1993). However, Blacks, having been legally considered property during the founding and the formative decades of the United States, have persistently been denied the benefits of education and, instead, have had to survive a legacy of systematic anti-blackness that has shaped racially motivated policies, lack of resources, and, specifically within schooling, a continuously growing achievement gap, and skewed life changes (Hartman, 2007). Part of this legacy was also legal denial of literacy for enslaved Black people, which drove them to embrace resistance and become illegal readers. That

such tensions still surround the education of Black people is plain to see when framed in terms of ideas developed by Cheryl Harris (1993), Saidiya Hartman (2007), and Christina Sharpe (2016).

Whiteness as Property and the Wake of Slavery

Harris (1993) asserts that historical forms of domination have evolved into the present to reproduce subordination of Blacks to Whites. The performance and/or embodiment of being or acting a particular way based upon strict rules is what Harris refers to as whiteness as property. The origins of property rights in the United States are rooted in racial domination. Whiteness as property highlights the relationships between concepts of race and property and reflects on how rights to property are contingent on, intertwined with, and conflated with race. This note from Harris is a sobering reminder that many if not all laws, even those, as we will see, found in patterns of school discipline, center on racially dominating Black people.

Sharpe (2016) can be interpreted as expanding the idea of whiteness as property into the idea of the wake of slavery. The wake of slavery describes the afterlife and ongoing disaster of the ruptures in Black lives caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, the unfinished project of emancipation, Jim Crow, and the realization that the past is not past, but remains present (5). Sharpe's concept of the wake frames my thinking about public schooling and informs an ethnographic study I completed in a Chicago charter school. A focus of my study is how anti-blackness insidiously infiltrates the experience of Black students in the school. Historically, the schoolhouse has been considered a place to take strides towards improved opportunity and greater life chances for Black students. However, as Sharpe (2016, 12) remarks, while the means and modes of Black subjugation may have changed through time, the fact and the structure of that subjugation remain.

Working in the Wake at Restorative Justice High School

To better understand the relationship between the wake of slavery and the schooling of Black students, I conducted a mixed ethnographic study at a (now former) no-nonsense charter high school. Restorative Justice High School. (RJHS — All names of institutions and interviewees are pseudonyms.) is located on the south side of Chicago in the Englewood neighborhood. According to city planning data (Ellis, 2009. Data from 2000.), Englewood has a population that is 94% African American and a poverty rate of 44%. The poverty rate has increased due to a divestment in the community over the decades, resulting in Englewood becoming a known high crime area on the south side of Chicago. Restorative Justice High School, which is housed within an old elementary school, has been open since 2010 and serves predominantly African American students from low-income families. More specifically, of the 640 students currently enrolled, 97% are African American and 94% receive free or reduced-price lunch. I began this fieldwork right after the charter network of which RJHS is a member admitted its past no-excuses disciplinary policies were anti-black and announced it was shifting to an anti-racist framework. What I hope to discover with further study is how anti-racism expresses itself within a school that metaphorically functions as the hold of a slave ship, against the backdrop of a neighborhood that for decades has been a site of systematically perpetrated anti-blackness. What I have found so far is that the no-excuses discipline policy was a failure for the Black students in the school. The ethnography included participant and non-participant observation of classrooms and other school spaces during the 2021-2022 school year. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with current and former students and staff.

I focus here on the voices, experiences, and perspectives of current students at RJHS, particularly 12th graders. The 12th graders were the last students to experience only the punitive discipline system the school was, finally, moving away from. Thus, they have a unique perspective on the before and after experience. My fieldwork revealed tensions that emerged when school administrators adopted admittedly racist, anti-black disciplinary policies and practices that were an integral component of the daily structures and experiences of all who worked and/or went to school at RJHS. This writing also wrestles with questions regarding how public schools in urban contexts re-embodiment the afterlives of slavery. Student narratives illustrated the embodied experiences of being in the wake within the context of a strict, no-nonsense charter school.

As Harris (1993) would have predicted, structural constraints through school rules and policies show up in the data via student experiences. The experiences of anti-blackness many Black students at RJHS have become familiar with came in the form of strict rules heavily emphasizing punitive discipline, prescribed/proscribed behavior, and strict codes of conduct. Many students perceived these rules and their execution as petty and as making RJHS prison-like.

The student code of conduct consisted of a series of rules and regulations to ensure a particular culture in the school. These included regulations related to uniform, noise volume, ‘respect’, tardiness, foul language, and academic honesty. For example, if a uniform shirt was untucked, a belt not being worn or unacceptable shoes or if a student was ‘slouching’ in their seat, a demerit could (and, according to the code of conduct, should) have been issued. Every four demerits a student ‘earned’ during a two-week cycle resulted in a detention. The accumulation of a certain number of detentions also resulted in heavier penalties. For a 9th-11th grader, ‘earning’ 36 detentions meant the student would repeat the grade level, regardless of academic performance. For 12th graders, earning 13 detentions resulted in not being able to attend their graduation ceremony.

The student code of conduct was a series of rules and regulations designed to ensure students performed a school-approved culture, one oriented towards White, middle-class norms and values. Stacey Davis, a Black female 12th grader at Restorative Justice High School, recalled she had received demerits, a disciplinary measure issued to a student when in violation of the student code of conduct. Stacey recalled a moment when she was issued a demerit from a White female teacher for disrespect. She stated, “The teacher felt my tone was disrespectful. But I wasn’t being disrespectful. I was talking regular. I think because the teacher didn’t like me, she felt I was an easy target to demerit, so I just didn’t really speak in class.” Stacey’s experience reveals that she had to make a choice of being present in her class as whiteness as property, rather than herself, or being silent – invisible, shrinking herself to protect herself from harmful consequences. Another student, a 12th grade Black male named Brandon Jones recalls being issued a demerit for speaking during a noise-level 0 (silence) stricture at lunch. He states, “I don’t know why we had to be silent during our lunch. That’s really the only time we had to talk to your friends and stuff. But the culture member (“Culture member” was the name given to school personnel who were part of the school disciplinary team. Culture members were responsible for implementing and maintaining school culture, or rather enforcing desired behaviors based on school policy), I felt like he was provoking me... and when I said something he gave me a demerit. I just would eat lunch in Ms. Davis’ classroom. That way I wouldn’t get any demerits.” Again, Brandon, in spirit with his classmate, Stacey, found it safer to withdraw

from school life rather than inauthentically participate by being required to adhere to strict but seemingly arbitrary rules of behavior and decorum.

The arbitrariness of the rules threatened to turn an allegedly no-nonsense discipline policy into utter nonsense from the point of view of the students. Strict expectations placed emphasis on the behaviors of Black students in their proximity to whiteness. In addition to performance in the classroom there were strict discipline systems and codes of conduct that applied outside the classroom, as well. These included not being ‘loud and rowdy’ in school spaces, no ‘loitering’ in the hallway, and being ‘disrespectful’ to an adult. All these behaviors — loud and rowdy, loitering, and, most invidiously, disrespectful — were subject to wide variation in interpretation from teacher to teacher and staff member to staff member. The variability in interpretation made the rules unrealistic and unfair elements of the afterlife of slavery and fueled much fear, anxiety, and resentment among students around classroom performance.

Thinking historically, it is valuable to note that Black codes and Jim Crow laws also restricted African Americans to move freely in public spaces (Goodman, 1912), and were very much rooted in the restriction of Black people’s right to enjoyment. Echoes of these racially charged laws ring in the hallways and classrooms and lunchrooms of Restorative Justice High, where laws have given way to discipline policy and practice; but the forms of school discipline can be considered just as anti-black as any Jim Crow law. The trends of history are reproduced in the present at RJHS. This is what scholars like Hartman, Sharpe, and Harris mean when they say the past is present within the wake of slavery. Those historical restrictions have become reanimated in the present, according to the experiences of the students at Justice High. These historical acts, that manifest in the present, are all demonstrations of systems and structures that fail and have failed to recognize the full capacity of humanness in Black bodies.

The perspective of students at Justice High is valuable because it demonstrates how structural constraints via whiteness as property not only impact Black students but are also built into the expectations of teaching and management. The expectations that come to light through the student code of conduct reveal that management of the behavior of students, more than instruction and its content, is priority. The harnessing of power through policy, the deputizing of teachers as it relates to managing a classroom, and willing that power onto Black students who are not behaving within the constraining expectations placed upon them, all give RJHS the feel of a carceral institution. Punitive/carceral-like discipline systems based on policies that do not capture the full capacity of humanness in Black bodies employs anti-blackness at the level of the covert or hidden curriculum. Majority of students interviewed at Justice High described how trapped and betrayed they felt when feeling the pressure to be a particular way to avoid getting demerits or having to be corrected by another adult in the building. Psychic harm thus replaces physical harm as the societally acceptable way of controlling Black people. The policies of dark logics loomed over the entire school building.

Some students were more aware of the inner workings of the disciplinary system and were more successful at navigating (a form of resistance) it without fear of demerits and other, associated negative consequences. Waking consciousness (realization) was another theme that came up during the interviews. Jasmine Richards, a female 12th grader, recalls her freshman and sophomore year when she would get on teachers’ good side and be really nice to them. She knew that if she established a relationship with some of her teachers, this would cushion her from getting demerits. She states, “If a teacher liked me, I knew they probably wouldn’t give me a

demerit. We had that relationship.” Jasmine’s realization was that harm could be avoided via establishing positive relationships with teachers.

Lastly, resistance was a result for most. Just as Jasmine, other students used positive relationships as a way of avoiding getting demerits, a form of resistance. The power of relationships seemed to be one of the most efficient ways of navigating a strict discipline system for students. For instance, when the question of relationships was posed to a group of students in a class centered on social and emotional learning, majority of their responses related to Jasmine’s. One student in particular, Teresa Peoples, a 12th grade female student expressed how having relationships with black teachers was a way of navigating school rules. As she expressed, “Most of my teachers are black and I could relate to them. I think that black students relate to the black teachers more because they grew up the same way and can relate, so they won’t demerit as much. The white teachers I had; I couldn’t really relate to them. I’m nice to them but I am careful about having a certain tone with them, cause sometimes they can be fragile, especially when they are new.”

Within this suffocating atmosphere that exists in learning spaces, I ask: What do students do and how are they employing acts of resistance and survival? Where does this knowledge come from? And most importantly, is freedom even possible within the institutional structures which embody logics and mechanisms of the past that reproduce anti-blackness? *Or* is mere survival the only realistic option?

Moving Out of the Wake and into Wake Work

Bettina Love poses the question of survival in her book, *We Want to Do More Than Survive* (2019). Love discusses what she calls an *educational survival complex*, which is where students are left learning to merely survive, learning how schools mimic the world they live in, thus making schools a training site for a life of exhaustion (27). Love also goes on to say that school reform is not equal to social justice when it fails to provide subjugated students what they need to thrive. Instead of liberatory practices and resources, education reformers take up space in urban schools offering nothing more than survival tactics to children of color in the forms of test taking skills, acronyms, grit labs, and character education (10). She goes on further to explain that prescribing reform without restructuring our system of schooling doesn’t provide what is actually needed. According to Love, the barriers of racism and discrimination cannot be eradicated by tweaking the system or making adjustments (11). Love recognizes in schools/classrooms an ongoing process of *spiritual death* fueled by fear and active disempowerment. That same sort of spiritual death took place hundreds of years ago, not in schoolhouses and classrooms, but in the holds of slave ships.

Sharpe (2016) offers a more positive view of the situation by describing possibilities of freedom in the wake of slavery. As Sharpe explains, wake work is the imagining of new ways to live in the wake of slavery, the afterlife of property. Wake work calls on us to inhabit and rupture the epistemology of anti-blackness with our own lived and un/imaginable lives. Sharpe’s intervention creates use of wake work by students themselves to utilize the tapped and untapped imagination aimed at creating new ways of being, thinking and living, untethered from the old and oppressive forms of survival in public education. In this liberatory sense, wake work also means developing a new analytic and tracking the ways that Black people have resisted, ruptured, and disrupted their subjugation. Wake work, according to Sharpe, is the active resistance to the forms and reproductions of anti-blackness. Resistance is a form of wake work

because it creates avenues to enforce abolitionist strategies which seek freedom from and diminishment of the wake of slavery (Love, 2019).

The possibilities of survival and resistance in the wake as they relate to school and classrooms are only beginning to be imagined. The idea is to develop forms of school life and strategies of instruction that desire to undercut the logic of anti-blackness. Bettina Love (2019) offers the possibility of abolitionist strategies and practices found in public education. These strategies not only free students and teachers from structural constraints by countering the racial capitalist ideologies located in public education, but abolitionist strategies also provide avenues to come to realizations of how schools and their logics are reflections of the larger world that is operating within the logics of White domination and racial capitalism. A political education for both students and teachers, therefore, is also a possible form of wake work.

The immediate goal is to utilize wake work in schools/classroom as a form of survival within the wake of slavery, within the hold. To survive in the suffocating atmosphere of anti-blackness that schools have (re)produced. The long-term goal of wake work is to support flourishing of Black students in public schools by undoing logics of White supremacy. To extend the metaphor of the wake of slavery, wake work seeks to slow down the speed of the anti-blackness boat to diminish the size and power of its wake. This allows us to understand that wake work is a mode/form of abolition. A path towards freedom. The same path that many abolitionists' ancestors have embarked upon seeking freedom from the legal bondage of slavery.

I argue that teachers can incorporate wake work into their pedagogical praxis by focusing on relationship-building with individual students and creation of classroom community among all their students as key elements in a successful disciplinary program. Relationship- and community-building shift the language and motivations of schooling as not just helping students perform better academically. Rather, with wake work of the relationship-building sort taking place in classrooms, school discipline becomes a matter of assisting young people caught in the wake of slavery with their healing, coping, survival, and flourishing. The classroom is no longer a hold, but a guidepost to freedom. Wake work that builds relationships in the school context could be a possibility of transformation and liberation. Building relationships with teachers at Restorative Justice High School is something students such as Jasmine Richards recognized as a useful survival strategy. Imagine students thriving if schools and teachers took the initiative in creating relationships and building classroom and school community. If wake work is initiated both by schools and by students working together in/against the wake, then the possibilities become endless for flourishing within/despite the wake of slavery.

Works Cited

- Darling-Hammond, Linda (2000), New Standards and Old Inequalities: School Reform and the Education of African American Students, *Journal of Negro Education* 69, 4 (Fall): 263-287.
- Easton, Horace (1846), *First Annual Report of the State General School Superintendent to the of Common Schools, Made to the Legislature*. Printed by Easton & Danforth, Printers.
- Ellis, Josh (2009), *Metropolitan Planning Council*, Englewood Demographics.
<https://www.metroplanning.org/news/3528/Englewood>
- Goodman, Byne Frances (1912), *The Black Codes 1865-1867*, College of Literature and Arts University of Illinois.
- Harris, Cheryl (1993), Whiteness as Property, *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), 1707–1791.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>

Hartman, Saidiya (2007), *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Love, Bettina (2019), *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, Beacon Press.

Sharpe, Christina (2016), *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Duke University Press.

Overcoming Explicit Stereotyping in Education

Luljeta Mati

College of Staten Island/City University of New York

Abstract: Stereotyping students ensures individual student differences are ignored as we presume things about people that may not be true. Steering the teacher-student relationship away from a categorizing approach is imperative if we wish to improve instruction. When teachers start thinking of students as actual individual people rather than examples of a kind of person, inclusiveness can occur in the classroom. A good tactic to avoid stereotyping is to stop thinking of culture as big and start thinking of culture as small. Big culture needs to be diminished in educational thinking so that small culture can be enlarged in teaching practice. Cutting culture down to size positions teachers to learn who their students are by revealing the life worlds of students as individuals rather than distorting student life through a stereotypical lens.

Stereotyping students is a critical issue facing education. As McLeod (2017) notes, “A stereotype is a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people.” When we stereotype students, we infer, based on the fallacious assumption that all members of a specific group have a fixed set of characteristics and abilities, that some individual person from that group has the set of characteristics and abilities attributed to the group. Stereotyping unfairly simplifies the social world of students. Stereotyping students ensures individual student differences are ignored as we presume things about people that may not be true. Steering the teacher-student relationship away from a categorizing approach is imperative if we wish to improve instruction. When teachers start thinking of students as actual individual people rather than examples of a kind of person, inclusiveness can occur in the classroom. A good tactic to avoid stereotyping is to stop thinking of culture as big and start thinking of culture as small. Big culture needs to be diminished in educational thinking so that small culture can be enlarged in teaching practice. Cutting culture down to size positions teachers to learn who their students are by revealing the life worlds of students as individuals rather than distorting student life through a stereotypical lens.

Flanagan, et al. (2020) make note of two related facts about teaching. On the one hand, teacher expectations influence student achievement. On the other hand, teacher expectations can vary depending on the racial/ethnic group from which students come. Although the teachers in their study did not report any differences in the way they treated students from different ethnic groups, Flanagan’s study did find what “appeared to be a discrepancy between teacher expectations and the reported behaviours toward students from various ethnic groups” (1445). Teachers held the highest expectations for students of Asian descent, lower expectations for students of European extraction, and the lowest expectations for students with indigenous (Canadian Indian) ancestry. Kleen and Glock (2018) give an example of how these sorts of differences can make a difference in how teachers relate to students. In their study, Kleen and Glock presented teachers with descriptions of two female students, one above average and easy to teach, the other below average and difficult to teach. The researchers then added racial descriptions to the two students. Teachers judged the students differently depending on the added, racial information. When teachers heard the bright student was a minority student, they judged that student as better to have in class than a minority hard to teach student, a White hard to teach student, and even a White easy to teach student. The White, easy to teach student and the minority hard to teach students were treated by the teachers as typical students. Kleen and

Glock concluded that teachers' judgments about students is more likely to be stereotypical when information about students is consistent with teachers' expectations of "those kinds" of students. However, more individualized judgments about students are likely to take place when teacher expectations are not supported by stereotypical information about a student.

Labeling practices often send children direct and indirect messages about the academic status or ability of "their kind" of students. Such cases successfully merge stigma and stereotypes via attribution to students of negative qualities they may not possess (Riley, 2010). When negative messages reinforce negative stereotypes, the result is students being stigmatized (Noguera, 2003). We must come to realize that these stereotypes can wrongly group and victimize students, not allowing them to come out of the shadow cast by the stereotypes projected on them. As Marsh et al. (2013, 467) note: "In schools throughout the United States, Black males are typically overrepresented in academic categories associated with failure or risk and underrepresented in those associated with success." As a result of being labeled, sanctioned individuals may eventually embrace their deviant status. For instance, and way too often, negative stereotypes might result in students being directed to special education classes they ought not be put into (Dandy, et al., 2015). This can occur due to students being forced to comply with expectations of others who have also been labeled under a specific stereotype. When students are in a learning environment that does not value their voice, they feel unable to contribute their opinions, and are likely to disengage from learning activities. These factors can hinder children's self-esteem and mental health.

For example, speaking from personal experience in a 2018 TEDx Talk, Sadie Ortiz states, "Stereotypes stand in the way of students like obstacles." Given the way her school perceived Latina students, she was already told by the age of ten that she would not make it far in life, that she would be pregnant by the time she was sixteen, that her skin color and ethnicity had already decided her fate, namely, failure of achieving an education. In sixth grade, Sadie was supposed to be given the opportunity to take an elective; but she was deprived of that opportunity and, instead, placed in a class offering extra academic help which she did not need. Knowing she had been mislabeled, Sadie fought back against the stereotyping. Her mistreatment motivated her to complete homework, do great on assignments, and get high scores on tests. Overcoming the obstacles put in her way by her school, Sadie was able to graduate and begin a successful course of college study. Carl James (2010) discerns a pattern in stories like Sadie's. Stereotypes create a turning point in the lives of students: "Those who resist the stereotype set out to challenge it; hence, they work "harder" to "prove" that they are not like their peers or to prove their teachers wrong. It is ironic that it takes the stereotype and the presence of their underachieving peers to motivate some students to do well in school. As one young man said, "You can allow things to govern your life or you can deal with them then, and just kind of move on and prove them [teachers] wrong" (472). Tyrone Howard's (2008) study of African American male high school students confirms James' point of view: "Results showed that participants were keenly aware of the influence of race on the manner in which they were perceived by school staff members and that participants fought to eradicate negative racial stereotypes" (967). However, James also says, in the quote above, that this way of looking at the stereotypes is ironic in that it requires both failing peers and motivated exceptions to make things turn out well for a few at the expense of the many. Howard, as well, says his results suggested that use of counter-storytelling in a critical race theory framework facilitated participants' discussion of race-related issues. A few success stories cannot overcome the fact that stereotyping operates to racialize, marginalize, and

structure an unsuccessful learning process that disrupts social opportunities, diminishes life chances and ruins educational outcomes. Stereotypes explain why many of today's Black youth eventually become disengaged from school and the educational process. James' point of view on this issue is that we should be considering cultural processes that underlie a human life, as an individual's challenges often are of the cultural world they occupy. Howard offers the same idea when he says counter-stereotype storytelling may be an effective antidote against racial stereotyping in schools.

Counter-stereotype storytelling gets off on the right foot by reorienting our thinking about culture. As we move away from understanding culture as a big or monolithic construct, we can move towards culture as a small or diversified construct. Unlike big culture, small culture may be lived out differently by any given individual relative to any other individual thought of as "belonging to" some culture. The term "small culture" was conceptualized by Adrian Holliday (2012) who pointed out a need to distinguish two paradigms of culture in applied linguistics:

What has become the default notion of 'culture' refers to prescribed ethnic, national, and international entities. This large culture paradigm is by its nature vulnerable to a culturist reduction of 'foreign' students, teachers and their educational contexts. In contrast, a small culture paradigm attaches 'culture' to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour, and thus avoids culturist ethnic, national, or international stereotyping. Ethnography uses small cultures as the location for research, as an interpretive device for understanding emergent behaviour, rather than seeking to explain prescribed ethnic, national, or international difference. (238)

For example, had the idea of small culture been implemented in the case of Sadie Ortiz, then there might have been a different experience with the teachers at her school. Sadie's school failed her by not learning who she truly was and by disregarding her efforts and high-quality schoolwork she was handing in. This is a prime example as to why small culture is beneficial regarding students' outlook on their learning experience. Students like Sadie and those studied by James and Howard should feel represented and appreciated in the classroom. The idea of culturally diverse teaching can open teachers and students' minds about one another.

Acknowledging a person's day to day culture can limit reliance on stereotyping because you are learning the quality factors of someone based on the actual emergent behaviors they present to you, rather than grouping them offhand according to their culture or race or presumed ability level. In their study of teachers in mainstream schools who had to learn to handle inclusive education, Pachita and Ghergut (2021) found positive experiences had while engaging with disabled students as individuals lowered the level of stereotypes teachers used to assess students, generally. Taking a small culture approach means being concerned with emergent behavior as students navigate the cultures around them. An effort to understand how people work, questioning and learning why students are doing things the way they do, expresses the learning an educator must do to teach students well.

Cook-Sather and Reisinger (2001) give some perfect examples of the positive effects of overcoming stereotypes to improve teaching in their discussion of the Teaching and Learning Together Project, a program designed to get preservice teachers to refrain from stereotyping students. The three students involved in Cook-Sather and Reisinger's study all mention that they prejudged and made assumptions about the students they were going to be working with. One of the preservice teachers in the study, James, was working with a student named Don. James based

his initial impression of Don solely on Don's appearance and demeanor. James thought that Don was "the perfect slacker" — "a really bright student... who made the choice to rebel against the system, and damn whatever future he was destroying" (93). In James' eyes, Don fit the "stereotype" of a "slacker" that James was already familiar with by association from his high school years. The initial judgment might have kept James from looking beyond Don's appearance. However, after their fourth exchange, James learned that Don had been in an automobile accident that had ill-affected him, including short-term memory loss and fine motor skill impairment. After learning the information about Don, James began to view him in a different light. This medical explanation revealed that there were reasons for Don's low grades and difficulties with written expression. James was inspired by what he learned through better understanding of who Don was as a person. Said James of his student: "Don had broken through many of the negative stereotypes I placed upon him at our first meeting and had shown himself to be capable of a great deal. He had given me a lot of faith that students could rise to meet the challenges that face them, even with very little support and motivation from the school system. It gave me high hopes for what students who had such support would be able to accomplish" (94). James' experience serves as verification of why it is extremely important that preservice educators respect their students by taking the time to go through a process-based learning experience with students before actually teaching them the curriculum. This will build appreciation and understanding, contributing to a stronger teacher-student relationship. In fact, some studies indicate that teachers prefer relying not on stereotypes but on understanding of students' personal characteristics learned about in a process of classroom dialogue across dimensions of transformation, knowledge, and personhood (Madon, et al., 1998; Landrum, et al., 2017).

