Editor's Message

As we are nearing the end of our third year, I would like to express my gratitude to authors, reviewers and editorial team members. JISE is aimed at those in the academic world who are dedicated to advancing the field of education through their research. JISE provides a range of articles that speak to the major issues in education across all content areas and disciplines. The journal is peer edited through a blind review process that utilizes national and international editorial boards and peer reviewers.

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CONTENTS

Peer Reviewed Articles

1 Magnetizing Public Education: The Lingering Effects of Magnet Schools in the Cincinnati Public School District, OH
   Adam John Parrillo.
   6-32

2 White Disadvantage: The Effects of Racial Isolation on White Pre-Service Teachers
   Shakeer A. Abdullah, Jose Ramon Llanes., & Daniel Henry
   33-45

3 “The Touchstone of Our Sanity”: Discussing Objectivity in Journalism Using Interdisciplinary Elements
   Joseph Gibbs
   46-56

4 The Effects of the Bologna Process in Vocational Education and Training: A Theorized Literature-Based Argument
   Indrit Vucaj
   57-67
Preparing Pre-Service Teachers for Performance Assessments
Lisa Barron

Between Old and New: Cognitive Dissonance and the Politics of Research
Wincharles Coker

Book Reviews

Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World
by Johann Christoph
Reviewed by Golden Cecily Sant
Magnetizing Public Education:

The Lingering Effects of Magnet Schools in the Cincinnati Public School District, OH

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Abstract

This paper examines the racial and socioeconomic enrollment patterns resulting from magnet school programs in the Cincinnati Public School district (Ohio). The analysis employs the measure of interracial exposure and independent t-tests to compare magnet schools with non-magnet schools across eight years, 1999-2006, and finds that there are significance differences in racial exposure and neighborhood income level of student populations. Further, magnet school literature is reviewed in the context of the "roll-out" of market-oriented Neoliberal policy reforms where emergence of these reforms coincides with Civil Rights era desegregation, resulting in ‘voluntary choice’ of magnet schools as the court accepted and government supported policy reform. This research is integral in broadening the discourse of contemporary school choice debates.

Keywords: Magnet Schools, Race, Income Levels, School Choice, Neo-liberalism

A recent Cincinnati Enquirer article illuminates concerns that choice in public schools, even in ‘magnet schools’ that were ostensibly designed to solve segregation, has resulted in (re) segregation of student populations by ethnicity (Fischer, 2009).
within and amongst urban schools, and so on) plaguing public education over the last forty years or so (Lipman, 2004). All of these issues have been impacted if not shaped by post WWII think tanks, policy makers, elected officials, and academics; and encompassed within the evolving nature of urban governance since the Neoliberal shift of the 1970s (Hackworth, 2007). Since public education is situated at the intersection of politics, economics, and social contexts at various scales and across geographical space, any attempt to understand aspects of education must, in some way, address all of these components. This paper examines the socioeconomic effects of magnet schools in the Cincinnati Public School District (Cincinnati, OH, USA) within the context of the school choice movement, which is imbedded in the Neoliberal project.

Literature Review

In their broad review of the social geographies of education in the English-speaking world, Collins and Coleman (2008) observe that schools have received little attention from geographers though they are central in construction of family life and social identities, thereby making significant social and political mechanisms. In fact, they highlight how the emergence of ‘public’ education institutions in North America is intertwined with nation-building projects. With this context, they further suggest how schools generally provide similar social and political roles across nations though they have substantially different organizations. This paper contributes to this literature by exploring the manifestation of one aspect of public schooling, choice as defined by magnet school models, situating this development within the political economic restructuring brought on by Neoliberal policy initiatives during the turmoil of racial desegregation of public schools in the United States. This restructuring of the process for enrollment in public schools promises long-term, ingrained consequences for community and national identities and social reproduction.

Hanson Thiem (2009) considers the state of geographical research in education and observes that the rise of education as a significant research theme is due to structural transitions. These emergent streams inquiry are divergent from the earlier and marginal themes of educational access and achievement, especially inherently spatial topics such as student migrations, education industry location and structure, the knowledge economy, and, of course, school choice. She distinguishes between inward- and outward-looking analysis; the former being the investigation of spatial variations in the provision, consumption, and outcomes of schooling themselves and the latter utilizing these same patterns to inform the greater social, economic, and political context. Her proposition is orienting towards an outward-looking agenda that “deliberately situates its object(s) of analysis relative to broader research programs where “the restructuring of education sectors in advanced capitalist political economies can inform discussion of globalization, neoliberalization, and knowledge economy formation” (p. 155) toward refining existing concepts and theories.

This paper reorients the historical emergence of school choice as implemented by magnet school models during the era of public school desegregation in the United States towards the theoretical context of Neoliberalism as informed by persistent socioeconomic and racial polarization in school choice paradigms, specifically in the Cincinnati Public School District. There is a synergistic relationship where the theoretical revision drives the hypothetical inquiry for
analysis and analytical results further strengthen the theoretical foundation proposed. In fact, this paper explicitly conforms to Hanson Thiem’s final and most targeted proposition; to utilize critical case study analyses to understand institution transformations during Neoliberal governance since education is central in this cultural political struggle.

Holloway et al. (2010) utilize Hanson Thiem’s ‘decentered’ geography of education as a foundation to argue for a reorientation towards an approach that also integrates the inward- and outward-looking approaches that explicitly focuses on children, youth, and families. While the argument intentionally departs from a political-economic perspective, the more intimate proposition delivers important observations for connecting the inward- and outward-looking strands of the geography of education. As context, the authors identify the benefits of quantitative studies that highlight the emergence of educational inequality and inequity through the introduction of school choice models driven by Neoliberal policy initiative; and further suggest approaches that focus on family decision-making processes that serve to flesh out the patterns existing in the quantitative research. While this paper does not address the behavioral geography of decision-making in school choice environments, it utilizes a statistical approach for the local analysis which does draw from and strengthen conclusions from the bulk of research that does explore both individual and family-oriented decision-making differences based upon differentiating characteristics such as ethnicity and socioeconomic class.

Additionally, Holloway et al. (2010) suggest broadening approaches in the geography of education to include more social and cultural contexts, including but not limited to class and race/ethnicity. This paper first provides an historical-theoretical paradigm for understanding the creation of magnet schools in the United States as synonymous with the rollout of early Neoliberal policy initiatives in public education. Moreover, the subsequent analysis aims to illuminate patterns of socioeconomic inequality/inequity that persist with the legacy of magnet school choice structures.

**Magnet Schools**

By definition, magnet schools are selective and academically demanding, and typically urban, public schools with generally superior facilities and programs that gained support because they are ostensibly more readily received by white citizens than forced busing (Blank et al., 1983; Ascher, 1990; Orange, 2002). More specifically, magnet schools have “(a) a distinctive curriculum based on a special theme or method of instruction; (b) a unique district role and purpose for voluntary desegregation; (c) voluntary choice of the school by the student and the parent; and (d) open access to school enrollment beyond the regular attendance zone” (Dentler, 1990).

The presumption of magnet schools is that they will attract a “cross section of students across all racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds,” thereby creating equity of access, although limited, while at the same time creating a student population more representative of the wider community (Orange, 2002, p. 102; Ascher 1990; Creating Successful…, 2004).

Magnet schools typically have programmatic differences or unique themes as opposed to neighborhood schools; revolving around the creative and performing arts, ecological issues, open structured classes, schools without walls, career option, exploration programs, etc.
(Warren, 1978; McMillan, 1980; Bortin, 1982; Blank et al., 1983; Creating Successful…, 2004). The assumptions underlying magnet schools are that (1) all parents will be well informed, (2) representation of policy development and management will be broadly based, (3) the location will be centralized, assuring access for all populations, and (4) the enrollment process will be equitable (Blank et al., 1983; Yu and Taylor, 1997; Meeks et al., 2000; Banks and Green, 2008). Metz (1990) identifies magnets schools as “revolutionary” in severing the connection between student body composition and residential patterns and force poor and minority children to become the productive citizens “who provide the labor force and the tax base on which depends the prosperity of the society” (p. 145).

Christenson et al. (2003) briefly describes how magnet programs became supported by the federal government; first through the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) in 1972 to “encourage the voluntary reduction, elimination, or prevention of minority-group isolation. “ next as a 1976 amendment to ESAA that specifically authorized grants to support the planning and implementation of magnet programs in school districts attempting to desegregate, and again in 1985 with the enactment of the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP). MSAP grants were intended to support magnet schools that were part of an approved desegregation plan designed to bring students from different socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds together. In fact, MSAP funding has been a significant factor in the development and operation of magnet programs where districts that receive these funds have proportionately more magnet programs than districts that do not receive this funding (Henig, 1996).

It must be mentioned that the concept of open enrollment, or the option to attend any school within, and sometimes outside, a district has technically been around longer than magnet schools. However, early involvement was typically low since there was no real diversification of school amenities (Armor, 1989). Alternative programs, similar to magnets, have also been part of early open enrollment plans. It is the desegregation component (or race quotas for enrollment) that differentiates magnets from the earlier vocational oriented alternative programs. In other words, the alternative school model was adopted with the additional purpose of desegregation by tracking race ratios to produce what is known as magnet schools (Ascher, 1990; Harris et al., 1991). In this majority-to-minority open enrollment, free transportation was afforded to students who wanted to transfer as long as they were moving from a school where they were members of the ethnic majority to a school where they would be a minority (Armor, 1989). When alternative magnet programs that offered something different and more educationally attractive than neighborhoods schools were added to open enrollment policies, participation dramatically increased (Raywid, 1985). In other words, differentiation of program and quality, as oppose to racial integration, created the disparities necessary to spur the decision to geographically transfer schools.

**Magnet Schools, School Choice, and Neoliberalism**

Brenner and Theodore (2002) argue that through this globalized capital, Neoliberalism has varied and particular manifestations in specific local and regional spaces by implementing a wide range of policy experiments and political strategies intended to restructure institutions as to enhance labor market flexibility,
competitiveness, and location-specific assets. Herod and Aguiar (2006) employ a similar perspective where instead of producing a borderless world, Neoliberal projects shape and are shaped by local and national social struggles and institutional histories. In combining these perspectives, Neoliberalism is a fairly well-defined ideology championed largely by economic elites and political institutions at multiple scales where the intersection of broader social struggles – namely the Civil Rights Movement and the court-ordered desegregation of public schools – partly determine the shape and form that Neoliberal policies take at the local level.

Peck and Tickell (2002, 2007) argue that Neoliberalism first took meaningful shape in the 1970s through policies dedicated to market (and market-like) reforms and has evolved over three decades in order to sustain its influence and control across all spheres of life. Neoliberalism begins as a relatively abstract economic doctrine (1970s) with societal underpinnings reaching back to the post WWII period. In this early stage of the “proto-neoliberalism” policy implementation, cities were flashpoints of economic dislocations and sociopolitical struggles, particularly in the sphere of social reproduction (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), or more specifically public education. These flashpoints of the political and economic crisis in the 1970s provided the rationale for early and widespread Neoliberal policy reforms (Smith, 2002; Conway and Heynen, 2006). Magnet schools, for example, were seen as a way to desegregate public schools through the mechanism and rhetoric of “school choice”. In the 1980s, or the “roll-back” era, governments and municipalities were increasingly economically constrained and implemented a range of cost-cutting measures such as cutbacks in public services and the privatization of infrastructural facilities with the aim of promoting a good business climate for cities (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In the 1990s, Neoliberalism emerges as a form of market-guided regulations to encourage economic growth in the short term while managing decreasing public expenditures (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

Karsten (1999) suggests that neoliberal education reforms began largely during the conservative administrations of Reagan and Thatcher in the US and UK, respectively. However, such reforms in the United States began much sooner with the introduction of voluntary choice plans of magnet schools during the era of desegregation. Magnet schools arguably provided the ideological foundation to initiate more extensive Neoliberal directives at the local scale. Social justice and equality were at the forefront of political upheavals in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, which included desegregation of public schools. Federal court-ordered busing policies fomented anti-state interventionist backlashes, coinciding with wider social movements that saw a common enemy of an intrusive state. By capturing and co-opting the rhetoric of individual freedom, for example, and using them against state interventions and regulations, proponents of neoliberal policies could hope to defend their position and perhaps even co-opt reform movements, including education reform, in ways that enhance their own class interests. Support for ostensibly “non-intrusive” solutions was generally widespread and based upon notions of liberty of consumer choice, or market mechanisms. However, these were not community-led solutions; rather they were typically organized by business policy organizations like the American Chamber of Commerce (Harvey 2005).
Pearson (1993), in a review of choice literature, predicted the socioeconomic polarization that has more recently been associated with school choice reforms, including magnet schools. While seemingly prophetic in her predictions, Pearson lacked an explicit theoretical framework that contextualized the move towards choice in public schools. This book is a trailblazer in examining the emergence of Neoliberal governance and examine a the gambit of issues including but not limited to manufacturing crisis, open enrollment policies, deregulation, supply side, demand side, and finally examining winners and losers of these policies. Since then, others have identified the effects of Neoliberal policies on education from the local to national to international scales. What one realizes while reflecting upon Pearson’s work, is that she was identifying and reporting upon the Neoliberal roll-out and retrenchment periods, but still lacked an explicit ideological connection to the earlier periods of voluntary desegregation with magnet schools.

Henig (1995) argues that there has been a shift in the contextualization of magnet school programs. These programs were inextricably tied with mandated government desegregation policy, but have now been reoriented to market force rhetoric as a way to improve schools. While Henig (1995) presents this as a distinct transition of the characterization of magnet programs, there really was never a clear separation of magnet schools from market force rhetoric. Indeed, magnet school programs originated with conservative constituencies and school boards that sought to limit federal oversight and mandates regarding desegregation (Erkins, 2002).

School choice policy proponents have more recently framed their arguments in the context of counteracting declining academic achievement and reducing student dropout rates as opposed to the original desegregation arguments due to the mixed results school choice programs have had in dealing with racial isolation (Harris et al., 1991). While school choice policies have been commonly associated with more conservative arguments of introducing market incentives in order to improve efficiency and to drive out institutions unable to compete, the rhetoric of ‘choice’ has gained liberal support as well through the argument that it “will provide the less affluent with what the wealthy already have – control over the quality of education their children receive” – a promise that is shown to be empirically challenged unless there is careful oversight in achieving equity (Yu and Taylor, 1997, p. 5).

School choice and magnet school programs were and continue to be an integral part of neoliberal education reform. ‘The choice’ mechanism in school reform models like magnet schools is key to Neoliberal reforms of public education. Indeed, the school ‘choice’ mechanism is the rhetorical and ideological foundation upon which neoliberal education reform rests. Public and academic discourses regarding magnet schools, however, have largely taken place within the context of desegregation and, consequently, have primarily centered on themes regarding parental choice, quality of education, technical aspects of implementation, and so on.

Studies of Magnet Schools Desegregation Effects

There are clear common threads in previous studies analyzing the desegregation effectiveness of magnet schools. A small proportion of studies reviewed found magnet programs to be successful in achieving desegregation results (Blank,
1983; Rossell, 1988; Clewell and Joy, 1990; Rossell and Armor, 1996). Interestingly, all but one of these found that plans that were mandatory or more directed as opposed to completely voluntary are more successful and that white flight complicate the results of desegregation plans. The one exception, a study by Rossell and Armor (1996), found that voluntary plans decreased white flight; a finding that is later rebutted by Rossell (2003).

Other studies found mixed results in terms of magnet programs achieving desegregation. Some found that there is limited effectiveness in enforcing desegregation through magnet schools because of increased white flight, leaving many districts with high concentrations of minority populations (Bortin, 1982; Dentler, 1984; Crim and Emmons, 1984; Rossell, 1985; Rossell, 1990; Rossell, 2003). Others, meanwhile, found that while some magnet schools may achieve desegregation measures, non-magnet schools remain racially isolated (Yu and Taylor, 1997; Goldring and Smrekar, 2000).

Most of the literature regarding magnet schools and desegregation considers magnet programs to be unsuccessful in achieving and maintaining desegregation of student populations. Many find that voluntary magnet programs are completely unsuccessful and actually end up re-segregating student populations (McMillan, 1980; Willie and Fultz, 1984; Asher, 1990; Levine and Eubanks, 1990; Dentler, 1990; West, 1994; Henig, 1995; Eaton, 1996; Bush, Burley, and Causey-Bush, 2001; Orfield, 2001; Erkins, 2002; Archbald, 2004; Brown et al., 2006). A number of these studies found that not only are magnet programs ineffective in desegregation efforts, but also create a two-tier system of magnet schools consisting of higher socioeconomic student populations and non-magnet schools of low socioeconomic student populations (Willie and Fultz, 1984; Levine and Eubanks, 1990; Yancey and Saporito, 1995; Gersti-Pepin, 2002). Finally, there is a clear trend in the literature of an increasing range of criticisms of magnet school programs, including increased racial isolation of students in non-magnet schools, the reinforcing of the socioeconomic hierarchy of households with voluntary choice and magnet programs, transportation costs limiting choices for students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and, finally, the “skimming off” of the best performing students by magnet schools from non-magnet schools, and the creation of a two-tier system with magnets as elites is in direct opposition to the philosophy of an equal education for all students.

