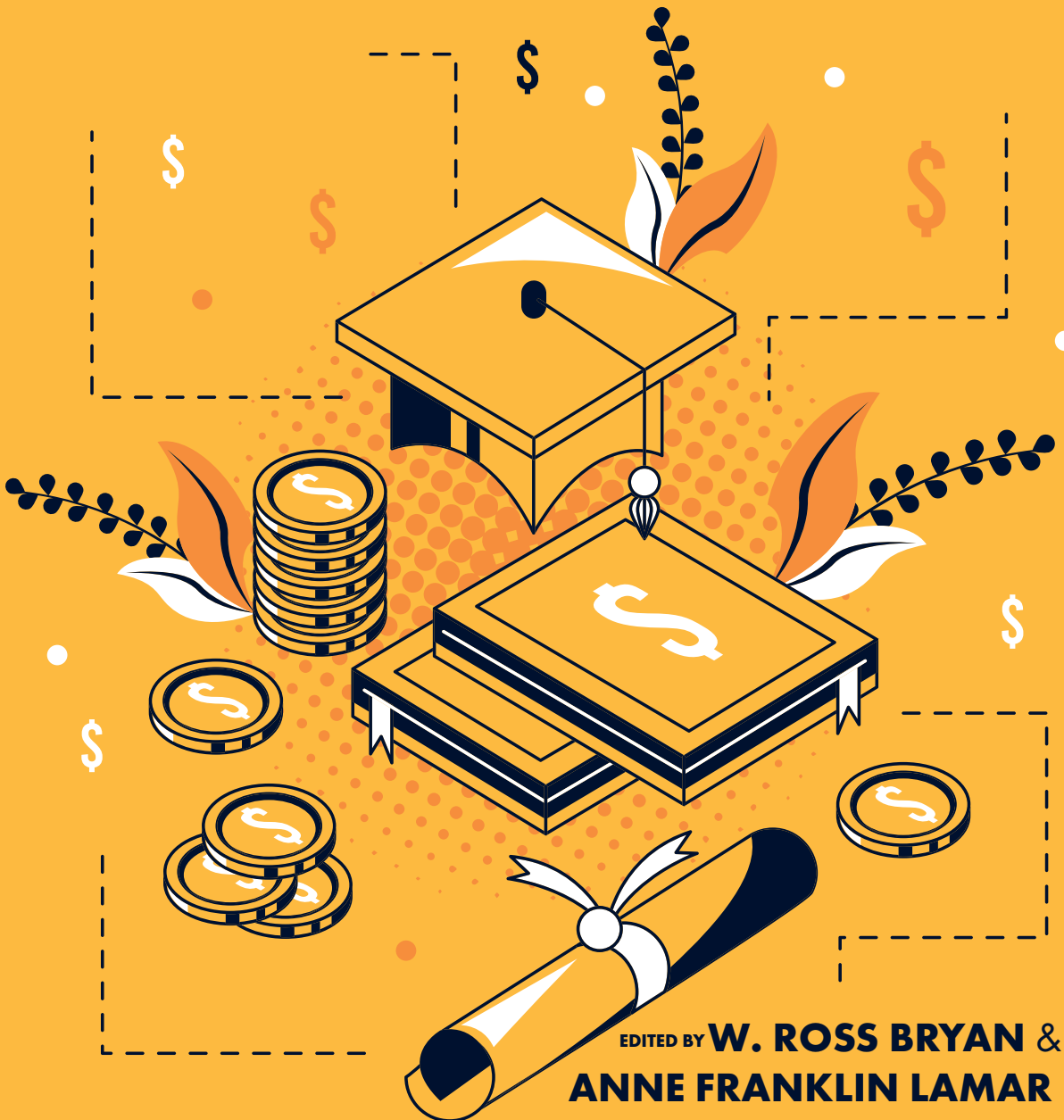


FOUNDATIONS OF

Engaged Scholarship

REVISED 2nd EDITION



EDITED BY **W. ROSS BRYAN &
ANNE FRANKLIN LAMAR**

REVISED SECOND EDITION

Foundations of Engaged Scholarship

EDITED BY

W. Ross Bryan and Anne Franklin Lamar

University of Alabama—Tuscaloosa



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CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
CHAPTER 1	
The Curious Case of Education	1
Darren Surman, W. Ross Bryan, and Joshua L. Fuller	
CHAPTER 2	
Why Honors? The Purposes and Values of Public Honors Education	23
Lynda Coon, Sheila Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Tara Williams	
CHAPTER 3	
Belongingness in Education: A Critical Institutional Issue Examined from Psychological and Social Perspectives	35
Ryan Alverson	
CHAPTER 4	
Critical Thinking Skills: The Process, Due Process, and Practice	53
Chad Tindol	
CHAPTER 5	
Engaged Scholarship	69
Leslie Parkins, Davis Jackson, Jackson Knappen, Garrett Barnes, Alexandra Huechteman, Karson Holmes, and Brett Austin	
CHAPTER 6	
Becoming a Public Intellectual	87
Charles Yeganian	

CHAPTER 7		
A Call for Empathy		109
Anne Franklin Lamar		
CHAPTER 8		
Developing Identity and Agency as a Scholar		123
Alexandra Gonzenbach Perkins		
CHAPTER 9		
Inquiry		139
Dr. John Latta		
CHAPTER 10		
Difference and Belonging: How to Leverage the Power of Diversity in College and Beyond		161
Cassander L. Smith		
CHAPTER 11		
A Student's Conclusion		175
Namie Franco		
CHAPTER 12		
Plato's Cave and Your Path to Enlightenment		187
John Kitchens		

FOREWORD

This program is more than one of this institution's elite colleges or schools. It is a transformational experience.