Another way of implementing small culture is by teaching material that students can apply to their outside of school lives. Students are able to feel valuable when they can relate and or take what they learn in the classroom from either their teacher or peers and apply it to achieve something more than they might have without what they learned at school This is an important feeling that we must strive for our students to experience. Christian Rauch (2010) argues that the key to gaining students' attention and ensuring their participation in their schooling lies in understanding their motivation for learning. Teachers need to reflect on this issue from the students' point of view and build bridges on a personal level with their students. When the material they are learning connects with their intellectual capital students learn better. When students feel able to be heard and answered in school, they will have the drive to pursue academic achievement rather than feeling that they have no way of doing so. If an educator does not take the time to get to know their students' backgrounds, then it is impossible to incorporate that knowledge about students into the curriculum. The last thing you want is for a child to feel like he or she is excluded and unrecognized.

Feelings of exclusion contribute to a generalized feeling of moral disrespect on the part of students when they think about how they are treated at school. Benjamin Endres (2002) argues that students need to feel included and recognized at school to overcome ill effects of negative stereotyping: "Generalised moral respect is an important moral resource for counteracting the social and institutional pressure to differentiate among students in ways that are detrimental to their learning" (176). Indeed, a small culture approach opens up the possibility of, to borrow Endres phrasing, both adhering to and transcending differences among our students. Endres provides a way to resolve the irony of students having to rely on stereotypes to find the

motivation to succeed in school. Instead, on Endres' small culture approach, students are made aware of the stereotypes that may negatively affect them and taught how successfully to deny the attribution of those stereotypes to themselves. This resolves the irony by denying the efficacy of the stereotype in the first place, at least when it comes to succeeding academically. It is important to raise awareness and teach the definition of labeling and stereotyping to your students. This can ensure that they understand that this type of behavior is not acceptable. On this approach, students are exposed to potential denials of their unique differences but supported in appreciating and developing those differences. This will provide a safe, accepting classroom environment.

Määttä & Satu (2012) describe this small culture approach to teaching as pedagogical tact. Pedagogical tact combines elements of teacher authority and teacherly love. Both are essential elements to teacher professionalism. A child's vulnerability calls for a loving attitude from the educator, and a focus on the student's physical security, her or his social, emotional, and educational well-being. Määttä and Satu believe that using pedagogical love in teaching means that the teacher can manifest the love for his/her pupils by trusting and believing in their talent and progress no matter what obstacles students face. As educators, if we encounter or witness any stereotyping, we should make the "bold move" and advocate against it. This will serve as role modeling for our students, ensuring that they know that stereotyping is wrong and harmful to someone both personally and educationally. This sort of respect, which is required by moral discourse Endres (2002) asserts "can be understood as reversible and equal in that it provides a regard for the position of the other that we would expect for ourselves" (185). Therefore, respecting students and limiting their exposure to stereotyping in the classroom will help prevent the stigma stereotypes place on students from becoming an excuse or explanation for their poor academic performance. Students are all uniquely different in their own special ways and those are the terms on which students should succeed academically.

References

- Cook-Sather, A. & Reisinger, O. (2001). Seeing the Students behind the Stereotypes: The Perspective of Three Preservice Teachers. *Teacher Educator* 37 (2): 91-99.
- Dandy, J., Durkin, K., Barber, B. L. & Houghton, S. (2015). Academic Expectations of Australian Students from Aboriginal, Asian, and Anglo Backgrounds: Perspectives of Teachers, Trainee-teachers, and Students. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*. 62 (1): 60-82.
- Endres, B. (2002). Transcending and Attending to Difference in the Multicultural Classroom. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36(2): 171-185.
- Flanagan, A., Cormier, D. & Bulut, O. (2020). Achievement May Be Rooted in Teacher Expectations: Examining the Differential Influences of Ethnicity, Years of Teaching, and Classroom Behaviour. *Social Psychology of Education*. 23 (6): 1429-1448.
- Holliday, A. (1999). Small Cultures. *Applied Linguistics* 20 (2): 237-264.
- Howard, T. C. (2008). Who Really Cares? The Disenfranchisement of African American Males in Prek-12 Schools: A Critical Race Theory Perspective. *Teachers College Record*, 110 (5): 954-985.
- James, C. E. (2012). Students "at Risk": Stereotypes and the Schooling of Black Boys. *Urban Education* 47 (2): 464-494.
- Kleen, H. & Glock, S. (2018). A Further Look into Ethnicity: The Impact of Stereotypical Expectations on Teachers' Judgments of Female Ethnic Minority Students. *Social*

- Psychology of Education*. 21 (4): 759-773.
- Landrum, B., G. Garza, and C. Guilbeau. (2017). Why Teach? A Projective Life-world Approach to Understanding What Teaching Means to Teachers. *Qualitative Research in Education* 6, no. 3 (October): 327-351.
- Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2012). Pedagogical Authority and Pedagogical Love: Connected or Incompatible? *International Journal of Whole Schooling* 8 (1): 21–39.
- Madon, S., Jussim, L. & Shelley, K.. (1998). The Accuracy and Power of Sex, Social Class, and Ethnic Stereotypes: a Naturalistic Study in Person Perception. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24 (12): 1304-1318.
- Marsh, L. Trenton S. and Noguera, P. A. (2018). Beyond Stigma and Stereotypes: An Ethnographic Study on the Effects of School-Imposed Labeling on Black Males in an Urban Charter School. *The Urban Review* 50 (4): 447-477.
- McLeod, S. (2017). Stereotypes. *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html>
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The Trouble with Black Boys: The Role and Influence of Environmental and Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of African American Males. *Urban Education* 38 (4): 431-459.
- Ortiz, S. (2018). Battling Cultural Stereotypes. TEDx Talks. *TEDxYouth@ParkCity*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr-7-RooA14>
- Pachita, I-C. & Ghergut, A. (2021). Inclusive Education and Stereotypes among Teachers from Mainstream Schools. *Journal of Educational Sciences* 42 (1): 85-98.
- Rauch, C. (2010). Intellectual Capital. *Principal* (May/June): 60.
- Riley, T. A. (2010). Stigma, Stereotype, and Attributional Theory: A Successful Merger. *Journal of Educational Thought*. 44 (2): 229-246.

Overcoming Implicit Bias in Schools

Danielle Randazzo

College of Staten Island/City University of New York

Abstract: Stereotyping is an evolutionarily efficient tool human beings use to help categorize stimuli and navigate their surroundings. Often, people may not even be aware that they are stereotyping because of how habitual it is to everyday life. However, stereotyping becomes immoral when humans treat others disparately based on stereotype. This is the reason the word “stereotype” has a negative connotation. Humans often let their inclination to stereotype inhibit their ability to see other human beings as individuals. Educators are not immune to their innate habit of stereotyping and will often engage in stereotyping behaviors or attitudes. Thus, students often fall victim to unfair treatment based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious affiliations, etc. It is possible to overcome implicit bias in the classroom by making efforts to end in-group/out-group approaches to schooling, emphasizing a sense of teamwork in classes, and focusing on mutual respect and acceptance as frames for learning together.

Why We Stereotype

Human beings all possess bias that affects everything they do, think, and say. A person’s bias frames their entire perspective of the world around them. It is interesting to think that the world may not appear the same to any two individuals. Theoretically, there are as many different versions of the world in existence as there are people to interpret it. For example, two people could be looking out of the same window at the same rainy scene outside but are perceiving two totally different images. One person is beholding the beauty and comfort that the rainy day exudes for them while the other person is deeply saddened by the lack of sunshine and blue skies. By this interpretive logic, there is no one true version of oneself that exists in the world either. Everyone a person encounters forms their own perception of that person through the lens of their own personal bias. This bias will affect who a person chooses to befriend, to dislike, to help in a time of need, to marry, to hire, to love or to hate.

A term strongly associated with bias is “stereotype.” The bias a person has for or against a certain group of people is often the result of existing stereotypes held by society about those groups of people. The word “stereotype” is most generally defined as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Stereotyping is something all humans do to simplify and reduce the amount of processing we have to do when coming across novel stimuli (unfamiliar people, places, things). Stereotyping can actually help humans in a few ways. It is a means of avoiding potentially harmful stimuli. When humans were still primarily hunters and gatherers, they had to learn to stereotype stimuli in nature as being safe to approach or consume versus being a potential threat. Humans still teach their young to stereotype in helpful ways such as when they teach children to run away when approached by strangers in the absence of trusted adults. Not every unfamiliar adult is dangerous, but children should still stereotype strangers in this way to ensure their protection from potential predators.

Something else to note about bias and stereotyping is that it is often a precognitive act for humans. Most stereotyping and other biased behavior is a result of bias that exists below the surface of one’s conscious awareness. During early developmental years, when a person is most easily influenced, if, say, contributors to bias, such as a parent making racist comments or an unpleasant experience with a member of a certain group of people, occur, then it is highly likely that a person can hold beliefs and bias without recalling the reasoning behind it. Moreover, they

may not even be aware that they hold a bias or that it is even influencing their daily life.

An epitomical example of unconscious bias having an effect on the way individuals live their lives is the Rosenthal Effect. The Rosenthal Effect is a phenomenon in which people, often children/students or employees, tend to perform only as well as the expectations of them held by their teachers, parents, or employers. Students whose teachers expect more from them will rise to meet those expectations and perform better while those whose teachers expect less from them will meet those lower expectations and perform worse (Dong & Wang 2007). In *Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior*, Leonard Mlodinow (2012) refers to an example of the Rosenthal Effect where a schoolteacher's students all were given an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) exam. The teacher was told some students performed poorly on the exam while others performed exceptionally well, and she was given the names of the students in each performance rank. However, the student results the teacher was given were false. The students she believed did exceptionally well did not actually do so, nor did the students she believed performed poorly actually do so. Class carried on for a few weeks as usual, until the students were given the IQ exam again. The scores of the students who the teacher was told performed exceptionally well on the original IQ exam increased on average by about 10 points the second time taking the exam, and the scores of the students who the teacher was told performed poorly on the original exam increased by only about 3 points the second time taking the exam. Because the teacher was given false scores, and to her knowledge was not treating the students any differently based on the scores she believed were authentic, it can be concluded that the teacher's bias toward her students was an *implicit* bias, existing below the surface of her consciousness. The information she had received about her students had an impact on her expectations of her students without her even realizing it. She has subconsciously stereotyped certain students as being more or less intelligent, and the effects were measurable.

If It's Out of Our Control, Is It Immoral?

As seemingly innocuous as the general definitions of "stereotype" and "bias" are, both terms have negative connotations. This is simply because of the many negative biases and stereotypes that unfairly generalize groups of people (based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc.) that are perpetuated by members of society. However, if stereotyping is something that is a part of human nature, and having bias is largely implicit in nature, then one may question why and how anyone should be held accountable for stereotyping or having implicit bias. If stereotyping and having implicit bias is in essence out of our control, is it truly wrong? In Jean Harvey's (1990) discussion of implicit bias, the topic is referred to as being amoral; not concerned with morality at all because it is out of human conscious control.

Jean Harvey (1990) also makes the argument that stereotypes do have some appropriate environments. She discusses the root definition of the term "stereotype" as being a group claim or a claim made about one or many characteristics of a group of people. She details how making such generalizations appropriately requires fulfillment of certain conditions such as the accuracy of the claim itself. In other words, if one is going to make a claim about a group of people, it should be overall true. Furthermore, the claims made should be justifiable through observations made or other forms of logical reasoning. She also speaks about situations in which people can "get away with" using certain stereotypes, for instance, when the stereotype is used within specific groups of people who would not be offended by the group generalization or group claim.

Davis and McCready (2020) concur with Harvey in their assertion that derogatory terms like slurs have their place in society as long as one uses the slur in a group of people that would not take offense.

Robin Barrow (2005) takes this line of thinking one step further by arguing that stereotypes and “jokes” of the sort signifying implicit bias simply come with the territory, so to speak, of having free speech. Barrow expresses the view that being a member in a society with free speech requires one to not be offended by these judgments because they are “practical consequences” of living in a society with the freedom to make such judgments. Barrow explains further that there needs to be a distinction drawn between what it means to be “upset” and what it means to be a “victim.” From Barrow’s point of view, *upsetting* someone with a stereotypical assumption is, at least, not as wrong as would be an offense harmful enough to make someone justifiably considered a *victim*. Finally, some take note of so-called positive stereotypes like “blondes have more fun,” “Frenchmen are great lovers,” and “African-Americans are athletic.” Because positive stereotypes set forth seemingly favorable generalizations about groups of people, so the argument goes, there is nothing morally wrong with vocalizing positive biases.

The Morality of Stereotyping and Implicit Bias

The arguments put forth for the amorality or permissibility of stereotyping and implicit bias all fail for reasons specific to each. In refutation of the argument from positive stereotypes, Lawrence Blum (2004) highlights a major issue with these seemingly innocuous statements: “Some stereotypes attribute a desirable characteristic to a group (being good students, for example) and, *ceteris paribus*, are less objectionable than ones that attribute undesirable characteristics. Yet the larger historical and social context may attach undesirable characteristics to the desirable ones — being boring and overfocused on academic pursuits, for example” (256). Here, Blum describes a phenomenon in which even positive generalizations about groups of people can end up translating to something negative in the eyes of society. Another issue with “positive” stereotypes is that they often put pressure on individuals from within the group in question to fit that stereotype, which they may have difficulty doing. An epitomical example of a positive stereotype causing harm is the stereotype that all Asians are good at math. While this may seem like a compliment, perpetuating this idea in society is harmful to Asian people for many reasons. Niral Shah (2019) argues that pushing the narrative that Asian people are good at mathematics serves as a dehumanizing agent for Asian people in society. According to this argument, pushing this stereotype reinforces Asian people being seen as types of calculators, capable of solving math problems at almost robotic speed. Furthermore, Asian people who are not good at math may feel a negatively skewed sense of self because they do not fit this stereotypical description.

Blum’s (2004) argument also exposes the absurdly optimistic epistemological assumption on which rests Harvey’s (1990) claim that stereotypes may be counted amoral so long as they are justifiable in the sense of being overall true of the groups against which the stereotypes are perpetuated by a society. It is difficult, of course, to certify as true any generalization over any population of individuals, but the difficulty of certifying as true any claim against a population of people becomes increasingly insurmountable as the group grows larger and larger. The example of Asians being good at math, as a positive stereotype, offers a clear violation of Harvey’s “mostly true” criterion. The “well-known” and widespread stereotype that Asian people are better at math than other racial/ethnic populations is not at all backed up by data. In fact, according to international exams, there are Asian countries that rank 38th, 46th, 59th, and even

as low as 63rd in the world in mathematics. Some Asian countries also are among the leaders in literature, but this fact is seldom spoken of (Pisa 2016).

Harvey's (1990) claim that it is sometimes possible "to get away with" stereotyping stands as its own moral refutation insofar as it interprets "morally permissible" as "able to get away with." However, it should also be noted that, as the world becomes the proverbial global village, opportunities to "get away" with stereotyping are increasingly becoming fewer and fewer. In our changing society where more and more people from more and more diverse groups are interacting with one another, more and more frequently odds of offending someone with any stereotype are increasing correlatively. It can also be argued that there is no appropriate setting to use stereotypes because each time one vocalizes a stereotype, they may be reinforcing its place in the societal stereotype repertoire, thus increasing the likelihood that the slur will reach the ears of those who are the targets of the stereotype.

Finally, Barrow's (2005) distinction between merely being offended and genuinely being a victim when subject to stereotyping searches vainly for an objective description of harm where only subjective canons apply. Certainly, it can be argued that upsetting someone, from that person's perspective, *does* make them a victim of sorts. Barrow seems to be thinking that being upset by something means nothing more than there was a minor inconvenience in some person's day. To the person stereotyped, however, being upset by something could mean that they were deeply hurt by that thing and their mental health was negatively impacted. If Barrow tries to deny this variation in possible meaning of 'being upset' then he is guilty of forcing his view of the situation onto those who may find themselves in such circumstances. The moment someone expresses their level of hurt or offense is the same moment others lose the ability to state the contrary with absolute certainty. It is a fact of life that no one person will ever know the world from the true perspective of another person.

But worse than this, Barrow (2005) underestimates the societal harm caused by bias when he overly individualizes and psychologizes the harm that stereotyping causes. Blum's (2004) moral analysis of stereotyping is helpful on this point. Blum states that using stereotypes is a kind of "moral distancing" where offenders surrender the ability to view people as individuals and show little acknowledgement of diversity within a group. Stereotyping is so harmful that even those not being explicitly targeted by stereotypes are negatively affected by their mere existence in a community accepting of bias. The term "stereotype threat" refers to the pressure or fear a person feels exhibiting behaviors that are stereotypical of a group to which they belong. Those facing the psychological stress of stereotype threat may undergo serious, long-lasting negative effects to their mental health and sense of self. For example, a black person surrounded by white people might feel the stress of stereotype threat because they are aware of the strong possibility that they will be stereotyped. This stress may impact the way this black person behaves and speaks so as to avoid exhibiting any stereotypical behaviors. This alteration of behaviors out of fear of not being accepted or of being actively rejected by the majority race can reinforce negative feelings about oneself, one's family, and one's race. Therefore, perpetuating stereotypes in society can create a negatively skewed sense of self and even self-resentment. These negative feelings can become a permanent part of one's identity (Freeman 2017). One's comfort in their self-presentation can be significantly reduced due to how that self-presentation can be distorted by the bias of those perceiving them (Olberding 2015).

Effects of Stereotyping on Students

If stereotyping and bias have detrimental effects on adults, it is easy to imagine the absolute destruction they can have on the malleable mind of a child. A vulnerable and impressionable mind must be protected at all costs. Trauma or damage to one's self esteem during childhood has ways of maintaining their impact on a person for a lifetime if not treated with therapeutic intervention. But, sadly, one place where stereotyping and implicit bias run rampant is the classroom setting. Whether one applauds or derides the fact of stereotyping at school, the fact of stereotyping is still getting in the way of high-quality schooling for all. Bias in the classroom infringes on a student's ability to be successful academically and socially.

Because bias is largely implicit and stereotypes are often ingrained in our minds as a part of our second nature, educators tend to discriminate against certain students, often minoritized students, without even realizing. Of course, some educators know exactly what they are doing when they are discriminating among students based on race or ethnicity. Whether knowingly deployed or not, stereotypes that exist regarding black and brown students nationwide increase the likelihood that those students will be punished more harshly and more frequently than their white counterparts. For example, it is often the case that an infraction that would land a white student in detention would conversely land a black or brown student an expulsion from the school. When teachers and administrators remove students from the classroom, they are hindering their success trajectories. Students being frequently suspended, expelled, or sent to the principal's office due to these minor infractions results in them missing academic instruction and social interaction in the classroom. Furthermore, students who are expelled or suspended for discretionary violations are "nearly three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year" (*School-to-Prison Pipeline* n.d). Frequent encounters with the juvenile justice system led to an increased likelihood that one will have an encounter with law enforcement in adulthood. Therefore, biased behaviors by educators towards students is damaging to their sense of self, their quality of life, and the quality of their schooling.

Furthermore, discriminatory attitudes of adults can be transmitted to children in contact with those adults. So, not only are children victims of bias and prejudice at the hands of adults in their environment, they also become victims of their peers as well who are learning the same discriminatory behaviors that the adults exhibit. Children, like adults, tend to show preference for members of their in-groups. People have many in-groups, such as their racial group, their gender group, their social status group, their economic status group, etc. For children, these groups may include their sports team in-groups or their classmate in-groups, as well. Children begin to form quite a strong preference for their in-group members at young ages, around 3-11 years old. Children 7-11 years old use belonging to in-groups as a criterion to inform expectations of those individuals to behave morally (Lieberman, et al. 2018).

Not only are children affected by stereotyping and bias due to being members of certain races, genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, but children may also face discrimination just for being children. Michael Burroughs and Deborah Tollefsen (2016) discuss the notion of testimonial injustice and its effects on children. Testimonial injustice can be seen in instances where members of a group are not taken seriously or dismissed because of the prejudices against the group they are affiliated with. Burroughs and Tollefsen make the assertion that children are victims of testimonial injustice because they are not seen or heard as credible individuals because of their age and supposed ignorance. Gloria Origgi (2012) describes this bias against children as a kind of identity injustice. When we discount the ideas, etc., of kids just because those ideas

come from young people, we perpetrate epistemic injustice against them.

These detrimental interpersonal effects are precisely what makes stereotyping and acting on bias immoral. Even if we allow that subjectivity is central to any moral discussion about feelings of upset and victimization, it is an objective fact that stereotyping causes social harm and interpersonal ill-will. While having implicit biases may not be immoral *per se* because largely out of one's control, not seeking out and addressing the implicit biases within to be sure that one is not acting on them can be considered immoral, a sin of omission. Although it is true that humans are not in nearly as much control as we believe we are over our cognitive processes, including those related to bias and stereotyping, we should undoubtedly be held accountable for our actions that may be results of those (pre)cognitive processes, especially when those actions have such detrimental effects on others. If anyone cares about leading a moral life, they should care about causing the least amount of harm possible to others. Since it is difficult to know who will be offended by what statement and in what context, it is good moral practice to avoid making potentially offensive statements and pursue respect for others as a moral goal. Humans are far more than their instincts. Humans have the capacity to overcome their impulses and confront their implicit biases. The power of the human brain is insurmountable in its ability to train and retrain its thoughts and habits. So, biases being implicit is no excuse for letting those biases strengthen and further ingrain themselves into one's worldview.

How Can We Improve?

It may seem a daunting task to ameliorate the issue of implicit bias and discriminatory stereotyping behaviors humans display as they go about their daily lives. While there may never be a world completely free of bias, there are ways that those who care about being prosocial, moral individuals can become part of the solution rather than continuing to be part of the problem. Because implicit bias and stereotyping behavior is largely caused by deep rooted divisions between in-group and out-group members, like those related to race and ethnicity, the first step toward bettering social relations would be working toward breaking down in-group/out-group divisions. After all, if race is a social construct, then there is no nonsocial reason for race-based in-groups and race-based out-groups to continue to exist.

Eppich and Schmutz (2019) argue that breaking down bias can be accomplished by promoting a "sense of team" across different in-group and out-group members. The social mindset of individuals would need a shift from a "them" perspective to an "us" perspective. For this goal to become achievable, people need to address their implicit biases and make it a point to avoid use of slurs, stereotypes, or derogatory language toward others. What is considered a slur or derogatory language is continuously changing as society changes, and different groups of people will be offended by language that others are not. Therefore, it is best to avoid use of potentially harmful language that may perpetuate stereotypes or other generalizations based on in-group/out-group bias (Davis & McCready 2020). Furthermore, increased diversity should be the goal in assisting people in a positive way as they navigate their lives. A main priority, especially in educational contexts, should be to acknowledge the individuality of each person's experience as opposed to lumping everyone into overly generalized groups (Sweet & Monceri 2014).

Regarding students in schools, there are intriguing perspectives as to solutions that relieve children from the burden of negative stereotypes. Benjamin Endres (2002) asserts that educators should strive simultaneously to "transcend and attend" to differences in multicultural classrooms

as a means of combatting bias and discrimination. Rephrased, multicultural classrooms need to encourage togetherness and equality while also respecting and appreciating the differences between individuals. Michael Merry (2005) argues that there is room in the world of education for cultural coherence instruction in school to help children build their identities comfortably and confidently as members of their cultural groups. Merry argues that encouraging children to build their identities with pride and coherence in their family cultural groups while simultaneously existing as members of a society of people with unified culture will be especially beneficial to minority children who struggle to battle negative stereotypes surrounding their family culture. Overall, the main focus on the morality of stereotyping and bias is the way people feel. Glen Allen (1975) notes bias reveals itself whenever treatment of others makes them experience negative emotions. The goal of a moral life, therefore, should be to make those around you feel respected and accepted as often and as completely as possible.

Work Cited

- Allen, G. O. (1975). *Cognitive and Conative ethics: Two approaches to moral theory*. Pocatello: Idaho State University Press.
- Barrow, R. (2005). On the duty of not taking offense. *Journal of Moral Education*, 34(3), 265-275.
- Blum, L. (2004). Stereotypes and stereotyping: A moral analysis. *Philosophical Papers*, 33(3), 251-289.
- Burroughs, M. D., & Tollefsen, D. (2016). Learning to listen: Epistemic injustice and the child. *Episteme*, 13 (3), 359-377.
- Davis, C., & McCreedy, E. (2020). The instability of slurs. *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 97(1), 63-85.
- Dong, L. Y., & Wang, Y. (2007). The multiple roles of a teacher in college English teaching from the perspective of the Rosenthal effect. *Journal of Agricultural University of Hebei (Agriculture and Forestry Education Edition)*, 4, 1-12.
- Endres, B. (2002). Transcending and attending to differences in the multicultural classroom. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36(2), 171-185.
- Eppich, W. J. & Schmutz, J. B. (2019). From ‘them’ to ‘us’: Bridging group boundaries through team inclusiveness. *Medical Education*, 53(8), 756-758.
- Freeman, L. (2017). Embodied harm: A phenomenological engagement with stereotype threat. *Human Studies*, 40(4), 637-662.
- Harvey, J. (1990). Stereotypes and group-claims: Epistemological and moral issues, and their implications for multi-culturalism in Education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 24(1), 39-50.
- Lieberman, Z., Howard, L. H., Vasquez, N. M., & Woodward, A. L. (2018). Children’s expectations about conventional and moral behaviors of ingroup and outgroup members. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 165, 7-18.
- Merry, M. S. (2005). Cultural coherence and the schooling for identity maintenance. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 39(3), 477-497.
- Mlodinow, L. (2012). *Subliminal: How your unconscious mind rules your behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books
- Monceri, F. (2014). Taking diversity seriously: On the notion of intercultural philosophy. In *What is intercultural philosophy?* Ed. Sweet, W. Wahington, D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 81-94.
- Olberding, A. (2015). Looking philosophical: Stuff, stereotypes, and self-presentation. *Hypatia*,

- 30(4), 692–707.
- Origi, G. (2012). Epistemic injustice and epistemic trust. *Social Epistemology*, 26(2), 221–235.
- PISA, (n.d.). <https://www.oecd.org/PISA/>
- School-to-prison pipeline [infographic]*. American Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.). <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/school-prison-pipeline-infographic>
- Shah, N. (2019). “Asians are good at math” is not a compliment: STEM success as a threat to personhood. *Harvard Educational Review* 89(4), 661-686.

