Carpentry Is Intellectual Work
Robert R. Sherman

Review
Dystopia & Education: Insights into Theory, Praxis, and Policy in an Age of Utopia-Gone-Wrong
By Jessica A. Heybach & Eric C. Sheffield (Eds.)
Reviewed by Courtney Smith-Nelson

Video Essay
The Academy Talks with Linda McNeil
Critical Questions in Education
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** Our thanks to the cadre of scholars who serve as reviewers without whose services the journal could not exist.
Dearest Colleagues:

Welcome to Volume 5, Issue 2 of CQIE—marking (almost) our first five years in existence and which comes with an (almost) about-face stylistically. First, the almost about-face style matter: after deciding to shift from APA to Chicago, and experimenting with both APA and Chicago during that transition, we have decided to stick with an either/or policy on style, APA or Chicago, depending on the nature of the submission. Those changes will, in the coming days, be reflected on our website. Volume 5, Issue 2 is the last of our regular twice-a-year publications for year five; however, we will mark the end of our fifth year with a fall special theme issue on education and homelessness—an issue that is shaping up to be quite intriguing indeed.

As to the present issue, we once again offer a variety of perspectives on both contemporary and perennial educational questions. Our first and last manuscripts in this issue are also a first for CQIE—a reprint of an article first published nearly thirty years ago and a second article by that same author. Our dear friend and mentor Rob Sherman submitted an article (the last essay in this issue) for publication and after it was accepted, Rob mentioned that he had always thought the article (Carpentry Is Intellectual Work) would work well as a “bookend” to an article he published originally in the Journal of Thought (JOT) in 1985, Philosophy With Guts. With the gracious permission of JOT, we are able to publish both…in bookend style.

Following Sherman’s classic discussion of the separation of thought and emotion in “Guts,” Becky Noël Smith examines systemic modes of oppression utilizing the philosophical metaphor of the cage. Borrowing from Marilyn Frye, Smith argues that some important “collateral” insights into institutional, “intersectional,” oppression can be garnered in an extended look at the cage metaphor. Smith’s article is followed by a program suggestion to aid struggling preservice teacher candidates. Maureen Kincaid and Nancy Keiser describe how their institution provides intense interactive support for their future teachers via a close “monitoring” system and provide evidence of its success in several student case studies.

The fourth article of this issue is a quantitative study investigating the “predictability” of post-secondary school attendance based on important “community expectancy” factors. Dr.’s Derden and Miller suggest that there exist important community factors in determining attendance and retention for students entering postsecondary education. Our regular essay section closes with our second “bookend”: Rob Sherman examines carpentry and its intellectual nature as the means to understand John Dewey more clearly and suggest that philosophical work, particularly in education, entails thought, emotion, and action.
We also have our regular review and video essay. With some consternation, we close our print portion of this issue with a review of a book we know very well: *Dystopia & Education: Insights into Theory, Praxis, and Policy in an Age of Utopia-Gone-Wrong*. We know it well, because, well...it’s our book! Therapy aside, Courtney Smith-Nelson provides an insightful critique—and one we are very happy to have printed here. Our video essay is entitled, *The Academy Talks with Linda McNeil*. Linda was gracious enough to attend our conference in San Antonio last October and sat down for a chat with Steve Jones about contemporary issues in public schools.

As we hope most of you know, The Academy for Educational Studies continues to grow. This year we have expanded our conferences across the country to include two venues and dates: Louisville in October and San Diego in April. We hope you will join us for one (or both) of these rich conference opportunities. Information can be found at our website.

In closing, we want to extend our gratitude to our peer reviewers: without their thankless work, this ongoing project would simply not be possible.

PAX,

Jessica A. Heybach, Associate Editor

Eric C. Sheffield, Founding Editor
Critical Questions In Education

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Review

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Video Essay

The Academy Talks with Linda McNeil:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfm9m5jHadU
Philosophy With Guts*

Robert R. Sherman, University of Florida—Emeritus

Abstract

Western philosophy, from Plato on, has had the tendency to separate feeling and thought, affect and cognition. This article argues that a strong philosophy (metaphorically, with “guts”) utilizes both in its work. In fact, a “complete act of thought” also will include action. Feeling motivates thought, which formulates ideas, that action tests in practice. This idea of philosophy draws on insights from John Dewey and several poets and other writers. Some implications are drawn for education.

Keywords: Emotions, affect, cognition, Dewey

I like to use a good quote, so I will repeat what an ancient philosopher once said: that the point of an exposition should be clear at the beginning and the presentation should be simple and dignified. That means that I should explain the point of my title.

The title—“Philosophy With Guts”—has a double, and colloquial, meaning. My intent is to show that philosophy—which is reflection or rationality—involves feelings or emotions, or what is crudely and metaphorically called “the guts.” Secondly, a philosophy that takes account of feeling is more substantial, more robust, and thus it “has guts.”

Some of my colleagues may think I am redundant. They have heard me say these things before, most recently at a departmental gathering with faculty and students. I was asked to talk about John Dewey’s philosophy, but instead of being didactic about his work, I decided to use him to buttress my own views about a vexing problem in education. That problem is the tendency we have to separate feeling and thought. Dewey strikes a good response in me. (I am aware that he strikes an opposite response in others.) His observations “fit” my own experiences; what he says “makes sense.” So I will continue to use him. Seneca used to say that whatever is well said becomes my own.

Rudolf Flesch, in his book How To Make Sense, believes that redundancy is useful in getting through “semantic noise,” or all the circumstances that get in the way of understanding. In other words, some things bear repeating. A protest against the separation of feeling and thought is one of them. Philosophers have argued against the separation, but it continues. The tendency to

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* This article is reprinted here by gracious permission of the editorial board of the Journal of Thought. Its original publication was in Volume 20, Number 2 (1985), pp. 3-11.

separate feeling and thought perhaps is well enough known that it need not be sketched hereagain. Its origin—and persistence—has been traced to Plato. The tendency really is to tri-polarize, rather than bi-polarize, to separate feeling, and thought, and action.² My focus is on the rupture between feeling and thought, but repair has implications for action as well.

The tendency to separate feeling and thought is more widespread than only in education. The conception seems to be ingrained in philosophy. In 1938, when travelling in Europe, Irwin Edman recorded that an English friend explained that “there are two unpardonable sins at Oxford [University], one is to be seen working, the other is to be enthusiastic.”³ Things have not changed much in forty years. When studying Thomas Green’s The Activities of Teaching,⁴ a student in philosophy of education class recently suggested that the “logical” acts of teaching—e.g., explaining, giving reasons, demonstrating—are cognitive in nature, and the “strategic” acts of teaching—e.g., motivating, encouraging, disciplining—are affective. As if feeling is not part of explaining, and thought is not part of motivating and disciplining.

But of all places, we ought to counteract in philosophy and education this separation of feeling and thought. Instead, we continue to act as if feeling and thought were different, and competing, and more or less worthy realities or ways of knowing. The separation is alive in curricula and academic politics in higher education. Even those who are friendly toward “feeling” simply reverse the opposition, opting for more “affective” education, but thereby retaining the separation.

The separation has problems. It doesn’t “match” experience (certainly not my own); it is “formal” rather than practical, and thus has the usual failings of abstractness. Israel Scheffler says that the

opposition of cognition and emotion must...be challenged for it distorts everything it touches: Mechanizing science, it sentimentalizes art, while portraying ethics and religion as twin swamps of feeling and unreasoned commitment. Education, meanwhile—that is to say, the development of mind and attitudes in the young—is split into two grotesque parts—unfeeling knowledge and mindless arousal.⁵

Once the separation is made, we spend our efforts trying to “bridge the gap,” to get feeling and thought back together again, to “unify” them, rather than dealing with practical applications and problems. In education, some of those problems are to understand and make use of student “interest” (or motivation), “discipline” (in the sense of effort), “values,” the relation between theory and practice, and distinctions such as those made between education as science and art. As Bishop Berkeley said about another matter, “we have first raised a dust and then complain that we cannot see.”

I begin graduate philosophy of education classes by asking where philosophy came from; how did it develop? The usual answer to this kind of question is to locate an event or a personality in time. But in a chapter titled “Changing Conceptions in Philosophy,”⁶ John Dewey goes at

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the matter differently, showing that philosophy did not develop full-blown in the heads of one or two persons, but evolved from competing interests and activities. He says (in paraphrase and with my emphasis): We remember what interests us and because it interests us. Thus, the primary life of memory is emotional, not intellectual or practical. When left to himself, man is a creature of desire rather than intellectual study, inquiry, or speculation. He ceases to be so motivated only when subjected to a discipline foreign to his nature. Philosophy emerges out of material irrelevant to science and explanation. Philosophy arose historically from the need to reconcile two kinds of mental product—memory and matters-of-fact, incorporated in poetry and science. Thus, philosophy did not develop unbiased and unprejudiced; its role was (and is) to preserve the past in a new form.

One can remark about the Deweyan themes of reconstruction and continuity in this statement. And there could be a controversy about the “truth” of the interpretation. Some students take Dewey’s comments as implying a disrespect for philosophy (which shows they accept—at least unconsciously—the separation between feeling and thought and consequences). But these are not my concern at the moment. Neither is it my point to propose a theory of recapitulation, that the development of thought in every individual follows this pattern. The point is to focus on the emotive ingredients or thoughts, to show that thought arises from emotion (specifically a “doubtful” or unclear emotion) and returns ultimately to (a satisfied) emotion. Emotion is part of a “complete act” of philosophy.

I have found similar points of view in other subject matters—for instance, in poetry. The poet Robert Frost reminds us by metaphor that “Calculation is usually no part in the first step in any walk.” He says (again with my emphasis):

The freshness of a poem belongs absolutely to its not having been thought out and then set to verse as the verse in turn might be set to music. A poem is the emotion of having a thought while the reader awaits a little anxiously for the success of dawn. A poem is never a put-up job so to speak. It begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a love-sickness. It is never a thought to begin with. It is at its best when it is a tantalizing vagueness. It finds its thought and succeeds, or doesn’t find it and comes to nothing. It finds its thought or makes its thought...It may be a big emotion...and yet finds nothing it can embody in. It finds the thought and thought finds the words. Let’s say again: A poem particularly must not begin with thought first.

You may think that is okay for poetry, which is supposed to be emotional and not rational (again maintaining the separation). But that is not what Frost or Dewey says. Philosophy, like poetry, begins with emotion and finds a thought, or it amounts to nothing. Rudolf Flesch makes the same point about speech and writing, which are effective only if they touch an “interest” in the audience:

What is that flicker of interest? It’s an emotion. If your words can’t arouse that bare minimum of emotion, they are dead.

Your audience must get some emotional experience…; without that, nothing you say will make the slightest difference…Pure thought by itself does not communicate; there has to be some emotional material to carry it across.\textsuperscript{10} [It is useless to speak and write] without emotional involvement. Our feelings must get into our words, the more so the better.\textsuperscript{11}

These really are comments about “interest” and its role in thought. Interests are feelings or emotions. Dewey says that “…feeling is the interesting side of all consciousness…”\textsuperscript{12} Contrasted with “mere” feeling, interest is what Dewey calls “developed” feeling, or feeling that is taken out of isolation and put into relation to objects of knowledge or ideals of action.\textsuperscript{13}

Perhaps the word “interest” has been used so much that we have forgotten its sense. We are paid “interest” by a bank and have an “interest” in a business partnership. In education we talk about using student “interests” as the basis for instruction. An interest is a stake or an investment in something. Student “interests” are their “investments” in education, in other words, interests are values.

Like all values, interests are not passive, which is not to say that we engage in a feverish pursuit of them at every moment, that when the time comes we act on them. The dictionary says that interests are “concerns” with things that “make a difference.” Interests are inclinations to act. According to Dewey, there is no need to overlook the “feeling” phase of emotion in order to note that in ordinary speech it is the “behavior” sense of emotion that is important.

When we say that John Smith is very resentful at the treatment he has received, or is hopeful of success in business, or regrets that he accepted a nomination for office, we do not simply, or even chiefly, mean that he has a certain “feel” occupying his consciousness. We mean he is in a certain practical attitude, has assumed a readiness to act in certain ways.\textsuperscript{14}

“Motive” thus is the important connotation of the word “emotion,” which means “to stir up” or “to move.” In summary, feelings or emotions are interests or values; their function or purpose is to stir things up or to get things going.

In education, we usually encounter several problems at this point. One is to wonder about the “proper” ways to stir up thought or to display feelings or emotions. I suppose that we are afraid that feelings will, as they can, get out of hand. (But so can thought.) We should remember that it is the function of education to develop, not to impose, techniques and skills for controlling feeling—and thought. There is no absolutely right way to express or control a feeling or an emotion. What is required is that one have feelings—about experience—and that they be expressed.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 184.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 187.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 240.
Dewey says the expression of an emotion is not a side issue, it is a clue to interest and a motive for thought.

Another device that I use in philosophy of education is to ask students how they “feel” about something they have read or about an idea we have discussed. This is risky business. I do not mean to ignore the distinctions that can be made among “feeling” and “believing” and “knowing.” My point is that feeling is a preliminary to knowledge. (“All knowledge…exists…in the medium of feeling.”) If we can express how we feel, then we can become thoughtful about it. (Conversely, if we have no “feelings” about a matter, or if we are unable to express them, then thought at best becomes abstract. And this turns into motivation and discipline problems.) Such questions as “how do you feel about…?” and “why?” and “would you feel differently if…?” and so on should be taken as attempts to stir up thought.

The fact of the matter is that we do have such feelings. (Though we may suppress them and not recognize that they are a motive to thought.) We are surprised or intrigued or revolted or elated by experiences. We like the recommendations that one essayist has, or dislike the proposals put forward by some legislator. Our “guts” are tense, our heads ache, we pace the floor, and our voices rise. These all are indications that we have an “interest” in the matters at hand. Alas, instead of using these as a motive to thought, to exploit the interests, we suppress the feelings; we believe they are in competition with thought and always should be judged the loser.

Rudolf Flesch provides an easy example. He says,

...We have gotten out of the habit of expressing our emotions. Human beings, like their evolutionary ancestors [the ape, who “shows hunger, fear, pain, and rage on his face and with his whole body”], are so designed by nature that every emotion should have an outward expression...

The other day I took my small son to see a three-dimensional movie. It was a matinee and the theater was filled with children—children who whooped and yelled whenever a ball or a chair seemed to fly out of the three-dimensional screen directly at the audience. There was no inhibition of the slightest degree in the expression of the emotions of these children; they acted like healthy young animals and all the yelling and screaming probably did them a world of good. Grownups don’t act that way anymore; they behave themselves, they are dignified, they know how to hide their feelings. They don’t scream with laughter, they don’t slap their thighs, they don’t shiver with excitement: they have learned to keep their emotions inside...

In keeping emotions inside we lose the motive for thought. (We may also get ulcers.) Flesch observes that instead of preparing themselves for “fight or flight,” like the ape, “human beings have one more alternative:...they can respond to dangers and opportunities by [thinking].” But humans cannot think effectively, if at all, if they suppress their emotions. Dewey makes the point: He says “Thinking is not a case of spontaneous combustion; it does not occur just on ‘general principles.’ There is something that occasions and evokes it.”

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15. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
Another problem encountered in education is the worry that if feelings are made legitimate, they will replace thought. (That too preserves the separation between feeling and thought.) Everything I have said is that feelings are a part of thought, not the whole of it, but particularly the motive to thought. In *The Child and the Curriculum*, Dewey cautions that interests, or feelings, are not achievements or accomplishments, but rather “attitudes toward possible experiences”; their value is in the leverage they give to thought.\(^{20}\) In *Art As Experience*, he says that emotions are not complete in themselves; they are to or from or about something objective; and involve a self that is vitally concerned.\(^{21}\) Emotions have work to do: to effect continuity and singlemindedness and variety.\(^{22}\)

Robert Frost said that poetry begins with a feeling and finds a thought. Poetry is at its best, he says, when it is vague. I understand that to mean that there is something left to the imagination. Philosophy and education, on the other hand—which also begins with feeling—attempt to “clarify” thought, and together these lead to action. There is no need to believe that if feeling is allowed into the arena, there will be no need for thought. Rather, to employ a Kantian metaphor, the point is that thought without emotion is empty and emotion without thought is blind. (Scheffler also makes this observation.\(^{23}\).)

In 1886, Dewey addressed the Students’ Christian Association at the University of Michigan on the topic, “The Place of Religious Emotion.” His comments are a good summary of a more general view of the role of feeling in thought. He said,

> I know of nothing more important in the practical [religious] life, than the right conduct of the emotions. They are so central that when they are healthy, we may take it for granted that the whole religious life is upon the right line. There are two unhealthy developments of emotion which occur to me in the consideration of this subject. One is deadness or apathy of feeling. The other is undue or unregulated feeling. It is certain...that without a spontaneous and active interest in things that are lovely and of good report, there will be no sincere devotion, no earnest service. This is a truth not confined to religious action. It is coextensive with all action. Without the interest supplied by emotions, men might sleep and dream, but they would never awake and act. But mark one thing—the feeling is not a good in itself, it is good because it does arouse, because it awakens aspiration, kindles devotion, and leads to service.

...This suggests the fact that, while it is all important to have the religious emotions alive and developed, it is equally important that they should be healthy. But what is unhealthy religious feeling?...Religious feeling is unhealthy when it is watched and analyzed to see if it exists, if it is right, if it is growing. It is as fatal to be forever observing our own religious moods and experience, as it is to pull up a seed from the ground to see if it is growing. We must plant the seed and nourish it, and leave the rest where it belongs, [to nature]. Healthy emotion, whether religious or otherwise, is that which finds no time nor opportunity to dwell upon itself and see how it is getting along; which loses it-

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22. Ibid., p. 69.
self in pushing on to the work of the prize of the high calling. It is emotion which expends itself in action, and which gives the impetus to new endeavor.\textsuperscript{24}

It is not my purpose to discuss the development of feeling or the emotions, but only to make the point that feeling is a part of thought, part of a “complete act” of philosophy—emotion, cognition, and action, and the cycle begins again. After quoting at length from Dewey about religious emotion, another summary of my point perhaps is not necessary. (In this case, there is no need to be redundant) But I want to give an example from my own university of Dewey’s point that feeling is unhealthy if it is watched and analyzed too much. If you think the example “washes our dirty linen in public,” I will invoke the psychologist James McKeen Cattel, who said under similar circumstances that it is better to wash it than to continue to wear it. I am interested in the example, not the complaint.

One of the extraordinary concerns we have at our university is with our reputation. We like to think that we are “No. 1” both in academics and athletics. Our desire is to be the “flagship” university and to win the conference championship in football. There are reasons to believe that we fall far short of those aspirations in many cases. But we spend a lot of time talking about the matter, and assuring ourselves of our reputation, and trying to win through public relations what we have not gained in substance. We try to talk our way, rather than work our way, to the top.