**Historical Enrollment Patterns in the Cincinnati Public School District**

Through the 1940s and the mid-1960s, the district experienced enrollment increases with an all-time enrollment high of 91,000 students in the 1966-67 school year. From this point, as illustrated in Table 1, the district began its enrollment decline, mirroring the City’s population decline, losing over half 1966-67 school year enrollment by the 2001-02 school year, with 42,000 students (Erkins, 2002). During this overall period, white flight and suburbanization had been transforming previously white neighborhoods into predominantly black neighborhoods. The overall enrollment losses, therefore, were disproportionately among white students. While overall enrollment dropped about 36% from 1970 to 1980, the proportion of black students increased from 45.7% to 57.3% (Erkins, 2002).

Declining enrollments in the Cincinnati Public School District has
continued, again mirroring the overall population loss of the City of Cincinnati. However, more recently other trends besides demographic movements have complicated the situation. Higher enrollment in private schools and the proliferation of charter schools in conjunction with the declining perceptions of public schooling, all being components of school choice rhetoric, are factors contributing to continued student enrollment declines within the district (Erkins, 2002).

**Method**

Given the previous research that indicates the racially and socioeconomically polarizing results from magnet and school choice programs (within a Neoliberal policy framework), it is expected that these results should manifest at localities that pursue these programs, such as the Cincinnati Public School District. The objective, then, of this analysis is to first address the student enrollment data from an approach utilizing a traditionally accepted demographic race ratio analysis (Measure of Interracial Contact) in order to understand the racial distributions between magnet and non-magnet schools (racial polarization). The next step is to apply an alternate statistical method, independent T-tests, in order to understand whether there are significant socioeconomic differences between students of magnet and non-magnet schools (socioeconomic polarization). It is hypothesized that magnet schools (1) have more equitable racial exposures than non-magnet schools and (2) have students that are from neighborhoods of higher socioeconomic status than non-magnet students. The eight years of student enrollment data, ranging from the 1999-2000 to the 2006-2007 school years, was obtained through a formal data request from the Cincinnati Public School District and includes information such as student addresses, grade-level, ethnicity, and school attended.

**Study Area**

During the study period, the Cincinnati Public School District had an open enrollment policy where students could choose to attend any school within the district no matter in which neighborhood school boundary they reside (Policy 5111.4 – rescinded 11/07). Additional to this is the schools of choice (magnet) program designed by the central administration to specifically attract white students to urban schools and to bring about voluntary desegregation and retain middle-class families (Bass, 1978; Morris and Goldring, 1999). Acceptance into magnet programs is based on application date and maintaining a racial balance. Transportation is provided for students in grades K-8 who live more than one mile from the site by yellow bus service and is provided for all students in grades 9-12 by Metro bus passes (Goldring and Smrekar, 2000).

This study focused on high school facilities only. During the study period, the district went through restructuring of the high school programs by phasing out “traditional” high schools and initiating multiple programs with different educational routes in the same existing facilities; the number of individual high schools peaked during the 2003-2004 school year as this transition of programs takes place (see Table 2). According to the district, all high school facilities/programs, traditional and new, are designated as “citywide magnets,” meaning that they are all open enrollment facilities. Additionally, while the CPS district defines all high school programs as magnets, certain programs are referred to as schools of choice, which have enrollment requirements.

This study categorizes the high schools a bit differently than the district
itself; by designating those schools with test-in or perform-in criteria as magnets and those open to transfers without criteria as non-magnets. This is specifically to compare the legacy of the historic magnet programs of the district against the remaining “non-magnet” facilities. Table 2 displays the numbers of magnets and non-magnet programs (indicating the transition described above) and Figure 1 displays the locations, names, and years of active status for non-magnet high schools and Table 3 displays the 3-digit codes for CPS high schools during the study period.

Figure 2 displays names and locations of the magnet high schools during the study period. The number of magnet high schools and their programmatic differences from non-magnets are consistent through the eight year study period with four facilities overall. These are Clark Montessori (135), the School for Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA-333), Dater (380), and Walnut Hills (450). Each of these has specified criteria for enrollment. Both Dater and Walnut Hills are “test-in” or have academic performance based examinations, SCPA is a “perform-in” program, and students enrolled for Clark must have attended Montessori based elementary education.

Geographic Information Systems Preparation

In order to acquire the necessary information to perform the socioeconomic test analysis, further preparation had to be undertaken utilizing the geographic information system (GIS) software ArcGIS from ESRI. First the student addresses of residence were geocoded (spatially located) utilizing Hamilton County, OH streets data acquired from Cincinnati Area GIS (CAGIS). Any addresses that were not matched during this process were interactively matched if possible. For each year, unmatchable addresses were below 1% threshold of the entire dataset. Additionally, CPS high school locations were geocoded.

Next, 2000 Census data at the block group level was obtained from CAGIS. Utilizing the Analysis tools in ArcGIS, average median income from the Census 2000 dataset (Figure 3) was spatially assigned to the previously geocoded student residence locations.

Measure of Interracial Exposure

In this portion of the analysis, the interracial exposure of student populations attending magnet schools is compared to the interracial exposure of student populations attending non-magnet schools. It is expected that magnet schools have higher levels of racial exposure than non-magnets schools due to the legacy of court oversight, which ended in 1994. The measure of interracial exposure ($S_{mw}$) was calculated for Black versus White students for both magnet and non-magnet high schools from 1999 to 2006. The measure of interracial exposure is an unstandardized function of racial balance in each school and of the proportion of white students in the whole school district measuring the interracial contact, or proportion of white in the average minority child’s school. The equation is as follows:

$$S_{mw} = \frac{\sum NkmPkw}{\sum Nkm}$$

where k is each individual school, $Nkm$ is the number ($N$) of minorities ($m$) in a particular school ($k$), and $Pkw$ is the proportion ($P$) of white ($w$) in the same school ($k$) (Rossell, 1988, 1990, 2003). Since this is a weighted average, it will reflect any change in white student
enrollment rates from, for instance, white flight.

**Independent Samples T-Test**

Independent samples t-tests were utilized for the socioeconomic level comparisons. For this, income level (median household income) of the location of residence (census block group) for students is compared for student populations in magnet versus non-magnet schools. Figure 3 displays the spatial distribution of the median income across the district. These income data, attributed to students by location of residence, is categorized by the type of school they attend in order to examine the variations between magnet and non-magnet student populations in terms on income level. It is expected that magnet students should have significantly variation from non-magnets students, where magnet students come from significantly higher income levels. This analysis is conducted for the all years excluding 2001 and 2004. The year 2001 data is incomplete and it was decided to drop the 2004 analysis as to make two-year blocks of analyses through the eight years of data in consideration. The t-tests were conducted in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The independent samples t-test evaluates the mean difference between two populations resulting in the t statistic. The closer the t statistic is to zero, the closer the population means are to each other, and the larger the statistic is, positive or negative, the more variation there is between the two populations. The null hypothesis of the t-test is that there is no difference between the two populations being compared. There are two assumptions that must be satisfied before undertaking this statistical technique; (1) the distribution of the populations should be normal and (2) the two populations should have the same variance. Though the student enrollment data is in violation of being normally distributed, relatively large populations (over 30) are assumed to be normal and therefore the data (the n is in the hundreds for each) satisfy the assumption of normality (Gravetter and Wallnau 1985, Kachigan 1991). In addition, values were assigned from census data at an interval scale and the data contain a high degree of ties when being ranked where nonparametric procedures cannot handle high degree of ties in data values.

**Results**

**Measure of Interracial Exposure**

Table 4 displays the results of this analysis where the index represents the average proportion of white students in the schools attended by black students. According to the results, magnet high schools have equitable interracial exposure values with an average of 55.3% of student enrolled being white. On the other hand, non-magnet high schools demonstrate inequitable interracial exposure values with an average of 10.5% of students enrolled being identified as white. Therefore, on average across the eight years of data, magnet high schools clearly have a higher level of interracial exposure than non-magnet high schools.

Additionally, each category of school demonstrates a slight decrease in the level of interracial exposure, with magnets showing a 3.1% decrease and non-magnets showing a 2.6% over the eight years. This finding corresponds with the continued residential trends of White Flight and suburbanization from the inner urban areas of Cincinnati, which results in the CPS district having increasing proportions of black students compared to white students.
Independent Samples T-Test

Table 5 displays the average median household income (Census, 2000) of the location of residence for students that attend CPS high schools for six years of the eight year time span in consideration for this paper. The data is organized as to separate magnet high schools from non-magnet high schools. Across this time span, students that attend magnet schools live in areas (Census 2000 block groups) that have higher median household income levels than students that attend non-magnet schools with an approximate average of $9,000 for each year. Additionally, these data seem to indicate that each individual magnet school has a significant higher average income level for students than any other non-magnet school. Finally, as the CPS district restructured high school education (begins in 2002) with separation of open enrollment programs, for example Western Hills Traditional (470) being split into Western Hills University (471) and Design Tech programs (472), there seem to be less differentiation among non-magnet schools while magnets seem to continue having high average income levels of students that attend. The next question for these data is whether or not these patterns are statistically significant.

Table 6 displays the results of independent sample t-tests for average median household income of the area of residence (Census 2000 block group) that attend magnet schools versus those that attend non-magnet schools. For all years, the \[\text{equal variances not assumed}\] row must be utilized since the data did not pass Levene’s test for equality of variances as indicated by the p-value, \(\text{Sig.}\) being less than .05 for every year.

The column for the \[\text{95\% confidence interval of the difference}\] in means indicates that there is a significant variation between the income levels of students that attend magnet schools and non-magnet schools since the range between the lower and upper values do not overlap zero. The most important values are the t-test value \((t)\) and its p-value, or \(\text{Sig. (2-tailed)}\); the t score range is between 27.019 and 27.758 and the p-value is less than .05 for every year indicating that the null hypothesis of no difference is rejected at the .05 confidence level. In other words, the difference between average median household income for magnet and non-magnet students is statistically significant at the .05 confidence level. Therefore, magnet high school students come from households with statistically significant higher levels of income than non-magnet students in the CPS district.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that non-magnets schools contain racially isolated student populations, or are racially polarized due to magnet schools skimming off white populations due to the history of race quotas that strove to achieve “better” racial balances in magnet schools themselves. To examine the degree of polarization, the measure of interracial exposure was calculated for black versus white students for all eight years of analysis. This hypothesis is confirmed by the results. Across all eight years, magnet schools have a higher level of exposure (55.3%) than non-magnet schools (10.5%), with the level of exposure decreasing across the eight years due to the socioeconomic inertia of White Flight and neighborhood secession of an aging population from the urban areas of Cincinnati.

It was also hypothesized that students attending magnet schools are from residences with higher median household
income than non-magnet students, or there is socioeconomic polarization between magnet and non-magnet schools. The t-test, was utilized to compare the household income levels (Census 2000) of magnet and non-magnet student populations that were assigned by geocoding individual student addresses. This hypothesis is confirmed by the results. The t-test results for student household income levels classified by magnet and non-magnet categories demonstrate that the underlying distribution of income levels for students attending magnet schools is significantly different than those attending non-magnet schools, with magnet students having significantly higher median household income levels. Therefore, there is socioeconomic polarization between students that attend magnet and non-magnet schools.

All of the hypotheses for this research were confirmed indicating that polarization between magnet and non-magnet student populations is occurring in the CPS district across the eight years in question; a finding that supports the conclusions of previous studies of magnet schools in districts across the United States. Additionally, this study reinforces arguments contradicting that voluntary choice structures alone are sufficient in solving education issues, including desegregating schools. White Flight (residential racial polarization) and its socioeconomic inertia makes it increasing difficult for magnet schools to effectively achieve desegregation results (Bortin 1982, Dentler 1984, Crim and Emmons 1984, Rossell 1985, Rossell 1990, Rossell 2003) and non-magnet schools remain racially isolated while magnet schools achieve better racial exposure (Yu and Taylor 1997, Goldring and Smrekar 2000). The results of the analysis further indicate that there is re-segregation by race (McMillan 1980, Willie and Fultz 1984, Ascher 1990, Levine and Eubanks 1990, Dentler 1990, West 1994, Henig 1995, Eaton 1996, Bush, Burley, and Causey-Bush 2001, Orfield 2001, Erkins 2002, Archbald 2004, Brown et al. 2006) and by household income levels. Finally, the results point to the findings in previous studies that the marketized choice of magnet programs creates a two-tier school system of higher socioeconomic magnet schools and lower socioeconomic non-magnet schools (Willie and Fultz 1984, Levine and Eubanks 1990, Yancey and Saporito 1995, Gerstle-Pepin 2002). Overall, the results of the analysis of magnet schools demonstrate that socioeconomic polarization is occurring, patterns that mirror the polarizing effect of Neoliberal reforms in other institutions of society.

Limitations

This study was limited by the availability of data. In general, race ratios can be calculated for spatial data, but student residence address locations enabled the geographic assigning of income data. This CPS data was only available for the years presented here. During these years, the district employed a GIS specialist that compiled and organized the digital data. Since this level of digital data is not available before 1999, previous years could not be considered in terms of income level and distance traveled. Additionally, due to budgetary issues, this individual was let go, so essentially the district’s GIS department was decommissioned and this type of data was no longer available. This situation speaks to the fact that finding appropriate ways to answer questions in the scientific method relies upon the availability of data. Extension of this analysis to include the entire legacy of magnet programs would yield a more comprehensive understanding of magnet schools in the CPS. In addition, during the eight years of consideration in this study, CPS high school programs went
through a restructuring that may affect some enrollment patterns due to changing attraction characteristics of new programs. While this does not undermine the analysis of this study, a further examination of programmatic differences may yield new classifications beyond magnet and non-magnet. Somewhat related, students that lived in the district, but attended private, parochial, and charter schools were not considered. Exploring these components could prove illuminating especially in the era of public funded vouchers that are intended to siphon students from the public school system to private and charter schools.

**Significance to Wider Literature**

Considering the results of the analyses and the mixed history of magnet schools in desegregation, why did magnet schools emerge and become so commonplace in school districts all across the nation when they seemingly fail to accomplish? This answer appears to be fairly simple in hindsight examination; magnet schools were the first incarnation of government supported and induced choice policy supported by local business elites as more measured alternatives to forced busing. This occurs in an era of political and social upheaval, Civil Rights desegregation, where educational disparities between white and black children in public schools stemming from the socioeconomic residential disparities of white and black populations came to the forefront of political and social discourse. This turmoil provided the cover what Davies and Bansel (2007) describe as “piecemeal functionalist” implementation, a calculated tactic designed to avoid analysis and resistance, of Neoliberal education reform. It seems that the less intrusive ideological promises of magnet school’s voluntary choice to solve segregation were more palatable than forced busing.

Magnet schools have emerged as the dominant technique for desegregating public schools, though lacking any conclusive evidence of their efficacy, because they were a less intrusive “solution” to segregated educational patterns than forced busing schemes. While there has been some evidence throughout the years that magnet schools achieve some desegregation results in more or less ideal conditions, more issues of their effects arise in this body of research, such as long-term socioeconomic and racial isolation/desegregation, complications of white flight, and the emergence of a racialized two-tier education system. Therefore, as evidenced in much of the critical literature and in the results of the analysis of this research, that magnet schools have produced outcomes of (re) segregation for which they were originally prescribed as a solution. However, this socioeconomic and racial (re) segregation/isolation is no longer dependent upon segregated residential patterns; it has more complexity since schools no longer have discrete catchment boundaries and programmatic differences and disparities have been explicitly designed into the district (e.g. magnet vs. non-magnet, differences in pedagogy, etc.).

Magnet schools are the policy link between the ideological movement of Neoliberalism and the subsequent conventional wisdom of market authority (choice) reforms in public spheres, including education. The sociopolitical turmoil of Civil Rights in public education and the subsequent court rulings in favor of desegregation set the stage for negotiations at local and national scales that brought about the marketized choice structure of magnets school desegregation strategies. Despite this academic debate, magnet schools have achieved acceptance at local, state, and federal scales as evidenced by funding from governmental agencies and
from the support of seemingly incongruent sociopolitical groups at these scales. In fact, the greater school choice movement gains its credibility from the supposed success of magnet programs throughout the last 30 years. In addition to being commonplace, the concept of magnet schools has been extended beyond desegregation as a method to reform other perceived issues of public education.

While it is argued that the distribution of students to school facilities by residential location is inherently inequitable due to the increasing socioeconomic and geographic segregation of residential areas, proponents of market-based choice schemes to solve or mitigate these segregation issues fail to identify the inherent disparities within these schemes. Choice within market structures imposes disparities themselves since the choice of markets will reflect the very same preferences that produce the general socioeconomic and racial disparities of residential patterns. Additionally, choice enables “consumers” with higher levels of income or sociopolitical clout to exercise a higher level of opportunity to pursue their preferences, especially in a market with a scarce or limited resource or service, such as seats in school facilities. Therefore, there are winners and losers in the choice structures of education. In the end, instead of schools directly reflecting societal disparities of residential segregation of race and class, these disparities are reinforced along with a new hierarchy of disparity enabled by the ability to pursue societal preferences that have been shaped by the underlying spatial segregation of society, i.e. race, ethnic, class divisions, etc. So, while the Neoliberal movement views the power of the state to regulate and provide services as tyranny, any discussion or critique of these issues must acknowledge the inherent tyranny of the market.

