

John L. Rury and Suzanne Rice

DEWEY ON CIVIL RIGHTS, TESTING, INTEREST, AND DISCIPLINE: *DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION* IN PERSPECTIVE

In this essay we consider how the principles evident in Dewey's *Democracy and Education* would have been evident in response to the civil rights movement that took shape shortly after his death, and to the major educational reform movements of today. While acknowledging that Dewey's views on race and human development were inevitably influenced by his social and intellectual context, we maintain that he was fundamentally opposed to racist ideology and related popular beliefs, and that his deep commitment to democracy as a social process would have made him a staunch supporter of the civil rights movement and associated demands for racial equality. We likewise argue that Dewey would have had deep misgivings about the standards-driven assessment regimes that underlie current national reform efforts. In the end we suggest that *Democracy and Education* still has much to offer students of education today, and can serve as a helpful guide to those who would seek to change educational practice for the better.

John Dewey was an intellectual giant and *Democracy and Education* (*D&E*) remains among the most important books written about education in the twentieth century.¹ On the centennial of its publication, however, it rarely receives much attention outside academic discussions in philosophy and education. Even then it is often read with an eye toward answering a particular philosophical question or learning something more about Dewey himself. For today's readers outside academia (and many within), *D&E* can seem dated and obscure. In its pages Dewey addresses problems of the past, and he does so in a language that many find formal and awkward.² How could such a book possibly be considered relevant to the educational problems of today, or even the more recent past? Does Dewey's conception of educational reform and social change have a place in contemporary debates about the future of schools and their larger social context? Why should we still read this work?

Dewey also has been subject to criticism lately. He has been accused of willful blindness with respect to racial inequity, imperialism, and a number of other contemporaneous social problems. Like other educators in his time, Dewey sometimes displayed an affinity for the idea that children's social development and learning could parallel or reflect the evolution of human society. Early in his career, he advocated a curriculum that featured lessons based on customs, concepts, and technology from earlier epochs of human

John L. Rury, University of Kansas, email: jjury@ku.edu; Suzanne Rice, University of Kansas, email: srice@ku.edu

history. In line with this, he wrote about “primitive” or “savage” cultures and societies, past and present, that had not yet achieved the level of development evident in “modern” civilizations, suggesting a potential gradient of societal organization. Such references appear in *D&E*, although less frequently in Dewey’s later works. In these regards, it is suggested, he was very much a man of his time, exhibiting many of the partialities of understanding and idiosyncrasies of the day.³

Some of these criticisms seem well founded to us, and others less so. While it is true that Dewey was often insightful and unflinching in his social criticism, he clearly underestimated the extent and depth of racism as an ideological element of American life. Yet in other respects he was quite forward looking, as we hope the discussion here will illustrate. As Thomas Fallace has suggested, Dewey’s thinking on history and sociocultural change may have evolved, and he was considerably less influenced by prevailing ideas on race and inequality than most of his contemporaries.⁴ Like other mortals, Dewey was a product of his circumstances, despite his remarkable powers of observation and analysis, and thus should not be criticized too severely for failing to anticipate views that have emerged and gained acceptance since his death.

In acknowledging this, however, we are less troubled by his views on historical change than Fallace and other commentators.⁵ While Dewey may have believed that some societies were relatively more advanced in their institutions and technological capabilities, especially as they became more democratic, it is not altogether clear that he considered such attributes a predictable or necessary outcome of history. There is little evidence that Dewey believed that all societies passed through preordained stages of development or evolved in the same manner. Indeed, contingency played an important role in his comprehension of all human activity. Dewey recognized more than most that social development, whatever particular form it might take, inevitably carried new problems in its wake.⁶ Unlike Hegel or Marx, he did not believe that history has a foreseeable endpoint.

The principal point of this essay, however, is not to defend Dewey’s language or his larger perspective, but to consider how his ideas—particularly those conveyed in *D&E*—can help us think about more recent developments in the history of American education. In this light, we may ask how Dewey’s vision of education in a democratic society has fared in the century since this book was published. We might also wonder how Dewey himself would view developments in American education and the nation’s practice of democracy in the years since his death in 1952.