During your time in this program, you will learn that asking the right questions is as important as knowing the right answers, that commitment and compassion are as important as competency, and that making a difference for others is as important as the success you personally achieve.

Thucydides said “we should remember that one man is much the same as another and that he is best who is trained in the severest school.” This program is definitely not a “severe” school, but it will test, develop, and strengthen you. It will cause you to question ideas, values, society, the status quo, and yourself, and, in so doing, greatly enhance your horizons and your aspirations.

The essays in this book were written to help introduce you to an outstanding program and the experience before you.

Robert E. Witt
Professor and President Emeritus
University of Alabama

The Curious Case of Education

Darren Surman, W. Ross Bryan, and Joshua L. Fuller

Editor's Introduction

Two of my favorite colleagues have joined me in the following chapter to set the groundwork for this text. I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Joshua Fuller as a student in the classroom and then as my research assistant. Dr. Darren Surman has been one of my favorite colleagues for the past 8 years, and we have had many robust discussions about the “how,” “why,” and “so what” of education. I had the pleasure of being in the audience when Dr. Surman delivered one of the best convocation speeches I have ever heard. I invited him to help us take the lead in providing a springboard into education and the role of the student within their own pedagogy. We have tried to explore the philosophy of education, how we fund education across society, and, finally, how much your education and educational opportunities should matter to you.

We ask large questions of educational institutions and the student who fill seats within them. What is the purpose of you taking a seat in your classroom? Is it to get a job? Is it to become an enlightened citizen? Perhaps, it is to make connections with your fellow classmates as well as the faculty and staff, who can help you attain success in the future.

Additionally, we question access to education and how education plays a role in producing “winners” and “losers” in our society. This may sound harsh, but education, more than any other institution, helps decide the fate of your fellow classmates. We wrestle with each of these issues in the following chapter.

It is important for us to begin with some simple, grand narrative questions to consider. The idea of education was not invented by your college or university or by your K–12 experience. Many educational philosophers have discussed the notions of and differences between “schooling,” “learning,” “indoctrination,”

“liberation,” and others. For the purposes of this discussion, the chapter seeks to highlight why society educates and how we have constructed school from K–16 and beyond as well as give some framework to develop the relevance of modern education for the collective reader. More simply, we try to answer the “so what” of education.

Why Society Educates

For young scholars or, more specifically, university students entering college or university, it is paramount to decide why you have chosen to be in the seat you have taken in the modern university. It is my understanding that you do not want to be living in your parent’s basement in 4 years. Trust that your folks do not want you to be there either. What do you hope to gain from this matriculation? Is it to obtain a job that will pay enough for you to take care of yourself in the way you have become accustomed? Perhaps, you are seeking to become an enlightened individual. (This is what your faculty like to think.) Or finally, and most simply, do you want to become socially mobile? Would you like to have a bigger house than your parents, a nicer car, and a white picket fence to clearly delineate your and your neighbor’s property? You will need this demarcation to hold your beloved pet and 2.4 children. This is a quick, simplistic way to view the purpose of education, and it is certainly focused on the individual.

If we were to move toward the collective reasoning of why we educate, would it be as simple? For instance, I had an old professor, Gerald Unks (professor emeritus, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), who used to tell his students that “we all pay for the undereducated and the miseducated.” Dr. Unks told us we had to start with the understanding that “what we are really doing in education is deciding who has power in the next generation.” As of the writing of this chapter, this remains a truth. It does not, however, fully explain why we have chosen to educate the way we do as a collective. It is possible to follow the line of thought we have covered for the individual: so people can get jobs, move society forward by developing new knowledge and passing it on, and then progress with a higher standard of living. This is not easily done.

What happens if people do not want to be educated? This notion may seem silly but should be explored. Not everyone can have a high paying job ... can they? What would we do if everyone in our society had a college degree? Would that work in the job market? My generation had a great pop culture icon originating from a movie titled *Caddyshack*. Ted Knight played a character named Judge Smalls, who told his caddy on the golf course that if he could not afford to go to college

and law school, it was acceptable because “the world needed ditch diggers too.” How does this square with the American Dream and/or equal access to education? Quite simply, it does not. Is education a product or a right that all citizens of our country should be afforded, or should it be viewed as a commodity that is available for individuals to purchase and benefit from? One thing is certain: Education consumes a fair amount of societal resources. In fact, the United States spends more on primary and secondary public education than most developed nations. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), the United States spends \$620 billion on primary and secondary public education—6.4% of its GDP. Dividing that across all the public-school students in the United States amounts to roughly \$12,300 per public school student per year (OECD, 2014; Fast Facts, n.d.).