References


Rossell, C. H. (1990). The carrot or the stick for school desegregation policy: Magnet schools or forced busing.


**About the Author**

Adam Parrillo is a geographer at the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay whose research interests include social dimensions of the urban economy, small-city development, and applied geographic analysis.
Table 1

*Cincinnati Public School Enrollment, years 1946-47 through 2001-02*

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Key for CPS High School 3-Digit Numeric Codes

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<td>Magnet</td>
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<td>Non-magnet</td>
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<tr>
<td>395</td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Aiken Public Service Learning</td>
<td>Non-magnet</td>
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<tr>
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Table 5

Income Level of CPS High School Students, Census 2000 Blockgroup

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<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
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Figure 1. CPS Non-Magnet School Locations, 1999-2007.

Figure 2. CPS Magnet School Locations, 1999-2006.
Figure 3. Median Household Income, Census 2000
White Disadvantage: The Effects of Racial Isolation on White Pre-Service Teachers

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Jose Ramon Llanes Ph.D.,
Daniel Henry, Ph.D.,
Auburn University

Abstract

This paper examines the preconceived attitudes toward cultural and racial diversity that pre-service teacher education students at a primarily white southern research institution bring with them to class and how those preconceptions may impact their teaching and ability to integrate into a school environment that is culturally different from their own. Using qualitative research methods, the authors collected and analyzed written reflections from students throughout twelve sections of an educational foundation course. The authors found evidence that pre-service teachers had little understanding of the culture and behavior of African-American school children and were at a disadvantage when working with this group. We call this “white disadvantage.” On the basis of these findings, the authors make recommendations to increase the students’ exposure to diverse environments (in which they are not the majority), in their academic programs or through professional development in their teaching positions in order to meet the state standards on teaching quality.

Keywords: White Privilege; pre-service teachers; diversity education
Fifty years after school desegregation, white middle class students are still being raised in racially segregated schools (Orfield, & Lee 2007), attending segregated social and religious institutions and having little or no experience with members of other racial groups. When they arrive at predominantly white higher education institutions such as the one in this study, they find even greater opportunities to share their preconceptions, reinforce their stereotypes and continue avoiding other cultures rather than utilizing the opportunities to familiarize themselves with other perspectives. These pre-service teachers’ (PST) attitudes about and comfort with diversity are influenced by the experiences they had growing up, yet not much research has focused on this aspect of their development according to Hollins & Guzman (2005).

What happens when these white students graduate as teachers and are placed in school environments in which they are the minority? Do these teachers thrive? Do the majority of the students in those environments succeed? How can a course be designed to prepare teachers to thrive with a diversity of learners and settings to help ensure that the answers to the previous two questions are ‘yes’? This article attempts to look at how home environments, personal attitudes, individual biases, and myths limit the effectiveness of white pre-service teachers in such a way as it may resemble a disadvantage, a type of professional disadvantage we come to call white disadvantage.

Pre-service teachers most naturally bring their life experiences and prior classroom experiences as students into their initial teaching practice. It is at this point where their life experience (how things are) and prior classroom experience (how they were taught) are dominant in governing their behavior. In this study, the service-learning environments were populated by African-American students, led by African-American educators and administrators, located in low income predominantly African-American communities, or met all three of the preceding conditions. These were environments with which, very few of the white, middle class students had any experience.

Since their previous mostly segregated life experience guided their thinking and performance of their assigned pre-teaching task they find that they are not as successful as they expected or hoped. The school children seemed to behave, in what was for our pre-service teachers, unpredictable ways. Their supervisors in their assigned service locations did not seem as accepting of the pre-service teachers as they had come to expect. How they saw the world and ultimately how they will teach the children that they come into contact with, was challenged by the cultural and social reality of those students, that they are unprepared to comprehend.

Literature Review

There is existing literature on what is termed as white privilege or white advantage. Peggy McIntosh in her essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1988) identified White Privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that I (as a member of the majority) can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible
weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (McIntosh 1988 p.1).

Others agree with McIntosh’s assertions about the benefits of whiteness (Fine & Weiss, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Liu, Pickett Jr. & Ivey (2007) further refined the idea as “white middle class privilege” to differentiate the members of this group from poor whites and extremely rich whites.

Given McIntosh’s and Liu, Pickett Jr. and Ivey’s definitions of privilege and considering the benefits and life chances afforded members of the majority group in American society when operating within their own group as a majority, it should follow that when whites leave their own group's environment and venture into non-white organizational environments where they must function as professionals, they may find it more difficult to communicate, achieve credibility and establish leadership. “Too often the culturally ignorant pre-service teacher becomes a culturally insensitive in-service teacher who equates diversity with deficiency” (Scott, 2003, p. 212).

Sirin, Brabeck, Satiani and Rogers-Serin (2003) also point out that negative perspectives of certain cultures can prevent teachers from respecting their students. Early national studies of Federal Programs observed cross-cultural classroom behavior and noted that white children were given more access by white teachers while children of color were kept away (Stallings, 1980), these findings were confirmed in a 2012 U.S Department of Education study that outlined harsher punishments for minority students (Niederberger, 2014) as well as less access to resources and advanced courses (Klugman, 2013).

Ladson-Billings (1992) encourages white pre-service teachers to develop self-concepts and understandings of their students that are based on historical facts and current events and avoid thinking of their students of color as victims of slavery and other forms of discrimination. Mitchell’s (2009) work points out that white teachers reflect their cultural perspectives and beliefs in their relationships with students and ignore their students’ cultural differences. This phenomenon also can be seen in schools that serve low-income populations that are also white and in African-American environments and increasingly in Latin, Asian and Middle Eastern populations. There’s recurring evidence that teachers are entering classrooms cross-racially incompetent; meaning they have never had significant experiences with students from different racial backgrounds (Burke-Spero, 1999; Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003).

In order to offset the negative impact of white disadvantage, Carter (2008) suggests that “... requiring [the same type of reflective exercise that exists in the course we studied] is a step in the right direction". Some research suggests that community-based cross-cultural immersion projects are potent experiences heightening students’ cultural awareness and sensitivity. Milner (2003) highlights the importance of pre-service teacher reflection regarding race with the goal that pre-service teachers “move toward racial competence, an unobtainable goal, but a goal that all teachers of diverse students should strive toward" (p. 193). He does not suggest that there is a ‘one size fits all’ method for teachers, but a number of approaches to be considered. “Pre-service teachers may need to reflect on their racial identities to work towards liberating themselves from confines
(biases, prejudices, shortcomings) that may prevent them from reflecting on these issues” (p.194). Milner (2003) further states that “race reflection can be seen as a way to uncover inconspicuous phenomena; it can be a process to understand hidden values, biases, and beliefs about race that were not to the fore in a teacher’s thinking prior to conscious attempts to think about race (p.196).

Methodology

We examined 218 student reflection essays from all students enrolled in a Foundation of Education course during one Spring semester. The course is designed to provide an equivalent of two units of classroom discussion and a one-unit internship, to deal with the topic of “diversity in students and settings.” This is one of the first courses education majors are required to take at the University. The essays we studied were a requirement of the course and therefore needed to be completed in order for students to pass the course. The researchers looked for demographic information, evidence of attitudes towards diversity, the semantics of the language used, and common themes found throughout the essays. As part of the course, students were given the following guidance on writing a reflection. (See Appendix A)

The course described in this study was both classroom-based and field-based. Students were placed in schools and school-like environments where students performed a service learning activity. This was a required course for certification as a teacher in this state. More specifically, the Educational Foundations course focused on eight goals for pre-service teachers. Those goals included an historical overview and a review of contemporary issues of multiculturalism in educational practice and policy. (See Appendix A for the complete list of goals). Students were also required to submit essay reflections of their field-based experiences.

The student essay data from their field experiences were coded using ATLAS.ti, a computer program that helps researcher identify qualitative themes. The researchers chose a qualitative approach because these kind of “studies have a quality of ‘undeniability’ … [they] have a concrete, vivid meaningful flavor” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). Harper and Kuh (2003) posit that using qualitative methods for research are in fact valid methods for making meaning of data and experiences.

Many of the reflections referred to the personal life and upbringing of the pre-service teachers themselves. The reflections also discussed the communities that the writers were from, including their education, and social experiences prior to enrolling in the teacher education program.

The sample that was observed consisted of all students who identified as and presented themselves as White, consisting of 218 students. The Spring cohort also contained 17 non-white students who are not part of the sample. A great majority of the students (83 per cent) in the course were women. The diversity in the class consisted of some regional diversity, but most of the students were from the Southeast United States, specifically, Alabama and Georgia, coming from mostly homogeneous primarily white middle to upper class communities according to their essays.
Results

Graph 1 shows the frequency with which the most common themes appear in aggregate in the reflections that were reviewed for this project. These codes emerged from the reflections and help the researchers understand how students view themselves, others and the communities that they are from and have worked in. The perspectives and ideas that pre-service teachers share in these reflections give insight into their knowledge and awareness of cultures that differ from their own.

The codes that emerged were based on how this group described their experiences. Racial identity, education level, community, service location, diversity, gender, and assumptions, were the most commonly identified themes. The common themes were then pared down further to examine how these themes might contribute to the emerging theory on White Disadvantage.

Pre-service teachers’ service learning reflections give even greater insight to their attitudes about people who do not share their background and experiences. Students referred to some of the people that they worked with based on stereotypes that they may have learned in their various communities. A majority of the students found it hard to empathize with the some of the people that they worked with and maintained a “them versus us” mentality, evidenced by some of their comparisons across racial lines and the use of words like “them”, “those people”, “American” when referring to themselves and related terms that create clear divisions between the pre-service teachers and the people they worked with on their service learning projects. Examples of the qualitative themes that emerged from the students’ reflections are highlighted in Table 1.

Graph 1
The preceding themes can be whittled down even further to illustrate how white disadvantage emerges in pre-service teachers. All of the qualitative themes that emerged can fall into three categories: Perceptions of Community, Perceptions of Others, and Perceptions of Self. These three themes have become clear through some of the quotes found in the reflections. The following conceptual model (Model 1) attempts to outline how white disadvantage manifests itself.

A typical example of lack of awareness of how the invisible knapsack is indeed unapparent to a large number of our sample can be found in the following quote in which a student describes their privileged middle class upbringing on one hand and takes for granted that they would not have been impacted by a less affluent lifestyle. The students said “but take it all away and I would be the same person I am today. Maybe I would not drive a nice car or attend an out of state university, but my morals and values would be the same.”

The preceding quote from a student provides some insight into how pre-service teachers experience white middle-class privilege. The writer assumes that she would still have the same morals and values if her life experience were different. An assumption like this can hamper one’s ability to understand cultural and experiential differences that may exist among their future students. Among the perspectives heard in the classroom and at the heart of this study was the idea that the pre-service teachers’ material wealth came from their faith in God and a strong work ethic, thereby equating the service learning schools’ obviously poor community as lacking faith and lacking a culture of hard work. These perceptions may have limited the extent to which the pre-service teachers were able to understand the populations who they served. These perceptions also placed the university students at an educational disadvantage as they served in facilities that were run by people from a different race, income level and culture. The pre-service teachers’ misconceptions about the site workers appear to have prevented them from learning from these experienced teachers and para-professionals.
Model 1

While many students suffered from white disadvantage, not all have shared the same life experiences. The following quote (echoed in a small number of reflections) provides some evidence that supports the idea that varied life experiences contribute to greater appreciation of diversity. One student discussed how grateful they were for their upbringing because it seems to have helped them avoid the phenomenon of white disadvantage.

“From kindergarten through eighth grade I attended a Catholic school, where the majority of students were white. I am so grateful that my parents decided to send me to a public high school because it opened my eyes to so many different views and cultures.”

It is important to try to understand pre-service teachers through both their classroom experiences and through their own words in their reflections to get a comprehensive understanding of this population. The language that students used to describe service learning reflections reveal that some of these pre-service teachers are not comfortable with their ability to relate to and teach children from diverse backgrounds. One student said, “I would classify 8 out of the 9 students I worked with as “others” because they were not white like me. I am not a racist, nor have I ever considered myself to be one, but that does not mean I have not stereo-typed people of other races or backgrounds.” This and some of the other comments relate their experiences to those of the school children they supervised, as different from theirs in ways that characterize the school children as suspicious as a result of their diverse cultural background. These differences yield to apprehensions about “the other” which limit the teachers’ ability to relate to them.
Recommendations

If pre-service teachers do in fact suffer from what we call White Disadvantage, then it could be argued that they are not able to meet the standards set forth in the state Quality Teaching Standards, and should technically not be licensed to teach in this particular state. Given this conundrum, Colleges and Schools of Education, like this one, may want to consider studying further how they can bring about change in the way that they educate pre-service teachers that have grown up inside the bubble of sameness that renders them less than competent to work as teachers in non-white environments.

The students providing reflection essays confirm demographic variables as well as some themes that are highlighted in the literature. These pre-service teachers tend to gravitate towards other white people in order to feel comfortable in their environment as evidenced by their choice of college and their self identified groups of friends. Ironically, this group is also aware that they will have some problems teaching diverse students according to their essay reflections. One student indicated that they would be able to teach black kids “even though these kids go through this and have no hope of getting out (of poverty) at anytime.” Another student said “some of the challenges I faced was I could not really communicate with some of the individuals there. I really tried very hard to help them in everyway possible”

Liu, Pickett Jr. and Ivey (2007) argue that the experiences of White middle-class should be taken into account when advising these students and should be addressed because of their shared experiences and lack of exposure to diversity. Their education while already including a field-experience should also include simulations, games or self-learning experiences that would highlight their role in furthering the impact of negative stereotypes and low expectations on students. If at the end of a field experience like this one, we have evidence that the student has not succeeded in overcoming this disadvantage, they should be counseled into additional work in this area with programs that involve them with diverse communities throughout the balance of the last two years in school. All courses and in particular diversity courses should use multiple measures to determine the degree of success starting with a simple pretest-posttest assessment of every objective (Ladson-Billings, 1991).

Pre-service teachers should also be exposed to multiple diverse populations in their practice and service learning experiences. Educations programs should facilitate more developmentally appropriate service learning, and require professionally relevant service learning with observation components before students can earn their license. Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) found that with more structured reflections and more instructors’ presence at the service learning sites, these same students at this university can show some movement towards cultural competency in their teaching. White Disadvantage not only affects diverse student populations in a negative way but also keeps pre-service teachers who experience the phenomenon from becoming the best teachers that they can be.
References


FEDS: HARSHER PUNISHMENT DOLED OUT TO BLACK STUDENTS


Howard, G. (2006). *We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know; White Teachers, Multiracial Schools (2nd Ed.)*. New York: Teachers College Press.


Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative themes</th>
<th>Example Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>White privilege— an invisible package of unearned assets that... (White) members of the majority can count on cashing in each day, but about which (Whites) were meant to remain oblivious (McIntosh 1998 p. 1).</td>
<td>“I can’t remember anyone not having a birthday party. Most of us get a car when we turn sixteen, and everyone graduates from high school. The youth of my community are often called spoiled, brat, and rich, and although it is certainly true for some people in the area, I don't consider it the case for most people. For example, I grew up with everything I ever needed. I took great vacations with my family, I had new clothes and supplies for school, and I had my own room filled with great toys. But take it all away and I would be the same person I am today. Maybe I would not drive a nice car or attend an out of state university, but my morals and values would be the same.”</td>
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<td>Protestant work ethic— the notion that you must work humbly and hard in order to earn the rewards that you are owed, the idea that hard work is the only thing that moves one from their condition to a better station in life.</td>
<td>“I was not handed anything as a child. I had to earn everything and I learned quickly the value of a dollar and the work it takes to provide for a family the way my parents provide for me. Most kids in Alpharetta have chores and they usually all get a job at sixteen.”</td>
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<td>Assigning responsibility for financial success to a “higher power” within a set religious structure.</td>
<td>(in class): “God helps those who help themselves. I feel pity for these children who do not know how God wants them to be.”</td>
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<td>Pity— sadness or shame directed at someone deemed to be less fortunate that one’s self</td>
<td>“The people I helped tutor were so far behind in school it made me sad.”</td>
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<td>Perspective shift</td>
<td>(in class): “I never met anyone like you (referring to a professor from another ethnic group) and I suddenly realized that there maybe many more like you.”</td>
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Appendix A

Service Learning Reflection Exercise

This course incorporates a great deal of information and perspective on the components of a classroom and of a society. You will see these things in action throughout your Service Learning experience this semester. Please respond to three (3) of the following prompts or quotes as they relate to your personal experiences this semester. Each response will include at least one personal example of something or someone you saw, did, or worked with. Do not give a chronological description of your experiences or recount your duties. Instead, provide in-depth integrations of specific SL experiences and class content (e.g. inequalities in the availabilities of resources, importance of re-educating “white America,” at-risk students, gender roles, white privilege, etc.).