What is wrong with this simply is that we constantly watch our feelings—in this case, the desire to be the best—rather than use them to stimulate thought and action, to decide means and organize effort. If we want to be the best, we should stop worrying about it and get to work. (I think the same analysis and evaluation can be made of the nationwide concern with “basic skills” or the “right to read.”) Feelings or emotions have a useful motivating function, but when we become too self-conscious about them they paralyze us. We should get to work. A better reputation will grow from that.

Some years ago another philosopher formulated the “Criteria for Judging a Philosophy of Education.” His concluding criterion is that “a philosophy of education should be satisfying to its adherents.”\textsuperscript{25} It should be intimate, have a personal flavor, and express one’s personality. If it finds favor with others, if it is pleasing, if it appears true, and strikes a responsive chord in them, then it meets an important test which can be applied to any philosophy. This is yet another comment on the “affective” or “feeling” dimension of philosophy. I have attempted to describe that dimension and its role in thought. If it appears true to you and motivates you to work at the problem I have described, that will be the test of my claim.


Bibliography


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Teaching in the Institutional Cage:
Metaphor and Collateral Oppression

Becky L. Noël Smith, Independent Scholar

Abstract

This analysis is a philosophical exploration of Marilyn Frye’s metaphor of the cage and Patricia Hill Collins’ theory of intersecting oppressions. It argues that social structures and forms of oppressive knowledge make up the individual wires on each person’s cage and that these work to confine individuals, particularly those in the schooling institution. The cage, however, remains in a state of flux as individuals transition into voluntary social groups (like the teaching profession). Thus, voluntary transitions into the profession can create scenarios where people experience either the intensification of existing barriers or the collateral acquisition of new oppressive wires.

Keywords: moral oppression, intersectionality, collateral oppression, total institutions

Introduction: Reflecting on My Time in the Institution

...injustices may not be perceived as injustices, even by those who suffer them, until somebody invents a previously unplayed role. Only if somebody has a dream, and a voice to describe that dream, does what looked like nature begin to look like culture, what looked like fate begin to look like a moral abomination. For until then only the language of the oppressor is available, and most oppressors have had the wit to teach the oppressed a language in which the oppressed will sound crazy—even to themselves—if they describe themselves as oppressed.

—Richard Rorty, Feminism and Pragmatism: The Tanner Lectures on Human Values (1990, p. 4, original emphasis)

I devoted four years of my life to a Title I, public elementary school. The bonds I developed with my peers, the parents, and my students ensured that the people in my school became ‘my community’ even though my home was an hour from campus. I taught third grade for a couple years, and then I became the school’s technology teacher. The latter post allowed me to experience a teacher-to-teacher social dynamic that contrasted with my previous, and sometimes isolating, dynamic in the grade-level classroom. The gain of adult interaction that accompanied the tech position came with the loss of the close, heart-warming bonds that developed throughout a year of working with my students. One position was not necessarily better than the other; they were just different.

The technology position allocated most of my time to troubleshooting the problems of my peers. I quickly realized that my effectiveness began with a diligence in listening to and un-
understanding the difficulties the staff faced. The process required research, creativity, and persistence in the quest to devise and test possible solutions; it was a perpetual, learning-to-fix-it cycle. But I thrived on the challenge, and I derived energy from the resolutions that followed the exhaustion of collaboratively wading through problems with my peers.

Many of us worked rather late as we wrangled with the chaos of the profession, and most technological difficulties were addressed once the children had vacated for the day. In the isolation of the computer lab or in the stillness of a child-free classroom, my colleagues would privilege me with access to their perspectives on many things. Conversations about their issues with technology often evolved into issues with our profession in general. Many people expressed an intense frustration at the constant onslaught of changes and meaninglessness that continually dragged them farther and farther away from simply being able to teach. In fact, the veteran teachers were especially effective in illuminating the uselessness of the technological changes that flowed from the district, through me, and onto them. I took their suggestions and concerns to heart and acknowledged the tendency of my department to complicate their work. And their critiques helped me to become very deliberate and creative in my attempts to buffer them from any further meaninglessness.

The agonies my colleagues’ expressed were very familiar to me. In fact, my own toil with the wrongness of the burdens placed upon classroom teachers gained in poignancy upon my move to the technology department. That is, the change liberated me from the restraints of standardization, so I was finally able to experience autonomy in both my lessons and my department. And in the absence of the restrictions, I developed a keen awareness for how truly unbearable things were prior to my fortune in freedom. As my observations and conversations traversed the school, though, I was persistently made aware of the cruelly, illogical and seemingly oppressive experiences that both my fellow teachers and our students endured.

So many of us were strapped down to practices with which we simply did not agree: drill and kill, test prep, testing strategies, scripted teaching programs and methods, incessant assessments that both stole time away from learning and provided us with no more knowledge than we possessed prior to administering them. We tokenized lessons about people and ideas which we shamefully admitted were worthy of far more time than the “scope and sequence” allowed. It was expected that our time be devoted to pounding away at the meaningless skills that distant, faceless policymakers and bureaucrats devised. But no amount of effort or hyper-curricular-integration could ever free up enough time for all the students to understand the multitude of standards required to be taught and tested in one year. With so little cohesion or continuity, and with such high-stakes attached to student and teacher “performance,” it felt impossible to teach anything of quality. And sadly, the curricular overload caused a scarcity of time that meant we frequently put off or skipped over the most important things: the student-generated curiosities and conversations that led to our social and emotional growth.

The prevalence of similar sentiments grew with every teacher I encountered, and some portion of everyone’s frustration, anxiety, and fear became embodied in my own experience. My uneasiness and distaste for the ways we and our profession were being shaped intensified because everything I knew to be good was eroding under the pressures and mentality of accountability. For example, I had entered the classroom with a solid understanding of the term “critical thinking,” but the meaning of that phrase suffered a horrific contortion by bureaucrats, policy makers, administrators, and teachers even. Its perpetual misuse, with a suspicious parallel to the corporate world, came to mean ‘climbing the ladder’ of “higher order thinking.” The beauty and
import of the critical portion of its identity was successfully erased through redefinition, like some sort of bizarre, forced marriage to Bloom’s taxonomy.

The “teachable moment” also became a warped modification of itself under the constraints of accountability (Havigurst, 1953, p. 7). In other words, it no longer comprised an educator’s ability to discern the educational appropriateness of a task in relation to a student’s cognitive readiness. The teachable moment was twisted to mean a rare mini-lesson whose content could be seized from the interactions of the working classroom. The frequent misuse implied expectations of scarcity and the minimal amount of time allocated for such events. But if one of those slick, little moments was lucky enough to weasel its way through an unforeseen crack in the rigidity of the day’s structure, then we were permitted to spare it a ‘moment’ so we could squash it on our way to the “important stuff.” The pressures upon our learning environment ensured that meaningful encounters had all the frequency and status of an endangered species. It often left one questioning if things were intentionally structured to weed out trace elements of organic meaningfulness.

A problem began to emerge. I had entered the profession with the belief that the university had prepared me well: my classes had equipped me with a plethora of teaching methods; a foundation in developmental psychology; and an incipient understanding of the dynamics of class, race, and gender in schooling. But in reality, I was completely unprepared for why and how the structures of bureaucracy and standardization that were being forced upon our environment would slowly whittle away at us, our practices, and our humanity. Critics of this narrative could certainly argue that this experience was just part of learning “to play the game” in the workplace: employees appease the authoritative hierarchy, doing whatever is pushed down upon them, so they can maintain the hope of skirting the next round of layoffs and perhaps even make it to see another pay raise. In response to such sentiment, I do not propose that teachers deserve a different work dynamic than anyone else in the labor force, for it is tragic that any person should feel pressured to compromise their moral obligation to self and others. There is one small factor, however, which tweaks the moral perspective when comparing many jobs, particularly those of the corporate world, with the profession of teaching: a teacher’s work is with the lives and souls of children.

People come to the profession for countless reasons, but my experience with teachers led me to believe that many did not approach the classroom with the intent of doing harm or creating obstacles for their students. On the contrary, many teachers affirm that the students provide the greatest and often only rewarding factor for working in the profession. I believe the people who dedicate themselves to the role of educator are those who have a strong sense of moral obligation and a deep intrinsic desire to grow and work toward the common good.\textsuperscript{1}

John Dewey’s (1916) thoughts attest to the intrinsic value derived from finding one’s place in a fulfilling occupation:

An occupation is the only thing which balances the distinctive capacity of an individual with his social service. To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. (p. 360)

\textsuperscript{1} See Lortie (1975, p. 27) for the social and moral intentions of educators and the primary source of their satisfactions: intrinsic rewards from interpersonal achievement of human connection (Lortie, 1975, p. 27). See Hansen (2001) on the moral practice of teaching and Bushaw & Lopez (2011) for the public perspective on respect for the profession.
This “key to happiness” makes the educator’s predicament most problematic, particularly for those who have glimpsed at the pride and satisfaction of the work. That is, if educators feel the restrictions and demands of the job coerce them to compromise their moral integrity, then they do so to the detriment of their communities’ youngest and most innocent human beings. This clearly creates an ethical dilemma, but the cruelty intensifies. See, as the teachers’ hands become directly responsible for administering the meaninglessness to which their students struggle to resist, they actually take up the sad task of abrading their own occupational incentive. A parallel can be drawn from Michel Foucault’s (1975/1977) analogy of the medical doctor being charged with the oversight of executions. He stated: “Today a doctor must watch over those condemned to death, right up to the last moment—thus juxtaposing himself as the agent of welfare, as the alleviator of pain, with the official whose task it is to end life” (p. 11).

The educator’s juxtaposition is not so different. The metrics may (or may not) indicate that the children’s scores are growing, but any person who listens to and interacts with the youth will perceive that their bodies, their words, and their morale indicate that the love for learning in most of them is simply dying. Thus, the highly-standardized and techno-bureaucratic education policies require an infliction of so much meaninglessness and harm that they actually require educators to “teach” their students to death. And for many, anxieties compound under looming feelings that refusal to oblige the demands of the institution will increasingly result in greater threats to one’s personal livelihood. Thus, it stands to reason that job expectations and the necessity for income coerce many educators not only to knowingly do harm, but it forces them to take part in their own moral erosion.

So, the irony is exposed. The very things which draw people to the profession (the desire to teach, to experience growth, to engage with the youth, to take part in a moral or civic obligation to the community) become warped under the bureaucratic, corporatized, and technocratic structures of the institution. The educator then finds herself in the position where her own actions are directly responsible for destroying that which she loves and, consequently, an important part of her self. And unless she can see beyond the options that are handed to her, she comes to live out the exact antithesis of her occupational and moral aims.

As a teacher, I observed and experienced the ways the policies over the schooling environment encouraged teachers to ignore their moral impulses and to suppress the growth of self and others. Perplexed by the conflict and the constraints, I came to question what it was exactly that had naggingly dissuaded me from teaching “from my gut.” The mechanisms—and the problem—felt more severe than a moral identity crisis; they felt morally oppressive. And this, of course, necessitated the question: what does it mean to be oppressed?

The following analysis is a philosophical exploration which blends Marilyn Frye’s metaphor of the cage with Patricia Hill Collins’ theory of intersecting oppressions. I argue that social structures and forms of oppressive knowledge make up the individual wires on each person’s cage and that these work to confine individuals, particularly those in the schooling institution. The cage is in a constant state of flux because the number of wires shifts with one’s environment.

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3. “Harm” refers to any lesson or activity which is not worthwhile to students and which results in stagnation for student and teacher. Dewey (1916) said, “Any aim is of value so far as it assists observation, choice, and planning in carrying on activity from moment to moment...if it gets in the way of the individual’s own common sense...it does harm” (Dewey, p. 125).
Thus, I argue that transitions into voluntary social groups (like the teaching profession) create scenarios where people experience either the intensification of existing barriers or the collateral acquisition of wires. In either case, though, the burden of the cage is influenced by one’s tendency to hold onto oppressive knowledge.

Metaphorical exploration can certainly assist in testing one’s understanding of a complex concept, but it can also help simplify it. In this case, metaphor reveals the strengths and the weaknesses of the cage so that one can move on to more pragmatic questions: how does one take part in her own oppression, and what can be done about it?

**Inspecting the Cage**

As the Western understanding of oppression has developed, scholars have grown to see that the means for oppressing are primarily psychological and, therefore, frequently imperceptible (Cudd, 2006). This is not to say that psychological mechanisms of domination exist apart from the human interaction that is necessary for physical violence and institutional assertions of power, for surely the psychological mechanisms only exist and persist because of the interactions among humankind. Some of the most enduring oppressive habits are continually created, taught, and reinforced on the cultural and individual levels, and the fact that these mechanisms are so deeply and often unconsciously engrained into our existence means that they are insidiously persistent.

Oppression is varied and subtle, but always overlapping. Marilyn Frye (1983) used the analogy of the birdcage to describe its complexity.

If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere…It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon. (p. 4)

Frye’s imagery describes the perspective one might see if she were to inspect the perimeter of the cage. That is, in walking around the outside of a classic, dome-shaped bird cage, she would be able to see the repeating pattern of bars which confine the being within. However, if we extend our gaze so as to look down upon the cage from above, it becomes possible to see how all of these wires converge upon a single vertex at the center of the dome.

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) might have described this vertex as the point of intersectionality. It is the location where various types of oppression cross one another. This point is of particular interest in this analysis because, architecturally speaking,

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4. Hill Collins (2000) did not specifically use the cage metaphor, but her definition blends well with Frye’s. “Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice” (p. 18).
it also happens to be the very place on a dome where the greatest amount of compression amasses. Therefore, one must question what the tension surrounding this vertex implies psychologically and existentially for the person who is confined.

As one peers upon the intersecting wires at the top of the cage, it becomes easy to see that one’s placement in life and within society will ultimately impact the number of wires that each person must negotiate in their actions. For instance, the mechanisms of confinement around a Mexican American, working-class, straight, single mother would look substantially different and arguably more restrictive than the wires constructed around a White, upper-middle class, gay man who is monogamously committed to his partner. Each person in this example would clearly come to suffer various limitations and agitations. The woman would confront the struggles associated with single parenthood, but she would also have to maneuver around the obstacles constructed by society’s stereotypes and perceptions regarding her gender, class, race, parenting status, and citizenship. The man on the other hand might be free of those particular constraints, but his sexuality would likely cause him to be confronted by different stereotypes, restrictions, and defamation.

These two people might appear to have little in common regarding oppressive experience. However, suppose both of them exist in a society where the dominant culture encourages marriage for straight women while simultaneously denying marriage to same-sex couples. In this heteronormative setting, she would increase her chances of suffering social and long-term economic limitations by choosing not to conform to the social expectation of marriage for someone of her gender. Meanwhile, his refusal to give into the dominant expectation regarding sexuality would prohibit him from partaking in the social recognition and the economic and legal benefits of a state-recognized marriage. The woman and the man would each endure varying degrees of oppression because their “sexual choices are not perceived as normal, moral, or worthy of state support” (Cohen, 1997, p. 442).

This example demonstrates several points. First, it is obvious that one individual can experience multiple obstacles due to the constrictions of intersectionality. Second, and more importantly, the example shows how two people can run up against the same wire (institutionalized, heteronormative notions of marriage, in this case) even though they do not share the characteristics of gender, race, class, or sexuality. Their varying characteristics are not inconsequential, though, because these are the factors that allow two individuals to confront the same wire differently. The fact that the same wire can be viewed in different ways simply means that the wire has experiential facets. Thus, two very different people can be caged by the same wire, and each person’s cage is cast with the bar because both have been pushed outside the dominant group which benefits from the maintenance of the given institutional practice.

People are constantly categorizing and being categorized by one another. Therefore, each human being simultaneously belongs to and transitions in and out of a multitude of voluntary and

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5. See Hill-Collins (2000) outlined this in Part 2, Section 4. The stereotypes associated with gender, class, and race “provides ideological justifications for intersecting oppressions” (p. 79).
7. For example, same-sex couples are restricted from the lower tax brackets tied to combined household income, which limits take-home pay, the ability to save, and participation in some retirement plans like IRAs. Probate avoidance upon death also results in compounding economic and psychological harms.
non-voluntary social groups. These transitions are present in every interaction, and so one’s position of power is also maintained in a constant state of flux. For instance, the power dynamic experienced by a principal in her school setting would differ significantly from her home or when she appears before her school board. Furthermore, one’s shifting position of privilege is also constantly influencing and being influenced by each setting, each person with whom one connects, and one’s memberships among various social groups. So, the shifts in individual relations of power mean that the make-up of the dominant group can and will also consistently adjust as a result. It is through these interactions and transitions across the many scenarios of power that each person comes to exist, in varying degrees, as both the oppressor and the oppressed (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 246).

Collateral Oppression as an Indiscernible Barrier

If two seemingly different people can share the same type of barrier, then the human transitioning among social groups and positions of privilege adds another layer of intricacy to the compounding potential of shared forms of oppression. In particular, movement in and out of voluntary social groups makes it possible for individuals to experience what could be considered collateral oppression: an incidental, but shared mechanism of confinement that is experienced through one’s membership in a voluntary social group. An explanation of collateral oppression can easily be drawn out of the predominantly female, education profession. To better explain this, though, it is first necessary to look briefly at the relations of power that exist over the field.

Of the nation’s K-12 educators, 76% are female. While women are an overwhelming majority of the teaching profession, just less than 50% of school principals are female (Snyder & Dillow, 2011, p. 60). The gender demographic for principalships may initially appear balanced, but when this statistic is compared to the proportion of women in the teaching workforce it becomes obvious that the authoritative hierarchy is disproportionately masculine. This connection between gender and authority in education, of course, worsens the farther up the chains of command and influence one travels. Approximately 24% of superintendents are women (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young & Ellerson, 2011, p. 86). But, the hierarchy of power extends well beyond the borders of the school district because federal policies increasingly determine educators’ work, and yet the feminine perspective is represented in less than 17% of Congress (Manning, 2011, p. 6). Finally, there are even fewer women in the tier of influence which shapes the federal policies that direct the work of the profession. In fact, one need only look at Diane Ravitch’s (2010) nickname for one of the most coercive groups—the Billionaire Boys’ Club—to get a demographic sense of those who has wielded power over the nation’s educators.10

The relation between wealth and power over the politics of schooling, of course, brings to light issues related to class. The broader social and economic perspective shows that class-related issues continue to impact the profession. Allegretto, Corcoran & Mishel, (2004) completed a salary comparison between teachers and professional equivalents that adjusted for week-

8. “A social group is a collection of persons who share (or would share under similar circumstances) a set of social constraints on action” (Cudd, 2006, p. 44). A voluntary social group has an air of choice about it, as in an occupational group. A non-voluntary social group is something outside the realm of choice, like an ethnic group.

