

FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES



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BRAZIL • SOCIAL JUSTICE • HISTORY • AMAZON • ANTHROPOLOGY •
DISABILITY • ATTITUDES • PERCEPTION • INCLUSIVITY • BAHRAIN • TEA
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PREFERENCE • EDUCATIONAL MAGAZINE • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
• PEDAGOGY • MINNESOTA • IRELAND • MEN'S SHEDS • STORIES • OLDER
ADULTS • TEACHING INTERNSHIPS • SPAIN • US • COMPARATIVE EDUCATION
• RURAL EDUCATION • CULTURAL LITERACY • FOLKLORE • SELF-EFFICACY •
ENGLISH LEARNERS • AFRICA • DEMOCRACY • DEVELOPMENT • FULBRIGHT •
HIGHER EDUCATION

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The journal provides a welcoming space for Fulbrighters to share their work and reflections on global issues with a broad audience. It features thoughtful, accessible articles that reflect on how Fulbright experiences have contributed to knowledge and cross-cultural understanding, or that comment on contemporary issues that affect the Fulbright program or cultural and educational exchange more broadly.

The *Fulbright Chronicles* can only succeed with the engagement of the Fulbright community. The editors strongly encourage Fulbrighters to contribute articles or commentaries on topics related to your research and practice and the critical issues of our times. Author Guidelines are available on our website (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

The journal is an independent publication, overseen by the Editorial Board members under the guidance of the Co-Editors. Rob Ellis serves as Publishing Editor. For further information, visit the *Fulbright Chronicles* site (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

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CAN THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM PLAY A ROLE IN HELPING HIGHER EDUCATION FIND NEW VALUE AND PURPOSE?

BRUCE B. SVARE AND KEVIN F. F. QUIGLEY

From time to time, a book comes along that changes your thinking on a particular topic and provides a roadmap for solving a vexing societal problem. Such is the case with *Whatever it is, I'm Against it: Resistance to Change in Higher Education*. The title derives from a well-known song in a classic Marx Brothers film, aptly titled *Horse Feathers*. This book by the former long-time president at Macalester College, Brian Rosenberg, is a refreshing take on the difficulty in affecting lasting change addressing the most difficult issues confronting higher education today.

Young Americans and their parents are increasingly questioning the value of a college education in light of its escalating costs and questionable payoff in career opportunity and compensation. To further complicate the higher education landscape, there is a demographic cliff, meaning there are a fast diminishing number of college-age students and that this pattern will continue to decline another 20% until the year 2035. The result is that tuition-driven colleges and universities are showing dramatic enrollment declines putting many of them in financial peril; this is especially true at smaller colleges and regional universities. *Inside Higher Education* reports recently that in the US 15 institutions of higher learning shuttered their doors just this past year with many more expected to close in the years ahead.

This existential challenge to higher education institutions is not unique to the US. Other countries are experiencing their own crises in terms of declining enrollments and deteriorating finances given the rising cost of college education and increased skepticism about the value and purpose of higher education. Thailand and South Korea are just two examples where declining college-age student populations are forcing the consolidation of overbuilt and under-resourced university systems.

So, what is Rosenberg's solution for this and what does it have to do with the Fulbright program? His answer--easy to recommend and extremely difficult to execute--is to totally reimagine higher education and shed many of the prevailing ideas about its organization, culture, and purpose. Rosenberg suggests starting anew while avoiding replicating the Western higher education prototype. He provides a few compelling examples, among them are the African Leadership University (ALU) and Sterling College in Vermont. Rosenberg briefly mentions other examples of dramatic innovation

that have radically reworked the higher education model like Arizona State and Southern New Hampshire University. These universities are, however, at such large scale (hundreds of thousands of students each) that they are difficult to easily and quickly emulate.

The ALU model puts students (not faculty) at the center of their learning. It is inclusive instead of elitist, does away with majors and instead focuses on experiential learning, promotes building upon existing strengths, and utilizes both face-to-face and online learning strategies. The mission of ALU is to educate entrepreneurial leaders who will solve the pressing problems that plague a particular geographic area. ALU is about moving away from content specialties and being all things to all people. Rather, it emphasizes affordability, innovative critical thinking, ethical decision making, and working with others to problem-solve and creatively devise solutions.

Sterling College, which became a college some four decades ago, is a contrasting example of innovation through narrowing the institution's focus to one subject, the environment, and explicitly, consistently, and systemically linking theory to practice, turning ideas to actions. Both of these are relatively modest efforts. They do, however, suggest that change is possible. They require vision, resources, as well as the leadership with the courage and commitment to change. Fulbrighters could play an invaluable role in supporting higher educational leaders who want to implement innovative change.

Change will not be easy because of the prevailing model of faculty-dominated resource-intensive institutions trying to be everything to everybody. The ALU and Sterling College approach is a refreshing departure from the current emphasis of many colleges and universities to simply stay in business with little thought to either affordability or the mission of serving the public by helping to solve long standing societal problems. That older model of higher education, one that relies upon increasing enrollments (and tuition dollars) to balance the books as well as providing an endless array of majors to attract students, is no longer sustainable. These are tactics that are currently used by nearly every college and university today but are doomed to eventually fail for many except elite institutions with their deep endowments and large tuition revenues.

Places like ALU and Sterling College exemplify a more meaningful way of educating our young people. If scaled up to a point where they are serving many more individuals and their approach is replicated by other institutions, this could be a game-changer, especially in areas of the world where populations are increasing dramatically but educational opportunities are limited and expensive.

The core of many Fulbright experiences is resourceful innovation, generally related to higher education. For any future Fulbrighters, we advise them to apply for a fellowship where they could be on the frontlines of what is happening at places like ALU, Sterling, or other innovative higher educational institutions. Then, bring that knowledge and those experiences back to their

home institutions for implementation. We believe that even a small number of Fulbrighters could play an important role in promoting innovation that revitalizes the value and purpose of higher education.

We are very pleased that we are closing out our second publishing year of *Fulbright Chronicles* with another stellar group of articles. Shepard Forman writes movingly about how serendipity and opportunism enabled him to take a very different path while on a Fulbright in Brazil. Daniel Kelin's Fulbright work in India helped him to devise a drama-based program to help his own students in Hawaii better appreciate their cultural heritage. Iris Happo, a Fulbrighter from Finland, compared the early childhood education of her home country with the US. She makes recommendations on how each country could stand to benefit from the perceived strengths of their counterparts. Fulbrighter Alicia Sianes-Bautista from Spain compared the strengths and weaknesses of teaching internships between her home and host institution in Minnesota. Melinda Heinz, a Fulbrighter from the US, studied how Irish Men's Sheds (social clubs) impacted the well-being of older men. Romanian Fulbrighter Adina Ionescu explored new classroom tactics that can be used to teach students about sustainability. Her work culminated in a national newsletter that was created to teach others about these methods. Finally, Alex Woodman, a Fulbright research scholar at the School of Medicine, AGU (Bahrain), reports on how those with disabilities in this country are treated so inclusively and how policies they have adopted can produce transformational changes in those who have some form of disability.

Fulbrighters could play an invaluable role in supporting higher educational leaders who want to implement innovative change.

In this issue, we are introducing a new feature: an in-depth interview of a Fulbright alumnus. We are pleased to publish the first interview with Femi Mimiko, a distinguished Nigerian educator, whose work in higher education and development is well known. Conducted by two members of our editorial team, JohnBosco Chika Chukwuorji and Habiba Atta, it reveals how Femi Mimiko's Fulbright experience at the US Military Academy at West Point enhanced his understanding about the importance of understanding others and shaped his career in important ways.

Looking back over this past year, *Fulbright Chronicles* published 30 articles and commentaries with 18 (60%) of those papers authored by US alumni and 12 (40%) by foreign alumni. We also published 16 book reviews with 10 (60%) being US alumni authors of books and 6 (40%) being foreign alumni. For our book reviewers, 9 (56%) were from the US and 7 (44%) were foreign. These numbers reflect important progress in our desire to be as global in our reach as the Fulbright program is.

Please enjoy this issue of *Fulbright Chronicles* and consider submitting an article in the future. Please also let us know whether you are aware of higher education institutions that are innovating to enhance their value and purpose and where Fulbrighters are contributing to these changes. If there is

community interest in this topic, we would consider it for a special issue. Our inaugural special issue on Sustainability, edited by Associate Editor Melanie Brooks, will be the *Chronicle's* first special issue and will kick off our third year in mid-April.