Prompts

Please answer these two questions:

1. Describe the culture of the place where you grew up—what was the dominant skin color/ethnicity? Religion? Food? Holiday traditions? Compare that to the culture of your service learning site.
2. “Diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are” (Howard, 1999. p. 2). What responses to diversity (yours or someone else’s) did you see at your site this semester that impressed you? What responses to diversity did you see that were unimpressive?

And choose ONE of the following:

3. James Kielsmeier (2000) points out that one goal of service learning is to “challenge the existing roles of teachers, parents, and other members of communities by demanding new levels of involvement and shared responsibility” (2000, p. 652-653). How was this goal met or not met through your SL placement? What challenges did you face? What challenges were you expecting to face? What surprised you?
4. In the book, We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know, Gary Howard points out that “dominant groups tend to know very little about those whom they define as ‘the other’” (2006, p. 61). What “others” did you encounter this semester? How does society mark them as an “other”? What did you learn about the “others” that was surprising or new to you?
5. How does public policy (Individuals with Disabilities, Property Tax, any law/regulation, etc.) influence the people at your SL site? What effects did you see in action—positive or negative? Please cite or paraphrase the legislation as well as examples of what you saw in your response.
6. Find an idea or a quote from one book or article that you read this semester for FOUN 3000 that was meaningful and relevant to your SL site. Tell me what the quote is and explain its relevance to your experience. Be sure to include the reference information in APA or MLA format.
Appendix B

Educational Foundations 3000 Course Learning Goals

1. Ability to state and understand major historical forces shaping American education.
2. Ability to state and understand major social and cultural forces that contributed to the movement for equality of educational opportunity in American education.
3. Ability to state and understand the interrelationship of cultural, historical, and social forces that contributed to the desegregation of American education.
4. Ability to state and understand the educational construction of exclusion, oppression, and subordination in educational settings.
5. Ability to state and understand the educational construction of freedom, opportunity, and social hope in diverse communities.
6. Ability to state and understand contemporary issues of racial discrimination in educational practice and policy.
7. Ability to state and understand historical and contemporary issues of Native Americans in educational practice and policy.
8. Ability to state and understand contemporary issues of multiculturalism in educational practice and policy.

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“The Touchstone of Our Sanity”: Discussing Objectivity in Journalism Using Interdisciplinary Elements

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Abstract:

Objectivity is a contentious topic in journalism, important to address in a newswriting classroom because of the profession’s mission of representing reality. While often discussed within the discipline, other fields also provide examples of definitions and observations that may help journalism educators find additional ways to approach the subject. They also offer the potential for introducing relevant, related topics along the way.

Keywords: Journalism, Journalistic Objectivity

Additional challenges are likely to emerge in discussions in some partisan, politicized, and cross-cultural settings.

Nonetheless, the concept remains key in the newswriting classroom, where conveying an understanding of objectivity, and the limitations on its realization, is usually part of teaching about the reporting process. Often vigorously discussed among journalism professionals and educators, objectivity has also been a topic of debate in other fields. And these provide additional elements, grounded in established intellectual territory, that help support classroom dialogue about the concept in a newsgathering context. They also help further discussion of the mission and values of journalism, itself highly interdisciplinary.
A Nuanced Topic

The term *journalism* is broad, and includes journalistic opinion, which involves informed editorial subjectivity. But the concept of objectivity becomes especially important when discussing reporting – the gathering and presentation of news, which is often the basis for the public perception of reality. The need for care in this context is a relatively recent development. Until perhaps the later 20th century, those practicing the craft in the US, for example, had no trouble describing their approach as objective (Dennis and Merrill, 2006, p. 140).

Several factors have helped make objectivity a more nuanced topic among journalists and journalism educators. One was the rise of postmodernism, with its emphasis on relativism, its tendency to cast reality as consisting of “multiple contingent truths,” and its assertion that much empirical research is value-laden (Bishop, pp. 994-995). New journalistic movements also emerged that disregarded conventional wisdom about objectivity in reporting; interestingly, many “claimed to be more objective than traditional objectivity” (Dennis and Merrill, 2006, pp. 141-142; see also Dennis and Rivers, 2011).

Exacerbating this trend in America was the corporatization of much mainstream journalism (see e.g. Underwood, 1995; Harper and Yantek, 2003; O’Shea, 2011; McChesney and Nichols, 2010; and McChesney and Pickard, 2011); the resulting shift away from expensive-together news toward reliance on cheaper opinion and commentary (for a related discussion, see Bruni, 2014); and the rise of the Internet as a no-holds barred forum, sometimes featuring dubious information (see e.g. Webb, 2012). In America at least, these factors accompanied and likely accelerated a general decline in confidence in the press that pollsters have tracked since the 1980s (see Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 10). By the early 2000s, partisanship in U.S. journalism was seen as common, and constituted to some professionals a significant concern (see e.g. Goodwin, 2004; and Shaw, 2004). By 2014, observers began to refer to “the Balkanization of the news media” (Friedman, 2014, p. 8).

Representing Reality

To some, such partisanship may at least reflect a form of honesty, for today in academic settings it is generally held that, to quote Taflinger (1996) “Objectivity is not a possible goal in human interaction, and that includes journalism.” The concept has been increasingly portrayed in information media settings as passé or irrelevant (for discussion, see Campbell, 2004, pp. 160-161). Amid increased wariness about the veracity of news, transparency on the reporter’s part concerning his or her own politics has been described as “the new objectivity” (David Weinberger, quoted in Sullivan, 2013, p. SR12). The author of one recent book critiquing the US news media – part of an ever-expanding literary field – suggests that the public “should reward news outlets that are transparent about the personal opinions of their journalists,” and encourages the latter to publicly disclose their political views (Groseclose, 2011, pp. 254-255).

Certainly a critical approach to objectivity in reporting is appropriate in both academic and professional journalism circles. Even the most conscientious reporters generally work under intense deadline pressure and at the mercy of sources and their availability; few people, from passersby to public officials, necessarily want to go on the record on a controversial subject, for example. Indeed,
any given report might be measured in degrees of imperfection, and few if any professional journalists would claim to present transcendental truth in their work (for related discussions, see e.g. Merrill, 1997, pp. 113-117; and Lippmann, 1961 edition, pp. 338-365; see also Proudfoot and Lacey, 2012, pp. 415-419).

But without a sense that reality exists and should be capably presented, journalism would differ little from areas such as advertising, public relations, and propaganda. Nor is reporting the only career path in an open society where objectivity, or at least impartiality, are key qualities. Philip B. Corbett, the New York Times’ associate managing editor for standards, observes: “We expect professionals in all sorts of fields to put their personal opinions aside, or keep them to themselves, when they do their work — judges, police officers, scientists, teachers. Why would we expect less of journalists?” (quoted in Sullivan, 2013, p. SR12).

There are also valid social arguments against abandoning efforts to present news with objectivity in mind, however daunting it may be. Lippmann (2012 edition) warned that people “who have lost their grip upon the relevant facts of their environment are the inevitable victims of agitation and propaganda. … Without protection against propaganda, without standards of evidence, without criteria of emphasis, the living substance of all popular decision is exposed to every prejudice and to infinite exploitation” (pp. 18, 21). A later observer, Corrigan (1999) likens objectivity in journalism to other worthy-but-elusive ideals such as “world peace, racial harmony, universal human rights, and religious tolerance,” and argues that none should be abandoned because of difficulty in attainment (pp. xvi-xvii).

**Journalistic Objectivity**

Among reporters, the term **objectivity** is often used to convey **fairness** or **neutrality**. Something that is **fair** is, to cite a dictionary definition, “marked by impartiality and honesty; free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism”; that which is **neutral** is “not engaged on either side; specifically: not aligned with a political or ideological grouping” (Merriam Webster, 1997, pp. 417, 781). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) observe that American journalists’ interest in objectivity was part of a deliberate move to mitigate reporting bias – which they acknowledged as a problem – by employing more methodical approaches (pp. 72-75). The effort also recognized that complex stories might require the inclusion of a variety of sources and viewpoints, a point noted in recent journalism textbooks discussing coverage of diverse and multicultural communities (see, e.g., G. Foreman, 2010, pp. 288-312).

Dennis notes that a modern reference to **journalistic objectivity** might be summarized as “separating fact from opinion”; “presenting an emotionally detached view of the news”; and “striving for fairness and balance” with the intention of providing “full information to the audience” (Dennis and Merrill, 2006, p. 140). Many reporters consciously try to do this every day. However, Dennis adds that some observers have faulted this approach, one criticism being that, on controversial subjects, it may assume “that complex situations can always be reduced to a balanced presentation with two alternative views” (Dennis and Merrill, 2006, pp. 142).

Often in the background of such criticism is an ongoing argument about the role of the reporter: Is it to determine truth, or to present multiple viewpoints and hence
allow readers/viewers to make up their own minds? In practice, journalists may well try doing both within a single report. Unsettled and complex issues may well call for multiple perspectives to be folded into a story. However, as Tuchman (1972) notes, many “facts” in a report may reflect the perceived “common sense” or conventional wisdom of the audience. In these cases, there is no apparent need for attribution, qualification, verification, or presentation of an alternative (discussed in Muhlmann, 2008, p. 11).

**Contextual Objectivity**

A given audience’s conventional wisdom about reality figures in media-related discussions of contextual objectivity, which is a term that originated in quantum mechanics (Berenger, 2005; and Berenger and Taha, 2013). Media scholars have particularly employed the term when discussing war reporting. El Nawawy and Iskandar (2002) use it to refer to the shading that news often receives in its encoding — what rates as “assassination” as opposed to “targeted killing,” for example — for specific audiences. They write that: “Contextual objectivity can be seen in every broadcast in every media outlet in the world, not just Al-Jazeera and the U.S. networks.” The question for networks during war, they add, is how they can “strike a balance that provides audiences a true representation of real events while still appealing to public opinions and sensibilities” (pp. 201-202).

The same authors elsewhere (2004) write that:

> Contextualization demonstrates a situational position, a way by which collectivism among participants within the same “context” — whether cultural, religious, political, or economic — is realized and engaged. It is precisely this contextualization that aggravates and complicates the pursuit of “objective” coverage within the news media setting. Contextualization further confuses attempts at evenhandedness and efforts to cover all sides of a story. Particularly in times of war, it is the context within which a reporter operates that makes communication with the ‘enemy’ unacceptable (p. 320).

The news media, they add, “have a dual role as both informants and a mirror for society, hence, they are held to a rather stringent policy by their viewers. They must meet their dual duties of being balanced (objectivity) while reflecting the views of their public constituency (contextualization)” (p. 321. See also e.g. Harb, 2008; Hundleby, 2009; Al-Najjar, 2011; and Higgins and Smith, 2011).

**Some External Views**

Definitions of objectivity from some areas outside journalism tend to emphasize the concept as involving accuracy and lack of bias, often reflecting reliance on empirical and repeatable standards. However, some also acknowledge that disagreements exist over the universality and/or applicability of methods.

To cite one example, Derksen and Gartrell (1992), in an entry on “Scientific Explanation” in the Encyclopedia of Sociology, describe “being objective” as meaning “that observers agree on what they have observed.” They write:

> For example, a group of scientists observing the behavior of objects when they are dropped would agree
that they saw the objects “fall” to the ground. For this observation to be objective (1) there must be an agreed-upon method for producing it (dropping an object); (2) the observation must be replicable (more than one object is released and they all “fall”); and (3) the same results must occur regardless of who performs the operation and where they perform it (objects must behave the same way for all observers anywhere in the world.) Scientific operations must be expressed clearly enough that other people can repeat the procedures. Only when all these conditions are met is it possible to say that an observation is objective. This form of objectivity is called “intersubjectivity” and is crucial to scientific explanations (p. 1715).

The entry adds that the “second use of the word objective in science means that scientific explanations are not based on the values, opinions, attitudes, or beliefs of the researcher. In other words, scientific explanations are ‘value-free’” (p. 1715). However, existence of the latter condition, the authors note, has been challenged in some schools of thought (pp. 1716-1719; see also Lett, 1996, pp. 1142-1143).

Another reference work entry – on “Objectivity in Ethics” from The Encyclopedia of Philosophy – makes evident the complexity of the concept, describing several different types of objectivity. One that parallels some discussions within journalism involves objectivity as truth. Of this, the author writes:

In one sense, what is objective is what is so independently of one’s particular attitude or position. But this idea can be specified in different ways. In one sense, a particular ethical judgment is objective if and only if it is correct, where this is an evaluation of the judgment itself, not of how it is formed or sustained. If ethical judgments are beliefs, then it is natural to think that they are correct if and only if they are true (Kolodny, 2006, p. 3).

This basis of objectivity seems to favor an understanding that only one truth (not multiple perspectives on it) actually exists. It is echoed in part of Lett’s (1996) entry on “Scientific Anthropology” in the Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology:

Scientific objectivity implies two things: first, that the truth or falsity of a given factual claim is independent of the claimant’s hopes, fears, desires or goals; and second, that no two conflicting accounts of a given phenomenon can both be correct (p. 1142).

Thus a reporter practicing journalistic objectivity – providing multiple viewpoints on a non-settled issue – might uphold fairness and neutrality, but not necessarily be practicing objectivity as defined above.

**Verification**

With that said, some of these views on objectivity from outside journalism are invoked in the term journalism of verification (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001, pp. 70-93). This sees journalism as a process that requires reporters to explain how they got their facts together. At its most basic, this involves providing attribution for quotes and other data, and noting the limitations of a story (such as when someone refused comment or when data was not available). Kovach and Rosenstiel’s thesis that “The
The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification” (p. 71) indicates that a reporter’s work should meet the same criteria as a scientific operation.

Analogous to this is the term *publicly verifiable*, which Lett (1996) uses in the aforementioned entry on “Scientific Anthropology” in the Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology. While acknowledging that absolute objectivity is unrealizable or unattainable, Lett adds that the process of public verification – “that the procedures employed in the collection of the evidence be replicable by independent observers” – is meant to render “the biases of individual scientists… irrelevant” (pp. 1142-1143).

Accordingly, journalists practicing verification-conscious versions of their craft would be expected to treat data like a scientist or social scientist should; notably today there is increasing discussion of “data-based journalism” and “data journalism” (see, e.g. V. Foreman, 2012, and Rogers, 2014).

**Balance and Falsehoods**

Under any circumstances, reporters (like scientists and social scientists, among others) may also be expected to refute certain statements, or refuse to present them at all, given “the journalist’s responsibility in discerning true from false news” (Mellor, 2005, pp. 88-89, citing Nabi, 1989). In such an approach, objectivity in the sense of discovering truth is the journalist’s mission, and not necessarily something to be left to the audience.

However, at times legal realities and professional ethics encourage reporting “balance.” Journalists covering crime, for example, usually defer to courts as to what constitutes “truth” related to the guilt or innocence of suspects; they may risk lawsuits for wrongly “convicting” a suspect themselves. Similarly, reporters covering courtroom stories may feel an ethical duty to include responses one side makes to another’s charges. This generally also applies to stories about public controversies, especially political ones involving candidates in the period before an election.

Still other factors have influenced recent aspects of “balance” in American political coverage. Some news outlets responded to budget cuts by abandoning comprehensive reporting in favor of simply providing arenas for partisan squabbles (see, e.g., Bruni, 2014). Though undoubtedly cheaper, to some professionals this constitutes an abdication of the journalist’s role as arbiter over facts. Goodwin (2004) writes that the “tired formula of turning the cameras or news pages over to two partisans so they can duke it out only adds to the burden of viewers and readers. They are now expected to find the truth that presumably lies somewhere between two lies. Used to be, that was the job of journalism” (p. 6). In this regard, another observer (Chinni, 2004) holds that “routinely presenting opposing points of view regardless of the facts is often a lazy substitute for reporting. It means assertions don’t have to be checked or even filtered. … Who needs journalism if truth is just a matter of opinion” (p. 9). From another viewpoint – in this case a text discussed in a scholarly work on Arab news media – “objectivity as presenting two opposing opinions is beside the point, assuming that one of the two opinions is misleading or false, because then the media would be helping to promote this opinion” (Mellor, 2005, pp. 88-89, citing Nabi, 1989; cf. Mill, 1978).
Real or alleged distortion of reality in the name of balance or fairness is sometimes referred to as false balance or false equivalence. Defining the latter term, Fournier (2013) writes that it means “to describe a situation as having logical and apparent equivalence when in fact there is none.” (For related discussions, see e.g. Montopoli, 2004; Fallows, 2013; and Poniewozik, 2013). The late philosophy professor and Boston University President John Silber has been described as having been a “longtime foe of false equivalence.” A combative figure, Silber was often engaged in controversy on- and off-campus, and was known to clash with reporters. A former editor of Boston University’s Daily Free Press has recalled how “a quarter of a century ago, some of the biggest battles we waged (publicly and privately) centered on what Silber considered to be one of journalism's big cop-outs – the ‘he said, she said’ narrative that forms the basis of most reporting. At least as he explained it to me, journalists have a duty not just to lay out the facts, and not just to serve up quotes, but also to search for, and write about, the truth of the matter. Surely it was his background in philosophy – he studied Kant, for example – that made him push in this direction” (Cohen, 2012).