Learning to Rope: Fancy Jo's Story

Lynett Rock

Connors State College/Oklahoma State University

Abstract: After an overview on the history and evolution, of women's role in rodeo, discussion turns to the story of Fancy Jo, a participant in my study. Fancy Jo's story highlights aspects of informal learning including the centrality of family rodeo participation to her role as a cowgirl. Fancy Jo, a Native American woman, grew up in the rodeo and learned from her father. She provides an example of how women in the rodeo have exhibited resistance to power structures and demanded more access. Fancy Jo's interview explored the addition of breakaway roping to rodeo, a women's event, highlighting how women navigate, resist, and transform their educational spaces. Change takes time, resistance, and pressure within racialized and patriarchal systems.

Fancy Jo is a cowgirl, a breakaway roper, a teacher, a daughter, and many more descriptive terms. This paper examines Fancy Jo's narrative and the stories she tells about learning to become a cowgirl. Fancy Jo's story is part of a larger discussion within my dissertation on women's experiences competing in the rodeo arena. As I examine Fancy Jo's experiences, I will first give a brief introduction to rodeo, then discuss the gendered aspects of the rodeo arena, and share her complete narrative. Finally, conclusions are made from her stories.

Introduction to Rodeo

Rodeo can be defined many different ways; it is a sport, an extension of a lifestyle, and a business. Rodeo is also masculinized and racialized (Ford, 2020; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Joudrey, 2016; Martin et al., 2014; Parkinson, 2020; Patton & Schedlock, 2012; Pensrose, 2013). Throughout the evolution of rodeo an emphasis has been placed on patriotism and belief in God without acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of participants and competitors. Women are regulated to limited events and participation as rodeo queens through the gendered dimension of rodeo culture. Almost every rodeo begins with a call to service for America and God followed by a standard set of events: steer wrestling, tie-down roping, breakaway roping, barrel racing, team roping, bronc riding, and bull riding. Other events may be included depending on the associations or local traditions, but these represent the core rodeo offerings.

A Woman's Place: Gender and Women within the Rodeo

Scholarship surrounding women's roles and gender within the rodeo arena has shown that women experience rodeo differently than men (Butler & Charles, 2012; Dashper, 2016; Hedenborg, 2015; Meah, 2015; Weninger & Dallaire, 2017 a & b). Social interactions that take place within a space contribute to defining that space's significance and the agency of those who occupy that space (Meah, 2015). Cowgirls practice and compete within the arena and therefore define themselves and others within that space. The time needed to train, compete, and network within the rodeo arena contributes to how a cowgirl defines herself and others. Weninger and Dallaire (2017b) discussed that cowgirls would label those that spent extensive time training and bonding with animals as legitimate barrel racers. But other scholars found that women needed to exhibit a nurturing personality in order to gain acceptance (Butler & Charles, 2012; Dashper, 2016). Dashper (2016) emphasizes that "caring and nurturing are commonly believed to be feminine skills, things which women have a 'natural' capacity for" (p. 261). It is not one interaction that defines a cowgirl but the totality of social expectations and preparation to

compete. Cowgirls navigate both self-constructed identities and socially constructed gendered spaces to find acceptance within the rodeo arena. Women in the rodeo need to exhibit both physical strength (to “care their horses”) and fit within gendered expectations of hetero-femininity to find a space of belonging (Butler & Charles, 2012; Weninger & Dallaire, 2017a).

Pathway to the Arena: Narrative Inquiry

I choose to begin my ethnographic journey into the rodeo arena with a rich narrative that highlights Fancy Jo’s stories. Narratives exist in many forms. Researchers use them in a variety of ways within different disciplines. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) presented the type of narrative inquiry I chose for this project; focusing on the “experience as expressed in lived and told stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 40). Because “lives are lived, told, retold, and relived in storied ways on storied landscapes;” narrative research is rooted in the realm of representation of experience (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 598). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that “narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines” (p. 121). This is true for my study also.

I am a cowgirl, I live in the arena, and I have shared experiences with my participants. My own experiences within this environment influenced the creation of this project and helped me position myself as a researcher in the arena. I learned about rodeo in ways unexplainable through other methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Cowgirls are not univocal, but cowgirls/individuals must recognize that “we are all characters with multiple plotlines who speak from within these multiple plotlines” (p. 147). Cowgirls see the world from many viewpoints. As a researcher, I endeavored to capture all the variety they revealed to me.

I came to rodeo late in life and struggled with the unspoken rules that regulated me to limited events. This struggle gave birth to my research puzzle. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) narrative inquiry research begins with a puzzle that evolves from a sense of wonder. Instead of focusing on one research problem, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that “narrative inquiry characteristically begins with the researcher’s autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the *research puzzle*” (p. 41. Emphasis in original.). My research puzzle focused on rodeos rules and culture. I wondered what rodeo would be like if everyone entered the arena with equal opportunities. Additionally, I wondered why I still choose to compete? Why other women entered the arena?

I have applied a feminist theoretical perspective to Fancy Jo’s narrative because masculine hegemonic tendencies are deeply rooted in historical rodeo cultural traditions (Burbick, 2007; Ford, 2020; Kim et al., 2017; Parkinson, 2020; Patton & Schedlock, 2012; Toy, 2012). Traditional gender roles are part of the historical, patriarchal past that has shaped current rodeo culture (Burbick, 2007; Ford, 2020; Kim et al., 2017; Parkinson, 2020; Patton & Schedlock, 2012; Toy, 2012). Crotty (1998) states that a feminist theoretical perspective calls “current ideology into question, and initiates action, in the case of social justice” (p. 157). My study is situated on gender and power within the rodeo arena. The purpose of the larger study was not to generalize cowgirl experiences but to “re-present” my participants’ rodeo stories, illustrating and unpacking the meaning they narrated about the masculinized arena.

Fancy Jo's Story

Fancy Jo and I met by the grandstands on a July night. Intermittent cool breezes lowered both the heat and the humidity typical of Oklahoma summers. Fancy Jo was up in the slack and uncharacteristically nervous. Fancy Jo is a stocky woman who can control a 1200-pound horse while roping a running calf, but the thought of participating in an interview rattled her. Seeking privacy, we walked away from the stands towards my truck; I perched on the tailgate while Fancy Jo paced near me. Cowgirls and cowboys interrupted us as they warmed up their horses nearby. Many would say “hello” and catch up, for Fancy Jo is well known. Rodeo in Oklahoma is a family affair because everyone knows everyone, and every performance is tantamount to a small family reunion.

Fancy Jo is not a pop culture dime store cowgirl. Unlike some female competitors, she doesn't wear bedazzled jeans or flashy clothing. This night she is wearing what I might call her “rodeo uniform”: baggy jeans, a blue t-shirt, sunglasses, ball cap, and cowboy boots. Her long brown hair is tied back, and although she is Native American, she passes for White. Her smile lights up her face; kindness radiates from her. Her father is a teacher and influenced her to be the same. Fancy Jo's grit goes beyond the rodeo arena, for she seeks out and bonds with the “troubled kids” in the classroom. Choosing education as a career is tied to her rodeo journey. Teaching fits into her lifestyle; having summers off allows her to follow in her father's footsteps into yet another arena.

At the time of the interview, Fancy Jo was ranked in multiple rodeo associations standings for breakaway roping. So far this year she has earned over \$4000 roping in just two associations. She competes in the ACRA (American Cowboys Rodeo Association), CRRRA (Cowboys Regional Rodeo Association), IPRA (International Professional Rodeo Association), INFR (Indian National Finals Rodeo), open rodeos, and jackpots. Ladies' breakaway roping is her main area, but she also barrel races and team ropes in the “off” season. Fancy Jo comes from a family of cowboys. Her family considers competition “a lifestyle. Sometimes I call it a hobby... *a bad habit*. It's just a way of life. That's all I know.” Fancy Jo learned how to compete in the rodeo from her parents; her dad specifically was instrumental in her learning to rope because he put a rope in her hand early in her life. The arena is like a second home for Fancy Jo.

The following section, presented in its entirety, tells the story of Fancy Jo, in her own words. Words are used to paint a picture of this cowgirl, her rodeo career, how she learned to become a cowgirl, and where she is now.

The conversation turned to a photo Fancy Jo posted on Facebook of her backed into the box. Fancy Jo explained that she had been roping since she was five years old. *“I started running barrels first. And then I was always in the way, so dad would put a rope in my hand, and I was twelve or thirteen when I entered my first breakaway roping... I've been roping ever since.”* Describing the photo, Fancy Jo stated *“I was maybe five, and I am sure my mother took the photo. My cousin was in the chute acting like a fake calf (smiles in remembrance) for my dad to turn out.”*

At this point Fancy Jo starts to tear up and suddenly walks away, returning with sunglasses on, although it's dusk. She quickly starts talking about her dad.

That's who he was as a parent, and that kind of memory is... I was always in the way. I was always in the pen roping... in the way. I was having my boom box rocking out (you can hear tears in her voice). In the way. My dad added steps by the chute, so I could help turn calves out. It was definitely a good childhood. My parents are my biggest impacts and have taught me to do the best and to be a good person both in and out of the arena.

Fancy Jo stalked away from the truck and took a short break to regain her composure. When she returned, we discussed if there were times she was treated differently at rodeos because she was a woman.

She looked away from me and seemed to gather her words carefully, almost like she was both anticipating and dreading this topic. *"I would have to say no. Just because that's all I know and everybody that's around me knows that's all I know."*

She takes a long pause, turns and walks away from the truck and then comes back like she had rethought her answer. She starts again:

Well, maybe we should start that again. And I thought about this, how I want to answer this question when you first mentioned this project. In 2005, Donna came to me and asked me to be the first director of the CRRA. They wanted to add girls' breakaway roping. And I'm not a position type person. I'm more of a ... I'm a leader but not like wanting to make decisions. And I told her I would do it, and it's (women's breakaway roping) been in there ever since. They say it's the best thing they ever put into the rodeo. And we started out with our event at just a few rodeos and now we have to make a decision about which rodeo to enter. It's changed from just a few rodeos to now it's . . . we get 'the book' out and there are options for every week. I mean, it's amazing, every rodeo includes breakaway! We're still fighting the added money situation. We still get shorted on added money.

And then two years later, we went to the ACRA board, about five of us, and we begged and pleaded with them to have our event added. We literally had to go with a list of pros and cons, and in front of the board of directors. And they said 'yes,' but we had to go Saturday morning in the slack of the finals instead of the performance. So, the first two years of ACRA finals, we went Saturday morning. The third year we got to rope during the perf [performance] and they timed us. Literally had a stopwatch because they thought we would take too long. And I think we finished all fifteen girls in less than five minutes. And it's like every association we have had to show ourselves, prove ourselves. And that's what a friend of mine and I were about talking earlier, she called the CRS and asked for the entries of like the bareback riding and they had 824 for the whole year. And the breakaway had almost 3000.

And at the IFR once we got it in there our event paid \$333 to win a round, and that was in 2012. By comparison, I think the regular events pay almost \$2000 a round. And now we're up to a \$1000 a round, so we're still not equal added money. Now in the CRRRA and the ACRA, we are equal added money at the finals. Never did I think that our event would go to so many different rodeos, that they would be able to rope at Cheyenne, and at the IFR for \$50,000. It's all been hard work. It wasn't handed to us but was hard work; multiple people have paved the way for us to compete at this level.

And that's what irritates me, these young girls just entering the sport, they don't realize how much work has went into it. Let them get on social media and complain because we don't have equal added money. And I'm like, "you should've been there." What was happening twelve years ago when we first started this endeavor! Because when I was a kid, you went to high school rodeos, you went to college rodeos, and you were done. There were a few open rodeos. But we've had to work hard. I had a friend ask 'why didn't you enter Cheyenne?' Because I've worked hard but it's a long way to Cheyenne. It was amazing just watching them, but the opportunities that are there now are just unreal.

Fancy Jo is so thankful to be able to compete in her chosen event.

I feel like sometimes they just kind of run us whatever in there to rope [referring to the quality of cattle supplied during breakaway roping]. I can remember when we first started roping the calves would barely fit in the chute. Shoot-Sam (her husband) couldn't even get in there to push because they were so big and it was just like the breakaway ropers will run them because we were so eager to be an event. We didn't care what we had to do. I mean, morning slack, if the calves were big, if they had horns, whatever they sent for us. Well, we have to get our foot in the door before we can start rocking the boat. We can't be making people mad. And that's, that's what I feel like the younger generation doesn't understand because I mean they (the rodeo associations) were pretty much like, 'if this doesn't work, it's not going to happen'.

After the conversation, we said our goodbyes and walked in different directions. I went to watch the rest of the rodeo, and she went to warm up her horse. Over the course of the evening, I received several texts from her thanking me for including her in this project and adding little tidbits to complete the conversation. The interview spurred her to reflect on her childhood, and she wanted to make sure I knew how important her parents were to her, and why she cried that evening.

Fancy Jo, narrating a type of determination to succeed, provides an example of how hard cowgirls work to have their events included in the rodeo. In one of her texts to me, she said that it takes a "drive and desire to succeed" in the rodeo. Fancy Jo's rodeo education, which began with her parents, taught her the value of persistence and how to blaze pathways of access. Fighting for her rightful place in the arena has encouraged her to teach future generations how women compete, and Fancy Jo still believes that future generations have a lot to learn. (Rock, 2021)

Conclusions; and What's Next?

Fancy Jo narrated her cowgirl journey and emphasized the role of her father in her learning how to belong to the rodeo arena. Her story reflected that having parents who had a rodeo history allowed her to exercise her courage and claim a place in the arena. Fancy Jo had access to areas that are often off limits to other competitors without a family history. Fancy Jo's father was the driving force behind her early entry into rodeo even though her mother also competed. She learned, informally, through his life experiences. Le Belle (1981) characterized informal education as being "associated with either socialization in kin-based societies in which the family is the dominant institution or the sort of education involving basic attitudes and values that occur within the family in all societies" (p. 314). Fancy Jo's father not only socialized her to desire competition in the rodeo but also contributed to her gendered socialization. What she learned allowed her to develop an identity that was resistant to hegemonic expressions of womanhood. Fancy Jo narrated learning from her father and an attitude that valued rodeo skills, culture, and participation in the sport. Fancy Jo's family sport history within the rodeo influenced her desire to compete; children with an extensive family sport history have higher rates of participation in a particular sport (Downward et al., 2014; Gustafson & Rhodes, 2006; Hayoz et al., 2017; Knight, 2019).

Fancy Jo's stories about her family's involvement in the rodeo illustrated that competition acted as a pathway to strengthen family identity outside the arena. In this sense, participation in the rodeo functioned as a binding to their family's structure and purpose. Rodeo functions as part of her family's identity, past, and, through her and her husband's participation, the future. Fancy Jo belongs to her family through her participation in rodeo. This reflects a cyclic process between rodeo participation and family identity. Fancy Jo belongs in the rodeo arena because her family also belongs, and she belongs to her family because she competes in the rodeo.

Fancy Jo also talked about the young age she began learning the skills associated with success in the rodeo. These skills were taught by her parents with an emphasis on her father's role. Fancy Jo learned that she *could* compete in the rodeo. Her family acted as a site of socialization and gave rise to gendered norms as part of her gendered socialization into her family. Fancy Jo acquired a sense of empowerment every time she rode, practiced, or competed in the arena with her family. Like Ford (2020) stated "these are not just rodeo families — these families *are* rodeo" (p. 110. Emphasis in original.). Fancy Jo's family has a history of rodeo success and that created a feeling of empowerment and belonging for Fancy Jo. Fancy Jo's early socialization into rodeo as a sport was influenced by her father through his heavy involvement (Strandbu et al., 2020). Her father instilled a "family sport culture" that increased her acceptance of rodeo (Strandbu et al., 2020). Fancy Jo learned that she belonged in the masculinized rodeo arena through his teachings and his message that rodeo participation was a desired activity.

Change is happening in the rodeo world. Professional rodeos offer larger and larger monetary incentives which has increased the number of competitors. The addition of breakaway roping is giving more women the chance to compete. As more women enter elite rodeos (used here to indicate rodeos with larger than usual prizes), the diversity of competitors will create both opportunities for and resistance to change. Further research is needed to discuss how the inclusion of more women into rodeo affects competitors, rodeo committees, and audience attraction.

Cowgirls have a smaller piece of the monetary pie in rodeo than do cowboys. Being restricted to only two events limits the amount of money a woman can win. Rodeo is a capitalist, patriarchal system that functions within our society. There are lines drawn that separate women from men and cowgirls are no exception. Women are relegated to two events now, it has not always been that way, and I believe the future of women in the rodeo will include more cowgirls crossing cultural boundaries. Fancy Jo is just one cowgirl, narratives from other competitors with different outlooks would add more pieces to the puzzle that is rodeo. Future research should explore the ways women are crossing boundaries and finding a home in the arena.

References

- Burbick, J. (2007). *Rodeo queens: On the circuit with America's cowgirls* (D.E. Schultz & J. Burbick, Eds.). Public Affairs.
- Butler, D., & Charles, N. (2012). Exaggerated femininity and tortured masculinity: Embodying gender in the horseracing industry. *The Sociological Review*, 60(4), 676–695. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02129.x>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research (1st ed.)*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, M. S. (2009). Comments on Coulter and Smith: Relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 598–602. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09353940>
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage Publications.
- Dasher, K. (2016). Strong, active women: Re(doing) rural femininity through equestrian sport and leisure. *Ethnography*, 17(3), 350–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609379>
- Downward, P., Hallmann, K., & Pawlowski, T. (2014). Assessing parental impact on the sports participation of children: A socio-economic analysis of the UK. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 14(1), 84–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2013.805250>
- Ford, E. (2020). *Rodeo as refuge, rodeo as rebellion: Gender, race, and identity in the American rodeo*. University Press of Kansas.
- Forsyth, C., & Thompson, C. (2007). Helpmates of the Rodeo: Fans, Wives, and Groupies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 31(4), 394–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723507307812>
- Gustafson, S., & Rhodes, R. (2006). Parental correlates of physical activity in children and early adolescents. *Sports Medicine*, 36(1), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-200636010-00006>
- Hayoz, C., Klostermann, C., Schmid, J., Schlesinger, T., & Nagel, S. (2019). Intergenerational transfer of a sports-related lifestyle within the family. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 54(2), 182–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690217702525>
- Hedenborg, S. (2015). Gender and sports within the equine sector – A comparative perspective. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32(4), 551–564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2015.1022151>
- Joudrey, S. (2016). What a man: Portrayals of masculinity and race in Calgary stampede ephemera. *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 16(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708615615608>
- Kim, E., Eldakhkhny, D. M., & Falcus, S. (2017). Becoming a Korean American cowgirl: Performing ethnicity in “The Lone Night Cantina” from Don Lee’s *Yellow: Stories* (2001). *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2017.1408262>

- Knight, C. (2019). Revealing findings in youth sport parenting research. *Kinesiology Review (Champaign, Ill.)*, 8(3), 252–259. <https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2019-0023>
- La Belle, T. J. (1981). An introduction to the nonformal education of children and youth. *Comparative Education Review*, 25(3), 313–329.
- Martin, L., Fasching-Varner, K., Quinn, M., & Jackson, M. (2014). Racism, rodeos, and the misery industries of Louisiana. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 7(6), 60–84.
- Meah, A. (2014). Reconceptualizing power and gendered subjectivities in domestic cooking spaces. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(5), 671–690. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513501404>
- Parkinson, O. (2020). ‘Spoiler alert: It’s men’: A thesis on the true cause of female exclusion from rodeo bronc riding [paper presentation]. National Conference on Undergraduate Research 2020, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana, United States.
- Patton, T., & Schedlock, S. (2012). *Gender, whiteness, and power in rodeo: Breaking away from the ties of sexism and racism*. Lexington Books. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oks-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1013592>
- Penrose, J. (2003). When all the cowboys are Indians: The nature of race in All-Indian rodeo. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93(3), 687–705. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8306.9303009>
- Rock, L. (2021). *Ride like a girl: A narrative exploration of women in the rodeo* (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University).
- Weninger, D., & Dallaire, C. (2017a). “It’s not how you look; It’s what you do.” Western Canadian barrel racers, rodeo legitimacy and femininity. *Sport in Society*, 20(8), 1077–1091. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2016.1175140>
- Weninger, D., & Dallaire, C. (2017b). The gendered barrel racer–horse relationship in Western Canadian rodeo. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 54(1), 104–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690217708578>

**Peers, Power, and Purpose:
Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives on the Theory of Peer Social Capital in Schools**

Keith W. Frome
The Park School of Buffalo

Abstract: Youth activation can take a multitude of effective forms, which are only recently being explored at scale. Although a highly promising form of youth-adult partnership, a commonly accepted nomenclature to guide high school implementation and practice has yet to be constructed. Sometimes referred to as peer social capital or instrumental assistance, youth activation occurs when young people act to improve their schools. Youth activation takes off from young people’s keen interest in making their school experiences more rewarding and growth-oriented and more likely to encourage engagement, thriving, and development in the student body. Alongside adults who embrace young people’s authentic leadership potential, youth activators mobilize their peers and motivate a sense of engagement and belonging, which contributes to positive school experiences. Students become problem solvers rather than problems to be solved.

On Friday, March 9, 2018, less than one month after the tragic shootings in Parkland, then Governor of Florida, Rick Scott, signed into law Senate Bill 7026, otherwise known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. It was a remarkably swift legislative response in a state famous for its vigorous protections of gun owners. As Patricia Mazzei reported in the *New York Times*, at the signing ceremony, Governor Scott credited the classmates of the slain students and their parents for inspiring the bill and “praised them for helping persuade lawmakers to pass legislation.” Governor Scott was reported as stating, “You made your voices heard... you helped change your state. You made a difference. You should be proud.”¹ The same article quoted Rebecca Schneid, the 16-year-old editor of the Stoneman Douglas High newspaper, *The Eagle Eye*. Though not completely satisfied by the reach of the bill, Schneid reportedly said: “I never really expected to get something done so fast. We’ve been calling them out, and that really scared them. And that’s scaring them into making sure they actually do represent us. They know that if they don’t, we’re going to vote them out. We’re going to keep sending people to Tallahassee because when we go away, this goes away.”²

The difference between Governor Scott’s comments and Schneid’s illustrates one vanguard of current American education reform. Governor Scott represents the importance of student voice, but Schneid demonstrates youth activation. Scott’s language, while laudatory and appreciative, is also relatively passive. Students “help.” They don’t scream or shout or argue or demonstrate, but rather they “make their voices heard.” They don’t change the world, they “make a difference.” The implication is that student protest is an act that is accomplished and done. Temporally, according to Governor Scott, this is already a historical act — to be commended and remembered — but essentially over and done with.

Schneid’s vision and language, on the other hand, launch the student voice dimension into a new realm. Her language is action-packed. She and her partners “expect,” they scare, they call out, they make sure, and they “keep sending.” For the Stoneman Douglas High School youth activators, their work is ongoing and demands a program of vigilance and measurement.

¹ Mazzei, P. (March 9, 2018). Florida Governor Signs Gun Limits into Law, Breaking with the N.R.A. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/florida-governor-gun-limits.html>

² Ibid.

Temporally, they are planning for the future. Senate Bill 7026 is not history; it is a milestone on a longer strategic path. Schneid vows to take responsibility, because, and it bears repeating, “when we go away, this goes away.” Schneid’s voice is certainly sounded and heard, but her vision assumes responsibility and continued responsiveness. It should be noted that the Parkland students were able to leverage their position of relative privilege to attract national and international media attention in ways that communities of color have not been typically afforded. I mention Governor Scott’s and Schneid’s reflections to illustrate the distinction between youth voice and the kind of youth activism practiced by young people in schools and communities throughout the country. The point is youth activists don’t just voice their observations and make suggestions; they pursue measurable goals and achieve demonstrable results.³

Peer Social Capital and Youth Activation

Youth activation can take a multitude of effective forms, which are only recently being explored at scale. Although a highly promising form of youth-adult partnership, a commonly accepted nomenclature to guide high school implementation and practice has yet to be constructed. Sometimes referred to as peer social capital or instrumental assistance, youth activation occurs when young people act to improve their schools. Youth activation takes off from young people’s keen interest in making their school experiences more rewarding and growth-oriented and more likely to encourage engagement, thriving, and development in the student body. Alongside adults who embrace young people’s authentic leadership potential, youth activators mobilize their peers and motivate a sense of engagement and belonging, which contributes to positive school experiences.