As always, we eagerly look forward to hearing from our global alumni family as we work together to shape the *Fulbright Chronicles* to be the best representative of the Fulbright program in all of its strengths and breadth.

We wish all of you a peaceful, prosperous, and healthy 2024!

ARTICLES

HOW AN ERRANT FULBRIGHT SHAPED MY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

SHEPARD FORMAN

ABSTRACT

Serendipity and opportunity enabled this unmoored young man to acquire a Fulbright-Hays fellowship in Brazil from 1961-62. The fellowship was marked by a clash of wills between my insistence on “learning by living” and the Fulbright Commissioner’s strict interpretations of the contractual nature of my Fulbright proposal. The intervention of a renowned anthropology professor opened a path to a professional and personal life that I believe would make the Fulbright Commission proud.

Keywords: Brazil • social justice • history • Amazon • anthropology



PRELUDE TO A FULBRIGHT AND MY ENCOUNTER WITH BRAZIL

I imagine most Fulbrighters exclaim that their Fulbright experience had a profound effect on their lives. The same is certainly true for me, although my Fulbright story precedes my fellowship year in Brazil (1961-1962), extends long past it and was written in large part by my defiance of the rules and regulations the Brazilian Fulbright Commission sought to impose on me. Both professionally and personally, it has led to a lifetime engagement with Brazil and to a rewarding career as a university professor, a human rights and social justice activist, and a proponent of international cooperation in economic and post-conflict peace and development.

The story begins in my junior year at Brandeis University when I was first introduced to the Portuguese-speaking world. While researching a book on Portuguese Africa, Professor James Duffy asked a group of us in his Spanish lit class to help him with some comparative research on other areas of Portuguese colonialism. I literally drew the short straw and set off to learn what I could about the Southeast Asian half-island of East Timor, best known for a Magellan stop-over and its marginal contribution to the spice trade. I found scant information on the island itself but struck a vein of interest in the malfeasance of colonialism and the rights of subjugated peoples that would guide my career in the years ahead.

Bachelor’s degree in hand, I set off for New York to discover what life had in store for me. My application for a training program at the hemispheric shipping giant, Grace & Co., rejected – despite my proficiency in Spanish – “because we only hire prestige graduates here”, I refocused my sights on

Madison Avenue and landed a job writing blurbs on weekly programs for *TV Guide* magazine. In search of something more enriching, I enrolled in evening courses at NYU in Spanish and Italian romance literature, driven perhaps by a vague notion that an advanced degree in literature might steer me toward a career in literary publishing. It led me instead to the Fulbright program.

To pay tuition and cover my boarding house rent in Greenwich Village, I took a day job as functions manager at NYU's Loeb Student Center where I largely managed room assignments and set-ups for diverse university events. It was 1960, I was one year out of college and still figuring out life at 22, when Title VI of the Language and Area Studies Program was introduced at NYU. I recall a meeting with Celeste Coutinho, the administrator of NYU's new Brazil Studies Center, who urged me to switch from Italian to Portuguese. I did so motivated by my earlier exposure to Portuguese colonialism and the promise that I could give up my day job, study full time, receive a fellowship that outpaced my NYU salary and enjoy more of Greenwich Village delights during my now freed-up evening hours.

I enrolled in a reading course in early Portuguese love poems and another on orthographic changes from Spanish to Portuguese, which were fun but concentrated my mind on late medieval language more aligned to vulgar Latin than to modern day Portuguese, not exactly what the National Defense Education Act had in mind. One of my readings, led me to an epic poem about Isaac de Castro, an expelled Portuguese Jew who studied with Spinoza in Holland and, at around age 20, went to Recife, then part of Dutch holdings in the Brazilian Northeast. For reasons unknown, he crossed over into Portuguese territory, was arrested in Bahia, shipped back to Lisbon for trial by inquisition and burnt at the stake after refusing to abjure his faith. Something drew me to Isaac de Castro and, upon discovering that the entire inquisition transcript was intact at the National Library in Lisbon, I proposed a translation of the trial record and an interpretation of the text for my master's degree essay; a proposal rejected as neither history nor literature.

Increasingly interested in Portuguese colonial history, I switched my NDEA fellowship to the area studies program, refocused my thesis research on the role of the Jew in Dutch Brasil and signed on to a course on Brazilian society and culture with the renowned Columbia University anthropologist Charles Wagley, who was filling out the fledgling curriculum at NYU's Brazil Center. Dora Vasconcelos, the poetess Consul General of Brazil in New York, became the patroness of our class, invited us to consular events, an exhibition match with the Bangu soccer club, and the jaw-dropping annual Carnival Ball at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Brazil became my passion, and I jumped when Celeste Coutinho urged me to apply to the recently inaugurated Fulbright-Hays Fellowship program in Brazil, advising me to choose a topic with more contemporary relevance. A short-lived 1930s workers strike in São Paulo had caught my eye in a history course and became my topic of the moment.

My application was accepted with the caveat that I bolster my spoken Portuguese with a three-month intensive language training program at the University of Rio Grande do Sul where, in the summer of 1961, I was placed with a Portuguese only speaking family and their two teen sons who were raising a baby jaguar that took pleasure in leaping on me from atop the refrigerator and a living room bookshelf. I spent a lot of time away from the house, learning enough street Portuguese to augment my fellowship at the horse races and be cited for “most progress in language learning” among my cohort at our certificate ceremony. The best of my learning occurred in clubs and coffee shops with Brazilian friends who awakened me to the importance of contemporary politics. At that time, Janio Quadros renounced his presidency in August 1961 after just seven months in office, succeeded by his populist vice-president João Goulart. The military began to manifest its custodial intention, and I became more attuned to the politics and culture of a country in flux.

A mixture of excitement and apprehension accompanied me to Rio de Janeiro in September 1961 for the month-long orientation to my Fulbright fellowship. Despite the removal of the capital to the newly inaugurated Brasília, Rio was still the cultural and intellectual hub of the country. I became intoxicated with the sights, sounds and tastes of Rio, frequenting the popular dance clubs of ZiCartola and Estudantina, an Afro-Brazilian Umbanda *terreiro* and the Mangueira samba school. I certainly spent too much time on the iconic Copacabana beach. I had come armed with introductions to the family and friends of a young Brazilian journalist, Leona Shluger, who Celeste Coutinho had encouraged me to meet on the eve of my departure from New York. Leona anticipated the energy, spirit, and promise I encountered in this ready-made community and through her I learned much about the aspirations, hopes, and ambitions of young Brazilians. Leona and I would marry seven years later, and together we would build a life devoted to public service now in its 57th year.

RULES, REGULATIONS AND BRAZILIAN DEXTERITY

To fulfill my fellowship obligations, I dutifully attended classes at the Federal University of Brazil and the Commission’s orientation events. It came as somewhat of a shock, then, when the Fulbright Commissioner, Fernando Tude de Souza, reminded me that, “by contract”, I was to take up my Fulbright in the archives of São Paulo where I had proposed to study the 1930s labor strike. I argued strenuously that a more open-ended learning experience in a rapidly changing Brazil would be perfectly consonant with the intention of the Fulbright-Hays program, but to no avail. Not even the ministrations of the *simpática* program administrator, Patricia Bildner, could convince Tude de Souza of the wisdom of rewriting my “contract.” I reluctantly left for São Paulo where, after a dismal week in a dusty basement archive, I unilaterally

decided that a paper on the labor strike would neither fulfill my obligation to US taxpayers or to my own sense of purpose. I returned to Rio, rented a room in a classic art deco apartment building a block from Copacabana Beach, and settled in for a year of learning by living.

In one of my frequent meetings with fellow Fulbrighters, Diana Siedhoff, a linguist who as Diana Natalicio would become the 30-year President of the University of Texas at El Paso, observed that Rio was not representative of Brazil and suggested that as a group we explore the countryside. I immediately signed on, and the two of us set off for Pirapora, Minas Gerais, boarding a San Francisco paddlewheel river boat heading north through the backlands toward Paulo Afonso falls, soon to become one of Brazil's major hydroelectric sites. The boat got stuck on a sandbar for five days, I caught malaria and Diana had me taken ashore at the pilgrimage town of Bom Jesus de Lapa where she correctly assumed there would be a pharmacy, saw to my transfer to a hospital in the state capital of Bahia and oversaw my recovery. We then travelled north to Manaus on the Amazon River where Diana decided to return to her classroom studies and I, now interested in rural poverty and development, determined to travel the Amazon if I was truly to know Brazil.