Is education a public good or a private good? How do we view it? Does it enable and empower the individual or society? Should it be controlled by the federal government or the local school board? The simple answer is that we cannot decide as a macro- or micro community. It has vexed us since the founding of our nation. Again, as Dr. Unks tells us, we all philosophically “pay” for education; should we not all benefit from it?

There are many ways to discuss the “why” of education. David Labaree (2000) lays out three main goals of education in our nation’s history that can easily be framed as philosophies, for our purposes:

Grounded in this contradictory social context, the history of American education has been a tale of ambivalent goals and muddled outcomes. Like other major institutions in American society, education has come to be defined as an arena that simultaneously promotes equality and adapts to inequality. Within schools, these contradictory purposes have translated into three distinguishable educational goals, each of which has exerted considerable impact without succeeding in eliminating the others. I call these goals democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. (2000)

Labaree’s goals give us a foothold to interrogate the “why” of education in a bit more detail. In his democratic equality philosophy, education is seen as a public good to benefit everyone. It is required that all citizens go through the process of schooling so that they may be competent citizens. In this model, school is compulsory (everyone must attend) and is meant to be equitable. “One argues that a democratic society cannot persist unless it prepares all of its young with equal care to take on full responsibilities of citizenship in a competent manner”

(Labaree 2000 p. 42). This philosophy lends itself to the idea that everyone must have the same curriculum, delivered in the same way, at the same time. This takes us to the need for a unified curriculum. If we are all being prepared in the same way for citizenship, then we must all have the same material and delivery methods (pedagogy). An easy critique of this model would lead us to the position that not all of us learn in the same way; one could also argue different people would like to focus on different fields of study and may have different levels of interest and competencies. However, we must keep in mind that these are philosophies, not concrete steps to educating society.

In Labaree's social efficiency model, education is also seen as a public good. In this model, education is meant to fulfill job roles within society. If we need more widget factory workers, then we must create them in our schools. We will input widget factory knowledge into our curriculum, and students will be tracked into these pathways. In this way, curriculum is driven by the job market. This creates a socially efficient model for our students to follow. Students will be tested and tracked into job roles that they show competence in. The intent is not for "Big Brother" to have education as its tool; the intent is for us all to be working and able to earn a living. It is difficult to dispute the fact that this philosophy lends itself to high-stakes testing, tracking of students, and ability groups. That standardized test you took in the fourth grade suddenly has much more significance. It may mean you are a line worker in the widget factory or, perhaps, you have more potential and could possibly supervise the factory. This would lead to stratified curriculum at some point. The factory line worker would have a different set of values placed on their education than the leadership of the factory. Either way, this seems a bit limiting of student's aspirations, although it certainly would be efficient (said the fascist ... wink).

The third philosophy is the one that is most closely tied to Judge Smails: social mobility. In this model, education is seen as a private good and goes to the highest bidder. Instead of curriculum becoming stratified, institutions become stratified. This stratification is generally based in cost to the consumer. In this model, education is commodified, and its quality is dependent on what the student can afford. In this scenario, education is also market driven, in that institutions change and bend to what the customer (student) wants. This means, as a professor, I could theoretically sell my class to the students as, "Let me just take a few minutes and tell you how this freshman seminar will benefit your future self; you need this course and I am just the one to provide it for you. I promise you, I will be funny and charming, and you will come out as a better student—just look at my ratemyprofessor.com surveys." We may be closer to this one than I originally thought. I think I just made myself queasy.

In classes, I get to this point and show a logo of Lexus and one of Toyota. Now, there is nothing wrong with a Toyota; I own two of them! I ask students if they would like the Toyota of education or the Lexus of education. Most students choose the Lexus version; the best part of this question is that the question is somewhat loaded. These hypothetical education companies are selling the same product, right? Toyota and Lexus are owned by the same company, but the cars they make are not the same product. One is the luxury version, the upscale type, the high end; whatever it is, my initial thought is that we are basically talking about the same product. One just has more bells and whistles—a better sound system, leather interior, a moon roof, and so on. If we are basically buying the same car or education, then why does one cost more than the other? In education, this boils down to how society views this commodity. Is my degree from the University of North Carolina Asheville the same as one from Harvard? No. Why? Because society views it differently. And although I loved my classmates at UNC Asheville, maybe I would have had “better” classmates at Harvard. It is very possible that my having been educated at Harvard would have given me the ability to think differently or have power windows and a moon roof. Perhaps, this is a good time to move to the “how” of education.

Here, we meet Dr. Unks again. Remember when he said, “What we are really doing in education is deciding who has power in the next generation”? We have discussed the “why” of education, and we are now move onto the “how.” As a researcher and intellectual, I like to boil things down quickly and then create a space to work within. Let us assume that Dr. Unks is right. How do we operationalize this within schools?