9. See Foucault (1982) for the constant presence of power relations, Bourdieu (2002) for the transactions of social capital as a result, and Hill Collins (2000) for how power and intersectionality are highlighted through situational transitions.

ly income. They found that teachers had “a wage disadvantage of 12.2%” each week. When they divided this by the average reported work hours for each profession, they concluded that “…the hourly wage disadvantage was an even larger 14.1%” (p. 2). This trend has gradually worsened since 1979, and by 2007 the American Federation of Teachers claimed that teachers “earn 70 cents on the dollar” when compared to their professional equivalents (Di Carlo, Johnson, & Cochran, p. 3). The difference amounts to about $22,000 per year.

There are obviously many things at work here, and these numbers provide only brief examples of the authoritative hierarchy as it currently spans over the school institution via the political and economic arenas. But the intersectionality of gender and class and its relation to power in the profession not only is very distinct; the patriarchal power dynamic has been deeply and historically entrenched in the bureaucracy and culture of the institution for well beyond a century.11 Women continue to be the overwhelming majority of the laborers in the educational field today, and they are enclosing upon the highest ratio since the early 1900’s (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Rury, 1989). If history is to offer a lesson, it is that alienation from power, the sexual division of labor,12 and swells of resistance13 also increase the farther the institution spans and the more bureaucratic and centralized it becomes.

**Gender and Class via Collateral Oppression**

Now, imagine that someone lacks experience with or perception for the intensity of the gender and class power dynamic that exists in the schooling institution. This person could be either a woman or a man, but for the sake of argument, assume the person in this example is a man. In choosing to become a school teacher, he would enter a voluntary social group that is predominantly female, and in doing so, he and his craft would be governed by this large patriarchal institutional structure. His place of subordination in this power structure would subject him to an environment where he would experience oppressive barriers in ways that might be quite foreign to him. That is, by stepping into the institutional setting, he would experience the infliction of power from the perspective of a woman.

His experience with power in this situation would be an example of collateral oppression. That is, the type of power exerted over the social group of educators may not necessarily, or historically, be aimed at him or his gender in particular. However, as a member of a voluntary social group that is governed by an increasingly wealthy, patriarchal, and bureaucratic power structure, he would acquire the intersecting wires of class and *gender*. This would happen despite his gender but because of his chosen affiliation with the profession.14

But the use of a male example here does not imply that a woman’s understanding of power would make her more prepared for or less shocked by the patriarchal density of the schooling institution. My experience as a woman and my lifelong attempts at dodging gender stereotypes and their restrictions still left me sorely disoriented by the confrontations I made with the gender barrier inside the schooling institution. Hill Collins (2000) explained this situation by

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14. For more see Ferguson’s (1984) explanation of “the bureaucrat as the second sex” (p. 83).
articulating the importance of location on one’s perception of power: “Her gender may be more prominent when she becomes a mother, her race when she searches for housing, her social class when she applies for credit...In all these contexts, her position in relation to and within intersecting oppressions shifts” (p. 274).

Race via Collateral Oppression

So, if a man can acquire the oppressive restrictions that are tied to a different gender, then what does collateral oppression imply for race and the teaching profession? Well, while gender and class contribute to educators’ outsider status, race factors in somewhat differently. That is, the teaching profession is predominantly White, so that in terms of race most of the social group falls inside the sphere of dominance. Though this may be the case, it is unrealistic to assume that a prevalence of whiteness leaves educators uncaged by the unjust racist practices of the schooling institution.

Survival in an ever-changing and increasingly diverse society requires the ability to learn from both similarity and difference. If the tensions and propagation of racist practices in schools are to be diminished, educators must be willing to see their own expressions of power; they must imagine and perceive how those expressions influence their interactions with students. These explorations should occur in teacher education programs, but they must continue into one’s collaborations with colleagues and community members as well.

As teachers bring their varied perspectives and experiences into the schools, the collective cultural knowledge grows in each school and in the profession as a whole. These variations form part of the tangible human resource that educators can then turn to as they grow in their understandings of themselves, their students, and their teaching practices. Diversity, therefore, is vital to the growth of the teaching profession.

Sadly, no shortage of scholarship has shown that the opportunities for drawing upon the benefits of diversity have dwindled over the last two decades. The resegregation of schools has been rising steadily. The same pattern is evident in the attrition rates of minority teachers: between 1988 and 2008 the percentage of minority teachers increased from 12.4% to 16.5% (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 18). However, “minority turnover was, respectfully, 18% and 24% higher than White teacher turnover” (p. 23). Minority teacher attrition and resegregation are both blatantly racist problems that afflict students, teacher, and their communities.

When the schools and the profession are robbed of diversity and stability, the teachers, students, and families who remain in the institution become more and more isolated from the wealth of cultural perspectives. Thus, resegregation and minority attrition form the mechanism of a much broader problem; they function like a divide and conquer scenario that works to the detriment of everyone in the institution. Those in the minority lose access to the multitude of benefits that come from collaborating and learning through similarity, and those in the majority lose access to the necessary benefits of learning about and through difference.

15. “[In] 2008… 41% of all elementary and secondary students were minority, but only 16.5% of all elementary and secondary teachers were minority” (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 41)
16. See KewalRamani, Gilbertson, & Fox (2007); Frankenberg & Lee (2002); Grant (2009); Kozol (1991; 2005); Orfield (2001); Orfield & Lee (2004); and Renzulli & Evans (2005) for information on school poverty, resegregation, and White flight.
17. In Chicago it was reported that African Americans made up 30% of the tenured workforce, yet they comprised 40% of those who were laid off (Caref & Jankov, 2012, p. 23).
The isolated phenomena of resegregation and minority attrition touch on only a few of the many ways educators contend with the socially constructed inequalities, deprivations, and restrictions that result from racism. Of course, each injustice yields its own set of psychological and material side effects for those who experience it directly (racial isolation; disparities in resources; the erosion of autonomy and power at the school level; financial, emotional, and psychological hardships for educators and their families). As damaging as all of these personal injustices are for teachers, the harms extend well beyond the direct impact left on the individuals who are nudged, pushed, and separated out of the schools. Regardless of race, and consciously or not, every educator assumes the oppressive wire of racism collaterally. The harms of racism are felt through the connections educators make with their colleagues, their students, their schools, and their communities. The damage is wielded upon everyone when students, teachers, and entire schools are unfairly judged and then disproportionately punished. It is experienced when the profession is expected to attend to the systematic and racist practices of standardization and high-stakes testing. But racism is most detrimental to educators when the direct attacks against students and colleagues forge a gulf between the wealth of cultural knowledges that would facilitate human solidarity, growth in the craft, and the progression toward a more humane institution.

Understanding the Structural Integrity of the Cage

A teacher’s transition into the schooling environment can enhance one’s awareness for the interrelated complexity of sexism, classism, and racism by intensifying her or his exposure to these oppressive power dynamics. And whether the result of a voluntary transition is an intensification of oppressive mechanisms (for a woman) or the collateral acquisition of oppressive barriers (gender for a man or race for White teachers), it stands to reason that an experience with the intersectionality of these barriers would be disorienting—and indiscernible even—to many who enter the teaching profession.

With collateral oppression and the variability of social groups and positions of power in mind, it now seems appropriate to elaborate on Marilyn Frye’s metaphor of the cage. A wire is constructed over an individual each time she or he is classified as “Other” and pushed into one of the innumerable voluntary and non-voluntary social groups which stands outside the perpetually varying, dominant group (Beauvoir, 1949/2009). A collective social intent provides the fuel that creates an oppressive structure, but the wire itself is forged out of privilege. Like a piece of rebar, it provides the isolated frame onto which all oppressive weight eventually adheres. And this means that, with the acquisition of oppressive knowledge, the slender arched wire gradually expands into a much larger, weighty concrete arch. The girth and, consequently, the structural weight of the oppressive barrier comes from the collective inaction of those who are apathetically and unknowingly afforded privilege by the subjection of the outlying social group. The greater the privilege that one group’s oppression bestows upon the dominant group, the greater will be the girth and weight of that particular barrier; the wider that barrier, the more effort must be expended when the individual attempts to maneuver around or simply see past that particular obstruction.


19. Oppressive knowledges are social-cultural-institutional learning processes that are “mis-educative” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 25) and lead to a lack of “oppositional knowledges” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 275).
One barrier can obviously be a nuisance, but the cage which restricts one’s mobility and human potential is constructed of many intersecting wires. Those intersecting oppressions are most frequently, or perhaps most obviously, related to the dominant assumptions about people’s non-voluntary characteristics like race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. However, when voluntary social groups are taken into account, the intersectionality of oppression becomes complicated by the very quality that defines a group as “voluntary”: the ability to transition. So in essence, as voluntary social groups diversify through such transitions, not only does the possibility for collateral oppression increase; the obviousness of oppressive histories becomes more soluble and therefore dissolves more easily into the fluidity of that group’s diversity. The result is that the source or type of power stands blurred and on the periphery of the individual’s knowledge. And in the absence of historical, theoretical, or experiential knowledge through which to make sense of the situation, the only discernable aspect for the exercise of power is the resulting emotional disorientation that comes from one’s collision with the unrecognizable barriers. Again, as the number of wires increases, so will the tension and one’s collisions with the cage.

So, if power indeed exists in every interaction, then both intersectionality and the cage metaphor can feel all-encompassing and inescapable. The sense of hopelessness elicited by this metaphor, though, can be alleviated through a better understanding of the structural mechanics of the cage. Architecturally, the dome-shaped cage is nothing more than a series of independent arches constructed around one focal point: the individual. When a slender arch (like a wire) is set into place, its structural support occurs through the balance of its weight and its proportion. Thus, the oppressive barrier can stand on its own only as long as this structural balance remains in check. But this balance rarely remains the same. Over time the individual accumulates the weight of oppressive knowledge, the barrier then expands around that wire, and the structural weight of the entire arch gradually increases. And as the weight of privilege and dominance bears down upon that one tiny wire, a deepening tension garners at the base of the arch. Too much of this type of tension, though, will break the integrity of the arch. So if the oppressive burden continues to grow in size and weight, it simultaneously requires additional buttressing at the base and on the sides so it can avoid collapsing under its own weight (Klein, Levenson, & Munroe, 2004). This yields one question in particular: if the compounding weight of oppression is to avoid its own destruction, then from where does the structural reinforcement come?

Strangely enough, the support is provided by the individual who stands at the center of the cage.

Letting Go

Jim Garrison (1997) said, “Oppression often consists of being assigned false choices, that is, choices among alternatives specified by others that do not necessarily have our best interests at heart” (p. xvi). Not only does the individual come to accept false choices as legitimate, as Garrison said, but as a member of a multitude of outlying social groups, she or he also comes to internalize numerous forms of oppressive knowledge (Freire 1970/1997). This phenomenon of internalization means that the potential burden of any one oppressive structure (the wire or arch)

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20. Hill Collins (2000) referred to this as a lack of “oppositional knowledges” (p. 275).
21. Examples of “internalized oppression” offered by Sharp, Bermudez, Watson, & Fitzpatrick (2007) are beliefs in one’s own inferiority; the act of privileging dominant perspectives over those of marginalized people; insecurity in self-confidence and self-worth; and avoiding self-validation until it comes from someone who is perceived to be dominant.
is directly proportional to the strength of one’s own clutch upon that particular form of oppressive knowledge. Accordingly, then, it is the individual who actually buttresses the many intersecting arches of dominance, and she or he does so by psychologically grasping onto the base of each one of the barriers. The stronger the person’s hold, the more privilege each structure will come to bear for someone else.

The caged individual may be completely unaware of the integral part she or he plays in providing strength for these oppressive structures. This is the very reason why learning to see and examine each intuited barrier is key. That is, one must first see them so as to know that she is even holding onto them, and only once she learns to feel the barriers in her psychological grips can she begin releasing her grasp upon them. The solution for attaining relief from the psychological weight of the cage is at least as old as Socrates. As Kerry Burch (2000) explained, Diotima tempted Socrates with her wisdom and this solution when she told him that “he must somehow ‘let go’ of the conventional way of knowing” (p. 42).

So, freeing oneself from the oppressive burden of someone else’s privilege begins with releasing the assumptions, false choices, and the ways of knowing and acting that have been handed down through institutionalized and hegemonic ways of seeing the world. This entails the ironic act of “unlearning” in order to grow (Noël Smith, 2013). By letting go, the person dismantles the most crucial support to the barrier so it can finally succumb to its own tension and give way under its own weight. “Thus we discover that we believe many things not because the things are so, but because we have been habituated through the weight of authority, by imitation, prestige, instruction, the unconscious effect of language, etc.” (Dewey, 1925/1958, p. 14). Once the arch crumbles, the person can then begin working to relieve herself from the unconscious habit of accepting and burdening unjustified weight.

The symbiotic relationship between the oppressive burden and the psychological grip places the person in a rather precarious position, though, meaning that simply “letting go” is far easier said than done. The difficulty lies in the reality that the collapse of an oppressive arch brings with it collateral damage—that is, the person at the center of the cage stands in direct line of all falling debris. Thus, in an attempt to maintain a feeling of security, it is easy to grasp tightly onto those things one thought she knew or thought she believed. This is often done out of a desire to avoid the vulnerability, uncertainty, and inevitable pain that coincides with the collapse (Van Overwalle & Jordens, 2002; Elliot & Devine, 1994). Unfortunately, this also means that both the grasp and the burden are most severe right before the release; the tension is most intense in the moment that just precedes the fall; the feeling of insecurity is most unsettling in that first, unobstructed glimpse.

Intersecting oppressions, yet again, complicate this entire process. The individual must be willing, one structure at a time, to let go of the oppressive forms of knowledge that gradually have been secured into place. This means that a person who is dedicated to life-long growth will have to commit to reliving the shocking and painful collapse many times over in order to truly step beyond the ways in which she was taught to see this world, her place in it, and perhaps most importantly, the way she was taught to see herself. The willingness to face this potential rests in the learner’s courage to acknowledge that growth beyond the deepest held beliefs may only rest upon her or his ability to acclimate to this self-inflicted dissonance, discomfort, and even pain. Commitment to growth also requires the rediscovery of life’s longstanding wounds and the patience to finally tend properly to their healing. For better and worse, this healing process only

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22. This type of education occurs via Freire’s (1970/1997) “banking” concept of education and is deeply rooted to Deweyean (1922/2002) “habit.”
comes from persistently sifting through, learning from, and then sweeping away the debris of someone else’s privilege.

**Standing amid the Remnants**

The only thing left standing after the collapse of an oppressive structure of knowledge is but the slender wire to which all the destructive mass initially adhered. The social nature of humankind and the constant transitions in and out of scenarios of power make it difficult and perhaps unlikely for a person to shed the entirety of the cage. And one might seek justification for how or why the wires can possibly remain intact even after a person has let go. Well, despite the refusal to no longer accept the belief in one’s socially constructed inferiority, the reality remains that women continue to make less money than men for comparable work, Black men persistently suffer from disparities in labor and incarceration, and same-sex couples still cannot marry in a majority of the United States. Unjust social structures are incredibly difficult to circumnavigate entirely without mass collective movement, but a diminution of oppressive knowledge might at least make it easier for a person to make one’s way in the world.

Once a person has achieved this state of mind, the potential exists for her or him to begin learning how to maneuver with the remaining wires and how to discover new environments where confinements are not so readily constructed (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 110). Better yet, once an individual is equipped with the experience of burdening, recognizing, and releasing oppressive forms of knowledge, the hope exists that she or he can then begin experimenting with and bolstering democratic qualities in new environments. When the mind is no longer occupied with holding onto constructed ways of knowing, her hands are free to extend toward, connect to, and assist another human being. When the eyes are no longer blocked by the overlapping arches she once supported, she will be free to see another’s humanity and possibility for what they truly may be.

**Conclusion**

The cage metaphor and the theory of intersectionality explain how physical, social, and financial attributes affect the number and type of constraints an individual may have to negotiate throughout life. However, because human beings are always transitioning in and out of varying social environments, intersectionality also explains how power dynamics and the number of constraints can change based on the environment. As collateral oppression is incorporated, it becomes obvious that a voluntary transition (like the choice to transition into the teaching profession) can bring with it the intensification of existing barriers or the acquisition of oppressive wires that may be altogether foreign to the person who “voluntarily” experiences it. As can be imagined, the result is disorientation, especially when those involved lack the theoretical or experiential knowledge for understanding and counteracting the oppressive dynamics around them.

Oppression is not only the act of being forced outside the realm of privilege and social power; it is the act of accepting that such a placement is where one actually belongs. As time, experience, interaction, and the social environment continually work upon the individual, a person cannot help but take in some aspects of the patterns, tendencies, and habits of that environment. These work to teach a person how one is expected to act; how one is expected to stand in relation and comparison to others; and what one should come to expect from life as a result of her or his physical attributes, personal interests, and financial status. Thus, oppression is the unquestioning acceptance of what one has been taught; it is a lack of faith in the tangibility of one’s
own experience and in the ability to know and learn from the hard-fought struggles and the connections made with fellow human beings. When viewed in this light, it is possible to see not only how power and knowledge are interconnected, but how they function in ways that can be as restrictive as they can be liberatory. Liberation from institutionalized schooling will begin only after those on the inside start letting go of the belief that people who know nothing about our students or their learning processes (corporate testing companies, bureaucrats, venture philanthropists, policymakers, ‘think’ tanks, and federal curriculum committees) know more about the needs of public school children than the students, their families, and their teachers.

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Using a Monitoring Process to Effectively Assist Struggling Pre-Service Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

A critical issue in teacher preparation today is that some candidates meet the criteria for admission to teacher education programs yet they struggle or fail to develop the levels of knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions required to complete the program. This article offers three different case studies to examine the monitoring process developed by one teacher preparation program to identify such students and provide effective interventions.

Keywords: teacher candidates, dispositions, monitoring, assessment, remediation, teacher education

Introduction

Those of us who have been involved for any length of time in preparing teachers are likely to have experienced the feeling that something is not going well with one or more candidates. There are candidates who struggle while moving through the program, often grappling with the same issue(s) in multiple classes and field experiences until the problem(s) becomes glaringly apparent and failure becomes imminent.

Nearly every seasoned professor in teacher education programs would admit to a time when he or she breathed a sigh of relief that a certain candidate actually made it through student teaching. And most professors would also admit to not being surprised that a certain candidate was not successful in student teaching or that the candidate who made it through on a wing and a prayer was unable to find employment in the teaching field after graduation.

