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Developing Empathetic Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine implications for teaching empathy among high school-aged adolescents. The study utilized primarily quantitative methods via electronic pre and post-questionnaires with supplemental informal interviews. In the spring of 2017, high school seniors from two small schools (public and private) in the Southeastern United States participated in interactive, student-centered exercises designed to promote empathy. University faculty and teachers from nearby high schools worked collaboratively to develop and implement lessons on controversial topics. The pre and post-questionnaires were then examined to assess whether these interactive controversial lessons led to greater student empathy. Empathy promoting exercises were embedded in the lessons and discussions on the following "controversial" topics: genocide, LGBTQA+, and privilege. The researchers examined the following question: can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy? Findings suggest that students are more likely to express empathy toward those who are different from themselves in classroom environments that explicitly foster openness to diverse views. Implications for understanding the development of empathetic classroom practice and practices on effectively teaching empathy are discussed.

Keywords: empathetic learners, controversial issues, social studies education, civic education

Historical Empathy

Historical empathy is the process of students' cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions; and involves understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Over the past two decades, the fostering and display of historical empathy has received significant attention by scholars concerned with the teaching and learning of history in Kindergarten-12 classrooms.

Empathy is critically important to collaborative and inclusive systems and approaches in a democratic society. It is by and through empathy that individuals are capable of developing shared experiences that create environments of inclusivity and tolerance for diverse experiences and perspectives. Children thrive in learning environments where their opinions and perspectives are respected. Creating empathetic classrooms may not only yield immediate outcomes for improved self-esteem, motivation, and academic performance (Lynch & Simpson, 2010; University of Eastern Finland, 2015; and Wilson, 2016), but may also foster development of the life-long skills necessary for critical, reflective, and compassionate thinking. Further, Barton & Levstik (2004), posited that "if students are going to take part in meaningful public discussion, they need to understand that differing perspectives are a normal part of social interaction, not an aberration to be suppressed or overcome" (p. 219).[1]

To encourage the development of empathetic experiences among students, teachers must merge creative instructional strategies with objectives specifically designed to promote empathy among learners. In social science education, the presentation of controversial topics in lessons developed for high school students has been widely supported (Harwood & Hahn, 1990). This literature is mostly positive as "scholars have continuously noted that the use of controversial issues and contemporary points of contention in the classroom has some benefits which, when implemented effectively, will help teachers achieve the aims of social studies education" (Tannebaum, 2013, p. 100).

Within academic circles, the discussion of controversial topics in the classroom assists with:

> the elimination of idiocy; the increasing likelihood for student-engagement; the development of autonomous students who think critically… [and, the development of] students who are more likely to vote in elections, follow political news, take part in discussions on politics, have confidence in their views and develop an interest in processes of a democratic society. (Tannebaum, 2013, p. 100)

Further, research suggests that teachers are more inclined to provide added opportunities for collaborative dialogue and discourse in classrooms where students are capable of articulating a number of diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007; Moore, 2012; Parker, 2012). Consequently, empathy driven curricula nurture opportunities for deeper learning experiences.

By utilizing controversial dialogue in instructional practice, teachers may be able to create multiple opportunities for perspective taking among students. The element of perspective taking, "understanding another's prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs to understand how that person might have thought about the situation in question" (Endacott and Pelekanos, 2015), can be an essential instructional tool for fostering empathy among high school students.

Developing Empathetic Learners

Teaching empathy is critical in today's K-12 classrooms. In the southeastern United States with its history of inequality, and emphasis on traditionalism—where children may be more vulnerable to developing less empathetic ideologies—the need for instruction in empathy is particularly relevant. In classrooms where historical empathy is taught, the students are able to create a collaborative forum for the exchange of ideas, motivate one another through cooperation, and serve as peer models (Colby, 2008) while developing the ability to think critically, reflect, and develop compassion in order to create an empathetic society. The current social and political climate across the United States is markedly divisive. Opposing points of view are commonly met with little to no empathy while an increasing intolerance for diverse perspectives appears to take center stage. School-aged children are not immune to this phenomenon where lack of empathy and intolerance can be most apparent in schools. Utilizing historical contexts provide a viable context whereby students may understand diverse experiences and develop empathetic perspectives.

Teaching Historical Empathy

Endacott and Brooks (2013) contended that any attempt at "historical empathy" must include historical contextualization, perspective taking, and effective connection. Historical inquiry that does not encompass all three of these aspects cannot be called "historical empathy" but may, instead, be more accurately described as "historical perspective taking" or "effective connection to history" (p. 43-44).

Yilmaz (2007) posited that engaging in historical empathy is both demanding and challenging for students even at the lowest rank of educational objectives, 'Knowledge' as outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy

(1956), or 'Remembering' per Anderson and Krathwohl's (2002) new revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The author also asserted that students must first know historical facts, concepts, and interpretations in order to practice empathy. Cowan and Maitles (2012), however, contended that actively engaged students who can voice their opinions develop empathy through active learning. The authors also suggest that pedagogical practices like "role play can be used to develop empathy by, for example, giving students a choice of scenarios or allowing them to devise their own scenario where they can apply what they learned…" (p. 125). Along similar lines, Tannebaum (2013) perpetuated the educational vision and argued that students need to (a) work in a classroom that reflects "a functional democratic society" (p. 99), and for (b) "…the necessity for teachers who incorporate controversial social issues into their lessons through various forms of discourse" (p. 99).

Further, Healey (2012) looked at controversial topics in higher education and argued the importance of teaching controversial topics through debate and reflection for students to develop critical thinking skills. Specifically, Healey argued that the skill "…of 'thinking on your feet' which forms a central part of the debate…" is an essential element in critical thinking (p. 240). Misco (2014) argued, "Controversies constitute a normative anchor within citizenship education curriculum, and the degree to which they are subjected to reflection has profound implications for the vibrancy of democracy" (p. 48), and that "Engaging controversial issues pay a democratic dividend for student-citizens by increasing civic participation, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, content understanding, and political activity" (p. 48). The research is clear that teaching historical empathy is a crucial tool available to teachers in the development higher order thinking of their students (Cowan & Maitles, 2012; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Endacott & Pelekanos, 2015; Healey, 2012; Tannebaum, 2013; Yilmaz, 2007).

Barriers to Teaching Empathy

According to Brooks (2009), empathy is difficult to achieve because it runs counter to intuitive ways of thinking. Researchers have identified several obstacles that can prevent students from displaying empathetic regard for people of the past, e.g., students' tendencies to explain unfamiliar practices as the result of a moral or intellectual deficiency, a lack of technology, a lack of intelligence or assumptions of ignorance, or being old-fashioned (Lee & Ashby, 2001; Barton & Levstik, 2004, as cited in Brooks, 2009). In other words, students struggled to recognize that practices that now seem outdated were at one time seen as the norm.

When students generate reasons to explain the past that are not

grounded in evidence, they are in danger of what Wineburg, 2001 (as cited in Brooks, 2009) labels "presentism," or the act of viewing the past through the lens of the present, or a reliance on assumptions of ignorance (Brooks, 2011). Wineburg explained that this approach is not simply a bad habit that some fall into, but a "psychological condition at rest, a way of thinking that comes quite naturally" (p. 221). Further, the presentist assumptions that students frequently draw upon detract from their ability to contextualize past actions and inhibit their ability to recognize the worth of other perspectives—two essential components of historical empathy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers may develop empathetic students.

By creating a collaborative partnership between university faculty and high school teachers to develop and co-facilitate interactive United States Government lessons to promote empathy, the researchers sought to answer the following question, 'can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?' The premise of this research study was that teaching controversial topics is the foundation for dialogue in building a democratic society, fostering critical thinking, and empathy. This study took place in the Southeastern United States and utilized its history of racial and socioeconomic inequality and deep traditionalist views as a historical context for the lesson designs.

Methodology

This study consisted of primarily quantitative methods. The quantitative data is from a pre and post-questionnaire (Appendix A) administered by the researchers. The pre-questionnaire served as the baseline for the study and the post-questionnaire provided an understanding of whether participants perceived they were more empathetic from participating in discussions surrounding controversial topics. The qualitative data is from informal interviews with the two teachers the lessons (topics: Genocide, LGBTQA+, and privilege) were co-developed and co-taught with and high school participant's responses during lesson discussions. The qualitative data served to enrich the quantitative data. This approach was designed to triangulate the findings and provide a more thorough understanding of the effects of co-teaching controversial topics on developing empathy. Facilitators included university-based faculty and high school teachers co-teaching controversial topics using interactive student-centered ap-

proaches to answer the research question: Can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?

Sample and Participant Selection

The research sample consisted of a multi-layered site selection based on the school district, social studies course, high school, and teacher. The researchers did not have a role in selecting the high school students. The students were assigned by the school based on whether the students needed United States Government to graduate. There is one exception. At School A the high school teacher requested two additional students be added to the study. The teacher explained that she believed the students would benefit from this experience. Those students voluntarily attended and participated in the co-taught controversial lessons during their free time.

At the school district level, the researchers selected a district based on convenience; it was in close proximity to the university. In this district, the Assistant Superintendent informed the researchers of an incident with a previous high school teacher who had mistaught controversial topics, and it caused concern. This led the researchers to be especially transparent in explaining the research intentions to the four high schools (one private and three public) in the surrounding area. It also led the researchers to select United States Government as the preferred course because it is a required twelfth grade course. Since there was a school district concern about teaching controversial topics, the researchers wanted to ensure the students were mature to discuss controversial topics. The researchers' intention was to select two high schools whose administrators were interested in having a United States Government teacher co-teach controversial topics with a teacher education faculty member. There needed to be a teacher who was interested and committed to participating. Also, the schools needed to offer a United States Government class at times the researchers were available to co-teach the class. There was no sample preference based on the schools being private or public or on student characteristics.

To select the high schools, the researchers sent an email to the four high school head administrators explaining the research project and requesting a meeting to explain the activities further. One public school administrator did not respond to three email requests and this school was eliminated. Thereafter, the researchers conducted initial visits to the three high schools in the vicinity. Another school was eliminated based on the course scheduling conflict (the United States Government classes were not scheduled during a time the researchers was available). The remaining two schools were selected based on their administrators stated interest to have their United States

Government teacher co-teach interactive controversial topics with a university faculty member.

When meeting with the school administrators, the researchers re-iterated the goal of the study, which was to build community relations, foster critical thinking, and gauge the effect of co-teaching controversial topics on student empathy. School administrators selected the teacher the researchers would work with. Thereafter, the researchers met with the teachers to ensure their interest and commitment. At both schools, the United States Government teacher expressed interest in participating in the study. After explaining the research, there was another meeting at each school to invite the teachers and administrators to contribute in the topic selection, pedagogical strategies, and co-teaching activities.

Data Collection

The quantitative data consists of a pre and post-questionnaire (see Appendix A) electronically administered through Survey Monkey to a total of 42 spring 2017 seniors in School A (27 participants) and School B (15 participants). Appendix A depicts the questions on the pre and post-questionnaire that relate to this research. The other questions are redacted because they are part of a separate study. Based on the research objectives and using the literature review, these questionnaire questions were developed by the researchers. To check validity, the pre/post-questionnaire was shared with the school administrators and teachers at the two schools. At School A, the teacher provided feedback on language to ensure content would be easily understood by the high school students. School B provided no feedback. To ensure reliability, the researchers went to each school and administered the pre/post-questionnaire to both sets of students. The pre and post-questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. At both schools, the first day was focused on introducing and explaining the research to the students and included explaining the controversial topics with an emphasis on teaching empathy. After, the students completed the pre-questionnaire.

Summary of Two Schools

The two high schools were uniquely different, and their approach to this research varied. School A was a public school whose demographic is 99% African-American and a middle to low-income school as deter-mined by the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch (CSD). Although it is not clear why there was a gender imbalance in School A, 21 of the 27 students were female. In contrast, School B was a private school with a student population of 99% white and was a middle to high-income school. There was also a gender imbalance where only four of the

15 students were female. School B was comparatively more disorganized. For example at the start of the semester, there was not a clear indication of the number of students in the class, and it appeared that a special class was created to accommodate sporting activities. The class assignment process for athletes may also explain the gender imbalance.

School A

The researchers worked closely with the Assistant Superintendent and school administrators at School A to develop lesson plans and address initial concerns that the lessons would not be controversial enough to disrupt the educational process. Consequently, the researchers worked closely with school personnel to ensure that the planned topics fit the needs of the students, school, and district. The researchers visited School A three times before conducting the pre-questionnaire with the students. The first time was to meet with the teacher and administrator to approve the controversial topics. The next two times were to detail the specifics of the three co-taught lessons. During this time, the teacher and researchers went over each lesson to ensure the lesson fit the contextual needs of the class.

The researchers presented various sub-topics and adapted materials to make the content more relevant to the students. For example, a precursor activity for the privilege lesson had students complete a community analysis worksheet. After discussions between the faculty and teacher, the researchers added "natural" hair as a controversial topic in the African American community. Lesson development was a process that included changes up to the day the lesson was co-taught and even during the lesson facilitation. Post-lesson discussions also took place and revolved around how the lesson progressed, then the co-facilitators looked ahead to the next lessons and made further changes. Reflection on student performance and contextual considerations led to adaptation within the lessons.

