

**MERITOCRACY: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL POLICY CONUNDRUM  
TRANSVERSING SELECTED WORKS OF JAMES BRYANT CONANT**

By

BENJAMIN ENOMA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2008

UMI Number: 3325415

Copyright 2008 by  
Enoma, Benjamin

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3325415  
Copyright 2008 by ProQuest LLC  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© 2008

BENJAMIN ENOMA

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the  
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

---

Date Dr. Nicholas Michelli  
Chair of Examining Committee

---

---

Date Dr. Anthony Picciano  
Executive Officer

Dr. Philip Anderson

Dean Nicholas Lemann

---

Supervision Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## Abstract

**MERITOCRACY: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL POLICY CONUNDRUM  
TRANSVERSING SELECTED WORKS OF JAMES BRYANT CONANT**

By

Benjamin Enoma

Adviser: Professor Nicholas M. Michelli

In the United States, adjacent strands of the meritocratic discourse intercept by accident of history. It occurs either in the Jeffersonian tradition of culling from all sectors of the populace a natural aristocracy of talents as proposed by James Conant through the development of Scholastic Aptitude Tests, or by expanding the structure of opportunity to all individuals and leveling uneven terrains through social policies like desegregation of schools and affirmative action. In other words, it is a case of policies based on the ‘laissez-faire’ doctrine versus those based on governmental intervention. “This interception to some degree has fused the strands in some quarters into one homological discourse; the only caveat is that the destinations of the select and elect groups are not relegated to public service as it is hoped; most wind up in the private for profit sector.” (Lemann, 1999)

Interlacing the meritocracy discourse is the juxtaposition of power both private and public. Views on the roles of elites and experts in a democracy oscillate between standardized nationalism and enlightened provincialism. Historically, efforts were made to amalgamate these viewpoints.

The history of education is replete with ethical and philosophical debates and epistemological variances. These have wavered between the following: the anchoring purpose of fostering sacred or secular, civic and civil knowledge; and those serving the leisured minority or

the laboring majority. These are along the continuum of the conservative, liberal and radical ideological viewpoints, which tinker and falter towards and sometimes, away from social progress.

My research methodology comprised of theoretical explorations of conceptions of the meritocracy. I employed qualitative and historical tools; including discursive analyses of extant literature and focused on the notion of the American comprehensive high school as a gateway to higher education. I looked to explore the relationships between conceptions of meritocracy and their influences on educational policy enactment. I conducted specific archival research on a portion of the personal papers of James Bryant Conant (1893-1978) on the Campus of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, NJ. I also conducted one personal interview with an individual who worked with Conant. It is my settled conviction that my research posed no greater risks to any subject than those incurred in ordinary life.

**DEDICATION**

*Amours de ma vie;  
Alero, Yuki and Idia,  
Je suis foncièrement Bénéie!*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am finally settling into this journey of living, receiving and of giving. I live for Jesus Christ who died for me and I am eternally grateful for His grace and mercy. I live to fulfill my parents' (Moses and Catherine Enoma) modest dreams of securing a good education. I have received a great deal of help along the way in this industry of learning. I owe a debt of gratitude to a great community of educators spanning the globe, who devoted countless hours in my intellectual formation.

My sincere gratitude goes to Mr. Okunzuwa, my fourth grade teacher who sparked a burning desire to question. To Dr. Natho Godwin Irivieri, my mentor and housemaster at unity school Agbarho, who fanned the flames and added a thirst to my hunger for knowledge. Professor Kester Echenim, the department of modern languages at the University of Benin for inspiring me to explore the world and new cultures. Dean Nicholas Lemann, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, thanks for our numerous sessions on meritocracy and for pointing me sotto voce to Dr. Conant. To Dr. Nicholas Michelli my dissertation chair for the apprenticeship of liberty and deliberation thinking. I thank Drs. Anderson and Picciano for their keen eyes and deep insights. I am profoundly indebted.

I also thank all of my siblings Ms. E.I. Oshodin, Dr. A.F. Enoma, Dr. A.I. Enoma, Dr. A.V. Aliu, Engr. M.O. Enoma, Barrister S.E. Otokurin, and Mrs. J. O. Legemah, (RN) who propelled me to soar and my peers who challenged and nurtured me along the way. To Cohort 3 in the Urban Education program, I salute you. Lastly to my immediate family who gave and continues to give, that most precious substance that life is made of: T-I-M-E. My wife Belinda (Alero), my daughters Yuki and Idia, thanks for your time-loan. I shall pay in kind.

## Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE .....	1
Problem Statement .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Intelligence Quotient: A Brief History .....	16
Standardization and Tracking .....	17
United States Army Alpha Beta Test.....	19
Large Scale Acceptance/Legitimization .....	20
Meritocratic Norms and Status Quo .....	21
CHAPTER TWO .....	31
Methodology.....	31
Triangulation.....	33
Safeguards.....	35
Objects of Study.....	35
Research Questions.....	36
Analysis and Interpretation of Data .....	37
Conclusion/Possible Implications .....	38
CHAPTER THREE .....	41
Review of Literature .....	41
Social Ladder and Specializations .....	43
Meritocracy and Opportunity Distribution in a Democracy: .....	44
Policy Making and Power Polity .....	48
Educational Opportunity Distribution.....	52
Education Policy Formulation .....	53
Education Purposes and Metaphors .....	56
Education Reforms.....	58
Pedagogy and Knowledge Production .....	62
Intelligence and Cognition: innate versus developed abilities.....	64
CHAPTER FOUR.....	71
The Common School .....	71
Tracing Federal Role.....	72
States and Local School Boards.....	74
A Nation at Risk.....	75
Periodization .....	77
Social Capital .....	78
Enter a Reformer.....	81
CHAPTER FIVE .....	85
A Comprehensive Policy Framework.....	85
Meritocracy since the Depression .....	87
Anti-Totalitarian Roots .....	89
Conant on Democracy and Social Justice.....	91
Conant on the American Education System .....	94
Conant on Public Education.....	95
Conant on Intelligence .....	97

Conant on Equal Opportunity and Testing .....	100
Meritocracy Discourse in Metonymic Frame .....	103
Open and Hidden Agenda.....	108
CHAPTER SIX.....	112
Original Research Questions.....	112
Discursive Implications and Policy Recommendations.....	112
Laissez Faire or Else .....	116
Knowledge Economy.....	117
Agenda Forum .....	118
Private Power for Public Good .....	119
Civil Society and Social Justice.....	120
Calling the Pied Piper’s Tune .....	121
Directions for New Research .....	123
REFERENCES .....	127

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Problem Statement**

#### **Introduction**

The American dream, a phrase coined by James Truslow Adams in his 1931 bestseller, *The Epic of America*<sup>1</sup> depicts a land where success in life is available to everyone, who works hard, a land where opportunities exist for each, according to his or her abilities, talents, and/or achievements. In a broad sense, people understand the American dream to be an enactment of the promise of meritocracy. The ideology of meritocracy presupposes an equality of opportunity for all, within the framework of honest hard work, intelligence, and good faith effort. “Social reality however, portrays a system of inequalities, a pecking order, and hierarchies, where advantage and privilege are explicated in terms of the meritocracy. You get out of the system what you put into it, you reap what you sow, and your returns are based on your investments.” (McNamee, & Miller, 2004)<sup>2</sup>

The idea of meritocracy is older than the word itself, dating back to Plato’s *Republic* and sixth century China. Meritocracy is a formal system by which social advancement or attainment is based upon cognitive ability, effort, and achievement. It began with the civil service reform in England in the 1870s. In 1958, the British sociologist, Michael Young coined the word in his celebrated essay/book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*.<sup>3</sup> The word *meritocracy* had a negative connotation. In Young’s futuristic treatise, the social place or status of the individual would be determined by intelligence quotient plus effort equals merit (IQ+E=M). This translates into a lottery system where the odds are stacked in favor of the aristocrats; the best minds and highest echelon of citizens in a society. There are scores of criticisms of the notion of meritocracy akin to Young’s original position. Some critical theorists posit that the power elite subscribes to merit

simply to legitimize a system where social position is really determined by class, birth, and wealth. (Johnstone, 1992)<sup>4</sup>, (Arrow, Bowles & Durlauf, 2000)<sup>5</sup>, (McNamee, 2004)<sup>6</sup> I agree with the foregoing argument to the extent that the pursuits of and reliance on merit in a society like the United States, where race is inextricably linked to class and social standing serves to reify the status quo. (McNamee, et al 1996)<sup>7</sup>

The unspoken premises of our meritocracy according to Fallows and Lemann are these:

- That there is such a thing as intelligence or ability, and that it can be measured.
- That intelligence matters, it counts for more than most human qualities and provides the fairest proxy for merit in discriminating among people. It is hateful to judge people by charm, lineage, beauty, or wealth.
- There may be other important qualities such as honor or imagination but they are soft intelligence is quantifiable, hard.
- Not incidentally, intelligence lends itself to objective distinctions among large numbers of people.
- That education is the engine of social progress and intelligence is its fuel.
- A fair and self-interested society will give the best opportunities to the most deserving candidates. The best students will go to the best schools, where they will be trained for the highest responsibilities (for which they will in large measure, receive the highest rewards).
- By the same logic, it makes sense to exclude, as early as possible, those who are not up to these responsibilities, through predictive testing and academic tracks. (Fallows, 1980)<sup>8</sup>, (Lemann, 1999)<sup>9</sup>

In a capitalist democracy such as the United States, the individual is ostensibly, largely responsible for his or her lot in life. When it pertains to upward mobility, up the social, economic and political ladder, the individual determines his/her ascent or descent through a process of radical engagement or latent disengagement. What is not so apparent in this treatise are the roles

that families play, the factors of bequests and inheritances, significant differences in the accumulations of social and cultural capital, who we know and what we know and the fact that there is a great divide between the starting points of mainstream and minority people, rich and poor individuals, whose ascent and descent for the most part are predetermined within the system of inequalities. (Bowles and Gintis 1976)<sup>10</sup>, (Bowen, Tobin, Kurzeil, & Pichler, 2005)<sup>11</sup>

This study is situated at the juncture of different bodies of scholastic works namely: the literature on utilitarian ethics, democracy and government, political economy and free enterprise economy, cross-cultural psychology, educational psychology and psychometrics, the history of education, educational policy and school administration, cognitive linguistics, and discourse analysis. I made my interventions in areas where I believe there are gaps and scant records and in areas where polysemous constructions may have led to erroneous conclusions. My quest is to enrich the understanding we have of educational policy making and the ideas, forms, events and factors that shape it.

At the center of my explorations is the work of James Bryant Conant 1893-1978, focusing on shaping the discourse on meritocracy and education policy in America, with particular interest on his post-Harvard presidency and diplomatic role in Germany. Between 1957 and 1970 in collaboration with the Carnegie Foundation, Conant turned his attention to public education in America focusing on the (high school) secondary level. He produced several reports to interested citizens and wrote several books. He gave hundreds of speeches and contributed scores of articles on the subject of education. I looked at his life-long work on education and other engagements that informed his reasoning and ideological positioning. He adored Thomas Jefferson and borrowed his ideas as evidenced in his 1940 Charter day address at the University of California, Berkeley: Education for a Classless Society.

To understand the bearing of Jefferson's ideas on the development of American schools and colleges we must realize, of course, that they represented only one aspect of a wider social philosophy. As this philosophy was understood by large numbers of the citizens of the young republic, it included the following points: a belligerent belief in individual freedom; complete confidence in the powers of man's intelligence to overcome all obstacles; the assumption of a society without hereditary classes, without an aristocracy; a differentiation of labors with a corresponding differentiation in the types of education (but no ruling caste, no hereditary educational privileges, everyone to be 'as good as everyone else'); widespread education for all citizens so that political decisions might be 'rational.' Dominating all was the doctrine of the maximum independence of the individual, the minimum of social control by organized society. (Conant, 1940)<sup>12</sup>

One of the inherent and recurrent themes in the discourse of meritocracy is the notion that social mobility resulting from hard work and intelligence is based on laissez-faire doctrine to the exclusion of any social control by organized society or the government. I teased out instances where social interventions and regulations influenced and sometimes determined ascendant meritocracy. Conant was considered a scientific advisor with several United States Presidents, from Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s to John F. Kennedy in the 1960s. He had Washington's ear on matters of national security, atomic weaponry and the Cold War. Conant favored a universal national draft of all able-bodied young men without the deferment accorded college students by the Selective Service Act. He understood that the war machine needed as many skilled professionals as it did combat infantry but believed that all should serve in their best suited capacity as determined by the government. To analyze and engage the meritocracy discourse, I turn now to a Foucauldian lens.

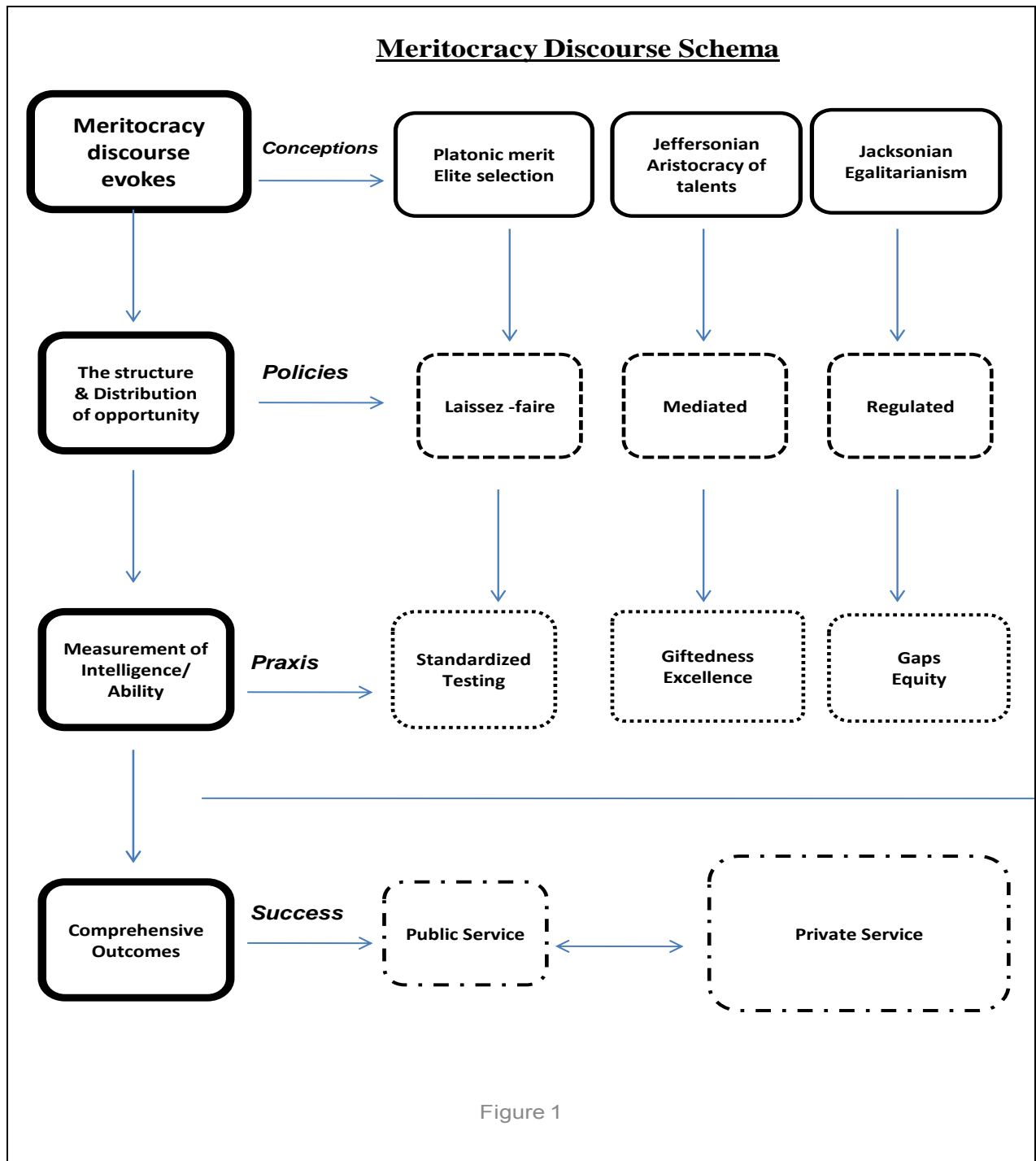
Foucault presents a framework for discursive analysis in his 1981 chef d'oeuvre: *The Order of Discourse*, "in every society discourses are controlled, selected, organized and controlled in specific ways." He links discourse - its rules, systems and procedures constituted by a will to knowledge- with desire on one hand and institutional constraint on the other. "Discourse forms

both an object and manifestation of desire. It is linked to power and social domination, but it is not simply a negative, which translate struggles of systems of domination, it is the thing for which and by which there is struggle. Discourse is power.” (Foucault, 1981)<sup>13</sup> Starting from this Foucauldian premise, discourses are always historically and socially positioned and constituted. Institutions distribute and maintain a hierarchy of discourses, which in turn retain their power in relation to other discourses, such that discourses are inter-textual. In this study I employed discursive analyses on different ontological realms to make sense of concepts, forms or language and things or events.

Meritocracy can be seen as a metonym. Literal language exists within systems of containment and classification. While non-literal language tropes like metonyms permeate boundaries and open up new understandings, they conjure up mental images and conceptual frameworks. Meritocracy metonyms express contiguity, proximity and similarity with the notions of selection versus election of opportunity, equity and excellence, standards and quotas, and the distribution of rewards. United States educational policy has been fashioned and instantiated by astute metonymic frames, leveraging conviction by association and obscuring policy rationales. “Non-literal language metonymy, like metaphor, is part of our everyday way of thinking. It is grounded in our experience and subject to general and systematic principles that structure our thoughts and actions.” (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980)<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, exploring the cognitive linguistic process of meritocracy as metonyms of related concepts will unearth a new understanding of this ideology and its import on the United States educational policy framework. Meritocracy can be seen as metonyms for “hyphenated morality” and encompassing the twin aspects of “elite selection” and “opportunity distribution” in higher education. Some view meritocracy as an instrument for elite selection, others see it as

a tool for mass opportunity distribution. However, I argue that meritocracy is a metonymy of morality. In Figure 1 below, I present my analytical schema on meritocracy discourse.



- I. (Platonic merit) here meritocracy is about extraordinary abilities and elite selection of individuals for specific positions in the leadership functions of the State apparatus (government service). This practice dates back to Plato's Republic, Genghis Khan's Mongolian Empire, 6<sup>th</sup> century China, France's grandes écoles, and Germany's recruitment of the General Army Staff, Jefferson's natural aristocracy or as WEB Dubois refers to it the "Talented Tenth." (Dubois, 1903)<sup>15</sup>
- II. (Jeffersonian Aristocracy) The Expansionist and Social Efficiency Problem-Solvers merit: This group believes that meritocracy should promote the inclusion of all gifted and talented students regardless of socioeconomic status and race, to the acquisition of skills, literacy and numeracy. Some have termed it the twin pillars of the capitalist industry. (Douthat, 2005)<sup>16</sup> Here, the goal is to produce functional members of society who will service the industries. Education cannot be a luxurious pursuit of knowledge with a disinterested end as in "mind as a muscle, *l'art pour l'art* or in Gramsci's<sup>17</sup> notion of the organic intellectual. Knowledge is not about solitary pleasures and cerebral exercises rather it is about producing a necessary end of marketable skills, acquisitions in literacy, science and mathematics. The expansionists argue that they are about mass opportunity or "maximum opportunity for the fit and able" and it can be achieved through high stakes standardized testing.
- III. (Jacksonian Egalitarianism) The Natural and Equitable Distribution of Opportunity for all merit: This is the leveler and eliminator of social ascriptions and class advantages. It exists primarily to thwart the formation of a caste system. Conant termed it excessive egalitarianism or the Jacksonian democracy. This third strand is much closer home and relates more directly to the enactment of the United States educational policy.

Based on history, we know that entrance and acceptance into the United States aristocracy and establishment is closely guarded and monitored. Education being a purveyor or the chief source of upward mobility is the implement for affecting the structure of opportunity. Many establishmentarians position themselves here. “If an aristocracy does not assimilate people from classes other than its own, it devolves into a caste” (De Tocqueville, 1888<sup>18</sup>, Batzell, 1964)<sup>19</sup>

The United States’ poignant refutation of monarchy and its attendant issues of nepotism and favoritism, where social mobility is largely based, on ascriptive characteristics, circumstances of birth and social-cultural associations were evidenced by its war of independence against England. The United States Declaration of Independence and its Constitution are ensconced in the spirit of egalitarianism. Equality of men before the law, equality of opportunity, albeit debatable in letters and implementation, is present in the spirit of the Law.

The United States walks this delicate balance of responsibility to the group and the common good on the one hand, and the exercise of individual rights and liberty on the other. Thomas Hobbes, in his masterpiece, *Leviathan*, posited the groundwork of the social contract: “The individual gives up some rights and ascribes them to the government in the furtherance of peace and security, who in turn regulate the affairs of state from the power invested in it by the individual/group.” The United States also embraces John Locke’s thoughts on individual liberty that is, inalienable rights. One can argue with cause that the war of independence was spurred by the following: “If a government subverts the ends for which it was created then it might be deposed; indeed, he asserts, revolution in some circumstances is not only a right but an obligation. ... The ruling body if it offends against natural law must be deposed.”(Locke, 1690)<sup>20</sup> This was arguably the philosophical issue, which sanctioned the rebellions of both the American colonialists in 1775, and the French ‘tiers états’ (common folk) in 1789.

Free enterprise and free market or capitalist economies like the United States work under the tacit assumption that all citizens and/or participants will succeed inequitably. This assumption is akin to that of the social Darwinists' "survival of the fittest of the specie." Another historical assumption is that success is achieved by meritocracy. The harder one works and the more intelligent one is, the greater the chances of success. Hard work and measured IQ equals success to the exclusion of any salient systemic factor that works for or against some people in a given social context. To this end, eminent Scottish philosopher Adam Smith in his famous book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*,<sup>21</sup> talks of the "invisible hands" that shape the free market economy. He does not address class or social status but speaks of the preoccupation of the individual with the pursuits of his own fortunes and how that translates into the generation of wealth for the society as a whole. In this way, the economic destinies of the individual and his nation are inextricably linked. In his view, self-interest is the engine that drives the economy and competition is its governor. He agrees in principle with Emile Durkheim on the significance of the division of labor and how the talented gravitate towards positions of responsibility and everyone finds his or her place by virtue of talents and industry (efforts). The foregoing is a capitalist notion that abandons equal success for all and supports free enterprise; purportedly free from governmental and non-governmental intrusions.

Durkheim further asserts that division of social labor is distinguished from division of physiological labor by an essential characteristic. In the organism, each cell has its defined role and cannot change it. In societies, tasks have never been so immutably distributed. Even where the forms of organization are most rigid, the individual can move about in the interior of the form in which he is fixed with a certain liberty. He states: division of labor like all social facts, and

more generally, all biological facts, present pathological forms. He called it the anomic division of labor:

One might be tempted to reckon as irregular forms of the division of labor criminal occupations and other harmful activities. It is well known that in a business where each employee is not sufficiently occupied movements are badly adjusted to one another, operations are carried on without any unity; in short, solidarity breaks down, incoherence and disorder make their appearances. There are cases where the division of labor, pushed very far, produces a very imperfect integration. (Durkheim, cited in Simpson, 1947)<sup>22</sup>

Durkheim posited that fault often lies in the regulative body because rules in themselves do not suffice to produce solidarity. In fact, the more rigid rules are, the more dissension they create. Class wars ensue as in the institution of *claws and of castes*. The lower classes no longer being satisfied with the role, which has devolved upon them from custom or by law, aspire to functions, which are closed to them and seek to dispossess those who are exercising these functions.

Thus civil wars arise, which are due to the manner in which labor is distributed. There is nothing similar to this in the organism. No doubt, during periods of crises, the different tissues war against one another and nourish themselves at the expense of others; never does one cell or organ seek to usurp a role different from the one, which it is filling. (Durkheim, cited in Simpson, 1947)<sup>23</sup>

In labor capital is not just restricted to economic or material resources. It goes beyond the acquisition and accumulation of property by the *homo economicus*, which usually signifies success, wealth, and power. Bourdieu in his text *Forms of Capital*<sup>24</sup> expands on the notion of capital beyond its economic form. He argues that “cultural capital exists in three forms: A.) Embodied within the individual. B.) Objectified in artifacts and resources, which can be appropriated materially via economic capital or symbolically via the embodied capital. C.) Institutionalized capital; this is the form that refers to various instruments of legitimization, academic credentials and professional licenses.” In this institutionalized form of capital, some

would argue that the die is not necessarily cast in favor of the wealthy. Unquestionably, it helps to possess material and economic means. However, access to cultural capital can also be made through non-economic means such as social networks. Indubitably, the United States is a democracy; the electoral process and the participation of United States citizens demonstrate it. “Notwithstanding the governance at the policy and implementation levels remains ironically an Aristocracy.” (Batzell, 1964)<sup>25</sup>, (Domhoff, 2000)<sup>26</sup>

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the United States, adjacent strands of the meritocratic discourse intercept by accident of history. This interception is in the Jeffersonian tradition of culling from all sectors of the populace a natural aristocracy of talents and as proposed by Conant through the development of scholastic aptitude tests or expanding the structure of opportunity to all individuals. There are efforts to level the uneven terrain through social policies; such as desegregation of schools and affirmative action. “This interception to some degree has fused the strands in some quarters into one homological discourse; the only caveat is that the destinations of the select and elect groups are not relegated to public service as it is hoped; most wind up in the private /for profit sector.” (Lemann, 1999)<sup>27</sup> Is meritocracy governed by the spirit of free enterprise that inheres in laissez-faire or by governmental intervention that underlie social policy regulation?

I observed that historically the ideology of meritocracy has ebbs, flows, waxes or wanes in correlation to the prevailing socio-economic discourse. This fits well into the framing metaphors of George Lakoff. “The liberal and conservative worldviews are not monolithic. There will not be a single conservative or liberal worldview to fit all conservatives or all liberals. Conservatism and liberalism are radial categories, they have ... central models and variations on those models.” (Lakoff, 1996)<sup>28</sup> The nation as a family metaphor that frames the conservative

worldview is like that of a strict father running a tight ship where rewards are earned through hard work and the individual is solely responsible for his/her success. Any form of assistance or handout cripples him or her. While the liberal worldview is that of nurturing parent, “a doting mother,” who nurtures her wards to achieve success and assist the feeble among them to achievement. These two worldviews inform the cyclical ebbs and flows of the ideology of meritocracy as enacted in United States education policies. Liberals support the line of “equity” while conservatives tow “excellence.” It is important to reinforce the radial categories espoused by Lakoff. Meritocracy can be viewed as a conservative or liberal doctrine depending on the end intended; whether it is to expand opportunity or select talented elite.