These, of course, are big questions, so restricting them to certain issues that have roiled the nation and its schools during these years is one way to focus the discussion. Arguably, the civil rights movement that emerged in the years following Dewey’s death was among the most significant challenges to American conceptions of democracy and the role that schools should play in it. What insights, if any, does *D&E* have to offer regarding this historical development? Related to this, but historically and conceptually quite distinct, is the national educational reform movement that took shape in the 1980s and beyond, eventually culminating in the No Child Left Behind legislation that proved so controversial among educators and the public. What could *D&E* possibly have to say about that? In the remainder of this brief essay we offer answers to these questions.

DEWEY AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Dewey did not live to see the full flowering of the civil rights movement that affected American life so dramatically in the postwar era, particularly in the 1960s and beyond. Given his liberal proclivities, there can be little doubt, however, that he would have been a ready supporter of the *Brown* decision, which arrived just two years after his death. He likewise would surely have favored expanded guarantees of protection for black voting rights and other measures intended to end racial discrimination and segregation that still existed across the South and elsewhere in the United States.⁷ But is there any indication that his interest in these questions would have gone further?

We believe there is ample evidence in *D&E* to support the proposition that Dewey would have been an enthusiastic supporter of the civil rights movement in general, and perhaps even a participant in some of its key moments (given the ability to do so, of course). In many respects, after all, this political and social struggle embodied several of the key ideas that Dewey expressed in 1916, on a wider scale than perhaps any other in the nation's history.

To begin, Dewey unequivocally rejected the idea that fixed, innate, or genetically based differences in mental ability—or “intelligence”—distinguished “civilized” from “savage” people. The latter term, in the minds of many early twentieth-century Americans, included most African Americans, who were still widely depicted as ignorant, immoral, and incapable of refinement. Dewey's earlier writing and speeches provide ample evidence that he rejected this view, a stance made clear in *D&E* as well. The intelligence testing movement was just getting underway, but earlier “studies” that purported to show racial differences in skull size, brain weight, and other presumed determinants of intellectual ability still exerted considerable influence. Consequently, if African Americans were poor, crowding the jails and prisons, and leaving the schools, many believed that it must have been due to inherent deficiencies in mental capacity. Such ideas had been circulating since before the nineteenth century, and despite a time of enlightened thinking about race just before, during, and immediately following the Civil War, they remained popular following 1900.⁸

Dewey, by contrast, was unmistakably an environmentalist in his thinking about mental capacity and development, and the idea of “intelligence” in particular. In *D&E* he made it quite clear that he did not see differences between “savage” and “civilized” people as resulting from inborn “intelligence,” contrary to what many believed. Indeed, he noted that “careful study” had shown that most people were largely the same with respect to native mental capacities. Instead of innate abilities, it was the activities and the demands of the environment, or the proximate social and physical setting, that accounted for most differences. Regarding the advantages of modern life, he argued that “We start not so much with superior capacities as with superior stimuli for evocation and direction of our capacities.” For Dewey, the mind developed in concert with its immediate milieu, and this was the principal advantage of “civilized” over “primitive” peoples.⁹

In this respect it is not difficult to imagine that Dewey had been influenced by his more liberally minded Columbia University colleagues, particularly Franz Boas, who was revolutionizing the field of anthropology with a strongly environmental comprehension of cultural distinctions and the development of behavioral differences across groups of people. Dewey likely considered Boas's work, and that of his many students, as examples

of “careful study” mentioned above. Boas criticized the premise of innate mental distinctions between different racial and ethnic groups, and had been doing so for more than a decade by 1916. But his ideas were decidedly out of fashion then. At a time when the eugenics movement was gaining steam, and authors such as Madison Grant were worrying about the dilution of the nation’s genetic stock of supposedly superior Nordic qualities, the views of Dewey and Boas were all the more distinctive. Eventually ideas of figures such as Boas and Dewey would enter the mainstream, and by the middle of the century would become a new conventional wisdom. But in 1916 they represented a minority view.¹⁰