We all intuitively knew that it was not appropriate to get such candidates through student teaching nor was it right to allow those candidates lacking knowledge and/or skills to move along in the program. Unfortunately, our policies, like those of many teacher education programs, did little to help us as our admission and retention policies relied for the most part on grade point average (GPA) and successful completion of state exams (Desjean-Perotta, 2006). In response to this problem, the Department of Education at North Central College (NCC), like other teacher education programs, examined its policies and increased the rigor of its admission standards and competencies required in order to increase the likelihood of having candidates who could successfully complete the program. Increased rigor (admission tests, GPA, evaluations of dispositions, etc.) are necessary measures, although they alone will not eliminate the fact that
some candidates will meet the admission criteria but still struggle to complete program requirements.

It has been a popular trend to blame teacher preparation programs for the problems associated with public schools and American education in general. In the past ten years or so, publications such as the National Council on Teacher Quality reports have caught the attention of the public and fueled the argument that someone (i.e., teacher preparation programs) must be held accountable for the poor student performance in public schools. Using research methodology that would never receive approval from any higher education research committee, and appearing to cherry-pick information from websites as their main mode of data collection, these reports have nonetheless created significant public attention. Even teacher preparation programs long known for their rigorous standards and high expectations have found themselves in a defensive mode. And life under the microscope has made teacher preparation programs reluctant to take chances on candidates who might not be successful.

Teacher preparation programs have long recognized that candidates who lack content knowledge need to acquire it before they progress in the program. The problem of candidates possessing a lack of content can most easily be remedied by having them take additional coursework in the particular subject area. Teacher preparation programs have also long recognized that those who lack pedagogical skills need more practice before they progress through the program. While not as simple a solution as taking a course, it has not been particularly difficult to arrange for remedial field experience opportunities for candidates to try to gain the skills they lacked. It is certainly more challenging to address remediation when candidates lack professional dispositions. Even though dispositions have long been valued and are widely accepted as an integral part of any quality teacher preparation program, it is only recently that teaching candidates about dispositions has become more formal than informal (Shively and Misco, 2010).

In 2000, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) stipulated that teacher preparation programs assess dispositions. But as Koeppen and Davison-Jenkins (2006) point out, NCATE required only that dispositions be assessed. A typical example of this type of assessment occurs when an applicant completes a dispositions assessment as part of a screening tool prior to admission to a teacher education program. While this is a good starting place, more is needed than to simply assess dispositions for program admission. For example, some candidates respond to items on dispositions surveys based on what they think they should say, rather than what they truly believe and only later does the teacher education program become aware that the candidate lacks professional dispositions. While assessing a candidate’s dispositions in a variety of environments and across various personnel helps construct a more complete picture of each candidate’s dispositions, this, too, falls short. Having data on candidates who lack dispositions should not limit us to taking one of two responses: exclude the individual from the teacher preparation program or look the other way. Data should be used to help candidates who have deficits in the assessed areas (Desjean-Perotta, 2006). Powers (1999) emphasizes that we can teach dispositions to candidates and monitor their development. It is not a forgone conclusion that the outcome of a candidate’s dispositions assessment has to remain as a fixed point. Rather, teacher education programs can provide candidates guidance on developing the necessary dispositions before dismissing them or letting them slip through the cracks.
**What is Meant by “Monitoring?”**

The Teacher Education Program at North Central College has very high standards and recognizes that not every student who wants to become a teacher will actually be able to realize that dream. It also recognizes that some students who have the potential to become excellent teachers might need support to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to complete the program. The monitoring program in the NCC’s Department of Education (which will be explained in greater depth in a subsequent section) involves identification of the problems, communication with the candidate about the problems, an explanation of why the problem is considered a concern in the teaching profession, and the provision of support to help the candidate succeed. It does not operate solely as a screening mechanism to eliminate candidates who do not seem likely to make it through the program. Monitoring varies in the ways supports are delivered, based on the different needs of candidates. It is not intended to be punitive, but rather a support system that starts from the assumption that candidates can change and develop.

It should be pointed out that monitoring is not limited to candidates to who lack dispositions. Some candidates who have been involved in the monitoring process lack content knowledge, some lack pedagogical skills, some lack professional dispositions, and some are lacking in more than one of these three areas. The process and types of possible supports that might be recommended for a candidate lacking content knowledge or teaching skills are more obvious than are the process and types of supports for a candidate lacking professional dispositions. Having a clearly defined monitoring process is particularly helpful to faculty to know when and how to address situations where professional dispositions are not evident (Brewer, Lindquist, and Altemueller, 2011).

**How Do Other Teacher Preparation Programs Address Disposition Issues and/or Carry Out a Monitoring Process?**

There are many similarities in the ways different teacher preparation programs deal with candidates who struggle. There are also some unique components and approaches. Brewer, et al (2011) described aspects of the approaches used by several programs. Following is a brief overview, highlighting one or more aspects of each program that appears to be particularly supportive to struggling candidates.

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) developed a self-evaluation of professional behaviors survey, which candidates complete on Livetext as part of the application to the teacher education program (EMU, 2012). The survey items require candidates to select a response most fitting of their own behavior, on a 5-point scale. Some of the topics addressed on the survey include attendance, timeliness, independence and initiative, handling frustration, responsiveness to constructive suggestions, communication skills, and clarity and coherency in oral presentations. In this survey candidates are also given the opportunity to write reflections and elaborations on each item beyond simply ticking the box.

Brewer et al (2011) describe a process developed by the Metropolitan State College in Denver to communicate concerns to candidates. When it is apparent that a candidate lacks a particular disposition, a meeting is arranged with the candidate, the advisor, the professor, the program coordinator, and department chair to discuss ideas for improvement. A hold is placed on the candidate’s file if a third issue occurs and at that point, the candidate is advised to seek other career options. One highlighted aspect of the process is that the communication method involves
a team of professionals. It is unlikely that the candidate would leave the meeting thinking that the problem was a result of a personality conflict with one individual, which sometimes happens when addressing dispositional issues. Also, this team approach is likely to afford the candidate with multiple perspectives during the discussion of ideas for improvement. The process also includes consequences (to seek other career options if a third issue occurs).

Northwest Missouri State University (NMSU) developed a Teacher Education Guidance Committee, the role of which is to meet with a candidate who has been admitted to the teacher education program and his/her advisor after the issuance of the third low disposition rating (Brewer et al, 2011). A highlighted aspect of the process is that a specific committee is charged with the task of determining one of four possible outcomes: no action (candidate continues); remediation followed by further screening; remediation, and suspension until the remedial requirements have been met; or termination from the program (NMSU Professional Education Handbook, 2012). The process, including the opportunity for appeal, is clearly written in the handbook and makes it apparent to the candidate that one of a range of consequences will result if change does not occur.

St. Norbert College also utilizes a panel approach when change does not occur or when additional concerns arise (Brewer et al, 2011). The process contains a clear explanation that the assessment of a candidate’s dispositions is not based on a single event or piece of evidence but instead involves the collection of evidence throughout the candidate’s college experience representing a pattern established over time (St. Norbert College website, 2012). Faculty and field supervisors complete dispositions reviews on teach candidate at the end of every course. A highlighted aspect of the St. Norbert College process is the ongoing assessment of dispositions, which is likely to provide more accurate data on an individual’s current dispositions than would an assessment of dispositions performed only upon admission to the teacher education program. For example, some candidates do not exhibit the necessary professional dispositions early in the program yet they make substantial growth as they proceed through the program. However, some candidates do not consistently exhibit these dispositions. A one-time assessment performed early in the program that does not reveal problems with professional dispositions is not necessarily an accurate accounting of the candidate’s dispositions over time.

The University of Nevada-Reno includes a list of twenty-two dispositions with accompanying professional behaviors as part of the application packet for admission to the teacher education program. There are two highlighted aspects of this program’s process. First, the format of dispositions followed by professional behaviors increases the likelihood of candidates’ understanding of the disposition. For example, the meaning of the disposition “professional feedback” is made clear when accompanied by the behavior, e.g., “The candidate is receptive and responsive to professional feedback incorporating suggestions into practice.” The second highlighted aspect of this process is that it includes a signature line stating:

I have read the dispositions and professional behaviors above and I understand they describe a set of expectations for candidates enrolled in teacher education programs in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno. I further understand that as a teacher education candidate if I do not exhibit these behaviors based on the professional judgment of program faculty, I may be asked to leave the program. (p 12)

The use of a signature line communicates to candidates that the assessment of dispositions is a serious consideration and that there are serious consequences for not making changes.
Brewer et al. (2011) described the PDQ-PREP process at Metropolitan State College of Denver and at Murray State College in Kentucky. The researchers sought to develop a positive, non-punitive approach. One highlighted aspect of this process is that the candidate is advised to engage in self-reflection and to take an active role in drafting his or her improvement goals. This is likely to foster a sense of ownership in the candidate since s/he is involved in the development of the goals. The second highlighted aspect of this approach involves the way the candidate’s progress in achieving the goals is monitored. There is clear communication to the candidate of expectations and consequences. Brewer et al. (2011) noted that if the candidate is making good faith effort to improve, the PDQ-PREP will be updated, and continued, or closed. If little or no progress has been made, or the concerns have continued, other career options may be discussed or the teacher candidate may be dismissed from the licensure program. (p. 56)

Desjean-Perotta (2006) chronicled the development of the Fitness to Teach policy at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), beginning with an informal exploration of other institutions’ policies, through the examination of standards from professional agencies, and ending with approval from the University of Texas attorneys. The highlighted aspect of the UTSA process is the emphasis on the critical need for all members of the teacher preparation faculty, including part-time faculty, to consistently uphold the policies. Although highly competent in their roles, part-time faculty may not be as highly vested in the department’s mission of inducting only quality teachers into the teaching profession. Therefore, as a result, weak or incompetent candidates may end up being recommended for a certificate despite their apparent weaknesses, because some faculty may believe that it causes less trouble to do so than to deal with complicated due process rights and grievances. Our experience, however, shows that an FTT policy helps alleviate many of these concerns for part-time faculty because the policy provides them with the support they need to make confident high-stakes judgment calls about teacher candidates. (p. 26)

**Teaching and Assessing Dispositions at North Central College**

As mentioned previously, the monitoring process at North Central College (NCC) is not limited to dispositions. A candidate can be identified for monitoring if deficits are noted in knowledge, skills, or dispositions, or a combination of the three areas. The Department of Education at NCC kept a record of reasons why struggling candidates received monitoring reports during the four academic years from fall 2008 through spring 2012. Following are broad categories that show ways in which candidates struggled, listed in order of those occurring most frequently to less frequently.

- Candidates lack the professional dispositions that are needed by the profession (organization, communication, responsibility, punctuality, follow-through, commitment, etc.).
- Candidates lack proper depth of the content that they are responsible for teaching.
- Candidates lack skills in lesson planning.
- Candidates have temporary, acute issues that prohibit them from completing their work or from producing quality work.
- Candidates have ongoing chronic issues that prohibit them from completing their work or from producing quality work.

Issues involving dispositions occur most frequently, emphasizing the importance of teaching about dispositions and addressing the issue when candidates have deficits in professional dispositions. Like Powers (1999), the NCC’s Department of Education believes dispositions can be taught to candidates. But it is also understood that before candidates can be expected to develop new beliefs and behaviors, they have to understand the beliefs, how they manifest themselves as behaviors, and why they are important to the profession. Thus, we concur with Taylor and Wasicsko (2000) who pointed out Powers’ suggestion that candidates need to be made more aware of appropriate dispositions. Beginning in the first education course, NCC candidates receive information on dispositions and take part in assignments where dispositions of the teaching profession are examined. The attention placed on teaching about dispositions early in the program and continuing throughout the program, helps candidates understand the expectations that will be placed upon them to demonstrate these dispositions as candidates and later as teachers in the field. Candidates who do not demonstrate professional dispositions, along with candidates who do not demonstrate proper content knowledge or teaching skills, will take part in the monitoring process.

Koeppen and Davison-Jenkins (2006) note that it is better to make explicit the dispositions we want our teacher candidates to exhibit rather than to make assumptions about what they know and believe. Thus, in order to accentuate the importance of dispositions and to emphasize opportunities to exhibit them, NCC Education faculty members include in their syllabi lists of both basic and advanced dispositions, and professors typically point out the specific dispositions that are emphasized in each course.

Like the program at St. Norbert College, NCC’s program assesses candidates’ dispositions at multiple times throughout the program and a variety of professionals are involved in the assessment. One of the first assessments of dispositions occurs as part of the application process to be admitted to the Teacher Education Program. The candidate completes a Self-Evaluation of Professional Dispositions and a faculty member in the candidate’s major (who has had the student for at least one course) also completes an Assessment of Professional Dispositions. This is not a “secret” evaluation. Candidates are expected to read the evaluation from the faculty member to help them understand how their dispositions are perceived by professionals. Candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are assessed throughout each field experience by cooperating teachers and by supervisors. Candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are also assessed by college professors at the end of each Education course. The important aspect is what happens with the disposition information gained from the assessments. Rather than limit disposition assessment data only for use in screening or for collective analysis of the candidates as a whole, the data is issued to identify candidates who need support if they lack certain dispositions and to assist the candidate in developing a growth plan.

As mentioned previously, NCC takes a strong stance on the importance of teaching about dispositions. The department believes that by making candidates aware of the importance of these dispositions, and by supporting candidates to acquire them, there will be an increased likelihood that candidates will successfully complete the program and be prepared for the teaching profession. Part of teaching dispositions involves assessing candidates’ dispositions and we concur with Brewer et al (2011) who stress that “the responsibility of teacher educators is to begin
the process of assessing dispositions early in a teacher candidate’s education so that the teacher candidate can continue to grow and develop all skills, including dispositions,” (p. 65).

The Department of Education at NCC has found candidates have an understanding of dispositions. Candidates can verbally state them, but they view their own circumstances as different. That is, they believe they have reasons why the behavior occurred or failed to occur, and they often believe they are “exempt.” It behooves us to inform candidates about how their actions are perceived by others. This allows candidates who lack skills the opportunity to grow and change. It also allows the department to operate in a consistent and fair manner with all students. One of the NCC teacher candidates used an expression recently that applies to this situation. The candidate, who had just completed the student teaching term, was an invited speaker at a workshop for candidates about to begin student teaching. The particularly apt example he chose to share from his student teaching arose from his experiences with classroom management, but clearly the message applies to those of us in teacher preparation. His message was “That which you tolerate, you encourage.” If we don’t take the time to clearly inform candidates about their own dispositions as evidenced by their behaviors, we can only expect to see more of it.

**Informing Candidates about Monitoring**

Candidates at North Central College are informed about the monitoring process early and often in courses and at information meetings, as well as by various personnel (course professors, academic advisors, field experience coordinators, and supervisors). It is explained to candidates that monitoring involves an array of supports to help them succeed; it is not intended to be a “gotcha” or demerit program. Candidates are provided with examples of monitoring services (e.g., help with organization, help with written communication, personal counseling, lesson plan tutoring, additional opportunities for field experience, etc.) although it is emphasized that each candidate has unique needs so the strategies are individualized.

**Logistics of Monitoring Process**

NCC’s monitoring process was developed around the same time as many of the aforementioned programs and it includes many of the same components. The process has evolved over time, and some of the particular ways in which it has been modified are discussed in the following section.

A candidate can be identified for monitoring in a number of ways. First, if a professor notes a problem in one area (absences, late work, low quality work, difficulty with oral or written communication, etc.), the professor completes a Level One Monitoring Report and meets with the candidate to explain the concern and, usually, alternatives and solutions are discussed at this meeting. The candidate keeps a copy of the report, which is also forwarded to the Coordinator of Teacher Education, who keeps a record of candidates who have been issued monitoring reports. One way that this process has evolved over time is that the Coordinator of Teacher Education no longer simply keeps a record of Level One monitoring reports, but in nearly all situations, the coordinator contacts the candidate by email and extends an offer for help. Two benefits arise from this practice. First, some candidates actually follow up on the offer for assistance and receive suggestions and/or recommendations for services. The larger benefit is that candidates receive communication that emphasizes that the problem is “real.” Similar to the Metropolitan State process, this modification of the team approach when communicating the problem rein
forces the idea that the problem is not just a personality issue with one professor and that change is expected.

It has been noted that a number of first-time offenses at NCC occur when candidates fail to attend mandatory field experience meetings the first time they take a course with a field experience. Even though they receive email notices, and we can affirm that the emails are actually opened, several candidates each term fail to grasp the seriousness of the word “mandatory” and do not attend the meetings. These candidates are issued a monitoring report and meet individually with the Field Placement Coordinator. They are also contacted via email by the Coordinator of Teacher Education. Data over time indicates that the majority of these candidates have no additional incidences requiring monitoring, suggesting that the majority of these candidates have no additional incidences requiring monitoring, suggesting that the time taken to communicate expectations to candidates early in their program is time well spent.

A field experience supervisor or placement coordinator can also present a candidate with a monitoring report if a problem is noted in the field experience setting. Because of the fact that P-12 students can be potentially affected, any concerns with candidate performance in the field are automatically elevated to Level Two monitoring, even if it is a first-time occurrence. The supervisor and placement coordinator, and sometimes the Department Chairperson, meet with the candidate to talk about the problem and to determine a plan of action to address the concern. The Coordinator of Teacher Education is also given a copy of the monitoring report and follows up with the candidate.

Other serious problems outside of the field experience setting result in a Level Two Monitoring Report. Generally, in this situation, patterns of behavior have been observed. An example is the student who is habitually tardy for class and/or who has failed to submit several assignments on time or the student who fails the first exam/quiz in nearly every course, then has to play catch up the rest of the term. Because all monitoring reports go to the Coordinator of Teacher Education, that person keeps track of behaviors that might seem minor when viewed individually, but show a clear pattern when they are repeated across multiple professors and multiple terms. Case Study 1 illustrates this type of situation.

Issuing multiple monitoring reports each time an incident occurs is an example of how the monitoring process at NCC has evolved over time. Some professors/supervisors would not issue a second monitoring report, believing that there was no need since the candidate was already on monitoring. The problem was that unless the candidate self-reported continued issues, the Coordinator of Teacher Education had no way to know of additional incidences. There were instances where the candidate reported that everything was going fine and it was only at the end of a course, when it was too late to provide supports, that the scope of the problem became apparent. Thus, like the University of Nevada-Reno program, the Coordinator of Teacher Education emphatically stresses the importance for all monitoring matters to be reported, included those noted by part-time Education faculty and supervisors.

As is done with Level One monitoring issues, the candidate receiving a Level Two Monitoring Report first meets with the professor or supervisor who issued the report. They discuss the problem and typically, suggestions/alternatives are discussed. All candidates receiving a Level Two report also meet with the Coordinator of Teacher Education (or a designee) to discuss the problem, develop a plan of strategies, and then continue to meet with the coordinator on a regular basis to monitor progress (Keiser, Kincaid, and Servais, 2011). Like the PDQ-PREP program at the University of Texas at San Antonio, candidates assist in drafting their own improvement plans. Originally, candidates were asked to come up with a list of goals, and then to develop one
or more accompanying strategies for each goal. A candidate with a problem turning in work on time might have a goal to submit all assignments on time for the rest of the term. One strategy to actualize this goal would be to record all assignments in a planner so as to be certain of the date each is due. A second strategy would be to start working on an assignment at least five days before it is due so as to not procrastinate and have the pressure of having to do the entire assignment the night before the due date.