I spent the next two months "hitchhiking" on my exchange student visa by boat and plane down the Amazon. At that time, students could travel free with the Brazilian air force (FAB), and I managed passage on a plane I believed to be going to Iquitos, Peru, from where I could ferry back across the river to Brazil. To my astonishment, we landed in Quito, Ecuador, for which I had no entry document and where I was detained by immigration authorities. Fortunately, there were Ecuadorian students on board, returning from an exchange program in São Paulo. Mario Zambrano, son of a lawyer and brother of a soccer star, negotiated my "parole" in the care of the Zambrano family, but at the cost of surrendering my passport which I was promised would be returned to me in a week's time at the southern border crossing between Guayaquil, Equador and Tumbes, Peru.

With new horizons ahead of me, I continued south by bus and on truck bed, mostly in the company of patient and kindly indigenous Peruvians and Bolivians, often with chickens and llamas and once with a pet cayman, stopping in Lima and La Paz and villages enroute. This journey included crossing Lake Titicaca on a traditional straw raft and spending a week in Santa Cruz, Bolivia at the home for orphaned and abandoned children founded by the missionaries John and Elena Stansberry before catching the Maria Fumaça (smoking Maria), wood-fired train back to São Paulo, intrigued by the stunning differences in Latin American societies and cultures and satisfied that I had more than met the requirements for a successful Fulbright learning experience.

"Not so," declared Tude de Souza, who called me a "vagabond and bum," said I had abrogated my Fulbright contract, that my fellowship was being rescinded and that I should return to the States, just 3 months into my year-long stay. Depressed, I withdrew to a bar in Copacabana hoping that a beer or

two would help me formulate an undeniable defense. Unexpectedly, Charles Wagley, the Columbia professor who had introduced me to Brazil at NYU, entered the bar. What was I doing there at noon on a sunny Rio day, he asked. I restrained from redirecting the question but told him of my plight. Chuck laughed, said he and his wife Cecilia were going to the Northeast for a semester of travel and research while finishing his book, *Introduction to Brazil*. He said they could use a research assistant and asked if I would join them -- if he were able to convince Tude de Souza to stay my execution.

Tude de Souza relented, providing I enroll in an anthropology class at the University of Bahia with the dean of Brazilian anthropology, Thales de Azevedo. I spent the next six months in Salvador, where I rented a room above the gatehouse of a Swiss cacao exporter and his wife, providentially situated across the road from the *terreiro* of Mãe Menininha, the renowned mother of the saints at the most venerated condomblé in Bahia, where I deepened my appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture. Mostly, I traveled through the backlands with the Wagleys in their Rural Wyllis. Dr. Thales never took attendance for Tude de Souza and too modestly assured me I would learn more anthropology on the road with the Wagleys than I would in his classroom.

I spent much of my time in the company of Socorro Ferraz and Fernando Barbosa, students at the Federal University of Pernambuco and their fellow organizers of Francisco Julião's Peasant Leagues. At one meeting in the rural town of Surubim, hundreds of peasants gathered to receive medical attention (Fernando) and attend literacy classes (Socorro) while a law student instructed the peasants on their rights to land and to fair wages. The local priest called his parishioners, including young boys in the parochial school, to a counter demonstration. Landowners' hired gunmen arrived to break up the meeting and in the confusion that followed, a twelve-year old boy was shot and killed. In what I later learned was a pre-arranged plan, I was hustled away to a safe house while the priest exhorted the crowd to find *that* Cuban (me) and hold him accountable. I was hidden away until near dawn when I was secreted back to Recife and the Wagley's comforting hands.

THE FULBRIGHT EFFECT

Those six "Fulbright" months were probably the most formative of my career. Brazil was in political and social flux marked by spontaneous worker strikes in every sector of the economy, disrupting daily life. Banks would close, schools cancelled classes, buses didn't run. A Carnival song summed it up: "Rio de Janeiro, the city that seduces; by day there is no water; at night there is no light"! The collapse of public services and the failure of state and federal government to address public needs gave rise to the political populism, urban and rural social movements and guerilla activity that would roil the country throughout my Fulbright year. Three years later, on April 1, 1964, I watched the warships enter the bay at Copacabana while doing

dissertation research in Brazil and questioned the value of my academic work as the country plunged into 21 years of dictatorial darkness. Arbitrary arrests and disappearances followed. Friends and colleagues – including the Peasant League organizers mentioned above – were dismissed from their jobs and fled into exile.

I recorded the impressions of that year in an article, “Up from the Parrot’s Perch,” in a book appropriately entitled *Young Americans Abroad*. I later published an article about the events in Surubim in, *Cadernos Brasileiros V* (1963), a Brazilian journal of social and political commentary. At Wagley’s invitation, I went on to do a PhD in Anthropology at Columbia University. I was drawn back to the stark landscapes of the Brazilian Northeast for my dissertation fieldwork and subsequent research on the political and economic engagement of peasants in Brazilian national life. A dozen years of university teaching convinced me I was more suited to a life of activism; I gave up tenure and returned to Brazil as advisor on higher education and rural development in the Ford Foundation’s Rio office, a life-changing career move clearly influenced by my Fulbright experience. I was honored to serve, at President Clinton’s invitation, on the National Humanities Center Steering Committee on the Future of the Fulbright Exchange Program on its fiftieth anniversary.

A dozen years of university teaching convinced me I was more suited to a life of activism; I gave up tenure and returned to Brazil as advisor on higher education and rural development in the Ford Foundation’s Rio office, a life-changing career move clearly influenced by my Fulbright experience.

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Shep in Rio during his Fulbright year

BIOGRAPHY

Shepard Forman (PhD anthropology, Columbia University; post-doctoral fellowship, Economic Development, the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, England) taught political and economic anthropology and Latin American Studies at the universities of Indiana, Chicago and Michigan and the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro; conducted field research in Northeast Brazil and among the Makassae peoples of East Timor; directed programs in Human Rights and Social Justice, Governance and Public Policy, and International Affairs at the Ford Foundation; and founded the Center on International Cooperation at New York University to develop more effective multilateral responses to global problems, including peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction and development. He authored and edited nine books and published multiple articles on anthropology and international public policy. Shep is married to Leona Shluger Forman, a Brazilian journalist, former director in the UN's Public Information department, and founder of the BrazilFoundation. They have two children: Alexandra Joy Forman, founder of the Instituto Urca in Rio de Janeiro, devoted to storytelling with a social purpose; and Jacob Forman, a film and TV writer who works closely with production companies in Brazil; and a Brazilian granddaughter, Lara Rosa Forman. He and Leona are permanent residents of Rio de Janeiro and spend summers and fall at their family farmhouse in Ashfield, Massachusetts. He can be reached at: shepardforman@gmail.com

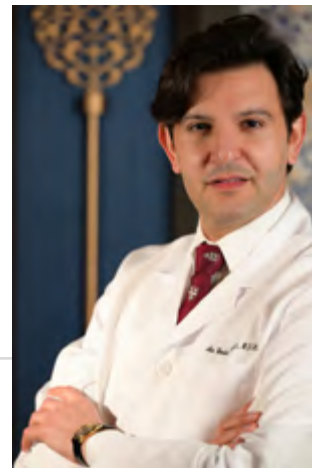
NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US: A FULBRIGHT RESEARCH SCHOLAR PAVES THE ROAD TO EMBRACE THE DISABILITY WITH DIGNITY

ALEXANDER WOODMAN

ABSTRACT

As a Fulbright research scholar at the School of Medicine, AGU (Bahrain), I became genuinely interested in how “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” concept is perceived in Bahrain, one of the most inclusive countries for people with disabilities. I started a series of qualitative studies with the people who have innovative perspectives to initiate a roadmap, which would pave the road for making positive and transformative changes for those individuals who have some form of disability.

Keywords: disability • attitudes • perception • inclusivity • Bahrain



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a disability is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for a person with that condition to perform certain activities and interact with the world around them. An estimated 1.3 billion (16%) of the world’s population currently suffers from a significant disability, and almost everyone experiences a temporary or permanent disability at some point in life. In other words, disability is part of being human.