Realizing that COVID-19 school interruptions may have been an inflection point for the recognition of the effectiveness of youth activation, Chelsea Waite of the Christensen Institute recently released a report on a survey of the emerging field of student-run support services. According to Waite, “As schools develop strategies for supporting students to both survive and thrive, the power of peer social capital is a lesson worth remembering. Across the entire high school to career pipeline, peer networks are an immense, but still latent, resource in the student success equation.”⁴ Waite highlights four ways that peer social capital is leveraged by schools, colleges, non-profits, and the students themselves to measurably improve outcomes:

1. Social support to foster belonging, identity formation, and social and emotional skills;
2. Academic support to drive learning outcomes and keep classmates on track;
3. Guidance support to expand post-graduate options and ease transitions;
4. Mental health support to promote well-being and reduce loneliness.⁵

Waite documents work already being done in these four modalities, arguing that student-driven success occurs because it leverages the nascent social capital that resides in every school setting. For Waite, “Social capital describes access to, and ability to mobilize, relationships that

³ Portions of this paper originally appeared in Sherman, Robert and Frome, Keith W. (2019). *A Guide to Youth Activation: Peers, Power, Purpose and Partnerships*. PeerForward, Inc.

⁴ Waite, Chelsea (2021). *Peer Connections Reimagined: Innovations Nurturing Student Networks to Unlock Opportunity*. Christensen Institute, 3.

⁵ Ibid.

help further an individual’s potential and goals. Just like skills and knowledge, relationships offer resources that drive access to opportunity.”⁶ In the following discussion, I want to establish the foundations of Waite’s taxonomy by pointing out that there is a significant, antecedent psychological, sociological, and philosophical body of literature that supports and deepens the work already being done in the area of peer social capital. For the purposes of this paper, I’ll use the term “youth activation” to refer to the deliberate and systematic leverage of peer social capital networks stipulating, specifically, that *youth activation* occurs when *youth, along with their peers and school/civic partners, create and execute student-designed solutions to pressing challenges that they themselves identify in their schools*. In particular, youth activators:

Challenge: They *identify* an important issue — a pressing problem or compelling vision that matters, and to which a solution or improvement is sought;

Solve: They *generate* youth-powered solutions that can make a measurable difference; and

Partner: They *ally* with peers and school/civic leaders to work on the identified pressing problem in order to increase impact and press resolution.

To understand the dynamics of youth activation, the concept must be distinguished, but not entirely separated, from related concepts of youth *voice* and youth *agency*. Within the context of the development of youth activation as an area of study, the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research emphasized the developmental importance of addressing student agency in schools. In the consortium’s 2015 report on “integrated identities,”⁷ *agency* is defined as the feeling of being effective and being able to influence one’s world positively, knowing how to get what you need to progress or problem-solve. Likewise, *voice* refers to the ability to communicate feelings and goals and to participate through one’s actions and words.⁸ By focusing on the perspectives and needs of the community, youth activation integrates and catalyzes student agency and voice. Youth activation in practice incorporates performance management and organizing techniques to develop stronger renegotiated relationships with adults, some of whom may have broad influence in a school or district. Youth activation creates learning environments that emphasize the importance of peer relationships and collaboration, where goals for improving the community can be verbalized and established as opportunities for student voice, and collective actions can be taken to realize school improvement goals as opportunities for student agency. The practice of youth activation prioritizes student-determined goals and places youth interest and motivation at the core of the educational enterprise. Working with and alongside adults whose roles are supportive and facilitative, young people positively impact the school experience for themselves and their peers. Through youth activation, students hypothesize and act.

⁶Waite. *Peer Connections Reimagined*, 4.

⁷Dickson, S., Ehrlich, S. B., Farrington, C., Hayes, K., Heath, R. D., Johnson, D. W., Turner, A. C. (2015). *Foundations for Young Adult Success*. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/foundations-young-adult-success-developmental-framework>

⁸Sturgis, C. (2015). *Three Factors for Success: Agency, Integrated Identity, and Competencies*. Competency Works. <https://www.competencyworks.org/reflections/three-factors-for-success-agency-integrated-identity-and-competencies/>

Youth-Adult Partnerships in an Era of Supply-Side School Reform

There are two fundamental reasons schools tend not to be structured in ways that unleash the power of students through authentic youth-adult partnerships: supply-side school reform policies and the banking metaphor of learning and teaching that continues to bewitch educational practice. Recent decades of school reform efforts have focused on the supply side of the education equation and neglected the demand side. Instead of investing in developing assets that already exist in communities with struggling schools, namely the capacities of students and families, the mainstream reform agenda addressed school-side deficits by externally supplying everything from technology to training to standards to assessments to brand new schools and new leaders. Two of the most influential educational reform documents of the past three decades, *A Nation at Risk* (1983)⁹ and *The Turnaround Challenge* (2007),¹⁰ recommend myriad supply-side responses to the urgency of diminished student success rates. Neither of these reports mentions or recommends leveraging the power of young people to influence and drive their classmates to take charge of their academic and career narratives or to improve the lives of their families and friends. As previously noted, young people are naturally motivated to improve their given situation, but schools are not investing in the support and structures necessary to catalyze and encourage this natural inclination. A typical school budget does not allocate expenditures for implementing anything resembling a youth activation strategy, which does not naturally fit into standard school budgeting categories. “Student Support” dollars are spent on adults — guidance counseling, health, attendance, and special needs service providers — but not on students supporting students.

In addition, a pernicious framework organizes much educational theory and practice, which the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire called the “banking model.”¹¹ This educational dynamic situates students as empty vaults to be filled by the banker/teacher with currency, i.e., knowledge, standards, and skills. The teacher acts on the student, who is passive and academically disconnected from his or her classmates. The role of the student is to display the amount absorbed or “banked” through a series of tests and assessments. It is no coincidence that “accounting” and “accountability” are related words that dominate contemporary educational practice.

Divorced from a concomitant focus on the power and assets of students and families, supply-side reform and the banking metaphor of pedagogy have contributed to decades of lackluster outcomes. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, even though high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates were increasing, college completion rates had been stubbornly incremental. In 2015, 12% of low-income high school students achieved a bachelor’s degree, signaling an increase of only six percentage points over a span of 44 years.¹² Not surprisingly, over the same timeframe, the percentage of Americans who were earning more money and enjoying a higher standard of

⁹ Bell, T. H. (1983). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The National Commission on Excellence in Education.

¹⁰ Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The Turnaround Challenge*. Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.

¹¹ Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, trans.). Continuum Publishing Company.

¹² *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2017 Historical Trend Report*. (2017). Pell Institute. http://pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2017_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf

living than their parents, i.e., living the “American Dream,” tumbled from 90% to 50%.¹³ Pointing to inadequate education as well as increasing rates of crime, drug abuse, depression, suicide and obesity, a U.S. military organization determined that 75% of American youth were ineligible to serve in the military.¹⁴ Within this context, youth voice, agency, and activation proponents are seeking to invert the supply-side, banking paradigm with the expectation that outcomes on numerous measures, from academics to physical and mental well-being to hopefulness to civic engagement, will significantly improve, especially as schools emerge from pandemic restrictions.

Foundations of Youth Activation Theory

Generating a robust youth activation theory requires attention to a large body of interdisciplinary literature with entries from the fields of sociology, youth organizing, developmental psychology, neuroscience, civic education, and moral philosophy. Among these foundational fields, the philosophical aspects of youth agency, voice, and activation have been largely overlooked, even among the most ardent youth advocates. Here, my goal is to survey the scholarly foundations of youth activation theory grounded in advancements in research on school culture, with the hope that future practitioners will take up a more in-depth exploration of these and other frameworks.

Sociological Foundations of Youth Activation

Beginning with the work of Otis Dudley Duncan in the 1950s and 1960s to more recent studies by Robert Crosnoe, Laurence Steinberg and Andrew Sokatch, quantitative sociological research has documented both the positive and negative impacts of peer influence on academic achievement and social mobility. Sokatch’s regression analysis study of postsecondary outcome data suggested that among a cohort of low-income high school students of color, peer-group expectations were the greatest predictor of college attendance.¹⁵ Sokatch found that having encouragement from friends who planned to attend college increased the students’ chances of enrolling in college by nearly 30 percentage points.

Much of the sociological research on youth activation (which Crosnoe and other scholars refer to as “instrumental assistance”) turns on the distinction between formal and informal schooling processes, although in many cases, a school’s informal and formal processes are organically intertwined and impact one another. For example, the intended outcomes of a school’s formal processes may be thwarted or accelerated by its peer networks and groupings. In order to understand how a school’s formal processes work, one must also understand its informal, social context. Formal processes involve the deliberately designed and constructed aspects of schools as institutions including curricula, success metrics, calendars, standards, disciplinary procedures, evaluations, awards, extra-curriculars, student and faculty evaluations, and academic groupings. Informal processes are found in the social context of a school, including how peers select their social groups, choose their identities, and visualize their futures.

Once the interplay of formal and informal processes is understood, then policies and programs may be manipulated and implemented to harness the power of positive peer influence

¹³ Chetty, R., Grusky, D., Hell, M., Hendren, N., Manduca, R., Narang, J. (2016). *The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940*. <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/data/>

¹⁴ Christeson, W., Messner-Zidell, S., & Taggart, A. D. (2009). *Ready, Willing, and Unable to Serve*. Mission: Readiness. Military Leaders for Kids. <http://cdn.missionreadiness.org/NATEE1109.pdf>

¹⁵ Sokatch, A. (2006). Peer Influences on the College-Going Decisions of Low Socioeconomic Status Urban Youth. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(1), 128-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124506291783>

in order to drive academic and social-emotional outcomes such as belonging, well-being, and a sense of hope. Published in 1961, James Coleman's *Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and its Impact on Education*, was among the first studies to make this argument. Coleman's work suggested that because interscholastic athletic competitions nurtured a school's positive peer culture, schools should also establish academic leagues to similarly inspire each student to pursue academic achievement as a service to the school's community.¹⁶ Crosnoe extended Coleman's arguments in the 2011 book *Fitting In, Standing Out*. Crosnoe's mixed-method study explored how social aspects of schooling impacted academic achievement.¹⁷ By analyzing a school's social structure in terms of its peer networks (people you know) and its "crowds" (self-selected groupings that give participants a sense of identity), Crosnoe demonstrated that networks and crowds can and do positively motivate students to succeed and to engage in pro-social behaviors. Crosnoe noted that schools could leverage the social dynamic by intentionally strengthening positive peer influence and employing the conduits of networks and crowds through extra-curriculars, peer mentoring systems, and accessible mental health services. A robust summary of this literature can be found in "The Social Contexts of High Schools" by Crosnoe and colleagues.¹⁸

Philosophical Foundations of Youth Activation

In addition to sociological studies, theoretical tenets of youth activation can be located in the literature on moral development from the field of developmental psychology. I contend that these developmental frameworks take shape for youth activation when read alongside theories of compassion and hope from the field of moral philosophy. A few examples illustrate the importance of philosophical foundations to any discussion of youth activation.

In Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, people develop a capacity to think and act morally by progressing through six stages of moral reasoning arranged into three levels, the pre-conventional, the conventional, and the post-conventional. In pre-conventional moral reasoning, the person is either interested in avoiding punishment or enhancing their self-interest. Those operating at the conventional level make moral decisions based upon considerations of conformity to social norms, such as being a "good boy" or "good girl," or analyzing the right course of action based on what protects the social order from chaos and confusion. The post-conventional level represents, for Kohlberg, the highest platform for moral thinking and includes the fifth and sixth stages of moral development. Thinkers and actors at the fifth stage seek to contribute to a social contract that enhances the well-being of as many individuals as possible, whereas those who operate at the sixth stage base their judgments on universal moral values such as goodness, justice, truth, and fairness.¹⁹

Youth activators tend to exhibit at least stage-five thinking in Kohlberg's taxonomy and many speak in stage-six terms using universal moral precepts to explain their work. For instance, a team of youth activators wanted to improve the relationships between 12th and 9th graders in

¹⁶ Coleman, J. S. (1961). *Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and its Impact on Education*. Free Press of Glencoe.

¹⁷ Crosnoe, R. (2011). *Fitting In, Standing Out: Navigating the Social Challenges of High School to Get An Education*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸ Crosnoe, R. et al. (2018). The Social Contexts of High Schools, in Schneider, B. (Ed.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Education in the 21st Century*. Springer International.

¹⁹ Kohlberg, L., & Hersh, R. H. (1977). Moral Development: A Review of the Theory. *Theory into Practice*, 16(2), 53–59.

their Idaho high school which had a history of toxicity. They devised a Kindness Week campaign wherein 12th graders would do acts of kindness for the underclassmen and register these acts on Instagram. The mayor of their town caught wind of the campaign and declared that every citizen should participate in Kindness Week, renting space on a billboard to announce the effort. This example, indicative of many documented youth activation efforts, reveals elements of stage-five and stage-six thinking, including taking action to authenticate and reinforce the social contract to serve the well-being of individuals throughout the social arenas involved in the activation. Expressions of activation echoed beyond the walls of the school in service of universal values such as fairness and kindness.²⁰

Criticisms of Kohlberg's research have pointed to its exclusion of women and girls, its neglect of relationships and narrative, and its lack of attention to the power of care and empathy in moral development and action. For example, analysis from both Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*²¹ and Nel Noddings' *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*²² suggested that Kohlberg's theory failed to account for how compassion motivates, drives, and lubricates moral action. Though youth activation uses performance management and community organizing techniques to drive measurable outcomes, these outcomes ought to be grounded in a framework of compassion.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum's distinction between "empathy" and "compassion" is helpful here. Empathy, Nussbaum argues, is the ability to reconstruct another's experience without judgment about the value or nature of the experience, i.e., whether it is good or bad or paltry or happy or sad. Compassion is more complex, involving three elements: 1) a judgment that someone is suffering; 2) the belief that the person is innocent, that is, they did not bring about their own suffering; and 3) the understanding that we have what Nussbaum terms a "related vulnerability" in that we identify with the person because the same misfortune could befall us someday, which authentically connects us to the person as we share with them a common set of values and understandings of what is good and just. Clearly, we need the power of empathy to be compassionate. Nussbaum makes the point, though, that when the three elements of compassion are in place, their conjunction is "very likely to lead to action."²³

Compassion is not a disposition but an *action* resulting from ideation. Thus, youth activated students are propelled to act and to, in the words of Crosnoe, "instrumentally assist"²⁴ their classmates in meaningfully and measurably improving their situation. In *The Monarchy of Fear*, Martha Nussbaum explores fear, anger, disgust, envy and jealousy as emotions and mindsets that tear the fabric of a community, an institution, and a country. Nussbaum describes the typical

²⁰ Nampa, Idaho School District Newsletter. (September 27, 2018). Skyline [High School] Senior Leads Kindness Day Efforts. <https://www.nsd131.org/apps/news/article/922832> Nampa, Idaho Mayor's [Debbie Kling] Newsletter. (September 2019). Community Kindness Week, 16-21 September 2019. <https://www.cityofnampa.us/DocumentCenter/View/10242/01-September-2019-Nampa-Highlights>

²¹ Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.

²² Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. University of California Press.

²³ Nussbaum, Martha C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press, 335.

²⁴ Crosnoe et al. *The Social Contexts of High Schools*.

large American high school as a “veritable cauldron of envy.”²⁵ For Nussbaum, the antidote to fear, anger, disgust, envy, and jealousy is hope, and she makes a useful distinction between idle and practical hope. Idle hope is merely wishing while practical hope establishes a goal for betterment, makes a plan to achieve this better state, and acts to pursue the goal.²⁶ Through storytelling and listening, youth activators may empathically imagine the situation of their classmates and share one another’s vulnerabilities. They understand that the status quo of their community is not the fault of their classmates and friends but an accident of zip code as well as the result of centuries of injustice.

Youth activation points to the sociological, psychological, and philosophical thinking that underpins the kind of paradigm shift our educational system needs and for which our students yearn. The desired paradigm shift finds expression in a distinction between schools of envy, that emphasize individual academic, athletic and social achievement, and schools of hope that focus on agency, voice, youth activation and community-wide achievement. As Robert Sherman and I have summarized elsewhere²⁷, schools of hope are characterized by the following attributes:

1. Students are regarded and treated by all stakeholders as sources of solutions.
2. Students identify problems/structures/attitudes/rules/habits that are meaningful and consequential, and whose improvement would be important to their peers and their communities.
3. Adults provide support, scaffolding, and structure as allies and partners, not as authoritarian figures.
4. Adults and students share power.
5. Students are accountable as they pursue meaningful, measurable goals.
6. When appropriate to the challenge, the greater community outside of the school is engaged and supportive of youth activation through frequent communications and celebrations.
7. The administrative apparatus of the school (schedule, resources, budget categories, evaluations, discipline processes) supports and helps facilitate all aspects of the process of youth activation.

Building on these attributes, schools may be reimagined and organizationally reconstructed as places where students are viewed as problem solvers rather than problems to be solved.

²⁵ Nussbaum, Martha C. (2018). *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at the Political Crisis*. Simon & Schuster, 147.

²⁶ Nussbaum. *The Monarchy of Fear*, 206.

²⁷ Sherman and Frome, *A Guide to Youth Activation*, 31

A Science-based Theory of Leadership: Facilitating Continuous Progressive Change in P-12 Schools

Jared R. Lancer

Independent Scholar/Educational Consultant

Abstract: Major problems in public education are rooted in teaching practice which are exacerbated by traditional conceptions of leadership. To address these longstanding challenges, a science-based theory of leadership is presented. A science-based theory of leadership is grounded in thinking that dynamically interacts with underlying conceptual understandings of schooling, including investment in purpose, process, assessment, and evidence to explain, facilitate, and predict learning. Application of science-based theory to education practice, in a way that accounts for particular social and cultural contexts, results in meeting with greater predictability desired outcomes for all students and provides a way to address the issue of sustainability of desired learning outcomes in public school systems.

Major, persisting problems in public education are rooted in traditional teaching practice and exacerbated by traditional conceptions of leadership. These problems are illustrated by the adversarial social context and high rate of punitive school practices in the nation's public schools. Punitive schooling practices cause harm and trauma and negatively influence the life trajectories of children (US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16). According to the Nation's Report Card, despite the primary charge of public schools to develop habits of mind among learners to be productive members of society, fewer than 50% in every student racial group, including students whose parents graduated from college, can read printed texts proficiently by 12th grade (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2019), only approximately 14% of students in the United States can comprehend and interpret printed texts well enough to distinguish between fact and opinion. In California in 2020-2021, while 83.6% of all students graduated from high school as part of a 4-year cohort, fewer than half of white students and all other learners met the minimum college entrance requirements for the University of California and California State University systems (California Department of Education, 2022). Nationally, as many as 60% of entering college freshmen are placed in remedial education courses to develop the skills they should have learned in high school (Thompson, Morales, Sargrad, and Jimenez, 2016). This reality poses multiple challenges in communities across the nation including access to economic opportunity and quality of life. Given the low rate at which all students are prepared for college and professional careers, what level of responsibility should public schools take for poverty, homelessness, and illiteracy in local communities?

Traditional conceptions of leadership significantly contribute to these problems. A traditional conception of leadership is guided by an individualistic and egocentric focus adhering to a linear thought pattern in decision making. Across the country, this perspective causes instability, turbulence, and conflict. Surface and narrow decision making that lacks depth of understanding of the local context and communities of public schools estranges public schools from the people they ought to be serving. This traditional conception of leadership is at the root of the lack of continuity in public school systems. This traditional conception of leadership is the underlying reason even longstanding high performing schools can suddenly become average or low performing following a change in leadership. The perspective on leadership thus plays a central role in the inability to transform underperforming schools and is at the root of the issue of

sustaining high performing schools and systems.

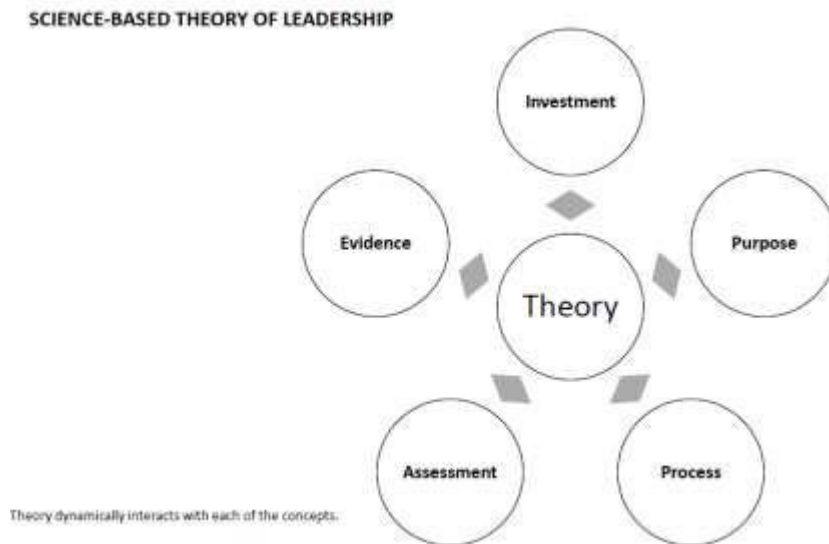
Science-based Theory of Leadership

To address these challenges, a science-based theory of leadership is presented here. A science-based theory of leadership grounds explanation, facilitation, and prediction of learning in dynamic interaction with underlying conceptual understandings, including investment, purpose, process, assessment, and evidence. Application of theory and its underlying concepts to practice in particular social and cultural contexts, results in meeting expected outcomes for all students with greater consistency, predictability and verifiable evidence.

A science-based theory of leadership raises the question: To what extent do we possess the power to predict continuous progressive change in public schools? If we do possess that power, even to a limited extent, how can we use theory to consistently transform practice and learning outcomes in underperforming schools? To what degree could a science-based theory of leadership sustain high achievement and learning outcomes? What questions might be asked of current and prospective leaders to determine these understandings and their application to contexts of practice to predict performance? Which aspects of the dialogue would be important sources of evidence of this level of understanding? The degree to which we use these underlying understandings to identify and place leaders in public school systems plays a significant part in improving public school performance.

In response to these questions, articulating a science-based theory of leadership is grounded in the application of a set of conceptual understandings designed to provide explanatory and predictive power over learning outcomes. The theory applied to practice, with consideration for the particular social and cultural context of practice, reflects a science-based approach. The interconnected conceptual understandings function as tools to guide and adjust practice in response to local contexts of schooling. Adjustments are based upon evidence obtained by making ongoing observations, documenting practice, and fostering a culture of collaborative inquiry and analysis of what is working and not working for students. This type of leadership influences and organizes thoughtful and deliberate analysis of practice via use of evidence to identify the necessary adjustments for change and continuous improvement. Science-based leadership fosters investment and synergy among stakeholders and school-based teams in a shared purpose for the work of instruction in school classrooms. Teams engage in collaborative and constructive problem solving to improve and make ongoing adjustments. To this end, leadership practice grounded in a science-based approach facilitates greater consistency, continuity, and predictability for the organization to better serve students in all areas. In short, science-based leadership facilitates continuous progressive change. A model of a science-based theory of leadership, which defines its conceptual understandings and interrelationships as follows, is set forth below:

Theory: a system of interacting principles or concepts used to guide practice and to explain and predict events. A constructivist theoretical perspective predicts that learning will occur through an active participatory mental process of constructing new knowledge by building upon and extending existing cognitive schemas through new experiences (Hollins, 2010). Application of theory to practice requires leadership to facilitate the improvement of schools through a process that requires active participation of stakeholders and that builds upon existing values and thought processes through new experiences to construct knowledge and advance learning.



Investment: finding meaning and purpose in the work and the power to make decisions regarding the direction of work. Using a constructivist theory requires leadership to build and extend upon existing cognitive schemas within a community rather than superimposing a perspective or approach upon the work. This means understanding the values and work in a community and using these understandings to plan experiences that will keep teams focused and engaged in setting direction for continuous school improvement for enhancing learning among students

Purpose: a description of the focus and intention for the work of an organization and the desired impact. Using theory to facilitate investment involves planning an active and participatory process that builds upon the values and work within a community and that engages teams in constructing shared meaning, a sense of shared goals, and agreement upon the direction to take towards achieving them. Constructing a shared purpose provides meaning, responsibility and direction for all concerned and serves as a tool for examining the congruence among the intentionality of the school, internal coherence of the organization, and desired impact of the work.

Process: a deliberate plan used to facilitate change through organizing new experiences and promoting active participation. Carrying out a process for continuous improvement in a school involves planning and facilitating experiences that actively engages the community and builds upon the present thinking, work, and values. Successfully facilitating a process for continuous improvement involves developing a plan and structure to ensure active participation and a format for discourse.

Assessment: tools and processes for gathering information to evaluate needs, diagnose problems, determine impact. Facilitating a process of continuous engagement and improvement of practice to better serve all students requires use of assessment to define challenges, determine

goals and evaluate the effectiveness of current approaches. An accurate and useful assessment requires documentation of learner responses to instruction to understand patterns as well as to determine common successes and challenges and necessary adjustments.