While some candidates were able to develop honest goals and logical accompanying strategies, others had difficulty with the process. Some candidates developed goals that were not directly related to the problem or that were unrealistic. For example, using the previous scenario of having a problem turning in work on time, a candidate might develop a loosely related, unrealistic goal of “getting a grade of 100 percent on all assignments the rest of the term.” Or a candidate struggling with generating actual strategies might only restate the goal, for example “turning in work when it is due,” rather than coming up with one or more appropriate strategies.

As an alternative to the goal/strategy process, most candidates are now asked to think of the issue in a problem/solution format. For example, a candidate receiving a monitoring report from a college supervisor for having submitted and taught two poorly developed elementary math lesson plans (lacking critical content, lacking ways of engaging students with the content, and lacking variety in instructional strategies.) For the problem of inadequate content, the candidate developed a solution by inserting a content outline in the plan. For the problem of lack of student involvement, the candidate developed one solution by inserting a list of questions into the content outline and another solution by developing interactive white board activities or the use of individual handheld wipe-off boards for a portion of each lesson. For the problem of lacking variety in instructional strategies, the candidate developed a solution to select at least two different instructional strategies (from an approved list) for each lesson. Lastly, the candidate developed a solution to submit all remaining math lesson plans well in advance for the supervisor to review prior to an observation. Granted, the process often takes coaching from the Coordinator of Teacher Education but overall, candidates seem to generate more practical plans using the problem/solution format than they did with the goal/strategy format.

The benefit of having candidates develop their own strategies/solutions is that they development a commitment to it—it is their plan. Additionally, it teaches candidates a way of thinking that will hopefully result in independent problem solving when they encounter future issues. It is explained to candidates that what they do becomes what is considered their evidence of demonstrating that they are making progress. They need to be able to show that the solution was implemented so they can document that they have made gains. Candidates have ownership of the outcome since they have a great deal of input into the plan.

One important change in NCC’s monitoring process was the insertion of the “monitoring clause” into the application for admission to the Teacher Education Program. In the early years of implementing the monitoring process, there were several instances where candidates claimed that they had never been informed of the process and they simply refused to take part in remediation. Thus, similar to the practice used at the University of Nevada-Reno, a statement is now included in the application which requires the candidate’s signature to attest that s/he will actively take part in the monitoring process should the need arise. The monitoring clause informs the candidate that failure to actively participate in monitoring will lead to dismissal from the Teacher Education Program. Some candidates are defensive about taking part in monitoring but since the addition of the monitoring clause on the application, there have been no instances of refusal.
As mentioned previously, candidates can also be identified for monitoring by the college supervisor and/or through the evaluation from the cooperating teacher when enrolled in a field experience. At the end of every field experience, the cooperating teacher and the supervisor (independent of each other) complete an evaluation of the candidate, which includes a section in which they must indicate if the candidate is recommended, recommended with reservations, or not recommended to continue in the Teacher Education Program. Faculty members who teach courses with field experiences also provide a similar type of evaluation of every student. A candidate who receives a “recommended with reservation” or a “do not recommend” is placed on Level Two monitoring. These candidates meet individually with the Coordinator of Teacher Education (and often simultaneously with the Department Chair or the Placement Coordinator) to talk about the concerns and to develop an action plan (problems and solutions to be addressed in the next field experience).

In the past, the candidate who received a “recommendation with reservations” often moved on to the next scheduled field experience and worked on the problems in that setting. If the candidate did not have any more methods courses/field experiences left to complete, s/he would work on the problems while student teaching. All too often, the candidate continued to display the same problems in the next field or student teaching experience. Increased skills are expected at each level, thus candidates who have not taken part in remediation are far more likely to experience problems again at the next level than to perform at the expected levels. As the monitoring process has developed, most candidates who struggle in the field are now required to take part in a remedial field experience before moving on to the next methods/field experience or on to student teaching. The department developed a course number for this experience to ensure that the student was assigned a field supervisor. Receiving a rating of “recommend with reservations” does not automatically mean move on to the next level, rather it means that the candidate can continue to participate in the Teacher Education Program under a remediation plan. To move to the next level (the next field experience course or on to student teaching) the candidate must produce evidence of forward steady progress and the acquisition of necessary skills.

One benefit of the remedial field experience requirement is that more candidates are gaining the knowledge and skills they need and are completing student teaching, often with higher grades than those that were earned in the past by struggling candidates. Another benefit is that partner schools have expressed that they are aware of and support the high expectations NCC has for its candidates and that they appreciate that NCC candidates come to field and student teaching experiences with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions already in place. Additionally, whenever possible, the remedial field experience takes place in the same classroom where the candidate will student teach. This helps the candidate build familiarity, comfort, and confidence while gaining the necessary skills and it allows the cooperating teacher to indicate if the student is not ready to enter the student teaching experience upon completion of the field experience. In these instances, the cooperating teacher is not notified that the candidate is completing a remedial field experience in order to respect the privacy of the candidate and to avoid tainting the cooperating teacher’s view of the candidate.

Level Three issues are very serious monitoring concerns. Often, these result from situations where candidates previously on Level Two monitoring failed to make progress and their continued participation in the Teacher Education Program is in question. Case Study 1 describes this type of scenario. Most often, candidates in these more serious situations are required to take part in a hearing with the Teacher Education Committee, which is composed of the Education Department Chair, the Coordinator of Teacher Education, one other faculty member from the
Department of Education, one Field Experience Coordinator, and three full-time faculty members from departments outside of Education. After hearing the candidate’s presentation of the case and after reviewing the evidence from participating in monitoring, the Teacher Education Committee has three options: 1) allow the candidate to continue in the program with no conditions, 2) allow the candidate to continue with conditions (typically, involving participating in the monitoring process), or 3) dismiss the candidate from the Teacher Education Program. The actions of the Teacher Education Committee are final. Candidates are also permitted to request a hearing with the committee if they wish to appeal an outcome of the monitoring process or of an Education Department policy.

The End-of-Course Evaluation Process and Monitoring

At the end of every Education course, professors (and field supervisors and cooperating teachers for relevant courses) complete an evaluation on each candidate and indicate one of three possible ratings regarding the candidate’s participation in the Teacher Education Program: a “recommendation” to continue, a “recommendation with reservations” to continue, or a “do not recommend” to continue. Each candidate who receives a rating other than a recommendation to continue meets with the Coordinator of Teacher Education and the Education Department Chair, who explain the concern, and discuss and initiate the candidate into the monitoring process. This end-of-course evaluation was a modification made to address the fact that issues inevitably arise at the end of the term, and the monitoring report system did not seem to be an appropriate vehicle to address those issues. For example, professors noted that some candidates made it through the term yet performed very poorly on the final or failed to turn in required paperwork. Often, the professor had no further contact with the candidate since the term had ended. Even when the professor completed a monitoring report and contacted a candidate to arrange a meeting, the candidate simply did not show up. The department recognized that candidates who needed help were falling through the cracks. Some candidates’ issues were so chronic in that they would crash at the end of the term in each course. They were not being identified for monitoring, but the problem would become apparent at the point where the candidate’s application for student teaching was reviewed by the department and the candidate could not be recommended to move forward. Thus, the end-of-course evaluation was developed to help identify candidates in need of support, using an evaluation tool that was more appropriate than the monitoring report.

Recommendation for Student Teaching

Candidates submit an application to student teaching one full year (three academic terms) before the term targeted for student teaching. Each applicant must receive a consensus rating of recommend from the Department of Education and also from the academic content department for candidates in secondary education or K-12 programs. This rating of “recommend” is the signal needed by the Placement Office to begin seeking a student teaching placement. A candidate who receives a “recommend with reservation” or “do not recommend” rating meets with the Coordinator of Teacher Education and the Department Chair to discuss the problem(s) resulting in the particular rating. The coordinator and department chair inform the candidate of the hold that has been placed on a student teaching placement and provide information about the monitoring process if needed. Typically, candidates receiving a “recommend with reservations” or “do not recommend” rating have already been involved in the monitoring process and are actively work-
ing on strategies and solutions. If a candidate has not previously been involved in monitoring, s/he enters the process at this time. It is made clear at this time that in order to receive a recommendation for student teaching, the candidate needs to provide evidence that previously noted problems are no longer an issue and that s/he has the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to be successful in student teaching. The evidence, which could include anything from evaluations from supervisors and cooperating teachers to weekly attendance/assignment sheets from course professors to documentation of continued participation and progress in counseling, is provided by the candidate to the Coordinator of Teacher Education. The coordinator in turn informs the Placement Office to begin seeking student teaching placement when satisfactory evidence is in place indicating that progress is being made toward addressing the concerns.

Two changes have taken place with the process described above. The placement process for student teaching begins a full year before the targeted term and cases arose where some candidates demonstrated the types of problems that clearly would have resulted in a “recommendation with reservations” or “do not recommend” rating after their placements had already been made. Some candidates who already had their student teaching placements seemed dismissive of the monitoring process, perhaps assuming that since they had received a “recommendation” early on and already had a placement, there was nothing to stop them from going on. Part of the problem was a flaw in the process—candidates clearly needed to continue to demonstrate proper knowledge, skills, and dispositions throughout the program. Another part of the problem was that departments were asked to provide ratings on candidates they did not know well, particularly in the case of transfer students. With the revised process, candidates’ names are first presented to departments for recommendation a full year in advance and if a “recommend” rating is provided, the placement process is initiated. However, it is made clear to candidates that their names will be resubmitted to the departments every term before they student teach, and if a “recommend with reservation” or “do not recommend” rating occurs, the placement will be frozen until proper evidence has been provided via the monitoring process. Additionally, departments have been given the opportunity to delay their responses until the end of the term in cases where a candidate is enrolled in courses but there is insufficient evidence to make a clear recommendation.

Admittedly, the downside of this change means that the Placement Office has less time to make placements for some candidates. However, to keep this in perspective, the number of candidates who do not receive a recommendation is quite small. The Department of Education believes that the benefits of taking time to get to know candidates before rating them and re-examining candidates each term before student teaching, has outweighed the problems associated with less time available to make student teaching placements.

**Case Studies**

The following case studies demonstrate how NCC’s monitoring process was implemented to provide support to candidates in three very different scenarios. All three of these cases were considered “serious” situations. One should keep in mind that the majority of monitoring cases are minor and do not involve this level of intervention.

**Case Study 1—Allison**

Allison’s major was Elementary Education. She produced high quality work although she was very quiet in class and rarely interacted with other students. At the point where her applica-
tion for student teaching was reviewed (a year in advance), it was discovered that she reported some kind of “major catastrophe” or life crisis about three weeks before the end of every term in most of her courses. She would meet individually with each professor, describe the life crisis, state that she was able to keep up in all her other courses, and then ask each professor if she could have an extension on major assignments in that course. It is unknown whether or not she asked for similar extensions from her cooperating teachers. It was not noted on evaluations, but given her style of communication, it could have happened.

As a result she received a “recommend with reservations” for student teaching and the Coordinator of Teacher Education and Department Chair met with her to discuss the concerns and to emphasize how important stamina and stress management are for teachers. It appeared she did not recognize this pattern of behavior. While some of her life crisis issues were genuine, others could not be verified and she was unable to recall details on problems that had occurred only six months earlier. Following is a discussion of strategies that were identified to help Allison become aware of her pattern of behavior and develop positive stress-management skills, along with a summary of her participating in the monitoring process.

- One strategy employed was to have Allison and her professors complete weekly attendance/assignment sheets. These forms are used by other organizations on campus (athletics, etc.) and their use does not negatively stigmatize the student. The form is filled out at the last class meeting each week by both the student and the professor to document that week’s attendance, tardies, prompt submission of assignments, and projected grade in the course at the time in which the form is being completed. The purpose of using this form was to have Allison recognize when she was having problems and to develop skills to cope with and get through stressful situations without asking for extensions. Allison’s behavior did not change significantly as a result of completing the forms, as she continued to experience some kind of catastrophe near the end of each term. Although the quality of her work was outstanding, she had problems getting work accomplished without extensions.

- When Allison reached the final set of methods/practicum courses, it became clear that she could not keep up with the lesson-planning demands. In one course, she need to plan and teach four language arts lessons spread out over a six-week period, but she simply could not get the lessons done in advance in order to get them to her cooperating teacher and supervisor for review. She stated that she would begin to do research for her lesson and that she couldn’t seem to stop gathering lesson ideas. When she finally did try and develop a lesson plan from all the content and lessons ideas she had researched, she was so overwhelmed that she could not complete the plan. At this point, we simply could not let her go on to student teaching without some evidence that she could successfully complete it. Because she had not made continued forward progress in meeting her goals and because we lacked evidence that she could complete student teaching requirements, her situation was considered at Level Three in the monitoring process. Allison was scheduled for a hearing with the Teacher Education Committee, whose role it was to determine if she could continue without conditions, continue with conditions, or be dismissed from the Teacher Education Program.

- The determination was made that she would be allowed to continue for one more term with conditions. She was informed that if she failed to meet her goals at the end of the upcoming term, she would be dismissed from the Teacher Education Program. Allison
reported during the hearing that she had been taking part in counseling for a number of years with a private therapist. The Teacher Education Committee required that she provide ongoing documentation that she was continuing to take part in counseling on a regular basis and that she was making satisfactory progress (the committee did NOT request that the therapist provide specific details, just documentation that she was participating in counseling and making progress).

- Allison was also required to enroll in an additional field experience to build skills in timely lesson planning. This field experience was approximately twenty hours a week—with the intent that she would build stamina along with experience. One of the parameters established for her was that she needed to stop after she researched four ideas and to write her lesson plan, using no more than those four ideas. Allison spent half days at the school.

- The expectations for the additional field experience were clearly lined out, stating that she needed to submit lesson plans in advance, that she needed to take on increasingly more responsibilities and exhibit greater independence, while maintaining her composure and completing tasks on time. By the end of the experience she was expected to have taken over full responsibility for all planning, teaching, and grading for half of the school day. At the end of the additional field experience, it was determined that Allison had demonstrated the skills needed to move on to student teaching.

- The cooperating teacher from the additional field experience agreed to let Allison return the next term for her student teaching experience. Allison completed student teaching with a grade of A and is now working as a teaching assistant.

Case Study 2—Melanie

Melanie’s major was Elementary Education. Melanie’s grades were acceptable but not exceptional. She was immature in her interactions with peers, but able to work with them to complete in-class assignments without problems. Her interactions with professors were markedly different. She appeared uncomfortable, defensive, and dismissive. For example, when a professor asked to meet with her to give feedback on a low-quality assignment, Melanie declined to sit down and stood during the meeting. In meetings with various professors, her comments were abrupt and dismissive and ranged from “Yes,” “OK,” to “Of course.” She did not ask questions during meetings and she consistently replied “No” when asked if she had any questions. Following is a discussion of strategies identified to help Melanie gain the knowledge and skills she lacked and a summary of her participation in the monitoring process.

- One of the strategies that Melanie took part in was to meet with campus resource personnel to work on communication skills. While it was documented that she did attend these meetings, there were no noticeable changes in her communication skills with Education faculty.

- Melanie’s skills in lesson planning were very weak. Her plans contained little in terms of either pedagogy or content. One simply could not tell what she was teaching or how she was teaching it from reading her plans. A part of Melanie’s plan of strategies was to meet with the methods professor and/or the field experience supervisor during the planning of each of four lessons to be taught at her field experience school. Typically, at this point in the candidate’s program, it is assumed that the candidate would meet with the cooperat-
ing teacher to get input on the lesson and would be able to independently develop a lesson plan to be submitted for review. In Melanie’s case, additional support was provided while the lesson plan was developed. Even with this level of support, Melanie continued to struggle to create lessons with adequate depth of content and pedagogy. The professor and supervisor showed her examples of lessons developed by other students, but Melanie dismissed the need for depth with comments such as, “My co-op doesn’t want me to do that,” even though the cooperating teacher shared similar concerns regarding inadequate depth and clarity of the lesson plans.

- It was apparent when Melanie taught her lessons that she did not have a strong understanding of the content she was teaching, nor was she able to provide examples or re-explain concepts when students asked for clarification. Eventually, she admitted that she did not have a firm understanding of some of the content she was trying to teach.
- It had been stipulated in Melanie’s monitoring plan that continuation in the Teacher Education Program was contingent upon continued forward progress in the goals and strategies on her monitoring plan. Also, she was supposed to have signed up to take part in a summer program with children on campus to gain more experience and she was to have registered for an additional field experience for the upcoming fall term so we could re-evaluate her readiness for student teaching.
- Melanie did not meet these requirements and while she did not speak directly with Education professors, she informed others on campus that she had changed her major. Because the conditions surrounding her continued participation in the program were not met, she received written notice that she was dismissed from the Teacher Education Program. This was done in an amicable manner, making note of the fact that she had not fulfilled the requirements of her monitoring plan, but also emphasizing that we were aware that she had made plans to pursue another line of study at NCC.

While it might seem unnecessary, or perhaps even punitive, to provide written notice of dismissal in a situation in which the student changed major, we found it necessary to do so. We have had several instances of students who were involved in monitoring, left the college for a period of time or changed his/her major, graduated with a non-education degree, and then returned to the Education program fully expecting to be reinstated to the program with a clean slate. Thus, we stand by our policy to provide written notification, informing students of the dismissal and of the steps that would be required should they wish to return. Typically, a student wishing to return would request a hearing with the Teacher Education Committee and as part of the hearing, s/he would need to provide sufficient evidence that the previous problems had been properly addressed and no longer pose a concern for the student’s successful completion of the program requirements.

Melanie was what we would call a reluctant participant in the monitoring process. The specificity and depth of her problems were not really known to those who worked with her, but it was pretty obvious that she did not want to take part. The application for admission to the Teacher Education Program includes a clause indicating that the candidate must take part in monitoring if the need is identified and the candidate must sign that clause in order to be admitted to the Teacher Education Program. Without that clause, one can surmise that Melanie would not have taken part in any level of the monitoring process.
Case Study 3—Brian

Brian’s major was K-12 Health and Physical Education. Brian was not a particularly strong student. He was somewhat less mature than peers and was inclined to let others do the work on group projects. But he was a very likable young man and his potential as a future teacher was apparent.