How Society Educates

To understand how this power plays out in students’ education, let’s start with what we value in education. Here is a fact for you to ponder: it would be easy for me to walk into any kindergarten classroom in this country and tell you which students would go on to college or university. I could do this and be about 95% accurate. I only need to know one piece of information that has nothing to do with achievement or ability. All I need to know is what the student’s parents or caregivers do for a living. This is a bold statement, and I have never tested it, but I would be willing to bet I could do it. This untested fact does not make me feel good and warm. In fact, it makes me kind of queasy again. Social scientists refer to this as *social reproduction*, defined as “the reproduction of the structure of the relations of force between the classes” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 11). The idea

is that we reproduce the same pathways for our children that we had. Being socially mobile is very difficult and does not happen often; is it even possible? Of course! However, it takes a tremendous amount of resources, hard work, and luck to do it.

What implicit and explicit messages are we sending and receiving about education on a very surface level? Are these messages laden with societal values? In other words, as it relates to education and how we educate, what do *we* value? Specifically, how do we fund public schools? In the private realm, are there “good” schools and “better” schools? If you attended a public or a private school in your home town, I would be willing to bet you could give me a pretty good rundown on the best to worst schools both public and private. What is this calculation based on? Is it the physical building and quality of books within the school? Is it the average income of the school’s teachers and administrators? Perhaps, it’s how good their football team is? Or maybe it’s the achievement level of the students within the school? Would it surprise you to know that we spend different amounts on students’ education based on where they live? There is a simple formula that is the basis for how public schools are funded nationally. It sometimes is supplemented by states and local governments, but the fundamental formula is called Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE), and it is as follows: tax base multiplied by the tax rate divided by the number of pupils in the district. Jonathan Kozol (1991) dedicated a whole book to this notion, titled *Savage Inequalities*. He did a masterful job of highlighting the differences in public school funding, citing examples from around the country using districts adjacent to each other. This is a larger issue that can be teased out at another time, but the relevance to this project is the values we convey to our students when we see that society spends different dollar amounts on their education. Do we value some students more than others? Do we invest more in some students than others? Is this based on anything they can control?

As consumers of higher education, students seemingly have more control of their educational dollars with regard to where and how they are spent. For the first time in many of their experiences, they choose where to attend. However, this decision is based on many factors that are not very far from the democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility philosophies. To revisit a common thematic question, why are you here?

Again, we see this complicated by the idea of funding. Colleges and universities are not immune from the funding bug. In fact, institutions of higher education are arguably more affected by funding models. The Per Pupil Expenditure formula is not in play, but state appropriations, merit and needs-based scholarships, and access to opportunities certainly are. As an academic, I think the three crown jewels of student satisfaction in their college choice are housing facilities, dining facilities/

options, and recreation facilities (all in the student life realm). This fact does not keep me warm at night, but I understand that feeling at home and connected to their context is, perhaps, more important to incoming students than quality of instruction or faculty. Research tells us that a sense of belonging is paramount to success in higher education (Alverson, 2015; see Chapter 3).

How do these facts help us better understand how we educate in K–16? To better explain, I draw on the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu gives us this notion of cultural capital to use as a way to explain how we educate. As a reminder, this is directly tied to the “why” of education and the philosophies we discussed in the first part of this chapter.

For this argument, think about cultural capital as something you carry around in your pocket. You use this capital multiple times a day to negotiate power and purchase things you want or need within your context. This concept can also be understood formulaically:

$$\text{Social Capital} + \text{Economic Capital} = \text{Cultural Capital}$$

Social Capital can be defined as who you know or what societal contacts you have. Have you ever gotten a job because you knew someone who worked at the company? Other things such as race; class; gender; socioeconomic status; and sexual orientation, preference, or identity can function as social capital that give you contextual power or influence. Bourdieu warns us that these forms of capital are contingent upon context, meaning any of these forms of capital matter only in particular ways in particular places. For example, as the professor of a class, I have a fair amount of capital and can give some of that to my students as it relates to class, our institution of higher education, or simply providing a reference. My capital, or the capital my students may take from me, is less than if we were in a different context or if they needed my influence/power to help them get a loan to buy a new car. Banks and loan officers do not necessarily care if your professor thinks you are intellectually in the top 5% of the class.

Economic Capital is a bit more simply defined. It is currency, dollars, rubles, chickens, euros—anything that can be traded or bartered with to gain something. One can certainly have a tremendous amount of economic capital and very little social capital, thusly lowering one’s cultural capital (a reminder that the formula is Social + Economic = Cultural).

Cultural Capital is relevant to this discussion because it is the way we negotiate power in society. I would also argue that this is the primary way we educate. As educators, we are providing students with opportunities to gain capital. Society

has set up this structure for students to take advantage of “opportunities,” so that they may “bank” their cultural capital (Freiere, 1972). Students then use this capital to navigate their educational contexts. The chief piece of capital in and out of the classroom is grades; this subject is too large to discuss in this chapter but consider, for a moment, how powerful a grade is to you. A pointed example is the significance of your standardized test score for college entry. A strong ACT or SAT score is very powerful and functions as capital within the context of higher education institutions, but as a reminder from Bourdieu, it would not matter much in my weekly pickup basketball game. However, your ACT/SAT test scores along with your GPA had significant impact on where you chose to attend, who you were going to attend with, and how much you were going to have to pay for this opportunity. While it may seem simplistic to funnel all the “how” of education into this one concept, it is an elegantly basic way to think of it. Take a moment and think about how much this one concept matters in education, particularly if you keep in the front of your mind that what we are really doing in education is deciding who has power in the next generation.