School B

The private school administration was mainly concerned that the lessons fit with its conservative Christian values. The researchers visited School B twice before conducting the pre-questionnaire with students. The administrator met with the researchers and requested the guidance counselor at the school serve as a liaison. A follow-up meeting was held with the counselor, and teacher agreed to the controversial topics. No concerns were expressed about any of the topics selected. The teacher indicated the students were from a conservative background but did not provide further input. The teacher indicated he did not want to be

involved in the lesson development and that whatever topics researchers suggested was fine. The teacher in the area of United States Government initially began the school year on staff but resigned before the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

The pre and post-questionnaire were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The findings were mixed. To ensure participants understood the meaning of empathy, question 19 on the pre-questionnaire and questions 11 and 14 on the post-questionnaire (see Appendix A) requested participants explain and provide and example of empathy. There were no major differences in the pre and post-questionnaire. Participants were able to clearly articulate and provide examples. For example, participant 17 stated in the pre-questionnaire, "Empathy means to be able to understand or share the same emotion as someone else. Its being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes." Similarly, participant 6 stated on the post-questionnaire, "Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another." For the above questions, there was no change noted from the pre to post-questionnaire, but there were themes that emerged from the informal interviews with the collaborating teachers and participants responses to post-questionnaire questions 12, 13, 16, and 18 (see Appendix A). These questions pertain to the perceived benefits of participating in co-teaching controversial topics.

Themes

Findings in this study indicate similarities and differences between participants at School A and School B. In response to the question driving this research, "can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?" two thematic categories emerged from the quantitative data. The two themes were teacher engagement and student engagement. Also, general observations concerning teaching controversial topics emerged.

Teacher Engagement

From the schools there were clear differences between the involvement of the two teachers. Ironically, School B initially expressed greater interest in the project, but then did not follow through with any practical involvement. urther, at School B the number of students in the class was unclear. The teacher looked at the class sheet of names (the school counselor provided) and checked off names that were present and crossed off two that were no longer in the class (the counselor had already crossed off one of these names). There seemed to be a general confusion of who

was in the class. The teacher and administration requested no further meetings.

This is in contrast to the teacher at School A where the teacher knew the number of students in the class and sought to bring in additional students. Further, at School A, the administrator insisted on sitting in on the initial meeting and there were pre lesson and post-lesson meetings with the teacher. The pre-lesson meetings pertained to reflecting on the general characteristics of students in the class and how the content of the lessons related to them. These discussions related to specific students (updated discussions on students who will no longer be in the class, example transferred to another school) and general ideas about the content and its connection to the larger community (incorporating information on the substance of a local Walmart). The post-lesson reflection discussions surrounded things that went well, things that could have changed, and how these things may alter the future lessons.

In general, although student engagement was high in both participating schools, actual completion of assigned student tasks was much lower in School B. For example, when students at School B were asked to complete an exit ticket on LGBQTA+ lesson only 3 of the 15 students present completed the task. At School B, there was no follow up or push from the teacher assigned to the class for the students to complete the assignment. In contrast, at School A, the teacher walked around the room and vocally asserted for the students to complete the task. At School A, 27 of the 27 students completed the exit ticket. This drastic difference in student completion of tasks is credited to an actively engaged teacher. Further, at School A, there were no instances during any of the lessons where students refused to complete tasks.

This is in contrast to School B where participants openly refused to complete tasks. For example, one assignment requested participants visit the local Walmart and explain the types of dolls they sell. The assignment was to understand if the products they sold were equally geared to the racial diversity of the community. Interestingly, none of the School B participants completed the assignment, but, in class, seven of the students vocally complained about how 'terrible' Walmart is and that Walmart 'probably discriminated' based on race. Their lack of assignment completion seems attributed to the lack of teacher engagement rather then their political views.

Student Engagement

To determine student engagement, a variety of factors were analyzed. For example, attendance for participating in this study was high at both the schools. School A had 90% attendance and School B had 85%. Also,

the post-questionnaire was completed by 34 of the 42 participants (86.56 percent return rate). Specifically, School A had higher return rate with an 88.8% return rate compared to 66% at School B. Overall, the interest to participate in this study was high at both schools. Further, question 18 from the post-questionnaire asked participants to judge whether they benefitted from this experience and an overwhelming 87.88% stated yes with 12.12% declaring no.

Additionally, from the post-questionnaire, overwhelmingly students at both schools agreed the teaching of controversial topics made them more empathetic. For example, question 12 on the post-questionnaire asked, 'do you believe that you are more empathetic because of the topics discussed?' 33 of the 34 participants answered the question with 75.76% answering yes and 24.24% stating no. Further supporting this response was post-questionnaire question 13 that asked, 'should empathy toward those who are different from you (a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, etc.) be taught in school?' Overwhelmingly, 78.79% replied yes with 21.21% stating no. These responses reveal participants' interest in participating in controversial lesson topics to enable discussion and learn from diverse views.

Furthermore, this study sought to determine whether the participants enjoyed discussing controversial topics, question 16 on the post-questionnaire asked, did you like discussing the topics presented to you? Similarly, an overwhelming, 90.91% of participants responded yes, with only 9.09% responding no. This result also revealed an interest to engage in non-traditional topics. This finding is particularly relevant because this study takes place in the Southeastern United States that is known for its traditional views. Participants cited the following explanations as to why they enjoyed discussing controversial topics: "I just liked how we were able to discuss them and see both sides"; "I liked the fact that we got to talk about them, which we don't get to do much"; "During the discussion of the different topics, I liked that information was presented to me that I did not know of"; and "I liked discussing these topics because most teachers avoid topics such as these and in small debates with my peers, I'm never fully able to access my thoughts." Regardless of the political point of views of the students, almost 91% of participants enjoyed discussing and exploring diverse views.

Results and Discussion

In general, participants at both schools clearly understood and could define empathy (pre-questionnaire question 19 and post-questionnaire questions 11 and 14). This is significant when comparing participants.

At both schools, students were less likely to express empathy toward individuals who were different from them. For example, the week before teaching the lesson on LGBTQA+ in School B, President Trump emphasized states should decide the policy for bathroom usage. This led to a heated in-class discussion on transgender individuals and bathroom regulations. At School B, during the LGBTQA+ lessons, three students were extremely hostile towards transgender people. Participants expressed confusion as to why the individuals were transgendered and wondered if the parents were forcing them to behave this way. Participants also expressed a fear of their bathroom space being invaded by those they did not understand. School A also had students who exhibited discomfort when discussing the LGBTQA+ community. At School A students expressed discomfort around 'flamy' or openly gay individuals.

Other controversial topics invoked similar responses, but with a different rationale. For example, the genocide lesson responses were similar. Overwhelmingly, School B 10/13 and School A 22/23 participants declared Genocide Awareness a significant event that should be part of the calendar. Interestingly, although both groups overwhelmingly thought genocide awareness was significant, the rationales were different. At School A participant responses included, 'honoring the dead; respect for those who died; social justice; how we moved forward as a society; remember those who fell; the importance of identifying discrimination; pointing out different cultures discriminated against and help prevent it from happening again.' In contrast, at School B participants stated, 'the importance of discussing history, remember those killed, and remember those no longer with us.'

Regardless of student's political leanings, the findings indicate students benefitted from discussing controversial topics because it allowed them to engage new dialogue topics. These dialogues fostered critical thinking. For example, while discussing whether women should take their husband's last name on marriage, one student (School B) responded, 'I have never honestly thought about that.' He went on to explain, that he had never questioned or thought of a contrary view.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the small sample population (27 at School A and 15 at School B, totally 42 participants) and that it is confined to two high schools in the Southeastern United States. Generalizations about the two schools (one public and one private) are difficult to apply outside this community because the study size. Similarly, another limitation of the small sample size is the inability to determine statistical consequences. For example, for the scaled 1-10 questions, pre-question-

naire question 16 and 17/post-questionnaire 9 and 10 (see Appendix A), the average score of participants was 7 in the pre and post-questionnaire. There was no change.

Furthermore, the teacher at School B, resigned before the semester concluded. Consequently, high school participants at School B were at a disadvantage due to the absence of a certified teacher to engage them in the controversial topics. In addition, this may have had an effect on the lack of completed assignments from School B.

Conclusion

This study examined teaching empathy in K-12 classrooms and is particularly relevant in our fractured country. This study is particularly relevant because there is a need to create empathetic learners who think critically, reflect, and have compassion. The findings suggest that students are more likely to express empathy toward those who are different from themselves in classroom environments that explicitly foster openness to diverse views. The findings also suggest that teachers should engage students in controversial topics to enable them to understand different perspectives. As demonstrated by the post-questionnaire responses, students were interested to learn about ideas that were different from their own. This is an essential component to fostering empathy.

Overwhelmingly, as demonstrated by post-questionnaire responses to questions 12, 13, 16, and 18, participants perceived benefits from their engagement in the controversial topics. The significance of this study is in understanding effective teaching practices for promoting student empathy. Further research should delve into the benefits for the co-facilitators, the university faculty and high school teachers who co-taught the controversial topics using interactive student-centered approaches to promote empathy. Further research could also delve into the varied student-centered approaches used to promote empathy.

Note

[1] See Brooks (2009).

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Appendix A

Questionnaire (pre/post test) to Students

TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please answer only the questions with which you are comfortable. The information from individual surveys will be kept confidential and will only be analyzed as a group.

1. What is your email address?

2. What school do you currently attend?

3. Grade Level:
    Freshmen
    Sophomore
    Junior
    Senior

4. What is your sex?
    Male
    Female

5. Which ethno-racial/origin categories best describe you?
    Select all choices that apply. Note: you may select more than one group.

    Black or African American (For example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, etc.)

    White (For example, German or German-American, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.)

    Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, etc.)

    Asian (For example, Chinese or Chinese-American, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)

    American Indian or Alaskan Native (For example, Navajo, Blackfeet, Mayan, Aztec, Cherokee, Creek, Inupiat, etc.)

    Middle Eastern or North African (For example, Syrian or Syrian-American, Iranian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.)

    Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, etc.)

    Some other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify): _____

6. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not important" and 10 being "very important," how important is learning about empathy in your high school social studies classes?

7. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not much" and 10 being "a lot," how much does learning about controversial topics influence your overall level of empathy?

8. In your own words, provide a brief statement about what empathy means to you.

Post-Questionnaire

What is your email address?

9. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not important" and 10 being "very important," how important is learning about empathy in your high school social studies classes?

10. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not much" and 10 being "a lot," how much does learning about controversial topics influence your overall level of empathy?

11. In your own words, provide a brief statement about what empathy means to you and provide an example.

12. Do you believe that you are more empathetic as a result of the topics discussed? YES/NO

13. Should empathy toward those who are different from you (a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, etc.) be taught in school? YES/NO

14. Provide an example of how you are empathetic towards people who are different from you (someone of a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic income, etc.)

15. Did you like discussing the topics presented to you? YES/NO

16. Did you benefit from this experience? YES/NO. If yes, explain and provide an example of how you benefited from this experience.

Dewey's Thought on Education and Social Change

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Abstract

Dewey published his article "Education and Social Change" in 1937. His preoccupation with this issue is a constant theme in his works, which are infused with ideas about the role that education and, most specifically, our school system have in the transformation of society. His thought has had a tremendous influence on the work of later educational philosophers. He believed in a more democratic, just, free, and peaceful world, where civil liberties and human rights are respected. Education's main goal should be to create individuals who grasp the complexity and broader implications of social issues and who also feel empowered to engage with such issues and prepared to work toward developing real solutions: that is, individuals who fight for a society free of racism, intolerance, discrimination, and xenophobia. My intent is to provide a brief introduction and analysis of his views on these issues, point out specific points of contact with the theories of other educational philosophers, while also highlighting the continued relevance of his thought in contemporary society.

Keywords: John Dewey, Progressive Education, Social change, School System, Experience, Critical Pedagogy.

1. The Shortcomings of the Traditional Education System

Dewey was convinced of the power of education to change society. This conviction made him state that "the chief means of continuous, graded, economical improvement and social rectification lies in utiliz-

ing the opportunities of educating the young to modify prevailing types of thought and desire" (Dewey, 2002, p. 127). Youth are by nature curious, flexible, and experimenting, but their lifelong habits are still under development. It is in their character to question the established social system. In Dewey's opinion, here lies the main flaw and perversion of the traditional school system: students do not have the opportunity to reflect on and criticize the content and belief system that they are being taught. As Williams (2017) points out, unfortunately, the fundamental flaw of this traditional approach to education persists in the United States more than one hundred years later: "Education in most classrooms today is what Dewey would have described as a traditional classroom setting" (p. 91), one that is not appropriate for the development of the young.