During the winter holiday, with one term of coursework remaining before student teaching, Brian was involved in a car accident. The other driver was intoxicated. Physical injuries were minor although the damage to the vehicles was quite extensive. Over the next few weeks, Brian had recurring dreams about the accident. The quality of his coursework declined considerably, he did not turn in assignments, and could not keep up. Professors became aware of the depth of the problem when Brian did not turn in any of the field experience forms by the due date at the end of the third week of the term. It was also discovered that Brian had not completed any hours and had failed to make contact with his cooperating teacher. Following is a discussion of strategies that were identified to support Brian and a summary of his participation in the monitoring process.

- Brian willingly met with Education faculty and he volunteered information about the accident, which was not known to faculty as it occurred over the holiday break. He stated that he could not sleep; he was visibly agitated, frazzled, and cried throughout much of the meeting. The Campus Wellness Center was contacted and it was arranged for Brian to go there at the conclusion of the Monitoring meeting to arrange for counseling to deal with his anxiety.
- Brian was scheduled to take a heavy load of courses in his final term before student teaching and it was likely he would have failed most of the courses and/or dropped out. We convinced him to slow down his program so that he could focus on fewer courses at a time, even though this meant delaying the student teaching term.
- Brian had lost all semblance of a daily routine. He revealed that some nights he would go to bed at 5 a.m. only to end up napping through most of the afternoon. Then he would not be tired enough to sleep for more than a couple of hours at night. His eating habits were also erratic. One strategy was to help him figure out how to establish a normal routine prior to student teaching. This included a 90-minute exercise program from 6:30 to 8 a.m. daily; no naps during the day and in bed by midnight; and an improved diet with three regular meals a day.

Brian had not developed strong organizational skills before his accident, so this was not an area where he simply re-established prior habits. To foster the development of such skills he would need during student teaching, he began to use a weekly planner and wrote out daily to-do lists. He set up and began using a file box with folders for his teaching materials. He also began using a binder with dividers and pockets to keep his materials organized when he carried them back and forth from home to college and to his field experience school.
Brian responded well to the structure and strategies that were part of his monitoring program. He struggled at times, but demonstrated proper communication and coping during these few low spots. His progress throughout the term was steady and Brian went on to student teach the next fall, earning a grade of “A.” Brian was selected as the “mentor” guest speaker to present at the Student Teaching Workshop the next term where he spoke openly about his experiences and proudly shared student teaching tips and organizational strategies with the participants.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

It seems likely that without the monitoring process, Allison and Brian would not have made it through student teaching. In fact, neither one may not have made it through college. Both of them had problems of a serious enough nature that they could have been removed from the teacher education program if assessments were designed only to screen rather than also support. On the other hand, without the monitoring process, Melanie (with her mediocre grades) might have been passed along from course to course and could have ended up in student teaching where her problems would have become glaringly apparent, creating an uncomfortable situation for Melanie, the college, her cooperating teacher, the host school, and potentially a harmful situation for the elementary students who would have lost valuable instructional time. Worse, if an effort was made to just get Melanie through student teaching, she could have ended up certified to teach though clearly unqualified.

The North Central College Department of Education acknowledges that many teacher preparation programs have established equally effective ways to identify and assist struggling candidates. For programs interested in developing or revising their process, the following recommendations from this study are offered:

- Establish a method for early and ongoing identification of candidate who struggle with knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for the teaching profession.
- Clearly communicate with the candidate, describing both what constitutes the area of concern and why it presents a problem for successful completion of the program and success in the field of teaching.
- Provide support, but also establish the expectation that responsibility rests with the candidate to provide evidence of forward steady progress without plateaus or backslides.

This means some candidates may have to delay graduation in order to remediate deficits in knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions. It also means that some candidates will not continue on in the Teacher Education Program if evidence of steady forward progress does not occur.

The data on NCC candidates who received monitoring reports during the 2011–12 academic year shows that one-third of the candidates received more than one report. Often, the candidate exhibited the same issue across several courses/situations (e.g., problems turning in work on time). Often, more than one problem was noted on each report (e.g., the same student would have problems with content knowledge and problems in implementing instruction).

However, we believe that the critical piece of data is that two-thirds of the candidates who received a notice were issued only one report. This means that the majority of candidates successfully addressed the concern upon first notice. The department admits that it takes time for faculty members to write up monitoring reports and to meet with candidates. In addition, it takes time for the Coordinator of Teacher Education to meet with candidates and coordinate/provide
supports. But the results have proven effective interventions. When candidates are informed of concerns (the earlier the better), and they are provided with supports, the outcomes include the retention of college students, an increase in the number of candidates who successfully complete the program, and the department’s maintaining its reputation for high standards. True, not every student who enters North Central College with a desire to become a teacher makes it through the program, but those who do not succeed are identified early and are supported to find other majors that will help them reach their goals. We owe it to our teacher candidates to support them so they can develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions we know they need. We owe it to current and future students in K-12 classrooms to prepare competent and highly qualified teachers.

References


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Predicting Postsecondary Attendance through Cultural Norming: A Test of Community Expectancy

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Abstract

Efforts to enhance college going rates have employed a number of strategies, such as improving recruitment efforts and enhancing financial aid packages. Little effort, however, has been directed at looking at the social and human capital that might impact a residential community, and the subsequent influence this community might have on a student’s decision to attend college. Utilizing 18 community level variables in one case study US state, the study tested community expectancy as a predictor of college attendance. Study findings moderately supported community expectancy, and provided a strong research agenda for further exploration into how community's impact individual behavior.

Keywords: Community expectancy, social capital, human capital, college going rates, postsecondary attendance, higher education

Introduction

There have been multiple efforts to increase the rate at which young people completing a secondary education go to college. Frequent studies and efforts have been directed at early college awareness, secondary school counseling, mentoring, financial aid packaging, and even marketing strategies that report the benefits of college completion. Despite an array of efforts and significant financial commitment to recruitment, the college completion rate in the United States has changed only slightly over the past five decades.

Deggs and Miller (2009) suggested a different factor that might impact college attendance: the community’s expectation of what youth should or should not do. They identified five elements that can impact an individual’s decision making about life roles and perceptions: formal education bodies, civic agencies, informal associations, religious affiliations, and home life. To make this suggestion, Deggs and Miller drew on three prominent philosophical sets of writing, including Dewey’s (1899/1980, 1916/2004, 1938, 1939) writings on the intersection of community, democracy, and education. Erikson’s (1950/1993, 1968/1994) identity development theory because of his belief that adolescents either struggle to identify with accepted communal norms and become participants in that community, or they struggle with rejecting those norms and become alienated. The third domain of knowledge forming the foundation of this community expectancy was Schlossberg’s transition theory (as cited in Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) in combination with life course theory (Elder, 1994, 1998; Giele & Elder, 1998) and Swidler’s (1986) concepts of settled and unsettled lives.
Deggs and Miller’s model of community expectancy can be translated to college enrollment by arguing that an individual learns from both formal and informal actions, and a life time of informal actions and expectations are conveyed to a youth throughout a community. These expectations are conveyed by neighbors unintentionally talking about where they attended college, about religious leaders purporting the value of education, and even from public speakers or politicians who proclaim the value of questioning and exploration beyond the town limits. Through four studies, they had found moderate positive support for the idea that communities do have the power to convey an expectation of right and wrong to community members.

The purpose for conducting the current study was to specifically identify the variables that can compose community expectancy and to correlate these variables with college attendance. In addition to identifying the variables that contribute to college going, the study explored whether latent factors exist among the social, cultural, and human capital variables that might be used to identify community expectations of college attendance.

**Background of the Study**

The study began with the assumption that community expectations of postsecondary attendance can be detected, and if this is possible, it presents a new battery of approaches that might be useful in recruiting students to college. The concept of community expectation, as outlined in the Deggs and Miller (2009) model, suggests using human, social, and cultural capital as measures of community expectancy, and this discussion uses those three forms of capital as primary elements of literature to review.

A review of literature related to social, cultural, and human capital yielded 18 variables that may indicate community expectancy’s role in a student’s decision to attend college. The identification is problematic, but given Dewey’s (1899/1980, 1916/2004, 1938, 1939) suggestion that community should be viewed as a pseudo-organism, the variables that shape individual level behaviors, values, and norms could be converted to the community level for the purpose of studying community expectations. For example, parental education level was deemed a relevant determinant of college choice (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999), therefore, the percent of the population over 25 with a high school diploma or equivalent and the percent of population over the age of 25 with a bachelor’s degree could be used as a substitute for representing communal education levels. Variables suggested by theory and found in previous research were also included. For example, the central nature of cultural capital to Bourdieu’s (1986) theory and Rowan-Kenyon’s (2007) implication that students who participated in art, music, and dance classes should show higher rates of college attendance led to the inclusion of the percent of local industry in a community dedicated to the arts, recreation, and entertainment as a variable in the study.

Using measures of poverty, income, and diversity were determined to be appropriate for inclusion, as they have all been consistent elements that have been correlated with college enrollment (Perna, 2000; Rowan-Kenyon, 2007; King, 2008). As familial income was a significant indicator of college attendance, a similar variable measuring the average income per capita should suggest attendance rates among a community’s student cohort. Likewise, as an indicator of communal socio-economic status (SES), the percent of population below poverty within a community could correlate positively with a community’s expectation of college attendance.

Other elements of a community that are entwined with both education and poverty included the community literacy rate, the number of secondary school activities, proximity to a postsecondary institution, and per pupil spending. Community literacy, a community-wide fac-
tor, bridged the gap between education and poverty and can be considered as both an indicator of the overall academic preparation of a community and the overall community’s ability to assess the value of education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). The per pupil expenditure (PPE) at the district level and the number of secondary school activities (such as clubs and sports) were used as indicators of community expectancy of postsecondary attendance as they represent both the wealth of the community and the community’s dedication to extracurricular programming. Together these variables may indicate communal encouragement of student involvement, a factor seen as critical to college choice (Stage & Hossler, 2004; Perna, 2000; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Rowan-Kenyon, 2007). Additionally, a community that hosts a college in its city limits or nearby may promote college attendance through the creation of social capital linkages (Hoenack & Weiler, 1975; Miller & Tuttle, 2006; 2007).

Variables that assist in understanding basic demographic elements of communities can also provide insight into community expectancy. Anderson and Subramanian (2006) sought “to understand the extent to which neighbourhood factors independently predict educational outcomes in adolescents” (p. 2013). The authors took a communal approach and examined individual/household variables, neighborhood variables, and municipal level variables in Sweden. They provided the reasoning for including the demographic indicators of human capital: average family size and the community dependency ratio. The dependency ratio was determined by combining the age 0-14 and over age 65 population, dividing that number by the population aged 15-64 and then multiplying by 100 (Yaukey, 1990). Similarly, population migration is a standard demographic measurement of population movement and can assist in understanding population shifts that may result from changing community dynamics, such as the closing or opening of a factory or other large employer. A high in-migration level can correlate positively with college attendance in the sense that it brings in more cultural diversity, potentially more social networks, and a greater variety of life-experiences. Out-migration, conversely, can lead to population stagnation and socio-cultural decline and less interest in activities related to leaving the community, such as going away to college (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcoullier, 2004).

The percent of workers reporting as self-employed in all industries for both genders, the homeownership rate, and the unemployment rate may all provide useful insights into community expectations of college attendance by examining the economic health of a community. Self-employment can indicate a more vibrant and diversified local economy, and, it may also be indicative of higher education levels (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcoullier, 2004), however, in rural areas, farmers and farm laborers could skew these results. The homeownership rate of a community would likely project an expectancy of postsecondary attendance since owning a home could be considered a sign of wealth (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcoullier, 2004). Additionally, high rates of unemployment have been found to negatively affect college enrollment and success (Anderson & Subramanian, 2006).

Merton’s (1968) work on communal stability led to the inclusion of the community’s crime rate. A high crime rate, as an indicator of communal instability, could possibly result in lower community expectancy for citizens to do something different, such as expending the effort, dedication, and time to attend college.

Rates of religious adherence were also included as a measure of social networking and bonding opportunities, both important elements of a strong social capital (Anderson, 1981; Putnam, 2000). Church attendance may promote college attendance, especially for members of denominations that encourage further education, such as those that promote or require seminary trained church leaders. Anderson (1981), for example, found that being actively involved with
the Jewish faith was strongly correlated with higher college grade point average and persistence in college.

**Research Methods**

As an exploratory study, multiple regression analysis and factor analysis were used to address the purpose of the study. Multiple regression was performed to identify which of the 18 identified independent variables significantly affected community-level college attendance rates, as indicated by the school district college going rates among the sample. Also, due to the exploratory nature of the study, the second analytic procedure was an exploratory factor analysis intended to identify latent factors among the independent variables. Data were collected and used in the State of Arkansas. Although the use of this mid-sized state is a limitation of the study, it does provide a strong initial step in an analysis of this nature.

**Sample**

The study relied on data from 63 Arkansas communities with populations between 2,000 and 30,000 residents, as identified in the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau’s decennial census. Using a random number table, 80 of the 120 incorporated Arkansas communities within the population range were selected; however, because school district data were necessary, 17 of the 80 communities were eliminated from the sample. All communities in the state’s highly urban Pulaski County, under the auspices of the Pulaski County Special School District, were eliminated. A total of 63 communities remained to be included in the study, with a population range of 2,008 to 27,752 (mean community size 6,500). School districts ranged in size from 3,517 to 32,505 students (mean school size 11,257), with data being drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics (2010).

Data were collected from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (dependent variable) and multiple other sources, including: Y2000 US Decennial Census, the Arkansas Activities Association, the Arkansas Institute for Economic Advancement, the Association of Religion Data Archives, the Criminal Justice Information Division of the Arkansas Crime Information Center, and the national Center for Education Statistics. The state of Arkansas, the case state in the study, has a largely rural population of approximately 2.9 million residents (80% White, 15% Black, 5% other racially identified citizens). The state’s geography, and subsequent population patterns, is divided between the southeastern Mississippi Delta region and the northern Ozark Mountains. The largest elements in the state’s economy are agricultural production, mining, and retail operations. So although Arkansas is but one case state, the geography and demographic distribution are similar to many other North American rural settings.

**Data Analysis Results**

An initial regression was performed to identify the main effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The main effects and the final regression model were tested for heteroscedasticity using a scatterplot of the unstandardized residuals, a review of the histograms and a normal probability plots, and White’s Test for heteroscedasticity. Heteroscedasticity was not a problem, but multicollinearity issues created expected difficulties due to the similarity of many of the variables. To control for and identify multicollinearity, significant correlational rela-
tions were identified using a correlation table with Pearson’s coefficient of determination (Pearson’s r). Variables with a correlation equal to \( r = 0.70 \) or above were highlighted as a potential collinear relationship. The VIF and tolerance values were also used to test for collinearity. VIF values above 5 were treated with skepticism and tolerance values under 0.20 were viewed as problematic. Because multicollinearity was suggested in these tests a series of regressions were performed in which the dependent variable was removed and each independent variable was rotated into its position. Substantial increases in the \( R^2 \) and Adjusted \( R^2 \) values indicated that the independent variable in the dependent variable position was problematic. The results of this multicollinearity testing led to eight subsequent regressions manipulating suspect variables in and out of the regressions in turn and testing various combinations of interaction terms. For instance, the first four regressions focused on the interaction between the variables measuring the percentage of baccalaureate degrees and the variable measuring the average community income per capita. The process for each of these tests was as follows:

- Bachelor’s degrees and average income were removed from the model
- Income was added back into the model without bachelor’s degrees
- Bachelor’s degrees was added back into the model without the average income
- Both variables were added into the model along with an interaction term generated from both variables

This strategy identified a suppressor relationship between the two variables in which income per capita, while not significant itself, was affecting the significance of the other variable. Another round of these tests followed the same procedures but focused on the interaction of the variables measuring the percent of nonwhite residents in the community and the literacy rate. Since neither of these variables had a significant impact on the outcome of the overall regression model, they were both removed from the final model. Likewise, in the course of these analyses, all consistently extraneous variables were eliminated. The final regression model was generated using only those variables that consistently had a significant effect on the dependent variable along with the suppressor variable measuring the average income per capita. This final regression model was used to answer the first research question. As previously noted, the study was intended to be exploratory in nature; therefore, despite the possible advantages of using a one-tailed test for significance \( (t = 1.671) \) at \( p \leq 0.05 \) and hypothesizing directional outcomes, a two-tailed test for significance was used in the analysis of the regression findings. Using a one-tailed test would likely have yielded a higher number of significant explanatory variables, but using a two-tailed test allowed for the observation and explanation of possible unexpected outcomes.

The second statistical analysis conducted was an exploratory factor analysis. This technique was employed to identify possible latent factors among the social, cultural, and human capital variables that the regression analysis did not identify. Ideally, the results of such a test would offer trends in the data identifying areas of interest for future inquiry into community expectancy. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett’s test of sphericity were performed to determine whether this set of variables was acceptable for factor analysis (George & Mallery, 2003). Principal components analysis was used to extract the factors with extraction based upon the SPSS default of 1.0 for Eigenvalues. An orthogonal Promax rotation with Kaiser Normalization was used, as correlations among the factors were expected. Factor loadings with a value less than 0.32 (Costello & Osborne, 2005) were suppressed automatically.
The initial factor analysis suggested a structure with six factors. Retaining only the highest crossloading items resulted in the removal of two of the six factors. Crossloading items load at or higher than the minimum of .32 on more than one factor (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Because a different structure was suggested by this technique, a series of new factor analyses restricting the possible factors to five, four, and three were performed to create the most parsimonious model. A final factor model with four factor groupings was used to address the second research question.

Findings

Despite problems with multicollinearity, the variables measuring the number of secondary-level competitive clubs declared by a school district, the net population migration, the percent of population 25 and older with a baccalaureate degree, and the unemployment rate had the most consistent and largest effect on the school district college going rates for the Y2000 post-secondary cohort from the sampled Arkansas communities. Initially, the interaction term between average income per capita and the percent of population 25 and older with a baccalaureate degree was found to have a statistically significant effect; however, the standardized beta coefficients for the percent of baccalaureate degrees and the interaction term were higher than \(-1/\sqrt{1}\) threshold at 2.413 and -2.611, respectively. This finding suggested the existence of a suppressor variable relationship between the percent of bachelor’s degrees and income per capita. An examination of the results from the previous set of regressions ran against the dependent variable of college going rates confirmed that percent of baccalaureate degrees was only significant in the models in which income per capita was included. With the knowledge of the existence of a suppressor variable relationship, a final regression model was performed that excluded the interaction term and included the variable measuring income per capita even though it was found to be insignificant. A summary of the final regression model that included only the variables identified as consistently significant along with the variable measuring income per capita in explaining dependent variable was reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of Significant Variables Explaining Going Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardized Estimate (B)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Clubs</td>
<td>.006*</td>
<td>2.134</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Migration</td>
<td>-.00001*</td>
<td>-2.843</td>
<td>-.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Degree</td>
<td>.927*</td>
<td>2.807</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>-.919*</td>
<td>-2.593</td>
<td>-.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income per Capita</td>
<td>-.000008</td>
<td>-1.121</td>
<td>-.192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adj. \(R^2\) = .275; \(df=57\). *p<.05, two-tailed.