However, the former editor also acknowledges that, in the circumstances he was reporting on, sometimes “it was impossible for me at the time to know who was telling the truth, or whether anyone could know the truth” (Cohen, 2012). This observation hits at a reality of journalism, and beyond: truth can be hard to discover. And as another philosopher warns, silencing a voice may be silencing truth (Mill, 1978, pp. 15-52).

Information vs. Interpretation

Even when facts in a report are correct, other issues may arise. Merrill, who developed the TUFF (Truthful-Unbiased-Full-Fair) model of ethical and professional reporting, himself acknowledged that its elements could be paradoxical (Merrill, 1997, pp. 174-189). For example, a journalist’s article about a sexual assault might be accurate (i.e. truthful), but if it names the victim it may not be considered fair (Kayode, 2011, p. 148). This power that journalists have in selecting what facts they include can be described as gatekeeping. Accordingly, this initial screening – determining what is relevant to a reporter’s representation of reality – can also be viewed as a form of interpretation of that data.

With that said, professional journalists are expected to put data into contexts their background knowledge provides (see e.g. O’Shea, 2011, pp. 340-341). As Bruni (2014) writes: “News has always been paired with analysis, and a certain degree of assumption and conjecture rightly enters into the laudable attempt to make sense of things.” But as that author notes, critiquing the “grandstanding” that often follows initial news reports, problems have arisen when “impassioned interpretations eclipsed actual information” (p. SR3).

Other disciplines have had their own debates over the role of interpretation vs. information. One such example comes from the humanities area of history, which has similarities to journalism, the latter having been likened to “the first rough draft of history” (Phil Graham, quoted in Halberstam, 2000, p. 161). At the core of this discussion were the lectures of British historian E.H. Carr (1961) delivered at
Cambridge University, in which he critiques reliance on purely empirical approaches. He observes, among other things, that historians’ power of selection of their facts forestalls any pretense to objectivity. (Journalism’s critics have, as noted above, marshaled similar arguments about reporters.) Carr faults those who apply the values of their own era to historical facts, but also argues that the latter are in eternal flux due to the progress of interpretation (pp. 7-10, 24, 159, and passim). He remarks at one point that “objectivity in history does not and cannot rest on some fixed and immovable standard of judgment existing here and now, but only on a standard which is laid up in the future and is evolved as the course of history advances. History acquires meaning and objectivity only when it establishes a coherent relation between past and future” (p. 173).

A response to this came from Cambridge University professor of history G.R. Elton (2002 edition), arguing that facts could indeed be separated from their interpretation. The problem with suggesting that “history is what historians write, not what happened,” Elton continues, is that it was “dangerously close to suggesting either that it does not much matter what one says because (interpretation being everything) there are always several reasonably convincing interpretations of any given set of events, or that history is altogether unknowable, being merely what happens to be said by a given historian at a given moment” (p. 51).

It is important to note that while Elton defended empiricism, he did not discount the importance of competent interpretation. But he might have agreed with Lippmann (2010 edition), who warned against “the loss of contact with objective information. Public as well as private reason depends upon it. Not what somebody says, not what somebody wishes were true, but what is so beyond all our opining, constitutes the touchstone of our sanity” (p. 19).

**Conclusion**

Academic fields outside of journalism studies provide examples of definitions, arguments, and other elements that may help fuel classroom discussions about the pursuit and attainment of objectivity. These shed different and useful lights on the basic concept, sometimes introducing cautions akin to those applied to journalism-related uses of the term. They can also lead into related topics involving areas such as methodology, balance, and interpretation.

While this piece has cited examples drawn from disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and history, these do not, of course, represent the full range of interdisciplinary resources available to a journalism educator. Nor are these the only disciplines outside of journalism that offer useful models and parallels. Moreover, objectivity is not the only journalism-related topic that might gain from an interdisciplinary approach to source materials. Scholars in business studies, for example, have written on topics such as organizational learning that speak to the role of information in fixing problems (see e.g. the discussion of works by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön in Larsson and Nohrsted, 2002, pp. 116-117). Others have written on the democratizing role of information distribution, another topic that parallels journalism’s traditional mission (see e.g. Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006, 31-32).
Objectivity will remain contentious not only in journalism, but also to practitioners and educators in other fields. Introducing journalism students to discussions about objectivity and related concepts drawn from other disciplines broadens their approach to what will be a career-long issue. It also lets them know that they will not be alone.

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The Effects of the Bologna Process in Vocational Education and Training: A Theorized Literature-Based Argument

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Abstract

Bologna Process (BP), founded to meet growing challenge of international education and fulfill employment market demands in Europe (Caddick, 2008), has transformed European higher education system (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012) with remarkable results (Vassiliou, 2012). The Bologna Process has also led to some controversy (Cardoso et al., 2008). Some of these controversies were expressed as concerns, ranging from lack of financial reforms to adapt technical education (Reichert & Tauch, 2003) to lack of consultancy resources for technical advice (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009), about BP’s impact on vocational education and training across Europe. Through theoretical framework and literature research methodology, this paper attempts to illuminate theoretically the impact that BP has had on career and technical education in Europe.

Keywords: Bologna Process, Vocational Education and Training (VET)
charge of education from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement declaring architectural harmonization of European higher education system (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998). The launch of the Bologna Declaration (1999) has since caused major changes to degree structures (Bunning & Shilela, 2006).

The implementation of a common higher education academic degrees structure across Europe means that some European countries are moving away from a four- or five-year first cycle degree cycle to a shorter three-year cycle as suggested by the Bologna Process (Cardoso et al., 2008). The move towards a common European higher education has revealed the problems that it encountered in individual European countries. Although there has been a strong commitment by many signatory countries, majority of them have expressed significant lack of financial support for the Bologna reforms (Reichert & Tauch, 2003) or even for consultancy for technical advice (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Others have also widely expressed concerns with the impact over the career and technical education.

The weaknesses of career and technical education (CTE) and its equivalence, vocational education and training (VET), have been troubling because they target country’s most vulnerable and least privileged (Hoffman, 2009). However, in order to agree with Hoffman (2009), one must understand why technical education was created in the first place. Reasons differ and are as a result of different needs and what they promote. Technical and vocational educational programs are not only means to increase productivity or economic growth or even increase employability among its participants but to also improve equity and social cohesion among marginalized groups (Calleja, 2014) who otherwise would not be able to participate. Thus, to dis vocational and technical education is the equivalence of belittling discourse to education.

To Europeans, vocational and technical education (VET) can play a special role in promoting both economic and social competitiveness (Heidegger, 2000; Abs at al., 2009; Aspin & Chapman, 2009) although the focus is to mostly benefit the worker (Wu, 2003). To Americans (U.S.), career and technical education is an attempt to address and meet economic needs that the economy demands (Hogg, 1999; Englert & Grossmann, 2009). To Australians, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has emerged as a career guidance to contextualize market realities and to empower individuals see lifelong perspectives (Zelloth, 2014). Regardless its reason for inception, technical training is not only crucially important but it also supports and stabilizes the emergent policy framework for European higher education system (Keeling, 2006).

The Bologna Process is one sort of higher education system, that has arguably been founded to meet growing challenge of international education and fulfill employment market demands in Europe (Caddick, 2008), and the question posited is not whether the effect of the Bologna Process has profoundly affected technical education but to what extent has this effect affected technical education. This paper will attempt to shed some light over the Bologna Process impact on the career, vocational and technical education throughout Europe and learn where the future of vocational and technical education is headed.
Literature Research Context

The United States considers career and technical education to be the education of the 21st century (Castalda et al., 2000 cited in Wu, 2003) but its role is often misunderstood and misinterpreted across different countries. At times, terminology used across nations is also different. The United States emphasizes it as Career and Technical Education (CTE). Australia has named it Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). And most of the world, including Europe, calls it Vocational Education and Training (VET). Since technical and vocational training takes place anywhere between upon completion of secondary education to adult continuing education, the definitions of what constitutes technical and vocational education are also different. For this reason, the Occupational Outlook Handbook compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2014) and Terminology of Vocational Training Policy compiled by the European Centre for the Development (Cedefop) of vocational Training (Tissot, 2004) are consulted to establish the definition of terminology and its use throughout this paper.

According to BLS (2014), education is the needed levels of education to enter an occupation and occupation is a craft, trade, profession or other means of earning a living which employees within same occupation perform same tasks whether or not they work and operate within the same industry. Cedefop (Tissot, 2004) defines education as the improvement or update of individual’s knowledge and/or skills, acquisitions of new skills for a career move or retraining and continuation of personal or professional development. Either definition implies that technical education is the education that aims to help individuals to enter a profession, to upgrade or obtain the necessary skills by which he or she earns an income. The focus here is to examine technical education from the lenses of occupational profession; that is, occupations that upon training will enable employees to earn a decent living income. To name a few they range from average paying professions such as mechanics, chefs, welders, cosmetologists to high paying professions including lawyers, nurses, engineers, dentists etc. Some of these professions also require at least 3 years of full-time academic work beyond traditional four-year university studies. However, they were examined in a technical context because, according to distinguished award-winning scholar Abbott (1988), they require a fair amount of expertise to carry although the results, at times, cannot be guaranteed. Hence, the focus is on jobs that require specialized technical training.

The Impact

The significance of technical education has been and is still receiving ever-increasing attention by European policy-makers (Calleja, 2014). The increase of attention has come as a result of an agenda agreement between the Member States of European Union, the European social partners and the European Commission to increase participation of individuals in technical education (Council of EU and European Commission, 2010). A greater participation of individuals in technical education will require a stronger synchronization with the Bologna Process in order to produce a synergetic effect with the Bologna Process’ instruments and principles (Council of EU and European Commission, 2010).

Nonetheless, a study by Cardoso et al. (2008) has indicated that adoption of the Bologna Process has increased the demand for higher education and Calleja (2014) has
statistically documented the increase of technical education participation over recent years. Majority of the countries who have opted to adapt the Bologna Process, have offered and still offer technical and vocational training. Yet, most of them have decided to make the transition from technical education to higher education (Davies, 2008). Transition from technical and vocational education has widely been argued in relation to higher education institutions’ missions. Scholars Hackl (2012) and Neave (2005) have supported this transition on basis of training a workforce for the knowledge economy. Neave (2005) argues that training centers were converted for public employees and agents including bureaucrats, judges, lawyers, teachers, medical doctors and other publicly-related service roles for a knowledge economy. Similarly Hackl (2012) argues that the emphasis on curiosity-driven research has shifted to “economically-relevant research (p. 89)” with the focus to enhance competitiveness of national economics. Hence, universities have become more business-like organizations driven to prepare a knowledgeable workforce in service to community to be later absorbed by the private and public sector. Other scholars believe that higher education is increasingly becoming “embedded in transnational economic spaces (Miklavic, 2009, p. 122)” where internationalization is an integral strategy for economic competitiveness (Britez & Peters, 2010). Moreover, even in a knowledge society, expertise skills including those vocational and technical are equally important to academic skills and competencies (Englert & Grossmann, 2009; Council of EU and European Commission, 2010; Bank, 2014).

Calleja (2014) theorizes that the life of European education and training practices lies on the access of adult participation in lifelong learning programs. Some of the fields that require lifelong learning participation have supported this argument. For instance, engineering and computing fields has concluded that the technical education among young men and women will increase with the implementation of the Bologna Process (OECD, 2012). The nursing field also has reported the impact of the Bologna Process as a positive one seeking to unify professional and higher education with career and technical education. Moreover, early studies in Ireland, UK and Germany have also provided clear evidence of the positive impact on student experiences and outcomes (O'Carroll et al., 2009). Scott (2009) has attributed the impact to two factors. The first factor, in alignment with Powell, et al.(2012), was the increase of demand for technical and expertise and professional skills and two, an increase of social demand for higher education. The former and first impactful factor also appear to suggest an enhancement of team work cooperation (Hendricks & Scheerens, 2009).

Some scholars (Cardoso et al., 2008; Davies, 2008) have agreed that the Bologna Process spurred growth mainly in professional education but technical education has also been positively influenced and perceived. Technical education programs, particularly, have seen growth (Calleja, 2014). A large contributor to the growth of recognition in technical education sector has come largely by private enterprises and government-recognized or accredited institutions for technical and professional education (Crosier & Parveva, 2013). Other parts of this successful impact are also attributed to the ability of the Bologna Process to process and accommodate different levels of academic and technical paths for students (Veiga,
Amaral, & Mendes, 2008). In fact, one of the most prominent characteristic of the Bologna Process is the inability to draw a clear boundary between academic and technical education (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012), thus blurring the line between academic and technical education to accommodate more educational choices for traditional and non-traditional students. The reason why accommodation is important is because a large corpus of research has theorized the higher education success factors but only a few have actually focused attention on educational choices (Oppedissano, 2011) which is exactly what Bologna Process is capable of offering to its participants including work migration as one of the most important factors in ensuring its mobile success among students.

Work migration facilitation is a factor that has played a large role in the impact of the Bologna Process mainly because mobility of young people has grown rapidly either to obtain new educational credentials or high wages and higher quality of education (Bezis & Soueri, 2011). Presumably, the ability to move across Europe freely will enable workers to have access to technology unavailable in their own country and to obtain new skills unknown due to new jobs creation. These jobs range from computational jobs such as application development, user experience design, cloud computing to market research data mining, elderly care and sustainability experts that a decade ago were inexistent (Forbes, 2012).

Facilitation of work migration across the continent has widely contributed to impact and it is expected to rise. The qualification levels expected to increase from diploma level to graduate level under a unified platform (Davies, 2008; Cardoso et al., 2008). Such unification and facilitation is greatly welcomed because of the mobility of students and professional workers that can migrate from a country where there is a surplus of workers within a certain field to a country facing employees’ shortage of the same field. Unification is also very critical and closely connected to mobility of technical education because once skilled-labor is enabled to move freely across the continent, employers in different countries around Europe can utilize employment gaps and allow them to grow and expand in size. Additionally, the new employment workforce from different countries is fully equipped with the same obtainable skills as the professionals of that particular country. Naturally, that expands the opportunity for employers to grow who seek qualified candidates for certain positions and more opportunities for employees who seek to match their individual skills with employment positions. Accordingly, Davies (2008) expects more realistic opportunities for mobility and employability for undergraduate and graduate students. Thus, employability is expected to rise and so is expected the acquisition or the upgrading of new skills.

The relational importance between technical education and higher education is growing because changes in the world of work are shifting (Powell et al, 2012). Although impact results have shown positive signs thus far, it still remains to be seen the long terms effects of the Bologna Process in technical education. Even more interestingly to see unravel is how the Bologna Process will balance the employee shortage in technical and professional positions throughout Europe.

**Conclusion**

In an increasingly competitive world, countries need an exponentially educated
and skilled workforce to remain competitive and succeed (OECD, 2012). Developed countries are giving significant prevalence to higher education (Oppedissano, 2011) and the implementation of the Bologna Process is one kind of arrangement that supports “uniformity and coherence (p. 35)” to arrange different kinds of hierarchical educational institutions. The impact has also extended to technical educational institutions.

One of the succeeding arguments in support of the Bologna Process is the positive impact on career and technical education due to its accommodating abilities for technical and professional and academic positions. The institutions that are in business of providing career and technical education are diverse and range from vocational educational institutions and professional development centers to workplace centers, colleges and universities (Billett, 2011). Hence, the scope and opportunities to obtain new skills are wide and abundant whether those skills are acquiring in postsecondary or adult training. Some countries (Andorra, Cyprus, Finland etc.) have even taken steep measures to ensure flexible studies including e-learning opportunities and weekend classes among other initiatives to promote flexibility to choose from different kinds of educational programs (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012).

Generally speaking, being able to choose from a menu of choices enhances the attentiveness towards choices and guides the participant towards selection. For instance, in France, structural adaption of the Bologna Process has introduced new professionally-oriented programs and in Poland, it has developed public vocational and technical higher education institutions (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012). Latest report from EACEA P9 Eurydice (2012) has shown that students’ accessibility to more educational program choices has been perceived and seen positively that ultimately contribute to “parity of esteem and equality of different educational choices and pathways (p. 83).” Similarly, the more choices available to students to choose from between technical, professional or academic opportunities in life, the higher may be the chances for the participant to continue his or her education regardless of career selection. Of course, at times, many students will choose to change careers and doing so, the Bologna Process prevails at offering choices to switch among career paths. Under the Bologna Process, the switch between career paths is commonly understood as a non-traditional route to higher education (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012).

Although the Bologna Process has offered an array of opportunities to its participants, whether that is to attend higher or technical education degrees, it also represents a degree of difficulty in implementation. This difficulty, according to Horner and Dobert (2008) has come as a result of differences between national traditions characterized by particular national features because the European higher education systems are deeply rooted in their respective nationalistic backgrounds. Thus, it is logical to indicate that teaching of education differs across European nations despite their attempts to synchronize. The same rationale also applies to technical education although at a much lesser degree. Technical occupations like carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, doctors, pharmacists and other related technical professions are universally ubiquitous positions differing minimally across borders. Hence, employee shortage or surplus will most likely not occur because many employees will seek to upgrade and match their skills with organizational needs or new tools and technology will redesign and standardize
posing making it easier for employers and employees to match their skills. One concern, however, remains on the affordability of either new technology or upgrading new skills.