To illustrate, Dewey (1958) uses the metaphor of teachers trying to pour knowledge into the "empty heads" of students. He asserts, "that education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory" (p. 46). In the traditional school system, students do not become critical thinkers, but rather receive content and are expected to accept it as true. They typically do not question the curriculum, which raises a major concern: Adults (and more specifically, the dominant classes) are the ones responsible for the belief system taught in schools through their curriculum. Without critical reflection, our school system would consequently perpetuate the current situation. "Education becomes the art of taking advantage of the helplessness of the young; the forming of habits becomes a guarantee for the maintenance of hedges of custom" (Dewey, 2002, p. 64). Schools have become centers of social reproduction, maintaining the status quo, and places where students are "trained to enrich the system, not themselves" (DeFalco, 2016, p. 58). A point that Dewey repeatedly criticized, arguing that it is through education, as a means of becoming part of a democratic society, that individuals improve and become the best possible human beings. He points out that this is where the great difficulty lies, as each generation is going to try maintain the existing conditions and situation as it is: "Parents educate their children so that they may get on; princes educate their subjects as instruments of their own purposes" (Dewey, 1958, p. 111).

Effective schooling does not need to teach different beliefs or shape different morals in our youth, but rather should form habits that are "more intelligent, more sensitively percipient, more informed with foresight, more aware of what they are about, more direct and sincere, more flexibly responsive than those current" (Dewey, 2002, p. 128). This kind of educational system would equip young people with the skills to shape their own morals and propose their social improvements when they face

their own problems. Dewey believed that education should be grounded in the open honest discussion of current events, or it becomes irrelevant, a mere archeological look to the past or a way to acquire special skills and knowledge, but disconnected from society. Education has to serve as a way to understand the present and provide individuals with the means to improve society (Fallace, 2016, pp. 182-185).

2. The Role of Experience

Dewey (1963) believes that there is a close relationship between experience and education, but they are not the same. He states that "[t]he belief that all genuine education comes from experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other" (p. 25). The quality of the education will depend on the quality, nature and frequency of the experiences. Being exposed to ineffective, defective, or deficient experiences can arrest or impede education; Dewey (1963) refers to these as "mis-educative" experiences, those that suppress growth and result in routine action (p. 37). In fact, the traditional school "is so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life that … [it] is the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience" (Dewey 1899, p. 31). To sum-up, experience is not equivalent to education, but positive educational experiences are a necessary condition for education.

According to Deweyan theory, we learn from positive experiences by reflecting on them. Conscious reflection enables us to attach meaning to such experiences; it is through the process of consciously reflecting on them that those experiences become meaningful. If teachers do not require such focus-on-meaning reflection from students, they do not educate, but only train.

> When things have a meaning for us, we mean (intend, propose) what we do: when they do not, we act blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently. In both kinds of responsive adjustment, our activities are directed or controlled. But in the merely blind response, direction is also blind. There may be training, but there is no education. (Dewey, 1958, p. 35)

Students need to think reflectively about the beliefs that teachers present to them, as such beliefs inform the way that they interpret the world and relate with it (behavior). Paraphrasing his own example (Dewey 1910, p. 5), when one believes that the world is flat, it affects the way she thinks about antipodes, navigation, and the position of planets in the universe. If the reflection piece is not present in learning, students will not develop conscious understandings of connections, they will simply develop "habits" (Schutz 2011, p. 269). Through such habits, individu-

als develop control over the environment, and they learn how to react to similar situations—although no two situations are ever going to be exactly the same. Dewey believed that reflective thought is a conscious inquiry, an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1910, p. 6). He raises the concern that this key reflection piece often is missing in the traditional education system.

Parallelisms between Dewey's and Freire's description of the traditional schooling system are easy to find. For example, Freire (2005) depicts a very similar situation when he uses the banking model metaphor, and his explanation resembles Dewey's very closely.

> Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. (71-72)

In this model, knowledge and society are fixed, motionless, static entities; the first one is deposited into students, who need to accept it without critical questioning. The element of inquiry, an absolute necessity in the educational process, according to Dewey and Freire, is missing from this approach. Teachers and students play completely opposite roles: One is the knowledgeable individual; the others are ignorant parties who know nothing and accept their ignorance. Teachers are the authority who are in charge of completing this one-way transmission process. This school system mirrors the situation of an oppressed society, where the oppressed (students) have a passive role that they accept without developing a critical consciousness.

3. Indoctrination and Social Change

Dewey (1937) considered traditional autocratic schooling systems as indoctrinatory structures, the primary goal of which is the continuation of the current social organization. He stated that "there is a great deal of indoctrination now going on in the schools, especially with reference to narrow nationalism under the name of patriotism, and with reference to the dominant economic régime." (p. 472). Parents (especially those from upper classes) are often accomplices in such indoctrination and demand that the school system maintain the status quo and transmit the accepted social and moral values. Regenspan (2017) believes that Dewey's thought is a useful tool that teachers can employ to overcome

these barriers, to help students explore their own social constructions, and to offer them "a 'next step' in their own ongoing process of healthy differentiation from their families of origin" (pp.14-15).

In order to reach a true education, in his progressive model, Dewey rejects the idea of using the existing teaching methods and just reversing their objectives. That is, we should not use the same old approach to teach different ideas. In fact, he proposed to fundamentally change education's frame of reference so that it has a new unified objective. He posits that such a framework already exists: It is education for democracy (Dewey, 1937, pp. 472-473). In the indoctrination process there is no such a thing as an exchange of ideas, and genuine student participation is non-existent.

The Critical Pedagogy movement shares Dewey's concern that our current school system serves those in power to maintain and expand their privileges. Influenced in large part by Marxism and revolutionary movements, there are significant differences in their general framework, though. For this group of educational philosophers, those who control the flow of information and ideas control society. They seek to give oppressed peoples an equal, interactive share of that control. Freire identifies six states that we need to be aware of when organizing the content of education or political action necessary to liberate the oppressed. In the first phase, *submergence*, the oppressed do not understand the forces that control their lives. Those forces are deliberately imposed on them by the oppressors, even if those in power are not consciously complicit in their dehumanization of others and of themselves (Freire, 2005, pp. 58-59). In this state, individuals are passive, and they are afraid of freedom. There is not manipulation of people so much as there is suppression. In the second state, the individuals need to identify the *general thematics* that constrain their lives. The third state is *codification*. The oppressed must co-construct visual aids and images that remind them of the injustice they suffer. By doing so, they are able to name it and, consequently, become conscious of the unfairness and discrimination. The fourth stage is *decodification*, that is, reflecting on the situation to discover the contradictions between their situations and the direct and indirect causes of their current condition. The fifth state is *emergence*, in which the community as a whole develops consciousness of the oppression and becomes united. That state serves as the catalyst which ultimately begins the conflict among classes. The sixth and final state in Freire's theory is *praxis*, a revolutionary process, a cultural transformation, possibly even a revolution, to create a new society. The oppressed free themselves from the structures and transform society.

This in-depth analysis of power and oppression, or call for extreme

political and revolutionary action, is not present in Dewey's educational philosophy. He saw the need for social changes, but he argued that such changes should be done in a nonviolent manner. Dewey (1958) stated, "society must have a type of education which gives individuals personal interest in social relationships and control and the habits of minds which *secure social changes without introducing disorder*" (p. 99; emphasis added). I tend to agree with Schutz's (2001) argument, "while Dewey sometimes noted that social conflict could be productive, he generally argued that such conflict was not, ultimately necessary" (p. 287). In his vision, most conflicts are not rooted in problems between individuals and other individuals, but with the collective social/natural environment.

In what ways could education promote social change then? First of all, education needs to be rooted in current social problems. Dewey argues that education should be ingrained in the present social conditions and needs, otherwise it just has an "antiquarian interest." With an interdisciplinary approach, students and teachers need to apply the knowledge of the past to current issues (Hatcher, 1997; Fallace, 2016). But how would social change be achieved? We must agree with Schutz (2001) when he states that Dewey "hoped that by teaching his students to perceive the relationships between their individual activities and the processes and structures of the larger society, he could help to free them from it, helping them participate in changing this reality, especially in their work lives" (p. 273). We can draw a parallelism between Dewey's "perception of the relationships" and Freire's stage of identification of the general thematics. In both cases, the individual becomes aware of her role in society and how her actions (or lack of action) perpetuate the current social order. Understanding the role that the individual has in the social fiber, is key to igniting the change. Dewey believed that participation is a key element in achieving social change, as only those who participate and contribute to the consecution of common goals truly realize the necessity of a true democratic society (Honnet, 1998, p. 776).

This realization process should consequently create engaged citizens. The role of education transcends mere individual growth. I agree with Hatcher (1997) when she clearly states that, in Dewey's thought, "education should develop individual capacities, however they must be for the benefit of the local community and society at large; the development of individual capacities is for the common good" (p. 24). For Dewey, personal development is pointless if it is not applied to the improvement of society as a whole.

4. Education and Democracy

Those who criticized Dewey's educational philosophy tried to undermine his method from a relativistic perspective. They negate the existence of a clear and universal definition of democracy and, consequently, they sustain that we cannot base an education system on a concept whose characteristics vary depending on who is invoking it. Dewey did recognize that there is not a single, definitive, and universally accepted definition of what a democracy is; however he did underscore certain features that every democratic society shares.

> I do not claim for a moment that the significance of democracy as a mode of life is so settled that there can be no disagreement as to its significance. The moment we leave glittering generalities and come to concrete details, there is great divergence.… But there is a tradition and an idea which we can put in opposition to the very much that is undemocratic in our institutions. The idea and ideal involve at least the necessity of personal and voluntary participation in reaching decisions and executing them—in so far it is the contrary of the idea of indoctrination. (Dewey, 1937, p. 473)

In fact, Dewey's own conception of democracy changed over time, becoming more complex and thorough.[1] Democracy is not a mere form of state organization. In a real democratic society, the citizens' participation goes much further than the periodic legitimization of those in power; their role goes much further than the bare control of the state apparatus. It is a model of social cooperation, in which all citizens are integrated in a self-organizing community (Honneth, 1998, pp. 763-767).

There are two elements that characterize a democratically constituted society: "Recognition of mutual interest as a factor in social control" and "freer interaction between social groups, … [and] change in social habit—its continuous readjustment through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse" (Dewey, 1958, p. 100). Consequently, a democracy is a progressive society that facilitates communication, cooperation, and respect between people of different groups. Individuals should not be mere observers of what happens around them, but they must actively participate and engage in social interactions and shared interests. Originally, according to Dewey, such shared interests are not the result of deliberate and conscious effort, but the consequence of economic and manufacturing development. The opposing forces of individualization and a broader community of interests make imperative that we intentionally work to support, increase, and spread them. In socially mobile, adaptable societies, it is essential that "intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms" (Dewey,

1958, p. 102). Such accessibility allows individuals to adapt to changes and understand the significance of social interconnections among groups. Otherwise, the few educated individuals will exclusively benefit from the results of the directed actions of the rest of the society.

In contrast to the often oversimplified, child-centered interpretation of educational progressivism, in Dewey's opinion, students do not simply "learn by doing." He places most emphasis on the kind of activities that they complete. The activities should be democratic and scientific. A democratic activity must have the following characteristics: (1) the activity has to be purposeful; (2) students must understand the activity's purpose and embrace it; (3) the activity has to be social and every student voice must be heard. It does not mean that students are free to do whatever they want, rather that teachers are not mere transmitters of knowledge. That is, "teachers" become coaches and facilitators. Shor (1992) agrees that in order to be democratic, "the learning process needs to be negotiated, requiring leadership by the teacher and mutual teacher-student authority" (p. 16). Students need to have a say when choosing the curriculum, which needs to be grounded in current events, and conflicts are managed and resolved through negotiation between the teacher and the students, not by the imposition of the teacher's opinions or ideas. Shor describes this learning environment as a "participatory classroom."

Secondly, in addition to educational activities being democratic, schools should employ scientific methods of teaching and learning. The key idea is that schools have to teach students how to think, not what to think. Teachers provide the problems, the context, the tools, and the instruments, not the results. For example, in a scientific activity, the outcome is uncertain (problem); students make predictions about potential outcomes (hypothesis); students elaborate possible approaches to test their predictions (methodology); students act on their ideas (test); students observe and examine the consequences (analysis); students reflect on the results (confirmation or revision).[2]

5. Dewey's Thought and Our Current Educational Policy

Our society currently suffers from polarization, from extreme divisions between cultural and political perspectives. Opposing views and values are marked by extreme dichotomies: Everything is black or white. Such radical opposing positions have long been present in the educational debate. Jia (2005) states that "to Dewey, education is perhaps the area most polluted by such conceptual dichotomies" (p. 101). Among the dichotomies he mentions the following stand out: naturalism vs. humanism, physical studies vs. social studies, intellectual vs. practical,

vocational education vs. general education" (Jia, 2005, p. 101). Among many others, one could add private vs. public education, bilingual vs. monolingual education, and assimilative vs. multicultural education. Dewey opposed a dual education system (liberal education vs. vocational education), as he believed that it would make class divisions even more prevalent (DeFalco, 2016, p. 60).

Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, in opposition to this approach, underscores the importance of true communication that allows individuals to break any rigid, isolating barrier, and builds integrative, constructive bridges. In a democratic society, the goal of education should be to break the barriers that the above-mentioned dualisms create. The origin of Dewey's integrating understanding of education is rooted in his conception of reality as a fluid, ever-moving, unstable process. Consequently, the key concept in his educational philosophy is growth, which can only be achieved through communication. Education, as with communication, should be destructive in a useful way: It should dissolve custom, pernicious and hardened habits (Dewey, 1958, p. 5-7; Jia, 2005, p. 104). Such habits precondition the content that students learn as well as the methods and strategies used to attempt to promote learning; as a result, such habits can limit future learning.

Dewey (1958) believed in multicultural education, which he considered an efficient way "to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory which keep men from seeing the full import of what they are doing" (p. 101). Education should integrate all different groups into a greater society, eliminating the boundaries between them.[3] Multicultural communication and education provide opportunities for individuals to modify the students' experiences, increase the number and variety of habits, and make the individual more inclined to abandon or modify them (Sun, 2011, p. 22).

Myopically, the most recent educational reforms in the U.S. have arisen from the fear of losing a competitive edge on an international economic scale. They have followed an instrumentalist approach, considering school's main goal to provide students with the skills they will need to become more efficient and competent workers to join the work force. In contrast, Hatcher (1997) derived from Dewey's philosophy five characteristics that any good education system should maintain: "Integration of personal experience with academic learning, structured opportunities for reflection, inquiry-based learning, face-to-face communication, connection with the community," all of which are sound methodological and teaching practices. Instead of focusing on "training" students, these are the characteristics that a sound democratic educational policy should nurture into the school system.

6. Can Education Alone Change Society?

Could we then fix the educational system if we just implemented democratic, scientific activities provided students with opportunities to reflect on the habits, beliefs, and morals that are being taught? In 1991, Hodgkinson stated that an educational reform is a task fated to fail when pupils in schools do not have their most basic needs covered. Among the major factors that Hodgkinson identified that contribute to the failure of our educational system include improper nutrition; high housing costs; transportation costs; threats to personal safety; health risks; and lack of access to medical services. His recommendations to improve education included creating a national health care system, food assistance, subsidized housing, and transportation for families in poverty, and community and job training programs for parents and guardians in at-risk situations. In a similar way, Dewey (1958) argued that "school facilities must be secured … the adequate administrative provision of school facilities and such supplementation of family resources as will enable youth to take advantage of them" (p. 114).

In 1991, Hodgkinson asserted that "at least one-third of the nation's children [were] at risk of school failure before they enter kindergarten" (1991, p.10). Unfortunately, 25 years later, the situation has changed very little and is still frightening. According to Children Defend Fund analysis of the 2016 US Census, 3,810,000 children under the age of five live below the poverty line, that is, one in five infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are in this tragic situation. From those, approximately 1,750,000 live in conditions of extreme poverty.[4]

Hodkingson (1991) argued that "educators alone cannot 'fix' the problems of education, because dealing with the root causes of poverty must involve health care, housing, transportation, job training, and social welfare bureaucracies" (p. 16). Well before Hodkingson, Dewey (1937) pointed in this direction:

> I conclude by saying that there is at least one thing in which the idea of democracy is not dim, however far short we have come from striving to make it reality. Our public school system was founded in the name of equality of opportunity for all, independent of birth, economic status, race, creed, or color. *The school cannot by itself alone create or embody this idea*. But the least it can do is to create individuals who understand the concrete meaning of the idea with their minds, who cherish it warmly in their hearts, and who are equipped to battle in its behalf in their actions. (p. 474, italics added)

But the fact that we cannot fix the school system without addressing first the social needs of the students does not mean that we are not

responsible for our children's future. Education alone cannot change society, but is an instrumental piece to build a more educated, politically, and civically active and engaged population. Schutz (2001) expresses this idea with meridian clarity: "The fact that schools cannot, alone, change society does not release us from the responsibility for imagining how schools might develop 'effective' democratic citizens, even if this can only happen on a small scale in individual schools" (p. 281). We can take small steps and create a scalable system. A clear example of this are the Deweyan roots and inspiration of the fundamental guidelines and processes in service–learning pedagogy. According to Hatcher (1997), it "integrates personal experience with classroom learning, creates opportunities for reflection, is inquiry-based, facilitates face-to-face communication, and connects students to the community. Thus, service-learning exemplifies Dewey's educational philosophy" (p. 27).

In order for our public school system to truly educate our children we must also ensure that all children have the minimum instruments required for their success, that we create a society where their most basic physiological and safety needs are covered. In his later years, Dewey "more openly acknowledged that schools were inextricably tied to prevailing structures of power and therefore extremely difficult to transform into agencies of democratic reform" (Westbrook, 1991, p. 509). He criticized those that defended that education's main goal is to prepare students for life, for a brighter future, by providing them with the skills that they will need to succeed in the labor market. He opposed a utilitarian understanding of education. In fact, he saw such an approach as a system of maintaining the privileges of the dominant class, the status quo of the cultured upper class. Dewey (2002) argued that such attempt is conscious and intentional, an idea that later on reappeared in the Critical Pedagogy movement:

> As traditionally conducted, it [education] strikingly exhibits a subordination of the living preset to a remote and precarious future. To prepare, to get ready, is its key-note. The actual outcome is lack of adequate preparation, of intelligent adaptation. The professed exaltation of the future turns out in practice a blind following of tradition, a rule of thumb muddling along from day to day; or, as in some of the projects called industrial education, a determined effort on the part of one class of the community to secure *its* future at the expense of another class. (pp. 269-270, italics in the original)

Our students need to become aware of the socioeconomic structures and injustice that impede their success. We also need to separate schools from private interests and existing powers that are trying to gain even more control over them. This is not a new or revolutionary concept. John

Dewey pointed us in this direction over a hundred years ago. DeFalco (2016) rightfully states, "Deweyan education reform can help to alleviate the exploitation of workers—if schools sincerely want to become instruments for democracy instead of maintaining the status quo" (p. 64). If we are serious about fixing our educational system, it is time for our society to move in the direction that Dewey so clearly mapped for us.

Note

[1] See Honneth (1998) for an exhaustive discussion of the evolution of the concept of democracy in Dewey's thought and its validity as an alternative to republicanist and proceduralist interpretations of democracy.

[2] "So much for the general features of a reflective experience. They are (i) perplexity, confusion, doubt, due to the fact that one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose full character is not yet determined; (ii) a conjectural anticipation—a tentative interpretation of the given elements, attributing to them a tendency to effect certain consequences; (iii) a careful survey (examination, inspection, exploration, analysis of all attainable consideration which will define and clarify the problem in hand; (iv) a consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis to make it more precise and more consistent, because squaring with a wider range of facts; (v) taking one stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action which is applied to the existing state of affairs; doing something overtly to bring about the anticipated result, and thereby testing the hypothesis. It is the extent and accuracy of steps three and four which mark off a distinctive reflective experience from one on the trial and error plane" (Dewey, 1958, p. 176).

[3] Schutz (2001) considers that here lies one of the limitations of Dewey's model as his "two key criteria of more democratic communities—the promotion of individual distinctiveness through participation in shared efforts and the elimination of boundaries between groups—both appear to contain the seeds of significant oppression for those groups that are already marginalized in our society" (p. 293).

[4] The U.S. Census defines poverty as an annual income of $24,563 or less for a family of four. Extreme poverty is defined as an annual income of 50% or less of the poverty level.

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Self-Sufficiency and the Alienation of the Other in Modern Education

The Case of Emile

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Abstract

In this article I analyze Emile's relationships with others in accordance to Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. I proceed first by introducing Rousseau's educational program. Second, I introduce Marin Buber's framework focusing on his I-Thou and I-It relations. Third, I analyze four of Emile's important relationships with others: his tutor, Robert the Gardner, the magician, and Sophie according to Buber's framework. Finally, I conclude with general comments on the concept of otherness in Emile, and its educational consequences, to show how Rousseau's educational philosophy sacrifices the Other in the name of its natural education.

Introduction

Historically, the self and its relationships with others have been seen from different perspectives. In general, these perspectives fall into one of two categories: the self as an isolated entity and the self as relational (Willett, Anderson, & Meyers, 2015). The first approach focuses on the individualistic aspect of the self, namely on the self as a free, rational, and autonomous agent (Kant, 2012), and on the self as a calculating *homo economicus* (Bentham, 1879). The relational view, on the other hand, sees the self within its social relations and emphasizes that the self does not exist outside these relations (Dewey, 1916; Buber, 1996; Noddings, 1984). One major critique of the first approach is its neglect

of the role of the Other in creating the self. In this approach, the critique goes, the Other disappears and the self appears alienated. On the other hand, the relational understanding of the self has been critiqued for losing the primary role of the self. In this approach, it has been argued, the self disappears. A Hegelian expression of this dilemma between the self and the other states,

> the sense of the self needs to be affirmed by the other, and yet a response from the other that is non-confirming or unempathic can lead at best to a sense of depletion or at worst to shattering of the self. This results in a defensive quest for an illusory self-sufficiency which is in conflict with the opposite wish to surrender the self to the other, to merge, to become enslaved. (Modell, 1984, p. 131)

For educators, this discussion leads to the following practical questions: How can education prepare students to be free individuals without alienating them, and how can education prepare students for their social life without sacrificing their own identities?

In this article, I discuss one major modern answer to these questions: Rousseau's naturalistic approach to education. Though Rousseau's educational philosophy has been debated among scholars for a long time, still more discussion is needed about the role of the Other in his philosophy. Feminists have discussed women's education in *Emile*, focusing on Sophie's education and how sexist that education is or is not. However, there has been relatively little focus on the idea of otherness and the kind of self/other relationships that we might find in a philosophy that puts self-sufficiency as its central principle. Blits (1991) discusses how Rousseau's paradoxical educational project rests on the idea of depersonalizing the self in order to return the self to its natural status. While the mechanism of creating the self will be one main focus for this paper, more focus will be devoted to the Other and its role in arguing against the primacy of the self in the self/other relationship debate.

Rousseau's Proposal

Rousseau's educational approach is considered to be a major foundation for modern progressive education (Bloom, 1979; Davis, 2004; Frank, 2011, Parry, 2011; Katz, 2013). The main link between Rousseau's educational philosophy and modern education is the primacy/centrality of the child. My main aim here is to question the effect of this centrality on the child/other relationship focusing on the case of Emile. To do that I use Martin Buber's distinction between I-Thou and I-It relationships as a framework that focuses on the role of the other in relationships. I analyze the main relationships in Emile's life focusing on how he relates

to others. I argue that the centrality of the self minimizes the chances to meet others as others or to be more precise, it makes education less welcoming to the otherness of others. Hopefully this analysis helps us rethink modern education, especially its primacy of the child/self in education. Here is one example taken from modern education: Maria Montessori (1995) writes:

> Education is not something which a teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in the virtue of experiences in which the child acts on the environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange series of motives of cultural activity in a special environment made for the child. (p.8)

I ask what kind of student/teacher relationships we get in such a framework where the teacher does not educate and does not talk to her student. *Emile* is a good case for contemplating such an issue.

At the very beginning of his book *Emile* (1762), Jean- Jacques Rousseau states "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man" (1762/2003, p. 1). The basic thesis of the book is that Emile should be educated 'negatively' by his direct experience with the natural world around him in order to be self-sufficient. The role of his tutor, Rousseau himself, is to facilitate that experience with minimum intervention. Since Emile's tutor is highly involved in his education, it might be more accurate to call Rousseau's education 'protective' or 'defensive' rather than 'negative' (Parry, 2011). *Emile* can be divided into two major parts. The first part, I-III, is dedicated to raising a natural child who cares only about himself. Books IV-V, on the other hand, are devoted to raising a social and moral person in relations with others (Bloom, 1979).

It is important to notice that Rousseau has a specific conception of nature that does not include men. He distinguishes natural elements as follows: "The internal development of our faculties and organs is the education of nature; the use which we learn to make of this development is the education of men; while the acquisition of personal experience from the objects that affect us is the education of things" (p. 2). Thus, man has three teachers—Nature, things, and men—and the student must encounter these teachers in precisely this order. By nature and things, he seems to mean "the world of matter and of physical forces, personified as an intelligent and infallible guide from which is carefully excluded all the modifications of matter and force which have been made by human art" (Psyne, 2003, p.1). The main distinction here between nature and men is the distinction between necessity and whims. Nature

acts in accordance to its deterministic laws whereas men's actions are governed by their arbitrary wills. Since nature is not within our power, it must regulate the teaching of things and men. Thus, for Rousseau, "when education becomes an art, it is almost impossible for it to succeed" (p. 38). Naturalistic education is a strong education because the laws of nature govern it. When these laws and the nature of the child are known, we can then predict, to a high degree, the results of our education.