The United States educational system is decentralized to the extent that there is no uniform federal curriculum of instruction for specific age groups or educational levels (classes). There are no nationwide, uniform entrance examinations into institutions of learning, such as the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary and Advanced levels) examinations in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth nations. The United States Constitution does not address the subject of public education or its control. Consequently the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment devolves this responsibility to the State. “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” It is because of this constitutional situation of education within the power of the states that the educational policy of the United States remains largely decentralized. Albeit with the United States Supreme Court landmark decision in 1954 on *Brown v. Board of Education*, and concerns about national defense leading to the National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the creation of the Department of Education by President Carter, the federal role in education policy has become progressively stronger. This role is mostly tied to *the*

*power of the purse*’ i.e. provisions of federal funding to schools and the requirements attached to such funding. Block and categorical grants from the federal government are usually disbursed with strings attached. Below are some examples of this burgeoning trend.

The funding authorizations for programs in the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) expired during the 108th Congress (2004) and it has been extended yearly since. Discussions in 2006 on the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization bills centered predictably on the issues of cuts in aid programs and accountability. The federal government has increasingly held legislative oversight over institutions of higher education as a precondition for the appropriation of funds. This sway ruffles state and institutional feathers, the former for its constitutional privilege and the latter for its academic freedom. HEA reauthorization is now complete and was signed into law on August 14, 2008 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

A thorny issue for most of the non-profit private and independent colleges and universities is the measure of College Affordability Index (CAI). Congress is trying to curb the meteoric rise in tuition by instituting an affordability index, which compares the increase in an institution’s tuition over a three-year period to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Institutions with a CAI of more than 2.0—that is, whose tuition increased by more than twice the CPI—would be subject to additional requirements, like an audit by the Inspector General of the United States Department of Education (ED).

**“Calculation of CAI** – The Department of Education would calculate, based on price data already submitted annually by colleges, a College Affordability Index. ED would add the CAI to the information for consumers on its COOL (college opportunity online) Web site. The CAI would be calculated by looking at the three most recent academic years and comparing the first and last years: percentage increase in tuition & fees  
Percentage increase in CPI-Urban for July

Tuition and fees are for a first-time, full-time, full-year student. The CPI increased by 5.16 percent between July 2002 and July 2004.

**Consequences** – Beginning with any three-year interval ending on or after June 30, 2009, an institution that has a CAI above 2.0 must submit a report to ED. ED will post the report on the Web through COOL (college opportunity online). The report must include:

- a. An explanation of the factors contributing to the price increase
- b. A management plan stating specific steps the institution is taking and will take to reduce its CAI
- c. An action plan, including a schedule, for reducing increases
- d. If another entity controls tuition and fee increases, in whole or in part, a description of the entity

**Exceptions** – Depending on relative standing of the institution's CAI when compared to institutions of similar type and control, an institution with a CAI of 2.0 or higher may face more or less stringent consequences." (NACUBO, 2004)<sup>29</sup>

Another controversy was the proposed HR 3039, Expanding Opportunities in Higher Education Act of 2003. The measure seeks to repeal the 50 percent rule for distance learning programs. It would rewrite the definition of higher education institutions used in the Higher Education Act to include for-profit, non-profit, public and private colleges. The current HEA requires that institutions deliver at least 50% of its courses offerings on-site at a campus (physical locale). If this rule were repealed, it would give all institutions of higher learning, which deliver on-line (Web-based) instruction a comparative advantage in the competition for enrollments. Under the proposed measure, a career school can operate entirely on-line and eliminate the overhead costs the construction of campus facilities and still qualify for federal aid. Needless to say, the public and state financed institutions of higher education and the private and independent (non-profit) institutions of higher learning hate to see this passed into law to the chagrin of the beneficiary. Additionally, HR 3039 would repeal the "90/10" rule, which requires institutions to earn at least 10 percent of their revenue from non-federal sources, such as

endowments or tuition. This will again facilitate the birth and growth of for-profit colleges and universities to the utter dismay of the other categories of institutions.

In October, 2005, the United States Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings established a Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

The purpose of the Commission is to consider how best to improve our system of higher education to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to meet our future workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the changing economy. To accomplish this purpose, the Commission shall consider Federal, state, local, and institutional roles in higher education and analyze whether the current goals of higher education are appropriate and achievable.... In particular, the country is encountering a significant change to its economic structure, resulting in unmet workforce needs. This is particularly true with respect to highly skilled workers and in the fields of mathematics and science. The need is clear and unavoidable: only 68 out of 100 entering 9th graders graduate from high school on time. Yet, 80 percent of our fastest-growing jobs will require some higher education. As the need for highly skilled workers continues to grow, institutions of higher education must assess whether they are providing the necessary coursework and incentives that will enable American students to compete in the new global economy. (ED Education Department, 2005)<sup>30</sup>

The New Commission on the Future of Higher Education spurred controversy quickly. Currently, a recommended plan talks about crafting a system of testing what students learn when they are in college. This is a measure of accountability weighing the return on investment of the federal dollars in higher education. The Commission addresses by proxy the meritocracy discourse in standardized format. In September 2008 the Commission is reported to have abandoned this proposal.

The Commission proposed a strategic assessment of competencies that college students attain throughout college. This will be the higher education equivalent of the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB)’s adequate yearly progress (AYP) testing instrument to see which colleges and universities meet the required competencies and which ones do not. This proposal is being

pushed by the Commission so that a national accreditation foundation will take over the role of evaluating higher education institutions from private accrediting organizations. This effort would be incompatible with a voluntary, autonomous and self-regulatory system. The higher education faculty, professional associations and other special interests groups are already voicing their opposition to the Commission's proposal. "The great success we see today in American higher education is in large part due to the preservation of a self-regulatory process, and in strengthening our institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The current accreditation process, while needing to be responsive to current accountability expectations, successfully balances these interests while evaluating institutional and student success. We cannot allow a formulaic approach from a central body to determine the value and quality of our many, varied and unique institutions of higher learning." said Judith Eaton, President of Council for Higher Education Accreditation CHEA. (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2004)<sup>31</sup>

Although the United States has a decentralized system of education, the power of the purse and increased investment by the federal government since the promulgation of the Higher Education Act of 1965, have positioned the federal government to exert more influence in educational policies to the chagrin of many state and local school district boards. This increased role goes beyond higher education into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which is recognized as the forebear of the "No Child Left Behind" Act (NCLB) of 2001.

### **Intelligence Quotient: A Brief History**

Lewis Madison Terman was a renowned psychologist situated in the pantheon and generation of eminent American psychologists influenced by "the Great Schools." In this era, the number of theoretical and empirical investigations of 'intelligence' increased considerably. In 1905, he received his PhD from Clark University Worcester, MA. His dissertation was on

individual differences in intelligence. He employed a variety of tests to measure and differentiate between the cognitive abilities of “gifted” and “stupid” pre-adolescent boys. Although this work preceded Goddard’s translation in 1908 of the 1905 “Binet-Simon scale”, the approaches to measuring human intelligence bore some similarities. Terman spent thirty-three years on the Faculty of Stanford University, Stanford, CA, in which he was the Head of the Department of Psychology for twenty years.

The works of Francis Galton, eminent British psychologist (1822-1911) who coined the term “Eugenics” and the phrase “nature versus nurture” largely influenced Terman. Galton was Charles Darwin’s cousin. His theory of intelligence, which was part science and part sociology, held that intelligence was the most valuable human attribute and that if people who possessed high levels of it could be identified and placed in positions of leadership, all of society would benefit. Terman was also influenced by French psychologists Alfred Binet, (1857-1911) and Theodore Simon (1873-1961) who co-designed the Binet-Simon scale. This was comprised of a variety of tasks they thought were representative of children’s aptitudes based on chronological age.

### **Standardization and Tracking**

As mentioned earlier, Terman’s era was replete with theoretical and empirical investigations on human intelligence. On the one hand, scholars like French Psychologists Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon approached this subject with the focus on ascertaining the level of intelligence that required special education. In other words, the goal was to identify the “least endowed” children so as to give the extra support needed for them to cope. In the United States, other psychologists such as Henry Goddard, Robert Yerkes, and Lewis Terman were fixated on the higher echelon - the “highly gifted.” (Cross, 2003)<sup>32</sup>

These reverse positions used similar techniques and shared the same basic assumption that intelligence in humans was a natural endowment that varied from individual to individual. It is fair to say that both approaches were aimed at the ultimate good of the society. However, it is pertinent to note that the focus on the least endowed individual has a social justice slant. That is, provide special education for those who need it and level the gaps in achievement; while the quest for the highly gifted possessed an elitist slant. The former used IQ tests to determine what a child needed to learn while the latter used IQ tests as a tool to predict the child's ability to learn.

If individual intelligence levels could be clearly ascertained then the population can be sorted on the basis of their IQ test scores and assigned to different levels within the school system, which would lead to corresponding socio-economic destinations in adulthood. With eugenics principles in mind, he pointed to the benefits of segregating this population. Reproduction will be controlled; crime, industrial inefficiency, and poverty will be reduced. The mentally weak are susceptible to delinquency and crime because they lack self restraint and have poor judgment about the consequences of their actions. Thus, he argued rhetorically, all the feeble-minded are potential criminals and feebleminded women, potential prostitutes. In the spirit of the progressive era's valuation for efficiency and control, He pointed out the application of IQ testing to mental retardation demonstrating how psychological technology can protect the gene pool, reduce crime, and elevate morality. (Terman, 1916)<sup>33</sup>

The explanation of these variances on the part of the gifted school was dependent on bloodline, racial or gene superiority. This was espoused in eugenics, a popular and emergent theory at the time as stated by Charles Davenport<sup>34</sup>. Eugenics is the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding.

“Terman was very open about his position that the etiology of intelligence is largely hereditary. Terman more than any other individual in recent history raised the bar on standardized tests and its uses in schooling to track and differentiate the college bound from the vocational or life adjustment education of children.” (Ballantyne, 2002)<sup>35</sup>

The use of IQ tests gained more ground as a result of two notable events. Firstly, the Congressional Bill or Immigration Act of 1924, Henry H. Goddard discovered that more than 80 percent of the Jewish, Hungarian, Polish, Italian, and Russian immigrants were mentally defective or feeble-minded. He believed that such a defect was a condition of the mind or brain, which is simply transmitted as a genetic trait. He did not pay attention to other factors that may have had a significant effect on the test scores. Tests were administered in English and under an arduous environment to immigrants whom had just traveled great distances. “It would be impossible to rate real intelligence by using a test that is based on only verbal skills to someone in a language they are illiterate in.” (Judge, 2002)<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, in 1927, the United States Supreme Court upheld Virginia State’s involuntary sterilization of Ms. Carrie Buck. In that case, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes penned the statement, “three generations of imbeciles are enough.” He decided that it was constitutionally legal for states to sterilize anyone they decided was eugenically undesirable. He stated that the principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the fallopian tubes. In other words, the general health of the society could be protected at the expense of the rights of individuals. This ruling gave further legitimacy to the claims of the advocates of mental testing. (Black, 2003)<sup>37</sup>

### **United States Army Alpha Beta Test**

During World War 1, the American Psychological Association (APA) president Robert M. Yerkes assumed chairmanship of a committee of forty psychologists in 1917. Their purpose was to develop and administer a group intelligence test (the United States Army Alpha Beta tests.) Notable members included Henry Goddard, Walter Bingham, Lewis Terman, Carl Brigham, Edward L. Thorndike, and William Dill Scott, the first American professor of

Psychology. William Scott resigned from the committee due to differences with Yerkes. The significance of the Alpha Beta tests is that it is the pivotal exercise that moved intelligence testing beyond the individual toward the group. “Thanks to the contributions of Lewis Terman; over 1.7 million United States inductees were tested.” (Judge, 2002) The success of the sorting of men into ranks of officers and combat infantry or foot soldiers by the use of these tests lent credence to the belief that testing and tracking was the most efficient way to position the most talented to achieve their fullest potential. The Alpha test was designed for literate inductees while the Beta test was designed for illiterate or English as second language inductees.

### **Large Scale Acceptance/Legitimization**

According to Shurkin, Lewis Terman conducted the best-known longitudinal study on human intelligence. In 1921, Terman and his colleagues began a longitudinal study of 1,528 gifted youth a.k.a. *Termites* with IQs greater than 140 and who were approximately 12 years old. Over a period of approximately 40 years, the researchers laid the groundwork for our understanding of giftedness and paved the way for efforts to identify and nurture giftedness in school. Terman died in 1956 but the study will continue until 2020 to encompass the entire lives of his original 1,528 gifted youths. Results of the study have been published in several volumes. Prominent amongst his many findings was that highly gifted children with 140+ IQ, contrary to popular beliefs about their looks and physical attributes, were well developed physically and often athletically inclined. (Shurkin, 1992)<sup>38</sup>

In 1922, Terman called for a formal multiple-track plan made up of five *psychometrically defined groups*: gifted, bright, average, slow, and special. While the possibility for transfer between tracks must be maintained, the abilities measured by the tests were considered constant and determined by heredity. Test scores could also tell us whether a child's native ability

corresponds approximately to the median for: the professional class, semi-professional pursuits, skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, and unskilled labor. “When his Stanford Achievement Test was published in 1923, the evaluative fate of school children for the next few decades was sealed.” (Ballantyne, 2002)<sup>39</sup>

Ellwood P. Cubberley, Education Chair at Stanford, a prominent advocate for professional school administrators collaborated with Terman on many fronts. Terman, a former school teacher and school principal was able to influence school administration to adopt segregated curricula as the most efficient way of educating school children. He hoped to eventually build a cluster of law abiding, industrious, men and women while purportedly ridding the society of potential criminals, prostitutes and delinquent citizens all in the cost efficient and scientific manner of aptitude testing. (Seago, 1976)<sup>40</sup>

### **Meritocratic Norms and Status Quo**

Terman, in line with most mental testers and advocates of eugenics, saw human intelligence as a hereditary possession handed down from parents to offspring via the genome. This position to some degree asserts defeatism around the fates of the least endowed. If intelligence is a genetic transfer absent any individual effort or cultivation, then education could serve no ameliorative purpose or hope to raise human intelligence levels. In sum, education is impotent vis-à-vis heredity.

This viewpoint incited disapproval from influential political commentator and Journalist Walter Lippmann who claimed, in a series of six articles in the *New Republic* in 1922, that “to isolate intelligence unalloyed by training or knowledge, and to predict the sum total of what a child is capable of learning after an hour or so of IQ testing ensconced in the name of Science was a contemptible claim.” William Chandler Bagley opined in his 1922 *Determinism in*

*Education: A Series of Papers on the Relative Influence of Inherited and Acquired Traits* that IQ testing was undemocratic because of the fatalistic inferences and deterministic nature of the tracking that follow its findings. Alfred Binet whose 1905 intelligence scale is at the origin of the IQ testing movement denounced the American use and customization of his scale and the link of intelligence solely to heredity. “He condemned those who with 'brutal pessimism' and 'deplorable verdicts' were promoting the concept of intelligence as a single, unitary construct.” (White, 2000)<sup>41</sup>

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) is a non-governmental agency in Princeton, NJ responsible for the creation and administration of a majority of the standardized tests used in higher education, and admissions to graduate and professional Schools. “(ETS) officials are careful to say, when speaking for the record, that native intelligence is not what their tests are designed to detect. Indeed, the main SAT fact sheet says that it is a test of developed ability, not of innate intelligence; tests of abilities that are developed slowly over time both through in-school and out-of-school experience.” (Chauncey & Dobbins 1963)<sup>42</sup>, (Fallows, 1980)<sup>43</sup>, (Vitella, 1995)<sup>44</sup>, (Lemann, 1995)<sup>45</sup>

Seligman draws a comparison of the British Sociologist, Michael Young’s 2034 futuristic dystopia to Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s 1994 *The Bell Curve*, praising the prescient Young for painting a realistic picture of what life has become in present day America. (Seligman, 1994)<sup>46</sup> Is cognitive ability central to social mobility and economic success? Robert Hauser offers a response in his working paper, “Meritocracy, Cognitive Ability, and the Sources of Occupational Success.”

Much of the standard psychometric evidence is weak, but ability does play a significant role in social stratification, primarily by way of its influence on schooling. There is no clear evidence or trend in the role of cognitive ability in the stratification process, and other social psychological variables may be equally

important. Hauser states “there is no evidence that cognitive ability is *the* central variable in the process of stratification, but there is ample reason for concern that recent and prospective changes in the structure of American education will raise its importance. (Hauser, 2002<sup>47</sup>)

Much of the controversy over meritocracy and its relationship to success, lie on the issue of fairness and equality of opportunity. Employing cognitive ability as the launch pad for merit is historically situated in the “Ivory Tower” social engineering effort. Two looming figures in this account are James Bryant Conant who on becoming the president of Harvard in 1933 encouraged one of his assistant deans, Henry Chauncey to embark on an ambitious program of educational testing. The goal was lofty, that is, the future of American democracy crucially depended on opening up its elite educational institutions to a much wider constituency than the rich and famous. The aim was to create, as Lemann (1999)<sup>48</sup> puts it “a scientized social utopia” by applying a standard gauge to people.

There is a body of literature showing that IQ tests are not culture free or independent of educational attainment. (Davis, & Havighurst, 1948)<sup>49</sup>, (Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp 1971)<sup>50</sup>, (Jensen, 1980)<sup>51</sup>, (Hurst & Mott, 2004)<sup>52</sup> Thus, the lofty goals of Conant and Chauncey were quickly sabotaged by the aristocracy and its meritocratic recruits. As Lemann writes, “they had learned how to play by the new rules and found ways to get their children into the best universities, via preparatory programs like “crammers” in New York that coached students on how to excel at the college boards. Thus, the original drive of moral education and mass opportunity (the inclusion of the poor and minority) took a back seat to the search for merit, which in this experiment meant total reliance on intellectual and academic aptitude.” (Lemann, 1999)<sup>53</sup>

Merit can also be viewed in a dichotomy via the concepts of academic achievement and on the job performance, formal academic knowledge and practical intelligence or tacit knowledge. Sternberg et al. argue that practical intelligence or tacit knowledge parallel academic intelligence and formal academic intelligence respectively. “An academically intelligent person is deemed to be so because he or she has acquired formal academic knowledge and has been tested through a wide range of intelligence and aptitude tests. By contrast, the practical, intelligent person has acquired tacit knowledge that has been tested through various real-world events but is not predicted through conventional intelligence testing.” (Sternberg, Wagner, Williams & Horvath, 1995)<sup>54</sup>

Polanyi, a precursor in this field, posited in his, work *Tacit Dimension*. “We should start from the fact that “we can know more than we can tell.” He termed this pre-logical phase of knowing as tacit knowledge. It is made up of a range of conceptual and sensory information and images that can be brought to bear in an attempt to make meaning. (Polanyi, 1966)<sup>55</sup> Although importance is ascribed to this notion of tacit knowledge, the voices of dissent should also be acknowledged. (Jensen, 1993) <sup>56</sup>asserted: “Tacit knowledge seems an exceedingly mysterious variable, theoretically and empirically.” According to Jensen, it neither is a personality measure nor is it a predictor of scholastic performance. In order for the concept to become theoretically grounded, empirical support is needed on how best to measure tacit knowledge. Somesh & Bogler in their study scrutinized the main themes of tacit knowledge; “informal and implicit knowledge used to achieve one’s goals.” (Somesh & Bogler 1999)<sup>57</sup> Undergraduate students were scrutinized. Their socioeconomic status (SES) and gender were also examined for variances in tacit knowledge. How are these variances related to academic achievement? Employing a questionnaire consisting of biographical information and a tacit knowledge scale that they

developed, they found that students with low-SES used tacit knowledge more than high-SES students. If this finding is validated, it would be particularly interesting because in many studies, low SES is usually associated with deficiency. However, the phrase “street smart” or tacit knowledge is appropriated more by students with low SES. Would it make a difference if tacit knowledge were valued in the higher education admission process? It was revealed in the study that students with high tacit knowledge achieved higher academic grades than students who had low tacit knowledge. The significant inference drawn here concerns the importance of tacit knowledge to student success in learning institutions. (Somesh & Bogler 1999)<sup>58</sup> The nature of tacit knowledge is intrinsic to the individual, that is, action-oriented knowledge acquired without direction or help from others. Yet, it allows individuals to appropriate resources to achieve their valued goals. It enables them to utilize resources like the reference library, tutorial services, academic advisors, and discover the “hidden curriculum.” A phenomenon of interest will be to evaluate factors that surround the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Is the acquisition of tacit knowledge propelled by economic hardship and the instinct to survive? The answer will shed some light on why low SES students rank higher in tacit knowledge than high SES students do.

Merit can also be looked at panoramically as a socio-cultural construct. Pierre Bourdieu in the *Forms of Capital*<sup>59</sup> expands capital beyond its economic perspective, which accentuates material exchanges to include non-economic and immaterial forms of capital. He favors a nurture rather than nature argument throughout his discussion on the forms of capital. Educational success, according to Bourdieu, entails a whole range of cultural behaviors, extending to ostensibly non-academic features like gait or accent. Privileged children and their teachers have learned this behavior. Unprivileged children have not. Privileged children fit into the world of educational expectations with apparent ease. The unprivileged are found to be difficult, to

present challenges. Both groups behave as their upbringing dictates. Bourdieu regards this ease or natural ability as in fact the product of a great social labor, largely on the part of the parents. It equips their children with the dispositions of manner as well as thought. This ensures that they succeed within the educational system and can then reproduce their parents' class position in the wider social system. Critics have questioned Bourdieu's premise inferring in his Habitus, that a student's merit can be regulated, reproduced and predestined with the investments in cultural capital made by the families of the students in question. Thus, dislocating the theory of the order of natural selection of talents and native endowments of intelligence and suggesting other social determinants of educability beyond the student's intellect.

## NOTES

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Adams, J. T. (1931) *Epic of America* Little Brown & Company
- <sup>2</sup> McNamee, S. J., Miller, R. K. (2004) *The Meritocracy Myth* Rowman & Littlefield
- <sup>3</sup> Young, M. D. (1958) *The Rise of the Meritocracy* London: Thames and Hudson
- <sup>4</sup> Johnstone, D. B. (1992) *The university, democracy, and the challenge to Meritocracy* Interchange, 23 (1 & 2): 19-23
- <sup>5</sup> Arrow, K., Bowles, S., and Durlauf, S. (2000) *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality* NJ: Princeton University Press
- <sup>6</sup> McNamee, S. J., Miller, R. K. (2004) *The Meritocracy Myth* Rowman & Littlefield
- <sup>7</sup> McNamee, S. J., Miller, R. K. (1996) *Inheritance and Wealth in America* New York: Plenum
- <sup>8</sup> Fallows, J. (1980) The Tests and the "Brightest": How fair are the College Boards? *The Atlantic Monthly* Feb. 1980
- <sup>9</sup> Lemann N. (1999). *The Big Test: The secret history of the American Meritocracy* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux
- <sup>10</sup> Bowles, S., Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and contradictions of economic life* New York: Basic Books
- <sup>11</sup> Bowen, W. G., Tobin, E. M., Kurzeil, M.A. & Pichler, S.C. (2005) *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education* (Thomas Jefferson Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series) Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press
- <sup>12</sup> Conant, J.B. (1940) Education for a Classless Society: The Jeffersonian Tradition. Charter Day Address delivered at the University of California on March 28, 1940
- <sup>13</sup> Foucault, M (1981) The order of discourse in Young, R. Ed. Untying the text PP.51-58 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- <sup>14</sup> Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>15</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903) "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* New York
- <sup>16</sup> Douthat, R. G. (2005) *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class* New York: Hyperion
- <sup>17</sup> Hoare, Q., Nowell Smith, G., Eds. Trans. (1971) *SPN: Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* London: Lawrence and Wishart

- 
- <sup>18</sup> De Tocqueville, A. translated by Henry Reeve, D.C.L. (1888). *The State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789 and the causes, which led to that event also known as the ancient regime and the revolution* On-line Books: <http://www.geocities.com/danielmacryan/ancientregime.pdf>
- <sup>19</sup> Baltzell, E. D. (1964) *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* New York: Vintage Books
- <sup>20</sup> Locke, J. (1690) *The Two Treatises of Government* London: Amen-Corner
- <sup>21</sup> Smith, A., (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, London: Methuen and Co., Ltd.
- <sup>22</sup> Simpson G. Transl. (1947) *The Division of Labor in Society* Book by Emile Durkheim, Free Press
- <sup>23</sup> Simpson G. Transl. (1947) *The Division of Labor in Society* Book by Emile Durkheim, Free Press
- <sup>24</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The Forms of Capital* in John Richardson, Ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258
- <sup>25</sup> Baltzell, E. D. (1964) *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* New York: Vintage Books
- <sup>26</sup> Domhoff, G. W. (2000). *Who Rules America?* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- <sup>27</sup> Lemann N. (1999). *The Big Test: The secret history of the American Meritocracy* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux
- <sup>28</sup> Lakoff, G. (1996) *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know that Liberals Don't* Chicago The University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>29</sup> National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Retrieved on April 19, 2006 from <http://www.nacubo.org/x6539.xml>
- <sup>30</sup> Department of education's Commission for the Future of Higher Education Charter and Statement of purpose Retrieved on April 17, 2006 from <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/charter.pdf>
- <sup>31</sup> The Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Expert Testimony Retrieved on April 19, 2006 from <http://www.chea.org/news/Testimony0406.htm>
- <sup>32</sup> Cross, T.L. (2003) *Examining Priorities in Gifted Education: Leaving No Gifted Child Behind: Breaking Our Educational System of Privilege*. Roeper Review Spring'03 Vol.101

- 
- <sup>33</sup> Terman, L. M. (1916). [The uses of intelligence tests](#): from *the measurement of intelligence* (chapter 1). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- <sup>34</sup> Charles Davenport, (1921)"Research in Eugenics," in Second International Eugenics Congress, (1923), Vol. 1: Carnegie Institute in Washington
- <sup>35</sup> Ballantyne P. F. (2002) *Psychology, Society, and Ability Testing (1859-2002): Transformative alternatives to Mental Darwinism and Interactionism*.
- <sup>36</sup> Judge L. (2002) *Eugenics (Semester Research Project)* - ENGL 328.004 / HIST 1302.106 Retrieved on 03/24/05 <http://www.accd.edu/sac/honors/main/papers02/Judge.htm>
- <sup>37</sup> Black, E. (2003) *War against the Weak: Eugenics and American's campaign to create a master race* New York: Four walls eight windows.
- <sup>38</sup> Shurkin, J. N. (1992). *Terman's kids: The groundbreaking study of how the gifted grow up*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company
- <sup>39</sup> Op. Cit
- <sup>40</sup> Seago, M. V. (1976). *Terman and the gifted* Los Altos, CA: Kaufmann.
- <sup>41</sup> As Cited in White, S. (2000). Conceptual foundations of IQ testing *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 6(1), 33-43
- <sup>42</sup> Chauncey, H., Dobbins, J.E. (1963) *TESTING: Its place in Education Today* New York: Harper and Row p.18
- <sup>43</sup> Fallows, J. (1980) The Tests and the "Brightest": How fair are the College Boards? *The Atlantic Monthly Feb. 1980*
- <sup>44</sup> Vitella, S. (1995) ETS Program Updates for GRE, GMAT, SAT and TOEFL retrieved on 3/2/2005 <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu/oseas/etsupdate.html>
- <sup>45</sup> Lemann, N. (1995, Sept.) The Great Sorting *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol. 276 No.3 pp84-100
- <sup>46</sup> Seligman, D. (1994) Foretelling the Bell Curve The rise of the Meritocracy *National Review* 46(12) 55
- <sup>47</sup> Hauser, R. M., (2002) Meritocracy, Cognitive Ability, and the Sources of Occupational Success *Center for Demography and Ecology Department of Sociology Madison: University of Wisconsin*
- <sup>48</sup> Lemann, N (1999) *The Big test: The secret history of the American Meritocracy* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux
- <sup>49</sup> Davis, A. Havighurst, R.J. (1948) 'Measurement of Mental Systems: Can Intelligence Be Measured?', *Scientific Monthly* 66:301-316

- 
- <sup>50</sup> Cole, M., Gay, J. Glick, J.A., Sharp, D.W. (1971) *The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking*: New York: Basic Books
- <sup>51</sup> Jensen, A. (1980) *Bias in mental testing* New York: Free Press.
- <sup>52</sup> Hurst, D. and Mott, F. L. (2004, Aug) "Potential Cultural Bias in a Standardized Reading Test: Implications for Predicting Subsequent Academic Achievement" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA*, Online <.PDF> Retrieved 2007-04-04 from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p108693\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p108693_index.html)
- <sup>53</sup> Lemann, N (1999) *The Big test: The secret history of the American Meritocracy* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux
- <sup>54</sup> Sternberg, R.J. Wagner, R. K., Williams, W. M., & Horvath, J. A. (1995) Testing Common Sense, *American Psychologist*, 50(11), 912-927
- <sup>55</sup> Polanyi, M. (1966) *The Tacit Dimension*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- <sup>56</sup> Jensen, A. R. (1993). Test Validity: g versus "tacit Knowledge." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2(1), 9-10
- <sup>57</sup> Somesh, A., Bogler, R. (1999) Tacit Knowledge in Academia: Its effect on Student Learning and Achievement *Journal of Psychology* 133(6)605-617
- <sup>58</sup> Somesh, A., Bogler, R. (1999) Tacit Knowledge in Academia: Its effect on Student Learning and Achievement *Journal of Psychology* 133(6)605-617
- <sup>59</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The Forms of Capital* in John Richardson, Ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Methodology**

This study is a theoretical exploration of the meritocracy within the context of the work of James Bryant Conant. I employed qualitative and historical analysis tools in the conduct of this study. There is no single source or wellspring for qualitative research. It has a rich history drawing from the fields of cultural anthropology and American sociology. (Bodgan & Bilken 1982)<sup>1</sup> Over a century ago, Wilhelm Dilthey argued that science was not moving in the direction of helping humans understand themselves: “We understand ourselves and others only when we transfer our own lived experience into every kind of expression of our own and other people’s lives.” (Dilthey, quoted in Richman, 1976)<sup>2</sup> Qualitative research draws from the dynamic curiosities of humans over the ages, formally disciplined by ethnographers, historians and social psychologists. Qualitative research is essentially an investigative process that attempts to make sense and meaning out of a social phenomenon or an event, by comparing and contrasting it, or interpreting it in the light of emergent data. In a qualitative research project issues emerge, blossom and fade away. Conversely in quantitative research as an issue becomes more refined or important, a parallel or subsequent study is started. (Stake, 1995)<sup>3</sup> The present one keeps its issues intact.