Dewey’s views on this matter are important because one of the fundamental objectives of the civil rights movement was the affirmation of human dignity and social equality of African Americans as a group. Martin Luther King Jr. vividly recalled being forced to stand in the back of a bus on a long trip home from a school debate competition because whites had first legal right to the seats. The indignity of Jim Crow was a constant reminder of the inferior status of African Americans.¹¹ The question of intellectual and moral inferiority lay at the core of the battle against Jim Crow segregation, whether in schools, other public institutions, or in private enterprise. As the Supreme Court famously noted in the *Brown* decision, segregation *is* inherently unequal. Despite the long-standing doctrine of *Plessy*, which held that separate could be equal, at bottom the principal arguments in favor of such a doctrine presupposed the mental and moral inferiority of African Americans.¹² Such beliefs presumably legitimized whites’ preference to keep apart from African Americans, suggesting that they represented a lower form of humankind. For his part, Dewey was opposed to this sort of segregation, whatever the justification. As he noted in *Democracy and Education*, “the division of society into more or less rigidly marked-off classes and groups” contributed to “obstruction of full and flexible social interaction and intercourse.” In rejecting social practices of this sort, Dewey implicitly acknowledged the dignity and fundamental humanity of all people.¹³ This was an essential foundation for a truly democratic social order, one that the United States had yet to establish in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

While Dewey’s views on race are certainly key in considering his likely response to the civil rights movement, the segment of *D&E* with greatest relevance to it is probably chapter 7: “The Democratic Conception of Education.” For Dewey, democracy was more than a matter of the popular election of leaders and maintaining a representative form of government. He argued instead that democracy “is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.” Such a conception, he believed, required overcoming divisions that had held people and groups apart in the past, “so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own.” The only way to accomplish this, Dewey said, was through “the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.” He saw this as partly a natural outgrowth of “the development of nodes of manufacture and commerce, travel, migration and intercommunication which flowed from the command of science over natural energy.”¹⁴ In short, it reflected the rise of modern urban society, which had brought people together as never before in history, and in this respect may have represented the possibility of an advance over other forms of social organization.

But Dewey also stipulated that there had to be “a deliberate effort to sustain and extend” these tendencies toward greater interaction by means of education. In other

words, democratic forms of associated living probably would not spontaneously arise from a given set of historical conditions. To overcome the propensity for class lines to harden, a democratic society “must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms.”¹⁵ The *content* of educational opportunities was important to Dewey, who noted that, “a society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability.”¹⁶ It was considerations such as these that put education at the very heart of Dewey’s conception of a democratic social order. And this, of course, placed a great deal of responsibility on the school, the principal institution for ensuring that tasks such as these were performed intelligently and effectively.¹⁷

School desegregation and equity in educational funding were among the most critical policy goals arising during the civil rights era, and they continue to be important goals today. While Dewey did not directly address these matters in *Democracy and Education*, he did decry the tendency of public schools to align with narrowly defined nationalistic purposes and to reproduce existing class divisions. As he noted in criticizing Plato’s educational ideas, which also sustained class distinctions, “only diversity makes change and progress.” Regarding school resources, he argued that “facilities must be secured of such amplitude and efficiency as will in fact and not simply in name discount the effects of economic inequalities, and to secure to all wards of the nation equality of equipment for their future careers.”¹⁸ In other words, all schools should be adequately resourced to offset differences in family and community wealth, providing all children with a more or less equal opportunity to experience success in whatever line of development they may choose to undertake.

To elaborate, Dewey maintained that a truly democratic education “demands not only adequate administrative provision of school facilities, and such supplementation of family resources as will enable youth to take advantage of them, but also such modification of traditional ideals of culture, traditional subjects of study and traditional methods of teaching and discipline as will retain all the youth under educational influences until they are equipped to be masters of their own economic and social careers.”¹⁹ He thus urged policy makers to consider curricular and instructional reform, along with a redistribution of resources to supplement families that lacked the means to take full advantage of whatever improved and equalized school facilities that may have existed. Only then would education, as offered in such institutions, begin to approximate the democratic ideal that he was advocating.