Since the natural liberty and growth of the child are the aim of education, unnatural liberty has to be repressed. Here is where the principle behind Rousseau's, supposedly unnoticed, manipulation of Emile appears. He writes, "employ force with children and reason with men. Such is the natural order" (p. 91). Also, "never assume to have any authority over him. Let him know only that he is weak and that you are strong, that by his condition and yours he is necessarily at your mercy" (p. 91). Teaching, then, is the art of "governing without precepts and doing everything by doing nothing" (p. 119). Actually, the only condition that Rousseau demands to be Emile's teacher is that "he [Emile] ought to honor his parents, but he ought to obey only me" (p. 53). To facilitate such authority, Rousseau takes Emile to the countryside for "in a village, a governor will be much more the master of the objects he wants to present to the child" (p. 95).

Emile's communication with other people is very limited. Reading books, which is another way to communicate with and relate to the Other, is discouraged. At the age of twelve, Rousseau plans, "Emile will hardly know what a book is" (p. 116). Emile's written communication will be limited to short notes from relatives. The first book Emile will read, sometime between the ages of twelve and fifteen, is the book that "provides the most felicitous treatise on natural education" (p. 184). It is *Robinson Crusoe*, a novel by Daniel Defoe published in 1719. The main character in the book is Robinson Crusoe who is "in his island, alone, deprived of the assistance of his kind and the instruments of all the arts, providing nevertheless for his subsistence, for his preservation, and even procuring for himself a kind of well-being" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 184). Rousseau realizes that being on an isolated island is not the right condition for a man as a social being, but thinking as an isolated man is the best way to appreciate all the others. This isolated man works in accordance with the first law of nature, which is "the care of preserving oneself" (p. 193).

From the age of fifteen to twenty, Emile is introduced to society and to moral education. He needs a companion, and hence the journey of looking for a wife starts. Sophie will be Emile's future companion. After this brief overview of Rousseau's educational program, I turn to Martin Buber's famous distinction between two basic relations I-Thou and I-It.

Buber's I-Thou and I-It Relationships

In this section I introduce Martin Buber's main idea of analyzing and classifying human relationships and how the other fits in them. According to Buber, there are two kinds of relation that humans engage in, the I-Thou relation and the I-It relation. The first relation exists between humans who see others as full human beings. The second exists between people who engage in instrumental relations. Dialogue, according to Buber must be an I-Thou relation. That is, dialogue, as Buber argues, requires whole presence of at least two people. The I-Thou relation guarantees this condition, whereas in the I-It we lose that presence. Buber (1970) differentiates between the two relations:

> I perceive something. I am sensible of something. I imagine something. I will something. I feel something. I think something. The life of human beings does not consist of all this and the like alone. This and the like together establish the realm of It. But the realm of Thou has a different basis. When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every It is bounded by others; It exists only through being bounded by others. But when Thou is spoken, there is nothing. Thou has no bounds. When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation. (p. 4)

The basic notion of Buber's philosophy of dialogue is that human beings exist always in relations. Any search for understanding human beings outside the realm of their relations is, thus, misguided. This is not a transcendental or a priori assumption that Buber makes but a mere observation of human beings' experiences. Dialogue for Buber happens in the space of "the between." Kramer and Gawlick (2003) distinguish between the two relations as follows:

Two primal life stands	
I-It relations	I-Thou relationships
Never spoken with the Whole Being	Spoken with the Whole Being
Experiencing/using/knowing	Event/happening
In space and time	Spaceless/Timeless
One-sided: singular	Two-sided: mutual
Controlling	Yielding
Subject-object duality	Interhuman betweenness

Now, I turn to *Emile* to analyze four of the relationships that Emile engages in using Buber's framework.

Emile and Jean-Jacques

In this section, I analyze Emile's relationship with his tutor/governor, Jean-Jacques. Little Emile, an imagined five-year-old orphan, is taken to the countryside to live alone with his tutor, Jean-Jacques, who states "I do not want others to ruin my work" (p. 55). Emile's setting is male dominated, with no mother or any other female relationship. Finzi (2005) notices that the death of the mother and the dismissal of her previous relationship to Emile in thinking about Emile is a sign of rejecting "any female genealogy" (in Bock &James, 2005, p. 121). According to Rousseau the ideal teacher should be as similar as possible to his student "I would want him to be a child himself if it were possible" (p. 51). Under the principle that nature is good and others are corrupt, Jean-Jacques aims to be part of nature and limit his otherness. He seeks to be another who is not other. Emile and his tutor are together all the time and Emile to obey him as he obeys the natural laws. The teacher presents a natural will so Emile does not feel that he is obeying a foreign will. Jean-Jacques is depersonalized. It is also essential for this depersonalization process that both the teacher and the student share the same destiny in life. The moment they recognize their strangeness, "each sets up his own little separate system: and both, engrossed by the time when they will no longer be together, stay only reluctantly" (p. 53).

The teacher must not work against the goal of the student's self-sufficiency. This needs a trick. Rousseau wants a teacher who does everything without appearing to do anything. Jean-Jacques will says to his student, "you are my property, my child, my work" (p. 323) and wants his student to be self-sufficient at the same time. The natural teacher is Rousseau's solution to this paradox. For Rousseau, dependence on nature is compatible with freedom. Freedom is a moral phenomenon that only can be threatened by others' wills. The teacher then becomes a natural force. That is to say, his teaching methods and practices must be: internal (i.e., consistent with inner development), objective (i.e., with no distinguishable will), deterministic, and necessary.

Because Rousseau believes that children are not moral beings, Emile's relationship with his teacher, Jean-Jacques, strives to be consistent with nature, and as far as possible from social communication. Thus, both the teacher and the student have to be depersonalized. As a third person, I see this relationship as an I-It relationship. Jean-Jacques has total control over Emile's education. He keeps referring to Emile's goals

and aims but it is not clear what these goals and aims are. Rousseau's answer is that Emile's goals are natural goals. However, we also know that Emile's conditions are not natural. He is completely cut off from his natural relationships, such as his relationships with family and friends. Rousseau is imagining a different kind of nature; an idealized nature (Milligan, 2002) where Emile gets idealized too.

According to Okin (1979), Rousseau refers to three natural stages: First, the *original state of nature* where human beings lived isolated, nomadic lives, totally devoid of contact or cooperation except for the momentary and chance encounters that satisfied their sexual impulses" (p. 369); Second, *the golden age* where human beings lived self-sufficient, virtually isolated, and rural lives; Third *the corrupt stage* which started with the establishment of private property. Emile lives in the second period. Emile's education is part of the plan to return to that stage. The return to that stage is an aim of Rousseau's, but we have no reason to believe that it is Emile's aim too.

However, from Jean-Jacques' and perhaps Emile's perspectives the relationship is an It-It relationship. That is, Jean-Jacques believes that he is acting under no personal force. In a way, he is a thing that just happens to be more developed than Emile. To be an I is to be special and different and to be another who relates to others by virtue of his otherness. The I in Rousseau's picture is Nature or the Author of Nature, as he refers to it sometimes. Kaufmann (1970) describes those whose interests dominate their lives as hardly having an I at all. Jean-Jacques, the teacher, is dominated by the interest to be natural. His way to be natural is to not be an I, and to relinquish any other will that is not consistent with nature or the general will.

Emile and Robert the Gardener

Emile's meeting with Robert the gardener is part of his educational plan. When Emile turns twelve, the plan is for Jean-Jacques to introduce him to some social concepts. Social relations are organized on the ideas of duties and rights and since children are by nature self-preserving, they first need to learn their rights before learning their duties. Also, because persons defend themselves, children need no special education to learn their personal right to be protected. However, things do not defend themselves, which makes it important to learn the idea of property. To this end a meeting between Emile and Robert the gardener is arranged. Rousseau starts working with Emile to grow beans and take care of them every day. Emile invests his efforts and time in this project, and feels that he owns it. One day, his little farm is destroyed and, after a short

investigation, he finds out that Robert the gardener is the one who did it. Emile and Jean-Jacques talk to Robert to complain about what he did, but surprisingly he complains too because he was using the land before they started their plantation. In this way, Rousseau concludes, Emile learns what is his and what belongs to others and hence respects the right of private property. After this lesson, Robert the gardener disappears from Emile's life.

Emile's relationship with Robert the gardener is a clear I-It relationship. That is, the existence of Robert is understood within Jean-Jacques' plan to teach Emile a lesson. In other words, Robert appears in Emile's life as a mere means to understand the concept of private property, and the right of the first occupant by labor. However, not all I-It relationships are problematic. Some of them are just part of the human condition that necessities people to engage in short and limited relationships. The relationship with the cashier on a road trip is a one example of such a relationship. They become problematic, though, when the possibility to move from the I-It relationship to an I-Thou relationship is limited or prohibited. In general, we know that Rousseau thinks that Emile should not have any social relationships before he is driven by his natural sexual desire to do so. Robert the gardener's story is designed to serve this purpose. Robert appears to be only concerned about himself. He shows no interest in showing nice feelings to the young man, Emile. When Emile expressed the fact that he has no garden, Robert replies, "what do I care? If you ruin mine, I won't let you go around in it anymore, for, you see, I do not want to waste my effort" (p. 99). With this sharp response to young Emile, Robert the gardener is serving Rousseau's goal to show that Robert is expressing a natural law, which by definition has to be necessary. Thus, according to the plan, Emile will think that there is no otherwise in this situation because Robert is acting according to the law of nature. If Robert cannot do otherwise, then Emile has no choice but to accept Robert's response as natural without anger or any negative feelings.

We know that Robert the gardener could have done otherwise. He could have chosen not to destroy Emile's beans and talked to him first about it. He could have been a communist and denied the concept private property in general, etc. The issue here is not that Rousseau is selective; rather it is that his argument rests on the denial of any other possible alternative to Robert the gardener's attitude. The problem with the Emile-Robert relationship is not that it is an I-It relationship, but that it is designed to have no possibility for moving to an I-Thou relationship.

Emile and the Magician

In book III which is devoted to Emile's education between the ages of twelve and fifteen, Jean-Jacques realizes Emile's need to learn the foundations of science. At this age, humans are able to progress from their mere concern about themselves to an interest in nature around them. This should be understood as an extension of their personal experiences, and hence their education must be practical through direct experiences. The science that Emile needs to know is the order of nature. That is, "the chain by which each particular object attracts another and always shows the one that follows" (p. 172).

Jean-Jacques and his pupil Emile have a scientific experience in which they learn the work of a magnet and its ability to attract other objects. Thus, when they visit the fair and watch the magician doing his act in which he attracts a waxed duck floating in water with a piece of bread, they are able to deduce his methods of trickery after a brief experiment. Emile feels pride because he was knowledgeable enough not to be fooled by the magician. The next day the fair's manager arranges for Emile to do the trick himself for an even bigger crowd. The magician, however, uses his experience to prevent Emile's trick from working. Emile is not able to move the duck, whereas the magician is able to do so. Emile and Jean-Jacques escape the crowd and leave for their home. The next day, the magician knocks on the door complaining first about Emile and Jean-Jacques' conduct and then explains to Emile that he had positioned a little boy under the table to move the duck as the magician wished regardless of the force of the magnet.

The lesson in this tale is twofold. First, there is a scientific lesson about the law of causality and second, the moral lesson that pride is evil. What concerns us here, though, is Emile's relationship with the magician. The magician appears to be another. Actually, this is Emile's first experience of another as other (Schaeffer, 2002). The magician does something new. He seems to possess different powers, and he challenges people's current knowledge. The magician appears to be free from the necessity of natural law. However, the magician's otherness disappears very quickly when Emile discovers his tricks. Emile wants to be a magician himself after discovering the secret of magic. This is a clear sign that the otherness of magician disappears. At first, the magician seems able to do otherwise, but Emile's knowledge of the natural sciences reduces the magician's otherness to sameness. That is to say, the magician's tricks become well known and compatible with Emile's scientific knowledge. Emile's move to act as a magician seems to result from his desire to appear as other to people, to be seen as the one who

is able to do otherwise. He does not believe that he can do so because he knows the tricks, but, nevertheless, he is attracted to the idea of otherness. Rousseau crafts the story very carefully so that this attraction to be seen as different leads only to pain and failure. Jean-Jacques blames himself even for even opening the opportunity for otherness. Rousseau writes, "everything must be foreseen, and everything must be foreseen very far ahead of time" (p. 175).

Emile and Sophie

The Emile-Sophie relationship, and Rousseau's view of women in general, has been debated in the literature (Wexler, 1967; Christenson, 1972; Okin, 1979; Kennedy, 2012; Fonteyne et al., 2015). Many researchers have pointed out the sexist aspects of Rousseau's views of women. He thinks women are big children, and inferior to men in their abilities to understand moral issues. This view of women has an effect on the Emile-Sophie relationship. Rousseau, who has been progressive throughout the whole book, turns out to be quite retrograde in his thinking about women in the fifth chapter. But, if my analysis above is convincing, we should not be surprised about the Emile-Sophie relationship. Emile has been educated to be singularly concerned first and foremost about himself throughout all of his relationships with others. His relationships with Robert the gardener, the magician, and his tutor Jean-Jacques, have been, at best, I-It relationships. Sophie, as another, should not be an exception.