The political, economic, and cultural context to better understand and support the public awareness of disability rights has been widely studied in Europe and the United States. Less is known about disability in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The evidence from the GCC shows that disability is viewed from different perspectives, taking into account historical time, epistemological outlines, and theoretical models, where the accuracy of disability statistics depends on how each country disaggregates disability. As reported by the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (2022), high disability ratings are observed in Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. There are three main causes of disability in these countries: congenital, disease-related, and accidental. In addition, birth-related causes have been reported in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

As a Fulbright research scholar at the Arabian Gulf University, School of Medicine, I became particularly interested in Bahrain, as it has become one of the first countries in the region to adopt regulations protecting the rights of people with disabilities. With this vision I was able to dive deeper into the concept of “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” which I became familiar with while at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

The Bahraini government, the private, and the public sectors have developed various programs and initiatives to ensure that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of life. These include educational programs, employment opportunities, and access to health services.

Early in January 2023, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the World Health Organization Country Office and UN-Habitat in Bahrain jointly hosted the opening ceremony of an accessible public park, supporting inclusivity in all policies, planning and participation, thereby ensuring that “no one is left behind.” Another distinctive initiative aimed at inclusivity and equal opportunities for all is the Muhfiz.in.bh community in Bahrain. The community was created to collaborate with various sectors of the government and society of Bahrain in order to support the well-being of people with disabilities and find better opportunities for them to express and present their potential and talent.

This approach to care harmonizes with “*Nothing About Us Without Us*”, a philosophy that originated in the disability rights movement, allowing the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in the development of their access to public spaces, transport, and the urban landscape or their inclusion in the social and cultural life of the country. People with disabilities have formed a wide range of organizations to meet political and personal needs, and the slogan “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” has become the core of these organizations, including social clubs, fundraising initiatives, national and regional alliances. The main goal was to understand anything about people with disabilities or the disability rights movement by recognizing their individual and collective needs.

With the brief evidence set out in this section, it would be fair to conclude that Bahrain is one of the most inclusive countries in the world for people with disabilities. However, what is less well known about Bahrain is whether and how the concept of “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” is being adapted for people with mental and cognitive impairments, as these impairments collectively constitute the largest “category” of disability in the country; as of 2020 n= 7468 cases. In my next series of studies on disability in Bahrain, I aim to sit down with the people who initiate and make positive changes in the lives of people who have some form of disability, and how they “include” people with mental and cognitive impairments, thereby diving deeper into the concept of “*Nothing About Us Without Us*.”

My first discussion was with Mr. Riyadh Al-Marzouq, Chair of the Bahraini Catalysts Disabilities Association. To maintain the transparency of the study for the purposes of reliability and validity, the discussion is presented in its entirety.

DISCUSSION

What is the strategic goal of the disability rights movement in the Bahraini Catalysts Disabilities Association (BCDA)? And what are the current challenges?

The Bahrain Disability Association aims to improve the accessibility and equitable opportunity to education, healthcare, and career services for disabled individuals. The laws created to preserve the rights of disabled individuals are already in place. However, the enforcement and moderation of such laws leave a lot to be desired. It is our goal to form a platform for disabled individuals in Bahrain, so we might help to ensure that their needs are met and their growth is facilitated.

The challenges we face here at the BCDA are largely financial and cultural. The majority of the BCDA's expenditure goes towards supporting disabled individuals who belong to disenfranchised or working-class families. The medical cost of catering to a physically disabled individual usually ranges from 100 to 1000 BHD per month. The BCDA reaches out to financially support those in need with the funds provided through government institutions and humanitarian charities, but regrettably, we lack the funding needed to support all our cases.

There is also a lack of awareness of the challenges disabled individuals face outside of the small circles that include them. In Bahrain, educational institutes are legally required to adapt to cater to their disabled students from the primary to high school levels. However, there is little support at the pre-school level and in higher education. The former results in disabled children being unprepared for the challenges they must face in their formative years, while the latter diminishes their chances of following a career path, about which they might feel passionate. Universities in Bahrain often deny prospective disabled students access to certain colleges and specializations, despite them proving exceptional capability, which is something they should not feel the need to prove in the first place.

There is still a lack of awareness of the problems faced by people with disabilities outside the circles to which they belong.

The laws that exist to ensure equitable opportunity for disabled individuals need to be revised to include those endeavors that disabled individuals find needlessly challenging. Moreover, the legal enforcement of such laws needs to be approached with greater vigilance to avoid tokenization.

How is the concept of “Nothing About Us Without Us” incorporated in the mission of the Bahraini Catalyst Disabilities Association?

The concept of “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” perfectly aligns with our mission statement. It is imperative to our goals that we listen intently to the needs and struggles of the people who need our aid. Having open lines of communication with disabled individuals and their families is a fundamental part of our job as mediators on their behalf, to interested parties, and government institutions.

How does culture influence public attitudes towards disability in Bahrain?

One of the primary motives for founding this association was to fight our culture’s preconceived notions regarding the capabilities, rights, and struggles of disabled individuals. Research shows a troubling degree of ignorance towards these issues among communities that do not have close ties to disabled individuals. That very ignorance further propagates the struggles disabled individuals face, and we intend to help rectify that by communicating our community’s perspectives through literature, seminars, etc.

Much work has been done for people with physical disabilities, but less is known about people with mental disorders. Please discuss initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity for this particular group. Do they or their relatives participate in the development of such initiatives?

Our association also dedicates itself to aiding people suffering from mental disability of varying degrees of severity. This is often achieved through arranging counseling with professional psychiatrists, and through communicating their struggles to the relevant institutions with the highest degrees of discretion possible. However, we still lack the funding and experienced professionals among our ranks to provide reliable aid to a significant number of individuals suffering from mental disabilities. Regrettably, we are unable to help individuals suffering from severe cases of autism or other mental disorders that deem them a threat to themselves or those around them. Whenever we are approached by individuals who need that kind of aid, we do our best to connect them to other institutions whose skill sets fall within this specific kind of disability.

What can you tell us about your experience with your own disability, and what drove you to help find this association?

Growing up as a disabled kid in a time when public facilities were not equipped to accommodate disabled individuals was very difficult. I was the kid in a wheelchair whose brother was a known athlete in our community. The kid whose father would carry him to class every day. I suffered endless

disrespect and belittlement; at best, I was the weak and fragile kid who lacked physical and - presumably - intellectual autonomy, and at worst, the class magnet for ridicule. My struggles were lost on them, and I came close to losing my once indomitable spirit.

I was later admitted into a special needs program formed in 1982, and with the abuse I suffered behind me, I recomposed myself once more. I was adamant about making sure that my voice was heard; that I and others like me be treated like peers, not ridiculed nor patronized. I wanted to prove that I was just as capable as my athlete brother. And I wanted to honor my late father, who, like many parents of disabled children, was endlessly supportive and kind to those who needed it. With those goals set before me, I felt in my heart that I could do anything, and I remain grateful for that strength.

CONCLUSION

For decades, the “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” philosophy has called for strengthening health care providers, governments, educators, and community training in responding to the needs of people with disabilities. However, there is still a lack of awareness of the problems faced by people with disabilities outside the circles to which they belong. Therefore, having open lines of communication with people with disabilities and their families is fundamental to the progress of inclusion in Bahrain and the GCC.

The experience gained through this qualitative study allowed me to rethink how inclusive communities truly are in the United States. Recent data shows that the United States is among the countries that provide an inclusive and equitable environment for people with disabilities, as disabilities affect approximately one in four (26%) of the US population. In addition, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed by the US Congress in 1990, provides equal opportunity and the right for people with disabilities to be accommodated in the United States, when necessary so they can study or work. However, a question that arises that will inform new research, beyond large community and national studies, is how the concept of “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” is practiced in small communities in the United States and what is the level of participation of people with disabilities in inclusive programs and projects. This became my vision for future research based on the experiences I had embraced in Bahrain.

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Introducing the concept of “Nothing About Us Without Us” to my students in the Gulf

BIOGRAPHY

Alexander Woodman (Fulbright Scholar, 2023-2024) is a licensed public health and clinical researcher. The primary focus of his research is advancing global reproductive health, medical education, and practice. He graduated with honors from UCLA, Harvard Medical School, and Yale University. In his research, Alexander merges epidemiological data with state-of-the-art laboratory technologies to find new ways to understand a variety of health conditions impacting the daily life of the public. He can be contacted at alexwoodman.ucla@gmail.com

FULBRIGHT TEA ALUMNI COLLABORATION: MAKING AN IMPACT

ADINA IONESCU

ABSTRACT

The Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (Fulbright TEA) Program I attended in 2022 was an opportunity for me to connect with other teachers with the same interests from Europe and Asia and to organize a project focused on creating sustainable futures. All the participants (teachers and their students) wrote articles about their educational experiences in order to share their best practices. All their articles were published in the national educational magazine I coordinate.