Ever thought the relative decline of public funding is a concern and shows no signs of reversing to Texeira (2009), the accessibility to move to new careers and the inclusive fundamentals of the Bologna Process will lessen the magnitude of funding decline effects. Hence, more accessibility to either upgrade skills or move freely between careers with enhancement of technical training will open more career and technical opportunities for students who cannot afford a higher education but rather opt for technical or vocational schooling. This particularly is not a problem because the market of labor will regulate itself in balancing the need for technical, professional and academic education. Moreover, higher education institutions will have to adjust their role to prepare professionals with the adequate skills to fill in the gaps of employment.

Technical training offers decent opportunities. It is worthy. It is influential in societal and organizational lives. And it should be respected and encouraged. Even though there is a drive of conversion for nations to switch to a more knowledge economy with the Bologna Process, the impact of the Bologna Process will sustain positively; mainly because the increasing cost of education may inhibit access for some to higher education and will offer an alternative to educational career path: technical or vocational education. Maybe economic forces (shortage, surplus) will either provide more incentives for individuals to choose a technical career path or better yet, individuals will understand the value of technical education with the new rapid upcoming changes surrounding our lives. Regardless where the influence comes from, technical and continuing education is worthy to be explored.

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Preparing Pre-Service Teachers for Performance Assessments

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Abstract

Performance assessments have become one way that many teacher education programs use to evaluate the effectiveness and readiness of pre-service teachers. These assessments allow teacher candidates to demonstrate their ability to plan, instruct, assess, and reflect. Teacher education programs can make changes to the curriculum and provide various support structures that allow teacher candidates to successfully complete a performance assessment. This article describes the support systems that one university has initiated for teacher candidates submitting a performance assessment, the improvement the assessment has made on the program, and the impact it has made on the teaching effectiveness of graduates.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher Education, Teachers Assessment

Teacher preparation programs strive to produce quality graduates who have the skills, experiences, and dispositions to be effective educators. The goal of these programs is that every graduate will be ready to teach and able to impact the learning of students in the local schools. In order to better prepare graduates, many programs have implemented performance assessments for their pre-service teacher candidates. Okhremtchouk et al. (2009) studied the perceptions of pre-service teachers who had participated in a performance assessment during their student teaching. The teacher candidates felt the experience of completing a performance assessment helped them become better teachers. They reported that they responded more appropriately to students, and felt they were able to plan better lessons and develop more effective assessments. In addition, pre-service teachers believed they were better prepared to meet the diverse needs of students after participating in a performance assessment.

Performance assessments provide important data for the teacher preparation program. Pre-service teachers are scored on the various aspects of teaching, such as planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection. The resulting data can be used to guide curricular changes, and can aid in the accreditation process (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These assessments are increasingly
seen as a way to demonstrate that graduates are adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession, and used as one of the indicators to identify strengths and weakness in teacher preparation programs (Lit & Lotan, 2013). Although many universities use performance assessments as a requirement for graduation, some states have also chosen to also use successful completion of a performance assessment as a condition for teacher licensure.

**Performance Assessments**

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) program was developed as an assessment for experienced and accomplished teachers. This assessment allows veteran teachers to demonstrate their effectiveness in advancing student achievement (“National Board of Professional Teaching Standards,” n.d.), and by 2013, over 100,000 teachers in 50 states had achieved National Board Certification (www.nbpts.org). In the 1980’s, Connecticut developed a summative portfolio system for beginning teachers called Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program (“Consortium for Policy Research in Education,” n.d.). It requires teachers in that state to develop and submit content-specific portfolios that demonstrate their teaching effectiveness during their second year of teaching. The goal was to improve student learning by improving teaching. While National Board addresses the competency of practicing professionals, and BEST was designed for beginning teachers, it was only recently that attention has been given to providing the same level of assessment for pre-service teachers. California, in response to State Senate Bill 2042 passed in 1998, developed several performance assessments for pre-service teachers such as the Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT), the California Teacher Performance Assessment (CalTPA), and the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers (FAST). FAST was a locally designed system, and was approved by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to be used by Fresno State University (Togerson, Macy, Beare, & Tanner, 2009).

Many felt that the time was right for the establishment of a national performance assessment for pre-service teachers, and in response to this need, the edTPA was developed by Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). This assessment drew from the experience of other performance assessments, such as the NBPTS and PACT, and was written with input from teachers and teacher educators. For the edTPA, candidates are asked to teach a learning segment of 3-5 lessons in which they demonstrate their ability to effectively plan, instruct, assess, analyze, and reflect. They are required to submit artifacts such as lesson plans, instructional materials, video recording clips, assessments, student work samples, and written responses to commentaries. The accompanying rubrics highlight the importance of the work being student-centered and not teacher-centered. It is designed as a pre-service assessment to identify if teacher education graduates are ready and equipped to assume the responsibilities of a teacher (“edTPA,” n.d.).

As more states learned about the edTPA, the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium (TPAC) was formed. Tennessee was one of the pilot states to join the Consortium, and by 2013, thirty-three states and the District of Columbia were implementing the edTPA at some level. Some states have used the edTPA for licensure or program completion,
some to inform the program and provide data, and still others have been at an exploratory level to learn about the possibilities (“edTPA,” n.d.).

Austin Peay State University (APSU), located in Clarksville, Tennessee, began implementing the edTPA with teacher candidates in 2011. The number of edTPA submissions has grown each semester since initial implementation. In spring 2011, 29 edTPAs were submitted in three content areas. During the academic year of 2013-2014, a total of 187 edTPAs in 16 content areas were submitted for national scoring.

Supporting Pre-Service Teachers

In the process of implementation, it was evident at Austin Peay State University that supporting pre-service teachers needed to be a priority in order for the implementation of a performance assessment, such as the edTPA, to be successful. Faculty planned specific ways they would support teacher candidates in all aspects of the edTPA, beginning in the Foundation of Education course and continuing through the submission of the edTPA during their last semester of student teaching. This meant redesigning the curriculum, changing student teaching placements, and revising support structures before and during student teaching.

Curriculum Changes

At Austin Peay State University, it was important that elements of the edTPA be embedded in the courses, so that from the moment teacher candidates entered the teacher education program, they were practicing the edTPA, and in doing so, advancing their skills as a professional. Okhremtchouk et al. (2009) affirmed this practice in their study. They reported that teacher preparation programs could support candidates by embedding aspects of the assessment into coursework, and providing effective feedback during the work. They also found that participants felt better prepared if they were given information about the assessment before the student teaching semester, and that participants who reported having the most positive experience, credited this to being well supported throughout the program (Okhremtchouk et al., 2009). Darling-Hammond and Snyder further asserted that performance assessments should not be viewed as add-ons in the program, but should be integrated in curriculum and instruction (2000).

Pre-service candidates were given opportunities during their earliest field experiences to practice planning, teaching, assessing, and reflecting, as they would in the edTPA. In their field experiences during the Foundation of Education course, they used the contextual information form to begin to view the class as individual students with diverse needs. In the instructional strategies course, they practiced lesson planning with special regard to the needs of students, effective strategies, and academic language. During their technology course, they practiced video recording with special emphasis on student engagement. The candidates learned the skills to record, clip, and upload their videos.

One particular area of curricular change was in leading the teacher candidates to analyze student work and learning. This practical task was essential in preparation of the candidates to not only be successful in the edTPA, but also to be successful as a teacher of record. Assessments were no longer viewed as simply paper and pencil tests, but as ways to focus planning future
lessons with specific goals and outcomes in mind (Shepard et al., 2005). They were asked to analyze student responses not only on formative assessments, but also by concentrating the work samples of two focus students. This type of analysis forced the teacher candidates to evaluate the needs and strengths of the students, reflect on the impact of their instruction, and plan for appropriate next steps. It helped them evaluate the impact that their instruction had on the students in the classroom.

Such structured performance practices throughout the curriculum provided the chance for the faculty and pre-service teachers to share a common focus in regard to a performance assessment and its demands (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, Shulman, 2005). Curricular changes can be challenging, but are an important part of the support system for candidates.

It may be the first and only time in a program that candidates and their instructors can see whether they indeed understand and can apply what they are supposed to be learning. Many programs have to make major changes to accomplish this, by integrating areas of knowledge, reducing fragmentation among courses and clinical experiences, increasing application to practice, and paying more attention to areas that have traditionally been underdeveloped in teachers’ repertoires (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 19).

These opportunities to practice the edTPA, as a part of the curriculum, helped form the basis of the support system. They became important learning experiences in preparation for their student teaching.

Student Teaching

While pre-service candidates had been given many opportunities to practice elements of the edTPA as a part of coursework, specific and organized support was needed during the weeks and months that a candidate was preparing for submission.

At Austin Peay State University, teacher candidates participate in a Residency Year for student teaching. This affords them more time in their student teaching placement, and more time to prepare their edTPA. Residency 1 consists of five weeks in the semester prior to the student teaching semester, which is Residency 2. During Residency 1, teacher candidates work on completing the contextual information portion of the edTPA. They are required to identify the unique characteristics of their school and classroom. They must also be able to discuss the individual strengths and needs of the students, the curriculum, textbook, resources, technology, and any other information that would guide the planning of the lessons. Seminars planned throughout Residency 1 focus on topics such as academic language, video recording and clipping, effective assessment, feedback, and reflection.

To prepare teacher candidates for the edTPA, an additional learning activity was created during Residency 1. The focus of this assignment was teaching a set of lessons, planned to address the specific needs of the students in the classroom. The teacher candidates also completed the commentary, reflection, and analysis of those lessons, using the content-specific handbooks and templates of the edTPA. In consultation with the mentor teacher, the teacher candidates prepared 1-2 lessons to teach in the class. The candidate had to be
able to demonstrate that the lesson was based on the needs and strengths of the students in the class. For example, if during the contextual information, the candidate identified two English Language Learning (ELL) students, then during the planning, instruction, and assessment of the lessons, the needs of those students should have been reflected. University faculty members observed and evaluated the teacher candidate during the instruction and offered suggestions for improvement. Pre-service candidates video recorded their lessons and met back at the university for peer review and discussion. This preparation in Residency 1 is intensive, but gave the candidates a real sense of what would be required for the actual submission. One candidate spoke of the intensive feedback and mentoring from the university faculty. She said, “The one on one time, support, group meetings, and reflective feedback helped me grow to be a better educator (candidate, fall 2013).”

During Residency 2 (the student teaching semester), teacher candidates continued to receive support as they completed their actual edTPA, but the type of support changed in order to be within the acceptable level of support. It was important that the educative value of the edTPA not taken away from the candidates by offering too much directed support. Instead of rewriting or editing their written work, faculty asked open-ended questions that led the candidates to analyze and reflect on their work. They helped guide candidates to analyze and reach conclusions based on their own work.

Residency 2 seminars were developed to allow candidates to gather in peer groups according to content areas. In these groups, they were able to discuss their edTPA and to talk with each other about any challenges they were facing. Faculty facilitators guided the groups and provided additional information as needed. These sessions were very valuable to candidates. A former student, who submitted an edTPA in fall, 2013, stated,

*I feel that I was very much prepared for the edTPA. If it weren't for the coaching and help from my University professors and my mentor teachers I would have been lost. The one-on-one time, support, group meetings (where all of the student teachers could talk to each other and grow from one another's experiences) and reflective feedback helped me grow to be a better educator and pass the edTPA.*

**edTPA Scores**

When edTPA was initially implemented, the submissions were scored by trained faculty members on campus. Beginning spring 2012, the edTPAs were submitted to Pearson to distribute for national scoring. A revision of the number of rubrics in spring 2013 from 13 to 15 makes it difficult to make exact comparisons before that date, but Table 1 shows Austin Peay’s increase in scores for three consecutive semesters.

These increases are important to note because as the program as revised the curriculum, established seminars, workshops, and opportunities for practice, the scores have increased. Although there is certainly room for improvement, it appears from the data that the support systems are effective and yielding reasonable increases each semester.

**Better Program, Better Teachers**

As programs are more willing to make the necessary changes to prepare candidates to be successful in the edTPA,
they will in turn be improving their own program. Graduates have reported that the edTPA helped them be a better teacher. One beginning teacher reported, “The edTPA engaged me to think deeper about the impact of thoughtful planning on the long term development of students (candidate in spring 2014).” Another candidate who submitted in fall, 2014, felt that the edTPA prepared her for evaluations as a teacher of record. She said “the edTPA is based closely on what educators are evaluated on by their principals. This is a fantastic way to show them what they are clearly expected to do in the classroom.”

Professors in the teacher education program have also noted an improvement since the implementation of the edTPA. “I think that the edTPA has made a substantial impact on the performance of our candidates. The edTPA provides a thread of consistency for our candidates to align a coherent teaching plan with the needs of students at the center of the process (reading professor).” In the area of Special Education, often the complex tasks of planning instructional strategies can be challenging for the pre-service teacher. “Composing the edTPA leads them through the process of using these goals and objectives to plan instruction based on student needs, instruct and engage the learner, and then assess the students’ learning to develop future strategies (special education professor).”

The local schools will reap the benefits of these changes as they receive teachers who are confident in their ability to effectively impact the learning and achievement of students. Principals have been supportive of the preparation that APSU graduates receive, and appreciate the rigor. “I think that Austin Peay has really stepped up their game in regards to the preparation of their teacher graduates. The edTPA has helped prepare students for serious thought-provoking planning and work (elementary principal)”. Principals have also noted that the experience they gained while preparing an edTPA has helped them be better prepared and equipped to enter the classroom. “They are able to plan backwards and know what student mastery of a learning target skill looks like in order to determine their explicit and direct classroom instruction. It helps them be more effective teachers (elementary principal)”.

Implementing a performance based assessment for a teacher education program is not a small or easy task. It takes the faculty working together to revise the curriculum, and a well-developed support system including seminars, workshops, and peer group work. Students must be willing to accept the challenge, and put in the necessary work to be successful. The result can be a teacher education program that produces graduates who are more confident, more effective, and better prepared to enter the teaching profession.

References

### Table 1
*edTPA Scores*

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Cumulative Score (highest possible 75)</th>
<th>Average Rubric Score (highest possible 5)</th>
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<td>Spring 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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### About the Author

Dr. Lisa Barron is an Assistant Professor and a Clinical Teaching Coordinator at Martha Dickerson Eriksson College of Education, Austin Peay State University
Between Old and New: Cognitive Dissonance and the Politics of Research

Wincharles Coker (PhD candidate)
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Abstract
In what ways does academic dissonance influence the conduct of research? Or rather what does it mean to convert from a research tradition that valorizes realism to one that emphasizes the rhizomatic, the postmodern, the (inter)subjective? In this narrative, I critically reflect on the challenges I encountered in transitioning as an academic from Ghana steeped in linguistics and education with an avid emphasis on post/positivism to becoming a doctoral student of interpretive inquiry as practiced in the humanities of an American university. The narrative draws inspiration from a recent pilot study I conducted to explore interactional rituals used among student editors of a college news bulletin. Based on a lessons-learnt approach, the paper is a modest contribution to studies on the politics of research, the objectivity/subjectivity debate, and research in cognitive dissonance.

Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, Confessional Tale, Interpretive Inquiry Micro-Politics, Post-Positivism

All humanistic research is problematic, partisan, and political.

--H. G. Goodall (2000)

Two roads diverged in a wood, and
I— I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

--Robert Frost (1874–1963)
When the renowned American poet Robert Frost in 1920 wrote “The Road Not Taken”, he knew too well that there comes a time when the most important decisions we must take come knocking hard on the doors of our hearts and minds. Sometimes these decisions are not either/or; instead they are wrapped in a labyrinth. And so is the path to academic excellence. In this narrative, I tell the story of my professional journey as an academic schooled in the traditions of social sciences (i.e. education) and linguistics during my undergraduate and postgraduate days in a large English-medium university in Ghana, West Africa, and then to my “conversion” into the humanities proper as a doctoral student in a leading research university in the United States. I discuss how the micropolitics privileged in these two research traditions interfered with each other, and increasingly obfuscated my transitioning into the techne and praxis of humanistic inquiry. I employ religious metaphors in an attempt to depict the avowed commitment and deep affection scholars in these radically different research traditions have for their respective fields.

Drawing on the lessons I have learnt in a recently conducted ethnographic research among student editors of a college news bulletin, I make forays into my internal struggles as first and foremost an academic and subsequently a doctoral student in a humanities department. In situating my storied self using Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, I critically engage how the clash between old versus new knowledge influenced the conduct of my fieldwork in a remarkably throbbing manner. I do so by providing first a vignette of my previous educational training and research epistemologies. This is followed by the efforts I am making to apostasize in engaging in humanistic interpretive research. Next I show how the dissonance in the course of transitioning significantly impacted on the conduct of the research I embarked on recently, both theoretically and methodologically. The practical implications of my confessions are discussed in the concluding section of this paper in the service of encouraging transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies. In the main, I argue that one of the most ignored areas of research on international students concerns the level of cognitive dissonance they experience as they transition from one academic domain to another field of study (cf. Diao, 2014; Hegarty, 2014; Kwadzo, 2014).