Such an approach to education, of course, would have represented a radical break from the reality of public schooling for most African Americans. This was certainly true in 1916, when nine of ten black students lived in the South and were provided only the barest modicum of resources for their segregated schools, far fewer than those allocated to white institutions. It was also true thirty years later, when the NAACP and its allies were undertaking a national campaign to achieve one of the goals that Dewey had identified: schooling that “in fact and not just in name” provided students with equivalent opportunities to realize their potential.²⁰ Given the grotesque inequalities that these campaigns exposed, and the protracted struggle to realize change in the South and elsewhere, it is hard to imagine that Dewey’s sympathies would not lay with the larger movement at the time. His brief and somewhat abstractly stated principles, although not directed at any

specific problem in educational policy or practice, aligned with those of the civil rights struggle as it emerged during the postwar era.

Of course, problems of educational inequality abound today as well. African American students are eight times more likely to attend high poverty schools than whites, and while funding discrepancies are not as bad as they were during Dewey's time, they are still associated with significant differences in learning outcomes.²¹ His admonitions regarding the necessity of equalizing resources remain pertinent, and educational inequity still represents a threat to American democracy. Recent political developments at the national level offer little hope that these questions will be addressed in the foreseeable future.²² According to Dewey, "a society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic."²³ By this criterion, the United States certainly has come a long way, thanks largely to struggles like those of the civil rights movement. But Dewey likely would argue that a long journey still lay ahead if such a vision is to be ever realized.

DEWEY AND NCLB: INTEREST, DISCIPLINE, AND DEMOCRACY

Following the civil rights era, the focal point of education policy in the United States shifted from equity to excellence, fueled by rising anxieties about the performance of American students on standardized international examinations and a conservative turn in national politics. This famously found expression in *A Nation at Risk*, the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, appointed by Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell. Claiming that the nation's schools were threatened by a "rising tide of mediocrity," the report inspired a wave of school reforms intended to raise standards in public education, assessed by standardized achievement tests.²⁴ Most of these developments occurred at the state and local levels, although a series of national commissions during the 1990s kept the issue in the public eye. The apogee of the standards movement was reached in 2001 with passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush.²⁵

Passed with bipartisan support, NCLB was arguably the most ambitious educational reform program in American history. It stipulated that public schools be held accountable for student learning as measured by standardized tests of achievement, as reflected in mastery of particular subjects. Individual schools would be expected to raise the achievement of all children to proficiency, even those from groups that had lagged in the past. This soon placed enormous pressure on teachers and administrators in lower performing schools, especially those serving children in unusually poor communities, who often were threatened with displacement and school closure. It was a school reform program focused directly on the classroom, and standardized achievement tests became the principal means for evaluating teachers. Unfortunately, NCLB did not produce a dramatic improvement in student achievement nationally, although there was a slight reduction in long-standing achievement gaps between different groups of students.²⁶

Given the prominent roles played by testing in the reforms following *A Nation at Risk*, and especially NCLB, it is not difficult to imagine how John Dewey would respond to these developments. In his own career Dewey was notably critical of standardized testing, which was just being developed at the time that *D&E* was published, although

most of his skepticism was aimed at IQ tests rather than standards-based assessments of the sort widely used today. One of the most widely discussed concerns at present is that this practice unduly drives the content of instruction. Teachers are encouraged, implicitly or explicitly, to devote additional time and energy to the subjects represented on the tests (and to basic skills within those subjects) and in extreme cases to focus instruction on actual test items. A central criticism is that, as a result of such practices, worthwhile content that would otherwise be integrated into the curriculum is given short shrift or is excluded altogether. As a consequence, students miss out on the opportunity to learn valuable lessons from considering such questions.²⁷

D&E points to a particular aspect of this problem that education reformers largely overlooked, namely, that teaching to the test leaves little room for teachers to accommodate students' interests. Teaching to the test eventually became an issue for teachers and students, and for parents too, who called for modifications to the NCLB testing regime, or for waivers to be exempted from mandatory tests. This movement gained steam in the latter stages of NCLB, contributing to its eventual downfall, and a new federal policy that gave states considerably greater discretion in making schools accountable for improvement in instruction. Many called for greater attention to flexibility in how teachers tailored their instruction to meet the needs and interests of students.²⁸ This is a significant problem, Dewey argued, because a failure to ground instruction in students' interests is tantamount to closing the door on the schools' democratic potential. Why this is so can be better appreciated in light of Dewey's analysis of *interest* in *D&E*.