I looked at James Bryant Conant and his work on nationalizing the notion of the comprehensive high school, the gateway to higher education and how he successfully designed the amalgamation of the small high schools into “comprehensive meritocracy outlets” and secured funding via public tax support. I explored his Carnegie Foundation funded reports and the reasons he advanced for the comprehensive high school as the gateway to a meritocratic

higher education. I studied his use of non-literal language (the metonymic framing of his ideas about “normative referencing” and ability groupings) to build a consensus and a coalition to support this cause. It is interesting today that this idea has turned on its head, a 180-degree turn with the introduction of new visions and small schools initiatives. Tracing this rich history allowed me to dissertate amply and locate answers to the question I set out to study: what are the connections between conceptions of meritocracy and higher education policy making?

I drew primarily from Dr. James B. Conant papers, articles, reports, books that center on educational policy. I conducted analyses of his work, written reactions to and in concert with his work on education. I privileged a method of analysis amidst others namely: narrative analysis. This is an alternative to survey research using psychological scales. It is an analysis of a chronologically told story with a focus on the temporal organization of different elements. Labov describes this as a process that allows the researcher to analyze the reasons why some elements are evaluated differently from others, how past events shape perceptions of the present, how the present shapes perceptions of the past and how both shape perceptions of the future. (Labov, 1997)<sup>4</sup> The method of narrative analysis as Riessman explains, “examines the flow of informant’s experiences in the stories they tell, with the objective of understanding how they obtain meaning from the events of their lives... narrative analysis is a continuum of different approaches to narrative texts rather than a standard method. (Riessman, 1993)<sup>5</sup> Narrative analysis was particularly useful in this study because of its exploratory nature. I paid a great deal of attention to reports, recommendations, and co-textual periodicals to appraise what the prevailing thoughts were at the time. I examined the social contexts to see if the narratives of the texts and respondents to show any insightful differences or see if they maintain discernable patterns. I also employed contextual analysis, as noted by Labov and Waletzky,

Narratives and particularly the evaluative elements of narratives are social phenomena and as such, they vary by the social context within which they are collected: home, school, office, etc. It may prove useful to gather narratives from similar groups or individuals in varying social contexts to see what differences the differences in evaluative components of the narratives might yield. Correspondingly, the researcher has to look out for recurrent forms or patterns that emerge from the different narratives. (Labov & Waletzky, 1967)<sup>6</sup>

This is essentially akin to hermeneutic phenomenology, which traces transfer of information and experience from the dialectics of different parts, and effect new constructions of the whole in a continual engagement with speech and events at the discourse level to deepen our understanding of social life and culture.

### **Triangulation**

In the social science repertoire, triangulation as a research strategy in the study of a social phenomenon is a relatively new concept, it is perceived to be a method that improves the validity of research findings and aid in the elimination of bias through correlation analyses. Its earliest assertion dates back to a paper published in 1959 by (Fiske and Campbell)<sup>7</sup>. Denzin provides a detailed discussion on the use of triangulation as a research strategy; he outlines four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation including time, space, and person, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation. (Denzin, 1978)<sup>8</sup>

A.) Data triangulation simply refers to using multiple data sources. Denzin extends the notion of data triangulation to include time, space and person, based on the assumption that understanding a social phenomenon requires its examination under a variety of conditions. B.) Investigator triangulation denotes studies that involve more than one investigator; this is typically built into the research process. Denzin highlights a problem in this type i.e. how much hands-on data collection does the PI need to carry out in order to effectively analyze the data? How much of the data analysis occurs in the field as they are collected. These are not easily answered questions.

C.) Theoretical triangulation is problematic at best, and considered impossible in reality, no study is devoid of a theoretical perspective but none embraces without preference multiple theories either because of the obvious incoherence that is bound to ensue at the stage of data analysis. D.) Methodological triangulation is the most popular of all four types; it denotes the use of multiple methods in the examination of a social phenomenon. Methods are considered subjective the way individuals are considered subjective. Jick posited: “the assumption that bias is eliminated in a multi-method research design is puzzling one that often goes unexamined...triangulation purports to exploit the assets and neutralize, rather than compound, the liabilities.” (Jick, 1983)<sup>9</sup>

Denzin (1978) explicates the value of five different methods/designs (experiment, survey, participant observation, unobtrusive methods, and historical methods) the discussion suggests that different methods produce different understandings of a social phenomenon, what is markedly absent is a discussion on how to reconcile these differences, unless one assumes that they cancel out each other. Triangulation has gained prominence in evaluation literature as well Guba and Lincoln discuss strategies such as prolonged engagements on site, peer debriefing, and establishing structural corroboration as a means of improving the credibility of evaluation findings.(Guba & Lincoln, 1981)<sup>10</sup> The most common value proposition of triangulation is that it will result in a convergence of evidence, a single proposition about a social phenomenon i.e. data from different sources or collected from different methods agree in outcome. There are however instances of when triangulated data are inconsistent, not converging but not contradictory. There are also instances when triangulated data are not simply inconsistent but actually contradictory. These variable outcomes shift the focus on triangulation away from serving as a technological

solution for ensuring internal and external validity. They place the responsibility on the researcher to construct plausible explanations about the social phenomenon being studied.

### **Safeguards**

In addition to the foregoing, safeguards were employed to protect the institutions and the participant. I took the position that my study is “formative” in outlook rather than “summative.” Guba and Lincoln espouse a constructivist paradigm and show that it offers multiple advantages, including empowerment and enfranchisement of stakeholders, as well as an action orientation that defines a course to be followed. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989)<sup>11</sup> I strived to employ Guba and Lincoln’s “Authenticity Criteria”, which comprises of ontological authenticity, learning from doing, documenting changes of positions (progressive subjectivity) and perspective overtime. Educative authenticity, assume a collective responsibility to educate one another i.e. participant and investigator alike. Then there is the catalytic authenticity; the researcher should effect positive changes for the participant and lastly tactical authenticity, intervening on behalf of the researched. I paid heed to their warning that a collective case study may be designed with more concern for representation in mind, albeit the representation of a small sample is difficult to defend. The relevant characteristics are likely to be too numerous so that only a few combinations can be included in the study.

### **Objects of Study**

Meritocracy purports to be the great leveler, and the vehicle that transports the American dream of access and equality of opportunity. Meritocracy raises questions about its roadworthiness as a vehicle because of its role in the establishment, cultures of resistance, glass ceilings in organizations, admissions to private boarding schools, restricted covenants in housing and zoning, exclusive domains like elite country club memberships, enlistment in the social

register and significant gaps in educational attainment and achievement of its citizens. The research questions and objects of study were (as in most constructivist studies) influenced and shaped by emergent data. In many ways, each question is important enough to structure an entire study. However, lines of interceptions and connections guided this study from the general to the particular. I began with questions around three different categories namely:

- The meritocracy discourse and United States secondary and higher educational policies-discursive analyses.
- Intelligence and cognition as it pertains to assessment and testing of individual and groups, abilities grouping, tracking and segregated curricula.
- Lastly, the case of the comprehensive high school, funding policies and their interceptions with polity and power in a democracy.

This study was guided by the following questions; they were restated and rephrased in certain instances during the course of analyzing the data

## **Research Questions**

- 1.) How has the ideology of meritocracy been enacted in education policies since the Great Depression -1930s?
  - 1a.)What is the dominant definition of meritocracy in discourse?
  - 1b.)What frames the discourse on meritocracy?
  - 1c.)What is the political economy of meritocracy?
- 2.) What are the connections between conceptions of meritocracy and higher education policy making?
- 3.) Is there a relationship between the funding of public education and the discourse on meritocracy?"
- 4.) Who should decide a child's "destiny," social, economic, and political as an adult in a democracy?
  - 4a.)What are the rationales for making such a decision?
  - 4b.)Is there any hidden agenda?
- 5.) What role does private power in a democracy play in public policy making?
- 6.) Are there discernable patterns in the enactment of educational policies and practices?

## **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

Researcher's bias: let me state at the outset my predilection and claim responsibility for any idiosyncrasies arising from the study, the responsibility is entirely mine. I came into this study with a substantial background as an enrollment manager in graduate admissions. I have served on Graduate Admissions Committees and voted on applications/candidacies for admission based on a set of criteria including standardized test scores. The question of student's success and the meritocracy has plagued my mind for a long time. The notions of equity and excellence in higher education remain in the mix of complexities that institutions have to manage along with what David H. Kalsbeek of DePaul University calls the four M's of strategic enrollment management: Mission, Margin, Market and Merit. Who succeeds as a result of hard work? Who succeeds as a result of intelligence and preparedness? Who is advantaged by educational policies and who is left behind? In the United States decentralized system of education standardized tests assume greater importance as they become the arbiter of developed abilities and aptitude. They measure or purport to measure the individual's propensity for success or merit. When a pattern of achievement is discernable along socio-economical, racial, and geo-political lines, it underscores the question about other social determinants of educability.

This is a simultaneous and incremental exercise in qualitative research using the constructivist frame: issues emerge, grow and die as observed in the research process. Consequently, questions are rephrased and focus is adjusted as new and progressive data emerge. Data were collected using multiple resources, interview, and analyses of archival tests, conferences papers, private memos, private correspondence, newspaper clippings, and published documents. There was an on-going effort to substantiate interpretations or clarify different meanings.

I also employed the method of explanation building. This is an alternative or supplement to pattern matching. Here, the researcher does not start out with a theory to be investigated. He or she merely attempts to induce theory from case examples chosen to represent diversity on some dependent variable. “A list of possible causes of the dependent variable is constructed through literature review and brainstorming, and information is gathered on each cause for each selected case. The researcher then inventories causal attributes, which are common to all cases, including cases high and low on the dependent variable. The researcher comes to a provisional conclusion that the differentiating attributes are the significant causes, while those common to all cases are not.” (Yin, 2003)<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion/Possible Implications**

The challenge of this undertaking is to understand further the ideas, concepts, cognitive processes, language (literal and non-literal), which help to construct rationales for policy proposals. The main focus is the concept of meritocracy. It is my settled conviction that this will go beyond the validation of what is known in the field and open up new avenues for intervention in matters that shape our democracy and civil society. I hope to extend the notions of meritocracy across the frontiers of social and class reproduction, to see whether it works or not, whether it is real or mythological, fair or unjust, whose interest is served and whose is severed. I hope to deconstruct the conceptions and enactments of this ideology as it relates to the structure and distribution of opportunity.

The larger scheme of social justice for the disadvantaged, poor, and minority in our educational system will be served with ardent exposition around the subject of reform and renewal by first validating the knowledge and consciousness of self that the disadvantaged students bring into the school system. It is my fervent desire that a message of hope will

permeate the aftermath of this work and provide munitions for both offense and defense in the race to succeed by merit.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Bodgan, R., & Bilken, S. (1982) *Qualitative Research for Education: An introduction to theory and Methods* Boston: Allyn & Bacon

<sup>2</sup> Rickman, H. P. (1961) ed. Wilhelm Dilthey Pattern & meaning in history: thoughts on history & society New York: Harper and Row

<sup>3</sup> Stake, R. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>4</sup> Labov, W. (1997) Some further steps in narrative analysis *The Journal of Narrative and Life History*. Available online at <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov/sfs.html>

<sup>5</sup> Riessman, C. (1993) *Narrative Analysis* Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications

<sup>6</sup> Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967) *Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience* Pp. 12-44 in J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press. Classic work focused on the importance of evaluative statements in first-person narratives. Available online at <http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/Labov&Waletzky.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, D.T., Fiske, D.W. (1959). Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix *Psychological Bulletin* 56(2), 81-105

<sup>8</sup> Denzin, N.K. (1978) *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill

<sup>9</sup> Jick, T.D. (1983) *Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action*. In J. Van Maanen (Ed.), *Qualitative Methods Beverly Hills: Sage*

<sup>10</sup> Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981) *Effective Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

<sup>11</sup> Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989) *Judging the quality of fourth generation evaluation* in Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. *Fourth Generation Evaluation* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>12</sup> Yin, R.K. (2003) *Applications of Case Study Research* Thousand Oaks: Sage

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Review of Literature**

Much ink has been spilt and many pages filled with scholastic ruminations about education, its purposes, delivery, popularization, and challenges. These are presented by the cascading tides of scientific, industrial, and technological revolutions in western civilizations and indeed the world over. They include thoughts and resources, committed to reforming education and regulating formal institutions (schools) by means of official and informal policies.

The history of education is replete with ethical and philosophical debates and epistemological variances. It wavers between educations' anchoring purposes of fostering sacred or secular knowledge, serving the leisured minority or the laboring majority, all along the continuum of the conservative, liberal and radical ideological viewpoints, tinkering and faltering towards and at times away from social progress. Lewis Mayhew sums up the debates on the functions and purposes of education as:

Generally, three principal philosophic visions have over the years, been differentially labeled although they are substantively similar. The first is an almost platonic postulant that there are eternal truths and the quest for them should be the mission of higher education. The second or relativist view holds that truth is emergent. The last view is that schools and colleges are essentially reforming agencies constantly interacting with political and social goals to reform society. Crossing these three philosophic positions is the continuum of individualism versus centralism. It is out of the interaction of the three positions and the continuum of individualism versus centralism that academic battles have been fought. (Mayhew 1970)<sup>1</sup>

The twin brand of educational discourse, the psychological and the sociological, have often been viewed disjointedly in history. An amalgamation of both was espoused by John Dewey in his *My Pedagogic Creed*,<sup>2</sup> which focuses on individual interests, albeit with a view to

locating the individual and helping him or her function within the community-at-large. Dewey believed education to be a process of socialization where schooling only represents the more formal aspects of this complex labyrinth. Life worlds and cultural experiences make up the remainder.

Plato in *The Republic* and *The laws*,<sup>3</sup> in the Greek city-states posited that education should be the business of the state to educate a select few of extraordinary abilities for public service. Albeit, the Romans and Athenians in practice devolved the sponsorship of formal education to the role of the father, education and schooling were transmitted essentially through private instruction that only the privileged and leisured minority could afford. In a true democracy, this original position has to be modified. As *Adler and Mayer* posited in their work *The Revolution in Education*, that “A truly democratic state without compulsory education at public expense would be an anomaly. Universal education is the inescapable corollary of universal suffrage.” (Adler & Mayer, 1958)<sup>4</sup> This came out when the United States was actively reacting to Sputnik. The development of individual abilities and capacities is a conduit to their roles as citizens, that is, to carrying out their civic duties in the interest of the public good.

At the turn of the twentieth century, education in the United States experienced the profound change and transformation described above. However, education, secondary and higher levels were the treasured preserve of the leisured minority comprised of elites and aristocrats. By the early 1900s, it progressed to its mass stage of expansion. Accepting many more citizens from a “developing middle class,” this expansion is concurrent with the rise of the industrial society with increasing efficiency in the means and modes of production and emergent laws abrogating child labor became popular nationally. Thus, with an increasing number of youths out of work and forbidden in most cases to work full time, they turned to educational avocation. This *mass*

*stage* reached its zenith post-World War II. It entered into its current stage of *universal access* in the 1960s when states like California enacted laws to this effect. Subsequently, *de facto* and *de jure*, education at the highest levels entered its *universal access* stage in the United States. One must note that *universal access* does not connote universal attendance. Access like opportunity is available but the choice to attend and the preparation required for successful attendance calls for individual responsibility. Here, one is confronted with the question, “what knowledge is of the most worth?” Should the business of education be to enlighten just the individual or the group? To which end should education be directed: personal or communal?

### **Social Ladder and Specializations**

The social ladder is a metaphor used to depict the various strata (classes) in a society. Whether one’s perception of the *ladder* is vertical, horizontal, or inclined, its essence is that, the various rungs correspond to distinct yet relational social categories. Whenever this metaphor is employed to describe a community of humans, the obvious sociological questions that crop up are: how do individuals ascend and descend the rungs of the ladder? Is mobility fluid or frozen? Is the opportunity to move from one rung to the other equitably distributed? In a planned democracy, the goal is to allow for maximum mobility across the populace, with proportional opportunity geared towards all, even so practice often falls short of this lofty goal.

Division of labor and functional specializations are as old as modern society. Taking full advantage of the finite nature of individual capacities and the variety in individual abilities, modern governments attempt to align certain skills and talents with corresponding responsibilities and tasks, for the society’s immediate good and posterity. The opportunity distribution methods that governments employ tend to vary on the position or *function* and are oftentimes in harmony with prevailing socio-economic situations. To further this discussion, I

highlight two of them here. The first method is the *laissez faire* doctrine. It implies a hands-off approach where mobility or advancement is guided by fair competition and market forces. The second method is the meritocracy policy. Here, hard work and aptitude are measured by standardized tests and candidates are sorted into learned professions based on their test scores as amplitudes for success. The problem that inheres in both methods is that success is skewed in the direction of the aristocrats. The poor and marginal groups in our society always lag behind the privileged and advantaged, creating an ever widening achievement gap. Policies and laws leveled at addressing this gap have been controversial and meager in success. (Anderson, & Byrne, 2004)<sup>5</sup> argued that desegregation of schools by the landmark United States Supreme Court decision of 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* and subsequent integrations have scored major political points but have scarcely succeeded in closing the achievement, socio-economic gaps between the poor, and the rich, blacks and whites.

### **Meritocracy and Opportunity Distribution in a Democracy:**

Aristotle's suggestion is that wealth and honor be distributed according to virtue. The most virtuous people make the most significant contributions to the life of the city, so they have the right to the greatest honors...Distributive justice' in this sense is circular and reifies the status quo, but Aristotle argues that he is not in favor of reinforcing unjust aristocracy rather in preserving the best of it. (Nicomachean Ethics Study Guide, ND)<sup>6</sup>

Longoria in his doctoral dissertation in the department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, College Park found that Americans are ambivalent in their views towards meritocracy.

They believe that hard work and intelligence should be rewarded, but they also support inherited wealth, seniority pay, and the distribution of educational opportunities through the market, where the wealthy can purchase superior opportunities for their children. He also found that Americans often consider items other than merit to be legitimate reasons for non egalitarian modes of distribution. (Longoria, 2006)<sup>7</sup>

Longoria's last finding affirms Hochschild's<sup>8</sup> qualitative study on distributive justice, which found that the dominant patterns among both the rich and the poor respondents are egalitarianism in the socializing and political domains and differentiation in the economic domain. Americans are non egalitarian in the economic domain but egalitarian in the social and political domains. One of the greatest challenges to democracy is the structure and the distribution of opportunity. There is a complex relationship between the rights of the individual within a pluralistic, democratic society vis-à-vis the persuasion of the dominant or mainstream group. This struggle between the majority and minority interests, advantaged and disadvantaged, privileged and marginalized groups often requires regulation and intervention from the government. Although some take the Adam Smith position that in a free market economy, the "invisible hands," a self-regulating mechanism of free markets should not be tampered with. Others take the Keynesian position which subscribes to governmental interventions such as bailouts and other fiscal and monetary regulatory policies. Policies aimed at leveling the gaps between the two are often constructed in the ideology of meritocracy. Here, individual ability and capacity for success is the arbiter of distributed opportunity. Can there be such a thing as "equal opportunity" in practice in any society? In the pre-industrial individualistic United States, opportunity was shaped by the phenomenon of manifest destiny and the quest for new frontiers by stalwart individuals "pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps." Therefore, public perception supports and justifies individual accumulation of wealth and its subsequent transmittal and ascription to heirs or other beneficiaries.

At one end, Communism portends to be classless and abandons the notion of private property and individual accumulation of wealth. Instead, it supports ultra-egalitarian terrain, where ownership of the means of production is the exclusive preserve of the State. The results

here are also flawed because a hierarchy of sorts exists based on the division of labor. In my opinion, absent utopia, opportunity can scarcely be equal in this or any society because of the transfers of capital in all forms; economic, social and cultural from forebear to progeny. What is more important for a nation? To be economically viable with *laissez faire* competition for individual property and goods regulated by market forces, or to be group conscious so all citizens have a fair shot at prosperity and social welfare? Where the latter is non-existent, the government should provide a mechanism for leveling the playing field between the haves and the have-nots. The history of the United States supports the latter. There are several historical evidences to support this assertion such as the enactments of the Civil War pension fund in 1862, President Roosevelt's new deal era, its Works Progress Administration, (WPA) and the Social Security Act of 1935. (Library of Congress, 2003)<sup>9</sup> "President Johnson's Great Society and its poverty eradication thrust of 1960s". (Califano Jr., 1999)<sup>10</sup>

Will French in his volume *Education and Social Dividends* proposed a planned democratic society, that is, one of "proportional opportunity" replacing equality with proportionality. He posited that in order to enact this, society had to commit to the primacy of social welfare over economic prosperity. Planning a society where opportunity is proportional to individual abilities and capacities rests on the caveat of its survival and advancement. (French, 1933)<sup>11</sup> Who will foot the bill? Who will pay the costs of leveling the playing field? Who will fund schooling? Who will design education to assuage existing inequalities and enhance socio-economic mobility? The answers to these questions represent the perennial struggles of policy makers and power brokers.

Defining merit in meritocracy is often problematic. What is merit? What are the considerations in making a distributive decision about a particular opportunity? How can we

accurately gauge a person's future performance based on a quality observed and displayed in the present? Since our judgment of a person's ability to do the job does not take into account the opportunities a person has in acquiring the skills to do the job, therefore, meritocracy rewards a person we hope will perform well. Hence, we judge *developed* abilities without considering the possibilities of developing those abilities in those who are not chosen. Others like Longoria will argue that "meritocracy does not seek to make dumb people smart. It seeks rather to give smart people without the economic and social resources to succeed, the resources to take advantage of their talents and contribute to society as much as their natural talent allows." I argue that there are two fallacies in the preceding case. Firstly, the motivation for meritocrats is the contribution of their talents to society. Most meritocrats are lured and fueled by personal ambition for recognition, status, power and not the thirst for civil service. Contextually, the end justifies the means. This is reminiscent of Lemann's "*Mandarins*," a term that refers to "modern versions of Platonic guardians, or natural aristocrats: scholars, selected on merit, elaborately trained, indifferent to material things, who move easily back and forth from the university to government occupying the highest position in society." (Lemann, 1999)

Secondly, meritocracy does not intend to make the dumb smart, but it identifies him or her as dumb or retarded and in many cases impedes their progress and suppresses desires. The unintended consequence of the meritocracy is that by charting future performance on present aptitude, it charts a clear and compelling case absent any amelioration or capacity building. Cognitive psychologists theorize about *late bloomers* and it is not accidental that the majority of underachieving students by far are from the throngs of the poor and minority groups. (Paul, 2000<sup>12</sup> & Rescorla 2005)<sup>13</sup>

## Policy Making and Power Polity

To quote Thomas Dye<sup>14</sup> “Policy is whatever the government decides to do or not to do.” Implicit in this rather simplistic definition is the salient fact that the absence of policy represents a policy position. Policy is inextricably linked with politics and power relations to the extent that policy is usually a means to a political end or in some cases the end itself. One can argue with cause that certain policies and their rationales are altruistic and devoid of the direct personal interests of its makers, and such policies are often fueled by ideals, democracy, proportionality of opportunity, anti-discrimination instruments etc. However, most can only declare, “tongue in cheek,” that a policy can exist without stakeholders, that is, in a vacuum. Policy in praxis is the very basis for action and regulations adopted, imposed or tacitly acquiesced, on a field of human actors. “He who speaks of power speaks of dominion and all dominions presume the existence of a dominated mass.” (Bakunin, ND)<sup>15</sup> Whether one subscribes to the view above of a notable anarchist or rejects it as unsound, we are hard pressed to denounce it as entirely bogus. The manner of ascent to leadership is at the crux of the debate. If we elect or select our leaders through popular choice as in a democracy, we do so with votes, which are “representative” of the majority of the people, as in Rousseau’s *Contrat Social*. He posited that tenures of the constituted authority are revocable and its terms confined within rigid limits. The fact remains that comparatively if the leadership emerges from a revolution and ascends to power by strength of their knowledge and ideas, regardless of the prevailing will of the majority, they also constitute a class of ruling elites. (Rousseau, 1762)<sup>16</sup>

In this vein, it is important to consider Robert Michels’ *iron law of oligarchy*. Although his thesis below is dated and concretized by political parties in Europe, the basic tenets apply to present organizations and the validity of some of its questions is perennial and broadly applicable.