**My Old Faith: Prior Tutelage and Epistemological Commitments**

My commitment to post-positivist research dates back to my tutelage in linguistics and educational psychology, following my graduation in 2007 from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. I was baptized into error and contrastive analysis, grammatical correctness and competence, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, and teaching methodologies, given the second language learning context from which I hail. As faithful students, my colleagues and I studied the works of Bloomfield’s (1933) *Language*, Quirk and Greenbaum’s (1973) *Oxford English Grammar*, and Lyon’s (1969) *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. We also meditated on the generative grammars of Noam Chomsky contained mainly in the ‘sacred scriptures’ of *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Others such

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1 Based on Van Maanen’s (1988) typology, this work

2 The theory primarily intimates that if an individual holds two cognitions that are inconsistent with each other, they try to rationalize them to reduce psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957; Bem, 1967). For Egan et al. (2007) and Metin and Iktisadi (2011), dissonance arises from logical inconsistencies, and cultural mores.
as Vygotsky (1978), Kachru (1990; 2006; Kachru et al., 2009), Stern (1983), and a host of educational psychologists as Thorndike (1999), Skinner (1965), Pavlov (1960), and Piaget (1967) formed the superstructure of our pedagogy. But this exposure, although on hindsight laid a formidable foundation of learning in my home country, did not paint, in my view, the best panoramic scenery of scholarship in English linguistics I would love to have. I asked for more. The graduate school beckoned. In August 2008 right after national service, I enrolled in the Department of English’s Master of Philosophy degree at my alma mater. I studied theoretical linguistics (grammar) best exemplified in the Chomskyan school coupled with phonetic and phonological theories, semantics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and qualitative research methods. The research methods stressed five research designs core to all qualitative studies: (a) phenomenology, (b) case study, (c) ethnography, and (d) grounded theory, and (e) mixed method, or so I thought. Per epistemological commitments, we were made to understand that the telos of qualitative inquiry is to capture the essences of phenomena3 as best as we could, based on thick description and depth as opposed to breadth and the crunching of numbers. Although the department does not look down upon research based on descriptive/inferential statistics, it looks more favorably on the former. A blend of qualitative and quantitative research methods was also encouraged.

3 My use of the term “essences” is rather consistent with the Heideggerian imperative. In the opening chapter of Being and Time, Heidegger argues that the ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its Existenz (Existenz here to be taken in a dynamic, active, future oriented sense). In the context of this paper, “essences” simply evokes a cline of phenomenological realities, authentic and inauthentic, I could possibly contemplate.

With respect to language studies, I strongly admired functional linguistics. In my scheme of things I reckoned that long before any civilizations became chirographic, language, for that matter speech, served as the material medium by and for which human communication thrived. Language was, in essence, known to its users long before it was theorized and sought to be reduced to mathematical formulae in the likes of Bloomfield’s structuralism or Chomsky’s universal grammar (UG) or government and binding theory (GBT). In fact, I found solace in the words of George Brown and Gillian Yule (1983) for whom the quintessence of language is the function it performs as “it cannot be restricted to linguistic forms independent of the purposes or the functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs” (p. 1). Thus I conceived of language, and still do, as a functional material as it holds in the gamut of sociolinguistics, (critical) discourse studies and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Hassan, 1983; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004). I consider too limiting the view that language is but a structured system of linguistic correlates as Bloomfield argued. My conception of language is pragmatic and dynamic. This is because language exists to help us to perceive, evaluate, and respond to the physical and social world around us. For me language is “a social currency by which humans trade to meet their communicative ends” (Coker, 2011: 1). This teleological apprehension of language in the lives of real people led me to explore, for my Master’s thesis, the discursive motivations for texting on radio panel discussions in Ghana. The success of the research yielded a number of peer-reviewed publications in Mass Communicator (2013a), Journal of Media and Communication Studies (2012), and International Journal of Current Research in the Humanities (2010). In most of my
works I emphasized manifestations of the language used by real people in real life situations.

Evidently this ‘discipleship’ deeply affected my worldview of what constitutes knowledge and how it should be pursued and theorized. Although I learnt that there is no single reality, the emphasis, nonetheless, was on ascertaining ‘reality’ as lived by participants, or as is revealed by the phenomenon under study. For this reason, the claim that reality is co-shared, immutable, messy, or dialectically discernible appeared outlandish to me in my initial contact with the interpretive turn. What is more, to tell someone of my background to go outside there, and do research without having a set of definitive research questions or objectives may seem risible. “What will I find if I have no objective?” they may ponder. Indeed when I reflect upon my own publications, I realize how limited my claims ought to have been in view of the fact that I rarely engage in member checks, self-reflexivity, or focused on the messy (See Coker, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013).

Given these prior intellectual commitments, I could say that I experienced some interesting academic dissonance between old and new information. In many instances, this clash threatened the very essence of my epistemological lineages. For example, which is true: a single immutable reality preached in the social sciences and conventional linguistics, or the fact that realities are contingent upon individual experiential knowing? I do not admit to have resolved this quandary, though in my own way, I am inclined to believe that we do research in order to obtain what I would call “a slice of reality”. For me, our apprehension of reality and knowledge will, for the most part, remain partial, partisan, and political (Goodall, 2000). We cannot not be partisan. This is but one of the creeds of my new found faith.

Converting into the New Faith: The Epistemology of the Interpretive Turn

The interpretive research is increasingly conterminous with the aspiration of humanistic inquiry. It also resonates well with researchers committed to new or performance ethnography (Coffey, 1999; Goodall, 2000; Norman & Lincoln, 2011; Quarshie Smith, 2012). In one of his apocryphic writings, *Writing the New Ethnography*, Goodall (2000: 9) defined ‘new’ ethnography, and by extension all interpretive research, to mean “creative stories shaped out of a writer’s personal experiences within a culture and addressed to academic and public audiences” (emphasis mine). His definition is radically different from the ethnographies before this account in the sense that it brings center-stage, at least, four key notions. One, new ethnographic research entails the writing of creative stories. This means that it requires the personal investment and ingenuity of the researcher to make but not make up stories as data. The stories for the most part are evocative. Contrary to the nature of ethnography pursued in traditional anthropology, in particular, and social sciences, in general, with its focus on what Van Maanen (1988) terms “realist tales”, the new ethnography takes a humanistic interpretive turn to doing ethnography.

Two, the new ethnographic philosophy valorizes personal experiences. Goodall tells us that it is not possible for the ethnographer to completely detach themselves and suspend their interest and experiences from the phenomenon they are investigating. Goodall (2000) refers to this personal investment as voice. This will include the researcher’s and the voices of the researched. As a phronetic praxis-based approach, research conducted in this paradigm places high premium on self-reflexivity. New ethnographers take as an article of faith that there is no interest in
highlighting the authoritative voice or the correct version of reality. Rather, there is an interest in keeping all voices in play, regardless of the possibility that these may be in tension or contradictory. According to Daly (2007), to be self-reflexive in postmodern qualitative research is to be keenly attentive to matters of voice. She adds that for researchers, this is a matter of weighing their own voice in the cacophony of opinions, ideas, and perceptions expressed by other participating voices in the research. In a word, all new ethnographies qualitative research is problematic, partisan, and personal (Goodall, 2000). It is not linear; it is dialectical, iterative, messy, and surprising. Its beauty lies in the surprises of observations and findings the researcher may arrive at in ways hitherto unimagined. This is the product of a constant mind kept in self-reflexivity. I myself am witness to this.

Three, like its precursor traditional ethnography, the new ethnography focuses on understanding cultures. Perhaps where they part company is in the latter’s avowal to a phenomenological, interpretive exploration of lived experiences of research participants in their own cultures. Finally, the new ethnography is not child’s play. It is not an excuse for storytelling with no larger significances. Rather it is a serious business with academic commitment, and an emancipatory ethos. Most new ethnographic studies are critical in nature. I can add that they bear the rigor of a research methodology worth paying attention to.

The quality of the new ethnography design can be evaluated based on Tracy’s (2010) eight “big tent” criteria. A parsimonious pedagogical tool, the model evinces that all quality qualitative researches need to pass the litmus tests of (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. A worthy topic, she notes, is one that is marked by “educative authenticity” as it raises the level of awareness of the research community, and touches both heart and belly. Worthy topics, the author insists, are interesting, significant, and timely. So too, they are driven by rich rigor. If a topic is worthy, then, it must establish its rigor in the main by rich, sound, and thick descriptions. Phenomena ought to be described in “loving detail”. In fact, rigorous descriptions of qualitative research are those that do not satisfice. They move “beyond convenience, opportunism, and the easy way out” (Tracy, 2010: 841) to make the taken for granted extraordinary and the extraordinary everyday. Rigorous studies, Tracy maintains, are also evaluated based on the number of pages of field notes, time spent at the field site(s), number of observation and interview hours, accuracy of transcription and number of pages of interview transcripts.

Thus said, Tracy admonishes researchers to be both sincere and credible. While sincerity, for her, connotes the capacity of the qualitative researcher to exhibit traits of self-reflexivity, vulnerability, transparency (i.e. admission of biases), and data auditing, credibility, Tracy points out, enables researchers to be trustworthy as they also seek to achieve verisimilitude and plausibility of research findings. Three things to note: (a) crystallization and triangulation, (b) multivocality, and (c) member reflections over and above member checking as the latter resonates with positivistic undertones, she says. For Tracy, all of the above qualities should lead to one thing: the resonance and significant contribution of the work. Resonance, in her model, emphasizes aesthetic merit, evocative writing, and formal generalizations as well as transferability such that it creates in the audience surprise and delight. It is that which makes the reader have the “O I see!”
feeling. She calls it significant contribution. Significant contributions do not leave readers with a doubt concerning the larger significances of a particular study. The author also thoroughly discusses the place of ethics in sound, resonance-driven rich qualitative research. She argues that this type of studies must not only satisfy requirements of IRB-led procedural ethics, but must for good reasons contemplate on how to address issues of situational, relational, and exiting ethics. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) call them “ethically important moments” or simply micro-ethics.

The final criterion, meaningful coherence, is the degree to which we can say that the researcher has achieved the purpose for conducting the research, writes Tracy. It is properly understood in terms of how research findings flow from the objectives or research questions, and whether the theoretical frames employed in the study are in tandem with the position advanced in the study. However, this may not easily apply to new ethnographic, interpretive lenses. As is the case with auto ethnography especially, it is also possible to have research whose logic is more in its messiness, its trouble, more than in its aesthetic structure. There is a logic to this. Consider, as an example, a sensitive shattering narrative of an ailing mother’s experience in raising her children in the wake of the global economic melt-down. Should her account be (re) presented chronologically, or should it be captured in the same way as the struggles this mother had to endure in eking out a living? Meaningful coherence, thus, is a function of a certain Darwinian logic that privileges linearity and progression of thought over and above multilayered accounts, as though the latter bears no merit at all.

Interestingly, if there be anything that distinguishes new ethnographic research from say ‘hard’ positivistic quantitative research, for me, it is rich rigor. This is not to say that in statistical research rigor is tossed to the wind. Far from it! But essentially researchers will agree that the quality of thick description privileged in (new) ethnographic research is matchless. It is its genius. And when we look at the entire process of how this type of studies is validated—or rather made credible through the painstakingly conscious process of self-reflexivity and member reflections, one realizes this case all the more. Thick description, in fact, requires due diligence on the part of qualitative researchers as they are supposed to not only tell but more importantly to take on the difficult task of describing in loving detail the focus of their studies.

But there are moral dilemmas to deal with in doing new ethnography. Exactly twenty years ago, Fine (1993) noted that there is an underside to all work, and that “each job includes ways of doing things that would be inappropriate for those outside the guild to know” (p. 267). The only way out, he explained is to create illusions in order to maintain occupational ethos, although the same create a set of moral dilemmas. So like all other qualitative researchers, new ethnographers need to be weary of ten ‘lies’ they tell while on the field and dealing with research participants. One serious dilemma confronting the field is that of new ethnographers thinking of themselves as being kind, honest, and friendly. This dilemma arises from our faith in positionality, researcher stance, and self-reflexivity all in the service of being fair to our research participants. Nonetheless, the choices we make are already soaked in biases and political motivations, for while we want to achieve justice and fairness, we also think of our larger audience whose primary occupation is to be very critical. Consider, for example Bucholtz (2000) “The Politics of Transcription”. How should we represent our participants when we transcribe interview sessions with them? Do
we represent their voices with all the linguistic breaches they commit, and/or utterances they may not have loved to come out in the public domain? In this case wherein lies our sincerity, openness, and friendship with them? Fine (1993) also said that we tell us because we do not represent in their honesty the real utterances of our participants. He argued that what we did best was to plagiarize by engaging in approximations, signposts, and mini-docudramas. “We make our informants sound like we think they sound, given our interpretations of who they ‘really’ are” (Fine, 1993: 278). In a word, the truth in Fine’s work lies in the limits of what we can and cannot claim. This is where my research takes off. With the brief autobiography in mind, I now turn to my field site, and the relationships I maintained in immersing myself in the culture of my participants. I also discuss the politics of getting IRB approval. Having discussed the constitution of my old and new knowledge, I now turn to a discussion of what they interfered with each other in the research I conducted in situ among student journalists of college newspaper.

When the Old and New Clash: Experiencing Dissonance in a Recent Study

Although I was duly informed that doing research is a political activity (Goodall, 2000; Daly, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), this knowledge became a phenomenological reality during a recent pilot ethnographic study I conducted. Drawing inspiration from the ‘new’ wave of research in news production, I examined the interactional rituals of undergraduate student editors of The Vibe. My prior contemplations of this research revolved around observations of the challenges the editors face, and what coping strategies they adopt in overcoming the difficulties associated with their work. However, given the dialectic and phonetic nature of interpretive ethnography, I realized that a focus on the entire gamut of the culture of this workplace would be much more productive. This ‘shift’ of attention was informed by my reflexive attitude to my data and research objective. The vignette below details how I felt on the first day of my first fieldwork.

It’s 5 o’clock in the evening, and I’m heading straight away to my field site. I would be meeting with Gloria Holmes, editor in chief of The Vibe, a college newspaper bulletin. Trepid, livid and timid, I make way to my seat, even though Gloria is yet to introduce me to the rest of her colleagues. A burning sensation moves down my spine, at the same time I’m as cold as snowballs. In awe, I shut my eyes and offer sincere prayers to the Heavens. I feel nervous because although the project was approved by the IRB of my institution, this did not mean that the girls cannot turn me down eventually, especially when the informed consent form promises them withdrawal from the research should they wish to do so. So even though the editors’ meetings start at 5:30 pm, I’m already seated close at the entrance door of their office. I’m not happy at all, and in my wildest thought I begin to pity myself. Gloria. Bob. Cathy. Amy. One by one they drop in and exchange phatic communion with me. My adrenalin begins to give way to a sense of belonging and common purpose. Gloria introduces me, and then in a smilingly relaxed mood communication amongst the editors involves four basic rituals viz. (a) collaborating and brainstorming, (b) gifting and sharing, (c) humoring and laughing, and (d) keeping quiet.
she tells me to continue, “Sure I’m Wincharles from Ghana, West Africa. I’m a graduate student interested in news work just like yourselves. But you know what, the best part is that I want to learn about it the way you do it. So I’m here to observe how you guys go about doing what you know best. I aim at understanding the challenges you go through in producing the news that we all read on campus, and what you do to overcome the difficulties you encounter in the course of your work. I have in my hands consent forms which I’ll be grateful if you could read them meaningfully, and then append your signatures to confirm your voluntary participation in my research. I’ll also be eternally grateful if one of you avails themselves to participate in an interview session with me. But this will take place in the course of my field work here. Thanks. Does anybody have a question?”

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So this is how it all began. But the more I got enmeshed in my field the more I realized the levels of difficulties that lay ahead. First there was the issue of what to observe. As a neophyte in the business of ethnography, I found it extremely difficult to write my fieldnotes. It was not the case that I had nothing to write. On the contrary there was too much to observe. This was in itself the problem. Again, my participants were so alive and full of energy with the job they do. And since the meetings last for not more than thirty minutes, they were marathon-like. They would hurry up in their presentations, and speak so fast that sometimes I could not keep pace with what was going on. One, I’m a Ghanaian with a Ghanaian accent such that I found it difficult sometimes to figure out what they were saying. Two, I also found it difficult to decipher the kinds of idioms they sometimes used in their conversations with one another. Although I could approximate and make out the meaning in context, given the evanescent property of speech, it was extremely difficult to capture all the essences of their conversations. Three, I considered it ethically inappropriate to ask them to repeat what they had said because I was just a participant observer. Four, I was a male among close to seven ladies, with the exception of Bob, their business manager. Anytime Bob came late or was absent I saw myself literally sweating in a fully air-conditioned room. When it happened that way, I would lose my “powers” of writing. I would be feigning to write although I knew so much that my notes were literally inchoate and largely incoherent.