Keywords: TEA alumni collaboration • sustainable future • sexual partner preference • educational magazine



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As a teacher of English as a Second Language for almost 15 years, I worked in two vocational High schools: A Sports' High school, for two years, after graduating from university, and in a Technological High school, for the past 13 years. Roşia-Jiu Technological High School is a non-profit educational organization. It is a vocational secondary state school based in the rural southwestern part of Romania. The primary educational areas of the school are: Economic profile with a specialization as an administrative technician, Environmental Protection with a specialization as an ecological technician, and Vocational Education/Trade profile with a specialization as a merchant/seller.

The aim of our technical school is to engage our students in activities related to the integration of different types of education. We focus on their communication and entrepreneurial skills, so as to enable them to contribute to the development of our community and our society overall. We have been involved in projects which aim at reducing the school dropout rate and increasing our students' ability to pass exams. We make partnerships with different organizations in our community, including non-profit organizations; we cooperate with partners in the private and public sectors, as well as international organizations.

I have always been interested in taking part in different cultural and educational exchange projects. These projects have taken me to other locations in Europe, South Korea and Japan.

I have also applied for various European grants, such as the Erasmus Plus, which is a European Union life-long learning program that takes place in a non-formal environment. It offers stipends and opportunities for individuals and organizations, in order to support education, training, youth development and sports.

In contrast to formal education, which involves a structured educational system and is usually supported by the state, non-formal education involves activities which are not structured and take place outside the formal system. It is designed to develop a range of skills and competencies that are supplementary and outside of the formal educational curriculum. In the non-formal education environment, cooperation replaces competition, education is related to lifelong learning requirements of the individual and the group, and support of each learner becomes the objective.

Throughout my experience, I have focused on the integration of non-formal education within the formal education system and I have included activities based on experiential learning during my classes. Experiential learning is based on the theory developed by Kolb, who believed that knowledge comes from the transformation of experience. For example, the methods and techniques that are employed include lectures or presentations that allow space for asking questions or feedback, master classes, visits and learning through concrete experience and discussions or debates, such as group –building activities.

Apart from teaching, I have also been a member and a project coordinator in nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in Romania, leading me to start my very own Youngsters of Europe Association. The organization aims to promote and support the common interests of young people locally, nationally and internationally. It focuses on the prevention of social exclusion of children (inclusive education) and it examines the potential of other countries' traditional cultures (intercultural education). As a president and project coordinator of my NGO, I initiated partnerships with the High School where I work, which is a vocational school situated in a rural area, as well as with a large number of schools and organizations throughout Romania.

Within some of these European projects, I was a youth leader of student groups from my school which sometimes included disadvantaged families. These exchange programs proved fruitful because students had the chance to experience new cultures for the first time, meet and collaborate with diverse people, and be exposed to a non-formal type of education. This educational approach focuses on group workshops, gamification, and other topics of their interest which are not usually discussed within formal educational settings. My students were all grateful for these experiences and I was happy to have made a difference in their lives.

Starting from the belief that a modern conception of teaching is based on the use of active-participative methods and techniques along with the use of new technologies and authentic materials, I decided to apply for The Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (Fulbright TEA) Program in the United States of America. I had never applied for a Fulbright scholarship before, and luckily, I was selected for the 6-week TEA program.

The program took place from the 25th of January to mid-March 2022 at Kent State University. I flew to Chicago O'Hare airport for the second time in 15 years. Upon our arrival, the participants were quarantined for 1 week while doing some of the seminars and getting-to-know each other activities online.

TEA ACTIVITIES

As part of the six-week Fulbright program, I took part in extensive professional development training, which included 45 hours of seminars on general pedagogy (e.g. student-centered learning, curriculum development, lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, and teacher leadership), 35 hours of training in teaching English and Media Literacy, and 20 hours of instruction in the effective use of technology in the classroom (e.g. low-tech options, free and open-source technologies, Web 2.0 technologies).

During the General Academic Sessions we focused on the insertion of media literacy and technology into authentic materials, which proved beneficial to our students back in our home school environments. The participants also discussed Leadership practices, did Lesson Plan workshops, peer reviews and final presentations, best practice in teaching methods, student-centered learning, and curriculum development. We also focused on the insertion of media literacy and technology into authentic materials, which proved beneficial to our students back in our home school environments.

The course was taught from a Relational Approach to education. For the *Cross Disciplinary* project, we chose a topic related to *Climate Change/Sustainability*, and then mentioned the learning objectives for our learners and the subject area. In pairs, we developed a brief 5-day unit plan according to our students' needs. I worked with another participant from Bulgaria, and together we designed a unit plan entitled *How Europe is Going to Change because of the Climate*. For the plan design, we focused on the *Science Common Core Standard* and the *ELA Common Core Standard* principles. After the presentations, we gave each other peer-to-peer feedback on how we could improve the unit plan.

MEDIA LITERACY: FIGHTING MISINFORMATION

During The Media Literacy Seminars (MLS) we focused on teaching strategies on how we, as educators, could facilitate and teach the best practices in media literacy coaching in schools in order to increase our students' awareness about them. These strategies were based on experiential learning which included invited guest speakers (e.g., journalists, editors, professors, librarians, administrators). We addressed questions to the speakers that were related to bias, stereotypes, propaganda, disinformation, and media ethics. Some of the questions we considered included the following: "What media do you consume for news, education & entertainment? What are the social implications of the new blended and merging cultural phenomena? Have I been manipulated by the media? What is the desired impact of my media literacy project? How can I prepare my students for a future media landscape

we cannot imagine now? What are the numbers of women and minorities in media vs population in your country and how are they represented? What is the connection between media literacy and American citizenship? What “Fake News” is deceiving/confusing your citizens and students this year? How can you address these stories in a convincing manner? Will parents approve?” The TEA participants created in-class workshops for their students, inspired by the resources for Media Literacy which they were supposed to implement in their schools upon their return.

SCHOOL PRACTICE AND OBSERVATION

In order to implement best practices in a school setting, I collaborated with Native American partner teachers to design lesson plans, activities and materials to deliver to the students at Streetsboro High School. Since two of the teachers I collaborated with taught Spanish, we decided to organize activities for the students to understand the resemblances between the Romance languages (in this case Romanian and Spanish). Therefore, I designed some slides containing similarities between the two languages, and others containing some language idioms whose meaning the students had to guess from the choices given. It was an engaging and fun activity for the students and they really showed interest in it. For instance, one of the idioms they found entertaining was “to be caught with the cat in the bag”, which in English means to be caught red-handed.

Apart from these lessons, I also made cultural presentations of Romania in order to support the students’ global understanding and their cultural competence. I presented the students with the details of our educational system, as well as pictures from Transylvania (e.g. *Bran Castle*, famous for the setting of *Dracula*, *Houses of Parliament* in Bucharest, the largest building in the world), and our traditional food.

I visited other schools where the TEA participants were distributed to teach (Hudson High School, Aurora High School), and we also went on a trip to the Amish community, where we were supposed to visit the school, but unfortunately we weren’t able to enter due to COVID restrictions.

All these visits were special and unique and enriched me in so many ways. During the program, I was invited to be a speaker at the Conference on Women’s Day, on March 8th, where I presented on the topic “Gender Data Gaps and Performance in Romania” along with two other Fulbright TEA participants, from Ukraine and Tajikistan, who also informed the attendees on women’s status in their societies.

BACK HOME: FULBRIGHT TEA ALUMNI COLLABORATION AND DISSEMINATION OF PROGRAM

As an editor of a national educational magazine entitled “(Non) Formal Perspectives in Education”, which I founded in March 2021, I initiated a partnership with the Vocational High School where I teach so as to allow our students to get involved in other projects in which they could write articles on our activities and best practices for the local and national level.

The magazine is published biannually and addresses a wide variety of projects, such as: Methods of Preventing School Dropout, Social Inclusion, Ecological Education, Media Literacy, Gender Equality, Inclusive Education, Bullying Prevention, The Importance of Using New Technologies, and Human Rights.