In the coming pages, we expand on how we educate by using other examples, but this is the most important one. For instance, why are you in the seat you are in right now? As far as I understand the purpose of this project, your professor wants you to begin thinking about grand narrative questions to consider while you matriculate. Your professor wants you to be exposed to foundational ideas and toil with them. Once you have developed your opinion on these large questions, you can begin to take on other questions and develop your own thoughts and critique.

We have discussed the “why” of education and mapped the “how” that this is actualized in K–16 education. Some of these philosophies are in direct contradiction with each other as well as the ideas concerning how education gets played out in society. How can we explain this phenomenon to ourselves and, most importantly, the students receiving our educational efforts? We have a very hard time agreeing on the overall purpose of education in American society; is it any wonder that there are huge inequalities in how education is enacted? For a better understanding of the next step in this thought exercise, we move to answering the “so what” of education. It will not illuminate some magical answer—far from it—but we may make more sense of education and why it should matter so much to us.

So What?

Education has historically been seen as the great equalizer of societal ills (Unks, 2000). It has been called on to rid us of “isms,” inequalities, and injustices. While

I am not quite sure how fair it is to put this on education's shoulders, teachers and federal, state, and local school administrators have been trying to address various movements for over 100 years. The Russians launched Sputnik, thus beginning the space race. "Education will catch us up, and we will beat them," rang out national sentiment. Racism has become a societal anchor? Education can fix that! Japanese car doors close better than ours? Our nation (and our schools) must be at risk (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). We need to fix our schools—right now!

The very first text I was required to read as a doctoral student was John Willinsky's 1998 book, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End*, which contains a comprehensive discussion on why the philosophy and actualization of education matters to a society. In his work, Willinsky goes to great lengths to show that the Western notion of education is rooted in imperialism and colonialism, to show that this historical indoctrination has given educators the opportunity to create the purpose, result, and weight of education. Willinsky encapsulates it this way:

To establish the degree to which our current ideas of education may have been influenced by the global forces of imperialism, I lay out, in the following three historical chapters, the different ways in which imperialism was bent on taking a knowing possession of the world, on setting that world on public display for the edification of the West, and on developing the principal forms of schooling that might serve both colonial state and colonized native. (2000, p. 19)

When I discuss this piece of Willinsky's text in class, I always make a big show of drawing out precisely how I do this in the classroom because educators remain implicit in this system. As a teacher, I always spend the first day of class selling myself and the syllabus is in front the student. I tell some jokes, tell the class about myself as well as my background and experience, and discuss why this course (which I refer to as the greatest class ever) will benefit them and their future selves. I casually ask them what they would like to discuss in the course and make a grand show of saying (in the most benevolent manner), "I know what I think about this subject and how it relates to the world we live in, but I am most concerned about what *you* think" (taking knowledge). I then write down their thoughts and concerns and go back to my office to weave their wants, needs, and ideas into the fabric of the course. In the very next class, I present them with an updated syllabus filled with their thoughts and ideas on what we will cover throughout the semester

(public display for edification). I convince them that I am a benevolent educator who simply wants to make the world a better place by sharing in some discourse (serving the colonizer). Now, gentle reader, am I a bad guy? I don't think of myself as a bad professor, but I think Dr. Seuss would have a field day with me! It seems "Grinchy" in some ways, doesn't it? If education tried to extract itself from this imperialist model, how would we do it? What would we have to do? Foucault (1979) warns us that we need to, at the very least, examine where and how students sit, the time allotted to lessons, how nonadherence to school is played out, and how the curriculum is developed and who it benefits from it. Conversely, don't we need order? Don't we all benefit from a shared notion of what and how school is articulated? Shouldn't we all learn in the same way or at least learn the same type of stuff? What about the "great books"? Are they suddenly not so great anymore?

Upon closer examination, my role is to create content on what I know; dress it up and make it pretty and wanted by the students; convince students that it will benefit them in some way; and then, ultimately, sell it to the class. Certainly, this is a cynical way to look at education, but put this scenario back in the Willinsky model of K-16 education. It hits all the notes of imperialism, doesn't it? I am the colonizer, and you are the colonized. I am creating little Rossites to go out and make the world a better place. Right?

What is "right" is not on my side. My daughter is 12 years old and understands enough of the world to relate to the good-versus-evil calculations. As college students, you all understand that this calculation can sometimes be very complicated. Are we sometimes complicit in really rotten and awful things? Of course we are. Life is complicated. For example, is Darth Vader a bad guy? He is not a bad guy in the beginning or at the end, right? Who decides what good and bad are? More explicitly, who decides good and bad classes, good and bad schools, or good and bad professors? Is my worth as a professor simply based on how popular I am on ratemyprofessor.com or the college's satisfaction surveys given out at the end of the term? Do we value my entertainment and joke quality more than actual transfer of knowledge to the student? (Don't answer that one.)