The principle of oligarchy in democratic parties is to be found in the technical indispensability of leadership...oligarchy depends upon what we may term the psychology of organization itself. It is the organization, which gives birth of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators, who says organizations says oligarchy. (Michels, 2001)<sup>17</sup>

Michels further posited that the formation of oligarchies within the various forms of democracy is an outcome of organic necessity, which affects any organization regardless of its ideological underpinnings. Elites or oligarchs by their nature slowly but inevitably assume the “aristocratic spirit” and in many cases take on the aristocratic forms against which at the outset they struggled fiercely. The succession of elites is a continuous process of intermixture, the old elements incessantly, attracting, absorbing and assimilating the new. The Mutualist (Joseph Pierre Proudhon<sup>18</sup> rejects *a priori* the notion of government and Jean Jacques Rousseau<sup>19</sup> and Guy de Maupassant<sup>20</sup> express in varying degrees of uniformity that it is the nature of man to be guided, it is natural to have the majority governed by the minority, especially when we consider the amorphous nature of the masses. Durkheim’s division of labor and specialization of functions helps us to make sense of and organize the fragmented nature of life in a society. Jefferson referred to the oligarchs, as the natural aristocracy based on talents not socio-biological ascriptions. W.E.B. Dubois<sup>21</sup> calls them the talented tenth, necessary for elevation of the rest of the mass. This iron law subsumes the reality that democracy, government for and by the people can only be enacted through the framework of oligarchs, a select group. Shall we not question then the natural instinct, which leads members of the possessing classes (aristocracy) to transmit and bequest to their children the wealth that they have amassed? Will not oligarchs in the same vein utilize their immense influence in order to secure for their offspring the succession of the offices, which they themselves now hold? This in fact is a major criticism of Marx’s Historical

Materialism, the perpetuity of ownership of the means of production by the ruling class via intergenerational transfers.

It is widely accepted that the United States is a political democracy, the electoral process and the participation of United States citizens in this process demonstrates it. “Notwithstanding the governance at the policy and implementation levels remains ironically an aristocracy. (Batzell, 1964)<sup>22</sup>, (Domhoff, 2000)<sup>23</sup>, (Bowles, 2005)<sup>24</sup> Aristocracy: rule by the best, is not to be confused with oligarchy rule by the few, or plutocracy rule by the wealthy. The establishment or the ruling class comprises of those born into affluent families, the upper class, whose pedigree and kinship occupy, its exclusive social clubs, corporations, and institutional think tanks of policy makers.

Batzell in his book *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* cited Alexis De Tocqueville, specifically his treatise on the establishment. “Unless the ruling class (Aristocracy) finds a way of assimilating new blood from the lower classes into their ranks, they risk alienating the populace and inciting rebellion and ultimately a regime change.” The French nobility is quoted as an example. From the feudal system of the middle ages, the designated serfs could scarcely aspire to the roles of vassals, talk much less of overlords or suzerains. Rigid social control and lack of social mobility are the chief ingredients in social revolts and upheavals. De Tocqueville singles out the English establishment as the only one in Europe that has a modicum of understanding the value of assimilating people from the lower classes into its ranks as a way of ensuring its survival to date. “When the establishment bars the doors of initiation into its ranks to people other than those ascribe by hereditary, it effectively becomes a Caste.” (De Tocqueville, 1888)<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony revolves around a consciousness of the world that puts forward a moral intellectual structure in the relationship of

the leaders and the masses, where a common language and a shared perception of life blossoms. The state becomes an educator, this consciousness moves from the particular to the universal and the masses, thus empowered become the custodians of good sense, not common sense. Gramsci like De Tocqueville deplores the closed nature of the ruling class, a condition, which necessitates the battle for positioning.

The former ruling classes were essentially conservative in the sense that they did not tend to construct an organic passage from other classes into their own, i.e. to enlarge their class technically and ideologically. Their conception was that of a closed caste. The bourgeoisie poses itself as an organism in continuous movement capable of absorbing the entire society. ... The entire function of the state has been transformed; the state has become an 'educator' ... (Gramsci SPN. 1971)<sup>26</sup>

He further asserts that hegemony or the supremacy of the dominant group can be manifested in two ways based on the relationship between the dominant and the dormant groups. When it is cordial, the former asserts a moral and intellectual leadership but when the relationship is strained, the former seeks to dominate and eliminate the latter even with the use of force. In light of the foregoing, I argue that opportunity structure albeit subject to individual agencies is akin to the normal distribution or the bell curve. There is limited room on the left, wide girth in the middle and a comparatively limited room on the right. One could say that the normal distribution "bell" curve is the vertebrae column of opportunity distribution. Whether or not meritocracy or social ascription is the preferred method of social mobility, there is more room in the middle than there is at the top and each time that the top approaches saturation point, it is rectified by a corresponding hardening or ratcheting up of high standards and greater hurdles in ascent.

One may rebut the foregoing by saying that in a lottery system, the element of chance or happenstance gives a modicum of equity to marginalized or disadvantaged groups. That is, a chance that the individual capacity and ability will transcend social status and circumstance.

Conversely, the privileged can invest more in the lottery ballots to improve their odds, develop abilities and expand capacities via education and experience. Policy makers and inhabitants at the top of the social ladder in a *credentialed society* guide entrance ramps into their folds with robust defenses, lest the new entrants meritorious or beneficiaries of affirmative action, increase marginal costs, water down their core values and diminish gains. In a saturation point scenario, qualified astrophysicists will be employed as parking valets or taxi cab drivers. One could argue the finer points of their superb navigational skills. In my opinion, it is a serious case of *infra-dig.* (*Beyond human dignity*) as experienced in pre-Nazi Germany. It is beyond human dignity to subject such vast learning and great skills to mindless and frivolous pursuits. Conant echoed this thought in his 1948 *Education in a Divided World*. “The German experience in the decade after the war should warn us against the perils lying in wait for a nation [sic] which trains a greater number of professional men than a society can employ.”(Conant, 1948)<sup>27</sup>

Great pains are taken by leaders and policy makers, most of it covert and surreptitious to control and construct a social ladder reflective of the prevailing economic situation, following the Rawlsian utilitarian value of extending happiness to the greatest amount of people in the society. These efforts are not always successful, as they tend to compete with the leaders’ instincts for self-preservation and perpetuation of their bloodlines. In the United States, a widely acclaimed political democracy, advantage and disadvantage toward success are etched along racial, social, economic and educational statuses.

### **Educational Opportunity Distribution**

Education and schooling are long recognized as the surest pathways to upward mobility and opportunity distribution in the civilized world. (Hauser, 2002)<sup>28</sup> Education therefore represents a “public good” that maintains the best interests and the common good of all.

Governments and private corporations ought to plan carefully and invest heavily in designing and operating educational programs and institutions that provide proportional opportunity to its individual citizens. This socio-economic dialectic struggle continues and raises this question: should the municipal, state or federal government fund and control education? How can one maintain a uniform national standard and retain local control? Should funding from public sources be limited to public institutions or extended to private and parochial schools? What does the taxpayer think when polled along income lines? Not all communities have equitable distribution of resources and capital, how does one ensure that birth in a poorer community does not constitute de facto caste system? The above mentioned are some problems that plague educational policy makers and inform a major part of the rationale for this project.

### **Education Policy Formulation**

Is education a discipline? On the surface, this proposition appears to be “hairsplitting” over negligible minutiae. Albeit below the surface and at its core is the fundamental conundrum that education and educators face in juxtaposition to a democratic society. “Professionals are of necessity experts however expertise does not always connote professionalism.” (Brown, 1994)<sup>29</sup> This echoes the opinions of many in academe, who oppose the vast and classification-adverse field of human endeavor called education. It is my contention that many outside the field of education hold sway in educational reforms and policy enactments because of this multidisciplinary debate in education. By implication of this controversy, education writ large has long been considered *res publicus* (the people’s matter or affairs) and internationally, *res communis* (a common possession) appropriated from Hugo Grotius treatise. (Magoffin, 1916)<sup>30</sup> The policies affecting its institutions, funding, and administrations have been historically shepherded by “the laity” with expertise in fields other than education and pedagogy.

James B. Conant in his 1963<sup>31</sup> report *The Education of American Teachers* posited that education is not a discipline neither is it a science but much like medicine a practical art. To attempt classifying such a vast field of human activity directed towards practical ends was to him an impossible task. This statement engendered a lingering controversy in which many experts criticized his logic as narrow and called on semantic variances in his definitions of education, science and academic discipline. Nonetheless, his aforesaid thesis provoked enough controversy as to warrant a national conference in the same year held at Johns Hopkins University's Department of Education under the chair and host Dr. John Walton. A good deal of the report resulting from this conference on- "*is education a discipline?*"<sup>32</sup> - is occupied by semantic analyses and clarifications of meaning. Although, no consensus came out of this conference, many agreed that education: (the professional preparation of various types of education specialists and research on the processes of learning, teaching and administering) offer opportunity for various fields of studies such as history, psychology and many others. The interesting summation made by Robert Beck in his review of the conference report reflects some of Conant's underlying concerns and earlier work at the Harvard School of Education. In his tenure as President with Education Dean Henry W. Holmes and the eventual tutelage of Holmes' successor, Dean Francis T. Spaulding, Conant with cooperation from other experts and inspiration from the experiment at the University of Chicago (President Robert M. Hutchins and Prof. Charles H. Judd,) formulated a new graduate degree the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT). The MAT is a joint program administered by faculty from liberal arts and humanities and the school of education to supplant the Ed.M degree that was wholly administered by the school of education. Conant believed in the early 1930s that as research had gained in

preeminence, general discipline where being drawn into applied disciplines, for example in the study of medicine, adjoining sciences like bio-chemistry leading medical schools looked for their professors not in the ranks of those with Doctor of Medicine degrees rather among physical and organic chemists. (Conant, 1970)<sup>33</sup>

Walton, not unlike Conant, remarks that the future of the discipline of education may well rest on joint appointments of many holding rank in (general) philosophy, history, and other disciplines as well as in colleges or departments of education. He noted also that three of the participants at this conference had such joint appointments although its significance was omitted from the report. Walton wrote,

The study of education in America had not always been characterized by the present dichotomy of academic and professional concerns. Due largely to Dewey's work as early as 1896, he described the content of the discipline of education as the subject matter taught in schools, relevant information from psychology, sociology, and methods of instruction: he agreed that a concern for the practice of education is the best way of preventing academic specialist from becoming narrow. (Walton, 1971)<sup>34</sup>

In the wake of the great debate about education in the latter part of the 1950s, (that resulted from the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union); America in the guise of national defense and maintaining its superpower status turned a critical eye to its schools, educators, and the school curriculum. Conant proposed a two-pronged approach, that is, the professor of education should be of two kinds the intermediary (academic) and the clinical (professional). He created an amalgam of sorts to bridge the widening gulf between professional educators and scholars of academic (subject matter/ content specialty) disciplines in the academy. Jerome S. Bruner in his publication *The Process of Education* spoke of the two major patterns that emerged as a result of the collaboration precipitated by Sputnik. The first pattern was on developing the structure of the child's mind and the act of learning, while the second was on the logical structure

of the subject-matter disciplines themselves. He hypothesized “that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development” using the spiral curriculum. (Bruner, 1960)<sup>35</sup>

### **Education Purposes and Metaphors**

The purposes of education in a democracy are revealed in the metaphors that frame it, a preeminence of the meritocratic view. It abandons the notion that all children can learn and focuses instead on the success of the elite. Success is linked to intelligence, talent, and hard work. To begin, the purposes of education could be as broadly defined as the Deweyan viewpoint, which sees as all media, whereby culture is transmitted from one generation to another and all means whereby society is renewed or as narrowly construed as the cultivation or enlightenment of the human mind to an undefined end. Regardless of our subscribed argument, we assume the responsibility of training our minds and/or others. Education and its purposes are usually perceived and framed in cultural and linguistic metaphors. Firstly, education and the act of learning are viewed as a one dimensional process. Here, the teacher or instructor is the fount of knowledge, his students or pupils are empty vessels poised as receptacles for previously established curricula, a body of official knowledge, with a goal to reproducing this knowledge when called upon.

Secondly, education is seen as building blocks, that is, laying the foundations for comprehension and moving in Cartesian order from simpler to more complex forms but suggestive of connectivity and a cumulative trend. In reality, most students discard their memory banks upon successful completion of the end of term examinations or tests. (Bruner, 1990)<sup>36</sup>

Thirdly, education testing is viewed as a competitive sport because some of the most pervasive symbols of our culture emerge from sports. Jones, Jones and Hargrove posit that sports metaphors abound in educational testing.

Politicians, parents and educators often talk about testing using expressions such as “stepping up to the plate,” “coming up to bat,” “winning or losing,” “measuring up” or “being No. 1.” ... Nevertheless, the analogy of education as a ballgame falls short in a variety of places. Perhaps most importantly, the sports metaphor fails because education is not a game with winners and losers. Unlike sports, the purpose in education is for all of the “players” to win. In addition, schools cannot pick who is on the team and who sits out, nor can schools exclude the less athletic or the unmotivated. Educators strive for all students to be winners, but high-stakes tests required under the (NCLB) “No Child Left Behind” Act have created new categories of students and large numbers of educators and schools who will be labeled winners and losers. Each year this labeling process begins anew, and as the losers improve their performance, the bar is raised so that new categories of winners and losers can be created. (Jones, M., Jones B., & Hargrove, 2003)<sup>37</sup>

Fourthly, the school is viewed as a factory because of the industrial society. Viewed as an assembling line, increased productivity and *cookie cutter, one-size fits all* approach to training every student to perform similar tasks with equal dexterity. This metaphor is often favored by business leaders, problem solvers and efficiency experts, who often tout slogans like ratcheting up the pressure, beating last year’s goal, and the production of literate citizens.

The road to professionalism in education, accreditation and certification/licensing of teachers is laden with discontented practitioners, socially unseen and with relatively poor remunerations. “Education is not a discipline, and anyone with sufficient knowledge of a subject matter could teach.” Statements like this one cited by Arthur Brown<sup>38</sup> are commonplace even among scholars within and without the academy. Were it not for the states’ requirements of foundations and other education courses for teaching certification, many in academe particularly in the liberal arts and science would sooner extricate and discard education programs than deal with them. Amidst the quagmire that confronts educators, an allegory comes to mind, one of a

cooking utensil, blackened, tarred with soot from the heat of the fire; it takes all the heat preparing the meal; boiling water, soup and other more fanciful menu. It is often sullied with spillovers and stained with burnt crust in the course of its travails but when it is time to dine, the utensil cannot be seen at the dinner table lest it ruins the tablecloth and/or embarrasses the host. I must admit that the lots of cooking utensils like those of educators are much improved and they may now join the dinner party albeit in tentative capacities.

### **Education Reforms**

Stephen Brookfield writes in *Reclaiming Critical Thinking as Ideology Critique*, that we often operate in the midst of ideology without ever knowing it. (Brookfield, 2007) <sup>39</sup> Historically, the philosophy of education like *political thoughts* breaks along distinct ideological viewpoints, ranging from the conservative right to the radical left. The history of American urban education (public schools) and the struggles to reform its curriculum, administration, and the influences of interest groups have been the subject of many scholarly books in the last century. The conservative viewpoint seeks to preserve the dominant culture or the established order. Attempts to revamp the status quo pose threats to the conservative position. The liberal position accepts the dominant culture with broad-mindedness. That is, it is open to reform or new propositions for change. Lastly, the radical position is often critical of or dissatisfied with the status quo. This viewpoint proposes alternate solutions and denounces the conservative viewpoint. The radical view is often touted as an extremist standpoint because of its preoccupation with denouncing the established order. All of these positions represent separate ideologies informed by different logics and schools of thought. The conservative, liberal and radical positions are sometimes quite distinct and almost indistinguishable.

On the subject of meritocracy, the conservatives often toe the line of excellence and advocate return to pristine and high order of elite selection. The liberals support the expansion of opportunity to break up group cleavages and the radicals want meritocracy to resolve all of the existing inequalities. These positions vary by degrees of interconnectedness and disparity, which is similar to the relationship between freedom and classlessness. Conant stated in his 1940 speech entitled *Education for a Classless Society* that “Russia is classless not free, England is free not classless, and Germany is neither classless nor free.”

The cyclical nature of the issues in the struggles for the American school reforms and the prevailing social contexts in which these issues are raised, make one wonder if lessons are ever drawn from the antecedents of history. The issues that existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century resurface now in the twenty-first century, albeit under new terminologies or frames of reference. For example, the concept of “school leaving,” is now “school dropout.” Also, “differentiated curriculum” which emerged in the 1840s, is now “tracking” in the twenty-first century and the list goes on. Socially and historically, we tend to revisit and/or reinvent the same issues and themes over long periods of time. In the late nineteen-century, broad strokes of pedagogical reviews had been etched by the deliberations of such groups as the Committee of Ten led by Charles Eliot of Harvard University and later on the Harris-led, Committee of Fifteen. The formers’ main thrust was to shape or not to shape education by the destination of the individual child. A college-bound child should have a special curriculum that is intense and different from that of the factory-bound child. Who should decide the destination of the child? Are not the poor and the minority children thus predestined? These were some of the underlying questions, which framed the debates over school reforms in that era. They still preoccupy the current issues of social justices and dispositions in the teaching profession. I reviewed all three

viewpoints from some of the extant literature on school reforms and pedagogic revisions. (Ravitch, 2001, Cummings, 1957, 1990, and Tyack, 1974)

Echoing the conservative position, Diane Ravitch observed that a decided split was recorded amongst educators, which is represented by a shift in “stratification” of an “academic curriculum” for the college bound children and an alternative curriculum for those who were not destined for college. Ms. Ravitch posits vis-à-vis the educational progressives (reformers) that their movement was plagued by “anti-intellectualism” in a bid to provide a democratic response to meet the needs of the individual child. Progressive reforms appeared with a veneer of rapidity bringing in their wake, grave and adverse consequences for the same students they sought to liberate or empower through education. She argues that the public school lost its compass and had set adrift on a tragic course when it abandoned what she referenced as “the academic curriculum” or liberal education. Basically, it is a systematic study of language and literature, science, mathematics, history, the arts and foreign languages. These studies convey important knowledge and skills cultivate aesthetic imagination and induce critical and reflective thinking about the world the students live in. (Ravitch, 2001)<sup>40</sup>

Cremin equally decries these curricular reforms albeit from a slightly different perspective. His views depict the liberal position. He accepts the status quo, that is the liberal arts or Ravitch’s academic curriculum but he does not denounce reforms or popularization. He posited that the popularization of schooling (American urban education) is a crisis that exacts a balancing act of the tremendous demands that Americans have made on their schools and colleges. “Constructing curricula that take into account the extraordinary diversity of America’s young people; designing institutions where well-prepared teachers can teach under supportive conditions and where all students can be motivated and assisted to develop their talents to the

fullest and lastly providing adequate and appropriate financing and sustaining such institutions.”  
(Cremin, 1990)<sup>41</sup>

Cremin believed that popularization had been a failure and he cited the reports of various commissions, which said that popularization brought with it declensions and degradation. His position was not critical of progressive education writ large; rather, he demonstrated what happened to the various implementations of progressive education.

The themes of protest, then, were many and various, “progressive education” meant different things to different progressives as each charted his course to the pedagogical promise land.” Lack of cohesiveness and the diversity of the various factions diluted the goals of the movement. The educational foundations of society are being gradually eroded by mediocrity. This has brought about an annulment of the formative powers of reformers in support of popularization. Their abandonment of general education or what some have referred to as the new basics, the integrated core, or the liberal Arts in favor of narrow specializations or crass vocationalism. (Cremin 1957)<sup>42</sup>

On the subject of reforms, Tyack proffers the radical viewpoint. He declares in sum that the search for the “one best system” has ill-served the pluralistic character of the American society. Americans have often perpetuated social injustice by blaming the victim, particularly in the case of institutionalized racism.” The imposition or fight to maintain the liberal education (with its humanistic foundation on the bedrock of Western Civilization) does not take into account the cultural particulars of the immigrant Chinese, the immigrants from eastern Europe or for that matter the Blacks in America. He infuses into the school reform conversation the role of politics and power.

Reformers argued whether it was more democratic to teach all students the same subjects or to tailor curriculum to individuals. What is the best way to “Americanize” immigrants or educate them? Is it by forced-fed assimilation or by honoring their ethnic heritages? The knowledge that is tested in the quest for meritocracy is not the pluralistic knowledge of all the

school children but a prescribed official knowledge descending from the mainstream and dominant culture.

Talks about keeping the school out of politics have often served to obscure the actual alignment of power and patterns of privilege. Tyack's position on reform was a closer alignment with the progressive education rather than the conservative viewpoint of a uniform curriculum based on the "liberal arts" or what he called, the one best system. He posited that failure has been systemic not idiosyncratic. The poor have borne the brunt of these reforms. He tempers this radical stance by admitting that there are heartening exceptions to these assertions. For example, "the quest for centralization (one best system) was fueled by the best conscious motives. There was nothing dubious or clandestine about the process. He claimed that the search for conspiracies or villains will be a fruitless occupation." (Tyack, 1974)<sup>43</sup>

## **Pedagogy and Knowledge Production**

By examining the intricacies of knowledge and how it is produced, we can assert that official and privileged knowledge is culturally derived and socially inscribed. Which knowledge is of the greatest value in a meritocracy? Knowledge production is susceptible to shifting cycles of theories and social contexts. For example, post-structuralism, psychoanalytic readings of contemporary culture, media studies, cultural studies, deconstructionism and narratives were dominant ways of making meaning in the fields of social and human sciences. Thereafter, the following emerged: ethnography, biography, portraiture, content analysis, gender studies, action research, constructivism and critical theory. As time progresses in its eternal flight, some of these approaches are waxing, some are waning and others are being incorporated into existing frameworks. Knowledge production is dynamic and evolving. It devolves power relations in any social context to those whose viewpoints or visions of the world are considered the mainstream.

It disfranchises the minority whose stances are often subjugated or marginalized. “These interactions between the different epistemologies inform the ontological stance of groups within any given society.” (Kincheloe, 2005)<sup>44</sup> Correspondingly knowledge follows a shifting cycle of standpoints, contexts, and epistemologies. Some are disparate and others recurrent. However, they are unfolding and unveiling better-informed individuals and hopefully more useful contributors to the chain of knowledge production. Knowledge is both finite and ephemeral and as such subject to anachronism. The existence of any universal or absolute meanings, whether textual or spoken, is questionable. The primary medium for communicating and meaning-making is language. Language comprises literal and non-literal elements such as the spoken and the written word; codes of articulation of individual, tropes, and collective experiences (life worlds).

In relating all of the above to pedagogy, the common denominator in research is the quest for meaning. The best meaning often comes from an integration of the whole from its parts. One can make the argument that the curriculum is really inside the students in terms of how they experience the events that they encounter. However, students can have incorrect information or misconceptions of events. How does the teacher build on these falsehoods? Is misconception not in fact an alternate conception? Thus, the hermeneutic circle of regenerative dialectics “both / and” continues *ad infinitum*. Knowledge is both generalizeable and transposable.

“Structures of social knowledge comprise of human agency and theories and the latter need to be tested or verified or refined so that we can understand the world.” (Philips & Burbules, 2000)<sup>45</sup> Inherent in this assumption is the fact that knowledge is at best conjectural and absolute truth is impractical. Thus, evidence established in research is always imperfect and fallible. This stance is evidenced in Sewell’s summation: “Structures I suggest are not reified categories we can invoke to explain the inevitable shape of social life. To invoke structures as I

defined them here is to call for a critical analysis of the dialectical interactions through which humans shape their history.” (Sewell, 1992)<sup>46</sup> Therefore, in the foregoing context, how can one accurately predict giftedness in learning without privileging dominant curriculum? Is there room in meritocracy framework for “multiple intelligences” as proposed by Howard Gardner?

### **Intelligence and Cognition: innate versus developed abilities**

The field of educational psychology (like other disciplines that deal with human cognition) has a rupture in its approach to theory. There is the formal, mechanistic and positivistic approach and the post-formal relativistic, constructivist, and critical approach. In the former, knowledge is objective and universal, determined by technical rationality, based on ‘science’ and devoid of contextual or socio-cultural variances. The assessment and evaluation of this formal body of knowledge is also inscribed with reductionist prescriptions. This remains a largely held view in the field of education that invokes intelligence as a property of the individual mind, its capacity to absorb new information, retain, recall, and apply its store of information in various circumstances at varying speeds. Humanists see the mind as muscle to be furnished, flexed and disciplined through a systematic study of structured curriculum. This is in part the underlying premise of standardized testing movement, to test for general aptitude and ability to learn. Contrary to form, positivistic knowledge possesses the ability to morph into new forms when debunked or challenged. For example, overtime, the field of eugenics evolved into genetics in the face of vociferous criticisms from the controversy surrounding voluntary sterilization of individuals below average IQs in Virginia: the case of Carrie Buck (Black, 2003)<sup>47</sup>.

Also the formal approach to theory is laced with power politics, mainstream ideology, and a hegemonic agenda. Post formal thought on the contrary features comprehension of the

relativistic nature of knowledge, the acceptance of contradictions, and the integration of contradictions into existing canons. Its methods and assumptions can be analyzed critically, questioned and reexamined repeatedly. Knowledge is transient and subject to anachronism. The post-formal approach consists of evolving and dynamic constructions that take into account contextual subjectivity, individuation, and marginal or subjugated stances.

The notion that intelligence is not an intrinsic quality that a human being possesses rather a social and material distribution that he or she acquires via interaction and activity is quite revolutionary. This claim takes proponents of eugenics and social Darwinists to task on the issue of intrinsic individual intellectual endowment and genetic superiority. Albeit, Roy Pea<sup>48</sup> posits that cognition is something a human does and not the acts of designed objects. Pea's point delineates between solitary intelligence and distributed intelligence. This is akin to the vital logical movement of individuals, which can be facilitated by good teachers and by entry into Lev Vygotsky's<sup>49</sup> zone of proximal development (ZPD) where students learn by association with skilled others.