The 3rd issue of the magazine was published in May 2022, upon my return from my Fulbright TEA, and it focused on Ecological Education. As an organizer, I signed partnerships with hundreds of teachers all over Romania who encouraged their students to take part in this project and send in their articles to be published.

The goal of the project, which was entitled *Implementation of ecological education in nonformal education*, was designed to address problems of our ecosystem, such as global warming, plastic pollution, and extinction or threats to biodiversity. These are issues that are essential for the education of young people and are aimed at spreading awareness about the importance of ecological education and participation in activities that lead to solving environmental challenges. It was fulfilling to see so many participants involved in this topic. The project illustrates how we can learn from each other and therefore inspire more effective methods of implementing ecological education in nonformal education systems.

After completing this successful project, I wanted to do more to disseminate what we learned during the Fulbright TEA program while continuing the collaborations I had developed with alumni from the program. Therefore, the 4th issue of the magazine consisted of a collaboration with my Fulbright TEA Alumni, who had engaged their students and their colleagues to take part in the international project from March- June 2023.

All the teachers who took part in this activity supported and coordinated their students to write articles, poems, and stories, or to create detailed drawings or graphics. At the end of the project all the participants received certificates of appreciation for their involvement.

The aim of the project was to encourage the active participation of the students, as well as teachers, youth workers and other social categories to take part in programs for self-development. The project, which focused on the needs of the learners and of those who come from disadvantaged groups, had a clearly defined purpose and used a diversity of methods.

We encouraged the participation of students, disadvantaged groups, and those who were willing to engage in this lifelong learning process, to make a change, to acquire new skills and discover their abilities and develop new competences, including their critical thinking. The international project/contest aims to facilitate networking within and between communities and societies thoroughly.

Knowing how to integrate Media Literacy in teaching, enabled me to use these strategies during my lessons as they are a means of integrating the four language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. For instance, I start each lesson by asking my students to select five news articles of the day from different media (newspapers, magazines, social media) and use their critical thinking skills to decide which ones are reliable or fake. They enjoy the debate and cooperate with great interest. The activities I initiated were valuable for all the participants and was a way to exchange best practices and insights between our schools.

The aim of the Fulbright TEA Alumni collaboration was to give young people opportunities to get involved in social activities that would enhance their potential in creating sustainable social and economic development, beginning with their communities and extending to the international level.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

Though the 6 weeks I spent in the US as a Fulbright scholar was short, it was filled with enriching experiences, wonderful people, and future collaborative possibilities. The aim of the Fulbright TEA Alumni collaboration was to give young people opportunities to get involved in social activities that would enhance their potential in creating sustainable social and economic development, beginning with their communities and extending to the international level. Encouraging our youths to become leaders in their own communities is essential for building a dynamic educational curriculum as well as for promoting cooperation activities between schools, associations and non-governmental organizations.

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Adina with the Kent State University professors and organizers of the Fulbright TEA program

BIOGRAPHY

Adina Ionescu is a teacher of English as Second Language at a Roşia-Jiu Technological High School in Romania. She received a Fulbright TEA scholarship in 2022, in the US. She can be contacted at adina.ionescu85@gmail.com

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA AND FINLAND: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

IRIS HAPPO

ABSTRACT

I was fortunate to receive a Fulbright scholarship to share my early childhood education expertise in West Central Minnesota. The main goals were to collaborate with partners in West Central Initiative Foundation while they were developing their early care and education system and to teach at the University of Minnesota Morris. I toured early care and education programs, met staff, gave presentations on the Finnish education system, and taught at the University of Minnesota Morris.

Keywords: early childhood education • pedagogy • Minnesota



INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a developmentally critical period in a human's life. Safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate care and education are a basic need during those first years, and people around the world are aware of the importance of early care and education. Historically, parents are children's first and most important teachers, with the added support of family and close relationships. However, professional early childhood care and education are needed when parents work outside the home.

Early childhood education is defined as the period of learning that takes place from birth to eight years old. The term "early care and education" (ECE) refers to the planned and purposeful whole of a child's upbringing, teaching, and care, with a particular emphasis on pedagogy. The phrase "child care" –or, as I use in this article, "early care and education" –means the act of professionally caring for and educating young children whose parents or caregivers work, go to school, or engage in some other economic activity that requires their attention away from the care of their children.

During the academic year 2021–2022, I accepted a Fulbright Scholarship to live and experience early childhood care and education in West Central Minnesota. My time in Minnesota was spent touring ECE programs, meeting staff, giving presentations on Finnish early childhood

The goal of my Fulbright project was to help Minnesota partners reframe the Early Childhood Education (ECE) system, making it more accessible, affordable, yet also high quality.

care and education, and teaching early childhood coursework at the University of Minnesota Morris. The goal of my Fulbright project was to help Minnesota partners reframe the ECE system, making it more accessible and affordable, yet still high quality.

In Minnesota, a multitude of advocates act to improve early care and education for children and families. One such dynamic organization is West Central Initiative, whose Early Childhood Initiative program provides a network of parents, educators, businesses, community leaders, faith leaders, policymakers, and two full-time staff who want to develop the best possible care and education for all young children in Minnesota. Because of their background in this area, West Central Initiative was a natural choice as the community partner that helped me in Minnesota. Working with their Director of Early Childhood Nancy Jost, and Early Childhood Specialist Marsha Erickson was a great pleasure. They were key people who helped me in my research on early childhood education in Minnesota.

In this article, I compare two early care and education systems, one in Finland and the other in Minnesota, to discuss their similarities, their differences, and the possible adjustments that can be made to strengthen both systems.

SIMILARITIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

I begin with some similarities between the early care and education systems in Finland and the United States. Both countries started to develop early childhood education at the end of the 19th century. At that time, both countries developed kindergarten, which was based on the theories and practices of the German educator Friedrich Fröbel, who invented kindergarten. His educational philosophy was grounded in four principles: creativity, social participation, free self-expression, and motor expression. During World War II, when the workforce needed more women, both the United States and Finland adapted Fröbel's model into a formal childcare system to care for younger children. The influence of Fröbel's pedagogy can still be seen in early childhood education today, but research and practices in early care and education have evolved since those times. The pedagogical approach is based on knowledge of a child's growth and development. Both Minnesota's and Finland's ECE programs emphasize play, exploration, and active learning as the most effective way to educate young children.

In general, the pedagogical implementation of early childhood education is similar in Minnesota and Finland. In both places, teachers focus on physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, and they emphasize play as an integral component of developmentally appropriate programs for children.

Young children need secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning. The environment must be caring and safe. Both Minnesota and Finland stress the early childhood system as a combination of care and education and emphasize that early childhood education is a major step for future learning experiences.

According to the United Nations' Sustainable Education Goals, all children should have access to free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. In addition, they should have access to quality early childhood care and education. This is the foundation of education in Finland. Through advocacy, Minnesota is working toward accessible, affordable, equitable, and quality care and education for every child. Early childhood is a significant stage of a child's path of growing and learning. ECE advocates are aware of the crucial importance of the early years before school in the success of future learning. The mission statement for West Central Initiative's Early Childhood Initiative is that "*children have the best possible start toward a healthy life of learning, achieving, and succeeding. Parents are involved and family engagement is important*". In Finland, the goals are the same but stated differently: "*to promote children's holistic growth, development and learning in collaboration with their guardians*".

MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

Minnesota and Finland are geographically distant from each other, but they have many commonalities. They both have four seasons, many lakes, and beautiful nature. They also have a large portion of sparsely populated rural areas. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why both Minnesota and Finland have developed a mixed delivery system in early care and education services. In a mixed delivery system, early childhood education programs can be implemented in different ways and places—through centers, school-based private preschools, and home-based child care.

Mixed delivery early care and education means that different entities provide the care and education based on the needs of the family. In Minnesota, depending on the community, family child care, Head Start, schools, and child care centers offer early childhood care and education. In Finland, parents can choose family day care, early childhood education, and care centers or, for example, clubs or playground activities.

A mixed delivery system meets the diverse needs of children, families, and communities and provides flexibility to parents to choose the most appropriate type of early childhood care and education for their children.

DIFFERENCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

In Finland, early childhood education is a part of the educational system, and the right to access care and education is written into law. The municipalities are responsible for arranging the early care and education possibilities for every child.

