

## **Past and Present**

### **A Critical Analysis of the Journal of Thought, Volume I and Volume 55**

**Carleigh Bristol Slater**  
*Seattle Pacific University*

#### **Abstract**

This analysis hopes to enlighten new and current readers to the historical context of the *Journal of Thought*. By dissecting the first volume of publications in 1966 to the Fall/Winter publication of 2021 the author compares the original and contemporary intentions and focus of the *Journal* to illuminate a timeline and continued insight into educational situations.

#### **Introduction**

*Experience is the child of Thought, and Thought is the child of action.*  
—Benjamin Disraeli

The *Journal of Thought* offers a reflective examination of educational issues from diverse perspectives. The intention of the *Journal* is to create a discourse between scholars that challenges and clarifies unique problems throughout the educational system, societal viewpoints and cross-cultural integration.

The earliest issue of The *Journal of Thought* appeared in 1966

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*Carleigh Bristol Slater is a Ph.D. in education candidate at the University of Edinburgh and a primary grades public school teacher in the United States. Email address: slatercarleigh@gmail.com*

during the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and directly after the Great Society programs for education reform commenced. These influences of society can be found within the premier issue and throughout the journals many years of publication. While times have changed, the polarity may not be as vast as some may assume. It is evident by comparing the 1st volume and the 55th volume of the *Journal* that in fact viewpoints on curriculum, society at large, and major moral dilemmas are less juxtaposed than some may have assumed.

The articles in the earliest issues are focused on a society at risk. The social challenges put forth by Robert R. Sherman in his article, "Civil Disobedience: Challenge of the Laws as a Principal of Democracy," portray a divided world. The controversies within colleges and academia as well as between American society and the government loom above all else in this major contribution first published in the summer of 1966. Asking critical questions, such as how we can challenge and obey simultaneously, still resonates deep within American society to this day. Similarly, in the article, "Intersectionality, Decolonization, and Educating for Critical Consciousness" Jennifer Gale de Sax and Bonnie Estelle-Trotter-Simmons (2021) examine the current status of rebellion through a lens of critical consciousness and its relation to decolonizing education in the article released in the Fall-Winter 2021 publication. Western society finds itself in a never-ending search through critical consciousness when contemplating the moral values of war and educational reform. Although the articles are spaced 55 years apart, we can see the direct connection to self, society and value of education. The question threaded through both remains the same and one that pangs the status quo. How can we encourage a rebellious youth that forces progress while keeping them amenable enough to be taken seriously by the masses? How do we as the more experienced generation both enable, uplift, and step back while maintaining some sense of control? Or is it this control that we must relinquish entirely? In essence where should the power lie and at what point is it transferred? Can there ever be a true balance?

The *Journal* continues to challenge the systems of society in both education and political realms which can be seen in both the initial volumes and the most current issue. The values of intersectionality and critical discourse are referenced across many past and present issues however, by examining the first and last issues published we can find correlation to Learner Centered Curriculum. Learner Centered Curriculum supports the ideals of self-realization and self-actualization at its core. According to Ellis (2004), taking a discovery approach towards knowledge that is non-linear, emergent, and unstructured leads the

individual towards self-discovery. The article, “The importance of the Choice of Work,” published by Vernon L. Willis in 1966, concerns vocational occupation and the individual’s role they play in society. Willis states, “The proper occupation for any person is one that corresponds to his assets and abilities and offers opportunities for him to live a happy and successful and useful life” (p. 33). A further statement regarding Learner Centered Curriculum was in the most recent publication in the article, “Untapped Potential” by Shannon Mersand. Mersand references the quote, “Education should be designed to reveal the talents and skills of every child” by Pamela Cantor. We can distinctly see the value of choice in both streams of thought despite the time and societies with which readers find themselves. The connections to the importance of the individual’s skills and talents in the world through vocational choices according to Willis (1966) are parallel to the arguments for a Learner Centered Curriculum and student choice found in the recent article by Mersand (2021).

Facilitating a well-rounded and holistic approach to educating youth and young adults through both a knowledge-centered and learner-centered approach is reinforced and illustrated in “Graphic Instructional Pedagogy” by James O. Barbre III and Joshua B. L. Tolbert in the 55th volume of the *Journal*. They posit that changing the approach to literature and its applications as well as reframing the graphic novels value within language arts curriculums will enhance any curriculum. Offering choice and increasing core knowledge through the use of graphic texts allows students to engage in visual, sensory, and inquiry-based learning strategies. Further, it offers a framework of curriculum that values storytelling and adds a lens of cultural relevance that otherwise may be overlooked.

A further connection to the 1966 *Journal of Thought* can be seen in “Research: A Foundation for Teaching.” According to James Van Patten in his editorial piece, written for the 2nd volume of the *Journal* in 1966, teachers must never stop learning and must be consistently expanding their views and knowledge of curriculums and practices that better support their students. While Van Patten is referencing teachers as researchers, we can directly see the action pieces taking form in the most current issue with Barbe and Tolbert. Their research and foundational findings only prove Van Patten’s premise devised some 55 years earlier.

Further critical areas of educational theory and societal structures are connected through a theme of social systems and social justice commentary. The challenges and questions set forth across a stream of articles both past and present show a development of thought over

time. The *Journal of Thought* shifts from one of examination of social structure in America to that of implementing and activating systems of change in the social system of present-day America. Articles such as “Quality, Cost and Time” by Rahul Kumar confront the long-debated question of what constitutes a quality education and what factors are most important for student success. Arthur K. Ellis states that “society based curriculum is based on social issues and is orientated towards the problems of living: life problems, community affairs and real world issues.” The iron triangle posited by Kumar reflects a society centered dilemma as we reflect on the true nature and structures of higher educational programs for international students and other critical stakeholders.

Erwina Godfrey previously examined, in her editorial piece from 1966, the societal implications of globalism in her article, “The War on Poverty.” Godfrey offers context and questions the moral dilemmas of what constitutes poverty, is it solely monetary or something else? This article asks readers to examine a society that centers itself not around a bloody war, such as the conflict in Vietnam, but one that can be resolved through moral obligation and calls on the American people to rally behind a positive cause. While this article does not include curriculum intentionally, we can anticipate that Godfrey would endorse a society centered curriculum with emphasis on community and global citizenship.

Examining and synthesizing articles from the premier issue to the most recent publication of the *Journal of Thought* has shown that time, while linear, has a recirculating pursuit of perspective and truth in the multifaceted realms of society. We can see through the analysis of articles that positions shift and answers offered may evolve. However, the best thinkers, teachers, writers, and learners have always valued a window to the past to provide a foundation for the future as seen in the many connections throughout the lifespans of the *journal*. It is the experiences of the people who have come before that will shape the future and the educational chronology is only better secured and archived by the *Journal of Thought*.

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