Evidence: proof that a phenomenon exists or that an event has occurred. The use of assessments provides information for analysis in order to determine the effectiveness of present approaches. Resulting information from assessments is used to analyze what is working and not working for relevant student groups. Evidence provides justification for adjusting pedagogy, curriculum, and the social context in the school to improve student learning.

Theories of Leadership: Transaction vs. Transformation and the Transformative

Transactional leadership in schools is represented by management and maintenance of productive operations within a system or organization. In stark contrast, transformational leadership for schools, at its core, is focused on fostering collaborative culture, promoting teacher development, and problem solving (Leithwood, 1992). This distinction is important to define because the central purpose for schools and learning requires something much more than transactional leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the curriculum and the instructional program. The focus is on facilitating instructional improvement and student performance which is a minimum expectation for the type of leadership needed to address the major challenges confronting P-12 schools.

On the other hand, transformative leadership is concerned with eliminating inequities in society through the quality and substance of learning in schools. Transformative leadership is focused on deconstructing knowledge, addressing inequitable distributions of power, and creating democracy, equity, and social justice (Shields, 2016). In transformative leadership, the aim is not just to empower students with the necessary skills for college readiness and postsecondary success; it is also to have a transformative impact on the overall quality of life in the local community and in the society at large.

In light of the foregoing theories, this paper introduced a science-based theory of leadership in an effort to address major persisting challenges in P-12 schools. In contrast with traditional and transactional conceptions of leadership, a science-based approach is grounded in theory and interconnected conceptual understandings. This theory-guided practice defines and describes central concepts upon which it is based and provides a process for facilitating continuous progressive change in P-12 schools. The consistency with which the application of theory is used to guide practice in context has the power to promote greater continuity and sustainability in schools to better serve students in all areas now and into the future.

Conclusion

Leadership is the facilitation of continuous progressive change. However, there are persisting problems in public education rooted in teaching practice and exacerbated by traditional conceptions of leadership. Traditional conceptions of leadership possess an egocentric and individualistic perspective with a focus on narrow, surface, and linear decision making. This type of leadership causes organizational turbulence and conflict as well as discontinuity in learning for students and is a major contributing factor to the instability and unsustainability of public schools and public-school systems. This perspective is commonly on display in leadership transitions and successions which explains how high performing schools can suddenly become average or low performing. Consistent application of a science-based theory of leadership to

educational practice that is responsive to local contexts of schooling offers a process for facilitating continuous progressive change and the power to promote greater continuity and sustainability of learning in the nation's schools.

References

- California Department of Education, (Feb 7, 2022) <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>
- Hollins, E. R. (2010, October). Application of theories of learning to practice. Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Edgar Snow Symposium: Global Community: A Chinese-American Dialogue, Kansas City, MO.
- Leithwood, K. (February 1992). Transforming leadership: The move toward transformational leadership. Educational Leadership. ASCD.
- OECD (2019), PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>.
- Shields, C. M. (2016). Transformative leadership: Primer. New York, NY: Peter Lang
- Thompson, Maggie, J. Morales, S. Sargrad and L. Jimenez (Sept. 28, 2016) Remedial Education. Center for American Progress <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/remedial-education/>
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992–2019 Reading Assessments <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=12>
- US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16 State and National Estimations <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2015-201>

Schools as Polling Places: Sanctioning the Public in New York State Public Schools

Mary Bushnell Greiner
Queens College/City University of New York

Abstract: This paper argues that the current debate about schools as polling places surfaces ongoing tensions about the role of schools in a democracy. Our nation is in the midst of a democratic crisis, and schools are implicated in this crisis. I utilize the premise that the Progressive Era established schools as “public goods” with a specific relationship to the ongoing experiment of democracy, and that democracy relies upon public schooling. This paper seeks to inform our understanding of whether taking elections out of schools would diminish public schools as a public good. Further, if elections continue to take place in schools, but students are not present on election day, what are the implications for schools as a public good?

“[G]overnment is a positive, a living, a constructive process of cooperation. For the housing of the supreme instrument of government, the fitting place is ...where the human spirit is released, and nature’s friendly powers are evoked. In the public-school house the ballot box belongs” (Ward, 1915, 13). The mayor of Sauk City, Wisconsin reportedly delivered these stirring sentiments to the delight of University of Wisconsin professor Thomas Ward. His statements were included in Ward’s pamphlet, “The Schoolhouse as the Polling Place” published by the United States Bureau of Education in 1915. Ward argued there was no better place for voting to happen than inside the schoolhouse for economical, educational, and convenience reasons. In addition, he spoke to the opinion that the schoolhouse was the most “worthy, appropriate, and beneficial” place for voting to happen. Ward campaigned for schools as natural locations for voting because of their symbolic, educational, and practical benefits to democracy.

On election day, in the early 21st century, nearly 25% of all U.S. voters cast their ballots inside of a school (Stewart, 2016). New York State election law directs county boards of elections to use public schools and other tax-exempt buildings as polling places. If a county election board designates a public school to serve as a polling site, state election law requires the school district to comply. New York State school administrators and school boards do not have authority to decide whether their school buildings are utilized as polling places by the New York State Board of Elections. A school board “must” allow a Board of Elections to utilize portions of a school building if asked to do so, and those rooms must be located near a “convenient entrance” of the school. Some school officials want to have the right to refuse the use of their buildings on voting day. In support of these officials’ concerns, the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) set one of its 2021 legislative priorities: “to allow boards of education to determine whether or not school district buildings are used as polling places (New York State School Boards Association, 2021, 16). NYSSBA joins school boards and school districts across the country in a reexamination of the use of public schools as polling places: Should schools be open to the public and open to students on Election Day? In the context of an escalation of school violence and, in particular, school shootings, this question has become more urgent (Irwin et al., 2022). The discussion gained momentum in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and because of a highly divisive election. Should schools be used as polling places during a pandemic? In a time of political polarization, should voters be allowed into schools?

To ask about whether schools should be used as polling places is to ask a foundational question about the relationship of schools and society. It is to consider the role of public schools

in a democracy. We could look to Dewey to remind us that democracy is always in the making, “born anew in each generation, and education is its midwife” (Dewey, 1916/1985). How literally should we consider Dewey’s statement? We might consider it is enough for schools to operate as embryonic communities in which young people learn habits and attitudes of members of society. Dewey wrote of the midwifery function of schools at a time when educators actively envisioned schools as foci of their communities. The National Society for the Study of Education devoted its 1911 Yearbook to laudatory descriptions of public lectures, vacation playgrounds, social-centers, and evening recreation centers organized in schoolhouses. Clarence Arthur Perry of the Russell Sage Foundation asserted these activities positively affected “public health, civic efficiency, and social solidarity” (Leipziger et al, 1911, 65). Perry further observed that, “In the work of rendering more effective and less wasteful those services for the whole community which it delegates to representatives, school extension can render valuable assistance. Citizens must be adequately informed before they can exercise ‘efficient citizenship’” (Leipziger et al, 1911, 67).

Labaree (1997, 41) brought to the forefront the conflict over the purposes of schooling and the extent to which schools should operate for a public or a private benefit:

Schools, it seems, occupy an awkward position at the intersection between what we hope society will become and what we think it really is, between political ideals and economic realities. This in turn leads to some crucial questions: Should schools present themselves as a model of our best hopes for our society and a mechanism for remaking that society in the image of those hopes? Should schools focus on adapting students to the needs of society as currently constructed? Or should they focus primarily on serving the individual hopes and ambitions of their students?

Within this “contradictory social context” (Labaree, 1997, 41) schools are sited to solve social and individual ills. Whether economic equality, political power, or achieving one’s dreams and aspirations, schools are charged with far more than they can likely deliver. I share Labaree’s clear concern that the private goods of social mobility have pulled public schools too far away from its public goods of democratic equality and social efficiency.

Boards of Education and Boards of Elections engage in potentially mutually supportive activities. Both are promoters of civic engagement. As the language of the role of schools has shifted “from citizens to consumers” (Labaree, 2010), the use of school buildings by Boards of Elections may be out of sync with current assumptions about who should be inside of a school building and for what purpose. However, I am not willing to give up on schools as a public good. I argue that the mutually supportive relationship of schools–elections–democracy is rooted in its founding and influence of the Progressive Era (late 19th-early 20th centuries). To contextualize this argument, this paper maps the historical and legal context of New York State Election Law as it concerns the use of schools as polling places. It is my intention to inform the current debate and our determinations for how school buildings are to be utilized for non-academic activities such as voting. To that end, I review the right to vote in the U.S., the federalist system of elections, and the Progressive Era roots of voting in schools.

The Act of Voting in the U.S.

Popular rhetoric asserts the primacy of voting as a constitutional right, as one of the basic rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. Voting is represented as a federal concern, as an act attached to a person’s national status. Only U.S. citizens are granted the franchise to vote in the U.S. Further, in popular discourse voting is described as an American act. Real Americans

vote. Legal scholar Jerry Goldfeder recalled in anticipation of election day: “For me, there’s nothing like the thrill of showing up to a polling site. Talking with neighbors, sharing stories with strangers. It’s truly an American thing to do. We go into the school or the church or wherever our polling place is. We see that American flag.” (Goldfeder, 2020)

Despite this nationalistic rhetoric of voting as an act of true Americans, U.S. citizens enjoy the right to vote because of language present in their state constitutions, not the U.S. Constitution (Kropf, 2016; Epps, 2013). “The U.S. Constitution merely implies the right to vote, while almost all state constitutions explicitly enumerate this right” (Douglas, 2014, 95). For example, Article II, Section 1 of the New York Constitution reads: “Every citizen shall be entitled to vote at every election for all officers elected by the people and upon all questions submitted to the vote of the people provided that such citizen is eighteen years of age or over and shall have been a resident of this state, and of the county, city, or village for thirty days next preceding an election” (New York State, 2014). Although the Arizona constitution establishes the right to vote in “negative terms” — focusing on denial of the vote to citizens failing to meet ballot-casting criteria rather than affirming the right of all citizens to vote (Garvey, 1944, xiii) — all other state constitutions confer the right to vote on citizens and residents (Douglas, 2014).

State residency and citizenship status are key determinants for where and, crucially, by whom votes may be cast. During presidential elections, candidates are qualified to be placed on the ballot according to each state’s requirements. A candidate may qualify for the ballot in Ohio, say, but not in Montana and Montana voters not have the same option to select presidential candidates as voters in Ohio. In these “multiple laboratories of democracy” (Kropf, 2016, 29) voters in each state may receive different presidential ballots with candidates’ names on ballots in some states but not all. Furthermore, only U.S. citizens may vote, but not all U.S. citizens may vote in presidential elections. With the passage of the 23rd Amendment, D.C. residents gained the right to vote for electors in a presidential election. U.S. citizens who are residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands may vote in presidential primaries, but not in the general presidential election as no electors are apportioned to those territories.

Kropf (2016, 7) emphasizes the individualistic nature of how Americans regard the right to vote. Seen through this lens, voting is about exercising one’s individual rights more than it supports the collective interests of maintaining a democracy. From a collectivist point of view the right to vote symbolizes persons becoming adults whose voices matter in running the country. This perspective becomes more apparent when considering individuals who lose the right to vote. An individualistic view contrasts with recognition of voting as a communal event effected for collective interests as well as individual. Of course, a communal view of voting tends to describe voting in its idealized state. In actuality, we know voting rights are not enjoyed universally by all persons who are eligible for these rights. Disenfranchisement of people of color and economically disadvantaged community members requires ongoing attention and reform. This ongoing work is undertaken by academic and non-academic groups; but the day-to-day work of access to the vote is accomplished by those in charge of administering elections.

Federalism in Election Administration

Like the right to vote, “election administration is almost entirely a state creature” (Toward a Greater State Role in Election Administration, 2005, 2323). State-level jurisdiction over election administration became better known to the general public through news accounts of the 2020 election. Differences in state-level election laws were observed, for example, in the variation of

required dates for the pre-processing and tabulation of ballots (Corasiniti and Lu, 2020; Shanton, 2019). Arizona and Nevada began tabulation of absentee ballots two weeks prior to Election Day 2020; other states did not begin processing and counting ballots until Election Day. Further, some states (e.g., Ohio, North Carolina, Florida) allowed absentee ballots to arrive after Election Day while Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Alabama and Mississippi held an Election Day deadline (Corasiniti and Lu, 2020).

Congress established a specific date for election day (the Tuesday after the first Monday in November) in 1845 (Kropf, 2016). Previously, each state set its own date which varied across 6 weeks. The first Tuesday in November was selected to respond to agrarian needs: “November made sense because it was after farmers were done with their harvest, but before hard winter weather that could make it difficult for them to get to town to vote. And since traveling by horse over unimproved roads could take a while, lawmakers wanted to avoid making their constituents travel to or from the polls on a Sunday (widely considered a day of rest and worship, not politicking)” (DeSilver, 2018). Congress sets the date for a general election while the general election itself is organized and run by State Boards of Elections, which in turn rely on County Boards of Elections. This federalized system is comparable to the authorization and organization of schooling as each state establishes its own laws concerning the education of its citizens. Those education laws are then enacted, with variation, by individual school districts.

All-mail ballot elections illustrate the impact of state election laws on voters’ experiences. Oregon became the first state to authorize full voting by mail through a 1998 citizens’ ballot initiative. As of the 2020 Presidential Election, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Colorado and Hawaii vote by mail with provision for voters to vote in-person if they so choose. While “all-mail elections” means that every registered voter receives a ballot by mail, this does not preclude in-person voting opportunities on and/or before Election Day. For example, despite the fact that all registered voters in Colorado are mailed a ballot, voters can choose to cast a ballot at an in-person vote center during the early voting period or on Election Day (or drop off or mail their ballot back) (National Council of State Legislatures, 2020).

County Boards of Elections select and run polling stations in accordance with legislative requirements and guidance from State Boards of Elections. The New York State Constitution specifies that county Boards of Elections must be formed with “equal representation of the two political parties” (New York State Legislature, 2014). Within a county board of election, each position is shared by two people, each representing one of the two parties that garnered the most votes in the previous general election. Practically speaking, each of these positions are held by one registered Democrat and one registered Republican. Bipartisan election leadership is not universal across states. “Election system leadership may be chosen by voters or appointed by an authority such as the governor or state legislature. The selection method — and the leaders themselves — may be partisan, bipartisan, or nonpartisan” (Shanton, 2019, 12).

Congress asserted some national voting requirements following the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. The Act was a direct response to the challenges of the 2000 Presidential election, decided in the U.S. Supreme Court (*Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000)). But the background of the development of HAVA included recognition of “The fact that we conduct not one national election for president but 51 different contests for presidential electors creates a recurring incentive for strategic mischief by partisan actors in the states, who need only suppress

relatively small numbers of votes to swing all of a state's electors — and thereby potentially the entire election — into the desired column” (Raskin, 2008, 189).

HAVA established national standards for voting systems and administration in an effort to resolve election administrative issues that interfered with accurate enfranchisement and counting of ballots. HAVA was “carefully crafted in order to respect the idea of federalism on which the electoral system was based” (Kropf, 2016, 56) thus preserving states' authority over voting. Its key arenas of influence are the requirements of state-wide registration lists and increased accessibility for voters with disabilities (Murray, 2003). Under HAVA, all states utilize provisional ballots for voters who assert their right to vote even if their names are absent from the registration lists. Prior to HAVA, some states did not maintain state-level registration lists, as they left that task solely to counties. HAVA does not specify what kinds of locations should be used for polling, although it does establish minimum accessibility standards for a polling site. It delineates standards for election administration and provides some funding to localities to achieve national consistency, but the act does not require states to utilize specific voting machines or ballots. Kropf (2016) notes that HAVA represents a “significant” insertion of the federal government into the running of elections even while it maintains deference to state-level authority over elections.

Voting in Schools in New York

Although New York was the last state to become HAVA compliant (Goldfeder, 2018), Election Laws of the State of New York have undergone dramatic changes since their initial passage in 1778. At the outset of the nation's experiment in democracy, election administration debates were largely concerned with whether to hold elections *viva voce* or by casting paper ballots. Throughout the intervening years larger changes as well as smaller clarifications have resulted in the current 798-page document (New York State Board of Elections, 2020). Most pages of the current New York Election Law concern matters such as nomination of candidates, responsibilities of election officials, registration of voters, election day procedures, and campaign expenditures. New York Election Law specifies these and other components of how elections are to be conducted including the hours and days of voter registration, and precise language for oaths of office. Substantial detail is provided for the design and layout of ballots. For example, Section 7-100 concerning the appearance of proposals on a ballot states: “Ballot proposals shall appear on the voting machine or ballot in a separate section. At the left of, or below or above, each proposal shall appear two voting levers or two voting squares, each at least one-half inch square. Next to the first lever or square shall be printed the word “Yes,” and next to the second lever or square shall be printed the word “No.” (Goldfeder, 2018, p. 340)

Similar specifics provided throughout the Election Law are noticeably absent in those sections of the law which allow for where elections are to take place. Contrary to the details about ballot language, NYS Election Law leaves substantial latitude for local election officials to identify appropriate polling locations. Even less attention is given to utilization of polling places, with the exception of layout of the voting arena, and the prohibitions concerning electioneering in the vicinity. Some of the law appears archaic and superfluous in today's reading: “No place in which a business licensed to sell alcoholic beverages for on premises consumption is conducted on any day of local registration or of voting shall be so designated” (4-104).

Two sections of the State of New York 2020 Election Law refer to polling places: 4-104 (registration and polling places; designation of) and 8-106 (polling places; attendance for

educational purposes). Out of the full 798-page 2020 Election Law, section 4-104 is 9 pages and section 8-106 just over 1 page. Section 8-106 directs boards of elections to permit students to attend polling places for educational purposes, reinforcing a benefit of using schools as polling places. Doing so provides easy opportunity for students to directly observe a democratic practice.

Section 4-104 is titled “Designation of Registration and Polling Places.” Sub-sections 3 and 8 within Section 4-104 refer specifically to the use of public schools as polling places:

3. A building exempt from taxation shall be used whenever possible as a polling place if it is situated in the same or a contiguous election district, and may contain as many distinctly separate polling places as public convenience may require. The expense, if any, incidental to its use, shall be paid like the expense of other places of registration and voting. If a board or body empowered to designate polling places chooses a public school building for such purpose, the board or agency which controls such building must make available a room or rooms in such building which are suitable for registration and voting and which are as close as possible to a convenient entrance to such building and must make available any such room or rooms which the board or body designating such building determines are accessible to physically disabled voters as provided in subdivision one-a. (85)

8. Whenever the board of elections shall determine that there is no building within an election district available and suitable for the meetings for the registration of voters or for any election, or that for reasons of efficiency or economy it is desirable to consolidate such meetings of one or more districts in one place, such board may designate a building for such purpose in an adjoining district in the same village, city or town and there may be as many distinctly separate meetings or polling places lawfully located in the same building as public convenience may require. Wherever possible, public schools, fire houses, municipal buildings or other buildings exempt from taxation shall be designated for such meetings and polling places. Such a determination shall be made only after notice to the chairpersons of the county committees of all political parties and reasonable opportunity for them to be heard. (90-91)

Five fragments of the text above stand out for particular consideration: “the board or agency which controls such (public school) building must make available a room or rooms” which are to be “as close as possible to a convenient entrance” and “accessible to physically disabled voters.” “Wherever possible, public schools... shall be designated for such meetings and polling places.”

All public schools are subject to laws above and beyond the education laws of their state, such as building codes, health and safety requirements, and labor laws. New York State Election Law specifies activities in the school building that could be considered outside of the primary school function of educating students. Because presidential elections must, by law, be held on the first Tuesday in November of an election year, and because polling places must be open throughout the day (Desilver, 2018), voters and election workers will be present in some public school buildings during what would otherwise be an instructional day.

As mentioned previously, New York State school administrators and school boards do not have authority to decide whether their school buildings are utilized as polling places by the New York State Board of Elections. As a result, schools currently have three options: 1) maintain the

regular school day and have both students and the public present in the building at the same time; 2) make Election Day an administrative day in which staff are present and students are not present; 3) close schools to staff and students on Election Day. A fourth option has been proposed: Bills have been introduced to the New York State Legislature to allow schools the authority to refuse or appeal the use of their buildings as polling places (Arnold, 2019). As of this writing, none of those bills has been brought to the floor for a vote.

Progressive Era Foundations of Current Election Law

New York State Election Law in its current iteration was written primarily in the Progressive Era. Beginning in 1910, the law was rewritten to be more specific in requirements for polling places. First the law was changed to outlaw voting in bars: “No building, or part of a building, shall be so designated (for the registration of voters and the election) in any city, if within thirty days before such designation, intoxicating liquors, ale or beer, shall have been sold in any part thereof” (New York State Legislature, 1910). Further changes were enacted with the goal of eliminating graft. Polling places were often assigned as political favors to shopkeepers and bar owners who would gain customers by hosting voting in their establishments.

The Honest Ballot Association, founded by Theodore Roosevelt, campaigned against this practice by arguing: “It is well known that, although there is no sanction in the law for it, the designation of polling places has for a long time been treated as political organization patronage” (The New York Times, 1915, 10). In his 1911 Report on the Board of Elections, New York City Commissioner of Accounts Raymond Fosdick recommended to Mayor Gaynor that the Board of Elections “reassume its legal power and duty to designate polling places, and should make such designations in accordance with the provisions of law, instead of abdicating this important function, as in past years, to district political leaders and organizations” (Fosdick, 1911, 7). Fosdick’s successor Leonard Wallstein submitted a similarly scathing report in which he observed that, “the testimony of the political leaders sustains the assumption that the designation of polling places is handled as a matter of political favor and patronage. President Koenig, Chairman of the New York County Republican Committee from 1911-1933, testified to Wallstein: “Wherever possible we prefer Republicans to have Republican polling places” (Wallstein, 1915, 37). Democrats cast their ballots in locations run by Democrats, and their counterparts in the Republican party brought their ballot tickets to voting locations where shopkeepers expressed support for that party line. “The polling places are divided between the two [political] parties. One takes the odd and the other the even, and that is given to the captain, who is lucky enough to have the polling place in his district, to hand out to anybody he favors” (Wallstein, 1915, 38). In an era of ward politics, polling places were but one manifestation of the power of influence and money.

Concurrently, progressives including John Dewey, Edward Ward, William Ziegler, and urban planner Clarence Perry sought to bring the school into the center of community life. Schools were the only public buildings in many neighborhoods and were thus literally well-positioned to house community activities and concerns. The movement to use schools as polling places in one place we see Progressive Era efforts to construct a more democratic society, a more efficient society, and to utilize schools to achieve these goals (Leipziger et al, 1911, Dewey, 1902).

Conclusion

Where does this leave New York schools today? Awkwardly teetering between competing social concerns. “The Presidential Commission on Election Administration... attempted to balance the competing interests of election officials and school officials. The commission recommends that: “Schools should be used as polling places; to address any related security concerns, Election Day should be an in-service day” (Weil, 2016), I fully understand the motivation to keep our school buildings secure, to not allow the general public easy access to students. Perhaps that is where we must venture next: to keep the voting public and students separate. Is such a straight-forward “solution” in the best interests of our students and our democracy? What happens when students no longer witness voters arriving at their school and taking part in the fundamental act of continuing democracy? What happens when voters are less likely to walk into a school building and witness the education of the next generation — a fundamental act of continuing democracy?

As I set out on this adventure, I determined to map the historical terrain of schools as polling places so that we could understand our situated space. The mapping brought to mind the charts of mariners of old who simply stated of the unknown: “Beyond there be dragons.” As we continue to map this social space newly constructed by the collision of tectonic concerns about personal safety and social solidarity, let us be careful to attend to the dragons en route, the pitfalls and losses of further removing our schools out of “the current of social life” (Leipzig et al, 1911, 7).

References

- Arnold, C. (2019). Should polling places be allowed in New York's schools? *Democrat and Chronicle*.
<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2019/01/04/new-york-school-polling-places/2431304002/>
- Corasiniti, N. and Lu, D. (2020 29 October). How quickly will your absentee vote be counted? A state-by-state timeline. *The New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/34VSu0N>
- Desilver, D. (2018). Weekday elections set the U.S. apart from many other advance democracies. Facttank. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/06/weekday-elections-set-the-u-s-apart-from-many-other-advanced-democracies/>
- Dewey, J. (1902). The school as social center. *The Elementary School Teacher*, 3 (2), 73-86.
- Dewey, J. ([1916] 1985). The need of an industrial education in an industrial democracy. In J. Boydston (Ed.), *John Dewey: The middle works, 1899--1924* (Vol. 10, 137--143). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Douglas, J. A. (2014). The Right to Vote Under State Constitutions. *Vanderbilt Law Review* (67), pp. 89-149. Available at: <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vlr/vol67/iss1/1>
- Epps, G. (2013 19 August). What does the Constitution actually Say about voting rights? Or, how the Shelby ruling is like starving a dog to death. *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/08/what-does-the-constitution-actually-say-about-voting-rights/278782/>
- Fosdick, R. B. (1911 20 April). *A report on an examination of the Board of Elections*. New York, NY: Office of the Commissioner of Accounts, City of New York, M.B. Brown Printing & Binding Co.