Pea's premise is sound because the mind rarely works alone when doing or practicing cognition. It always works in conjunction and consortium with artifacts, persons, and environments; natural or artificial. Meaning-making is a confluence of activity enabled by the individual agent and the surrounding resources. The method used by individuals to appropriate resources in the environment is of considerable interest. The notion that an individual is unable to learn because he or she is mentally weak by default of race or social class finds a new explanation. The presence or absence of the "cultural capital" and 'artifactual' resources necessary to realize intelligence in their respective environments or activities become pertinent.

If intelligence is a genetic transfer absent any individual effort or cultivation, then schooling, indeed education could serve no ameliorative purpose.

One could also argue like Kruger that intelligence is a matter of perception and self-assessment relative to others. “Like the inhabitants of Garrison Keillor's (1985) fictional community of Lake Wobegone,” most people appear to believe that their skills and abilities are above average. A series of studies have revealed that when people compare themselves with their peers, they focus egocentrically on their own skills and insufficiently take into account the skills of the comparison group or vice-versa. This tendency engenders the often documented above-average effect in domains in which absolute skills tend to be high but produces a reliable below-average effect in domains in which absolute skills tend to be low (Studies 1 and 2). “In Study 3, cognitive load exacerbated these biases, suggesting that people "anchor" on their assessment of their own abilities and insufficiently "adjust" to take into account the skills of the comparison group. These results suggest that the tendency to see oneself as above average may not be as ubiquitous as once thought.” (Kruger, 1999)<sup>50</sup> Why is the achievement gap in our schools strongly correlated with geo-political groups, racial groups and socio-economic status?

The history of United States schools is rich in structural variety and ownership, from public, tax-assisted institutions to proprietary, religious, and privately funded schools. The complexities intensify with the growth in number and diversity of their enrollees. The challenges posed to school operations by shifts in culture, the roles of the federal, state and local governing bodies are the subjects of the next chapter. These three levels of administration, with intercepting lines of responsibility and interests, sometimes complementary and at other times in conflict all on a scale of centralization and decentralization. The roles of elites and experts in our democracy oscillate between standardized nationalism and enlightened provincialism. Since the discourse on

meritocracy sometimes take its origins from the distribution of mass opportunity, it stands to reason that it seeks the aristocracy of talents from all provinces but with a national goal in mind. Therefore, it is essential that its policies have uniformity and national standards. The struggle that ensues in this enterprise is inherent inequality in the distribution of resources both human and material. To enforce standardization and free competition amongst school children, there should be a conversation about upgrading and equalizing the qualities of schools. In the next chapter, I traced the origins of the common school, a uniquely American institution, and locate within its history the evolving roles of the federal and state governments. We will also look at the events: domestic and international that have shaped the structure of our institutions of learning and the reports from communities of experts that inspire school reforms and demand in alternating sequence the pursuit of excellence and equity.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mayhew L. (1974) *The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education* Jossey-Bass Inc.
- <sup>2</sup> John Dewey (1897) *My Pedagogic Creed* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- <sup>3</sup> Plato, (360 B.C.E.) *The Republic*, transl. Jowett, B. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>  
Retrieved on May 20, 2007
- <sup>4</sup> Adler, M. J., Mayer, M. (1958) *The Revolution in Education* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- <sup>5</sup> Anderson, J., Byrne, D.N. (2004) *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*. Hoboken, NJ. Wiley Place of Publication:
- <sup>6</sup> Nicomachean Ethics Study Guide, ND Retrieved on 11/02/2007  
<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/section5.rhtml>
- <sup>7</sup> Longoria, R. (2006) Doctoral Dissertation *Meritocracy and Americans' Views on Distributive Justice* Baltimore: University of Maryland, College Park
- <sup>8</sup> Hochschild's, J. (1981) *American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard university Press
- <sup>9</sup> Library of Congress (2003) retrieved on 05/12/2007  
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/newdeal/newdeal.html>
- <sup>10</sup> Califano Jr., J.A. What Was Really Great About The Great Society: The truth behind the conservative myths October 1999 *Washington Monthly* Retrieved on 05/12/2007  
<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9910.califano.html>
- <sup>11</sup> French, W. (1935) *Education and Social Dividends* New York : Macmillan
- <sup>12</sup> Paul, R. (2000). Predicting outcomes of early expressive language delay: Ethical implications. In D.V.M. Bishop & L.B. Leonard (Eds.), *Speech and language impairments in children: Causes, characteristics, intervention and outcome* (pp. 195-209) Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis
- <sup>13</sup> Rescorla, L. (2005). Age 13 language and reading outcomes in late-talking toddlers. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 48, 459-471.
- <sup>14</sup> Dye Thomas (1984) *Understanding Public Policy* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- <sup>15</sup> Trans. from (ND) Bakunin, *L'Empire Knouto-Germanique et la Révolution sociale*, ed. cit., vol. ii, p. 126.
- <sup>16</sup> Rousseau, J. J. (1762) *Contrat Social ou Principes du Droit Politique* Amsterdam: Marc & Michel Rey
- <sup>17</sup> Michels, Robert. (2001) *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* Kitchener, Ontario, Canada: Batoche Books

- 
- <sup>18</sup> Proudhon, J.P. Transl. by Robinson, J.B. (1923) *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* London: Freedom Press pp. 293-294.
- <sup>19</sup> Rousseau, J. J. (1762) *Contrat Social ou Principes du Droit Politique* Amsterdam: Marc & Michel Rey
- <sup>20</sup> Guy de Maupassant quotes". [ThinkExist.com Quotations Online](http://einstein/quotes/guy_de_maupassant/) 1 Mar. 2007
- <sup>21</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, (1903) "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* New York
- <sup>22</sup> Baltzell, E.D. (1964) *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* New York: Vintage Books
- <sup>23</sup> Domhoff, G. W. (2002). *Who Rules America?* (Fourth Edition) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- <sup>24</sup> Bowles, S. Ed. (2005) *Unequal Choices: family background and economic success* NJ: Princeton University Press
- <sup>25</sup> De Tocqueville, A. translated by Henry Reeve, D.C.L. (1888). *The State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789 and the causes, which led to that event also known as the ancient regime and the revolution* On-line Books: <http://www.geocities.com/danielmacryan/ancientregime.pdf>
- <sup>26</sup> Hoare, Q., Nowell Smith, G., Eds. Trans. (1971) *SPN: Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- <sup>27</sup> Conant, J.B. (1948) *Education in a Divided World* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press
- <sup>28</sup> Hauser, R. M., (2002) *Meritocracy, Cognitive Ability, and the Sources of Occupational Success* Center for Demography and Ecology Department of Sociology Madison: University of Wisconsin
- <sup>29</sup> Brown, A (1994) *What's in a Name?* Response to "Revitalizing the Idea of Vocation in Teaching, Philosophy of Education Retrieved on 05/14/2007  
[http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/94\\_docs/BROWN.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/94_docs/BROWN.HTM)
- <sup>30</sup> Magoffin, D.D.R (1916) Transl. *Freedoms of the Seas: or the rights which belong to the Dutch to take part in East Indian Trade.* A dissertation by Grotius Hugo 1633 London: Oxford University Press
- <sup>31</sup> Conant, J. B. (1963) *The Education of American Teachers* New York: McGraw-Hill
- <sup>32</sup> Walton, J., Kuethe, J.L. (1963) *The Discipline of Education* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press
- <sup>33</sup> Conant, J. B. (1970) *My Several Lives: Memoirs of a Social Inventor* New York: Harper & Row
- <sup>34</sup> Walton, J. (1971) Clichés and Metaphors in the Study of Education *The School Review, Vol. 80, No. 1* pp. 76-85
- <sup>35</sup> Bruner, J. S. (1960) *The Process of Education* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

- 
- <sup>36</sup> Bruner, J. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
- <sup>37</sup> Jones, M. G., Jones B. D., Hargrove, T. Y. (2003) *The Unintended Consequences of High Stakes Testing* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield
- <sup>38</sup> Brown, A. (1994). "What's in a Name? Response to "Revitalizing the Idea of Vocation in Teaching" *Philosophy of Education* Retrieved on 04/10/2006 [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/94\\_docs/BROWN.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/94_docs/BROWN.HTM)
- <sup>39</sup> Brookfield, S. (2007) *Reclaiming Critical Thinking as Ideology Critique* in (eds.) Horn R.A., Kincheloe, J.L. Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology. Volume 2
- <sup>40</sup> Ravitch, Diane (2001) *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform* Touchstone: New York 133-134,
- <sup>41</sup> Cremin, Lawrence A. (1990) *Popular Schooling and its Discontents* New York: Harper & Row, 33-34, 40-41, 43
- <sup>42</sup> Cremin, Lawrence A. (1957) *The Progressive movement in American Education: A Perspective* Harvard Educational Review Fall 261
- <sup>43</sup> Tyack, David B. (1974) *The One Best System: A history of American Urban Education* Cambridge: Harvard University Press 11-12, 72-77, 180
- <sup>44</sup> Kincheloe, J. L. (2005) *Critical Pedagogy Primer* : Peter Lang
- <sup>45</sup> Phillips, D., Burbules, N. (2000) *Post-positivism and Educational Research* Rowman and Littlefield
- <sup>46</sup> Sewell, W. H. (1992) *A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation* Chicago: University Press.
- <sup>47</sup> Black, E. (2003) *War against the Weak: Eugenics and American's campaign to create a master race* New York: Four walls eight windows.
- <sup>48</sup> Pea, R. D. (1993) *Practices of distributed intelligence and designs for education* In Salomon, G. (Ed.) *Distributed cognitions* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47-87
- <sup>49</sup> Vygotsky, L. S. (1962) *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- <sup>50</sup> Kruger J. (1999) *Lake Wobegon be gone! The "below-average effect" and the egocentric nature of comparative ability judgments* *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 77(2):221-232.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Common School**

In the long list of institutions of which our country men have just cause to be proud, few hold so high a place in the estimation of the people, or show so marvelous a progress, as the American common school... In some states it was slowly struggling into existence; in others it was quite unknown. Here maintenance was voluntary. There free education was limited to the children of paupers or parents too poor to educate their sons and daughters at their own expense. Elsewhere [sic] State aid was coupled with local taxes. Scarcely anywhere did the common school system really flourish. McMaster (1901)<sup>1</sup>

The common school, funded and supported by the public through taxes is a proud American legacy. Its rise and development in the early nineteenth century is at parity with the growth and expansion of the nation. From the neighborhood “single room” schools in rural areas to large comprehensive campuses in urban metropolis, the purpose of schooling remain closely tied to equipping citizens with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to function as responsible citizens, entrepreneurs, and/or workers in a free market economy.

The upsurge of immigrant population, industrialization, the development of interstate railway systems, abolition of child labor, and nationwide promulgation of new labor laws, are some reasons credited for the expansion of the common school. The popularization of schooling resulted in the escalation of enrollments and its attendant problems of overburdened infrastructural capacities and inadequate resources both human and material. These were accompanied by struggles over the curriculum of instruction, student assessment, and access to education for the poor and disadvantaged. The rise of the common school called for additional governance, new policies, regulatory instruments and more resource allocation. The onslaught of reforms and renewal efforts characterize the tinkering and tweaking efforts, which exist to date in our institutions of learning.

## Tracing Federal Role

The role of the federal government in education and more specifically post-secondary education dates back to education benefits for veterans. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Congress recognized that military service prevented young people from receiving training for employment or a vocation and passed the Rehabilitation Act of 1919. This gave veterans disabled in World War I a monthly education assistance allowance. In 1944, towards the end of World War II, the Montgomery GI Bill was signed into law for ex-service men to receive educational training. In the wake of the celebrated Supreme Court decision in 1954, on school desegregation, “Brown v the Board of Education” and most notably during the 1960s ( President Johnson’s administration with its *Great Society* initiative and its war on poverty), the federal government progressively took on a robust role.

Two major factors ushered in an epoch of the current federal interest in the operations of public education. Firstly, shifts in domestic social policy. The *Brown* decision in 1954 and the strong public resistance to its mandate to desegregate United States schools made the federal government interested in its implementation to a certain degree especially as it pertained to the maintenance of national peace and security, surrounding civic unrests and riots. Another social policy shift was the civil rights movement and its underlying fight for racial equality and social justice culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1957. It focused primarily on voting rights, then onto the robust Civil Rights Act of 1964 whose Title IV deals specifically with equal access to public education. Secondly, significant world events such as the launching of Sputnik changed United States history. On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I and this event ushered in new political, military, technological, and scientific developments. It marked the start of the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union.

This inherent threat to the United States spheres of influence as world “Superpower” by a rival nation led directly to the creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The threat also inspired the federal government to respond by promulgating the National Defense Education Act in 1958 (NDEA) with a view to maintaining global competitiveness and dominance through education. NDEA is arguably the precursor of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act (HEA) both passed by the United States 89<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1965. Albeit, President Johnson’s Great Society and its war on poverty programs, accompanied by the civil rights legislation marked a shift from the national security cum military threat of the Sputnik launch to a social justice, anti-discrimination agenda, both of which led to the enactment of significant public laws and marked the inception of the current magnitude of federal roles in public education at all levels.

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has a long history replete with ups and downs. From its inception 140 years ago (in 1867) as Office of Education through its investiture as a Department headed by a Cabinet Secretary in 1980 by the Carter administration, the USDOE reflects the growing role of the federal government in education overall especially in post-secondary education. Although states, local, and private systems constitute over 90% of funding sources in education the federal role has expanded more in the post secondary sector than at the elementary and secondary levels. The official mission of the USDOE remains “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.” (USDOE, 2007)<sup>2</sup> Inherent in this mission are the goals of student success and attainment, global competitiveness, educational excellence, and equality of access to all.

These surges and rescissions in the role of the federal government in education can be linked to different administrations' prevailing disposition toward policy centralization and decentralization. Nonetheless, I argue that this pattern is specious when attributed to political affiliation, republican, democrats, or philosophical viewpoints; conservatism and liberalism. The fact that federal roles have expanded and contracted across these categorical divides over time, suggests that the factors that shape government actions and choices lie elsewhere in contextual and socio-economic milieu.

### **States and Local School Boards**

States remain the primary echelon of government responsible for direction and leadership in matters of education. Unlike some other nations around the world, the United States Constitution does not provide for a centralized or national structure. Thus, the American system of education barring a constitutional amendment is structurally decentralized. Each state is responsible for its educational policies. However, some deference (centralization) is given to federal educational policies and mandates enacted by Congress and executed through the United States Education Department and this is usually tied to grants and funding. States retain superior stakes in education policy-making appositely matching their levels of contributions to education funding.

In New York State history, an example of such pendulum swing in policy is school decentralization (devolution of authority from a central bureaucracy to local entities, a shift usually accompanied by an expanded participation and empowerment of the local actors (citizens) in the governance of schools). "State legislature mandated a New York City school decentralization plan by December of 1967, which led to the creation of 32 community school

boards to govern the City's elementary schools.” (Roger, 1968)<sup>3</sup> Similar decentralization mandates were popular across the nation in this era.

However, there was a swing to re-centralization. It was a retro-shift in the control of public schools from the local school boards to the state and federal levels. Firstly, this shift was attributed to the unrest surrounding school desegregation and the public's loss of confidence in local schools ability to provide high quality education. “In addition ... new interest groups drew the nation's attention to such issues as civil rights, women's roles, student rights, and bi-lingual education-issues that had been overlooked by local politics.” (Kirst, 1988)<sup>4</sup> As federal and state categorical aid programs were established to serve these needs, local entities such as the PTA gradually lost their influence. Local initiative further eroded in the 1970s by declining student enrollments, resistance to property taxes, and court decisions concerning student rights and due process. In tune with he who pays the piper, state role in public education waxed stronger with more contributions as local role waned with fewer contributions. “Until 1979, the local contribution to public education still exceeded the state share, by 1983 the local portion had dwindled to about 42 percent, while state share had risen to 50 percent” with federal monies making up the difference. (Doyle and Finn, 1984)<sup>5</sup> It should be duly noted that these percentages signify averages because state/local contributions vary significantly from state to state.

### **A Nation at Risk**

In the wake of the celebrated report *A Nation at Risk* of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, an insurgence of active participation in education matters followed at the state level. Local school boards; the grassroots institution that governs public education found itself ostracized and alienated in its role, while the National Governors Association (NGA) took an unprecedented interest in public school fiscal and student achievement matters.

Participatory democracy informed the creation of the local school boards. Members are elected by citizens and seldom appointed by local school districts. The board has oversight on the fiscal and fiduciary operations of the school and works with an administrator (the superintendent of schools) who in turn oversees the administration of individual schools within the district.

“The board was composed of “laymen” not professional educators or administrators. They wanted to make schools more efficient and more effective...Undue influence of labor unions, corruption, lack of accountability, and partisan politics are some of the major blemishes that tarnished the school boards’ image.” According to the Institute for Educational Leadership’s report – on local school boards (Carol, et al 1985)<sup>6</sup>

The Carol report is a compendium of the school board as an institution, problems in its formation and functions and recommendations on how to secure its future. The oscillation between the twin extremes of decentralization and re-centralization in our schools is reminiscent of Arthur Schlesinger’s (Father and Son) treatise on the cycles of American history. The tedious pendulum swing of determinism vacillates from conservatism to liberalism, from big government centralization to small government decentralization periodically.

In the rich history of American public education, the same factors that instigate institutional reforms and policy retooling lie at the door of government actions. These factors often mirror the prevailing socio-economic situations, prosperity, depression, war: foreign and domestic, rumors of war, civil unrests, global supremacy, diplomacy, international prestige, hegemony, ideology and lastly, reactions to unintended consequences of existing policies. Although we can trace the origins of public education to the Massachusetts Act of 1647, McMaster, (1901)<sup>7</sup> the popularization of schooling occurred later in the mid 1800s when child labor laws were promulgated and The Morrill Acts 1 and 11 were passed by Congress granting tracts of land to states for the purpose of erecting buildings for colleges and universities.

A strong pattern of correlation can be established from the prevailing socio-economic status quo, events around the world, domestic social policy shifts, and educational reforms. Who monitors the achievement of the “American Dream?” Why are equal opportunity, mass opportunity, and distribution of opportunity important in one era and trivial in another? Why do threats to United States international status engender fierce competition? Why do these threats instigate policies geared at distributing educational opportunities to a maximum number in the society?

### **Periodization**

The three eras of particular significance in my investigation are: the Depression and the New Deal era (1930s), Post World War II “intervention years/superpower status” (1940s-1950s) and the Great Society (War against Poverty) of the 1960s through the 1970s. In these four decades, I posit that many more policies and shifts emerged in educational reforms than in any other annals of American education. School enrollment numbers soared from the elementary to graduate schools and the learned professions were firmly established. Higher education entered and moved from the mass access stage into the universal access stage. Although many policy stakeholders were in favor of universal access, they fell short of the goal of universal attendance. The State of California led the way in the development of a three tier institutional model namely: two-year colleges, four year colleges and graduate degree granting institutions. The first tier or two-year community college was tuition free and catered to youth in the locality. Eligibility criterion was graduation from a high school. Placement and assessment tests helped to determine the academic readiness of the admitted students and the level of remediation needed to succeed in college.

## Social Capital

In addition to the economic capital invested in this process, social capital was also vital.

Social capital as the World Bank defines it:

The World Bank has also brought together a range of statistics to make the case for the social and economic benefits of social capital. For example they argue that there is evidence that schools are more effective when parents and local citizens are actively involved. 'Teachers are more committed, students achieve higher test scores, and better use is made of school facilities in those communities where parents and citizens take an active interest in children's educational well-being'. They also indicate some negative impacts, for example, when disgruntled local elites joined together to close health clinics in Uttar Pradesh. Child mortality rates soared as a result. World Bank (1999)<sup>8</sup>

United States public education has a long history of commissions and committees of inquiry such as the Committee of Ten instituted in 1892 by the National Education Association (NEA) and chaired by Charles Eliot (President of Harvard) to address universities uniform entrance requirements. The Committee concluded that education for college is equal to education for life. (Recommending thus four basic courses of study in high school)

In 1895, the Committee of Fifteen was instituted by the NEA and led by William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education and William Maxwell NY superintendent of schools. They were charged with reporting on the elementary school curriculum and Teacher training. "Correlation of studies committee and humanistic curriculum was believed to transmit the great Western Heritage. The Committee recommended the five Windows of the Soul: grammar, literature & arts, mathematics, geography and history in summary liberal arts education." (Kliebard, 1995)<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Terrel "Ted" Bell created The National Commission on Excellence in Education in August 26, 1981. He was Secretary of Education under President Reagan's first Administration. "Reagan it is said brought him on board to bring down the Education Department that had only

recently been created by President Carter.” (Phelps, 1996)<sup>10</sup> He charged the Commission to examine the quality of education in the United States and report to him 18 months from their first meeting.

*A Nation at Risk* was not the only such study in 1983. At least five other national reports published that year also found problems with basic education and made recommendations. They came from very prestigious sources such as an Education Commission of the States Task Force, the National Science Board, the College Board, the Business Higher Education Forum and a Twentieth Century Fund Task Force. *A Nation at Risk* stood out because it had a federal mandate and a national platform through the Education Department. The Commission’s 18 members included public school administrators, the 1981-82 Teacher of the year (Mr. Jay Sommer, of New Rochelle in NY), the president of Yale University, a Nobel laureate, a former governor, and the retired chairman of the Bell Labs amongst others.

The Commission’s charge was to assess the quality of teaching and learning in our nation’s public and private schools and to compare them with those of other advanced nations, explore the relationship between college admission and student achievement in high school, identify notable programs that ensure success in college, assess the impact of social and educational changes on student achievement in the last 25 years and define problems to overcome in the goal of excellence. Particular attention was focused on teenage youth (high school). Selective attention was also given to the formative years spent in elementary school and higher education as well as vocational and technical programs. The scope K-16 was unusually broad and a first attempt at encapsulating the ESEA and the HEA.

The Commission defined excellence at three levels. Firstly, the individual learner performing at the boundary of his or her ability in ways that challenge and push back personal

limits. Secondly, the (institutional) school or college sets high expectations and goals for all learners, and assist them to work to the limits of their capabilities. Lastly, the society (community) as a whole, when the above mentioned policies for excellence are adopted then the nation through its educational system and the support of its citizens (parents) can help equip the students to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The final report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education is a slim volume. The main body of this report is approximately 31 loosely packed pages. It represents the outcome of deliberations involving 18 months of meetings, some 40 commissioned papers and many extant papers consulted, hundreds of testimonies from individuals from every level of education, business and government and about \$750,000 in costs. It stirred up the national psyche with two significant indictments:

One was a Rising tide of mediocrity and the second An Act of war ... On a score of Academic tests United States students were never first or second and in comparison with other industrialized nations ranked last 7 times. "Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests was lower than 26 years ago... The SAT Scholastic Aptitude Test administered by the College Board has been on a steady decline. Reform recommendations were made in 5 broad categories: content, standards and expectations, time, teaching, and lastly, leadership and fiscal support." (NCEE Nation at Risk Report, 1983)

The Commission was criticized for recommending more testing and more spending. *A Nation at Risk* gave further impetus to a movement that began in the 1970s and by 1993, 47 states adopted some type of statewide testing program. Some critics have these to say: "the myriads of measurement problems lurking in the testing foreground were not addressed: Reliability, validity, standardizing and setting norms etc." (Hogan, 1985)<sup>11</sup> "Total annual expenditure grew nearly 60% from \$180 Billion to \$280 Billion. They got the money but none of the promised

gains was achieved more spending has become the favorite solution to all public school problems and this is widely accepted by educators and elected officials.” (Kirkpatrick, 2003)<sup>12</sup>

The Commission is accused of having ignored the role of teachers’ unions and collective bargaining, a major and some say fatal omission. Mario D. Fantini, a distinguished educator and Dean of Education at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, wrote “Their recommendations consisted of doing more of what we already have- more of what caused the problems in the first place i.e. adopting the ‘one size fits all’ approach of more nation-wide testing.”

The nation is still at risk; an educational emergency exists and the risk is looming larger in rural and urban areas where sizeable portions of children who live in poverty can be found. Elementary and secondary schools are graduating without equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as citizens and in the working world. There is a proliferation or an avalanche of commissions and reports with divergent and confluent recommendations. Over 150 separate reports proposing as many different reforms. Education is in a constant state of flux and reflux. In 1994 the Congress enacts the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and abandons it in 2002 after failing to meet any of the projected outcomes. (Hogan, 1985)<sup>13</sup>

The import of reports from Commissions such as the National Commission on Excellence in Education served to galvanize national support for reforming the United States educational system. These reports raised the bar on the curriculum of instruction and sensitizing the populace to the global competition and the risk that the nation ran of losing its place in the world to our Cold War and Ideological adversary the Soviet Union. While the international dimension of education heightened in significance, the national and domestic dimension got some attention too.

### **Enter a Reformer**

James Conant Bryant 1893-1978 led several lives, borrowing from the title of his 1970 autobiography: *My Several Lives: Memoirs of a Social Inventor*. He was inter alia an organic chemist of great renown, an academic, president of Harvard University from 1933-1953, a

scientist, who participated in the invention of the atom-bomb, statesman, diplomat, hiker, father, grandfather, husband and educator. He spent his sunset years returning to the task of reforming public education as an instrument of democracy, realigning its promises, revamping its institutions, and critiquing the education of its teachers.

Conant's role in meritocracy discourse is pivotal. Arguably, he did more in recent times than any other to promote the tenets of Jefferson's tradition of culling from all condition of people a natural aristocracy of talents, educating them at the expense of the state and steering them toward public service. However, in the socio-political landscape of America, the searing divide between the haves and the have-nots was not limited to their standards of living and residential domain. It also etched fault lines in their institutions and learning abilities.

In 1961 Conant embarked on a study of *Slums and Suburbs: Schools in Metropolitan Areas*.

His core findings were to a considerable degree what a school should and can do is determined in large measure by the status and ambitions of the families served. On the one hand he concluded that in the slum schools, social dynamite was building in the form of unemployed, out-of-school youth especially in the Negro slums. While on the other hand in the suburbs, Conant saw the matter of curtailing the ambitions and aspiration of parents to the abilities of their children in view of the type of college they were best suited for. (Conant, 1961)<sup>14</sup>

Conant proposed the infusion of resources into the slum schools to upgrade them rather than the token effect of integration by transporting students across attendance lines. This proposal drew barbs from many black educational leaders, who saw in his proposal a reifying of the status quo implicitly advocating de facto segregation after *Brown v Board of Ed*. This is one issue that Conant never resolved despite his unease with the reactions from advocates of integration.

He also proposed the extension of the responsibility of the slum schools in the educational and vocational guidance of youth until age 21 (the so called 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> grades). It

was clear from his report that he saw employment of youth as a way to allay the civic unrests and riots of the 1960s era. Although Conant was not opposed to universal access to college, he did not believe in universal attendance of college. “Conant saw the first of the three-tier college system originated in California i.e. the two-year community college as a terminal institution for a majority of high school graduates sticking with his emphasis on selecting only the highly gifted and the academically talented to the academy and the learned professions.”