In part, Willinsky (1998) is interrogating the idea of power and control of curriculum. If we take a step back and look at education in totality, we must ask ourselves an additional question: "Who decides what we learn and how we learn it?" This is not the same as the "why," "how," and "so what" of education; it is related but slightly different. Who decides what we learn and what truth is? What is the difference between truth and knowledge? In Philosophy 101 we learn that there may be a big "T" truth and a little "t" truth. We find out that truth is subjective and can certainly be manipulated or massaged. Our role in education is to pursue truth

in all forms. However, who is pushing truth and, perhaps more importantly, whose ideology is being promoted? Remember, controlling education is tremendously powerful.

Gerald Unks discusses the way schools are set up as a factory:

The model that emerged as “the ideal” was not based on any psychological knowledge or established educational philosophy. The ideal school was based on a model borrowed from business and industry—the factory. Much that goes on in schools—the division of educational task into twelve “grades,” the division of the school day into periods, the ringing bells, the system of quality control (A, B, C, D, F), the idea that everyone in the class should be working on the same material at the same time and at the same rate—all can be explained as remnants of the decision to base American schools on the factory model. (2000, p. 100)

Are students made in America fine motor vehicles? This notion that once students travel through the assembly line, gaining valuable skills and knowledge as they go through the factory is ridiculous. Yet we are bound by this idea that after going through this machination process, competent and engaged citizens pop out at the end, ready for the showroom floor. My old professor, Dr. Unks (2000, p. 101), puts a fine point on how our factory model of schooling has worked historically: “Most college students will admit that they were never really challenged in high school. Twenty-five percent of our population is functionally illiterate. At least 15 percent have never been challenged by the school to work up to full capacity simply because the mold was no challenge for them. What industry, other than publicly funded bureaucracy, peopled by mindless ninnyes, could stay in operation with a 40 percent rate of failure?”

This seems a bit harsh, but these numbers are backed up by current research and reporting. The Literacy Project (“Staggering Illiteracy,” n.d.) reports that 50% of adults in our country can’t read a book at an eighth-grade level, 45 million are functionally illiterate and read below a fifth-grade level, 44% of American adults do not read one book in a year, and 60% of households do not buy a single book in a year. These numbers are staggering and highlight the failings of how we have actualized schooling in our communities.

Who has built the factory, and what product should we expect to see as an output? In “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus” (Althusser, 1971), the reader is presented with a framework to better understand society and

societal power dissemination. Althusser presents the reader with pillars, or tools, used by the state to promote or push ideology; he calls them “Ideological State Apparatus” (religious, educational, family, legal, political, communications, and cultural). Althusser posits that the ideological state apparatus define and qualify social order. If we were to define what being an American is, we could start with an examination of the ideological state apparatus and how they have helped construct this notion of “Americanism.” Among these, he lists education as perhaps the “dominant Ideological State Apparatus” (104). Althusser describes the educational ISA as so powerful because it is the premiere way for societal power to be reproduced:

It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most ‘vulnerable’, squeezed between the family State apparatus and the educational State Apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses old or new methods, a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). (104)

The educational state apparatus and its presentation is not meant to bog down our conversation; I include it to simply put forth the idea that education is controlled by ideology and that the ruling class controls that ideology and will use education to reproduce itself and the structures that benefit it. We could have discussed this in the beginning of this chapter with the “why” of education, but that would have been a little soon to discuss class struggle and “social reproduction.” However, it does help us get deeper into the “so what” of education.

Who Can You Be in Such a “Factory”?

The problems, questions, and circumstances previously identified are ones that you, as a student, will continue to wrestle with and try to learn how to navigate. *You* will continue to move through this factory in your attempts to *make* and *find* meaning. I’d like to conclude this chapter by offering you some things that may be useful to you on such a journey but also challenge you to take on the responsibility to get the most *complete* education you can in the process of moving through the social apparatuses that comprise what we know of as “education.” But what is a complete education? And how will your experience in college lay the groundwork

for such a thing so that with it, you can later be instrumental in helping build the kind of world we all need?

One of the best convocation addresses I have witnessed speaks to this issue very nicely. The address, delivered by Dr. Darren Surman, was inspired by a work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and was entitled “Remember ... Intelligence is Not Enough.” The eloquent words and ideas that Dr. Surman delivered are reproduced here to provide you, the reader, with some concluding thoughts, and questions, about the relationships between education, power, identity, freedom, and meaning.:

In many of my classes, I enjoy having my students begin by reading a lesser-known piece by Martin Luther King, Jr. The piece, entitled “The Purpose of Education”, was written by King when he was 18 years old and it was published in the Morehouse College campus newspaper, the Maroon Tiger. In the piece, there is one line that continually stands out to students, and it has to me as well since the first time I read it. King wrote, “We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” When we discuss this line in class, in the larger context of the essay, it becomes clear that what we are talking about is a kind of education of the mind (intelligence), and, a kind of education of the heart (character). Now, you all know very well what an education of the mind entails. In fact, you are already quite successful at it. After all, you’re here! You know how to study, to retain information, how to take tests, how to write papers. You all have proven to us already that you know how to make A’s. And though you may not be, skill-wise, where you eventually see yourself as being within your major field of study, you have a pretty good idea about how to get there. You know what it is to commit yourself to an education of the mind, of the sacrifices that must be made, and of the joy that accompanies the affirmation when you earn an A+. In fact, one of the greatest commitments an Honors student typically makes during their academic career is to the pursuit of the A+. Perfectionism and the education of the mind are familiar concepts for you.