Indeed the first weeks of enmeshment in my field were regrettably shallow. Reflecting on this period, I realize how realist the first three weeks of my field notes had been. Even though I was neither detached from nor disinterested in my research, my sense of what constitutes ‘research’ still weighed on me. It simply would not leave; it clouded my sense of judgment, reporting, and observing what was going on each time I was with my participants. For the first three weeks, I realized that I overly focused on capturing the stories, actions, and experiences of my participants in fact *verbatim*. But as weeks progressed and I was becoming very confident in my fieldnote writing skills, it was quite easy to reflect upon the things I observed, and began to question my mode of inquiry. From the fourth to the sixth week, I raised a number of questions about what I was witnessing, and how I was immersing myself very deeply into the culture of my participants. My participants and I could talk so much that sometimes they requested to offer me some of the candies and cookies they shared as part of their rituals. Interestingly in the seventh and eighth weeks of fieldwork the fatigue of the students (it was close to finals) also affected me. I was also tired. This fatigue, coupled
with the fact that sometimes their meetings lasted for less than 15 minutes, to some extent, affected how much notes I could write. For example, below is all that I wrote on the penultimate week of my fieldwork.

5: 27 pm. All members are present. But Gloria says that it’s going to be a pretty much short meeting. “I guess we’ll start: section updates” she says. Many members say they have little to report about. Gloria says there’s no pictorial updates. But Amy reads her reports. This is the first time she does. She does this so happily. The sports editor talks about her reports and how things are getting better. She also speaks about reporting men’s basketball game. It’s Elsa’s turn. She’s writing about a proposal, and do a story about winter-driving. “I just e-mailed some photos about that”, she says. Sasha speaks of Huskies requirements and Experience Tech fee. The opinion editor says that this week she’s resigning this semester and that none of her writers is interested in the position.

Gloria: Tell your friends to get interested. Tell your friends to get interested. It’s opinion editing or writing. So it’s not so hard.

Bob: Nil sent me an e-mail that he’s not gonna be here anyway.

The house now discusses his absence.

Gloria: He was very vague and did not have any detail.

Bob: Told him to let me know so I could know how to distribute the papers.

Amy & Gloria: That’s on campus.

Amy: [while standing] I recall he said she’d got nothing.

Bob: My meeting with them is pretty promising. Half-page ad for the bookstore. We’ll have to work in conjunction to develop with similar colors.

Amy: When do they want to start?

Bob: Maybe next week. Not a big deal even if they’ve got pictorials.

Gloria: I’ll do Rushdie’s updates. He’s got the pictures though they’re not the best.

Members take turns to have a look at the pictures. There’s a mixed feeling.

Bob: We can change the sizes. Last week I had no ideas of what he was talking about, but this is pretty clear now. He also wants us to give him approval to rework the Facebook page. He also thinks that our comics are not funny, and that we should replace them.

Silence prevails for a while. Meanwhile Amy has stuck her bag at her back, zipped up her dress, and has put her hands in her pullover. Is she ready to leave? They also discuss the possibility of putting newspapers at the Bam Hall. They also discuss the issue of breaking news on their website. Gloria also wants to find out what makes breaking news in Horrnon. She also reminds the house that they have to know that nobody gets paid for content on the website, and that they would have to contact Jeremiah to find out what gets into that. She concludes by asking as usual, “Does anybody have something else to say? O all staff meeting at Fisher 1:33 pm. Let’s call it a night.” But Amy gives an excuse and says that period will inconvenience her. So far only Megan and
the observer are out. But Bob, Elsa, and Amy are looking at pictures on the computer screen of Bob. They’re laughing, and Amy is looking at the pictures on the computer while Gloria is talking about the excuse.

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There were times when I felt like a total stranger, an imposter, an intruder. There were times I felt my presence was not needful. I felt like I should know better to allow them proceed with their meetings, especially during times they had guests in their midst. Upon my conversation with Gloria, she told me that the guests—a young man in his early forties, and a lady in her mid-fifties—were persons from the Administration of the University, and were but supervising or observing the progress of their work. Yes I sometimes felt a sharp sensation through my spine as if to tell myself, “Why can’t you allow today to pass you by? Aren’t you distracting them?” Nonetheless, their love for me was encouraging. They sometimes handed over to me their seats so I could feel comfortable to make my notes. This, Elsa did most of the time. There was plenty of laughter anytime I came around and greeted. I love my field site, and may have also been biased by the fact that almost all my participants were female. In the absence of Bob, sometimes I felt uncomfortable being in all-ladies meetings all the same.

And what was I observing? What was I jotting down? In my frustration, I would expend my energies in an attempt to write down verbatim every single word I heard during the meetings. This was difficult. My participants usually engaged in ‘minidramas’. So it was far from the case that I could follow their speeches and utterances one after the other. Sometimes, I would try to do a thick description of the conditions and elements surrounding a particular case, and then quickly one of the participants would continue with yet another different thing. Sometimes, I tried to describe in loving detail the scene of the editorial meetings—in this case the office of The Vibe. But this could not be properly done as the meetings were too hot for my handling. Here is an illustration.

The office comprises seven seats and four Dell and three Samsung computers, a telephone, a microwave, and four huge drawers. There are also some brochures of the Vibe newspapers, slots for staff. The editor in chief says that the organization plans to purchase a vehicle. Displayed on the wall are the awards the Vibe has received and their institutional affiliation: They are a proud member of the Associated Press. They take a lot of time to discuss the distribution network of their production. Why is this so? Gloria then moves on:

*There’s another thing on the agenda: Pay-roll. It’s been insane. Basically it’s been trial periods. We’re not allowed to that anymore. No pay for voluntary work. Be a member of staff to receive a pay check.*

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As can be seen, my accounts were sometimes bereft of thick descriptions. For the most part they were realist in the sense that no matter how much I tried to involve myself in the notes, I ended up writing the stories mainly from the perspective of my participants. But while this is commendable, I reckon that it may have to do with my linguistic and social science training. The effect they weighed on me was so strong to dismiss. But my advisor encouraged me a great deal. She was always reminding me to take it easy and focus on capturing nuances of meaning.
Worse still, I was already obsessed with news work. I fixated over getting findings relatable to or different from the observations I made in an article published in *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies* (Coker, 2013b). I claimed that the internal news epistemes of a given media culture heavily influence its news framing. I argued that this view recognizes that different media organizations proffer and live by different media cultures. My review of the literature also revealed that normative standards and universal definitions of objectivity are problematic, and observed that they are overtly Anglo-American, and reinforce Western hegemonies. I also noticed that such criteria hardly account for cultural dependent factors that shape and constrain the production of news in cultures outside of the West. As I pointed out little did I know that much ethnography of newsroom is conducted with the view to finding out the “real”. Meanwhile, scholars have in the process paid little attention to the lived experiences of the people who make the news. Admittedly, my prior knowledge of news work clouded my abilities to see through the dense layers of experiences I wanted to study among my research participants.

Throughout the fieldwork, I focused on identifying the internal news epistemes characterizing work at *The Vibe*. And so when I was observing my participants or interviewing them, my mind would always play tricks on me to ascertain such things as the types of news values that guide work in this students’ organization. It is interesting that I even presented a paper I titled “A Road Less Traveled: Friending as an Emerging Concept in News work” at the departmental colloquium on the subject. Yet I had no inkling I was focusing too much on the surface structures of my research, neither did I realize that I was not fully engaging the possibilities of examining the ordinary, taken-for-granted aspects of my research. In a word, I was not undertaking a truly humanistic interpretive research. In fact, my prior contemplations of this study affected everything in the research. They affected its rationale (including the research question), the theoretical framework, epistemological and methodological commitments. As you can see, these positions negatively affected the interpretive analysis of my data. In what I called *friending*, I narrowly limited my analysis to an exploration of how principles of relevance, interest, and impact help student editors to redefine the news in a way that makes news work at *The Vibe* unique from what is known in the canonical literature. I talked about friending as involving a set of performative acts by which the students accomplish their work. This was indeed too limiting!

So what changed? Under the abler supervision of my advisor, I stepped back from this theorization of my data. In fact I backed off. This was at the dying embers of the game! The semester was quickly rolling away. There were two more weeks to go! What could I achieve? What could I do then? What could I say or write? Perplexed, frustrated, and sorrowful, I had never been in such a state of shock. But as I backed off from the stress my research was giving me, I began to really understand what scholars in the field meant when they said that field work is no child’s play. I clearly made sense of their admonitions in the likes of “Go into the field with no presuppositions. In fact, do not even read the literature. Do not set forth with any research objectives or research questions”. My advisor’s mantra was “Wait, you don’t know yet”. However radical these cautionary tales may sound, these are the best things to do on the field. On hindsight how I realize how quick I could interpret my data by just glancing through a few pages of my field notes! This was my temptation the price of which I duly paid.
But I did not throw in the towel. No my advisor would not permit it! I think my week-long soul searching exercise helped. So while the seconds were gradually ticking for stop work and paper submission, I reprinted my field notes and interview transcripts. With no units of analysis in mind nor any remembrance of work done yester yore—for I had cried my heart out—I began to go through my data again and again. I coded every single word, phrase, clause, sentence, and utterance very meticulously and clinically, based on emerging patterns of course with reference to my research question. One, here, two, there some coding categories were emerging. “But not too fast this time; nothing could pull a trick on me. Once bitten twice shy? Not likely,” I would soliloquize. And so gradually I went through my data. I also took the pain to add as illustrations excerpts from the field notes that elucidated the points I was making. It was becoming quite interesting. I think I was now getting at the reasons I may have glossed so much over my data. As I was going through my data, I realized that I had previously written my data analysis like a scientific article. Arcane. Canine. Bony. These descriptors best explain how they looked like. There was little of showing. Regrettably, there rather was too much telling. Too much telling there was! It seems my post-positivistic self had resuscitated. It would not leave my corporeal presence. It would not allow me to live the new life I have found in the humanities. And so when I shook the dust away, and the scales fell off my eyes, I’m glad to tell you that I was able to do my very best. Cui bono? Any merits?

**Negotiating the Political Boundaries of Research**

With the passing of time I realize that my success in the research I undertook cannot be attributed to exceptional brilliance. Rather I learnt to overcome the dissonance between my prior tutelage and my new academic life by negotiating first and foremost with my academic advisor, and then learning of the demands my new research paradigm placed on me. Once I was told that to excel in academia is to be keenly aware of the politics of research (Edu-Buandoh, 2010, personal communication). This negotiation involves the recognition epistemological commitments privileged in each research tradition and its sub-fields. For example, I have come to appreciate that doing research, especially from the perspective of interpretive ethnography requires a great deal of metis. One of its most distinguishing features is that it is dialectical and iterative. Through self-reflexivity, interpretive inquiry compels the researcher to go back and forth in the progress of their research in a way that may not have ever been envisaged in the natural or social sciences. There research is linear or at least cyclical. It begins with a research question, research objective, or hypothesis. This leads to the mode of inquiry which must yield well defined set of results. But I have come to appreciate the verity of humanistic research all the more, for I myself was once a disciple of post-positive research.

Now I believe in the poststructuralist interpretive properties of research. I believe in the messy. I believe in the rhizomatic. I believe there always will be lines of flight. There are no binaries. Now I have come to realize that anytime a researcher embarks on a piece of research, there are a number of biases, personal motivations, and interests (also known as extraneous variables among natural and social scientists) that affect the design of their research. These interests can best be checked through the researcher’s constant engagement in self-reflexivity. For me the greatest lesson I have learnt is to remain open to the endless array of possibilities my field site can offer. I have also learnt, albeit very painfully, that research, and I must stress interpretive research, is truly problematic, partisan, and
political. How many of us neophytes could truly understand what such interpretivists as Goodall (2000) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) meant had they not have lived experiences of their own? In a word, it is interesting that I have had my own lived experiences in being a student ethnographer while studying the lived experiences of others.

Finally ….

This confessional tale sheds light on the micro-politics involved in transitioning from one research tradition to another, or conducting inter-/trans-disciplinary studies. Often stories of the difficulties involved in such an exercise rarely add up to the scholarly canons. With the rise of the mixed method research design popularized by Creswell (2003), such stories stand the risk of not being told because the research community might think that doing research from two or more epistemological lineages is not only possible but desirable. But while this is neatly true, it does not in any way negate the nature of politics involved in the techne and praxis of doing research, especially from the perspective of transitioning from a post-postivistic realist realm to a humanistic interpretive framework.

From the perspective of intercultural communication and international studies, this paper troubles existing works on the rhetoric of alterity and difference. While a number of scholars repeatedly assert that international students’ levels of stress in host countries such as the United States, England, France, Australia, Canada, and Italy may be due to factors that are usually cultural (Diao, 2014; Grayson, 2014; Kwadzo, 2014), only few have argued that one of their most troubling experiences may rather be due to the cognitive dissonance they encounter in transitioning from one field of study to another. Thus too often, researchers are too quick to blame the frustrations of international students on cultural and emotional imbalances. It’s time this phenomenon is critically examined by stakeholders: college administrators and researchers.

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Childhood should hold some of our best memories. Memories where we played, but in today’s world kids’ childhood is being taken away. In Arnold’s book he talks of ways to reclaim childhood and what children need.

_Their Name is Today_, is a great book to read for any teacher, parent, grandparent, or guardian that believe that kids should be able to have a childhood! Children need time and space to grow. The culture that we live in today is fast-paced. There are some parents that have their children involved in dance recitals, gymnastics, and sports all in one week. This amount of activity results in children having not much downtime to play, relax, or just be kids.

In this book the reader will find that Arnold has many thoughts, opinions, and examples of what children need and how to give them back their childhood. There are also insights from different people sharing examples from their own childhood and their own children.

To raise a child, one needs to be able to give many things. Of course there are financial expenses but one also needs to be able to give love, honesty, and simplicity. In our society today, people hold back from having children because of financial expenses and fear of the future, but without children what would this life be? Children are born givers not takers. They are also teachers. Adults can learn so much from them.. Children get angry quickly but forgive just as fast. Children get a lot of who they are from their parents, guardians, and teachers. The ones who watch over children
mold them into who they will eventually become. To raise children who are happy and kind, one needs to have those same qualities in their selves. The life that is constructed in a home is largely responsible for our country’s future social and public life.

Arnold greatly emphasizes that play is a child’s work. Children are confused by tests and diagnostics at an age when they should be playing. We need to let children be children as long as they can be. Children have a mind of their own and cannot be programmed to our desires. Arnold enlightens the reader with Friedrich Frobel educational philosophy, which often spoke of the importance of children’s play. Arnold uses phrases from an Australian educator, Maggie Dent, whose philosophy is that children are positively impacted by increased playtime at home, and more unstructured recess at school. There is no way to measure these benefits through standardized testing. Problem solving skills and the ability to use deductive reasoning in real life can only be accomplished by interacting socially with peers. Their Name is Today goes against today’s education because we begin testing children at a young age and limit their playtime.

One interesting fact that Arnold brings up is that Finland has an unstructured model of education, where the children are allowed to freely play and explore without the pressure of adults. Children in Finland do not start school in a formal setting until the age of 7, yet they consistently have some of the highest rankings in the world on standardized test by the end of their school year. The teachers also have a greater public respect than teachers in the United States and are paid more.

Not only does Arnold write about letting children play, he talks about letting children fail, limiting technology, limiting the material things, discipline, difficult children, and reverence. Everything that is written in this book could help teachers and parents.

Parents and teachers want their children to do great, but they should also be concerned about their character. When one fails at something or becomes disappointed it can build character. No one wants his/her child to fail or feel left out; but not letting this happen can cause children not to take responsibility of their own actions. Failure often teaches us more than success.

Technology has taken over our world and in ways it has advanced the world, but it has also caused problems. There are a rising number of children who lack the motor skills needed because they are addicted to tablets and smartphones. We know that too much screen time affects our physical health but it plays a big role in social health as well. Now a lot of children find it hard to communicate with others face to face. Technology has in ways made our society quiet, where you no longer see people carrying on a conversation, you see people plugged into their phones. Technology is a crutch to use for parents and teachers to get children to stay quiet so they can get things done, but it is harming them.

Keeping up with a child’s demands can be exhausting. Giving them everything
thing they want can lead to raising a generation of spoiled brats! Arnold writes many examples and ways one can foster gratefulness in children.

Every child needs boundaries. Discipline should be an act of love not anger. Parents should not be afraid to discipline their child, but once the parent feels that the child is truly sorry, the parent should immediately forgive him/her. Each and every child is different but should not ever be abandoned. Discipline should always show that parents care for what their children do.

Arnold discusses the effect of so many children being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is leading to a widespread use of Ritalin, Adderall, and similar drugs. Many children who cannot sit still or pay attention are given this medicine because they are said to have disruptive behavior. This disruptive behavior can be traced to not having an appropriate relationship with parents. Arnold gives many different insights on having a difficult child in the chapter “In Praise of Difficult Children.”

Arnold gives back that there is still hope in our humanity. He reminds us teaching requires a lot of affection, knowledge, and tolerance; that it takes time to discover the best in each child. He reminds us to refrain from showing favoritism, and from comparing children with others. We must not push them to become something that they are not. Never lose faith in a child or give up on them. Arnold reminds us that their names are today.

Tomorrow comes so quick and before we know it these children will be flying with their own wings. *Their Name is Today* is such a wonderful read for anyone who wants to give his/her child a great childhood!

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