(Karabel, & Brint, 1989)<sup>15</sup>

Chapter Five deals with some theoretical underpinnings of Conant’s work in education, his conception of meritocracy as an aristocracy of talents (as espoused in many articles and speeches); his involvement with the National Education (NEA) Association’s, Education Policies Commission (EPC), his successful yet controversial documentation of “academic inventories” and comprehensiveness of United States high schools, his work with the standardized testing movement and the founding of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Princeton, NJ, and his quest for uniform standards in education and national policies via an Interstate Compact. Chapter Five also explores his worldview of the American society, of public education and opportunity distribution. Lastly I looked at the notion of a hidden agenda in the meritocracy discourse.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> McMaster J.B. (1901) *A History of the People of the United States: From the Revolution to the Civil War*. Volume V (1821-1830) New York: D. Appleton and Company

<sup>2</sup> Mission Statement Retrieved on October 16, 2007 Official Website of the ED  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>

<sup>3</sup> Roger, D. (1968). *"110 Livingston Street: Politics and Bureaucracy in the New York City schools"* New York: Random House

<sup>4</sup> Kirst, M. (1988) *"Who should control Our Schools?"* NEA Today 6 74-79

<sup>5</sup> Doyle, D.P., Chester E.F. Jr. (1984). *"American schools and the future of Local Control"* Public Interest 77, 77-95

<sup>6</sup> Carol, L.N. et al (1986) *"School Boards: Strengthening grassroots Leadership."* Washington DC: The Institute for Educational Leadership Inc.

<sup>7</sup> McMaster J.B. (1901) *A History of the People of the United States: From the Revolution to the Civil War*. Volume V (1821-1830) New York: D. Appleton and Company

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (1999) "What is Social Capital?" Poverty Net retrieved from  
<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm> retrieved on 10/29/2007

<sup>9</sup> Kliebard, H. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum: 1893-1958*. New York Routledge 23,179-181

<sup>10</sup> Phelps, D (1996). *Terrel H. Bell: The Thirteenth Man, '1921-1996-educator-Obituary*: Retrieved on 10/05/04 [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0DXK/is\\_n10\\_v13/ai\\_18680671](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0DXK/is_n10_v13/ai_18680671)

<sup>11</sup> Hogan, P (1985). Measurement Implications of "A Nation at Risk" ERIC Digest (ED) Washington DC

<sup>12</sup> Kirkpatrick, D. (2003). *Little to Show for 20 years of effort*, School Reform News: The Heartland Institute

<sup>13</sup> Hogan, P (1985). Measurement Implications of "A Nation at Risk" ERIC Digest (ED) Washington DC

<sup>14</sup> Conant, J.B. (1961) *Slums and Suburbs: Schools in Metropolitan Areas* New York :McGraw-Hill p.1

<sup>15</sup> Karabel, J. Brint, S. (1989) *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900-1985* New York: Oxford University Press

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **A Comprehensive Policy Framework**

‘A comprehensive strategy in education is focused on producing great results for all kids of all abilities, with suggested approaches and general policy positions that can work for every school in every community.’ (Rhode Island: comprehensive education strategy)<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that this is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead it evokes in broad strokes, a wide scope, a full view, an integrated, all encompassing look, consisting of many parts, a composite, and a compendious policy framework. The rights of the individual as well as the good of the group or community intercept in this complex framework. Jacksonian democracy and its tenet of universal equality of all citizens intercept with Jeffersonian natural aristocracy and its tenet of elite selection from all sections of the populace. Producing the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people; the Rawlsian<sup>2</sup> view on morality is juxtaposed to ascendant meritocracy, where deserving elite ascend the social ladder by virtue of meritorious talents and hard work.

This comprehensive policy framework also entails the swing from centralization to decentralization, uniform nation-wide standards to autonomous local control, voluntary associations to inter-state compacts and regional coalitions. These are along the continuum of global competitiveness. That is, the United States vis-à-vis other civilized nations. These vacillations border on spheres of influence, the pursuit of excellence and the quest for the advancement of science and technology.

A comprehensive policy framework also embraces the notable variances on notions of intelligence, based on mastery of the privileged official knowledge, the struggles over the

curriculum and instruction, and the measurement of achievement and the assessment of aptitude. It consists of different players in our educational institutions, teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, and administrators. It calls to question their qualifications, preparations and training, learning artifacts and resource allocations, and other determinants of educability such as the appointment of school buildings and facilities, and lastly, the optimal ratio of students to teachers in a classroom.

If we look at these foregoing varieties of components and factors that form the bedrock of policy formulations, we appreciate the difficulties that policy makers, stakeholders, and special interest groups encounter in the development of rationales and justifications to shape educational policy or sway the opinions of policy makers and all stakeholders.

One such special interest group is the National Education Association (NEA). It is a professional organization founded in 1857 with a purpose that is as applicable today as it was over its sesquicentennial pronouncement.

Resolved: that the interest of education whether university, academy, normal school or common school are one and inseparable; that all should have and show hearty sympathy with all co-laborers in this general work, joining heart and hand towards the improvement and greater efficiency of schools of every grade, for the benefit of the individual and the safety of the state. (NEA Charter, 1857)<sup>3</sup>

The NEA set up an Education Policies Commission (EPC) in 1941 and James B. Conant served on the EPC for sixteen years before chairing the commission in 1950. Conant, a chemist by training, a social inventor by avocation, an academic professional, a military researcher, and diplomat took on the subject of public education and assumed tutelage under the aegis of selected friends and professional bodies like the NEA. It is his long standing association with professional organizations and commissions that form the basis of his expert opinions and recommendations from studies he later conducted in the field of education.

## **Meritocracy since the Depression**

To take a stab at the question: how has the ideology of meritocracy been enacted since the depression? It is important to paint the socio-economic and political backdrop of the United States and locate within this tableau the tone-setter in policy formulations. During the early 1930s when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was President, the United States underwent the greatest test of its political and economic way of life. Capitalism and free enterprise suffered the greatest blow as the markets crashed and a wave of unemployment and economic hardships ensued. FDR ushered in the New Deal era with its work progress administration to provide a stimulus for the unemployed youth and able-bodied workers. The Social Security Act was later enacted in 1935 to cater to the pensioned and retired citizens, providing a modicum of fixed income and other subsidies to assist them in leading tranquil lives. Some opponents of the New Deal included Governor Huey Long of Louisiana and Dr. Francis Townsend. They saw it as a socialist ideal, which detracted from the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps mentality.” Others like Father Coughlin saw its dividends as inadequate. While these quests for survival were underway, the United States became embattled in World War II moving from isolation to intervention by virtue of commitments to allied nations and protecting national security interests. The war lasted six years from 1939-1945 but its import abided much longer. The returning veterans from WWII had to be retrained and employed. As a consequence of their significant number, the Congress passed the GI Bill to grant financial assistance to veterans for college education. After the death of FDR in 1945, Harry S. Truman ascended to the presidency and inherited the legacy of a short-lived peace. Although previously involved in his capacity as vice president, it was President Truman who ordered the use of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which precipitated the Japanese surrender.

In respect of Greece and Turkey, the *Truman doctrine*<sup>4</sup> was proclaimed on March 12, 1947. It marked the beginning of the Cold War and the jockeying for preeminence by the United States and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of WWII.

This superpower status and its ensuing competition had two axes. The first contended that democracy and capitalism trumped communism and totalitarianism in significant ways and the second axis challenged respective spheres of influence by recruiting allies and subjugating or alienating dissenters. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) founded on April 4, 1949 and the Warsaw Pact on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1955, both represented coalitions of the Western and Eastern blocs. The Cold War despite latter years of *détente* endured until the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Soviet Union) in 1989.

From 1950-1957, United States domestic politics was charred by the era of McCarthyism. Citizens were held guilty by suspicion of being members of the communist party by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. Alongside the Cold War from 1950-1953, the United States by way of the newly formed United Nations entered into the Korean War.

Now with a former Military General and erstwhile Columbia University President Dwight Eisenhower at the helm in the Whitehouse, the United States continued its quest to maintain and expand its place in the world. At the end of the Korean conflict, the French were beleaguered at *Dien Bien Phu*. From 1953 to 1954, the seeds of the Vietnamese conflict that embroiled and entangled three successive United States administrations from Kennedy to Nixon were sown in this conflict also known as the first Indo-China War. Although the United States did not openly declare war until 1965 and remained in conflict until 1975, it engaged in customary saber rattling with the Soviet Union on other fronts. The “Bay of Pigs”

invasion of 1961, the Cuban missile crises the following year is an account of nose to nose, narrowly averted head-on collision of the two foremost nuclear superpowers; the United States and the Soviet Union. From the Great Depression in the 1930s through 1975, the United States engaged in external conflicts and various domestic policy shifts simultaneously and the political climate was largely influenced by wars and rumors of war, the ideological conflict of capitalism versus communism or democracy versus totalitarianism. The reverberations from these acute and chronic tensions steered the United States' comprehensive policy mill.

The Soviets launched Sputnik in 1957 and trail blazed in the space race. This incident drove fear into the hearts of this nation's rulers and its intelligentsia. It brought into the education policy discourse the question of retooling for survival or losing our place in the world. There were concerns that the United States was effectively knuckling under and playing second fiddle to the Soviet Union and by implication, the Soviet educational system specifically in the sciences was proving superior to ours. This assertion resulted in the promulgation of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. This was a robust plan to raise the bar and motivate citizens at all levels of instruction to study in the areas of science, mathematics, modern languages and other areas through federal funds.

### **Anti-Totalitarian Roots**

Centralizing the United States educational policy would require a constitutional amendment and a recalibration of the cherished and deep rooted traditions of local control and voluntary association with a Unitarian standard imposed and upheld from the center. In the absence of a consensus, incremental and tangential changes have dotted the landscape of educational policy.

Despite this structure, the national population grew steadily and swelled school enrollments and increased further the complexities of policy formulations.

“Minority groups were marginalized: in the South Jim Crow laws (1876-1965) of “separate but equal.” (Kennedy, 1959/1990)<sup>5</sup> These laws carried through in schooling, even after the United States Supreme Court’s ruling on *Brown v. Board of education* in 1954, segregation of schools and other social institutions remained rampant. “De jure declaration did not carry over to de facto cessation.” (Balkin, 2002)<sup>6</sup>

Waging wars and building peace cost a fortune in material and human resources. Some of the lessons from World Wars 1 and II in the area of ability grouping via standardized testing proved an expedient and legal instrument of sorting men efficiently and effectively into different rungs in the military based on aptitude not achievement. This movement began by Henry Goddard and company in their Army Alpha Beta tests. These were widely accepted because they were seen as the way to regroup and distribute division of labor based on the propensity for performance. Standardized testing by psychometricians emerged as a reliable predictive tool. Despite staunch oppositions, the testing movement proved to be an effective, legally acceptable way of sorting masses into tracks and indirectly into various socio-economic destinies. One could argue with cause that individual agency could and did overcome this structure. However, individuals who ascended merit were uncommon.

The officers were privileged members of Ivy League institutions and the majority of the rank and file soldiers came from marginalized groups in failing public institutions. They were respectively, culturally and socially homogenous. Exceptions to these general trends were few and far between. Consequently, the notion of draft deferment as a way of preserving the aristocracy held sway. This was achieved with the promulgation of the 1948 Selective

Training and Service Act and the 1950 Selective Service College Qualification Test (SSCQT).

### **Conant on Democracy and Social Justice**

Dealing with the redistribution of mass opportunity and taking a leaf from the British and Jefferson's position on the natural aristocracy, a young James B. Conant at 40 years of age in 1933 ascended the helm of America's premier institution of higher learning, Harvard University. He remained President until 1953 and served actively and intermittently on many national boards and commissions related to science, education and the military in the interest of national security. He was hailed by general acclaim as the inspector general of the nation's schools, and education spokesman. As an academic statesman, his views on a number of issues related to American society and its educational system are very well documented and sought after.

Regarding his view of social justice, in his view it was fundamental to the Constitution. He believed that democracy required social justice, but he complained that there were few good public schools in Massachusetts because there were so many private schools.

(Personal Interview with Dr. John I. Goodlad)<sup>7</sup>

“Conant reveled on the thought that a significant ideal of the American democracy is the equality of opportunity. This ideal implies on the one hand a fluid social structure fostering change from one generation to the other and the other hand mutual respect between different vocational and economic groups; in short a minimum emphasis on class distinction. He believed that it was of the utmost significance for our future that belief in this ideal be strengthened and that we move each year nearer to its realization in practice. As of 1945 when Conant made these declarations he admitted that the last fifty years educational forces had been at work, which tended to stratify the American nation. He believed that with the promulgation of universal education to the high school stage, a vast instrument of democracy has been created capable of restoring a high degree of fluidity to our social and economic life...Furthermore, education can inculcate the social and political ideals necessary for the development of free and harmonious people operating an economic system based on private ownership and profit

motive but committed to social justice.” (Conant, 1945 as quoted in Passow, 1977)<sup>8</sup>

Here, Conant makes a straightforward albeit complex argument. Social justice at its core consigns primacy to the sociological; group liberties over the individual liberties. One can argue with compelling admiration the ideals of democracy, and also denounce with sound logic the existence of firm strata in our society and how those strata guard their entrance ramps with varying degrees of acceptances and rejections based on an evolving set of characteristics and abilities, ratcheted up and down by the forces of competition. The foregoing suggests a legacy of rigidity in our social structure to which individual agencies butt against with hard fought albeit modest impacts. “After all it is grounded in empiricism that the gaps in achievement are shaped along socio-economic statuses; along privileged and disadvantaged stations.” (Rodgers, Wang, & Gomez-Bellengé, 2004)<sup>9</sup>

Conant laid-out his most radical views on restructuring the American social fabric in a 1943 article in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled *Wanted: American Radicals*. He drew the anger of many of his contemporaries especially the establishmentarians; trustees of the Harvard Corporation and engaged in several private restatements and rebuttals notably with William Lamont Esq. In this article, he posited that a third strand of thought and action needed to be added to the dichotomous positions of the conservative reactionary and the liberals, which he termed the European radicals. This third strand, ‘the American radical’ would infuse into the polarized debate on isolationism and interventionism a middle ground and in effect, triangulate the debate. He drew the most barbs with his proposal that the American radical espouses the views below.

He believes in equality of opportunity not equality of rewards; but on the other hand, he will be lusty in wielding his axe against the root of inherited

privilege. To prevent the growth of a caste system, which he [sic] in abhors he will be resolute in his demands to confiscate (by Constitutional means) all property once a generation. He will demand really effective inheritance taxes and the breaking up of trust funds and estates. And this point cannot lightly be pushed aside, for it is the kernel of his radical philosophy (Conant, 1943)<sup>10</sup>

There were several notable reactions to this quote. Some classified it as mere rhetoric coming from a man whose livelihood and posterity depended on maintaining the established order. Some saw it as extreme propaganda to justify America's official new role in the post-war economic recovery, the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 and other such executive orders. Some viewed it as Conant baring his soul on the Jeffersonian altar of universal education for all, with a view to producing a fluid society where social mobility is ascendant and based on a natural aristocracy of talents rather than one that is predetermined by the privilege of inherited status and property.

The previously mentioned reactions are plausible with varying degrees of veracity. One thing is clear; Conant in words or in text never again ventured this far out on a limb. Jerome Karabel reports "that reverberations from this article precipitated a move within the Harvard Corporation to oust Conant from the Harvard presidency. His heretofore undisclosed role in Washington on the *Manhattan Project* absolved him and bought him enduring atonement." (Karabel, 2005)<sup>11</sup>

This secrecy of his important role in Washington while at the helm at Harvard belies a little known quality of the man Conant. Goodlad summed it up as:

Given his status, he was a warm person, although private. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was compassionate and quite humble. He seldom flew first class. To give you a sense of his standing, he was the first person outside the immediate team to learn that the atom had been split underneath Stagg Field at the University of Chicago, and it was Conant who informed President Roosevelt...  
(Personal Interview with Dr. John I. Goodlad)<sup>12</sup>

Conant's 21<sup>st</sup> and final recommendation in his 1959 report to interested citizens on the *American High Schools Today* stated that "in a comprehensive high school, the future atomic

physicist will sit and study next to a plumber. The college-bound and vocational students seeking marketable skills will interact in the high school “homeroom” on civic engagement during a class on American problems or government recommended for all high school students as a part of general education. Engaging in such a course will distinguish future citizens from what holds in totalitarian states.” He earmarked the homeroom as an inclusion unit that would assemble students of varying interests and abilities to discuss and vote on matters of critical interests to the student council. The idea was to enact in this forum action-based civic engagement in the democratic process. Conant saw in the comprehensive high school, a multi-purpose organization that would cater to the needs of all students, future citizens of this nation if informed by his twenty-one recommendations.

### **Conant on the American Education System**

The free tax supported schools are the sinews of our society: they are the products of unique ideals and the vehicle by which the American concept of democracy may be transmitted to our future citizens. The strength of this republic is therefore intimately connected with the success or failure of system of public education. (Conant, 1948)<sup>13</sup>

The American education system is largely decentralized and governed simultaneously by local school district boards and state boards of education. This decentralized format allows for local control, which is grounded in the American democratic ideal of local input in shaping government and governance rather than a state imposed uniformity from the center. Conant was concerned in the late 1940s about the growing number of private institutions specifically at the secondary school level; even though he clarified later that the import of this growth was less significant in elementary and college levels. The crux of his concern was the creation of a dual system of education such as existed in the Québec region of Canada; a system that ensured

further stratification of the American society and serve to perpetuate group cleavages and discourage pluralism or comprehensiveness.

After his 1959 review of the American high schools especially his incongruent findings in the south (the former confederate states), Conant became wistful about more federal and state collaboration for a national educational system. He may have been influenced also by the threat of Soviet domination and the cold war, coupled with the social chaos and civic unrests of the 1960s. This is a marked departure from his penchant for local control. He wrote specifically:

Let fifty states, at least fifteen to twenty of the more populous states, enter into a compact for the creation of an interstate commission for planning a nationwide educational policy. The compact will be drawn up by states and approved by Congress. The document would provide for the membership of the commission and guidelines for its operation...Each state would be ready to listen to any conclusions of the commission, but of course, would not be bound to follow its recommendations (Conant, 1964)<sup>14</sup>

Some will later credit the formation of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) in 1966 to North Carolina's Governor Sanford's reading of a copy of Conant's report and proposal, sent to him by John Gardner of the Carnegie Foundation. Conant noted in his memoirs a satisfaction for having invented the compact. It is therefore understandable that the ECS highest merit award is named for Conant; an honor bestowed on Goodlad in the year 2000. (ECS official Website)<sup>15</sup>

### **Conant on Public Education**

Borrowing a leaf from President Jefferson and celebrated educator Horace Mann, Conant argued that "free education for all assures a minimum of class distinction, the maximum fluidity and the maximum understanding between different vocational groups."(Conant, 1953)<sup>16</sup> "While he stood for universal and free education for all, he also took a stand against what he termed the

Jacksonian democracy, a widely popular strand in American thought that affirmed what he called excessive egalitarianism and preached equal educational privilege for all.”(Conant, 1938)<sup>17</sup>

He saw in public tax supported education a vehicle for conveying democracy, for enlightening all citizens on general education and marketable skills and as proposed by De Tocqueville allowing for social mobility. Throughout history, the proportion of students enrolled in public institutions has always been overwhelmingly large compared to those enrolled in private schools. Figures ranged from 90% to 10 % with 10 % swings one way or the other over much of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Conant decried the rise of private institutions of learning, especially the growing religious and parochial schools as detractors from the flow of democracy. He was vociferous about public tax support of such schools. In his 1953 essay *Education and Liberty*, he stated that “to use tax payers’ money to support private educations is to ask America to use its own hands to destroy itself.”(Conant, 1953)

One of the more complex aspects of analyzing Conant is teasing his rhetoric from praxis. He made this assertion during his presidency at Harvard University, a private institution. When confronted with this paradox, he claimed that he was only referring to secondary and lower levels of education and not the higher level. While he could lay claims to a public school education at Boston’s Roxbury Latin and subsequently Harvard, his sons Jim and Ted attended a private boarding institution (Exeter) at the secondary level. My interview with Goodlad and his response to the following questions corroborate this finding. What was Conant’s view at the time on higher educational access? Did it influence his work on the study you worked on?

Of course, all of Conant’s experiences were with elite colleges. I don’t think he had an adequate grasp of public education—all his children attended private schools. An example of his views is that he thought that the mathematics and science curricula should be designed for the most able students. For others, he saw vocational training as the alternative to studying mathematics and science (Personal Interview with Dr. John I. Goodlad)<sup>18</sup>

It is only fair to state for the records that Conant like most ardent scholars changed some fundamental positions as he encountered new information and engaged new experiences and cultures. He was not static on all of his views; therefore a snapshot analysis is underserved as demonstrated in the excerpt below from his memoirs.

If someone had told me when I was a chemist that in my old age I would devote a considerable amount of time and energy to examining public high schools of the United States, I should have branded him as demented...Even if a similar prophecy had been made in the first year or two of my Harvard presidency, I should have thought the prediction far from the mark. Only after professor Spaulding had opened my eyes to the problems in American secondary education would I have agreed. (Conant, 1970)<sup>19</sup>

He changed his mind on a few positions. He admitted to some blunders and asserted some positions with an ulterior goal in sight; once again any definitive characterization has to pass a rigorous threshold of comparing rhetoric to praxis. In this vein, in his published memoirs, he said of his recommendations on the report of *American High Schools Today* that “Ten or five years from now, at least some of my recommendations may need serious revision because of what has been demonstrated as successful practice. In short, there is no inconsistency between adapting what has been well tried and tested and having an open mind about the outcome of experiments newly planned and underway.” (Conant, 1970)

### **Conant on Intelligence**

On intelligence, Conant had very clear positions. In his 1959 report on the *American High School Today*, he asserted that of the nation’s high school children, only about 3% were highly gifted. He also posited that of the academically talented, which included by default the 3% of highly gifted, comprised nationally 15% of the student population. He expressed a wide

girth in the number of those who were destined for vocational studies on marketable skills, if you took away the bottom 10% percent of “slow readers” or special education students. The middle group constituted 75%. This construct on the distribution of intelligence or abilities remained for him an indisputable fact that could withstand scientific scrutiny.

For all of Conant’s progress and measured shifts on related concepts of assessment and achievement, this normal distribution curve of human intelligence quotient, that Herrnstein and Murray have made famous in the “*Bell Curve*,” formed the bedrock of his views on intelligence and opportunity distribution. It should be noted that despite Herrnstein and Murray’s peculiar application, the normal distribution or Gaussian distribution curve in Central Limit Theorem is a venerable statistical instrument employed in many valuable scientific studies. The controversy that surrounds the bell curve and intelligence tests is notable. Arthur Jensen claimed that “any test that contains "a large number of items," "a wide range of item difficulties," "a variety of content or forms," and "items that have a significant correlation with the sum of all other scores" will inevitably produce a normal distribution.” (Jensen, 1998)<sup>20</sup> Others like Stephen J. Gould posit that “raw test scores are converted to IQ values by fitting them to the normal distribution. In either case, it is the deliberate result of test construction or score interpretation that leads to IQ scores being normally distributed for the majority of the population.” (Gould, 1996)<sup>21</sup> However, the question whether *intelligence* itself is normally distributed is more involved, because *intelligence* is a latent variable, therefore its distribution cannot be observed directly

Thus Conant was in the minority in his time (during the Great School Debate of the 1950s) as a silent voice of dissent in the advocacy for increased access to higher education. He was focused instead on sorting through the vast throngs of talents for the 3%-15% who in his logic, deserved to be identified as early as possible, then challenged and guided into the academy

for our collective benefit. Some might argue that his pioneering work on the national scholarship at Harvard negates the above stated premise because he sought to expand opportunity to gifted children of all socio-economic statuses throughout the nation and provide full-aid applied on a need based sliding scale. This amounted to a free ride through Harvard for the recipients, in a lot of cases. His justification to the Harvard Corporation for embarking on the national scholarship was a safe mechanism for predicting future achievement on the basis of current aptitude using standardized tests as the measure.

It is true that Conant opposed segregated curriculums and tracking on the basis of the IQ or other measures. It is also true that he understood that all abilities were not innate and that some were developed. It is abundantly clear that he knew as well as anyone that failure could lie without the student, and be found instead in the skills and dispositions of teachers. The fault could lie also in external factors such as slum dwellings, and its attendant poverty and malnutrition. It is demonstrated that he sought to use language and labels carefully, and that he had his doubts about the validity of standardized tests. However, none of these altered his immutable view of the normal distribution of intelligence because the highly gifted remained 3% and the academically talented 15% of the population. These facts remained incontrovertible and sacrosanct as they undergirded all of his reasoning on the matter of intelligence or ability.

Is this “gift” of intelligence non-transferable and fixed? Are its elite possessors static? “Henry Goddard’s biographer asserts that Goddard established a testing program for immigrants between 1910-1917 at Ellis Island” (Fancher 1985)<sup>22</sup> If yes, how does one explain that the same eastern European Jews identified by Henry Goddard at Ellis Island, New York as possessing inferior intellect upon arrival on these shores managed overtime to rise to the apex of the intelligentsia, the cognitive elites in many fields of human endeavor? Do we owe this

transformation to interracial breeding and genetic transfers? I suggest that this premise is quite flawed.

### **Conant on Equal Opportunity and Testing**

As a principle, equality of opportunity denies the precedence of birth, of nepotism, of patronage or any other criterion, which allocate place, other than fair competition upon [sic] equally to talent and ambition. It asserts, in the terms of person' universalism over particularism, achievement over ascription. It is an ideal derived directly from the Enlightenment as codified by Kant, the principle of individual merit generalized as a categorical imperative. The meritocracy is thus the displacement of one principle of stratification by another of achievement for ascription. In the past, this was the progressive meaning of liberation. (Serkar, ND)<sup>23</sup>

Education has been seen by sociologists as the conduit for social mobility, a pathway to higher social status and learned occupations. There are discordant views on the relationships between education and social mobility. While some argue for its positive and efficacious outcomes, others denounce its promise and view it as a system to reify existing inequalities. It is not guaranteed that two individuals with equal levels of education will achieve equal distance on the vertical ladder of occupation. Conant believed in the concept of equality as prescribed by the United States Constitution and the accompanying inalienable rights of men and their freedom to pursue happiness. This belief is evident in his work to expand educational opportunity via the institution of National Scholarship at Harvard. However, he made a distinction between the Jeffersonian natural aristocracy of talents to be found and culled from all sectors of the society the Jacksonian democracy and predilection for excessive egalitarianism. Equal access did not mean equal rewards. He supported universal educational at the elementary level and universal opportunity or access to a secondary education for all but he was less embracing of universal

access to higher education. He was instead preoccupied with the quest for the early identification of the gifted and talented in the society.