In Minnesota, the administration of early care and education comes from a combination of education, human, and health services. Early care and education are usually delivered in four different forms: school-based programs are overseen by the Minnesota Department of Education; Head Start and center- and family-based programs are licensed and overseen by the Minnesota Department of Human Services; and several programs within each of these settings may be administered through the Minnesota Department of Health. The involvement of various departments in licensing and oversight of the different early care and education programs creates complexity.

ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

In Finland, each and every child under school age has an equal right and equal access to early childhood care and education. The legislative reform that made this equality possible did not happen without long-term planning, development, and advocacy. In Minnesota, advocates are vigorously carrying out similar actions. In both countries, the implementation of early childhood care and education comes from reliable research, which supports the objectives of and directly advocates for the common goal of high-quality early childhood care and education for every child.

The biggest difference in early childhood care and education between Minnesota and Finland is children's opportunities to participate. In Finland, early childhood education is part of the educational system, and therefore all children have an equal right to participate. The Finnish model is based on an integrated approach to care, education, and teaching, the so-called "educare" model. As care is integrated into education, children can stay in one place full-time every day.

The fee for Finnish early childhood education is income-based. In Minnesota, accessibility and affordability can depend on many factors: the availability of programs in one's community; a family's income or its ability to afford the programs; the amount of state or federal funding for slots in the program; the ability of state or federal funding to support everyone eligible; and, sometimes, access to transportation and parents' work status.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement is an important part of early childhood education, both in Minnesota and in Finland. Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in programs that promote children's learning and healthy development. Early childhood care and education providers must engage families as essential partners while providing services that encourage children's learning and development.

Both Minnesota and Finland agree on the importance of family engagement. In both places, cooperation with parents is ongoing during the day, with emphasis on drop off and pick up times. However, the two places differ in the ways they implement family engagement in early childhood care and education. In Finland, educators draw up an individual Early Childhood Education and Care Plan for a child, prepared in cooperation with the guardians and the child. Early childhood educators do not usually do home visits, but meetings take place in early childhood education centers. Early childhood education services do not offer education for parents or guardians.

In Minnesota, parent education programs are an inclusive part of early childhood education services. Early childhood educators focus on enhancing parenting practices and behaviors, and their intention is to promote positive play and interaction between parents and children. These programs are useful in supporting parents and strengthening parenting skills. Family engagement activities are organized to involve families in the learning and development of their children. There are parent-child workshops, family field trips, family service projects where families can help each other, et cetera. In Finland, these kinds of activities are not included in early childhood education services.

CONCLUSION: ONE THING THAT WE COULD ADOPT FROM EACH OTHER

Minnesota and Finland have more in common in the field of early care and education than it appears at first glance. For example, both Minnesota and Finland emphasize pedagogy, and the program environments are much the same. What is vastly different is the system. Comparing is complex as both countries have unique societal and economic structures. The funding sources and the way early childhood education services are organized vary as well. However, the values, goals, and educational methods are the same.

Finnish early childhood educators are highly educated experts in their field. They know how to educate children and could utilize this knowledge more widely. Even with these strong qualifications, however, Finnish educators involved in early childhood education programs and services could learn about parent education from Minnesota parent educators. Finnish families need support in managing everyday life as well as in improving their parenting skills. The United States has produced a great deal of research and experience on family engagement and guidelines on how to implement it. Finnish early childhood educators have good contact with parents and guardians, but their expertise is not used for educating parents and guardians. Early childhood educators could utilize their knowledge in parent education to improve their work in family engagement.

In Minnesota, many different programs have various qualifications, including assessments, rules and regulations, funding sources, costs, ways to access and learn about them, different government oversight agencies, paperwork for the families and the staff, and different schedules. Therefore, the system might be complicated to understand and navigate. In Finland, the system is much simpler: the municipality is responsible for organizing the early childhood education programs. Regardless of the municipality, the program and requirements for it are the same. Families have different choices, but most families apply for the service from municipal authorities and pay the fee to their municipality according to their income. Every child has a right to early childhood care and education in Finland regardless of their parents' working status; that is not the case in Minnesota. In Finland, the family pays very little for early care and education; in Minnesota, parents can pay as much as the equivalent of college tuition for some programs. Minnesota could learn from Finland by simplifying the system, the administrative work, and the bureaucracy.

When planning and implementing early childhood care and education, it is important to remember that there is no greater investment than quality early childhood education and care. The more you invest, the more you get in return, and vice versa.

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A FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE IN IRELAND: FINDING A NEW MEDIUM TO TELL THE STORIES OF IRISH MEN'S SHEDS MEMBERS

MELINDA HEINZ

ABSTRACT

As a Fulbright Scholar in Ireland, I learned about Irish Men's Sheds and how they impacted the well-being of older men. Hearing the stories from Men's Shed members inspired me to share their stories on a wider scale. After returning to the US, I collaborated with a colleague to make a documentary on the Irish Men's Sheds. The Fulbright experience challenged me to consider new mediums to tell the stories of older adults.

Keywords: Ireland • men's sheds • stories • older adults



THE MEN'S SHED MOVEMENT

In 2018 I led a study abroad program in Ireland with students from my university. While there, we visited a Men's Shed in Dundalk, Ireland. I had heard about Men's Sheds from a colleague I serendipitously met at The Gerontological Society of America conference that I attend annually. This colleague suggested that I include a visit to a Men's Shed. I had never heard of Men's Shed prior to our discussion and decided to add it to the travel itinerary. Little did I know just how influential Men's Sheds would become in my life. While in Ireland with students, we learned more about the expanding Men's Shed Movement. It began in Australia in the 1990s and Men's Sheds can now be found in other parts of the world. Ireland currently has the most Men's Sheds per capita since beginning in 2012. Men's Sheds are a group of men who meet up and enjoy one another's company through conversation, work on projects together (many often involve woodwork), and sometimes go out into the community to attend events or travel together. Each Men's Shed looks a bit different, but the Irish Men's Shed Association has a set of bylaws that each Men's Shed must follow. The rules range from having no alcohol on premises to no bullying and encourage Men's Sheds to create an environment where all are welcome.

At the Men's Shed in Dundalk, the men gave us a tour of their art studio, garden, and woodworking space and were eager to tell us what the Men's Shed Movement was all about. Throughout our study abroad program, the students and I reflected on how engaged the men seemed to be. They were busy, they were active, and they thoroughly enjoyed their time at the shed.

Our visit to the Men's Shed was brief, but I could not stop thinking about it. After returning to the US I read more about Men's Sheds and wondered why the concept did not seem to exist in the US I wanted to find a way to return to Ireland to learn more about the Men's Shed Movement.

APPLYING TO FULBRIGHT

During the beginning of the pandemic, the university I worked for decided to move online after spring break. This shift allowed me to work from home, rather than making my two-hour round-trip commute to the office. This newfound pocket of time afforded me time to do something productive. With two additional hours each day, I reasoned that I could devote time to learning more about Fulbright opportunities and to see if any fit with the desire to go to Ireland to learn more about Men's Sheds. I began researching Men's Sheds extensively and crafting my program statement telling the story of why I needed to return to Ireland to learn more about how Men's Sheds contribute to purpose and meaning in the lives of older, retired men. Most Men's Sheds members are older adults and men (as compared to women) can face more challenges during retirement, particularly socially. They are less likely to have maintained connections and relationships with former coworkers and are less likely to build new friendships. However, attending a Men's Shed allows men to regularly connect with others, and shed visits become part of a routine that they can count on. It is through discussions "shoulder to shoulder" while working on projects together that men often open up to one another and reveal concerns and worries on their minds. As a result, Men's Sheds seem to positively contribute to men's mental health. They provide a protective and safe outlet for men to forge new friendships and enjoy close ties with other men.

As the deadline for the application program neared, I also met with a researcher at the institution I hoped would serve as my host institution, the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS). Dr. Patrick Murray and I met on Zoom to discuss my project. Despite coming from very different disciplines, he was enthusiastic and supportive of my proposed project on Men's Sheds. One of his former students had been a Fulbrighter in the US and he had seen how beneficial an award could be. He agreed to write me a recommendation letter that I submitted with my application.

FULBRIGHT NOTIFICATION

I will never forget the day I received an email from Fulbright notifying me of my Fulbright Scholar award to Ireland. It was mid-April of 2021 and I was finishing up an advising appointment with a student when I saw an email notification from Fulbright pop up on my screen. After the advisee left, I clicked on the email and braced myself for what was in the attached letter. I learned that I was one of the lucky ones selected to join the 2021-2022 cohort of Fulbright Scholars to Ireland!