But, King says, “Remember, intelligence is not enough” So, if it is not enough, then what is this other side, this emphasis on character, this education of the heart? What does it look like and how do you be as intentional about getting that as you are about the education

of your mind? If King was right, and intelligence and character, together, are necessary for the true and complete education, then you have a responsibility to acquire more than the A+.

Since all of you are familiar with the habits, skills, and practices that are necessary to acquire an education of the mind, I want to simply suggest today some habits, skills, and practices that can contribute to an education of the heart. In doing so, I want to invite you see how your college experience can provide a space for you to explore these two sides of King's idea of true education, so that, ultimately, you can become the absolute best version of yourself that you can be within your chosen, specialized, major field of study. Today, then, I want to speak about the education of the heart that comes from the practice of reading, and the education of the heart that comes from the practice of transdisciplinarity. Your Honors experience will provide ample opportunities for you to practice these skills as substantively as you can. And, I want to emphasize the word practice here. I'm using it very purposefully. You will not arrive at these skills by the time you finish college, and you will not fully master them. They are, rather, skills that you can commit yourself to practicing for a lifetime. So, why not start now?

I have taught, in various capacities, for the last 16 years. I have been fortunate in that time to teach students of all majors in the department of Political Science, in Interdisciplinary Studies, and now in Honors Education. In that time, I have met many, many seniors who, nearing graduation, have admitted that during the course of their entire 4-year undergraduate education, they have never checked one single book out from any of the libraries that we have on campus. This is not something unique to our university, nor were these struggling students. Rather, these were incredibly bright, intelligent, successful students who were bound for great things. But I think such a phenomenon, of going through 4 years of undergraduate education and never once checking a book out from the library signals something problematic. To me, when a student admits such a thing, what they are also admitting is that they have only ever read what someone else has told them to read. They read what was required in their courses, or what they would be quizzed on or tested on. In any case, such students never took the initiative to take an ownership over their own education.

This, I think, relates in very fundamental ways to the manner in which King thought about the character part of getting an education. What is it to read, after all? How could such a process be linked to an education of the heart? I think, in my experience, it has everything to do with how one chooses to read. I am often reminded of three scholars who wrote about the art of reading. The philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, once stated in his *Genealogy of Morals*, “One skill is needed - lost today, unfortunately - for the practice of reading as an art: the skill to ruminate, which cows possess but modern humanity lacks.” When you look up the word, ruminate, you find that it means “to think deeply” or to “chew the cud”. If you’ve ever seen how slow a cow chews the cud, that is the speed at which Nietzsche said we must read. We must learn to slow our minds down, to chew on ideas and think about them, to not make snap judgements, but rather, let our learning processes and the connections that we make be born out of slow, methodical pondering. In a related sense, Tara Westover, in her New York Times bestselling book, *Educated*, stated that, for her, one of the most crucial skills she ever developed was “... the patience to read things I could not yet understand.” This is, easily, one of the hallmarks of a scholar. The vulnerability that can accompany reading, the humility one must engage to read something that they don’t understand, but to keep going and attempt to derive meaning from it, is indeed crucial. Finally, C.S. Lewis had a wonderful collection of essays all about the art of reading that was entitled, *The Reading Life: The Joy of Seeing New Worlds Through Others’ Eyes*. In it, he wrote, “We seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. But each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and selectiveness peculiar to himself. And even when we build disinterested fantasies, they are saturated with, and limited by, our own psychology ... We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own.” These thoughts from Lewis remind me of the work of Julie Laible. Dr. Laible, in articulating what she termed a “loving epistemology”, once stated, “Traveling can involve actual physical movement or talking to others or reading literature by others ... So, my advice to you ... is to travel knowing that you are responsible for others—they are a part of you—you do not exist without them.”

What we have in all of this is the joy, and the enlargement of being, that comes from reading, and listening. In other words, we become better people the more that we choose to listen to others' experiences as expressed to us. What these scholars have given us are the very character traits that accompany reading: rumination, patience, joy, listening, humility, sympathy, and empathy. The more we read, the more we listen, the more we travel, the more we can practice building such character traits. It's not just about understanding, or mastering, what a book is saying, but it is also about how you approach the book itself. How you interact with and listen to an author of a book can be a form of practice for how you interact with and listen to people in real life. So, approach books with patience, rumination, humility, generosity, and in the process, enlarge your being as C.S. Lewis said.

So, let me encourage today to remember that intelligence is not enough. Remember the education of your heart also. One way to do that is to find the libraries and READ, READ, READ! Spend time in them, get lost in them, wander through them. When you do search for something in particular on one of the computers, don't simply rely on the digital recommendations for books that appear in your searches. Wander the stacks! Go find the book you're looking for and, often, there will be 5 more books around it that were not digitally recommended to you in your search results that will be even more important to you. Take some time, grab an arm-load of books, find a nice place to sit, and travel. Do this a lot. It's not only an education of the mind you will be engaging in, but an education of the heart as well. And, your college experience will invite you to do this over, and over, and over again. Let your experience be a place in which you practice the art of character building by reading things that are strange and unfamiliar to you, things that you don't understand, but which inspire you to travel to deeper commitments to patience, humility, generosity, and listening.