To be interested is to be absorbed in, wrapped up in, carried away by, some object. To take an interest is to be on the alert, to care about, to be attentive. We say of an interested person both that he has lost himself in some affair and that he has found himself in it. Both terms express the engrossment of the self in an object.²⁹

As Dewey points out, etymologically, the word "interest" connotes something "between." In this case it is bookended on one side by the student's "present powers," intellectual, moral, and physical resources; and on the other side by an object (*of* interest).³⁰ Interest is thus educationally significant because it attaches a student's "present powers" to that more remote object. Learning occurs when the student encounters obstacles—and the means of overcoming them—as she pursues the object. Among the means of doing this are social relations among students and the knowledge and skills embedded in academic subjects.

Prior to NCLB, Dewey's ideas were more likely to find expression in schools, especially at the elementary level, and in more affluent communities where pressure to attain higher achievement was not as pronounced. The short film *Voyage of the Pilgrims '92*, which features a group of public school fourth graders in Lexington, Massachusetts; their teacher, Steven Levy; and several classroom volunteers, provides an example of interest operating in a school setting, and, most significantly, illustrates the deep relation between "interest" with "democracy." It is not clear whether this classroom was explicitly organized with Dewey in mind, but whether by intention or accident it clearly reflects Dewey's hope that schools would become embryonic democracies.³¹

As shown in the film, at the start of the school year Levy challenged students to "create their own classroom." Following much discussion among themselves and consultation

with Mr. Levy, the students decided that they wanted, above all, to make their own desks: this was their main interest. From the start, they encountered many questions that they had to answer in order to advance their project: How would Pilgrims make furniture? What tools did they have? What desk design should they adopt? How much wood and stain will be needed? How will they finance the project? The children came up against numerous obstacles along the way, but persevered, often choosing to continue working through recess and before and after regular school hours. Most of the time, these students were not working individually, but in teams and small groups with shifting membership. Of necessity, they had to consult with one another, smooth over disagreements, find compromises when consensus could not be reached, and coordinate the different parts of this multifaceted project. Because realizing their shared interest in the form of functional desks required the contributions of all the students, they encouraged one another's learning. The interest in building desks soon expanded to include an interest in one's classmates.

Students' interest in making the desks provided the needed motivation for learning considerable academic content as well. Reading, history, writing, and math were all taught in the context of the project as students undertook such tasks as learning about the lives and times of the Pilgrims, writing letters to area businesses asking for funding and then keeping them informed about of the project's development, computing area in order to buy wood and stain, and keeping accounts of expenses. All of this learning was organically connected with the students' central and genuinely held interest.³²

Dewey valued the knowledge encapsulated in school subjects and he appreciated the fact that reading and math (areas most widely tested in connection with NCLB) have a special place in students' learning. By helping students to pursue their interests, teachers are also, as a general rule, helping them to become better readers and mathematicians. Depending on the students and interests involved, they could become more competent in the sciences, arts, history, and other areas. But accommodating students' interests was important to Dewey not only as a means of helping students to learn academic content. He also theorized a connection between interest and the development of self-discipline, which in itself is an important educational goal.

While many teachers agreed with the goal of raising achievement, they also worried that NCLB's focus on testing foreclosed the possibility of engaging students in lessons that sparked curiosity and attention.³³ When interest is lacking, teachers have little choice but to use what Dewey called "artificial inducements": promises of reward or threats of punishment, in order to motivate students to attend to the lessons at hand. This has become somewhat commonplace during the NCLB era, and some schools have even experimented with the idea of offering monetary rewards for improvement on tests.³⁴ When such inducements are ineffective, direct, teacher-imposed discipline often follows, and students are denied privileges or given low grades for failing to meet externally imposed standards. These and other negative sanctions demean students, but from Dewey's perspective, that is only part of the problem: when teachers routinely exercise control, it is more difficult for students to develop control over themselves, or self-discipline. And as Dewey noted, such self-discipline is positively enabling:

A person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately, is in so far disciplined. Add to this ability a power to endure in an intelligently chosen course in face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty, and you have the essence of discipline. Discipline means power at command; mastery of the resources available for carrying through the action undertaken. ... Discipline is positive.³⁵

The connection between interest and discipline is illustrated in the example above when the students persevere in the face of differences of opinion and difficult math problems, as well as when they willingly forego recess in order to work on their project. These students' mental and physical powers are harnessed to a particular interest, but they are in the process of learning a more general "lesson" about what it means to be disciplined and the rewards of such discipline. For Dewey, students learn to be disciplined by *being* self-disciplined. Many educators associate "learning by doing" with the acquisition of skills, but, in Dewey's account, habits and traits of character are also acquired in this manner. As he often pointed out, such learning is essential for accomplishing any significant goal and, more broadly, for purposefully living life rather being led through it by others or, indirectly, by unexamined conventions and customs.

While interest and discipline have many important implications for education, Dewey argues that their connection with democracy is of the greatest educational significance. A characteristic of a democratic society is that its members have common interests that can be advanced only through the contributions of many, requiring that each member consider and execute her activities with others in mind. As Dewey recognized, such a society requires certain educational arrangements: "[A democratic] society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and habits of mind which secure social change without introducing disorder."³⁶

From a Deweyan perspective, one of the most serious shortcomings of NCLB is that it appears to contradict certain key educational needs of democracy. These deficiencies come into view once it is realized the extent to which tests, rather than students' interests, will drive instruction. Because it is the rare child who takes a direct interest in the skills tested, NCLB encourages teacher-imposed discipline, rather than self-discipline. Sacrificed are opportunities for students to work together with teachers to identify projects of interest that provide not only subject matter content, but also lessons in joint problem-solving and cooperation. Given this, it is little wonder that NCLB produced such modest improvements in student achievement, despite all of the time and resources devoted to its implementation as a reform program.

TOWARD A CONCLUSION

We have discussed just two examples of the continuing relevance of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*. As other contributors to this journal demonstrate, there are certainly more. In closing, we cannot resist mentioning just a few additional topics that seem of special significance at this time. Dewey anticipated the social and economic turn in historical scholarship, arguing that "industrial" and "economic" history, and even "intellectual" history should be the focus in schools, although the latter he believed should be concerned with the advance of science and technology.³⁷ Interestingly, he found economic and industrial history especially relevant because of their connections to the everyday experience of

most people, parallel in many respects to the idea of a “history from the bottom up,” which has animated much historical writing for the past fifty years.³⁸

The discussion of such an approach to historical study also sheds light on his conception of social change, which can be read as anything but undeviating and deterministic. He wrote of the “intimate connection of man’s struggles, successes, and failures with nature” that such an approach reveals, and the degree to which “the entire advance of humanity from savagery to civilization has been dependent upon intellectual discoveries and inventions.”³⁹ In other words, progress was the result of intelligent exercises in trial and error, systematic application of knowledge, and occasional discoveries. The curricular value of such an account could reside in insights offered into the development of technology and knowledge, along with lessons about the value of discipline and interest, among other things. As described in *D&E*, such a conception of societal development was hardly inevitable, nor necessarily limited to Europeans.

Dewey also wrote about vocational education in *D&E*, arguing forcefully that “the only adequate training for occupations is training through occupations” (emphasis in original).⁴⁰ He did not mean to suggest, however, that vocational ends in education could be restricted to specific jobs or professions. Rather, he thought of the term “occupation” as representing “a continuous activity having a purpose.”⁴¹ He worried that “any scheme of vocational education that takes its point of departure from the industrial regime that now exists, is likely to assume and perpetuate its divisions and weaknesses.”⁴² He thus would likely be skeptical of apprentice systems such as those historically connected to schooling in Europe, and still functioning there, which recently have received considerable attention from policy makers in the United States.⁴³ He also touched upon science education, writing about method and values in education, and about the process of thinking.⁴⁴

On these and other topics Dewey had insights to share with educators that remain relevant today. In addition to these perceptions, Dewey provides a critical lens through which to view contemporary educational issues. His approach focuses attention on the likely implications of different conceptualizations of recurring educational concerns and problems. While Dewey’s writing may have been opaque at points, and his examples set in a time long past, the essential problems he faced were not dissimilar to those confronting educators today. As the examples we have explored suggest, they likely will be important challenges in the future as well, and *D&E* will continue to be a useful resource for thinking about them.