The Adjusted \(R^2\) (.275) revealed that, given the number of independent variables, this model explained 27.5% of the variance in the dependent variable of community college going rates. The F test \(F_{5,57}=4.323\) revealed that the overall regression was statistically significant at
p ≤ .05. The constant (α), if all independent variables are zero, was .401. The variable measuring income per capita was not found to be significant. The unstandardized coefficients (B) and the t test results for each independent variable were as follows:

- On average, for each additional competitive club offered by a high school, college going rates could be expected to increase by .006 of a percentage point, holding everything else in the model constant. The t test was 2.134 (p ≤ .05) and therefore the variable measuring the number of competitive clubs in secondary schools was statistically significant.

- On average, given a one person increase in the net population migration of the county of a sampled community, college going rates could be expected to decrease by .00001 of a percentage point, holding everything else in the model constant. The t test was -2.843 (p ≤ .05) and therefore the variable measuring population migration was statistically significant.

- On average, given a one percentage point increase in the percent of population 25 and older with a baccalaureate degree, college going rates could be expected to increase by .927 of a percentage point, holding everything else in the model constant. The t test was 2.807 (p ≤ .05) and therefore the variable measuring the percent of population 25 and older with a baccalaureate degree was statistically significant.

- On average, given a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate, college going rates could be expected to decrease by .919 of a percentage point, holding everything else in the model constant. The t test was -2.593 (p ≤ .05) and therefore the variable measuring the unemployment rate was statistically significant.

Decreasing the amount of extraneous variables strengthened this model so that this set of variables explained 27.5% of the variation in the dependent variable. In terms of latent factors among the social, cultural, and human capital variables that could be used to identify community expectations of college attendance. A majority of the independent variables loaded on four factors. The interrelationships among these variables suggested that the existence of factors unidentified by the findings of the first research question were plausible.

The variables used were deemed acceptable by factor analysis according to the results of the KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity; although, interpretation of the KMO test rated the distribution of values between “middling” and “mediocre” (George & Mallery, 2003, p. 256). An initial scree plot suggested as many as ten possible factors, but those factors included crossloading variables. The principal components analysis revealed six factors with Eigenvalues higher than 1.0 with a cumulative explanation of 74.2% of the variance after the rotation converged in 16 iterations. Table 2 provided the variance explained by the six factors identified by the analysis.
Table 2
Variance Explained by Six Factors Identified by Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Total % of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.200</td>
<td>28.891</td>
<td>28.891</td>
<td>4.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.584</td>
<td>14.354</td>
<td>43.246</td>
<td>3.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.064</td>
<td>11.465</td>
<td>54.711</td>
<td>3.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>7.179</td>
<td>61.890</td>
<td>2.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.192</td>
<td>6.621</td>
<td>68.511</td>
<td>1.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>5.683</td>
<td>74.194</td>
<td>1.691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings

When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

In an ideal situation, three factors would have grouped the variables according to the social, cultural, and human capital categories. Likewise, five factors would have grouped the variables according to the Deggs-Miller (2009) Model of Community Expectancy. Six factors were identified but reduced to five after accounting for crossloading items. The fifth factor had one item with a loading higher than .32 and third and fourth factors had only two items loading higher than .32. Factors with fewer than three items are “generally considered weak or unstable” (Costello & Osborne, 2005, p. 5); thus, a new series of analyses were performed limiting the number of possible factors to five then to four and finally to three. Four factors provided the most parsimonious model although the variance explained decreased to 61.9%. This structure suggested a model of community expectancy that was not anticipated. Also, as Bourdieu (1986) suggested, this structure demonstrated that social, cultural, and human capital were highly interactive since they did not separate into individual factors. Table 3 presents the factor model suggested by this factor analysis process. Table 4 compared the findings to the Deggs-Miller model and the capitals categorization of the variables.

Table 3
Summarized Results of Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Nonwhite</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>.560</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Size</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the findings presented in Tables 3 and 4, potential latent factors previously unidentified could be suggested by these factor groupings. Explaining 28.89% of the variance, factor one consisted of variables—the percent of population below poverty, the percent of nonwhite population, and the percent of county population lacking basic prose literacy skills—that caused multicollinearity issues for the regressions. The strong loading of these variables together was not altogether unexpected. Also, it is particularly interesting that the majority of the variables identified in factor one were designated as cultural capital in the study. Cultural capital would

### Table 4
Suggested Model Groupings Compared to Findings from Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Deggs-Miller Model</th>
<th>Capitals</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Religious Affiliations</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeownership</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Degree</td>
<td>Formal Educational Bodies</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Size</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Nonwhite</td>
<td>Informal Associations</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate</td>
<td>Formal Educational Bodies</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>Formal Educational Bodies</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Clubs</td>
<td>Informal Associations</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Rate</td>
<td>Civic Agencies</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Degree</td>
<td>Formal Educational Bodies</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Industry</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Proximity</td>
<td>Formal Educational Bodies</td>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employment</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop. Migration</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency Ratio</td>
<td>Home Life</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
appear to be a legitimate means of measuring community expectations, especially as an indicator of important socio-cultural forces underlying the economic conditions of a community.

The variables of the second factor explained 14.4% of the variance and all had positive and statistically significant correlations with one another except for the correlation between per capita income and the crime rate. As the crime rate in a community increased, we could expect to find a higher income per capita in a community, a higher number of residents with baccalaureate degrees, and a higher number of competitive clubs within a community. This finding was interpreted as indicating the importance of measuring the communal quality of life when studying community expectancy of college attendance.

The nature of employment opportunity appeared to be the common thread uniting the variables in factor three; however, the inclusion of college proximity made interpretation difficult. Obviously, individuals working in the arts, recreation, and entertainment industry have a higher likelihood of identifying themselves as self-employed, which explained the connection between this variable and the variable measuring the percent of communal population that was self-employed. Taking into account the proximity of a college and excepting one outlying community with a high percentage of artists (8.5%), this finding would seem to indicate that the percent of self-employed persons increases, and the percent of persons employed in the arts, entertainment, and recreation fields decreases as one moves further away from a college. As Arkansas is a rural and agricultural state, the inclusion of self-employed farmers and farm laborers likely affected this variable. Thus, there were two possible conclusions. First, this grouping could indicate that the types of employment available within a community should be considered when studying community expectancy, which verifies the use of human capital variables. Second, the high factor loading of the variable measuring the percent of population in the arts, entertainment and recreation field (.863) may by itself indicate the importance of an artistic element within a community. Either conclusion would require further investigation.

The fourth factor was a weak loading with only two variables measuring the net population migration of the county and the dependency ratio of the community. Although it could be discounted altogether, the factor four findings should be taken into account by those interested in community expectancy. Only a slight negative correlation existed between these two variables ($r = -0.054$). Although not statistically significant, the negative correlation signaled that communities located in counties with negative population growth had, on average, a higher number of dependents. It could be that communities with high dependency ratios reflect limited population mobility, or stagnation. For whatever reason, these communities contained place bound populations. Although unexpected, this relationship would tend to support the assumptions of the study. Regardless, this finding taken into account with the final regression model’s findings would at least appear to justify further investigation into demographic elements like population shifts as indicators of community expectancy.

Discussion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this study, but of primary concern is the validity of community expectancy as a construct for further investigation into postsecondary degree attainment. It seems logical that communities, acting as pseudo-organisms, would collectively project expectations of behavior through the implicit and explicit messages about acceptable behavior they transmit to residents. A comprehensive review of the findings of the study appeared to suggest that community expectancy, albeit elusive, is measurable and may help explain the
community role in college choice. At the very least, further research into the area would be warranted.

Specifically, this study identified four community-level variables that correlated with the college going rates of the sampled communities: the number of competitive clubs offered in secondary schools, the population migration, the percent of population with a baccalaureate degree, and the unemployment rate. The identification of community-level variables that indicate communal expectations of attending college could be used to assist colleges seeking to recruit prospective students.

The use of specific social, cultural, and human capital appeared to be a valid construct for identifying explanatory variables indicative of community expectations. Although the findings of the study did not verify the Deggs-Miller (2009) Model of Community Expectancy, it did indicate that identified variables are likely components of larger interactive factors. No clear alternative to the Deggs-Miller model emerged from the findings; however, some areas of interest that may provide guidance for future research were identified. The areas identified by the study at the community level were 1) educational attainment, 2) socio-cultural forces, 3) quality of life, 4) employment opportunities, and 5) population mobility. Further research is needed into each of these areas to identify their specific component variables and to determine the nature of interaction among these areas and their variables before a comprehensive model of community expectancy can be generated.

A qualitative study that identifies the elements that differ among communities with high and low rates of college attendance would be a logical next step for research. One such communal phenomenon, as indicated by the factor analysis, was poverty. Poverty carries with it cultural legacies that are passed on through the generations, and among those legacies must be a valuing of educational attainment. Some groups in poverty may see education as a means of escape while other groups may see education as a tool of entrapment. Thus, carefully designed case studies of select communities may provide rich descriptions that could yield useful interpretations for the creation of a model of community expectancy. Furthermore, an ethnographic study aimed at resident opinions about college attendance and the community-level factors they believe encourage/discourage attendance could be useful.

The overall quality of life in a community appears to be related to college choice. A prospective student from a community with a financially stable populous will have a higher rate of college attendance. In short, a community with an educated workforce and more wealth translates into communal stability. More wealth and education also result in more taxes collected to support local law enforcement and the higher likelihood of more school activities.

Colleges have an important role to play in fostering appropriate community expectations of college attendance. College administrators should seek opportunities to get community residents on their campuses through various outreach programs (i.e., speakers’ bureaus, drama, arts, offering facilities for meetings of local organizations, etc.). Such activities break down barriers that may exist between the public and the local community. Often colleges do this for the communities in which they are located; however, they should reach out regionally. Any opportunity to get a prospective student or a prospective student’s family members on campus can potentially improve community expectations of postsecondary attainment.
References


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Carpentry Is Intellectual Work

Robert R. Sherman, University of Florida—Emeritus

Abstract

This article argues that carpentry is as much an intellectual as a physical activity. Terms are defined, the problem is outlined, examples are given, and some general conclusions are drawn for education. Some sketches are provided for graphic illustration of the examples. The interpretation in effect is pragmatic and cites Dewey on occasion to illuminate its views.

Keywords: Emotions, affect, cognition, Dewey

I worked as a carpenter before going to college, and during summers and spare time while teaching for 40 years in universities, and now that I am retired, I work as a carpenter again. I love to do carpentry. Today it would be called my “passion.” Joseph Campbell might say it is my “bliss.” To be sure, carpentry can be hard work, especially in the Florida heat and humidity. I like equally well the teaching I have done, baseball, and reading books. But carpentry is a special experience because it embodies so many good qualities.

When I was teaching, and always in need of examples, I used to tell my students that “carpentry is intellectual work.” I would give a brief explanation, but I never took time to work out the idea in detail. Then I told a colleague about it. He also does carpentry and was interested in the idea. He asked if I had written anything about it; if so, he wanted his students to read it, but regretfully I had to say “no.”

Now I want to remedy that. I want to tell why I think the idea is important, lay out some concepts (particularly “intellectual”), explain the activity of carpentry and provide examples for my idea, and draw some implications for education—for teaching and learning. I won’t detail “my life in carpentry,” which would be a long biography, or give “carpentry tips,” though some examples from my own experience will be helpful.

Terminology

When I would tell students that “carpentry is intellectual work,” I could see skepticism in their faces. Like so much other “work,” they appeared to think, carpentry is physical, not mental, activity. There is a teaching moment. The belief shows a common and long-standing tendency in our thinking to separate mind and body. Philosophers have debated this matter for centuries. Everyone notices the physical but seldom the mental or intellectual effort associated with carpentry. The students would refer to roofing, and cement-form building, and framing and truss
making, and laborers carrying lumber and supplies up and down ladders to document their skepticism.

Of course there is physical activity associated with carpentry. That is another reason why I like it. In this I agree with the insight, if not the extent to which they took it, of the Chinese Marxists who believed that intellectuals should be required to do some physical work. It might give them practical insight. In addition, it is good exercise. If you work as a carpenter, you won’t have to spend so much time jogging or in the gym.

What does a carpenter do? For my purposes I do not need to be very technical or detailed; a general idea should be enough for my discussion. A carpenter “builds or repairs wooden structures.” Distinctions can be made between “rough” (framing) and “finish” carpentry (often called “joinery”) and between those who build new structures from plans and repair carpenters.

Reading and following blueprints or plans requires intelligence, of course. Measurement, calculation, and figuring angles and curves—all carpentry activities—require intelligence—and education. It would be easy to make the case that “carpentry is intellectual work” by following this line. But I prefer to do repair carpentry, and odd job and handyman work, which usually follows no blueprint. One time a student working with me asked how we were going to deal with the problem we had been hired to fix. “I don’t know,” I replied, “we’ll figure it out as we go along.” It wasn’t that we lacked carpentry knowledge, but rather that in the process we would discover unforeseen difficulties—and opportunities. So an explanation of how carpentry is intellectual work will need to go beyond references simply to measurements and calculations or following plans.

As well, what does it mean to be “intellectual?” My claim is that carpentry is intellectual work. This term certainly is more problematic than is “carpentry.” Again, philosophers have made careers analyzing the term. An intellectual is thought to be someone inclined toward activities that require reasoning for their understanding and management and often is identified as someone with “great mental ability” or “high intelligence.” Identified this way, “intellectual” easily becomes synonymous with theoretical and abstract, which is not my purpose. There is nothing abstract about carpentry; it always has a practical purpose.

What I want to say is that carpentry requires not just physical activity but mental activity as well—that is, intelligence, which may be conceptualized as “the ability to respond adaptively to novel situations.” I hope you will see that quality in the discussion and the examples that follow. Carpentry requires knowledge and insight—empirical and logical categories—knowing what to do and what might result from that doing. It also requires “study, reflection, and speculation.” With all this, carpentry becomes a creative activity, which is what the meaning of intelligence given above implies. It aims to bring something into being through, among other things, “creative use of the intellect,” of reasoning and understanding.

Of course, what I have in mind throughout this discussion is carpentry that is “well done,” not crude carpentry, though some degree of intelligence is necessary throughout the craft. Think again about the distinction between “rough” and “finish” carpentry. Imagine the workmen who do each of these, and you should notice a different degree of intelligence required to do the jobs. Manual dexterity—“skill”—also is required to do “good carpentry,” but that issue is outside my focus right now.

I mentioned earlier that I prefer to do repair carpentry. My wife calls me “the rot man.” I like to take a “problem,” in a house or shed, and, as is said in medicine, diagnose and treat—or remedy—it. What is wrong, what might be done about it, how to do it, and what to expect as a
result? Then act on that thinking and revise the thinking (and further action) if necessary. This certainly is intellectual activity, not abstract, but an “intellectualizing” of activity. It is, in fact, what John Dewey calls “the general features of a reflective experience” (and which others call “problem solving”) and has the same features and process in carpentry that he outlines as thinking in general.1

If carpentry was primarily physical activity, what would be called for immediately in any job would be to bang at it with the hammer or hack at it with the saw. But wait: think about it before you do that. (“Proceed with care and caution,” one of my students said he had learned when working with me as a carpenter.) Is there an electric wire or a water line inside the wall? Will the wall or roof collapse if a stud is cut? Is a proper replacement part available, or will you have to make a substitute? Whatever is the case certainly will mean that a different remedy will have to be taken.

When my wife says she would like to have something changed around the house, my usual reply is, “well, let’s see. Before that can be done, this will have to be done, and before that, then that, and that, and that.” This could be interpreted that the husband doesn’t want to make the change. But for the carpenter, it is an “intellectualizing” of the problem before “actualizing” a solution. (Somewhere in his monument of writing, Dewey warns that action terminates thought.) It is, in fact, an example of the more abstractly-stated philosophical principle of pragmatism: an attempt to control, or direct, a process—in this case carpentry—by considering the likely results from acting on it. (Does this mean that I should re-title my paper to read “Carpentry as pragmatic practice”? Two perceptive reviewers of this paper have noted its pragmatic tenor and its continuing references to Dewey and have suggested I retitle it accordingly. That is a compliment, but since my main purpose focusses on carpentry, and is not to explain pragmatism or Dewey’s philosophy, I will retain the original title.)

**Examples**

Another way to explain that “carpentry is intellectual work” is to give examples from its practice that show it to be intellectual work.

One job when I worked on a carpentry crew was to build large buildings—chicken houses that were a hundred feet long, 35 or 40 feet wide, and two and three stories high. To begin, it was necessary to be sure that the buildings would be square. (Level and plumb (“vertical level”) also are the carpenter’s concern.) Our only tool for squaring the buildings was a “framing square” that measures two feet on one side and 12 inches on the other side. Used in a corner, such an implement could give the impression that the building was square (“in square,” carpenters say), but when followed for a hundred feet, the sides of the building could be “out of square” because of a slight variation that comes when using too small an implement in too large a space. (See Figure 1 for this contrast.) What to do? Today carpenters use a transit—a surveying tool—for squaring, and leveling, and plumbing, which means that if I was doing this work today I might not get the experience and insight I am about to reveal to you. But in “the old days” or when working on a small crew, we needed another way to be sure the building was square.

It so happened that we had a rule for squaring, which we called the “3, 4, 5 rule.” Measure 3 feet down one side of the building or any multiple of 3 feet (e. g., 6, 9, 12), and 4 feet down the other side or the same multiple of 4 feet (e. g., 8, 12, 16), and if the diagonal between those

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two points is 5 feet or the same multiple of 5 feet (e. g., 10, 15, 20), the building is in square. (Again see Figure 1 for examples of “in square” and “out of square.”)

It works like magic. If the building was not square, we could adjust the sides until the diagonal measurement showed it to be in square. Anyone could do it, though few could explain why it worked.

Then one day I had an epiphany. At the time I had no more education than anyone else on the crew. I had finished high school, but probably what is different is that I had taken the “college prep” course and had studied mathematics and geometry. It suddenly occurred to me that I had seen this carpentry rule in other guise while in school. The rule is, in fact, the Pythagorean Theorem for determining the length of the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle. You know, the square of one side, plus the square of the other side, is equal to the square of the diagonal (or hypotenuse): \( a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \). So, applying the “3, 4, 5 rule,” 3 squared (9), plus 4 squared (16, for a sum of 25), equals 5 squared (25). The building was in square.

I had recognized something intellectual about carpentry. Later on, when we were building a Quonset-type building—a half-moon shape—studding and dry-walling the inside rooms, the other workers on the crew would decline to cut the angles and curves, wanting me to do it, because, they said, I “understood these things.”