- Garvey, D. E. Garvey, *State of Arizona Election Laws 1944*, Article VII, Suffrage and Elections, xiii file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/statepubs_14134.pdf
- Goldfeder, J. H. (2020). Waiting on line and the thrill of voting. *Election Connection* podcast. October 21, 2020. <https://www.audible.com/pd/Election-Connection-Waiting-on-line-and-the-thrill-of-voting-Podcast/B08VG4K6P9>
- Irwin, V., Wang, K., Cui, J., & Thompson, A. (2022). Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021. NCES 2022-092/NCJ 304625. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Kropf, M. E. (2016). *Institutions and the right to vote in America*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Labaree, D. F. (2010). *Someone has to fail: The zero-sum game of American schooling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54 (1), 39-81.
- Leipziger, H. M., Hyre, S. E., Warden, R. D., Crampton, C. W., Stitt, E. W., Ward, E. J., Grice, E. C., Perry, C. A. (1911). *The City School as a Community Center: The Tenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Murray, P. (2003 28 January). Summary of federal legislation: Help America Vote Act. New York State Board of Elections memo. https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/hava/sum_hava_fed_leg.pdf
- National Council of State Legislatures. (2020). *Polling Places*. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/polling-places.aspx>
- New York State. (2014). *New York State Constitution*. As Revised, including amendments, effective January 1, 2014. <https://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm>. Last accessed 11/30/20.
- New York State Board of Elections. (2020). <https://elections.dutchessny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Election-2020.pdf>
- New York State Legislature. (1910). *General Laws of the State of New York*. Ch. 428, Section 299, Par. 2, St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co.
- New York State School Boards Association. (2021). *Legislative Priorities 2022*. Latham, NY: New York State School Boards Association.
- Raskin, J. (2008). Neither the red states nor the blue states but the United States. *Election Law Journal*, 27 (3), 188-195.
- Shanton, K. L. (2019). *The State and Local Role in Election Administration: Duties and Structures*. Congressional Research Service. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45549.pdf>
- Stewart, C. (2016). *2016 Survey of the performance of American elections*. Harvard Dataverse. <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/Y38VIQ>
- The New York Times. (1915 16 August). Sees patronage grab. Honest Ballot Association wants more polls in schools. *The New York Times*.
- Toward a Greater State Role in Election Administration. (2005). *Harvard Law Review*, 118(7), 2314-2335. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4093320>
- Wallstein, L. M. (1915). *Report on special examination of the accounts and methods of the Board of Elections of the City of New York*. New York, NY: Office of the Commissioner of Accounts, City of New York.
- Ward, E. J. (1915). *The schoolhouse as the polling place*. *United States Bureau of Education Bulletin*, No. 13 (638). Washington, D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office.

Ward, E. J. (1913). *The social center*. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

<https://www.audible.com/pd/Election-Connection-Waiting-on-line-and-the-thrill-of-voting-Podcast/B08VG4K6P9>

Weil, M. (2016). Securing schools as polling places. Bipartisan Policy Center.

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/securing-schools-as-polling-places/>

U.S. Outdoor Education: Teaching and Learning in Forest and Nature Schools

Leigh M. O'Brien
State University of New York at Geneseo

Abstract: Forest and Nature Schools are early childhood education programs that provide students regular and repeated access to a natural space, and promote child-directed, emergent, and inquiry-based learning in that space. Widely available to many students in some European countries, especially in Scandinavia, forest schools have yet to catch on at scale in North America, where they principally serve a privileged and White clientele able to pay tuition for schooling. Purposive sampling of forest schools in the northeast United States and southeast Canada reveals the value conflict Forest Schools face in the North American context where schooling, especially public schooling, has prior commitment to efficiency of academic instruction and teaching via transmission as educational ideals.

Introduction: What Are Forest and Nature Schools?

As a concerned early educator and environmentalist, I had been thinking about ways to combine my two passions... then I discovered outdoor education at the 2004 Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education conference in Oslo, Norway. This was the first time I had seen a totally outdoor program (except for toileting and preparing food). At this forest kindergarten, the children, with the guidance of two non-intrusive adults, played in the woods, created (and used) a swing that soared out over a hillside above the harbor, and just seemed to be enjoying life. I was hooked!

In the North American context, Forest and Nature Schools (FNS) are extremely varied, with half- or full-day programs for children of various ages taking place in urban or near-urban parks, on school grounds, and in natural playgrounds and outdoor classrooms. They're called Nature Preschools or Kindergartens, Outdoor Schools, Forest Schools, etc., but what they have in common is that these programs provide regular and repeated access to a natural space, as well as child-directed, emergent, and inquiry-based learning. Also, while in much of Europe play is thought to be the most important element in early child development, and so is typical of most European Forest and Nature Schools, in North America play is seen as just one of many elements of early development and hence doesn't usually feature as prominently.

The fundamental idea of Forest School is to create opportunities for children to spend more time playing and learning in natural settings. The defining feature is the emergent and play-based curriculum (MacEachren, 2013). Place becomes a teacher and provides the way the human teacher encourages children to learn from nature. The key aspect of this approach is that children have opportunities to build an ongoing relationship with the land, a dedicated educator, one another, and themselves (Forest School Canada, 2014; Power & Eperjesi, 2014). This attachment to the natural world offers, then, a rich environment in which children — and educators — can develop into healthy, confident, caring citizens.

Forest kindergartens, which began in Scandinavia in the 1960s, are a type of nature school that takes place entirely outdoors, typically allowing the children's interests and curiosity to direct the day's activities as well as inform and guide the curriculum. The emphasis tends to be on social, emotional, and physical development. A *nature preschool* (also known as a *nature-based preschool*) is similar to a forest school in most of these ways. However, these preschools have typically been more narrowly defined as a licensed early childhood program for three to

five-year-olds with 25-50% of the class day held outside each day, nature as the overarching theme of the curriculum, and nature being infused into the indoor spaces (Bailie, 2010; Larimore, 2011; Moore, 2014). Nature preschools, often housed at or affiliated with nature centers, typically require their teaching staff to have skills and experience in both early childhood education and environmental education. A “significant portion” (usually around 50%) of the school day in nature preschools is spent outside. This is typically balanced with a “progressive” cognitive/academic curriculum.

Given their similarities, Sobel (2014) suggested that we think of nature preschools and forest kindergartens as ‘the same genus, but different species.’ Keeping with this notion of taxonomy and adding forest schools to the mix, perhaps early childhood environmental education is the taxonomic “family,” where nature-based early childhood education is the “genus” for two separate “species”: nature-based preschools and forest kindergartens. Forest schools are another genus: *nature-enhanced* early childhood education (Larimore, 2016). Regardless, these programs share belief in the value of children having frequent outdoor experiences as part of their education to support their development, and to build a lifelong connection with the natural world.

A survey conducted by the Natural Start Alliance (2017) found that there were more than 250 nature preschools and forest kindergartens in the U.S., an all-time high. However, this same survey also found that some student populations, especially ethnic and racial minorities, were under-represented in nature-based programs. For instance, only 3% of students attending nature preschools and forest kindergartens were reported to be African American and 7% were Hispanic, while the latest U.S. Census found that 15% of children under 5 were African American and 25% were Hispanic. The survey also found an under-representation of students with disabilities and dual-language learners. Obviously, this is problematic, as I’ll address below.

What are the Benefits of Spending Time in Nature?

A growing body of research suggests that high-quality, child-directed outdoor experiences benefit young children in many ways. In fact, there are concerns among the academic and professional communities that young children’s current provision can be impoverished and inadequate if it does not enable children to appreciate and understand outdoor and natural environments (Gustavsson & Pramling, 2014; Klaar & Öhman, 2014; Tovey, 2007; Watts, 2013). According to Bohling-Phillipi (2006), Chawla (1999), Gill (2014), Louv (2005, 2008 & 2016), MacEachren (2013), the National Wildlife Federation (2010), Sobel (2008 & 2015), Wells and Lekies (2006), Worrall (2017), and many more, outdoor experiences, *especially in natural environments*, have the potential to benefit children’s physical, cognitive, creative, emotional, and social development, as well as their health, overall sense of well-being, self-regulation skills, and ability to attend. Rakow and Eells (2019) note that there are many proven benefits of spending time in nature. For instance, it reduces stress and increases concentration; teaches students to be more resilient; improves mood and cognition; helps children attain a healthful lifestyle; reduces the likelihood of obesity; and improves health and well-being. (See, also, the frequently cited work of Richard Louv, especially, *Last child in the woods* (2005, 2008). I ask if these kinds of experiences are valuable, perhaps even necessary to children’s well-being, why don’t *all* young children have the right to attend programs with such a range of benefits? This is currently not the case in the United States, and there are many reasons why that is so.

The Impacts of Societal Values and Beliefs on Forest and Nature Schools

All countries' values impact how FNS are understood, planned, conducted, staffed, and assessed. I have argued (O'Brien, 2018) that U.S. approaches to education, for instance, are grounded in a complex tissue of values and beliefs that include social class and racial divisions, hyper-individualism, a "me-first" orientation, an economic and political system that prioritizes corporations and those who are already wealthy, a disrespect for public land accompanied by a dangerous disregard for climate change and citizens' well-being, an unwillingness to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, a lack of universal health care, a fear of litigation, etc. These values and beliefs, of course, inform and often determine what happens in U.S. schools, even private schools, for our youngest children. Forest and Nature Schools are no exception. As Williams (2018) put it, "in a nation moving toward greater standardization of its public education system, programs centered around getting kids outside to explore aren't normal." Furthermore, "play-based learning has significantly decreased" while the "hurdles of district bureaucracies and fear of litigation" have continued to increase (Walker, 2016).

To cite another, related example, the comparative assessment of educational performance using standardized measures of outcomes or 'international large-scale assessments' such as the International Early Learning and Well-being Study (IELS), a project of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), is a growing phenomenon in education. According to Diaz-Diaz, Semenc, and Moss, "the IELS aims to improve early childhood services by providing policymakers, researchers, and early educators with valid and comparable information on children's early learning. The proponents of this study have argued that the IELS will help countries to improve later educational performance — and thus countries' economic growth..." (2019, 2). The IELS can be — and often is — seen as part of widespread, neoliberal global education reform that aims to apply principles and strategies of the market into public education, ostensibly to improve students' learning. Standardized testing plays a major role in the pursuit of these ends, stimulating competition, helping parent-consumers with information to assist them in making school choices, and for managers and funders to assess performance.

Note, however, that just three countries, out of OECD's 38 member-states, signed up to participate in the IELS: England, the U.S., and Estonia. According to Diaz-Diaz, Semenc, and Moss (2019), many countries that chose *not* to participate did so because of their concerns regarding the impacts of standardized testing on children, teachers, families, and early childhood education overall. Germany, for instance, contended that participation in IELS would deny children their right to an early education that is diverse and socio-culturally situated. And Danish (as well as other Nordic countries') values clearly contrast with U.S. values in that their schools "respect difference, encourage autonomy, and trust children to direct their own learning, especially through risky play" (Leder, 2018; O'Brien, 2016; Walker, 2016). Different value systems certainly seem to be at work.

A Look at FNS through North American Values: Methodology

In March of 2015, because of my interest in this relatively new, FNS version of early education, I visited five nature preschools for one day's session each, all of which were private schools in the U.S. Northeast. I mostly observed, but also took pictures, and spoke informally with children and program staff. Prior to my visits, I reviewed the programs' websites with the help of a student assistant. In early 2016, I joined a research project initiated by two British colleagues at Bath Spa University focused on cross-cultural understandings and related variations in implementations of FNS. Our small group came up with guidelines for data

collection and, in March 2016, I returned to two of the sites I visited in 2015, one in Massachusetts (Arcadia Nature Preschool) and one in Connecticut (DPNC — Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center Preschool), this time with a specific focus on teacher practices and beliefs. In addition to observing and being permitted to take pictures at the sites, I interviewed the lead teachers at each of the programs. I spent two days at each school this time. All three of us in this research project used purposive sampling, meaning, for my part of the study, that I purposefully went to the sites I did because I had reason to think that these programs and individuals fit the profile of the places and people that I wanted to reach. While the findings from purposive sampling do not always have to be statistically representative of the greater population of interest, they are qualitatively generalizable.

As did my colleagues, one who focused on English forest schools, the other on Danish forest schools, I used two main methods in my study:

1) Semi-structured interviews with practitioners to illuminate their perspective of the benefits of forest experience using Gill's typology of benefits — children's personal development, sense of well-being, capacity to attend to instruction, etc. — as a framework for the analysis.

I asked the teachers to tell me what they believed the benefits of attending the Nature Preschool were for young children.

I followed that question by asking, "*What specific pedagogical practices do you use to help children gain the most from their experiences at your school?*"

I would sometimes follow up on their responses by asking, "*Can you tell me more about...?*" or "*What do you mean by...?*"

I also asked them if they'd like to add any information or insights that I hadn't addressed.

2) Observations of two settings' teaching practices for which I included in my field notes (See Appendix below.):

Descriptions of the environment to provide context: location, weather, etc.

What adults were doing and how/when they interacted with children

What children were doing with whom, for how long, the level and nature of their involvement, etc.

How children communicated, and with whom

Resources with which the children engaged (e.g., materials, tools, etc.)

FNS through North American Values: A Simplified Thematic Analysis

Some patterns in the data (Yin, 2018) I noticed, include:

Teacher Beliefs Regarding the Benefits for Children Attending FNS

First, these teachers must believe what they do is worthwhile as working at a FNS is a lot of effort with little fiscal payoff, not to mention little awareness of or recognition for the value of

what they do. Yes, there's been some growth, but in the U.S., at least, outdoor learning is way off most people's radar. As one might guess, those best suited to teach at FNS are those with a passion for and comfort in the outdoors, nature, and children's development. Teachers also have to be willing to grow alongside their students, support children's play, and be comfortable having more questions than answers. Furthermore, at least as seen in this case study, teachers' beliefs about benefits of attending FNS seem to align with what the literature says about commitment to respecting difference, encouraging autonomy, and trusting children to direct their learning.

The two teachers I interviewed, one at Arcadia Nature Preschool (Linda) and the other at DPNC Preschool (Davnet) had very similar thoughts about the benefits of attending FNS including that it's an opportunity for children to explore with all their senses: "[U.S.] Children are often sensory-deprived; there is a sensory-rich diet at the preschool," Linda said. She added that children also develop a sense of wonder ...and their day is still related to academics (e.g., as Davnet told me, "typical preschool things" like self-control, social skills, and building community). But FNS students are inspired to learn further through exploration, which "triggers thought processes." And both teachers I interviewed also told me that benefits include some version of "children learn a respect for and an appreciation of nature, a love for being outdoors; and they have opportunities to socialize and connect themselves to a (nearby) place."

Teachers at the other sites I visited mostly echoed these thoughts. At Our Secret Garden in Newbury, MA, a teacher I spoke with as they were preparing for the children's arrival told me, "We teach kids stewardship and kindness to each other and the earth." On their website I learned the program occurs both in- and outdoors (although they didn't go outside the day we visited as it was "too icy" and the garden was still buried under piles of hard snow); is aimed at nurturing children of all abilities to care for themselves, each other, and the earth; and kindles a sense of wonder and intellectual curiosity. Teachers at Our Secret Garden hold that learning should be hands-on; that children have "incalculable worth;" and that their students can make a positive difference in community and world. Similarly, according to their school's website, teachers at Drumlin Farm Community Preschool in Lincoln, Massachusetts are guided by "the philosophy that multi-sensory, inquiry-based exploration of the natural world will foster curiosity and persistence in young learners, [and they] encourage children to develop positive dispositions for future learning." Manon, the lead teacher at the forest school affiliated with the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs, New York told me that children benefit from attending their school because they're happy, healthy, less stressed, have more space to breathe, are self-reliant, and gain confidence. She added that the environment there can absorb "that boy-ish energy," that the "social stuff" seems to be resolved more readily, and that children become more competent.

While I was only able to speak very briefly with the teachers at the Cumming Nature Center Forest School located in Naples, New York, their Parent Handbook provides the following mission statement: "Forest school provides students the opportunity to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for nature within an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment. We nurture the intrinsic connection between children and the natural world through unstructured play and seasonally adapted exploratory learning. As a result, students learn to be resilient, self-reliant, and confidently inquisitive." And at the Ottawa (Ontario, Canada) Forest and Nature School I talked with the three teachers about the program as they were setting up before the children arrived. Unfortunately, we did not address the possible benefits of attending the school, but the Visitor and Information Package I was given noted that the public-school students who

come to the site on Wednesdays for six weeks, will “play and learn, and get to know the [600-acre] forest, themselves, and each other in a natural setting.”

Teaching Practices Supporting Teacher Beliefs

At Arcadia Nature Preschool and DPNC Preschool teacher practices clearly aligned with their beliefs. For instance, if, as they believe, young children have increasingly limited opportunities in their typical day-to-day lives to use their senses to fully experience their worlds, these two programs provide many sensorial experiences grounded in their “outdoor classrooms,” their places. Their mornings, inside or outside, might include gently touching plants and animals, tasting the sap from maple trees and its final form, maple syrup, visually locating and then smelling skunk cabbages, a harbinger of spring, using binoculars to watch birds, balancing as they walk across — or in — a stream, and sitting still, with their eyes closed, to listen to the forest. While they are exploring, children are taught to respect the natural world and each other, through teacher modeling as well as by direct instruction and via books, songs, and dramatic reenactments. Students have many opportunities to marvel at what they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, as well as to ask and respond to teachers’ and peers’ open-ended questions. Whether teacher practices lead to the two programs’ stated goals is impossible to ascertain short term. While their stated goals are admirable — for instance, few would be against fostering children’s ability to work both independently and cooperatively, and to act in a caring and responsible way towards their environment, themselves, and others — they are so broad and often so long-range that we cannot be assured they will be met. Substantive longitudinal research in this area would be helpful. Unfortunately, when advocates of outdoor learning post on social media, they often make grandiose claims without evidence, a practice which cannot be helpful to the “cause.”

At Our Secret Garden, while the rooms were full of natural materials and nature-themed visuals were everywhere, — We spent lots of time observing Gerald, a Bearded Dragon kept at the school, and the two groups of children were called the Chickadees and the Cardinals. — I had to take the teacher’s word for it that their curriculum is “nature-based.” That’s because the children did not go outside the day we visited and the theme for the day was St. Patrick’s Day, around which everything revolved, including their snack. However, there is a community garden behind the school building. The children’s garden is gated and adjacent to the community garden. The students have a picnic space and grow their own vegetables, which they eat for snack. The children take care of the garden including adding compost daily. So, it seems likely that teaching practices aligned with teacher beliefs, but I cannot say for sure.

Unfortunately, I didn’t see much of the teacher practices at Drumlin Farm Community Preschool as I met with two lead teachers briefly while the children had free play downstairs, then with the director, Jill, in her office to talk and watch a PowerPoint about the program. We had a tour of the center, then we all, adults and children, went outside to play in the backyard. As the children were going to go back inside shortly, Jill drove my daughter and me to Drumlin Farms Nature Center (because of the icy conditions) and we walked from there to the farm and animal rehab areas, which I was told the children do once a week. I might add here that this program appeared in a 2015 *New York Times* article, “Preschool without Walls” by Lillian Mongeau, which suggests that it’s seen as a program worthy of note.

Teacher practices at Forest Kindergarten of the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs build on the Waldorf approach to education and included modeling connections (for example, whittling a spoon from a stick found on the ground); singing to build an “auditory environment that is soft,

gentle”; and giving very few directions as hearing directions “pulls them [children] outside of themselves.” Manon told me there is no set curriculum and that pedagogy, which is focused on “spiritual, physical, holistic development,” depends on the teacher. “We do it [teach] implicitly rather than being didactic; we try to keep it imaginative so it [learning?] stays alive for them.” She added that they do assess for first grade “readiness,” but very globally, looking at the child physically, socially, and emotionally, and only in terms of being ready for Waldorf school.

At the Cumming Nature Center Forest School, per the website, “While the children settle into their play, teachers are holding the space, fostering three things: purposeful work, observation, and exploration. We are introducing the children to outdoor culture. We take care of camp, and everyone’s needs, we make time to notice the beautiful world unfolding around us, and we head out to explore all that’s beyond our little camp.” These practices certainly seem to align with program goals, although along with Arcadia Nature Preschool and DPNC Preschool, whether the program helps students meet goals of cultivating a lifelong appreciation for nature and, as a result of their school experiences, learning to be resilient, self-reliant, and confidently inquisitive was not possible to confirm.

Finally, the teacher practices I observed at the Ottawa Forest and Nature School were in alignment with their stated beliefs in that children primarily played; appeared to learn about living in the forest (how to hoot like an owl, fix the hammock so they didn’t keep falling on the ground, put on bug spray safely, etc.); and spent most of the session getting to know the forest they walked through and played in (for example, how to negotiate a path that was *quite* muddy in several spots), as well as getting to know themselves (what to do if you got angry), and each other better in this context (most of the children spent a very long time arranging and re-arranging rocks and other materials in a shallow pool). Argues Jacob Rodenburg (2019), a Canadian who has taught in the field of Outdoor Education for almost 30 years, “leaving kids indoors cuts them off from the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a living being that shares the world with other living beings. Children have a right to experience the joy of discovering the richness, complexity, and diversity of life.” I believe this is one of the key differences between Canadian and U.S. early education. The use of the phrase, “children have a right to...” is not often heard regarding U.S. education. In fact, the U.S. *still* has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Tentative Conclusions

It seems clear, and unsurprising, that our values lead to our practices, both generally and in terms of forest and nature schools (Leather, 2018; Maynard, 2007; McClintic & Petty, 2015). In the U.S., those “practices” often lead to exclusion of children who might benefit from experiences with FNS (Williams, 2018). For instance, in Baynham’s 2018 article, How to pick outdoor preschool, the subtitle reads: “America’s outdoor preschools are unregulated and mostly benefit the privileged. Still, they’re a damn good idea.” That a vast majority of these programs are private and so mostly attended by those who have a certain degree of privilege is, the author notes, a “common criticism of the burgeoning trend of outdoor early education in America,” but, the reader is assured, a few states are piloting programs to license outdoor preschools so “low-income parents can receive tuition assistance from the state government” (Baynham, 2018). Consistent with this critique, the RMSC Cumming Nature Center Forest School sent out a message recently reminding families that the lottery for the 2020-2021 academic year is open, followed by this exhortation: Apply by Friday... spaces are filling up fast!

There are exceptions, of course. For example, Seattle's "Every Kid in a Park" Collaborative addresses some barriers that keep low-income youth from accessing public lands. (See <https://everykidoutside.wordpress.com/>) The University of Washington sponsors the Fiddleheads Forest School, "Seattle's pioneering outdoor preschool program". (See <https://botanicgardens.uw.edu/education/youth-family/fiddleheads-forest-school/ome>) Some, although not many, schools have started to offer one-day-a-week outdoor education or allow children to attend local forest schools one day a week, as was the case at the Cumming Nature Center Forest School. But it seems to me the exceptions prove the rule: As lovely as these schools and their beneficial outdoor experiences are, what I have seen in person and online suggests that almost exclusively affluent, able-bodied European-American, children have access to such programs. Furthermore, while decades of research in child development as well as modern neuroscience clearly show that young children learn best when they are active, in the current school "reform" era that's not happening in most U.S. schools and classrooms (O'Brien, 2001; Strauss, 2016).

While it is true that most countries' approaches to outdoor learning share common tenets, such as, their use of outdoor settings, a holistic educational approach, and claimed developmental benefits from outdoor education), there are also differences in their philosophical and practical underpinnings related to variations in cultural traditions regarding the outdoors (Waite, Bølling, & Bentsen, 2015). In fact, curriculum and outdoor educational practices are framed and shaped by cultural, social, political, and geographic influences (Kelly, 2014; Waite, 2013). This could be one reason why the practices of outdoor learning, which tend to be learner-centered and where the social and environmental contexts play a significant role and lead to greater co-construction of learning, are at odds with schooling norms which often foreground the acquisition of skills and knowledge through transmission teaching (Waite, 2013). U.S. values and practices are clearly much more aligned with the latter. As Waite, Bølling, and Bentsen write, "Forest Schools' aims and the performativity educational agenda in England mean it is often a fringe activity that lies outside central curriculum experience" (2015, 16). Unfortunately, the same is true for the U.S.

A good example of how challenging it is to "push-back" against the status quo is presented by Williams (2018) in an article with the subtitle, "When did America decide preschool should be in a classroom?" He shares the story of one school in Washington, D.C., that is publicly funded and expanding who can access outdoor early education. Nearly one third of its students come from low-income families and 68% are students of color.

But Mundo Verde is just one unique school. Its institutional freedoms... are rare luxuries in [U.S.] public early-education systems which tend to be enmeshed in mandates governing what students need to learn, the order in which they should encounter each element, and how most things ought to be taught.... Mundo Verde's challenge... largely comes down to conflicting beliefs about where learning should take place and what learning should look like. But these are debates about something deeper, too: the fundamental question of what childhood should be.

I found a wonderful summary of Williams' point in a Natural Start Alliance post by Kit Harrington (2017).