NOTES

¹John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

²On the difficulty of reading Dewey, see Paula Marantz Cohen, “John Dewey,” *The American Scholar*, Class Notes, Jan. 24, 2012, available at <https://theamericanscholar.org/john-dewey/#.V0dLFL5MbEY>.

³See, for instance, Frank Margonis, “John Dewey’s Racialized Visions of the Student and Classroom Community,” *Educational Theory* 59:1 (Feb. 2009): 17–39; Thomas D. Fallace, *Dewey and the Dilemma of Race: An Intellectual History, 1895–1922* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011), ch. 2. Also see Michael Eldridge, “Challenging Speculation about ‘Dewey’s Racialized Visions,’” *Educational Theory* 60:4 (Aug. 2010): 503–17.

⁴Fallace, *Dewey and the Dilemma of Race*, Introduction; also see Fallace’s essay in this collection.

⁵Fallace, *Dewey and the Dilemma of Race*, chs. 5, 6, 7.

⁶James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), ch. 5. Also see Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Preface, which suggests that uncertainty lay at the heart of Dewey's conception of human action rather than a liberal Protestant conception of progress (p. xi). Finally, it is telling that in his discussion of history as a subject in ch. 16 of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey does not promulgate a linear view of social or economic development, but rather suggests that history can be utilized to convey lessons about the human challenges of work, intellectual life, and scientific and technological advances. For more on this point, see our discussion of Dewey's conception of social change in the conclusion to follow.

⁷On the struggle for black voting rights, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), ch. 8. One might also surmise that he would oppose efforts to restrict voting today, such as reflected in recent Kansas legislation that has been challenged in the courts. On this point, see Zachary Roth, "Kris Kobach Sued over Proof of Citizenship Requirement for Voters," MSNBC, Feb. 18, 2016, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/kris-kobach-sued-over-proof-citizenship-requirement-voters>.

⁸Dewey's view regarding equality of intelligence is expressed most clearly on p. 36 of *Democracy and Education*. For an overview of changing perspectives on race in American history, see John L. Rury and Derrick Darby, "War and Education in the United States: Racial Ideology and Inequality in Three Historical Episodes," *Paedagogica Historica* LII:1&2 (Feb.–Apr. 2016): 8–23. A discussion of racial attitudes at the turn of the twentieth century can be found in Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), ch. 2; and Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), ch. 1.

⁹Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 36–37.

¹⁰For an overview of Boas, his influence and ideas on race, see Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896–1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), ch. 5; also see Vernon J. Williams, *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), Introduction.

¹¹Rufus Burrow, Jr., "Martin Luther King's Doctrine of Human Dignity," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 26:2 (Winter 2002): 228.

¹²On the Brown decision and its immediate context, see James T. Patterson, *Brown v Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 3.

¹³We do not mean to suggest that Dewey was opposed to racial segregation principally because of the idea of mental or moral inferiority. But he also recognized that "these social ruptures of continuity were seen to have their intellectual formulation in various dualisms or antitheses." Although he did not mention racial segregation in this regard, its ideological justification would certainly appear to fit this general observation. On this point, see *Democracy and Education*, 323.

¹⁴Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 87.

¹⁵Dewey would no doubt be critical of any school "choice" policy, such as that championed by Elisabeth DeVos in Michigan, which has the effect of distributing "intellectual opportunities" according to existing patterns of privilege and deprivation. For a discussion about how charter schools in Michigan have had this effect, please see, for example, Valerie Strauss, "A Sobering Look at what Betsy DeVos did to Education in Michigan—and what she might do as Secretary of Education," *Washington Post*, Dec. 8, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/08/a-sobering-look-at-what-betsy-devos-did-to-education-in-michigan-and-what-she-might-do-as-secretary-of-education/?utm_term=.9cd1f4d40c30

¹⁶Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 88.