Sophie starts as an idea in Jean-Jacques' imagination. Emile needs to be with another human being because he cannot satisfy his sexual needs by himself. Rousseau is looking for certain qualities in the person to whom Emile will attach himself. Rousseau states "it is unimportant whether the object I depict for him is imaginary," (p. 329). The imaginary Sophie is educationally preferable to any other real woman because "by providing the imaginary object, I am the master of comparisons, and I easily prevent my young man from having illusions about real objects" (p. 329). Even though Emile already has a natural attraction to women, Jean-Jacques wants him to be attracted to a specific kind of woman that he will present to him. The image is important because "if he takes pleasure in the image, he will soon hope that it has an origin" (p. 329). The search for the real Sophie will be driven by the image Jean-Jacques created. In Paris, where they look for Sophie, there is no possibility for a surprising or a different woman. That would be a failure.

We notice that, even though Emile is now twenty and has been raised naturally, he is not able to choose his own wife. Rousseau is still creating this character based on his view of women. Sophie has a good nature

with a sensitive heart. She is not beautiful but she has special talents and charms that make her companionship special. She knows best "the labors of her own sex" including "cutting and sewing her dresses" (p. 394). Using her knowledge of the kitchen and the house, she is able to govern her family's house. Her mind is "agreeable without being brilliant, and solid without being profound" (p. 359). She is so nice to others that "she harms only herself (p. 396). We notice how Sophie's character is always described as being good with others or useful to others. She is "likely to forget herself," and when she is punished, "she is docile" (p. 396). Although both Emile and Sophie are pupils of nature, "she more than any other is made for him" (p. 410). Sophie is not to be found in Paris, so Jean-Jacques and Emile return to the countryside.

Due to the hospitality of a family along their way, Emile has the chance to meet a girl named Sophie. When he hears her name for the first time he falls in love with her. For Emile, at the age of twenty, "this is not only his first love but his first passion of any kind" (p. 416). Emile asks her to marry him but she is reluctant because she thinks that she is poor and he is rich and she does not know how to bridge these inequalities. However, Emile does not listen and falls more deeply in love with her. He becomes jealous and according to Rousseau, "softened by an idle life, he lets himself be governed by women" (p. 431). "The passion with which he is preoccupied no longer permits him to give himself to purely reasoned conversations as he had before" (p. 442).

Rousseau feels his whole project with Emile is failing so he encourages Emile to attach his heart only to "imperishable beauty," to let his condition limit his desire, and make his duties come before his inclinations. In short, he tells Emile, "extend the law of necessity to moral things" (446). Rousseau announces to Emile that he must leave Sophie. Emile then travels around Europe for two years to learn his civil duties and to get himself ready to be a citizen. After the trip, Emile plans to settle down near Sophie's dwelling, but Rousseau refuses to give any information about Emile's return to Sophie and the conclusion of their love. These details, he states, "might be pleasing without being useful" (p. 475). Nonetheless, he gives a happy ending of Emile and Sophie living together.

For Rousseau, Sophie is essential for Emile's educational development. Driven by his sexual dependency, his relationship with a woman is required. However, this relation must be natural, which means it has to be in accordance with what Rousseau believes to be the role of man and the role of woman. Rousseau's approach to women in this picture is a functionalist approach. That is to say, "instead of concluding that the natural potential of women is at least unknown as that of men, he

defines her capacities teleologically in terms of what he perceived to be her function in a male-ruled world" (Okin, 1979, p. 407).

Emile's and Sophie's love surpasses that natural arrangement, which requires Jean-Jacques' explicit intervention to restore Emile's independence from Sophie. Jean-Jacques is willing to rejoin Emile and Sophie, but only under certain conditions. For Sophie, she has to know that "Emile has become the head of the house. It is for you to obey, just as nature wanted it" (p. 478). For Emile, he has to keep "the patriarchal and rustic life, man first life, which is the most peaceful, the most natural" (p. 474). Rousseau does not want to give more details about Sophie and Emile's life perhaps because he is not sure that they will maintain his order. Rousseau is worried that love will drive the Sophie-Emile relationship in another way; to break the natural order and open the door for otherness. In the natural order, Sophie is not another. She is a part of a well-known arrangement. I agree with Bloom (1979) who says of Emile:

> It is not quite precise to say that he loves an 'other', for he will not be making himself a hostage to an alien will and thus engaging in a struggle for mastery. This woman will, to use Platonic language, participate in the *idea* he has of her. He will recognize in her *his own* highest aspirations. (emphasis added, p. 22)

The Emile-Sophie relationship is meant to be an I-It relationship or an Emile-oriented relationship, but love threatens, at least in one case, that this relationship could have the potential for something other than that. Rousseau's cure against alienation is to be independent from others and maintain self-sufficiency, but his cure, I argue, alienates Emile. To escape losing oneself in another, Rousseau alienates the self from its other by reducing the self-other relation to a mere I-It relationship.

Conclusion

In this section I argue that although Rousseau aims to help Emile live in solitude which he sees as a happy condition, he ends up creating an alienating education. But first, we need to make the distinction between solitude and alienation clear, and then we need to examine the Emile-others relationships in light of our previous analysis. According to Koch (1994), the distinction can be made in two points. First, alienation, unlike solitude, is an unpleasant condition. Second, alienation "involves a fracture of relationship with another *who is yet felt to be as part of the experience.*" For example, to feel alienated from your co-worker "is a way of being aware of that person, a modality of *consciousness-of-other.*" On the other hand, Koch argues, solitude "is not any kind of consciousness-of-other, but rather a consciousness-without-other" (p. 43). I might add

a third distinction that solitude seems to be a choice whereas alienation seems to be a condition. We could reconstruct the difference above to say that, unlike solitude, alienation is *an unpleasant and involuntary awareness of a broken relationship with an essential other*.

Emile is meant to have no essential other, to be self-sufficient and not to rely on any other as a necessary condition for happiness. However, Jean-Jacques himself is an essential, perhaps too essential, other for Emile. Emile appears to be the most insufficient person when his tutor leads/monopolizes his life even in his adulthood. Although Rousseau tries to depersonalize Jean-Jacques, the tutor, by reducing him to a mere natural force, the tutor is an essential other. The depersonalization of the tutor, as we explained earlier, problematizes the Emile-Jean-Jacques relationship. Second, it is enforced upon Emile.

Emile shows an awareness of others. That is, in most of the opportunities that Emile has to interact with others, he shows a great interest in that interaction. He is open to being influenced by Robert the gardener, the magician, and Sophie. Moreover, he shows a great openness to learn from Jean-Jacques himself. Although Rousseau sees that openness as a threat to Emile's education, Emile does not seem to be threatened by these encounters. Rousseau does not give adequate direct access to Emile's feelings except in his relationship with Sophie. For Rousseau, Emile should be happy because he is solitary and "a truly happy man is a solitary being" (p. 221). The case of Sophie challenges this account of happiness. Emile was happy to be dependent on Sophie but Jean-Jacques saw that as a false happiness. We know that Emile was in pain when he left Sophie, and that he did choose to return to her. I conclude that while Rousseau argued against the alienation of humans from their nature (Skempton, 2010), he led Emile to be alienated from his fellow human beings.

Rousseau's idea of natural education is also the premise of the modern idea of teaching as facilitating; to allow natural learning. Two important results follow: first, the relationship between teacher and student is reduced to fulfill the idea of a self-sufficient student, which alienates both the student and the teacher. Second, the role of the educational system is accepted uncritically under its naturalistic claim. The philosophical, ideological, and political assumptions behind education are unnoticed.

Moreover, we find common results with the current market model of schooling (Ravitch, 2010; Strhan, 2012). Efficiency, measurability, and governability are usually the principles that drive schooling in this kind of educational model. Universal standards and benchmarks are usually used as tools to measure the success or failure of schools. By definition universal standards are not meant to measure students' particulars. In this situation, what distinguishes students and shows their subjectivities

are not acknowledged by their school. This is in alliance with Rousseau's principle of one basic nature of all children. Moreover, since this model of schooling is concerned with developing certain individual cognitive skills, it fosters a sense of self-preoccupation among students. Individual grades are what determine the student's success or failure in schools which devaluates their social contributions. Both Rousseau's and the model market end up with an antisocial educational environment. This environment is not likely to foster a good relationship between students and their schools since the whole set of school-based relationships, which are essential for a sense of belonging, is subordinated to getting grades that meet the standards. The school says to its students: be-for-your-selves, the new, the surprising, and the strange cannot be measured by our standardized tests and hence are not welcomed.

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Dewey's Creative Ontology

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Introduction

Inquiry-based and other experiential pedagogies are increasingly being adopted as powerful tools to enhance learning and engage students in the classroom. Inquiry-based learning, for example, has been found to effectively promote the acquisition of new knowledge, abilities, and attitudes when compared against traditional pedagogical methods (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Bruder & Prescott, 2013; Friesen & Scott, 2013).

While John Dewey is often referenced as an important originator of contemporary theories of inquiry, as well as experiential and problem-based forms of learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Schön, 1992; Downey & Clandinin, 2010; Savery, 2015), his wider philosophical thought is frequently evacuated from the very same educational literatures that take up the implications of his ideas. Such approaches inadvertently ignore many of the core insights in Dewey's philosophy. Stripped of this context, for example, inquiry is reduced to little more than an "active learning" strategy (Lee, 2012, p. 6) that is deployed to ensure students will be more likely to recall, reproduce, and mentally manipulate predetermined academic content (i.e. "enhanced" learning) (Prince & Felder, 2006). As such, Dewey's vision for liberating, humanizing education is turned into yet another kind of uncritical pedagogy that indoctrinates students into pre-existent social practices (Garrison, 1998, p. 114).

While it may be argued that holding a deeply theoretical conception

of inquiry is less important than simply bringing inquiry strategically into the classroom, such a view ignores the fact that a teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning play a significant role in shaping his or her approach to pedagogy and the curriculum (Monsour, 2009; Phillipp, 2007). Virginia S. Lee (2012) argues that "an instructor who sees himself as a presenter of knowledge and trusts primarily his own control over knowledge delivery will implement [inquiry guided learning] quite differently from an instructor who sees herself as a collaborator with students in the process of inquiry and trusts the process of inquiry itself as a force in learning regardless of the level of the students." (p 10). Grasping the philosophical complexities of inquiry is fundamental to embracing and advancing progressive forms of pedagogy.

This essay is an attempt to illuminate a significant aspect of Dewey's philosophy that is largely absent from contemporary educational discourses on inquiry, which is the relationship between the self and the process of inquiry. While there has been much written about Dewey's theory of inquiry, there has been less scholarship devoted to his notion of the self (Blanken-Webb, 2014, p 156), particularly as it relates to this theory of inquiry.

By understanding the relationship between inquiry and the self, it will become clear how and why Dewey's theory of inquiry was not simply a strategy to acquire academic content. For Dewey, inquiry is a way of taking seriously the school as a site of social self-formation which establishes the conditions for meaningful, just, and equitable forms of associated living. This is because inquiry is not a process of "active" learning (i.e. actively "taking in" knowledge), it is a mode of creative inhibition that is enacted in and through the world. Inquiry-driven pedagogies fundamentally alter a student's relationship to knowledge and themselves. In this way, inquiry is a process of reconstructive becoming that serves as a significant corrective to dehumanizing effects of traditional forms of education that Dewey faced in his own lifetime and continue to plague the education system today.

Dewey's Transactional Metaphysics

Many of the central elements of contemporary educational research and practice can be traced to the work of psychologist E.L. Thorndike. Thorndike's view of education is rooted in a foundationalist metaphysics which maintains that the self and the world are ontologically discreet and causally related. The self is little more than a behavioral agent who encounters the world as a mind from outside. Thorndike writes, for example, that "no response of any human being occurs without some

possibly discoverable cause; and no situation exists whose effect could not with sufficient knowledge be predicted. Things to not happen by mere chance in human life ...The same situation acting on the same individual will produce, always and inevitably, the same response" (Tomlinson 1997, p. 371). Educational research following Thorndike's legacy is largely devoted to developing single-factor causal models that attempt to explain and direct student behavior in the static environment of the school.

It is well known that Dewey lost the education wars of the early twentieth century to Thorndike. This occurred, in part, because Dewey's radical vision required not only deep practical changes to schooling, but also a wholesale revision of its underlying philosophical foundationalism. Thomas M. Alexander (1987) writes that Dewey's metaphysics are "so radical and divergent from traditional [views] that thinkers whose intellectual habits have been formed by the tradition are compelled, often against their inclinations, to give a systematic misreading of Dewey" (p 60).

Dewey refers to his metaphysical system as "empirical naturalism," "naturalistic empiricism," and "naturalistic humanism," all of which attempt to express the central idea that human experience and reality are not ontologically discrete but are emergent and co-determining. Human experience and nature bring one another into being and are interrelated (Dewey, 1949/1989, pp 242-244; 348). In his final published book, *Knowing and the Known* (1949/1989), Dewey introduces the concept of *transactional* to describe his metaphysics, as opposed to foundational or interactional, which attempts to locate their emergentist orientation (Brinkman, 2001, p 299-303).