Biodiversity is a requirement for balance in the systems underlying all living things. Yet our classrooms don't reflect the diversity that we rely upon in our outdoor spaces. Despite understanding better than anyone that the magic and wonder of the forest is something that all children deserve access to, nature-based preschool has, so far, been limited to a select population. If we want to change this, we are going to have to be ready to put in the hard work, and the critical self-reflection, that this change requires.

Caveats and Cautions

Wider, more systematic, and less biased study of the values underpinning FNS is needed. While some of a country's values may be broad enough to generalize from, many values may not be, especially if the country is large, diverse, and politically divided, as the U.S. is. For instance, five of the programs I visited were in the Northeast (in New England, specifically). Two were in the large and diverse state of New York, and one was in Ottawa, the capitol of Canada, and not far from the U.S./Canada border. Each of these areas has its own cultural variations with, for example, New England being relatively liberal, as in, for example the part of Massachusetts in which Arcadia is located. I was only able to visit my "primary" sites for three half-days, for a total of approximately 14 hours each. All the other sites I spent only one half-day in, with the exception of the Merrohawk Nature School in Newburyport, Massachusetts (not included in the analysis), where we spent only about an hour because the school was closed due to high winds. Similarly, the time I spent talking with staff was limited. Finally, I have a bias toward FNS for young children as I have an educational and experiential background in Early Education, as well as a lifelong appreciation for outdoor experiences. I am also concerned that most children rarely have these kinds of opportunities, to, I believe, their great detriment. I am also quite critical of the hyper-capitalism that characterizes the United States (e.g., Karier, 1973; O'Brien, 2001) as well as the country's intensifying and willful destruction of the natural environment.

But these limitations of the present study do not overturn the facts that 1) FNS in North America is but a shadow of FNS as practiced in, say, Nordic countries, and 2) we North Americans have a lot to learn about FNS from other places where it is practiced in ways fully supported by value systems, both educational and ecological, conducive to its flourishing. The hard and important work of critical analysis of the values guiding teaching practice and educational policymaking in the U.S. remains to be done. I hope this work, to some small extent, will encourage other educators to consider and perhaps address these concerns.

References

- Bailie, P. E. (2010). From the one-hour field trip to a nature preschool: Partnering with environmental organizations. *Young Children*, 65(4), 76–82.
- Bohling-Phillipi, V. (2006). The power of nature to help children heal. Retrieved from https://www.live-learn.org/resources/teachers/A_Sense_of_Place_Conference/power%20of%20nature%20to%20heal.pdf
- Baynham, J. (27 September 2018). How to pick an outdoor preschool: America's outdoor preschools are unregulated and mostly benefit the privileged. Still, they're a damn good idea. <https://www.outsideonline.com/2346611/how-pick-outdoor-preschool>
- Chawla, L. (1999). Life paths into effective environmental action. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 31(1), 15–26.

- Diaz-Diaz, C., Semeneć, P., & Moss, P. (2019). Editorial: Opening for debate and contestation: OECD's international early learning and child well-being study and the testing of children's outcomes. *Policy Futures in Education*, 17(1), 1-10.
- Forest School Canada (2014). *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A head, heart, hands approach to outdoor learning*. <https://childnature.ca/forest-school-canada/>
- Gill, T. (2014). The benefits of children's engagement with nature: A systematic literature review. *Children, Youth, and Environments*, 24(2), 10-34.
- Green Teacher (2017). Plug kids into nature. <https://greenteacher.com/plug-kids-in-to-nature/>
- Gustavsson, L., & Pramling, N. (2014). The educational nature of different ways teachers communicate with children about natural phenomena. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(1), 59-72.
- Harrington, K. (2017). Education in context: The role of place in nature-based early childhood education. <https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/education-context-role-place-nature-based-early-childhood-education>
- Karier, C. J. (1973). Business values and the educational state. In C. J. Karier, P. Violas, & J. Spring (Eds.), *Roots of crisis: American education in the twentieth century* (pp. 6-29). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Kelly, P. (2014). Intercultural comparative research: Rethinking insider and outsider perspectives. *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(2), 1-20.
- Klaar, S., & Öhman, J. (2014). Doing, knowing, caring, and feeling: Exploring relations between nature-oriented teaching and preschool children's learning. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(1), 37-58.
- Larimore, R. A. (2011). Nature-based preschools: A powerful partnership between early childhood and environmental education. *Legacy Magazine*, 22(3), 8-11.
- Larimore, R. A. (2016). Defining nature-based preschools. *The International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education*, 4(1), 32-36.
- Leather, M. (2018). A critique of Forest School: Something lost in translation. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 21, 5-18.
- Leder, S. (2018). Forest kindergartens: A multicultural perspective. <https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/forest-kindergartens-multicultural-perspective>
- Louv, R. (2005, 2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. New York, NY: Workman Publishing.
- Louv, R. (2016). *Vitamin N: The essential guide to a nature-rich life*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.
- MacEachern, Z. (2013). The Canadian Forest School movement. *Learning Landscapes*, 7(1), 219-232.
- Maynard, T. (2007). Forest schools in Great Britain: An initial exploration. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 8(1), 320-331.
- McClintic, S. & Petty, K. (2015). Exploring early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices about preschool outdoor play: A qualitative study. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 36, 24-43.
- Moore, R. C. (2014). *Nature play and learning places: Creating and managing places where children engage with nature*. Natural Learning Initiative and National Wildlife Federation. http://natureplayandlearningplaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Nature-Play-Learning-Places_v1.2_Sept22.pdf
- Mongeau, L. (29 December 2015). Preschool without walls. *New York Times*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/31/fashion/outdoor-preschool-in-nature.html>

National Wildlife Federation. (2010). Be out there.

https://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Be%20Out%20There/BeOutThere_WholeChild_V2.ashx

Natural Start Alliance. (17 November 2017). Nature preschools and kindergartens at record numbers in the U.S. <https://naturalstart.org/bright-ideas/nature-preschools-and-kindergartens-record-numbers-us>

O'Brien, L. M. (2001). Juggling scarves or Inclusion for what? Young children with special educational needs in an era of school 'reform.' *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2(3), 309-320.

O'Brien, L. M. (2018). Who benefits from outdoor education and play experiences? Variations in access to 'Forest School' and Nature Preschools in North America. A paper presented at the 26th International Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.

O'Brien, L.M. (2016). Children's play in Icelandic preschools. *Childhood Explorer* (an ACEI publication). <http://www.childhoodexplorer.org/childrens-play-in-icelandic-preschools>

O'Brien, L., & Murray, R. (2007). Forest School and its impacts on young children: Case studies in Britain. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*, 6, 249–265.

Power, M., & Eperjesi, P. (2014). An exploration into "home." *Childhood Explorer*, 6-9.

Rakow, D.A., & Eells, G.T. (2019). *Nature Rx: Improving college-student mental health*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Rodenburg, J. (17 June 2019). Why environmental educators shouldn't give up hope.

<https://clearingmagazine.org/archives/14300>

Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and nature: Design principles for educators*. Portsmouth, NH: Stenhouse Publishers.

Sobel, D. (2014). Learning to walk between the raindrops: The value of nature preschools and forest kindergartens. *Children, Youth, and Environments*, 24(2), 228-238.

Sobel, D. (2015). *Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The handbook for outdoor learning*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Strauss, V. (12 December 2016). The big problem with early childhood education.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/12/this-is-how-to-help-young-children-learn-to-love-school/>

Tovey, H. (2007). *Playing outdoors: Spaces and places, risks and challenges*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.

Waite, S. (2013). 'Knowing your place in the world': How place and culture support and obstruct educational aims. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43(4), 413–433.

Waite, S., Bølling, M., & Bentsen, P. (2015). Comparing apples and pears? A conceptual framework for understanding forms of outdoor learning through a comparison of English Forest Schools and Danish *udeskole*. *Environmental Education Research*, DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2015.1075193

Walker, T.D. (2016). Kindergarten, naturally: Pine needles and crackling fires replace whiteboards and desks in Finland's forest classrooms.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/kindergarten-naturally/500138/>

Watts, A. (2013). *Outdoor learning through the seasons: An essential guide for the early years*. London: Routledge.

Wells, N. M., & Lekies, K. S. (2006). Nature and the life course: Pathways from childhood nature experiences. *Children, Youth, and Environments*, 16(1), 1–25.

Williams, C. (26 April 2018). The perks of a play-in-the-mud educational philosophy. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/04/early-childhood-outdoor-education/558959/>

Worrall, S. (12 February 2017). We are wired to be outside. *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/02/nature-fix-brain-happy-florence-williams/>

Yin, R.K. (2018). *Case study research applications: Design and methods*. London: Sage.

Appendix: Data

The Nature Preschools I visited in 2016

1. *Arcadia Nature Preschool*, Easthampton, Massachusetts (affiliated with Mass Audubon)

Observations and website review

- The program was founded in 1976 (it was the first nature preschool in Massachusetts and one of the first in the country) on the premise that happy and rewarding early childhood experiences with nature form the foundation for the development of creative, caring, and aware adults (from website and interview)

- Their goals are to foster children's ability to work both independently and cooperatively, and to act in a caring and responsible way towards their environment, themselves, and others

- Each day, they first have indoor time: exploring (fabulous) materials, group time, snack, etc.

- Children are encouraged to be independent, and to explore, question, and choose things to do that interest them

- Teachers prepare and maintain the physical environment, add materials, ask questions, record children's predictions, etc.

- Then, they go outside (the outdoor "classroom" is a 723-acre Wildlife Sanctuary) to, for instance, take a walk in the woods, tap maple trees, or explore the stream that runs through the (very large) property

- The outdoor activities are connected with what happens inside; this is, apparently, "standard practice" for nature preschools (from my observations as well as what I've seen online)

Interview with lead teacher, Linda

- A summary of the **benefits** of attending Arcadia Nature Preschool:
 - The opportunity for children to explore with all their senses: "[U.S.] children are often sensory-deprived; there is a sensory-rich diet at the preschool."
 - They also develop a sense of wonder ... & their day is still related to academics
 - They learn a respect for and an appreciation of nature, a love for being outdoors; and they have opportunities to socialize and connect themselves to a (nearby) place
- **Teacher practices** include asking lots of open-ended questions; modeling inquiry (e.g., *What do you think? How can we find out?*); bringing in natural materials to explore; and immersion in nature – "There are many ways to explore & learn," as Linda put it.

- **Notes:**

- The Arcadia staff follows Mass-Audubon guidelines and Massachusetts early childhood program requirements, but they do not follow a specific curricular approach
- The teachers' backgrounds are both in Early Childhood Education and environmental education
- It appeared to me that teacher practices aligned with the stated goals, but some of the goals are so long-range (e.g., *the development of creative, caring, & aware adults*), that it's hard to tell.

2. Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center Preschool, Mystic, Connecticut

Observations and website review:

- **Their curriculum** is a “comprehensive blend of environmental education and traditional, play-based preschool standards”
 - They spend time outdoors every day!
 - The preschool is affiliated with and frequently uses the DPNC Center, which includes a 350-acre sanctuary and an animal rehabilitation center.
- **Their goals** are to foster the growth of whole, well-rounded, happy children, and to inspire an appreciation for the natural world and a lifetime environmental ethic
 - As at Arcadia Nature Preschool, indoor play & snack happen first, then they all go outside to walk around, explore, climb rocks, and, at one point, all sit quietly with eyes closed while they listen to the sounds of nature...

Interview with lead teacher, Davnet

- The **benefits** of attending the DPNC Preschool:
 - Children are inspired to love and respect the natural world
 - They learn “typical preschool things” like self-control, social skills, and building community
 - But they are inspired to learn further through exploration, which, she said, “triggers thought processes”
- **Teacher practices:**
 - Teachers observe closely and modify the environment based on what the children do (or don't do) and what the teachers notice
 - “We have started thinking about being ‘nature mentors,’ rather than being didactic teachers,” Davnet told me.
 - They teach children how to explore and to behave safely.
- **Notes:**
 - Two teachers, including the lead teacher, are Montessori trained, so there are some Montessori materials & Montessori-type activities: for example, math and practical life areas, the use of work mats, etc.

○ Again, it appeared to me that teacher practices aligned with stated goals, but, also again, the goals are so broad and long-range (*to foster the growth of whole, well-rounded, happy children, and to inspire an appreciation for the natural world and a lifetime environmental ethic*), that it's (again) difficult to tell.

3. The other FNSs

○ **The three additional schools I visited in 2015**, *Our Secret Garden Nursery & Preschool* in Newbury, MA; *Merrohawke's Forest Kindergarten* program in nearby Newburyport, MA (we were there *very* briefly as school was closed for the day because of high winds); and the *Drumlin Farm Community Preschool* in Lincoln, MA (like Arcadia, affiliated with Mass-Audubon) were very different from each other and from both Arcadia and the DPNC Preschool, but at the same time, they had many similarities.

○ For example, all the teachers and children were White, all the programs were private (that is, families paid tuition), all had an obvious focus on teaching children about nature, both inside and out, and all were part-time programs.

○ **The three additional schools I visited in 2016 & 2017** were *Forest Kindergarten of the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs* in Saratoga Springs, NY; the *Rochester Museum and Science Center Forest School at Cumming Nature Center* in Naples, NY, and the *Ottawa Forest and Nature School* in Ontario, Canada. These schools were quite different from the preceding programs in that the first was clearly affiliated with a Waldorf school and integrated this approach with their attention to nature; the second was the most aligned with what I understand as Forest School (e.g., children were outside almost the whole day exploring and roaming with minimal adult – 2 males, a rarity in early education – direction, and students from the local school district could attend all day on Friday with parent permission); and the third school, the FNS program in Ottawa, stood out for its weekly programming for 40+ Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and grade 1 children who attended Ottawa School Board (OSB) schools. In addition, it's the "headquarters" for the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, and it's a not-for-profit school with funders that donate for specific parts of the program, and where families pay tuition on a sliding-fee scale and the OSB supports their students' attendance.

○ Note that while Canada seems to be philosophically more aligned with the move toward outdoor learning than does the U.S., nature-based programs are rare in North American public schools. Nature Schools are mostly privately run for preschool-age children. "School boards are often reluctant to invest dollars in training teachers, designing outdoor learning spaces, and relinquishing constraints of liability concerns and a pervasive focus on standardized achievement outcomes to support these types of programs" (Green Teacher, 2017).

○ With the exception of the *Ottawa Forest and Nature School's* student population, which, the day I was there, was much more diverse than in any of the other schools I visited, students and teachers in these three schools were White, the programs were part-time (with the exception of Forest School Fridays at the *RMSC Forest School at Cumming Nature Center*), and families had to be able to financially and otherwise support (e.g., provide transportation) children's attendance.

Pre-Service Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Math Anxiety and Math Teaching Practices in the Context of COVID-19

Rupam Saran

Medgar Evers College/City University of New York

Abstract: This qualitative study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mathematics anxiety and socio-emotional competency among pre-service teachers in an undergraduate teacher education program. Specifically, the analysis explores relationships among socio-emotional competency, math anxiety, stress, economic conditions, and health issues. While a plethora of common stressors affect college students, including academic performance, intrapersonal tensions, and interpersonal relationships, the focus of this study is on the COVID-19 related pressures affecting preservice teachers in dealing with digital modes of learning and math performance in a fully online, synchronous instructional environment. Findings suggest a significant relationship among interpersonal factors, math anxiety, and socio-emotional competency

Introduction

In 2020, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic threatened the world and generated uncertainties and anxieties among all aspects of life, including school and university instructional modalities. Students' cognitive and social well-being and students' academic performance were put at risk by the sudden change in instructional modalities from face-to-face to fully on-line synchronous and asynchronous modes (Ayyala, et al. 2020; Almaiah, et al. 2020; Bloom, et al. 2020; Kim, 2020). The anxiety that affected students' mathematics learning and performance in fully online mathematics classes were of the affective and cognitive categories. The main challenges of sudden and dramatic change to fully online distance learning systems came with technical issues, such as availability of computers, internet systems, and other technical resources for online teaching and learning (Almaiah, et al., 2020; d'Orville, 2020). There was no time to prepare and to immerse in distance learning for students and faculty. The college and university provided technology workshops and trainings to navigate digital instructional platforms; but it was very hard for everybody to grasp all technical steps and details in a very short period of time. Unpreparedness and lack of efficient training caused stress for all stakeholders. The sudden transition caused psychological, cognitive, and physical stresses for students and faculty equally.

In the midst of ongoing COVID-19 challenges, there remains a need to prepare teachers who can teach all subject areas successfully to elementary school students. In the context of preparing effective mathematics teachers, lower levels of socio-emotional competency (SEC) and high levels of math anxiety can trigger teachers to avoid situations in which they will be required to learn/teach mathematics. Avoidance of college level mathematics courses renders preservice teachers (PSTs) unable to get profound knowledge of mathematics concepts. Teachers who lack good understanding of mathematics are in danger of incorrectly addressing mathematics concepts essential to the cognitive development of their students (Larson, 1983; Lake & Loreen, 2014; Mellawaty & Taufan, 2021). Beilock and associates (2010, 1860) assert, "Math anxiety... is more common in women than in men." This is a significant issue given that females constitute the majority of elementary school teachers, and these teachers often have math anxiety. Math anxious teachers have the potential for contributing to the development of math anxiety in their students. This problem is also noteworthy due to the fact that teachers make content specific and pedagogical decisions related to the methods and instructional strategies with which children are taught mathematics. High achievement in mathematics and development of mathematical understanding rests upon the fundamental assumption that teachers provide students with the

opportunity to experience and learn mathematical concepts in constructive environments and productive situations. Teachers must feel comfortable with the concepts they are teaching to students and the modality they are using to impart mathematical knowledge to their students.

In the present high-tech era, young adults are technology savvy and feel comfortable with social media and technology advances but are unfamiliar with distance education. Except for many nontraditional students who may have limited exposure to computer technology, in general, most students perceive distance learning positively due to efficiency in time and easy access to resources (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Bai, et al., 2020). However, challenges of pandemic teaching have altered the perception of distance learning among PSTs. Zoom, Google Classroom or Blackboard Ultra classrooms became unfamiliar territory when PSTs had to teach mathematics and present family math projects to elementary grade students and their parents.

Students in the context where this study took place face many of these pandemic challenges. The context of this study is a 4-year senior college with open admission policy that attracts a greater percentage of lower socioeconomic, nontraditional, female, and minority students than average 4-year institutions. Since at this college enrollment is less competitive, the college also serves students with more variability in academic skills, specifically math skill. The college traditionally offered many math developmental courses but due to budget cuts the number of these developmental math courses has declined over the past few years. The students enrolled in these courses have shown poor math skills which may explain why students overall report higher estimates of math anxiety than any other academic area.

Math Anxiety

Math anxiety is one of the most crucial factors in the field of mathematics learning that hinders an individual's mathematics performance and achievement. Math anxiety is associated with math avoidance and untoward consequences, such as negative attitudes towards math that lead to lower achievement in mathematics (Nuere & de Miguel, 2020; Ramirez, Shaw & Maloney, 2018; Sarkar, et al. 2014). Math anxiety is defined as a negative psychological condition that creates stress, fear, nervousness, and anxiety towards mathematics (Ashcraft & Moore, 2009; Sarkar, et al, 2014). Individuals who suffer from math anxiety fear mathematics and their anxiousness may affect even their physiological condition while solving mathematical tasks. Math anxious persons experience neural activation, and levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, increase when they engage in mathematical tasks (Brathwaite, et al. 2020; Brown, et al. 2020; Foley, et al. 2017a & b; Lake & Lauren, 2014; Sarkar, et al. 2014). Greenberger and Padesky (1995) explain the physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of mathematics anxiety. The physiological aspect of mathematics anxiety affects physical conditions, such as profuse sweating, hand/lip trembling, aches and pains in different body parts, increased heart rate, and lack of sleep. The affective aspects appear as feelings of nervousness, tension, and stress. The cognitive aspects manifest in inability to concentrate and poor decision making. The behavioral aspects appear in purposeful avoidances of class meetings and tools/resources essential for mathematics learning. Individuals suffering math anxiety tend to avoid mathematics and disciplines related to mathematics. Mathematics anxiety is damaging to one's self worth, confidence, and ability to recognize one's potential in mathematics.

Current research on math anxiety explains the development of math anxiety in three categories: (a) poor math skills, (b) genetic predispositions, and (c) socio-environmental factors. Ramirez, Shaw, & Maloney (2018) refers to two viewpoints of mathematics anxiety: The first

framework, the Disruption Account, argues that math anxiety causes people to underperform in mathematics. The second framework, the Reduced Competency Account, suggests that math anxiety is an outcome of poor ability to do mathematics. Students with reduced math abilities avoid taking math classes and miss opportunities to hone their math skills, e.g., doing math homework, engaging in math classes, etc. (Hembree, 1990) Avoidance can cause students to fall even further behind in their math understanding and lead to increased math anxiety. Consistent with this claim, students who are math anxious report taking fewer math courses, and math anxiety among adolescent students has been related to lowered intent to take math courses (Eccles et al. 1984). Research in elementary school mathematics education reports that in U.S. universities the mathematics requirement for elementary school teachers is low (Beilock, et al. 2010). Therefore, it becomes easy to become an elementary school teacher without taking higher-level math courses.

Social and Emotional Competence

The focus of this study is on PSTs learning to teach mathematics in a stressful environment. Therefore, the discussion involves the social emotional status of PSTs and their mathematics anxiety. When teachers lack the SEC to handle classroom challenges, they experience emotional stress. Within the teacher education conversation social-emotional competencies commonly appear as acknowledgement that higher education is a highly stressful period (Acharya, et al. 2018). However, COVID-19 gave rise to the argument that higher education institutions need to develop students' SEC to increase their ability to cope with stress (Bai, et al. 2020).

SEC involves six major elements: 1) emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies: 2) self-awareness, 3) social awareness, 4) responsible decision-making, 5) self-management, and 6) relationship management. Competency is defined as what an individual can do, accomplish, or perform. Socially and emotionally competent individuals know how to manage their emotions and their behavior. They can manage their behavior even when they are confronted by emotionally challenging situations and stress. They can regulate their emotions in healthful ways that facilitate teaching, and learning, and can create positive classroom environments conducive to positive outcomes (Bai, et al. 2020).

In the context of teaching and learning, SEC refers to one's capacity to use emotions to facilitate thinking. Socially and emotionally competent teachers possess the ability to recognize and control their emotions, impulses, and tendencies. They possess/cultivate mechanisms to generate and apply positive emotions to motivate their own learning as well as the learning of others. Individuals with positive SEC have a realistic understanding of their capabilities and recognize their emotional strengths and weaknesses. Socially and emotionally competent teachers also recognize and understand the emotions of others. Socially and emotionally competent teachers can manage their actions even when emotionally aroused by challenging situations and stress.

Lower levels of SEC are often related to emotional stress and anxiety that cause loss of interest in given tasks. In particular, the SEC dimensions of self-awareness and self-management tend to influence a teacher's ability to cope with the emotional demands of teaching and learning. Inability to teach subject matter and, at the same time, pay attention to the emotional lives of their students causes many teachers to experience exhaustion and stress. Burnout results from a breakdown in coping ability over time and is viewed as having three features: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of sense of personal accomplishment. When teachers are

unable to manage the social and emotional challenges of their chosen profession, they show lower levels of SEC and performance. Lower levels of SEC trigger anxiety, stress, and fear of low performance or ‘I cannot do it’ feeling. Individuals with aroused SEC experience anxiety, depression, and anxiousness that lead to actions and behaviors that are self-destructive and at the same time damaging to the environment they work in (Bai, et al. 2020).

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Stress is described as situations, events, or emotional or physical conditions that stimulate negative thoughts and feelings. Continued stressful situations cause tension and pressure on the body and mind and detract from physical and psychological well-being. According to Aldwin, 2007; Epstein & Meier, 1989; Lazarus, 1991; and Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, individuals have their unique way of reacting to challenging situations by engaging in a cognitive process of assessing whether the event poses a challenge or a threat for them and whether they have competence or ability to deal with the challenging situation. If they believe they have the competence to deal with the challenge, they use coping strategies, such as taking direct action to eliminate the sources of stress or to modify the situation. They may engage in emotion-focused coping and may use mental or physical techniques to reduce feelings of stress (Kyriacou, 2001). These strategies ideally take the form of positive reappraisal; but may take the form of unconstructive strategies, such as avoidance or denial. A person’s coping strategies and behavior are influenced by individual characteristics such as personality, demographics, current health status, personal life stressors, and financial status.

In general, there are many common stressors in college life that include greater academic demands, being on one’s own in a new environment, financial responsibilities, exposure to new people, and making decisions. Familial expectation to earn high grades is a great source of stress. Often, poor grades or failures become pressures that generate intrapersonal, interpersonal, academic, and environmental stressors. Among college students stress is generated by two basic sources: social issues and financial issues. Social issues include family life stress, such as death or sickness in the family and problems with childcare or elder care. First-generation college students, non-traditional students, such as those 35 years old or older or those returning to college after a long gap, often feel pressured to do well academically as they cope with social responsibilities above and beyond those borne by traditional college students. During the pandemic the stress level among non-traditional and the first-generation PSTs was very high. They felt they had enormous pressure to prove themselves to their family and community; and “not doing well” was not an option for them.