Conant speaking as a scientist and relying on the technical rationality of the scientific method embraced psychometrics and standardized testing as the measure and units of assessing abilities and potential for success in learning. The notable use of standardized tests by Yerkes, Goddard, and Terman's Army Alpha-Beta tests in sorting officers and foot soldiers in World War I proved to be a cost efficient way of sorting through millions of enlisted men. It is alleged to have kept the military from the plague of aristocratic reproduction and class ascriptions, which were rampant in the European military. Conant working with two of his freshmen Deans, Bender and Chauncey embarked on a journey (after decades of intricate political and administrative negotiations) that led to the amalgamation of several testing organizations and the formation of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, NJ. Although in his typical minimalist faction, Conant made light of his role in the formation of ETS. Chauncey, during a speech on the occasion of his retirement soirée, from the ETS presidency in 1970 at the Pierre Hotel in New York laid to rest Conant's claims of indirect contributions and placed clearly at his feet, the gem and the genesis of the organization's idea and birth.(Chauncey's private papers ETS Archives)

Testing is not without well known limitations and Henry Chauncey noted a few.

No Standardized inventory or combinations of inventories-of interests or of any other attributes-will tell an individual student that he should become a doctor, or an artist, or anything else. Properly used, such an inventory can add one more bit of evidence that may be helpful to him in making up his mind about vocational goals to pursue, but it cannot tell him what to do...its recognition is an event of some note in the history of measurement. (Chauncey & Dobbins, 1963)<sup>24</sup>

In assessment, tests and examinations build around two main methods, namely Norm Referenced Tests (NRT) or Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT). The NRT assumes the

distribution of human intelligence around a normal distribution curve otherwise known as the Bell curve. These tests are designed to compare students' scores with a few scoring very well and most scoring average and a few scoring poorly. Most of the standardized tests; SAT, ACT, LSAT, MCAT, GMAT and GRE, are norm referenced and the purported value of the test is predictive of the potential for achievement. CRT on the other hand is designed to measure an individual student's performance against a set of objectives or criteria. In this case, the Bell curve is skewed heavily to the right; and students are expected to perform very well. Classroom quizzes and exams based on course objectives are examples of CRT. The value is not predictive of aptitude but of performance. Conant straddled this divide. During our interview, Goodlad said of Conant, "He did, of course, advocate for the establishment of the Educational Testing Service, but he had a concern about testing. He thought that at least half of a test should directly test what teachers taught." (Personal Interview with Dr. John I. Goodlad)<sup>25</sup>

The strength of standardized testing movement resides in its experimental capacity to predict future success based on the participants scores. Would the picture not be different if students were actually measured against lessons taught? Would the gifted be the same 3% of the population if the shift from normal referencing to criterion referencing was made?

A third important characteristic of intelligence test is that they do not measure purely innate ability. Said another way, intelligence tests measure mental ability in terms of something that has already been learned, if there is in human beings a pure mental force, a latent power to perform mental tasks transmitted in the genes and born with the individual, it has not yet been isolated or measured...But even though "native intelligence" is suspected to exist, the intelligence tests we use in this generation measure not innate ability but a developed ability in which innate ability and learned behavior are mixed in unknown proportions.  
(Chauncey & Dobbins, 1963)<sup>26</sup>

This quote from Henry Chauncey, founding president of ETS dated 1963 holds true today. As far as research shows, no innate intelligence gene has been isolated or measured, except Charles Spearman's construct of the controversial *g factor*, which is representative of general intelligence. Much of the struggle in meritocracy remains tied to quantifiable intelligence, and assessment of learning capabilities via standardized testing. It remains an efficient, cost effective, legally accepted, sorting mechanism. Many contend that coaching can significantly improve test scores, which underscores the nature of what is being measured as learned and developed ability.

### **Meritocracy Discourse in Metonymic Frame**

Tropes like metaphor and metonyms are linguistic non-literal representations of the world we live in. Metonyms differ from metaphors primarily in the sense of the relationship of the signifier to the signified. The similarity in metaphor is intrinsic and constitutive in nature. In metonyms, the similarity could be proximal and contiguous. Meritocracy can be seen as a metonym. Literal language exists within systems of containment and classification. Although non-literal language tropes like metonyms permeate boundaries and open up new understandings, they conjure up mental images and conceptual frameworks. Meritocracy metonyms express contiguity, proximity and similarity with the notions of opportunity selection versus election, equity and excellence, standards and quotas and lastly, the distribution of rewards. United States educational policy has been fashioned and instantiated by astute metonymic frames, leveraging conviction by association and obscuring policy rationales. "Non-literal language: metonymy, like metaphor, is part of our everyday way of thinking, is grounded on our experience, is subject to general and systematic principles, that structure our thoughts and actions (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980)<sup>27</sup>

Radden and Kövecses explicate the cognitive view of metonymy as thus: a conceptual phenomenon, a cognitive process that operates within and idealized cognitive model (ICM). Their working definition is “Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model” (Radden, Kövecses, 1996)<sup>28</sup>

They Identified 50 different categories of metonymic frames in their work. The use of overriding factors to achieve a social communicative effect is the most closely associated with the concept, form and ICM of meritocracy. Social considerations may have a considerable impact on a speaker’s choice in a given situation. This is particularly true of face-threatening situations, which may be alleviated by metonymy-based euphemisms. For example, to go to the bathroom and to wash one’s hands (to urinate or defecate) describe activities that only tangentially relate to the central and relevant event. Hence, they violate the principles of central over peripheral, relevant over irrelevant as well as clear over obscure. Over time, euphemistic expressions can become so entrenched that they are no longer felt to be metonymic.

‘Thus to go to the bathroom is no longer associated with its spatial meaning of transporting oneself to the bathroom, rather it evokes the target sense directly in expressions such as the dog went to the bathroom on the living room rug. Metonymic expressions, which are no longer felt to mystify a taboo topic, tend to be replaced by new non-default metonymies. This happened to the original euphemistic word toilet, which was replaced by bathroom and rest room, which in their turn are being supplanted by expressions such as facilities and comfort station.’ (Radden, Kövecses, 1996)<sup>29</sup>

Conant although a physical scientist by training spent a great deal of time perfecting his use of literal and non-literal language. Akin to the precision required in volumetric titrations, in identifying chemical compounds, and their reactions when mixed. Conant is reported by Jerome Karabel<sup>30</sup> to have written in his personal diary and indicated in subsequent remarks to that text

that ‘the writing efforts it took him to earn a place in Harvard campus newspaper the *Crimson* almost wrecked a half-year’s worth of work.’” In my observation, much of Conant’s writings generally employed rather terse and surgically concise sentences which belied his breadth of knowledge across several disciplines. I also found that he employed effective metonyms to conjure up association and linkages to make a solid case without inciting boundless controversy. These well-placed metonyms in Conant reports were under girded by the rigors of scientific methods of research as well as years of leveraging information to persuade boards of trustees, and shape political opinions on issues of national security, nuclear information policy, clandestine committees working on classified information, pro-intervention legislation during WWII and the development and deployment of atomic weapons warfare. He did all of these while heading the National Defense Research Council (NDRC) and Harvard University. Hershberg<sup>31</sup> devotes an entire chapter to Conant’s Committee on the Clear and Present Danger (CPD). Whose activities evoke the essence of idealized cognitive models designed to achieve social communicative effects by shaping and swaying public opinion. CPD’s report, like the *American High School Report* was also addressed to interested citizens: the bar of public opinion.

Let me share some examples of metonymic references employed by Conant in his 1959 Report. Number one is the use of the term *Ability Grouping*. Ability denotes a measure of prowess in a specific task. For example, a person could have a high ability to dance, to sing, to read, to draw or paint etc. However in this context, ability is a metonym of intelligence. Intelligence connotes a general capacity to comprehend, retain, analyze and apply new or existing information with relative ease and alacrity. So by substituting ability from intelligence, Conant effectively neutralizes the argument that ability grouping is equal to tracking and

segregated curriculum by perceived intelligence, because of the task specific nature of ability, the flexibility to have one individual measure high in one task, average in another or low in another area. *Ability Grouping* has its criticisms and favors students of high ability whether applied in-class or between classes as Conant advocated its effect on achievement.

Another example of metonym used by Conant in this report is that of *academic inventory*. This is a recommendation to school districts superintendents to require annual academic inventory of high school principals. The word inventory is a metonym for value free assessment similar to systems theory of including all things without attaching rationales and underlying assumptions. Inventory simply denotes stock taking of academic items. This belies the fact its aim was to track the education of the academically talented and provide meaningful statistics on their education and transition to colleges or universities. It also omits the assumption that only 15% of the nation's high school students fall into this category of academically talented.

Another use of metonym by Conant is the innocuous epithet *highly gifted* to describe the category of those with the highest levels of intelligence. Giftedness connotes a natural or biological bequest, engrained in heredity and DNA. In this way, the gift is an intrinsically possessed capacity unalloyed of stimuli and motivation. This removes from consideration other external factors such as the social and educational determinants of educability and other dimensions of inequality. Is this gift transferable and transmittable? What degree of gift transfer is possible from educators to students, parents to children, peer to peer, and among siblings? Is this gift not present in extant works and life experiences and thus distributed in artifacts and inscribed in a cultural environment? If we agree with Conant that the highly gifted are approximately 3% of the high school students and are randomly dispersed across all sectors of the population, then does not the task of educators devolve to locating the "three-percenters" and

developing or challenging their gifts to rise to the occasion? Is the only measure of giftedness not IQ and standardized testing?

Another metonym used in the report is *elective programs*. The word ‘elective’ dates back to Charles Elliot’s Committee of Ten in the late nineteenth century. Election connotes choice and prerogative on the part of the elector. The student exercises the power of election or choice over a sequence of courses tailored to achieve particular ends. In reality, when analyzed in the framework of academic and vocational courses, electives is missing the initial consonant Selective, as in tracks. The options that the students elect are pre-arranged and chosen with certain assumptions. Conant in his third recommendation part (C) urges a high standard of grading be used for elective academic courses and lower standards applied to required courses to stand as deterrence to the less able thus effectively channel them into more *marketable* or vocational course sequences. In this metonymic frame, elective is the freedom to choose from selective or restricted options. However, the freedom of choice presented nullifies the debate over tracks or segregated curriculum.

The appropriate use of non-literal language tropes like metonyms and metaphors in policy drafts for the Congress and expert reports addressed to interested citizens is a powerful instrument for building multi-lateral consensus. It is also useful for reaching across the aisle in a non-partisan way to persuade all stakeholders about the significance of enacting policy to regulate a particular matter. The power of metonyms lies in their ability to subsume a part of a concept for the whole and vice versa. In the examples above, well framed metonyms appear innocuous on otherwise controversial subjects by inferring a meaning that insulates the controversy.

For example, if the 1959 Conant report had used selective courses instead of elective, the onus would be shifted to the school to select the courses and not the students. As a result, many would have equated that with the controversial tracking and segregated curriculum. However, by using the elective metonym in language, the burden rested with the students in a semblance of choice. The role of the school thus hidden is yet concrete because by applying selective grading in different courses, they can filter the class composition and achieve in an oblique way the unspoken tasks of sorting by ability or tracking.

In situational linguistics and semiotics, the system of rules of signifiers and the signified codes of meanings within and across language is a powerful medium for representing abstract concepts and making them come alive to participants in a communication chain. Most expert policy makers and negotiators know that careful crafting and use of non-literal language, the astute development of frames of references in negotiations can make or break agreements. Astute opinion shapers and expert commentators employ metonyms and metaphors to leverage points in their favor, curry votes and avoid controversies.

### **Open and Hidden Agenda**

Is there any hidden agenda? There is an open agenda in the meritocracy discourse and it is about identifying the highly gifted or intelligent amongst us, from all conditions of living: privileged or disadvantaged through standardized tests, challenging them with the most rigorous educational programs even at the taxpayers' expense, through hard work and devotion, the highly gifted will ultimately commit their earned expertise to the common good of our civil society.

Is there a hidden agenda in the discourse on meritocracy? This question raises three kinds of flags, and the most prominent is the flag of a conspiracy theory. Is there a conspiracy to

channel the “talented” to seats of privilege and power? Is there an organic development or laissez-faire approach to ascendant meritocracy? Thirdly, is the established order a product of social control and social reproduction?

Chapter Six I looked at social reproduction and the division of labor and explored for the preponderance of laissez-faire versus planned society. I highlighted the role of private power in public good. I examined the import of the Malthusian law on population and the economic law of diminishing returns. I looked at discursive implications and made some policy recommendations. I also looked at directions for new research specifically in the area of cross-cultural analyses of educational policy intertwined with meritocracy discourse using Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy retrieved on December 17, 2007  
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/edpolicy/CES.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Rawls, J.B. (1971) *A Theory of Justice* Harvard University Press cited as (TJ) revised Edition 1999

<sup>3</sup> Keck, D.J. *NEA and Academe through the years: the higher education roots of the NEA 1857 to the present*. Retrieved on 12/17/2007 <http://www2.nea.org/roots.html>

<sup>4</sup> President Truman's Library Retrieved on 3/12/2007

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=31&studycollectionid=TDoctrine&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=31&studycollectionid=TDoctrine&pagenumber=1)

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, S. (1959/1990) *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was*. Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, pp.216-117.

<sup>6</sup> Balkin J.M. (May, 2002), Review: Brown's Potential, Still Unrealized Reviewed work(s): *What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said: The Nation's Top Legal Experts Rewrite America's Landmark Civil Rights Decision* by *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 115, No. 7 pp. 2034-2041

<sup>7</sup> Interview Notes of Dr. John I. Goodlad in Seattle WA (2/7/2008)

<sup>8</sup> Conant, J.B. (1945) Public Education and the structure of American Education *Teachers College Record December of 1945* as quoted in Passow, A.H (1977) *American Secondary Education the Conant Influence* National Association of Secondary School Principals NASSP Reston , VA

<sup>9</sup> Rodgers, E.M., Wang, C., & Gómez-Bellengé, F.X. (2004) *Closing the Literacy Achievement Gap with Early Intervention* The Ohio State University Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association April 12 – 16, 2004 San Diego, CA

<sup>10</sup> Conant, J.B. (1943) *Wanted : American Radicals* Atlantic Monthly May 1943

<sup>11</sup> Karabel, J. (2005) *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company

<sup>12</sup> Interview Notes of Dr. John I. Goodlad in Seattle WA (2/7/2008)

<sup>13</sup> Conant, J.B. (1948) *Education in a Divided World* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

<sup>14</sup> Conant, J.B. (1964) *Shaping Educational Policy* New York: McGraw Hill

<sup>15</sup> Educational Commission of the States Retrieved 01/23/2008

<http://www.ecs.org/html/aboutECS/Awards.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Conant, J.B. (1953) *Education and Liberty* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

- 
- <sup>17</sup> Conant, J.B.(1938) *The Future of our Higher Education* :Harpers As cited in Karabel, J. (2005) *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company
- <sup>18</sup> Interview Notes of Dr. John I. Goodlad in Seattle WA (2/7/2008)
- <sup>19</sup> Conant, J.B. (1970) *My Several Lives: Memoirs of a Social Inventor* NY: Harper and Row P.613
- <sup>20</sup> Jensen, A (1998) *The G Factor: The science of Mental Ability (Human Evolution, Behavior and Intelligence*. Connecticut : Greenwood
- <sup>21</sup> Gould, S.J. (1996) *The Mismeasure of Man* New York: W.W. Norton
- <sup>22</sup> Fancher, R.E. (1985). *The intelligence men: Makers of the IQ controversy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company
- <sup>23</sup> Serkar, I (ND) *The Sociological Symbiosis of Education and Social Stratification* Retrieved on 2/28/2008 [http://www.geocities.com/husociology1/education1.htm#\\_ednref5](http://www.geocities.com/husociology1/education1.htm#_ednref5)
- <sup>24</sup> Chauncey, H., Dobbins, J.E. (1963) *TESTING: Its place in Education Today* New York: Harper and Row p.18
- <sup>25</sup> Interview Notes of Dr. John I. Goodlad in Seattle WA (2/7/2008)
- <sup>26</sup> Chauncey, H., Dobbins, J.E. (1963) *TESTING: Its place in Education Today* New York: Harper and Row p.22
- <sup>27</sup> Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>28</sup> Kövecses, Z., Radden, G. (1996) *Towards a Theory of Metonymy* in Berg, T. Ed. *Cognitive Linguistics Exploration Applications Research CLEAR No.1* 1999
- <sup>29</sup> Kövecses, Z., Radden, G. (1996) *Towards a Theory of Metonymy* in Berg, T. Ed. *Cognitive Linguistics Exploration Applications Research CLEAR No.1* 1999
- <sup>30</sup> Karabel, J. (2005) *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company
- <sup>31</sup> Hershberg J.G (1993) *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the making of the nuclear age* New York: Knopf

## CHAPTER SIX

### Original Research Questions

In this chapter, I restate my original objects of inquiry and discuss briefly how I went about analyzing and seeking answers to them.

- 1.) How has the ideology of meritocracy been enacted in education policies since the Great Depression -1930s?
  - 1a.)What is the dominant definition of meritocracy in discourse?
  - 1b.)What frames the discourse on meritocracy?
  - 1c.)What is the political economy of meritocracy?
- 2.) What are the connections between conceptions of meritocracy and higher education policy making?
- 3.) Is there a relationship between the funding of public education and the discourse on meritocracy?"
- 4.) Who should decide a child's "destiny," social, economic, and political as an adult in a democracy?
  - 4a.)What are the rationales for making such a decision?
  - 4b.)Is there any hidden agenda?
- 5.) What role does private power in a democracy play in public policy making?
- 6.) Are there discernable patterns in the enactment of educational policies and practices?

### Discursive Implications and Policy Recommendations

1.) How has the ideology of meritocracy been enacted in education policies since the Great Depression -1930s? 1a.) what is the dominant definition of meritocracy in discourse? 1b.) what frames the discourse on meritocracy? 1c.) what is the political economy of meritocracy? A compelling and present danger of the current enactment of the meritocratic ideology in the United States educational policy resides in the emphasis on standardized testing. In the latest

reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) currently known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which the Bush administration signed into law in the year 2001, there is prescription for annual testing mandates in mathematics and reading comprehension for grades 3 through 8. A year later, the Act stipulated the addition of science to mathematics and reading, in the annual testing mandates, and it extended annual testing to high schools from the elementary and middle school levels. Schools are rated for funding on the basis of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The emphasis placed on testing and the privilege given to science in this Act is reminiscent of the position of the administrative progressives and social efficiency group in the early twentieth century. Arguably, there is an inherent tracking that follows in the measurement system of the AYP. In my opinion, this will not promote the quality of learning or increase students' performance levels; rather it will further differentiate and marginalize minority and poor students.

1a.) what is the dominant definition of meritocracy in discourse? The dominant definition of the meritocracy in discourse over much of the last eighty years has been about elite selection, the quest for the talented and the able, via scholastic aptitude tests. The resulting implications are policies of selective investments. This practice discriminates against the majority of the population who by testing standards do not measure up to the virtues of the so called 15% who are academically talented. It represses the desires of poor testers to challenge themselves and creates thereby a vast army of mediocre citizens for whom the only viable option is to seek marketable or vocational skills. The corollary setback is the denial of social determinants of educability and absence of social capital. Conant in his 1959 first report to interested citizens cited "as a major problem in high school guidance and counseling the unchecked college ambitions of parents regardless of their children's abilities, he drew the analogy of a person of

small stature aspiring to a career in American football, where physical attributes and brute strength are absolutely necessary.” (Conant, 1959) The inference drawn here is that, some children have no business thinking of a college education based on their current level of perceived aptitude. I argue that this kind of reasoning represses desires and discriminates against the least of them and it is especially telling when the least of these are etched along socio-economic and racial, geo-political lines. Interestingly, Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon who first developed the “intelligence scales” approached this subject with a focus on ascertaining the level of intelligence that required special education. They sought to identify the “least endowed” children so as to give the extra support needed for them to cope. This idea went to seed when United States cognitive psychologists took a polemic approach and focused instead on the highly gifted. Thus, meritocracy searches for an aristocracy of talents arguably from all conditions of living: indigent or affluent but an aristocracy nonetheless, it abandons the less able and distributes to them roles it judges fit in the interest of all. As Longoria, asserted, “meritocracy is not supposed to make dumb students smart” (Longoria, 2006)<sup>1</sup> but I argue that it is a huge problem because it labels slow students and poor testers dumb and offers them a different route than the one that leads to the academy.

My recommendation here is to find a balance between the quest for the elites and the care for or nurturing of the less talented with an open mind that these too can develop extraordinary abilities. Based on our current high school system, I wonder if the celebrated Albert Einstein would not have been tracked into a vocational program and what a loss it would have been to human kind! The meritocracy discourse should be expanded beyond standardized testing to include other perspectives such as Howard Gardner’s theory on multiple intelligences, Roy Pea’s notion of distributed intelligence and Lev Vygotsky’s notion of the zone of proximal

development and Polanyi's theory of Tacit Knowledge. I believe that the inclusion of these perspectives will help redefine cognitive ability beyond native endowments or hereditary transfers to a dynamic construct that can be affected, developed, and enhance through pedagogy.

1c.) what is the political economy of meritocracy? In political economy, the law of diminishing returns plays a latent role in the structure of opportunity.

Sometimes also referred to as the law of variable proportions... The law states: When increasing amounts of one factor of production are employed in production along with a fixed amount of some other production factor, after some point, the resulting increases in output of product become smaller and smaller. (That is, first the marginal returns to successive small increases in the variable factor of production turn down, and then eventually the overall average returns per unit of the variable input start decreasing.) (Johnson, 2008)<sup>2</sup>

In other words, beyond a saturation point, marginal utility sets in and the returns on further investment is lower with each additional input to a point where it is no longer worthy of the investment. The fixed factor in this instance is the proportion of the population that is highly gifted and academically talented: 3%. The variable factors will include population growth and labor opportunity. To operationalize this concept, I have chosen some indices in the Human Development Index (HDI) report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The UNDP began in 1990 to put out a report on HDI. This report contains on an international scale, a structure of social planning. For instance, to rank economic indicators such as mortality rates and life expectancy, HDI reports on how many professionals exist in a given nation per capita and ranks them in optimum order. For example, if in a population of 500 people the optimum number of medical doctors is 20, that is, one doctor per 25 inhabitants. If in the same nation the number is increased up to 30 doctors, an addition of 5 doctors, the resulting ratio will be one doctor per 16.67 inhabitants. The (economical and political) value of each doctor diminishes at some point

with each successive ascendant. Their remuneration will be less because of higher supply of labor and ultimately the demand will be lowered.

Nations strive to avoid this imbroglio through professional licensing organizations or accreditation agencies or by creating allied alternatives to the role of the physician such as physician assistant, medical technologist and technician, each constituting a subsidiary unit to the physician and a landing strip for those who aim but fall short of the MD degree and licensure. In the event of a tilt on the supply side, agencies ratchet up the requisite preconditions for licensure. For instance, in the United States the competition is fierce and the associated costs are higher. It takes considerably longer now for citizens to become physicians than it did some thirty years ago. These same principles apply to all of the learned professions.

In reality, there is not much left to chance and laissez-faire or for that matter the invisible hands of supply and demand or market forces. As much we like to believe that ours isn't a planned society. Real estate, housing, mass transit, social infrastructure, and amenities are all designed on census data, shifting demographics and population projections. Therefore, there is a design to our structure of opportunity with primes and pumps. It is not as overt as some of the other policies that govern our daily lives. I contend that it is this covert and surreptitious machination of the opportunity structure, while projecting a laissez faire doctrine that is tantamount to the conspiracy theory.

### **Laissez Faire or Else**

2.) What are the connections between conceptions of meritocracy and higher education policy making? As to the question of laissez-faire approach to ascendant meritocracy, there are shreds of evidence to the contrary. In theory, laissez-faire applies to the freedom of competition in a free market economy, individual liberties and access to the pursuit of property ownership. In

practice, our economy is regulated and monitored to a great degree. Unlike Adam Smith's 'invisible hands,' the government has fiscal and monetary policies that govern trade and commerce and legal instruments like the Uniform Commercial Code govern transactions. The government also in response to the social contract implied in citizenship and taxation has proffered many paternalistic policies to safeguard the interests of the lowest income earners, retirees and pensioners. Conversely, it has established anti-trust laws to prevent the emergence of monopolies. I argue that laissez-faire exists at the point of access to opportunity but is vaporized within the structure.

### **Knowledge Economy**

3.) Is there a relationship between the funding of public education and the discourse on meritocracy?

Those in positions of power and privilege (including college presidents) need to be under constant vigilant scrutiny and from time to time must be the objects of attack. Tyrannies of ownership and management spring up all too readily. In order to ensure that the malignant growths of the body politic will be destroyed by radiations from the left, much abuse of healthy and sound tissue must be endured. Reformers and even fanatical radicals we must have. But if the unique type of American society is to continue, those who would better conditions must look in the direction of the progressive or liberal movements of an earlier period. The Left must consider returning to the aim of checking tyranny and restoring social mobility. Reformers must examine every action lest they end by placing in power the greatest tyrant of all—organized society  
(Conant, 1940)<sup>3</sup>

The current knowledge economy blossomed in the wake of our post-industrialized economy with its rising demand for more professionals and citizens with higher skills set and training. In the current labor market, the skills required are higher and more sophisticated than the brawn and strong backs that most manual labor required generations ago. This speaks to the changes in the means of production. Computerized processes now require skills and levels of proficiencies

hitherto unheard of. The net result of this development over time has been outsourcing or the loss of jobs (mostly lower level jobs) to developing nations where labor costs are cheaper.

The Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus postulated in 1798, in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* what is now known as Malthus' Iron Law of Population. This rather pessimistic theory suggested that growing population rates would contribute to a rising supply of labor that would inevitably lower wages. In essence, Malthus feared that continued population growth would lend itself to poverty. 'This essay is said to have sparked the debate in England over population size and it is also credited with the England's institution in 1801 of the decennial census,' (Malthus, 1798)<sup>4</sup> which is mirrored in the United States<sup>4</sup> to date. Education of citizens at public expense is an increasingly greater challenge as population grows and the economy becomes more knowledge based. I believe that there is a direct relationship between the funding of public education and the meritocracy discourse. As property taxes soar in many localities, the campaign for fiscal equity is spreading across many school districts, pitting excellence against equity.

### **Agenda Forum**

4.) Who should decide a child's "destiny," social, economic, and political as an adult in a democracy? 4a.) What are the rationales for making such a decision? 4b.) is there a hidden agenda? In my research, I did not find any overt evidence of a conspiracy by any organization, governmental or non-governmental, public or private in the United States to control the merit agenda. There are no established quotas for any geo-political group to access the social ladder. One can assert a pattern or patterns in achievement and educational attainment, and can equally locate within the structure of opportunity a head-start to segments of the population with anti-discrimination laws or a hereditary legacy of achievement. However, a clear cut underlying

assumption behind these assertions other than the perpetuation of self, of kith and of kin is absent.