¹⁷The significance of education in this respect may have been reflected in the recent presidential election, when attainment levels—and college graduation in particular—turned out to be a critical dividing line in public opinion. On this point, see Aaron Zitner and Diane Chinni, "Voters Education a Driving Force in this Election," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 13, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/voters-education-level-a-driving-force-this-election-1476401440>.

¹⁸Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 98–99.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 98.

²⁰On changing historical conditions of black education, see Robert A Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880–1950: An Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), ch. 6.

²¹On current educational inequality, see Eduardo Porter, "Education Gap between Rich and Poor is Growing Wider," *New York Times*, Sept. 22, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/business/economy/education-gap-between-rich-and-poor-is-growing-wider>.

²²Kate Zernike, "Betsy DeVos, Trump's Education Pick, Has Steered Money from Public Schools," *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/us/politics/betsy-devos-trumps-education-pick-has-steered-money-from-public-schools.html>.

²³Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 99.

²⁴The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1983), 1.

²⁵Maris Vinovskis, *From a Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind: National Education Goals and the Creation of Federal Education Policy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), ch. 7; Elizabeth DeBray, *Politics, Ideology and Education: Federal Policy during the Clinton and Bush Administrations* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), *passim*.

²⁶Thomas Dee and Brian Jacob, "The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement," National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper No. 15531, Nov. 2009.

²⁷On the many problems associated with assessment-driven reform, see the essays in Michael A. Rebell and Jessica R. Wolff, eds. *NCLB at the Crossroads: Reexamining the Federal Effort to Close the Achievement Gap* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009). For a discussion of Dewey's ideas on standardized testing, see Kevin D. Vinson, Rich Gibson, and E. Wayne Ross, "High Stakes Testing and Standardization: The Threat to Authenticity," *Progressive Perspectives*, 2001 Monograph Series, Vol. 3, No. 2, available at <http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/monographs/ProPer3n2.html>.

²⁸Motoko Rich and Tamar Lewin, "No Child Left Behind Law Faces its Own Reckoning," *New York Times*, Mar. 21, 2015, A16; Emmarie Huetteman and Motoko Rich, "House Restores Local Education Control in Revising No Child Left Behind," *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 2015, A25; Elizabeth A. Harris and Kate Taylor, "Big Questions on New York State Tests: How Many will Opt Out?" *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 2016, A18.

²⁹Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 126.

³⁰Dewey used the term *object* to refer to whatever an interest may be attached. "Objects," as he uses the term, include, for example, elements of the natural world, cultural artifacts, piece of art and music, historical events, a person, or even an idea.

³¹Steven Levy, Deborah O'Hara, Terri Payne Butler, and David R Nelson, *The Voyage of the Pilgrims '92*, (Santa Monica, CA: New American Schools Development Corp., 1992). The film's title comes from the 4th grade social studies curriculum.

³²Evaluation of the students' learning was similarly organic. Mr. Levy observed that when the children were engaged in this project, paper and pencil tests were unnecessary because proof of their learning was provided concretely in such things as clearly written letters and accurately figured perimeters and accounting sheets.

³³Richard J. Murnane and John P. Papay, "Teachers' Views on No Child Left Behind: Support for the Principles, Concern about the Practices," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 24:3 (Summer 2010): 151–66.

³⁴Bill Turque, "D.C. Students Respond to Cash Awards, Harvard Study Shows," *Washington Post*, Apr. 10, 2010, accessed at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/09/AR2010040905180.html>.

³⁵Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 129.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 99.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 215–16.

³⁸See the discussion of this, for instance, in Staughton Lynd, "History from the Bottom Up," *PM Press*, <http://www.pmpress.org/content/article.php/20080722200729927>."

³⁹Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 216, 217.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 310

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 309; for a somewhat different approach to the question, see his discussion of it in *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900), chap. VI, "The Psychology of Occupations."

⁴²Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 318.

⁴³On this approach to vocational education, see Nancy Hoffman, *Schooling for the Workplace: How Six of the World's Best Vocational Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), ch. 3. Dewey's treatment of vocational education has received much attention from scholars. For a recent examination, see Anthony DeFalco, "Dewey and Vocational Education: Still Timely?" *Journal of School and Society* 3:1 (2016), 54–64.

⁴⁴Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, chs., 17, 13, and 12, respectively.