A central part of Dewey's position is a rejection of the Substance Realist assumptions that underpin classical positivist views of science, including the views that continue to guide much of educational research today. In order to explain the difference between traditional positivist views of science and his own, Dewey distinguishes between two forms of materialism: "reductive" and "naturalistic." Reductive materialism, which is embodied in Thorndike's work, assumes that all things are reducible to (and therefore predictable from) constituent parts (Dewey, 1945/1989, pp 112-114). Harold Morowitz (2002) argues that all classical science is built upon reductive materialism. He writes that "from the theoretical constructs postulated at each level, we can make a series of predictions or rules that work their way, often through calculations, back to the world of observation" (p 19). This view is, in part, what sets forth a quest for final foundations (what Dewey called the "quest for certainty") which are assumed to be the building blocks of reality.

Naturalistic (i.e emergent) materialism, which is Dewey's position, maintains that things are related, but not strictly reducible, to parts. All

things emerge from parts to become something genuinely new. Morowitz (2002) writes that

> in the domain of emergence ["naturalist materialism"], the assumption is made that both actual systems as well as models operate by selection from the immense space and variability of the world of the possible, and in carrying out this selection, new and unanticipated properties emerge. This type of outcome is similar in some way to the biologist's view of evolution, in which novelty occurs by mutation, translocation, selection, and differential survival. New structures, new species, and new ecosystems thus emerge. The evolving taxa and systems are not predictable in any exact sense. (p 20)

For Dewey, existence is an event-structure which is always undergoing negotiation, adjustment, and revision (Dewey, 1925/1981, pp 5-6). There is nothing that exists as a thing-in-itself, but all *things* are manifestations of particular kinds of novel and complex relationships that take place in and through time.

Dewey's Emergent Self

Dewey's metaphysics yield a very different conceptualization of the self at the center of education than traditional foundationalist views. Dewey's view of the self has deep consequences not only for inquiry-driven pedagogies, but also curricular structures and the very aims of education. Before turning to an articulation of inquiry as a process of social-self creation, it is first necessary to clarify Dewey's view of the self.[1]

Built on his transactional metaphysics, Dewey's view of the self stands in opposition to traditional Western conceptualizations in which the self is imagined as largely static, ontologically discreet from the world, and formed as a cause of various effects in the world. In the dominant Western view, students (selves) are mental agents, whose thoughts, decisions, motivations, and actions take place consciously, and who are largely in control, aware, and distinct from their own emotions and bodies (Kuldas & Bulut, 2016, p 200). The self, as a whole, is understood as an *a priori* entity that is context-free (i.e. transcending interpersonal relationships) with traits that are ontologically distinct from cultural and social roles (Kuldas & Bulut, 2016, p 201). This can be seen, for example, in the widely held belief that there are such phenomena as "core" skills (e.g. critical thinking) which are context-free, universal, and can be internalized by students as waiting *tabula rosas*. Broadly speaking, educational research and practice in the U.S. remains committed to this position (Garrison, 1998).

To the contrary, Dewey argues that the self is an emergent property

of a process of ongoing reflection and action in the world. The self is an experimental consequence of social action and inquiry, rather than something that exists a priori. Dewey (1893/1971) writes that the self is "always a concrete specific activity" (p 43), meaning that the self "exists" only at the present moment, as a process, and is an experimental working ideal (Cunningham, 1995, p 183). The self, in this way, is a creative construction that emerges from an ongoing process of inquiry.

The bridge connecting Dewey's metaphysics and his theory of the emergent self is the triadic distinction he draws between the material world, life and the habits of living, and meanings and minds (Dewey 1925/1981, p 208). This bridge will show how and why the self is not ontologically distinct from the world, but is a uniquely emergent property of the world.

The Material World

Dewey argues that the difference "between the animate plant and the inanimate iron molecule is not that the former has something in addition to physio-chemical energy; it lies in the *way* in which physio-chemical energies are interconnected and operate, whence different *consequences* mark inanimate and animate activity respectively" (Dewey, 1925/1981, p. 195, emphasis in original). For Dewey, animate life is neither an illusion, nor a transcendental imposition into nature, but emerges from a particular relationship of properties inside nature. At its most basic level, the part of nature we describe as *living* shares the characteristic of what Dewey calls *restoration of equilibrium*. Inanimate nature is governed by its environment, but animate nature maintains "the type of activity of the organism to which it belongs" (Dewey, 1925/1981, p 195). What we call *life* is a particular kind of natural bias for sustaining the organism through renewal, which is not ontologically distinct from other kinds of biases within nature (Dewey 1925/1981, p 195). Lower-order organisms such as plants exhibit less complexity in their ability to transact with the environment. They simply, though selectively, react to environmental conditions. More complex forms of life more deeply cultivate the capacity to transact with the environment, allowing them to go beyond simple reactive impulses to actual, reconstructive possibilities.

Life and the Habits of Living

Complex forms of life acquire the capacity for what Dewey calls habitual action. Habits are behaviors that arise out of organism-environment transactions and which *incorporate the environment into* the behavior of the living creature (Dewey, 1922/1983, p 15). At their most basic level, habits are generalized, learned responses to particular classes

of environment situations. Dogs, for example, can be trained to behave in specific ways. It is their species-typical instincts that open the possibility of using natural signs for communicating, but it is household-specific habits that shape those possibilities into particular modes of behaving. There are three elements of Dewey's theory of habits that are critical to his view of the self.

The first element is that as forms of life become more complex, acquired habits become *more primitive* in behavior than species-typical impulses (Dewey, 1922/1983, p 65). It is learned behaviors that structure, guide, and call out immediate and reactive impulses, rather than the reciprocal being true. The second element is that habits are not the responses of an internal being to an external environment, but *an integrated transaction* between the two (Dewey, 1925/1981, p 215). Habituated sensitives widen and extend what we traditionally think of as "the organism." Complex organisms select, draw in, and redirect parts of their environment and themselves through adaptive action (Hickman 2001, p 21). The third element is that habits are self-evolving. Dewey writes that "the sailor is intellectually at home on the sea, the painter in his studio, the man of science in his laboratory" (Dewey, 1922/1983, p 123). This is because each has shaped their specific biological aptitudes and capacities into unique modes of behaving in given environments. *Inhabiting an environment* is a way of describing the active and alert commerce between the creature and the world.

For Dewey, habits—which are socially developed and deployed—structure the self: "all habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self" (Dewey, 1922/1983, p 21). Habits are therefore preconditions of knowledge, rather than knowledge, itself (Garrison, 1998, p. 124). They channel and refine our impulses and are modifications of our neuro-physiological system acquired from prior experiences as both participants in the customs of some socio-cultural tradition and in our biological environment (Garrison, 1998, p. 125)

Meanings and Minds

The most complex forms of life participate in meaning-relationships, which are both social and behavioral. Meaningful behavior begins habitually—in what G.H. Mead calls a "conversation of gestures" which lies below the acquisition of language and permeates all behavior. The conversation of gestures is a reciprocal shifting of behaviors based on conjoined action. The mechanism for the emergence of meaning is present even in proto-social acts because for Mead (1967/2009) the "adjustive response of the second organism gives to the gesture of the first organism the meaning it has" (pp 77-78). The gestures taking place between animals

only become meaningful when those gestures possess the capacity to co-ordinate action between agents. Gestures (including linguistic gestures) *mean something* because of our tendency to respond to them.

For humans, an act is meaningful because it symbolizes *potential* actions and *potential* results. Mead (1967/2009) writes that "you ask somebody to bring a visitor a chair. You arouse the tendency to get the chair in the other, but if he is slow to act you get the chair yourself. The response to the vocal gesture is the doing of a certain thing, and you arouse that same tendency in yourself" (pp 67). In this way, language draws in and coordinates potential responses in and through multiple actors, *including the actor him- or herself*.

To have a mind in the human sense means that one can respond to meaning rather than simply reacting mechanically and causally to particular stimuli (Brinkmann, 2011, p. 307; Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 34). Dewey (1925/1981) writes that "'mind' is an added property assumed by a feeling creature, when it reaches that organized interaction with other living creatures which is language ...This state of things in which qualitatively different feelings are not just had but are significant of objective differences, is mind. Feelings are no longer just felt. They have and they make *sense*..." (p. 198). Mind is what allows us to linguistically abstract and participate in shared meaning-relationships in order to creatively reconstruct experience. It is the mind, birthed through participation in language, that allows for the emergence of imaginative possibilities including the creation and reconstruction of the self (Dewey, 1934/1987, p. 276).

Selves

The *self* is brought into being when the live creature becomes a meaningful object to itself. Mead describes the emerging self as the relationship between the "I" and the "Me" (Mead. 1967/2009, pp. 173-178).

The "I" represents the unique, embodied, and habituated responses of the individual to particular situations, while the "Me" is the internalized attitude of the other that establishes alternative social positions and possibilities for action (Mead, 1967/2009, p. 175). For Mead, the *self* is worked out hermeneutically, as a transaction between the engaged, novel *action* of the "I" and the *critical reflection* on that action that sediments into the standpoints of the "Me." In Mead's account, we never experience ourselves directly, but only "indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group" (Mead, 1967/2009, p. 138). The self is always in deferral, a process of reflection on action, and always open to creative reconstruction (Mead, 1967/2009, p. 174). We are born with certain sets of biological aptitudes and experience the world uniquely, but we only achieve the *self* through conscious reflec-

tion on meaningful action. This is because the self is not an essential *thing*, but is a process of coordinated, action-in-environment which we interpret as a coherent object.

There are several aspects of this conceptualization of the emergent self that are central to Dewey's educational philosophy.

The first is that the self is transactional and emergent with the world, rather than *a priori* and ontologically discreet from the world. Dewey (1949/1989) writes that "no one exists as a buyer or seller save *in and because of* a transaction in which each is engaged. Nor is that all; specific things *become* goods or commodities because they are engaged in the transaction. ...Moreover, because of the exchange or transfer, both *parties* (the idiomatic name for *participants*) undergo change…" (p. 242, emphasis in original). Like all social meanings, the self exists as a transactional commerce with, in, and through the world. In the traditional Western conceptualization, the self enters the classroom as a discrete object which will change only in terms of knowledge acquisition and *a priori* developmental stages. For Dewey, the self emerges as a result of its transacting in and through different environments. It is likely that students placed in different classrooms will not simply know different things, but *will become different selves*.

The second is that the self is not reducible to a dependent causal property of environmental conditions, but is a creative construction which develops dimensions that belong uniquely and dynamically to the organism, itself. Dewey's emergent view of life and, in particular, human life is a shift from dependent to contingent forms of causality. It also means that the basic analytical unit of psychology cannot be stimulus-response, but instead is goal-directed activity through which the organism tries to affect change to itself and its environment (Bredo 2003, p 94). Selves, therefore, are not reducible strictly to physical movements, but include interpretive intentions that are the basis for unique, creative action (Brinkman, 2011, p. 306).

The third is that the self is creatively constructed in and through reflection and action in environment: through processes of inquiry. Scott Johnston (2010) writes that "it is out of this union of organism and environment through investigation of experience and its traits that the 'self' is born. Dewey's notion of the self is the product or resultant of inquiry into the transaction between human organism and world" (p. 466). The self emerges in and through participation in a meaning-field, which includes logical objects, tools, and other creative products, as well as roles enacted with and through those objects. This is why, for Dewey, teaching is not a process of direct instruction but in providing "an environment in which native powers will be put to better uses" (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 125).

This is the heart of Dewey's creative ontology and his radical constructivism. Education is not simply the acquisition of information or movement through *a priori* developmental stages, but it is a process of constructing the self. We make ourselves as we creatively engage in and contribute to a meaningful world. As Garrison (1998) argues, "What is the meaning of life? The Deweyan answer is that the meaning of life is to make more meaning" (p. 129). The meanings created in and through inquiry include the meanings of the self. In the final account, the self exists as result of engaged creative activity and is our greatest hermeneutic achievement.

Inquiry as Social-Self Creation

With Dewey's transactional metaphysics and emergent theory of self in view, it is now possible to show how and why his theory of inquiry is not reducible to an active learning strategy, but instead it is a process of social-self creation.

Inquiry as Construction

Dewey's theory of inquiry begins in a rejection of all foundationalism, including the positivist epistemologies that continue to dominate educational research and practice after Thorndike (Stoller, 2014, pp. 8-10).

The positive method imagines that inquiry is a process of laying bare the objective facts which stand in front of researchers. Thorndike expresses this basic concept in claiming that everything that exists, exists in some quantity, and can therefore be measured.[2] This view connects a foundationalist metaphysics (Substance Realism) with a foundationalist epistemology (Correspondence Theory of Truth) to yield a view of inquiry as a process that allows direct knowledge of any object under investigation. The same basic epistemic relationship between knowers and knowns as ontologically distinct manifests also in the view that inquiry is the process of knowers "acquiring" antecedently true knowledge.