Here is another example. A few years ago I taught a graduate course about John Dewey’s philosophy at a state university. At the same time I was living with a friend and his family, where I had agreed to rebuild his garage for my room and board.

The critics and some of the students in the course fault Dewey for not having an absolute grounding for his philosophy. It “free floats,” they complain, and they believe that especially in morals, thought (and action) must have some kind of absolute justification. Such justification, or
a “foundation,” may come from religion, or natural law, or logic, or something else. Our study was Dewey’s *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938)\(^2\) in which Dewey formulates a different conception of and role for logic that shuns—indeed, rebuts—this belief. I thought then, and still do, that Dewey’s *Logic* is a great book. It certainly is a difficult but a worthwhile study. We studied hard, but some students still were skeptical. They still could not understand how a system of thought and practice could function except on an absolute foundation.

At the same time, I said, I also was rebuilding the garage. It was nearing collapse. The sills were rotten, the walls were bulging and out of plumb and square, and the roof was sagging and leaning away from the walls. Our job was to replace the old materials and straighten and strengthen the building. (See Figure 2 for an illustration of the condition of “the old garage.”)

![Figure 2: The old garage](image)

But how could we get the building square, and plumb, and aligned all at the same time? There was no single point to which we could anchor and then reconstruct the rest of the garage. We could tie to a nearby tree, I suppose, but the tree might blow down (as it later did, by the way, demolishing the building again). Or we could anchor to a boulder in the ground or to a concrete pier, but none was available. And so on.

Here is what we did. We squared the building using the “3, 4, 5 rule.” Then we brought the two sidewalls into line (parallel with each other) and tied them together with a long piece of lumber. Then we plumbed the walls and braced them in each corner (four corners, eight braces) to be sure they would not fall back out of square and plumb. Finally, we attached the rafters and brought them into line vertically with the front and back walls and secured them in place with diagonal braces from top to bottom. The building now was square, plumb, aligned, and stable.

This example still might seem to be complicated, though I have tried to make it simple and keep it brief. (See Figure 3 for the reconstructed “new garage.”)

![Figure 3: The new garage](image)

The point is that nothing in the building depended on an absolute grounding or certainty. The building stands on its own—“four square,” we could say, and stable—because all its parts are tied together into a firm structure.

You will grant, I hope, that intelligence is required to figure this out. My claim, though, is not just that carpentry requires intelligence, which it certainly does, but that it is an intellectual activity itself. From the practice of carpentry, we might get an insight into other intellectual concerns. The next day back in class, it suddenly occurred to me to use this example from carpentry to explain again Dewey’s philosophy. It made a difference—not that everyone now agreed, but at least they saw the point. What need is there for an absolute truth or morality when ideas—recorded in history, philosophy, science, and literature—are brought together to form a strong conception—a theory, if you will? When one part of the conception is found to be in error (“rotten,” to use the carpentry example), other parts may support it while the errors are mended. Moral thinking is no different. Human knowledge, and hopes and aspirations, and rational (that is, logical) thinking is enough to ground morality.\(^3\) Carpentry confirmed this for me.

One more example. A few weeks ago a helper and I were called to a house that needed repairs. Rain on the roof had seeped into the eaves and had rotted the corner trim boards where they could be seen on two sides above the entry door. The owners wanted to sell the house, and this would have to be fixed before they could so do. We determined that the repair was not structural, but was more about appearance, and told the owner we would return in a few days to make the repair.

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Then we began to think about it. The rot could not simply be cut away and replaced with a new piece because there was nothing behind it to which a new piece could be attached. Also, the repairs to be made were in a rather inaccessible place. The roof, down which the rain coursed, was butted against the side of the building; the rain was getting behind the boards and never drying out, instead rotting and crumbling and creating the unsightly mess.

Detective work was called for. (That is an intellectual image.) It occurred to us that in order to make repairs that would not in time rot again, we had first to find the cause (or the source) of the problem. I will spare you the details of our search and findings, as you are, I hope, more interested in the intellectual point rather than the experience itself. The point, to repeat what I have said in previous examples, is that we had to think ahead to what would result if we did or did not make repairs in a certain way, and that thinking required us not only to find the cause or source of the problem but controlled what we possibly could do about it. Once the cause was determined, we could make repairs that would resolve the problem for now and in the future. Any other kind of repairs would be cosmetic and, as those who use cosmetics know, they would in time have to be redone again and again.

Comments

What follows from these ruminations about carpentry? One thing is that there is no antagonism—opposition—between physical and mental activity. That is a point I started with. Rather, they cooperate, to greater or lesser degree, depending on the work to be done. In carpentry, sometimes the work requires more physical than intellectual effort, but at another time what is required is to think about the difficulty before taking action.

When I say “carpentry is intellectual work,” I do not deny it also is physical activity. (On the other hand, to emphasize its physical character obscures its intellectual attributes—which is what motivates this paper.) At the beginning of the paper, I surveyed the meaning of “intellectual” and put it aside until now. There is another meaning of intellectual that implies “developed or chiefly guided by intellect rather than by emotion or experience.” This too might suggest that if carpentry is intellectual work, there is little that emotion and experience would contribute to it. But this is not the case. I have argued in another place that emotion is an indication of interest and a motivator of thought. So it is a natural part of intellectual activity.

Similarly, it would be foolish to say that carpentry does not build (to use a pun) on experience. As in other professions, one is unlikely to be successful without practice—that is, without experience. It is well to remember, though, again as Dewey warned, that it is not simply practice, but intelligent practice, that makes perfect. So once again we see the contribution of intellect to what so often is thought to be solely physical activity.

It is not that the carpenter constantly thinks about the act of carpentry all the while he is on the job. The job has to get done. The time to think about it is when planning the job or when difficulties are encountered. Thinking “qualifies” (or “requalifies,” Dewey would say) the experience. Whenever I have a carpentry job to do, I usually I tell the home owner, “I can’t get to it for a few days.” This gives me time to think about the problem and possible solutions. But then it comes time to put the solutions into practice.


In these remarks I do not mean to say that carpentry is unique from other kinds of experience. The same analysis could be made for, say, baseball or typewriting, two other activities with which I have had experience. A baseball player who thinks about making a play likely will commit an error. (Of course, errors may be committed for other reasons as well.) But once an error has been made, the player should think about its circumstances and make revisions through practice until he can execute the play without thinking about it—as if it were “natural.” (That is an ironic circularity.)

Similarly with typewriting, which I used to teach. Once you have learned the keys and where to place and move your fingers, the rest of learning to typewrite is practice until one can do it without thinking. To think about every touch of the keys will ensure error—or at least inefficiency. I learned to typewrite 55 years ago. Recently I saw television quiz show that asked what finger of what hand struck the “x” key. I could not answer the question immediately, and even had difficulty thinking about it, even though I have no trouble hitting the correct key when I write. The point is that the time to think about typewriting—to “intellectualize” it—is when the practice does not go well (or when one is learning it). Then the purpose is to reformulate it for efficient practice. Neither of these examples—baseball and typewriting—imply that the practices are not intellectual. They imply rather that, as in carpentry, intelligence is related to the practices in a special way.

A further comment. I have titled my paper “Carpentry is Intellectual Work” deliberately to emphasize work and thus to challenge another dichotomy, that intellectual activity is not work. So we are told, for example, that university faculty should not join unions because their profession is not trade union activity—work—but is, rather, mental or intellectual. This again is the dichotomy between mind and body. Anyone who has taught for a quarter- or a half-century knows that using intelligence is work—it requires effort. A good dictionary will reveal that work is “effort to do or make something,” “purposeful activity,” and the like. I particularly like Dewey’s formulation that work is an activity that “consciously includes regard for consequences as part of itself; it becomes constrained labor when the consequences are outside the activity as an end to which activity is merely a means.”

I have examples—from carpentry and otherwise—that would illustrate this as well, but I will leave that for another time.

**Bibliography**


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**Dystopia & Education: Insights into Theory, Praxis, and Policy in an Age of Utopia-Gone-Wrong**
By Jessica A. Heybach and Eric C. Sheffield (Eds.)

Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing (2013). 298 pp., $39.09

Reviewed by Courtney Smith-Nelson, Missouri State University

**Abstract**

Jessica A. Heybach and Eric C. Sheffield’s *Dystopia & Education* is a collection of essays that examine the plight of modern-day public education through the lens of dystopian themes in literature, movies, and other media. The essays converge on one overarching theme: American schooling in the 21st century—and the young people being subjected to it—is in trouble, trouble which has been predicted or mirrored to a disturbing degree of accuracy in dystopian works of the last two centuries. This review dissects the book section by section and discusses its implications for the current generation of “dystopian youth” students.

**Keywords:** Book review, Dystopian themes, Educational philosophy, Educational reform, Dystopia and school, Dystopian youth

It is an arguable truth that pop culture historically has been overlooked in academia. For better or worse, the ideas, perspectives, and memes of mainstream America have been, until relatively recently, relegated to a separate sphere from “high” culture—ivory tower literature, philosophy, and the like. From the founding of the Popular Culture Association in the 1970s to the ever-growing *Pop Culture and Philosophy* book series, the scholarly critique of popular culture and its reflection of/on society has become a more widely accepted (or at the very least, more widely published) field of study. In that vein, Heybach and Sheffield’s *Dystopia & Education* is a collection of essays that examines the plight of modern-day public education through the lens of dystopian themes in literature, movies, and video games. The authors of these essays come from a wide range of backgrounds, but converge on one overarching theme: American schooling and education in the 21st century—and the young people being subjected to it—are in trouble, trouble which has been predicted or mirrored to a disturbing degree of accuracy in dystopian works of the last two centuries.

*Dystopia & Education* is broken up into the three sections listed in its subtitle: theory, praxis, and policy, with the editors’ acknowledgment that any one cannot be separated from the others entirely; to that end, many of the works present address a combination of the three themes. Whether intentionally or not, these sections also appear in ascending order of readability and accessibility for the layperson whose expertise may not include the philosophy of education.
With that in mind, I will discuss each section in the same order in which I ultimately chose to read them, from back to front.

One can optimistically assume that any individual teacher or school would have a reasonable idea of what works and does not work for students—that is, what is helpful versus harmful in education. It is when schools are dictated to by some indirectly involved “other,” such as government officials whose expertise lies primarily in winning elections, that the ideals of education are warped into something counterproductive and ultimately oppressive. “Policy,” the final section of *Dystopia and Education* is, presumably, from whence the first inkling of the idea for a dystopian analysis of education came; after all, the classic literary dystopian universes—*1984, Brave New World, The Handmaid’s Tale*—are all defined by the total control (explicit or implicit) of the populace by an oppressive governmental regime. What’s more, it makes sense that an “education as dystopia” view would initially stem from governmental policy, when the role of government is to (ostensibly) make life better for its constituents. Dystopia in its original sense, and in the sense used by the editors and authors of *Dystopia and Education*, is the result of a utopian ideal gone awry: the handmaids are oppressed and controlled for their own safety; the totalitarian regime in *V for Vendetta* supposedly guarantees the United Kingdom a nation without the threat of terrorism, since any possible threat (read: religious or social minority) is strictly forbidden and carefully monitored.

In that vein, *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* ensure that no student will fall prey to the variability and imperfection of an individual teacher's opinions or experiences by standardizing all curriculum, lessons, and policies under the assumption that every child in America will eventually go to college. The reality of this utopian vision for education is that students are taught to meet the arbitrary standards of multiple choice tests, teachers are stripped away of any freedom in the classroom—including the use of non-scripted, unscheduled “teachable moments”—so that more and more students ultimately get left behind because of a one-size-fits-all approach to education. Such are the arguments in *Dystopia and Education*. Several authors in this volume point to a flawed underlying philosophy of these policies; according to the government that created them, the purpose of education is to provide economic security to the nation and to maintain a competitive edge with other nations where the measure of success is in dollars. This end is not met by producing a generation of young people who can think critically and have a holistic understanding of education as a means to a fulfilling life, but by those who can make money, pay taxes, and consume. While each essay in this section had its own take on the state of education in America, the parallels drawn between Victor Frankenstein, the ideals of the Enlightenment, and modern-day schooling in Bradley D. Rowe and Taylor Lacy Klassman’s “An Educational Dystopia: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and *Race to the Top*” was exceptionally spot-on. Frankenstein thought of himself as the perfect scientist, but his training was so narrowly oriented that he had no emotional or ethical connection to what he was doing. Similarly, the authors argue, as emotion, interest, and holistic educational practices are discarded for the standardized rote skills training that is becoming education, schools are becoming stunted, inept, and ultimately detrimental to its students.

Policy does effect—or more accurately, prescribe—the practices of the school systems that must follow those policies. So follows the second section of *Dystopia and Education*, wherein the praxis found within schools as a direct result of dystopian policies is examined via *The Giver, The Hunger Games, and A Clockwork Orange*, among other works. One particular theme occurring throughout the whole text is the comparison of schools, both in physical appearance and in practice, to prisons (multiple security checkpoints, required identification on
one's person at all times, strict monitoring and micromanaging of day-today activities and schedules, and constant surveillance, for starters). One reason given for these parallels is the rationale of “dystopian love,” also referred to as sadistic love. Schools just want the best for their students, but being children, they will inevitably make poor choices if left to their own devices. Dystopian love, then, saves the students from themselves—if the freedom to make poor choices is taken away, and measures put in place to make sure that freedom remains out of reach, then the students are forced to make what they are told are the “good” choices. The Hunger Games are held every year to remind the citizens of Panem what happens when the people make “bad” choices—in this particular case, the choice to rebel against the government, as discussed in Becky L. Noel Smith’s “‘Unlearning’ With the Dystopian Youth: Sating Student Hunger with the Hunger Games.” However, the notion of dystopian love is explained most clearly in Dystopia & Education editor Eric C. Sheffield’s “Dystopian Love Manifested in Dystopian Aesthetic: Insights into Contemporary Educational Practice from A Clockwork Orange,” which dissects the parallels between current educational practices and Anthony Burgess’s novel in which the protagonist Alex is forced through behavioral recalibration to physically loath violence; a noble idea perhaps, but in the process his love of classical music is ripped away as well. The arts are a casualty in Alex's “rehabilitation,” but he no longer has the choice to perform the acts of violence that he once loved (for a while, anyway).

Prison-like schools similarly try to recalibrate students to be more productive citizens, in the strictest economic sense of the word. As mentioned before, when the primary underlying philosophy of education is to produce a wealthy and comfortable economy, then the best consumer—I mean student—is a compliant one. Those who rebel against the system are in one way or another forced out and used as reminders to the others of the consequences of rebellion, without much thought to why the system is working to disengage so many students, or what can be done to remedy it. This particular point is discussed in the dissection of the Truancy series in Joshua Garrison and Leslee Grey’s “Dystopia, Disciplinarity, and Governmentality: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Novels of Isamu Fukui.” Teachers, especially young ones, reading Dystopia & Education may find some of the arguments in the “Praxis” section ringing eerily true; we see the makings of a generation of dystopian youth every day. What can be even more alarming is that inevitably the young educator who reads Dystopia & Education may find themselves asking: was I, too, a member of the dystopian youth? In a nation where public education promotes the systematic oppression of its youth through compliance, did my desire to become a teacher mark me as the most compliant?

The final section of Dystopia and Education (although the first to appear in the book) is the collection of essays discussing educational theory and its parallels to dystopian universes. While each author had a compelling argument in his or her own way, such as the unfortunate connection between aesthetic of horror and low-income school districts, the most powerful and relevant statement of the “Theory” section can be found in Benjamin Baez’s “Merit, Democracy, Governing”: in the education system as it functions today, students are often dis-empowered, marginalized, and subjugated in the most oppressive ways because “society had to be deemed knowable via statistical analysis.” It has come to pass that the success or failure of education is to be determined entirely through that which can be measured, and if some aspect of learning is not completely quantifiable and, therefore, label-able, then it is either forced into something that it is not for the sake of measurement or disregarded completely as unimportant or worse, nonexistent (this is, perhaps, another oblique commentary on the dystopianization of Enlightenment ideals as well—the notion that if a thing cannot be scientifically studied or analyzed, then it must not
exist). This thought is a nice one, from a Utopian standpoint; if every student and every school is knowable to such a minute degree as to be able to successfully address every educational need, then the system will ultimately serve its students better through this intense process of knowing and measuring. The dystopian reality of the matter, Baez argues, is that this intense measurement denies students any development of selfhood, and instead replaces it with an assembly-line, cookie-cutter education that is delivered not unto individual humans, but walking, talking ID numbers with color-coded background statistics, and the result of said education is a stamp of their worthiness as a human being according to the laws of the Standardized Test.

This is where *Dystopia and Education* begins to fall short on its analysis of the state of modern education; there are so many acute, painfully precise insights into what has become of schooling in the twenty-first century, but there were fewer reasons provided as to why it has become so. Most essays blame the government (again, an easy feat to do when so much of what makes a dystopia what it is occurs through oppressive government control). Baez's essay comes close, as do several others, to approaching one particular underlying theme that is only directly mentioned in the text a handful of times. In its quest to minutely control for and improve every aspect of education, government officials turned to molding schools, educational policy, and, therefore, practice, into something that is measurable and readily available for statistical analysis. It was decided that standardized testing is the means to do this, and thus was born the multi-billion dollar industry of psychometrics (not that it did not exist prior to NCLB, just not in its ultra-profitable and influential state that it does now). The incredibly costly—and profitable—process of producing, vetting, implementation, and grading of standardized tests gave rise to the idea of education as an industry, rather than a means of producing well-rounded, healthy human beings. The industrialization of education, it can be argued, has influenced the spread of dystopian realities in American schools. Few essays in *Dystopia & Education* explicitly mention the connection, although its tendrils can be found subtly woven throughout most of the text’s works.

In sum, *Dystopia & Education* delivers a bleak but unsurprising view of education, one that speaks very directly to the sensibilities of the public school teacher. The editors of *Dystopia & Education* plan to continue their work of providing a comprehensive theory of dystopian education, which has the potential to radically alter the way educators see themselves and their practices. Popular culture, even that which is directed toward children, has adopted dystopia almost as the default vision of any future. The bright, mod depictions of the future from previous generations—think of *The Jetsons*—eventually gave way to more bleak outlooks (you know things are bad when Disney, the happiest corporation on Earth, produces a dystopian parable like *WALL-E*, and it is lauded by critics as one of the best animated films in years). After reading *Dystopia & Education*, it is clear that this shift in popular culture is not without reason; but if there is one way to change this hopeless vision of the future, it is through education. Schools are the next frontier of dystopian wasteland, but with a comprehensive philosophy of dystopian education, perhaps Heybach and Sheffield will be the catalysts of change that will instill the next generation of dystopian youth with the antithesis of dystopia, that which is ever-increasingly lacking in public schools—hope.

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