Although the participant PSTs of this study were not employed at schools as full-time teachers, as part of their Early Field Experience (EFE) requirements they had to teach children mathematics once a week, do classroom observation of mathematics discourses, and develop many mathematics activities and projects for children in classrooms. In the United States, in general, teacher preparation programs consist of a strong face-to-face practical field-based experience where PSTs spend 10-15 hours instructional time with children in schools for each Education course they take. State certification requires all Education majors to fulfill 100 hours of EFE before they start their student teaching semester. Given this requirement, all participant PSTs had to be in the field with elementary school students and complete mathematics teaching assignments. In the semester of this study, participants had to accomplish all these tasks in online classroom contexts.

Methodology/Data Sources

Using the frameworks of math anxiety, SEC, and the transactional model of stress and coping, this study explores PSTs' math performance and mathematics anxiety in relationship with social emotional competence, stress, and mathematics teaching practices during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Among all disciplines, mathematics is often perceived as logical, precise, objective, and difficult to master. However, not all individuals feel the same way about mathematics. Often the thought of learning and doing mathematics initiates feelings of stress or fear, or joy. According to Zimney (2022), pandemic-related challenges surrounding inequities in education may worsen negative feelings about mathematics. To test Zimney's hypothesis, the objectives of this study are to examine 1) the impact challenges and stresses encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic had on PSTs' preexisting or newly developed math anxiety and 2) the influence of socio-environmental factors on PSTs' SEC, confidence and mathematics performance, and achievement in the math methods course in which they were enrolled.

EDUC 315 Teaching Early Childhood Mathematics in Elementary School is a math methods course for pre-service urban teachers. The course had to transition to fully online synchronous mode from face-to-face modality during the COVID-19 pandemic. In synchronous modality instructors followed a set class time and met with the students on Zoom and Black Board Ultra for digital instruction. Nineteen PSTs (16 females, 3 males) were in the early childhood math method course and became participants in the study. The college they attended is situated in the northeastern United States, an area very heavily affected by COVID-19 in 2020-2021.

During spring 2020, faculty and students participated in a college-wide initiative to foster technology integration across the campus in the COVID-19 environment and to facilitate virtual teaching and learning. PSTs followed the Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract methodology, reform-based mathematics curriculum, and state mathematics curriculum standards. Mathematics teaching videos were used as a pedagogical resource for modeling math teaching strategies. Each student in the math methods course was assigned a math teaching video on a mathematical concept covered in the course. The college had an extensive laptop loan program. Students were provided with laptops to work from home. Many workshops and training sessions were organized by the college to train faculty and students in distance learning.

Data sources are PSTs' reflective journals, pretest and posttest surveys, a self-report questionnaire, and document analysis. The data collection tools used are tests of critical thinking, self-concept, and mathematics anxiety. Analysis of the data is a one-group pretest-posttest highlighting details of participants' SEC, mathematics anxiety, and self-concept. The following steps were taken to identify math anxiety:

Self-report questionnaires/survey: Although some recent work has employed experience sampling surveys, according to research in math anxiety, the most common way to identify math anxiety is through self-report questionnaires that ask students to indicate how they feel about situations that involve math (Bieg, et al. 2015; Goetz, et al., 2013). The self-report questionnaires prompted PSTs to indicate how they feel about mathematics assignments, virtual mathematics teaching to children, and virtual mathematics projects.

Pretest and posttest: Surveys were administered to find out the level of mathematics anxiety and the quality of the mathematics self-concept PSTs had before the COVID-19 challenges. The pretest surveys focused on PSTs' beliefs and views of their competencies in mathematics, about

what mathematics is, their math anxieties (if they had any), what learning mathematics requires, their motivation to teach mathematics, what constitutes good mathematics teaching, and self-analysis of mathematics knowledge. End of the semester participant survey questions and reflections (administered in month 4 of the semester of the study) consisted of questions such as: How, if at all, have you changed your beliefs about yourself in relation to mathematics in fully online synchronous mode? How, if at all, have you changed your preexisting ideas about what mathematics is? How, if at all, have you changed your beliefs about what constitutes best practices in teaching mathematics with technology?

Ongoing reflective journals: PSTs wrote in their journal about their math experiences and their likes and dislikes of math that originated in their elementary, high school, and college introductory math courses or during the pandemic. Writing focused on PSTs' beliefs and feelings about math; PSTs' fluency with mathematical processes, such as problem solving, procedures and algorithms; PSTs' math content knowledge; and PSTs' mathematics pedagogical knowledge.

Mathematics teaching and learning in the digital environment: The teacher educators had to encourage math anxious PSTs to develop efficacy to teach mathematics to a range of diverse learners in a digital environment using course provided materials. In lieu of in-person classroom observation of mathematics lessons taught by a teacher and day-to-day mathematics discourses of classrooms the PSTs had to watch videos of mathematics teaching in elementary classrooms and then analyze the math instruction and discourse in the video. Using general prompts and questions about teacher-student interactions, namely: a) Describe the mathematics topic/concept. b) What do you notice about the teaching methodology in use? c) Analyze math teaching strategies the teacher applied. d) In what way do you think the teacher supported students' mathematics learning? e) In what way do you think the teacher responds to students' questions or their mistakes? f) Describe how you would teach the concept if you taught the same mathematics lesson as the teacher in the video did. g) Describe the section of the video where the mathematical concept needed better explanation. PSTs watched one video with the instructor and practiced the video analysis.

Findings: Impact of COVID-19, SEC, and Psychological Response to Stress

Many participating PSTs experienced feeling of loss and grief due to death or prolonged hospitalization of family members and close friends. During the pandemic, many individuals who had experienced loss of income were in a depressive state of sadness and stress leading to emotional arousal that manifested into anxiousness, anger, hostility, aggression, and failure or lower academic achievement. Because social interactions were restricted during COVID-19, PSTs experienced a sense of isolation and loneliness that led to anxiety and depression. Their unfamiliarity with remote instruction mode and virtual teaching resources hindered their academic performance, specifically in mathematics.

In developing competency to do mathematics and teach mathematics, especially critical thinking in mathematics, important psychological aspects include SEC, self-concept, and mathematics anxiety. Mellawati and Tufan (2021) mention that the main concerns in the mathematics learning process are psychology, cognitive approaches, and conceptualization of the affective domain. A person's perception or view of his or her ability to learn mathematics is that

person's mathematical self-concept. Therefore, mathematical self-concept is a person's beliefs, feelings, or attitudes regarding his ability to understand or do something in situations involving mathematics. The mathematical self-concept is affected by SEC and mathematics anxiety. When SEC is low, and anxiety is high, math performance becomes ill-affected by decreased attention and lack of mental clarity, loss of concentration and memory, a diminished sense of self-worth, feelings of depression and fear of failure, and physical ailments. Data from the study show many of the participants dealing with exactly these issues as PSTs who began the semester with high levels of math anxiety registered acute levels by the end of the semester. Similarly, those with moderate levels moved to higher levels; and even PSTs with no-to-insignificant levels of math anxiety to start the semester reported moderate levels of math anxiety by semester's end.

Results for Objective 1 of the Study: Impact of Challenges and Stress of the COVID-19 Pandemic on PSTs' Preexisting or Newly Developed Math Anxiety

Most math anxious PSTs felt that in online digital mode their math anxiety was elevated. They were intimidated by virtual manipulatives and virtual modes of mathematics teaching. They felt that they were restricted in the virtual environment and needed much more time to practice with virtual resources in order to implement them successfully in their teaching practices. A PST with moderate math anxiety shared that she wanted to be a good math teacher but in the virtual environment and pandemic stress she is suffering with negative thoughts and constant worry that she will fail the math methods course. In online learning mode she is constantly concerned about her ability to solve math problems and to complete math tasks.

One 38-year-old nontraditional student shared in her journal:

I have financial problems. My work hours are reduced my children are having online school each having online learning of their own, trying to teach math online and at the same time serving everybody at home, and doing my own work as a student, and a part time teacher is stressful. I did okay in mathematics courses at college, but the online mode is not good for me. I might fail this course....

Another nontraditional, 35-year-old PST compared her Literacy assignment with Math assignments and pointed out her issues:

In my family, we have one computer that I got from college. So, I needed my children to use my computer while I do housework and help them with their work. I must work at night to practice with virtual manipulatives, complete all lesson plans and math projects on time. Internet connection is weak in my apartment building I get frustrated. ...it is easier to do literacy course assignments, but math is different. I have to know math to do video analysis and teach students math... I wish I had a computer for my own work.

A few more examples of students' reflections from their journals indicate that math anxiety permeated the class:

I think Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (CPA) method of math instruction and learning is better for face-to-face classes. I understand better when I see and touch stuff.

Math is not my favorite subject. I think, in fully online mode, mathematics group assignments and projects are more difficult and complicated because they require

extra work to communicate with others outside the classroom. It was hard to do work without social interaction.

Hardest part was to learn how to use virtual manipulatives to teach children math concepts.

The partner work was a lot harder because everything had to be done through technology.

Results for Objective 2 of the Study: How Socio-environmental Factors Influenced PSTs' SEC, Confidence, and Mathematics Performance and Achievement within the Math Methods Course

Higher math-anxiety PSTs showed higher negative emotions towards mathematics. A nontraditional 40-year-old PST who worked at a school as an early childhood paraprofessional declared that she has math phobia. She shared:

My grades in math were always very... very low. I am not sure I did poor because I did not understand math, or I do not have smartness to learn math... I am missing something... I am always worried about math... I am not good with technology so learning online is very stressful for me. Using virtual manipulatives is another problem

She expressed that her low performance in math was the outcome of her incompetency to learn mathematical concepts and to perform challenging math tasks during her elementary school years. Her math anxiety became severe in online mode. The non-familiar environment exacerbated math anxiety and negatively influenced math performance. A PST with low level math anxiety explained that his fear of math made it difficult for him to feel confident to develop mathematics lesson plans and fulfill his teaching responsibilities effectively during virtual EFE.

Yet another nontraditional PST shared that she liked math and wanted to be an elementary school math coach, but the COVID-19 period was very hard for her. In her final reflection she wrote:

My daughter is in hospital for more than a month. She had suicidal tendencies, my mother died, and I was having a bad divorce case going on. I know math but I never taught math to the 5th graders so I was very scared to teach math. I almost dropped the course but my professor helped a lot to finish the math course I am not good in but I worked very hard to get good grades in math. I wanted to be a doctor but could not do very well in math....

This journal entry reveals its author is among those students who had many challenges during the pandemic and experienced lower levels of SEC because of them. She reported higher ongoing stress and math anxiety but showed a strong math identity and motivation to do well in math. Her teacher identity is strongly tied to math achievement. However, the ongoing pandemic and course stress loomed for her as a threat to her identity. The idea of dropping the course and taking it in a subsequent semester was an action to protect the personal image/identity she wished to maintain.

Discussion

Data from "Walking Down Memory Lane," a class activity to gain insight into PSTs' math experiences demonstrated that math avoidance tendencies and math anxiety for participant PSTs

stem from four elements. First, preexisting math anxiety; second, their experiences with math teachers' negative attitude towards them in K-12 grades; third, negative content experience, such as not understanding math concepts; and fourth, pedagogical experience that included the enactment of math instruction by their teachers in school and college.

The data reported a few preexisting themes that became stronger in the COVID-19 environment: 1) Confirmation of existing cultural stereotypes such as women hate math (Bieg, et al., 2015; Ramirez & Maloney, 2018), "...so if I hate math that is acceptable." 2) Affirmation of societal beliefs of learning (Koriat & Bjork, 2006; Ramirez et al., 2018). "If an individual has trouble learning something, then most probably that person will not do very well, I always had problem learning math, so I am not capable doing math." 3) Familial math culture and interactions in the home (Maloney, et al., 2015; Ramirez, Shaw & Maloney, 2018) "In my family nobody is good at math. My parents never could help me with math homework." 4) Classroom mathematics interactions (Beilock, et al., 2010). "My teacher gets really stressed-out teaching math." 5) Teachers' negative attitude (Ramirez, et al., 2018). "My teacher doesn't ask us questions or encourage us to ask questions she believes that not everyone can be good at math." 6) Beliefs about heightened physiological arousal (Jamieson, et al., 2017; Ramirez, Shaw & Maloney, 2018) "I become very nervous in math exams, I must be really nervous."

A few PSTs completing a math concentration (Minor) and good mathematics grades prior to taking the math methods course developed much higher levels of math anxiety in the challenging environment of the pandemic. These PSTs were more likely to give up while learning how to teach math and solving challenging math questions and were highly influenced by challenges posed by COVID-19. They did not want to get a "bad grade" to lower their grade point average. They wanted to opt for an "Incomplete" grade in the semester to allow them more time to complete assignments.

Conclusion

Findings demonstrate, as Zimney (2022) suggested that math anxiety can alter PSTs' mathematics learning behavior despite their mathematics learning abilities and past mathematics achievement. It can be concluded that there is a direct influence of self-concept and mathematics anxiety together on critical thinking. Results showed that PSTs' perceptions of their math ability had a direct effect on math anxiety. PSTs with higher math anxiety were reluctant and slower to attempt and complete math assignments that required them to do problem solving. These PSTs made more errors and were slower at solving mathematical problems and using virtual manipulatives compared to their lower level math anxiety peers.

Most PSTs pointed out negative math-related class experiences in their journals and maintained that COVID-19 socio-environmental factors intensified their math anxiety. Many PSTs had to deal with personal loss, stress, and health issues and at the same time they had to deal with math anxiety. Math anxious PSTs developed negative attitudes towards math and their math knowledge in the classroom. Oftentimes their first interactions with formal math began with their elementary teachers among whom, consistent with other research (Battista, 1986; Bryant, 2009; Hembree, 1990), the PSTs reported particularly high levels of math anxiety, which potentially impacts how both teachers and students feel and perform in math. The data demonstrates that poor mathematical self-concept and perceived math ability is related to math anxiety and vice versa.

Data revealed that a few PSTs with preexisting moderate levels of math anxiety became

more math anxious due to pandemic challenges, but they also had strong math identity and math motivation. They took math as a challenge and were motivated to do well in math education class. This finding aligns with Ramirez, Shaw, and Maloney's (2018) research that points out a large majority of research in math anxiety assumes that math anxious students have low motivation. However, in contrast, some math anxious students in this study showed high achievement and demonstrated that even the math anxious can be math motivated. Thus, this study has implications for elementary and early childhood contexts. In the pandemic environment, early childhood math education is a highly challenging field where teacher educators have to encourage math anxious PSTs to develop efficacy to teach mathematics to a range of diverse learners in digital environments. In order to prepare teachers capable of facilitating mathematical understanding, instructors of mathematics methods courses for elementary school PSTs must first deal with the issue of math anxiety in terms of both its psychological and its social sources to motivate students to succeed as math educators even in the face of daunting challenges.

References

- Acharya, L., L. Jin, and W. Collins. (2018). "College Life Is Stressful Today—emerging Stressors and Depressive Symptoms in College Students." *Journal of American College Health* 66 (7): 655–664. doi:10.1080/07448481.2018.1451869.
- Agarwal, S., & Kaushik, J. S. (2020). Student's perception of online learning during COVID pandemic. *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*, 87(7), 554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12098-020-03327-7>.
- Aldwin, C. M. (2007). *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Allen, D. S. (2001). *Mathematics experience: Contributing factors to the math anxiety and avoidance behaviors of female elementary school preservice teachers* (Doctoral dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/2346/19586>
- Almaiah, M. A., Al-Khasawneh, A., & Althunibat, A. (2020). Exploring the critical challenges and factors influencing the e-learning system usage during COVID-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(6), 5261–5280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10219-y>.
- Andrews, Amanda, and Jennifer Brown, (2009). "The effects of math anxiety," *Education*, Volume 135 Number 3 (2015), 362-370.
- Ashcraft, Mark H., and Alex M. Moore, (2009). "Mathematics anxiety and the affective drop in performance," *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 27 (3), 197-205.
- Ayyala, R. S., Taylor, G. A., & Callahan, M. J. (2020). Stresses and anxieties in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic — what we can learn. *Pediatric Radiology*, 50(8), 1052–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00247-020-04727-9>.
- Bai, S., S. Elavsky, M. Kishida, K. Dvořáková, and M. T. Greenberg. (2020). "Effects of Mindfulness Training on Daily Stress Response in College Students: Ecological Momentary Assessment of a Randomized Controlled Trial." *Mindfulness* 11 (6): 1433– 1445. doi:10.1007/s12671-020-01358-x.
- Battista, M. T. (1986). The relationship of mathematics anxiety and mathematical knowledge to the learning of mathematical pedagogy by preservice elementary teachers. *School Science and Mathematics*, 86(1), 10–19. doi:10.1111/j.1949-8594.1986.tb11580.x
- Beilock, S. L., Gunderson, E. A., Ramirez, G., & Levine, S. C. (2010). Female teachers' math anxiety affects girls' math achievement. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*,

- 107, 1860–1863. doi:10.1037/e634112013-097
- Beilock, S. L., Rydell, R. J., & McConnell, A. R. (2007). Stereotype threat and working memory: Mechanisms, alleviation, and spillover. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 136, 256–276. doi:10.1037/0096-3445.136.2.256
- Bieg, M., Goetz, T., Wolter, I., & Hall, N. C. (2015). Gender stereotype endorsement differentially predicts girls' and boys' trait-state discrepancy in math anxiety. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1401.
- Bloom, D. A., Reid, J. R., & Cassady, C. I. (2020). Education in the time of COVID-19. *Pediatric Radiology*, 50(8), 1055–1058. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00247-020-04728-8>.
- Braithwaite, J. R., Margaret P., and Adnan, M. (2020). Improving developmental and college-level mathematics: Prominent reforms and the need to address equity. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University Working Paper No. 124.
- Brown, J., Myriam, Ortiz-Padilla, and Roberto, S. (2020) "Does mathematical anxiety differ cross-culturally?" *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, Volume 9 Number 1 (2020), pages 126-136.
- Bryant, M. M. G. (2009). A study of pre-service teachers: Is it really mathematics anxiety? (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3359137)
- Bulo, J.G. & M.G. Sanchez (2014). Sources of stress among college students. *CVCITC Research Journal*, 1 (1), pp 16 – 25.
- Chadna, P. (2006). *Stressors-External and Internal. The Stress Barrier-Nature's Way to Overcoming Stress*. Dublin, Ireland: Blackhall Publishing.
- d'Orville, H. (2020). COVID-19 causes unprecedented educational disruption: Is there a road towards a new normal? *Prospects*, 49(1), 11-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09475-0>.
- D'Zurilla, T. J., & Sheedy, C. F. (1991). Relation between social problem-solving ability and subsequent level of psychological stress in college students. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61(5): 841-846.
- Eccles, J. E., Adler, T., & Meece, J. L. (1984). Sex differences in achievement: A test of alternate theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(1), 26–43. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.46.1.26
- Epstein, S., & Meier, F. (1989). Constructive thinking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57: 34-62.
- Ferguson, Amanda M., Erin A. Maloney, Jonathan Fugelsang, and Evan F. Risko, "On the relation between math and spatial ability: The case of math anxiety. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 39, (2015), 1-12.
- Foley, A. E., Herts, J. B., Borgonovi, F., Guerriero, S., Levine, S. C., & Beilock, S. L. (2017a). The math anxiety-performance link: A global phenomenon. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26(1), 52–58. doi:10.1177/0963721416672463
- Foley, A. E., Julianne, B. H., Francesca, B., Sonia, G., Susan C. L., and Sian L. B., (2017b). The math anxiety-performance link: A global phenomenon," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26 Number 1, 52-58.
- Goetz, T., Bieg, M., Lüdtke, O., Pekrun, R., & Hall, N. C. (2013). Do girls really experience more anxiety in mathematics? *Psychological Science*, 24, 2079–2087. doi:10.1177/0956797613486989
- Graham, S. R., Tolar, A., & Hokayem, H. (2020). Teaching pre-service teachers about COVID-

- 19 through distance learning. *Electronic Journal for Research in Science & Mathematics Education*, 24(3).
- Greenberger, D., & Padesky, C. A. (1995) *Mind over mood: Change how you feel by changing the way you think*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Hadar, L.L., Ergas, O., Alpert, B. & Ariay, T. (2020). Rethinking teacher education in a VUCA world. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. DOI: 1080/02619768.2020.1807513.
- Hembree, R. (1990). The nature, effects, and relief of mathematics anxiety. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 21, 33–46. doi:10.2307/749455
- Hill, J. B. (2021). Pre-Service Teacher Experiences during COVID-19: Exploring the Uncertainties between Clinical Practice and Distance Learning. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 1-13, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v2i2.18>
- Howard, S. K., Tondeur, J., Siddiq, F., & Scherer, R. (2020) Ready, set, go! Profiling teachers' readiness for online teaching in secondary education. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, pp. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2020.1839543>.
- Jamieson, J. P., & Harkins, S. G. (2007). Mere effort and stereotype threat performance effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93, 544. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.93.4.544
- Kaden, U. (2020). COVID-19 school closure-related changes to the professional life of a K–12 teacher. *Education Sciences*, 10(6), 165. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10060165>
- Kelley, W. P., & Tomhave, W.K. (1985). A study of math anxiety/avoidance in preservice elementary teachers. *Arithmetic Teacher*, 32(5), 51-53.
- Kim, J. (2020). Learning and teaching online during COVID-19: Experiences of student teachers in an early childhood education practicum. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 52(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00272-6>.
- Koriat, A., & Bjork, R. A. (2006). Mending metacognitive illusions: A comparison of mnemonic-based and theory-based procedures. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 32, 1133–1145. doi:10.1037/0278-7393.32.5.1133
- Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53, 27-35.
- Lake, V. E., and Loreen, K. (2014). Female preservice teachers and mathematics: Anxiety, beliefs, and stereotypes,” *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, Volume 35 Number 3 (2014), 262-275.
- Lanius, F. J., Lazarus, K., Ashcraft, F., Mark H., & Kelly S. R., (2015). Math anxiety and its cognitive consequences,” In Campbell, J. I. D., editor, *Handbook of Mathematical Cognition*, chapter 18, pages 315-327. Psychology Press, New York, 2005
- Larson, C.N. (1983). Teacher education - techniques for developing positive attitudes in preservice teachers. *Arithmetic Teacher*, 31(2), 8-9.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion. *American Psychologist*, 46, 819-834.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Lucier, K. L. (2013). *How to Identify the Sources of Stress in College*. USA: About.com. college life.
- Maloney, E. A., Ramirez, G., Gunderson, E. A., Levine, S. C., & Beilock, S. L. (2015). Intergenerational effects of parents' math anxiety on children's math achievement and anxiety. *Psychological Science*, 26, 1480–1488. doi:10.1177/0956797615592630
- Mellawati & Taufan, M. (2021). LMS-Google Classroom Digital Platform: Impact on the critical thinking ability, self-concept, and mathematics anxiety of pre-service

- mathematics teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indramayu, Indonesia, *Journal of Physics: Conf. Ser.* 1783 012126, doi:10.1088/1742-6596/1783/1/012126
- Nuere, S., & de Miguel, L. (2020). The digital/ technological connection with COVID-19: An unprecedented challenge in university teaching. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09454-6>
- Ramirez, G., Shaw, S. T., & Maloney E. A. (2018). Math Anxiety: Past Research, Promising Interventions, and a New Interpretation Framework, *Educational Psychologist*, 53:3, 145-164, DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2018.1447384
- Sarkar, A., Dowker, A., & Cohen, K. R. (2014). Cognitive enhancement or cognitive cost: Trait-specific outcomes of brain stimulation in the case of mathematics anxiety. *The Journal of Neuroscience*, 34, 16605–16610. doi:10.1523/jneurosci.3129-14.2014
- Segal, J., Smith, M., Robinson, L. & Segal, R. (December 2013). Stress at Work. Tips to Reduce and Manage Job and Workplace Stress. @Helpguide.org.
- Wong, H., Wong, R., Rogers, K., & Brooks, A. (2012). Managing your classroom for success. *Science and Children*, 49(9), 60–64. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43747385>
- Zimney, J. (2022 21 June). Five ways to integrate SEL with math. *SmartBrief newsletter*.

Educational Abundance

The Journal of the New York State Foundations of Education Association

ISSN 2693-3314

Co-editors:

Greg Seals

(gbdseals2@yahoo.com)

College of Staten Island/City University of New York

Leslee Grey

(lgrey@qc.cuny.edu)

Queens College/City University of New York

Editorial Assistant:

Mei Zhao

The College of New Jersey

Conference Proposal Reviewers for Volume 2 (2022)

Timothy R. Glander

Shawgi Tell

Nazareth College

Submission Procedures: Send conference proposal(s) to Conference Proposal Reviewers for the given conference year. Present accepted proposal at the NYSFEA conference for which the proposal was accepted. Convert presentation at the conference into a publication-ready paper. Email publication-ready paper to editor of the NYSFEA journal.

Format: Authors may use any reference style with which they are comfortable. Papers will be published using the reference style preferred by the author(s) of each paper.