### **Private Power for Public Good**

5.) What role does private power in a democracy play in public policy making? Borrowing this subtitle and analogy from the 1983 book by Ellen Lagemann<sup>5</sup> of Harvard, in the enactment of educational policies, private power is actualized in philanthropic foundations, think tanks, and non-profit organizations like ETS and various other special interests configurations. They exist to shape public opinions and partner with the governments in significant alliances and coalitions to enact public policies. Lagemann's work, centered on the history of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT) traces the intricate web of power polity. The genius of this outlay is that none of the actions of private power appear subversive or controlling on the contrary they appear altruistic and honorable. It is a little wonder that over time CFAT classifications of institutions of higher education in the United States has become the sole authority on the types and purview of such institutions. Also, successful completion of the CFAT prescribed 14 units courses at the secondary level a.k.a. "Carnegie Units" became the widely accepted yardstick for admissions into selective colleges and universities. The role of private power in meritocracy has been very significant. It addresses its sponsored reports to interested citizens, ascribing the semblance of power thereby to the electorate. It engages in elaborate, time consuming and costly studies and surveys. Private power enjoys the status of a neutral broker because a direct benefit of the effect of a policy cannot be traced back to its organizations. Ancillary steps are taken to publicize and disseminate its findings and where necessary lobbying campaigns are mounted to influence legislature. Thus, private power remains at the apex of opinion shapers in the United States. Educational policies remain vulnerable to the

agenda of these private entities unless efforts are made to secure and include checks and balances in the form of independent experts, in this instance, professional educators.

### **Civil Society and Social Justice**

6.) Are there discernable patterns in the enactment of educational policies and practices?

Although populism and democracy demand laissez-faire, special interests lobby against it. The perceived value of any social status is subject to the laws of diminishing returns. To be classless and free, there has to be a balance between Pluribus and Unum, between individual liberties and civil society.

Civil society and social justice are interdependent. One reason is because the three major arenas in modern societies-economy, state, and especially civil society-offer somewhat distinct conceptions of social justice, or normative orders, based on their dominant values. Modern industrial capitalism is not without its ultimate values and commensurate metric of justice. Its ultimate value is simply more-greater productivity and greater efficiency-more goods and services at lower economic cost. Non-economic costs are considered exogenous and irrelevant. From the standpoint of this ultimate value, the just distribution of rewards might be said to depend on merit or performance, including for example, "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work." Those who add the most value-whether in productivity, efficiency, or both-should get the most rewards. This view resembles the functionalist view of social stratification. Moreover, in such a metric of social justice, inequalities are not necessarily considered bad because they offer incentives for people to work hard and make them-selves more valuable in the market. (Persell, 1997)<sup>6</sup>

Economic and social inequalities are fair game when construed in the light of hard work and performance. What happens to the concept of social justice when rewards are distributed by inheritance? What becomes of the aristocracy of talents when segments of the populace are not in the game and cannot compete fairly?

Democracy is not natural. Barber calls it "an extraordinarily rare contrivance...it is also fragile in that it depends on an educated and engaged citizenry, who behave towards each other civilly and civically, a commitment to the deeper meaning of democracy must be re-created with

each new generation.” (Barber, 1992),<sup>7</sup> (Michelli, 2005)<sup>8</sup> Democracy is a learned behavior and society must be intentional about the transmission and development of its tenets in each succeeding generation or else what emerges as natural, is an aristocracy based on consanguinity, affinity, and social cleavages and at its very worst a caste system.

### **Calling the Pied Piper’s Tune**

A discernable pattern in the enactment of educational policies is strongly correlated to the political economy of meritocracy. Whosoever is responsible for funding schools, tax supported or proprietary schools, retains the power of the purse. In the early twentieth century, with the advent of the administrative progressives and pragmatists, social efficiency and costs effectiveness influenced a lot of the policies. It is good stewardship and accountability to manage limited resources to yield maximum returns in most ventures. However, in education, success is not tied to the bottom line or profits. Therefore, to have policies driven by pecuniary concerns, means sacrificing the interests of the less desirable students. It creates a dual system: one that caters to the gifted and tends perfunctorily to the rest.

The inordinate role of the laity in educational policy enactments is a significant reason that exacerbates this gruesome plight of a dual system. The laity is used here in its professional not religious sense. Most educational policy discussions seek to exclude educators for the obvious reason that their views run contrary to the pragmatic and problem solving viewpoint. Conant in his memoirs and his account of the double rescue of the Harvard College of Education confessed to a latent bias to professional educators and saw the curriculum and teaching methodology as frivolous and unnecessary,. This view was corroborated by Goodlad in our personal communications.

Ultimately, he (Conant) thought his study of educators was a failure. In the end he strongly felt that the Arts and Sciences should be primary in preparing teachers. He would have dropped all teacher education, but his team persuaded him otherwise. A close look reveals that while he argued to keep foundations courses, he did not support courses in methods or curriculum. (Personal Interview with Dr. John I. Goodlad)

Conant later saw things differently due in part to his rich association with Harvard education Dean, Francis Spaulding who became the Education Commissioner of New York State. Conant in his 1945 Julius and Rosa Sachs lecture series at the Teachers College *Public Education and the Structure of American Education* drew similarities in the reports of the Harvard Committee on General Education and those of the NEA Educational Policies Commission. He cited an agreement on how the high school curriculum should provide for general and vocational education. He commented that the differences were in the way the subjects were put together, “one according to a pattern, which corresponds to a rational method of handling areas of knowledge traditional in our universities, the other in terms of stimulating the interest of students with no bent for scholarly work.” Conant maintained like other notable opinion shapers in educational policy, that educators were *bleeding hearts* and could not make rational decisions devoid of their attachment to the possibilities of a stimulating pedagogy. I recommend that educators as experts should be included in all policy discussions and they should play more significant roles. In the end, educators are closer to the process and more familiar with how children learn, and possess the knowhow of the conveyance of knowledge to the mind of a learner. Bruner, in his 1960 *Process of Education* emphasized this very point when he talked of the two emergent patterns in education discipline. The first pattern was on developing the structure of the child’s mind and the act of learning. The second was on the logical structure of

the subject-matter. Educators have an invaluable capacity to shape policies surrounding education whether it is in reforming or renewing its institutions.

### **Directions for New Research**

The issues of mainstream and marginal groups, majority and minority groups, and immigrant versus indigenous cultures crisscross the annals of democratic relations. Whether the policies are assimilation on the one hand or integration of the other hand, there is always the overriding notion of power politics. In the end, the minority cultural values are often undermined or subjugated. Language is one of the most important vehicles for cultural opposition. In situations where shared meaning-making signs and symbols are absent, the group that has to assimilate the lingua franca (official national language) is often disadvantaged. Their own languages (that embody their cultural artifacts) are restricted to in-group and homebound usage. In the current tide of increased globalizations and immigration inflows, if the transient, cultures, immigrants, minorities, and refugees want to be successful, they almost always knuckle under to the established order.

A new direction for further research on the subject of the meritocracy discourse and educational policy in the United States will be to look through the lenses of cross-cultural psychology using Hofstede's four dimensions and classification of national cultures. These are measures of central tendencies which explicate decision-making, leadership techniques, organizational culture, attitude to work, policies and procedures and visions of the world through four cultural dimensions.

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch engineer, who worked for IBM in the 1960s, developed these cultural dimensions by conducting surveys in 74 countries and regions, where IBM had interests. The following four cultural dimensions emerged: 1. Power Distance Index PDI (measures

inequalities associated with status, intellectual capacity, rare skills, wealth, charisma, and social standing) 2. Individualism IDV index, (measures whether a society tends towards the individual rather than the group or vice-versa. Is the emphasis on the Pluribus or the Unum? 3. Masculinity MAS index (measures gender roles, assertiveness versus modesty, and masculinity versus femininity 4. Uncertainty Avoidance UAI index (measures the cultural strengths and weaknesses of dealing with the unknown) (Hofstede, & Hofstede, 2005)<sup>9</sup>

According to the results from Hofstede's Surveys, the United States ranked 57-59 out of 74 with a score of 40 tying Estonia and Luxembourg as a small power distance nation. On the Individualism index, the United States ranked number 1 of 74 countries with an eye-popping score of 91. On the Masculinity Index, the United States scored 62 and ranked 19 of 74 countries and regions. Sweden came in at 74 ranking as the most feminist country in the survey. Lastly, on the Uncertainty Avoidance index, the United States ranked 62 out of 74 with a score of 46 showing weak UAI. All of these scores and rankings come with specific interpretation of mental programming and mind software. It will be interesting to match the historical reality of our educational policies with the predicted predilections based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. We must bear in mind that these are aggregated results of measures of central tendencies, depending on the level of analysis. For instance, it is naïve to assume that because the United States ranked number one on the Individualism IDV index that there are no Americans with collectivist bent.

A study like this will shed more light on the influence of culture in educational policy and form the basis for comparative studies of various national and international educational systems. The phenomenon of globalization affects not only trade, commerce, and industry but also, our *raison d'être* as humankind. Today's world has no haven for terrorism or natural disasters. The

potential effects of environmental and air pollution, lack of sustainable development in agriculture and the hazards of degrading conditions in the biosphere do not have exclusive zones. These are problems facing all humans without regard for territorial jurisdictions of nations. Therefore, we have reached a juncture in civilization where our quest for survival and the posterity of a necessity must cut across national borders and frontiers.

Lastly, Conant credits Frank Spaulding, one time Harvard Dean of Education and Commissioner of Education appointed by the New York State Board of Regents with his deeper understanding of American public education. It would be productive work to look into Spaulding's work and do a biographic portraiture. The problems of public education have deep roots and understanding them can help to anchor its evolving purposes and promises.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Longoria, R. (2006) Doctoral Dissertation Meritocracy and Americans' Views on Distributive Justice Baltimore: University of Maryland, College Park

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, P.M.(2008) A Glossary of Political Economy Terms Retrieved on 2/13/2008  
[http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/diminishing\\_returns\\_law\\_of](http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/diminishing_returns_law_of)

<sup>3</sup> Conant, J.B. (1940) Education for a Classless Society: The Jeffersonian Tradition. Charter Day Address delivered at the University of California on March 28, 1940

<sup>4</sup> Malthus, T. R. (1798) A Essay on the population as it affects the future improvement of Society London: for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church yard

<sup>5</sup> Lagemann, E.C. (1983) Private Power for the Public Good: A History of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching New York: College Boards

<sup>6</sup> Persell, C.H. The Interdependence of Social Justice and Civil Society *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jun., 1997), pp. 149-172 Published by: Springer

<sup>7</sup> Barber, B. (1992) An Aristocracy of Everyone New York: Ballentine Books

<sup>8</sup> Michelli, N.M., Keiser, D.L. (2005) Teacher Education for Democracy and Social Justice New York & London: Routledge

<sup>9</sup> Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. (2005) Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind McGraw-Hill

## REFERENCES

- Adams, J. T. (1931) *Epic of America* Little Brown & Company
- Anderson, J., Byrne, D.N. (2004) *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*. Hoboken, NJ. Wiley Place of Publication:
- Adler, M. J., Mayer, M. (1958) *The Revolution in Education* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Arrow, K., Bowles, S., and Durlauf, S. (2000) *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality* NJ: Princeton University Press
- As Cited in White, S. (2000). Conceptual foundations of IQ testing *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 6(1), 33-43
- Balkin J.M. (May, 2002), Review: Brown's Potential, Still Unrealized Reviewed work(s): What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said: The Nation's Top Legal Experts Rewrite America's Landmark Civil Rights Decision by *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 115, No. 7 pp. 2034-2041
- Ballantyne P. F. (2002) *Psychology, Society, and Ability Testing (1859-2002): Transformative alternatives to Mental Darwinism and Interactionism*.
- Barber, B. (1992). *An Aristocracy of Everyone* New York: Ballentine Books
- Baltzell, E. D. (1964) *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* New York: Vintage Books
- Black, E. (2003) *War against the Weak: Eugenics and American's campaign to create a master race* New York: Four walls eight windows.
- Bodgan, R., & Bilken, S. (1982) *Qualitative Research for Education: An introduction to theory and Methods* Boston: Allyn & Bacon
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital in Richardson, J. Ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258
- Brookfield, S. (2007) *Reclaiming Critical Thinking as Ideology Critique* in (eds.) Horn R.A., Kincheloe, J.L. *Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology*. Volume 2
- Bruner, J. S. (1960). *The Process of Education* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press
- Bruner, J. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
- Brown, A. (1994). "What's in a Name? Response to "Revitalizing the Idea of Vocation in Teaching" *Philosophy of Education* Retrieved on 04/10/2006 [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/94\\_docs/BROWN.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/94_docs/BROWN.HTM)

Bowen, W. G., Tobin, E. M., Kurzeil, M.A. & Pichler, S.C. (2005) *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education* (Thomas Jefferson Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series) Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press

Bowles, S., Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and contradictions of economic life* New York: Basic Books

Bowles, S. Ed. (2005) *Unequal Choices: family background and economic success* NJ: Princeton University Press

Carol, L.N. et al (1986) "School Boards: Strengthening grassroots Leadership." Washington DC: The Institute for Educational Leadership Inc.

Chauncey, H Personal Papers Educational Testing Service Campus Princeton, NJ

Chauncey, H., Dobbins, J.E. (1963) *TESTING: Its place in Education Today* New York: Harper and Row p.18

Cole, M., Gay, J. Glick, J.A., Sharp, D.W. (1971) *The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking*: New York: Basic Books

Conant, J.B. 1893-1978. *Papers of James Bryant Conant, 1862-1987: an inventory* Harvard University Archives

Conant, J.B. (1938) *The Future of our Higher Education: Harpers* As cited in Karabel, J. (2005) *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company

Conant, J.B. (1940) *Education for a Classless Society: The Jeffersonian Tradition*. Charter Day Address delivered at the University of California on March 28, 1940

Conant, J.B. (1948) *Education in a Divided World* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Conant, J.B. (1943) *Wanted: American Radicals* Atlantic Monthly May 1943

Conant, J.B. (1945) *Public Education and the structure of American Education* Teachers College Record December of 1945 as quoted in Passow, A.H (1977) *American Secondary Education the Conant Influence* National Association of Secondary School Principals NASSP Reston, VA

Conant, J.B. (1948) *Education in a Divided World* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Conant, J.B. (1953) *Education and Liberty* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Conant, J. B. (1959) *American High School Today A First Report to Interested Citizens* New York: McGraw-Hill

Conant, J. B. (1963). *The Education of American Teachers* New York: McGraw-Hill

Conant, J.B. (1961) *Slums and Suburbs: Schools in Metropolitan Areas* New York: McGraw-Hill

- Conant, J.B. (1964) *Shaping Educational Policy* New York: McGraw Hill
- Conant, J. B. (1970) *My Several Lives: Memoirs of a Social Inventor* New York: Harper & Row
- Conant, J. (2005) *My Grandfather and the Bomb: For James B. Conant's family, Los Alamos was a grim morality tale.* Los Angeles Times May 2, 2005 Retrieved on 2/5/2006  
<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0502-26.htm>
- Cremin, L. A. (1990) *Popular Schooling and its Discontents* New York: Harper & Row, 33-34, 40-41, 43
- Cremin, L. A. (1957) *The Progressive movement in American Education: A Perspective* Harvard Educational Review Fall 261
- Cross, T.L. (2003) *Examining Priorities in Gifted Education: Leaving No Gifted Child Behind: Breaking Our Educational System of Privilege.* Roeper Review Spring'03 Vol.101
- Davenport, C. (1921)"Research in Eugenics," in *Second International Eugenics Congress, (1923), Vol. 1: Carnegie Institute in Washington*
- Davis, A. Havighurst, R.J. (1948) 'Measurement of Mental Systems: Can Intelligence Be Measured?' *Scientific Monthly* 66:301-316
- De Tocqueville, A. translated by Henry Reeve, D.C.L. (1888). *The State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789 and the causes, which led to that event also known as the ancient regime and the revolution* On-line Books: <http://www.geocities.com/danielmacryan/ancientregime.pdf>
- Department of education's Commission for the Future of Higher Education Charter and Statement of purpose Retrieved on April 17, 2006 from <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/charter.pdf>
- Dewey, J. (1897) *My Pedagogic Creed* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Domhoff, G. W. (2000). *Who Rules America?* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Douthat, R. G. (2005) *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class* New York: Hyperion
- Doyle, D.P., Chester E.F. Jr. (1984). "American schools and the future of Local Control" *Public Interest* 77, 77-95
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903) "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* New York
- Dye Thomas (1984) *Understanding Public Policy* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Educational Commission of the States Retrieved 01/23/2008  
<http://www.ecs.org/html/aboutECS/Awards.htm>
- Fallows, J. (1980) *The Tests and the "Brightest": How fair are the College Boards?* *The Atlantic Monthly* Feb. 1980
- Fancher, R.E. (1985). *The intelligence men: Makers of the IQ controversy.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company

- French, W. (1935) *Education and Social Dividends* New York: Macmillan
- Foucault, M (1981) *The order of discourse* in Young, R. Ed. *Untying the text* PP.51-58 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Gould, S.J. (1996) *The Mismeasure of Man* New York: W.W. Norton
- Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989) *Judging the quality of fourth generation evaluation* in Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. *Fourth Generation Evaluation* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guy de Maupassant quotes". ThinkExist.com Quotations Online 1 Mar. 2007  
[http://einstein/quotes/guy\\_de\\_maupassant/](http://einstein/quotes/guy_de_maupassant/)
- Interview Notes (Personal Communication) with Dr. John I. Goodlad in Seattle WA (2/7/2008)
- Hauser, R. M., (2002) *Meritocracy, Cognitive Ability, and the Sources of Occupational Success* Center for Demography and Ecology Department of Sociology Madison: University of Wisconsin
- Hershberg J.G (1993) *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the making of the nuclear age* New York: Knopf
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. (2005) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* McGraw-Hill
- Hoare, Q., Nowell Smith, G., Eds. Trans. (1971) *SPN: Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hochschild, J. (1981) *American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press
- Hogan, P (1985). *Measurement Implications of "A Nation at Risk"* ERIC Digest (ED) Washington DC
- Hurst, D. and Mott, F. L. (2004, Aug) "Potential Cultural Bias in a Standardized Reading Test: Implications for Predicting Subsequent Academic Achievement" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA, Online <.PDF> Retrieved 2007-04-04 from  
[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p108693\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p108693_index.html)
- Jensen, A. (1980) *Bias in mental testing* New York: Free Press.
- Jensen, A. R. (1993). *Test Validity: g versus "tacit Knowledge."* *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2(1), 9-10
- Jensen, A (1998) *The G Factor: The science of Mental Ability (Human Evolution, Behavior and Intelligence.* Connecticut: Greenwood
- Johnson, P.M. (2008) *A Glossary of Political Economy Terms* Retrieved on 2/13/2008  
[http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/diminishing\\_returns\\_law\\_of](http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/diminishing_returns_law_of)
- Johnstone, D. B. (1992). *The university, democracy, and the challenge to Meritocracy* *Interchange*, 23 (1 & 2): 19-23.

- Jones, M. G., Jones, B. D., Hargrove, T. Y. (2003). *The Unintended Consequences of High Stakes Testing* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield
- Judge L. (2002) *Eugenics (Semester Research Project) - ENGL 328.004 / HIST 1302.106* Retrieved on 03/24/05 <http://www.accd.edu/sac/honors/main/papers02/Judge.htm>
- Karabel, J. Brint, S. (1989). *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900-1985* New York: Oxford University Press
- Karabel, J. (2005). *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company
- Keck, D.J. (ND) *NEA and Academe through the years: the higher education roots of the NEA 1857 to the present*. Retrieved on 12/17/2007 <http://www2.nea.org/roots.html>
- Kennedy, S. (1959/1990) *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was*. Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, pp.216-117.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2005) *Critical Pedagogy Primer*: Peter Lang
- Kirkpatrick, D. (2003). *Little to Show for 20 years of effort, School Reform News: The Heartland Institute*
- Kirst, M. (1988) "Who should control Our Schools?" *NEA Today* 6 74-79
- Kliebard, H. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum: 1893-1958*. New York Routledge 23,179-181
- Kövecses, Z., Radden, G. (1996) *Towards a Theory of Metonymy in Berg, T. Ed. Cognitive Linguistics Exploration Applications Research CLEAR No.1 1999*
- Kruger J. (1999) *Lake Woebegone be gone! The "below-average effect" and the egocentric nature of comparative ability judgments* *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 77(2):221-232.
- Labov, W. (1997) *Some further steps in narrative analysis* *The Journal of Narrative and Life History*. Available online at <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov/sfs.html>
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967) *Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience* Pp. 12-44 in J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press. Classic work focused on the importance of evaluative statements in first-person narratives. Available online at <http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/Labov&Waletzky.htm>
- Lagemann, E.C. (1983) *Private Power for the Public Good: A History of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* New York: College Boards
- Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1996) *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know that Liberals Don't* Chicago The University of Chicago Press.

Lemann, N. (1995, Sept.) The Great Sorting the Atlantic Monthly Vol. 276 No.3 pp84-100

Lemann N. (1999). The Big Test: The secret history of the American Meritocracy New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux

Library of Congress (2003) retrieved on 05/12/2007

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/newdeal/newdeal.html>

Longoria, R. (2006) Doctoral Dissertation Meritocracy and Americans' Views on Distributive Justice Baltimore: University of Maryland, College Park

Magoffin, D.D.R (1916) Transl. Freedoms of the Seas: or the rights which belong to the Dutch to take part in East Indian Trade. A dissertation by Grotius Hugo 1633 London: Oxford University Press

Malthus, T. R. (1798) A Essay on the population as it affects the future improvement of Society London: for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church yard

Mayhew, L. (1974) The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education Jossey-Bass Inc.

McMaster J.B. (1901) A History of the People of the United States: From the Revolution to the Civil War. Volume V (1821-1830) New York: D. Appleton and Company

Mission Statement Retrieved on October 16, 2007 Official Website of the ED

<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>

McNamee, S. J., Miller, R. K. (1996) Inheritance and Wealth in America New York: Plenum

McNamee, S. J., Miller, R. K. (2004) The Meritocracy Myth Rowman & Littlefield

Michelli, N.M., Keiser, D.L. (2005) Teacher Education for Democracy and Social Justice New York & London: Routledge

Michels, Robert. (2001) Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy Kitchener, Ontario, Canada: Batoche Books

National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Retrieved on April 19, 2006 from <http://www.nacubo.org/x6539.xml>

Nicomachean Ethics Study Guide, ND Retrieved on 11/02/2007

<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/section5.rhtml>

Passow, A.H (1977) American Secondary Education the Conant Influence National Association of Secondary School Principals NASSP Reston, VA

Pea, R. D. (1993) Practices of distributed intelligence and designs for education In Salomon, G. (Ed.) Distributed cognitions New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47-87

Persell, C.H. The Interdependence of Social Justice and Civil Society Sociological Forum, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jun., 1997), pp. 149-172 Published by: Springer

- Phelps, D (1996). Terrel H. Bell: The Thirteenth Man, '1921-1996-educator-Obituary: Retrieved on 10/05/04  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0DXK/is\\_n10\\_v13/ai\\_18680671](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0DXK/is_n10_v13/ai_18680671)
- Phillips, D., Burbules, N. (2000) Post-positivism and Educational Research Rowman and Littlefield
- Picciano, A. G. (2004) Educational Research Primer. Continuum International Publishing Group
- Plato, (360 B.C.E.)The Republic, transl. Jowett, B. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>  
 Retrieved on May 20, 2007
- Polanyi, M. (1966) The Tacit Dimension. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- President Truman's Library Retrieved on 3/12/2007  
[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=31&studycollectionid=TDoctrine&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=31&studycollectionid=TDoctrine&pagenumber=1)
- Proudhon, J.P. Transl. by Robinson, J.B. (1923) General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century London: Freedom Press pp. 293-294.
- Ravitch, Diane (2001) Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform Touchstone: New York 133-134
- Rawls, J.B. (1971) A Theory of Justice Harvard University Press cited as (TJ) revised Edition 1999
- Rickman, H. P. (1961) ed. Wilhelm Dilthey Pattern & meaning in history: thoughts on history & society New York: Harper and Row
- Riessman, C. (1993) Narrative Analysis Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications
- Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy retrieved on December 17, 2007  
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/edpolicy/CES.aspx>
- Roger, D. (1968). "110 Livingston Street: Politics and Bureaucracy in the New York City schools" New York: Random House
- Rodgers, E.M., Wang, C., & Gómez-Bellengé, F.X. (2004) Closing the Literacy Achievement Gap with Early Intervention The Ohio State University Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association April 12 – 16, 2004 San Diego, CA
- Rousseau, J. J. (1762) Contrat Social ou Principes du Droit Politique Amsterdam: Marc & Michel Rey
- Seagoe, M. V. (1976). Terman and the gifted Los Altos, CA: Kaufmann.
- Seligman, D. (1994) Foretelling the Bell Curve The rise of the Meritocracy National Review 46(12) 55

Serkar, I (ND) The Sociological Symbiosis of Education and Social Stratification Retrieved on 2/28/2008 [http://www.geocities.com/husociology1/education1.htm#\\_ednref5](http://www.geocities.com/husociology1/education1.htm#_ednref5)

Sewell, W. H. (1992) *A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation* Chicago: University Press.

Shurkin, J. N. (1992). *Terman's kids: The groundbreaking study of how the gifted grow up*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company

Smith, A., (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, London: Methuen and Co., Ltd.

Simpson G. Transl. (1947) *The Division of Labor in Society* Book by Emile Durkheim, Free Press

Somesh, A., Bogler, R. (1999) Tacit Knowledge in Academia: Its effect on Student Learning and Achievement *Journal of Psychology* 133(6)605-617

Sternberg, R.J. Wagner, R. K., Williams, W. M., & Horvath, J. A. (1995) Testing Common Sense, *American Psychologist*, 50(11), 912-927

Terman, L. M. (1916). The uses of intelligence tests: from the measurement of intelligence (chapter 1). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

The Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Expert Testimony Retrieved on April 19, 2006 from <http://www.chea.org/news/Testimony0406.htm>

Trans. from (ND) Bakunin, *L'Empire Knouto-Germanique et la Révolution sociale*, ed. cit.,vol. ii, p. 126.

Tyack, David B. (1974) *The One Best System: A history of American Urban Education* Cambridge: Harvard University Press 11-12, 72-77, 180

Vitella, S. (1995) ETS Program Updates for GRE, GMAT, SAT and TOEFL retrieved on 3/2/2005 <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu/oseas/etsupdate.html>

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962) *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Walton, J., Kuethe, J.L. (1963) *The Discipline of Education* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press

Walton, J. (1971) Clichés and Metaphors in the Study of Education *The School Review*, Vol. 80, No. 1 pp. 76-85

World Bank (1999) "What is Social Capital?" Poverty Net retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm> retrieved on 10/29/2007

Yin, R.K. (2003) *Applications of Case Study Research* Thousand Oaks: Sage

Young, M. D. (1958). *The Rise of the Meritocracy* London: Thames and Hudson