Dewey called this position *the spectator theory of knowing*. He believed it characterized all major epistemologies in the West and was one of its most pernicious problems (Dewey, 1929/1984, pp. 3-20). The spectator theory of knowing gives way to the belief that ends (e.g., knowns, facts, skills, etc. …) can be fixed for learners prior to and apart from an experienced process of inquiry. This further means that learning, viewed as a generic, causal process, may be applied unilaterally and irrespective of the student or their unique context.[3]

In contrast positivist epistemology is the pragmatic view of truth, which was first articulated by C. S. Peirce. Peirce argues that we come

to know things in a way that is already pre-determined by the practical goals that brought us to study an object in the first place. For Peirce, there is always an object that exists, but that object is not precisely what is under investigation in scientific study. For Peirce, to have an *object* was already a symbolic construction which was conceptually represented for practical purposes. Peirce (1934) argues that:

> now thought is of the nature of a sign. In that case, then, if we can find out the right method of thinking and can follow it out—the right method of transforming signs—then truth can be nothing more nor less than the last result to which the following out of this method would ultimately carry us. In that case, that to which the representation should conform, is itself something in the nature of a representation, or sign—something noumenal, intelligible, conceivable, and utterly unlike a thing-in-itself. (pp. 390-391)

Peirce did not, on the other hand, conclude that what we know is *merely* a construction—a kind of subjectivist fiction—because material reality does exist. He (1878/2001) argues that "the real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you" (p. 69). For Peirce and for Dewey what is real in the world does not appear to us directly, but is mediated through our purposes in action. The world exists and forces us to respond. Yet, when in attempting to determine the essence of the real, what we are really doing is concentrating on a kind of abstracted concept we, ourselves, have created for our purposes. Peirce therefore rejects the idea that there is such a thing as an individual observer or an individual object, which exist independently. The object and the observer exist simultaneously and bring each other into existence.

Dewey takes up and greatly expands this argument in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, where he shows how objects of knowledge and social meanings (including the meaning of the self) are *constructed through* the process of inquiry.[4] Here, Dewey seeks to dissolve what he calls the epistemology industry, replacing it with a rich theory of inquiry that is broader and more capable than the traditional epistemological project. In its primary phase, the world is simply immediately experienced as both precognitive and unreflective. In Dewey's language it is immediately "had." The "object" of inquiry is what the process of inquiry will create. The world, itself, merely "suggests" objects, but it does not "give" them (Cunningham 1995, p 178). Craig Cunningham (1995) writes that "objects are created in the process of inquiry, when a perception is consciously connected to some other perception or idea. This does not mean, however, that objects of knowledge exist only in the mind. Both brute existences

and objects of knowledge are real; both exist in experience, and both have existential consequences" (p. 178).

The metaphysical significance of this aspect of Dewey's theory of inquiry cannot be understated. For Dewey all inquiry reconstructs experience. When we are engaging in active processes of inquiry we are not simply reconstructing our perception of an external, objective reality, but we are reconstructing *reality itself*. Dewey (1903/1976) writes that "reality is thus dynamic or self-evolving" (p. 296). When an inquirer has undergone a successful process of inquiry they have not *discovered* reality, but they have *changed* reality: a reality that includes the self.

Inquiry and Transformation

As such, inquiry is fundamentally a transformational process. As Dewey (1938/1986) writes, "the category of transformation extends through the whole pattern of inquiry" (p 394). There are three primary dimensions of transformation that occur in and through a successful process of inquiry that have significant implications in Dewey's educational philosophy.

The situation. The first transformation is the existential situation into which an individual or community directed its process of inquiry. Dewey writes (1938/1986), "The experimental phase of method is an overt manifestation of the fact that inquiry effects existential transformation of the existential material that instigates inquiry. Experimentation is not just a practical convenience nor yet a means of modifying states of mind" (p. 458). Inquiry is, instead, "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinately unified one" (p. 121). When an inquirer meaningfully inquires into a situation, he or she succeeds in part because the situation, itself, has been transformed and no longer requires further inquiry.

One of the limitations of applying inquiry as a classroom strategy without understanding its wider philosophical context is that its transformational potential is often stripped out as a result of it being orchestrated and administrated by the aims of the teacher. In this case, the student never undergoes the full arc of successful inquiry. Dewey (1938/1986) writes that "a problem is not a task to be performed which a person puts on himself or that is placed upon him by others—like a so-called arithmetical 'problem' in school work. A problem represents the *partial transformation* by inquiry of a problematic situation into a determinate situation" (pp. 111-112, emphasis added). The educational potential of inquiry is stunted when students are not allowed the experience of turning a truly indeterminate situation into a problematic one.

Students must encounter the very existential process of an emerging problematic if they are to learn how to creatively solve problems and reconstruct their environment.

Meanings. The second dimension of transformation are the meanings which emerge from the process of transforming an indeterminate situation into a determinate one.

For Dewey, *the* philosophic fallacy occurs when knowns are read back into the situation and imagined to have existed at the very beginning, prior to inquiry. In this case, they are imagined to have been discovered by or taken by the inquirer rather than made as a process of active production. Dewey (1938/1976) argues that "what scientific inquirers do, as distinct from what they say, is to execute certain operations of experimentation—which are operations of doing and making—that modify antecedently given existential conditions so that the results of the transformation are facts which are relevant and weighty in solution of a given problem" (p. 492). As Dewey (1938/1976) writes, after "undergoing inquiry, the material has a different logical important from that which it has as the outcome of inquiry" (p. 122). By the time *an idea* has become *a fact* it has undergone a transformation. It originated in a disrupted, synthetic, existential situation and only after successful operations performed becomes a logical object.

Dewey (1916/1980) argues that in undergoing successful inquiry the inquirer gains "an added power of subsequent direction or control" (p. 83). The inquirer also gains an "increased perception of the connections and continuities of the activities in which we are engaged" (p. 82-83). Stated another way, the inquirer's habits of action and of thinking are enriched and expanded as they are widened through the cultivation of emergent meaning-relationships.

Dewey compares an astronomer and a child looking through a telescope. In both cases, there exists the same physical activity: a person gazing through an arrangement of glass and metal. While the physical activity might be the same for both, for the astronomer there is an active productive skill and a wealth of meanings which fill and expand the experience. The astronomer not only has refined habits of seeing, but he has a rich understanding of the solar system, of physics, and of history. Dewey (1916/1980) writes that to "'learn geography' is to gain in power to perceive the spatial, the natural, connections of an ordinary act; to 'learn history' is essentially to gain in power to recognize its human connections" (p. 217). To learn is to begin to inhabit the environment with a particular mode of being in and capacities for engaging the world through the creation of meaning.

Selves. Lastly, inquiry transforms the persons involved in the process. Dewey (1939) writes that "the formation of a self new in some respect or some degree is…involved in every genuine act of inquiry" (p. 587). Inquiry does not simply change what we know, but it changes *who we are* because it concurrently reconstructs our habits, meaning-fields, available social roles, and view of ourselves as agents in the world.

Michel Foucault's work is helpful in illuminating this aspect of Dewey's philosophy. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault argues that Descartes ushered in a deeply problematic turn in the way that we conceptualize the relationship between knowledge and the self.

Prior to Descartes, *epimeleia heauton* (care of oneself) served as the guiding paradigm of philosophy. Under this paradigm it was understood that to access knowledge or truth the subject must undergo a conversion or transformation (Foucault, 2005, pp. XXIV; 10-17). Foucault argues that *epimeleia heauton* guided philosophy until Descartes ushered in *gnothi seauton* (know thyself) as the dominant view. Foucault (2005) writes that "the modern age of the history of truth begins when knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth. That is to say, it is when the philosopher (or the scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognize truth and have access to it in himself and through his acts of knowledge alone, without anything else being demanded of him and without his having to alter or change in any way his being as subject" (p. 17). After Descartes, the self is severed from the act of inquiry. Knowing becomes a gnostic concept: acquisition of information, while the self remains unchanged.

Epimeleia heauton is instead grounded in the "experimental attitude," which is the testing of oneself, or one's mode of being, in and through concrete practices (Foucault, 2005, p. XXVII). Foucault (2005) writes that "we can say that in and of itself an act of knowledge could never give access to the truth unless it was prepared, accompanied, doubled, and completed by a certain transformation of the subject; not of the individual, but of the subject himself in his being as subject" (pp. 15-16). *Epimeleia heauton* is grounded in knowing as a fusion of the knower with the known.

Dewey similarly argues that the act of knowing is not simple acquisition of information, but is a holistic transformation of the self in and through the process of experimental inquiry.

A process of inquiry is predicated on a constellation of elements which enter into a situation (Dewey 1939, p 586-587). When inquiry reconstructs a situation it transforms *all* aspects of that situation—environmental conditions, meanings, habits of the self, and attitudes, among other things—which hang together in a new way as a result of transactional

action that has taken place in the whole. As a result, as Dewey (1939) argues, reconstitution of the self *"is then not incidental but central"* to all acts of inquiry (p 588, emphasis added). Stated another way, a process of inquiry is a reconstitution of the self because to inquire is to transform the world in which the self is transactionally bound.

Conclusion: Educating in the Present

In a critical response to William Deresiewicz (2014), Steven Pinker (2014) writes the following:

> Perhaps I am emblematic of everything that is wrong with elite American education, but I have no idea how to get my students to build a self or become a soul. It isn't taught in graduate school, and in the hundreds of faculty appointments and promotions I have participated in, we've never evaluated a candidate on how well he or she could accomplish it.

In his critique, Pinker expresses a version of the foundationalism that underpins most traditional views of schooling. In such a conceptualization, education is little more than a process of information distribution. The self, if it is considered at all, is little more than a cognitive container for acquiring, recalling, and mentally manipulating information. Inquiry, if taken up as a pedagogical strategy, becomes a tool to catalyze this process of mental acquisition of academic content. At the end of a process of education, the students (the selves) are believed to remain unchanged, save acquisition of academic content and improved skills for mental manipulation of that content. Faculty, as Pinker vehemently argues, have no effect on and therefore bear no responsibility to the selves who enter their classrooms. Education is a simple distribution of information.

By understanding the connection between Dewey's theory of inquiry and his view of the self, it becomes apparent why such a position is a massive error in thinking. For Dewey, the self is neither an *a priori* essence nor ontologically discreet from the world, but emerges in and through transacting with the world - through the processes and practice of inquiry. Education is not a process of knowledge acquisition viewed as a gnostic concept, but a transformational process of growth and social-self creation. It is a process of humanization as we create and reconstruct our very being.

One of Dewey's most quoted statements is that education is not preparation for life, but is the very act of life itself (Dewey 1893/1971, p 50). This idea is also perhaps the most misunderstood of all his educational claims and certainly the least acted upon.

This claim from Dewey is one of the earliest in his continued concern

for educating *in the present*—a view he contrasts against education of the past or for an imagined future (see Dewey, 1916/1980 pp. 59-88). Education in the present means taking seriously the idea that education should involve students meaningfully and directly in their present experience as a way of constructing themselves and their world. As Dewey (1916/1980) writes "the mistake is not in attaching importance to preparation for future need, but in making it the mainspring of present effort. Because the need of preparation for a continually developing life is great, it is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible. Then as the present merges insensibly into the future, the future is taken care of" (p. 61). To do the opposite—to fill education with solutions from the past to be deployed into an imagined future—is to evacuate inquiry and, therefore, the self from the process of education.

To the contrary, Dewey defines education as a process of present-focused inquiry and, therefore, social-self creation. For him, education is the "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 82). This claim demands that we organize the architectures of education in such a way that they allow students to directly experience and participate in the kinds of ambiguous, value-laden, and relationally complex problems that are constitutive of life itself. In this way, education becomes nothing more and nothing less than an ongoing process of inquiry into present experience as a way of transforming not only what we know, but who we are.

Notes

[1] Dewey's views were heavily influenced by George Herbert Mead, who was Dewey's close friend and collaborator. In articulating Dewey's theory of self I will draw heavily from Mead's position, moving freely between the two. For those unfamiliar with the work of Dewey and Mead, it is important to note that while there are significant overlaps between their philosophical systems, Mead was primarily interested in employing philosophy as a way to explain how participation in the flow of coordinated action (i.e. immediate meaningful responses) transforms into consciousness of meaning (i.e., the awareness of the distinction between "the thing" and "what it means") (Biesta 1998, p 92). Dewey's primary concern, which is interrelated with Mead's, focuses more specifically on the construction, interpretation, and consequences of meaningful action for self and society.

[2] Specifically, Thorndike (1918) argued that "Whatever exists at all, exists in some amount. To know it thoroughly involves knowing its quantity as well as its quality" (p. 16). The assumption Thorndike makes is that it is only possible to know those things which can be measured and, therefore, measurement is

the ground for understanding everything which exists in the universe. Here, measurement serves as Thorndike's transcendental signifier.

[3] Here it might be assumed that contemporary constructivism has refuted this position but, at the ground, many constructivist paradigms still hold a foundationalist epistemology (Garrison, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Vanderstraeten, 2002).

[4] With limited space available, I am only able to summarize the details of Dewey's theory of inquiry. I would refer readers to Logic: the theory of inquiry (1938/1976), particularly pages 105-122.

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