One of the defining hallmarks of an Honors education is its commitment to transdisciplinarity. Now, sometimes, that word can be somewhat abstract. What does it mean to be transdisciplinary? What does that look like? First of all, to commit oneself to transdisciplinarity does not mean that one cannot have an academic specialization. All of your Honors College faculty have academic

specializations, and you will as well. So, how can we think about this concept as something less abstract? What does it look like in practice, how can you be intentional about practicing it, and most importantly, how can it be related to that all-important education of the heart which I am asking you to remember.

I was very fortunate as an undergraduate to receive my own introduction to transdisciplinarity by taking classes from a professor named Ed Passerini. He taught classes in interdisciplinary sciences and built the world's first totally solar-powered car. His own degrees were a Bachelor's degree in Physics with a minor in Mathematics from Harvard University, a Master's Degree in American Studies from Northeastern University, and a PhD in Literature from the University of Virginia, and he saw no conflict between such seemingly, disparate fields of knowledge. And, because of this, his classes were hard! They demanded that you think in transdisciplinary ways that you were not used to, and to ask transdisciplinary questions of every field of knowledge that you could. For instance, he was notorious for giving difficult tests. On one of his final exams, I can remember the exact wording of one of the questions. It said, simply: "Tell me about cows. Be sure to include graphs." What that meant was to start with cows and, from there, get to issues deforestation, soil erosion, atmospheric pollution, and along the way, discuss how economic, religious, philosophical, educational, political, and psychological factors all contributed to such relationships. And, oh yeah, be sure to include graphs! I remember that one of his favorite statements to make was, "There is not one single problem in society that can be solved by one discipline alone." He helped his students to see that, yes, while there are different buildings on a college campus all doing ostensibly different work, it is somewhat of an architectural illusion. They are all working, in some way, to make either the human condition better, or to make the world that encompasses the human condition better. And, when the people in these different buildings begin to talk with each other, problems can really be solved at that point.

To commit oneself to the practice of transdisciplinarity, then, is to understand that, at any point in time, no matter what one is reading, studying, or working to learn, that there are valuable tools, skills, methods, and questions that can be transferrable across fields

of knowledge. But be aware, that sometimes when you begin to engage in such cross-disciplinary inquiries, someone might try to tell you, “We don’t do that kind of work in this field.” Or, “Those are not the kinds of questions we ask.” When someone says something like that to you, it’s that they, often, simply don’t know yet how to ask such questions. So show them! Show them what it looks like to be a person who is willing to reside in the gaps and spaces between fields of knowledge, what it looks like to ask Humanities-based questions in the Natural Sciences, or what it looks like to take a Social Sciences approach to the Humanities. The comportment of transdisciplinarity requires the character traits of creativity and, often, bold leadership. Creativity to ask new kinds of questions, and leadership to show others how such questions are not merely interesting, but necessary in order to address the kinds of problems that we face.

So, let me encourage you again to remember that intelligence is not enough. Remember the education of your heart as well. Another way of doing that is by letting your Honors experience be a space in which you allow yourself the opportunity to get outside of your academic comfort zones, and to investigate things that you will not in your major field of study. In doing so, you can work to develop a spirit and character of bold, creative academic inquiry which will not only enlarge your own being, but will also have a profound impact on society as well.

So, in conclusion, what I would like to remind each you of today is that, as you begin this academic year, remember that intelligence is not enough ... not enough to build the kind of world that we all need. Intelligence and character are the marks of a true education ... an education that creates the kind of people who can help build, and sustain, community. But, each of you have to decide to be just as intentional about the education of your heart as you are about the education of your mind. I’m not pretending that I have given you the only ways to think about educating your heart. I have not. I have simply given you two ways to be mindful of it. Don’t simply read what someone else tells you to read. Don’t stop there. Choose to read, but read with care, generosity, and humility. Strive to practice that bold and creative approach to learning that is the spirit of transdisciplinarity. Let the practice of these two things serve as ethical and upbuilding processes for you, and in the process of

doing even these two things, you will be practicing the very skills that can lead to an education of your heart.

When I graduated with my undergraduate degree, my closest academic advisor gifted me with a book that was very important to him. In it, he inscribed a message to me. The message was, “You’ve earned your A in school. Now, go earn it with your life.” So, begin today, practicing the skills that will help you earn an A in life, and you will go a long way in achieving that true education that Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about.

Conclusion

Education is a curious thing, indeed. Whether we are talking about *why* society educates; *how* society educates; or, even more simply, the “so what” of it all, it is a curious thing that focuses our attention on the relationships between power, identity, freedom, and the construction of meaning in our everyday lives. Education is a site of formal structures as well as liberation; ideally, it is a liberation of both the heart and the mind. A student’s journey through honors education provides, perhaps, the best opportunity to explore the intersections between such things, so they can come out the other side, truly, as a scholar.

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