That summer was full of planning, organizing, and mapping out the logistics of what our stay in Ireland would look like. Finding housing proved to be one of the biggest challenges we encountered. Although we had planned to live in Limerick City where my university was located, we were unable to find short-term housing. We eventually secured an apartment in a small village in Ballina, County Tipperary, approximately 30 minutes from Limerick City. I felt a sense of relief when we knew where our home base would be for the next four months.

SETTLING IN

In early January 2022, my husband and I as well as two daughters, ages 5 years old and 6 months old flew to Ireland to begin our adventure. We settled into Ballina and found the people to be friendly and welcoming. It was a place where children played outside by themselves and regularly visited the petrol station with friends to buy snacks and other treats unchaperoned. Many children walked to school either by themselves or with classmates and I found their independence to be intriguing. Although I considered my community in the US to be quite safe, it was rare to see children walking to school or playing outdoors alone.

We met with my daughter's Múinteoir (teacher) after her first day and learned that she had made new friends and seemed to be adjusting well. But I also discovered that I had already committed a parenting faux pa, I failed to pack my daughter a lunch that day. It never occurred to me that there might not be a cafeteria to purchase food. I later learned that many of the primary schools in Ireland did not have cafeterias.

Later that first week, I met with colleagues at TUS. Our meeting was one of the first face-to-face interactions many of my new colleagues had had in months. Due to COVID-19 precautions, many employees were working remotely. The office space I was assigned was with three other biological researchers. Although we came from different academic disciplines, I became acquainted with those officemates quite well during our daily tea break at 11 am. In the US, my coworkers and I were guilty of almost never slowing down to get a coffee or share a chat during work hours. However, teatime allowed me to learn more about life in Ireland and was a time where I was able to ask questions about slang I had heard, politics, the school system, housing, and

so many other topics. Likewise, I was able to provide insight into how these systems functioned in the US. Reflecting on this experience made me realize that I knew little about my coworkers in the US, despite working in the same building as them as for nearly a decade.

MEN'S SHED INTERVIEWS

The purpose of my research on Men's Sheds was to conduct interviews with older, retired men to learn more about how Men's Sheds gave them a sense of purpose and meaning. I wanted to learn more about how they joined the shed, what they did there and why they kept coming back. After obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee, I began visiting Men's Sheds in mid-January.

The Irish Men's Shed Association saved me significant legwork by having the names of each Men's Shed and its associated chairperson and secretary listed on its website. This allowed me to call each Men's Shed and ask them if I could come for a visit to discuss my project. I was nervous about these "cold calls" and wondered how I would be perceived. I feared the members might be suspicious of my intent, particularly since I was not from Ireland. However, I was pleasantly surprised when the men seemed happy to have me visit and eager to show me what their Men's Shed was about.

The first interview I conducted was in a small rural village and the men there wanted to see my COVID vaccine card before letting me enter. They recorded my name and telephone number, explaining that it helped with contact tracing. They had recently opened their Men's Shed back up and were taking precautions so that the shed could remain open. I asked the men to talk about what the Men's Shed meant to them. Many of the men discussed how they found retirement to be challenging and more isolating than they had anticipated. Some men explained how they had seen their peers struggle and intentionally joined the Men's Shed prior to retiring to avoid that outcome for themselves.

I have interviewed many older adults about a variety of subjects and sometimes during an interview a participant says something that really stands out to me, and I know in that moment that their quote will be used when I report the research findings. One man talked about how depressed he felt prior to joining the Men's Shed. His words about spending his days "*Looking out the window with little to do, wondering what am I going to do today? What am I going to do tomorrow?*" moved me. I remember being transfixed in the interview; his honesty drew me in. I could clearly see how the Men's Shed had positively impacted his life.

During some of the interviews the men asked if there was something I might be able to do for them. Could I elevate the Men's Shed a bit? Show others how important it was? Throughout my time in Ireland this thought gnawed at me. What could I do? How could I share how meaningful the Men's Shed was on a wider scale? I promised the men that I would try to think of something.

SOMETHING MORE

In early April I heard that the Catalyst International Film Festival was taking place in Limerick City. I left work early one afternoon to check out the documentary portion at a local theater. While sitting in the audience I wondered if I could somehow piece together the interviews from the men into a documentary. I had zero experience with filmmaking, but I believed in the power of the stories that the men shared with me. What the men shared was so genuine and I wanted others to learn more about Men's Sheds and understand how sheds can be a resource for older men. Men's Sheds are more than just a building or a group of men, they provide a protective circle around men, insulating them from the pain of isolation, loneliness, and depression.

One of the first people I talked with about piecing the interviews together was my colleague, Laura Gleissner, the Art Gallery Director at the University of Northern Iowa. She had experience with video editing and seemed intrigued by my idea and suggested that I get some b-roll while I was there. Showing myself as a true novice, I asked what b-roll was! She laughed but explained that it was short video snippets of the scenery and environment that could be used to help with transitions in the documentary. I had approximately two weeks left in Ireland and spent much of it frantically driving around to different Men's Sheds to get a few more pictures as well as b-roll footage of the scenery.

After arriving back in the US, I met with Laura to map out ideas for the documentary. I told her that one of my goals was to finish the documentary in time for the January 2023 Catalyst International Film Festival deadline. Laura and I had several work sessions and I appreciated that she always gave me tasks beforehand to make our work time together the most efficient it could be. She instructed me to select the interviews that I found most moving, find music, and record voiceovers to help with transitions throughout the documentary. Engaging in the process of creating the documentary was so rewarding. I enjoyed the creative process of finding the right music to pair with a man's interview that related to the feeling he was evoking. I was also excited about disseminating the information beyond an academic journal and increasing the likelihood that a more diverse audience would engage with the content.

We submitted the documentary on time, and I know without Laura's help and ability to seamlessly navigate the video editing software, there would not be a Men's Shed documentary. I am forever grateful to Laura for investing in this project and believing in its value. In February 2023 we learned that the Irish Men's Shed documentary was selected for inclusion in the Catalyst International Film Festival. The acceptance into the film festival exceeded my wildest expectations and allowed me to create a platform to increase awareness and understanding of what Men's Sheds are. Our documentary premiered in April 2023 along with other documentary shorts in Limerick City. In addition, the YouTube link to the documentary has received comments from viewers around the world, increasing the likelihood that more people understand what Men's Sheds are.

The Fulbright experience also encouraged me to seek out interdisciplinary collaborations and has expanded the way I think about research dissemination, particularly that art and film can be valuable mediums to tell the stories of older adults.

THE CONTINUED IMPACT OF FULBRIGHT

My Fulbright experience continues to impact me in significant and exciting ways. First, it has paved the way for exciting collaborations with colleagues in the US and Ireland. Likewise, it has encouraged me to think more globally about my research. I have always been interested in purpose and meaning in older adulthood, but I want to continue exploring these topics in diverse cultures and contexts. The Fulbright experience also encouraged me to seek out interdisciplinary collaborations and has expanded the way I think about research dissemination, particularly that art and film can be valuable mediums to tell the stories of older adults.

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Dr. Heinz outside of the Dooradoyle Raheen Men's
Shed in Limerick City, Ireland

BIOGRAPHY

Melinda Heinz is an Assistant Professor of Family Services at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa. She received a Fulbright Scholar award to Ireland in 2022. She can be contacted at melinda.heinz@uni.edu

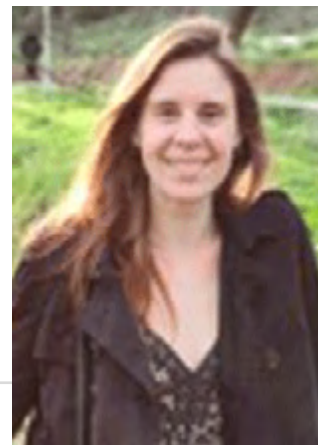
TEACHING INTERNSHIPS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA (SPAIN) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE AT WISE (US): EXPERIENCES FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

ALICIA SIANES-BAUTISTA

ABSTRACT

During my stay as a Fulbright Postdoc Scholar at the University of Virginia's College at Wise (VA) I collaborated in teacher training internships. This paper summarizes this experience from a comparative view, contrasting the strengths and weaknesses of teaching internships between my home and host institution. Results show that in Extremadura the courses offer students more specialization, whereas student monitoring from both the College Supervisor and the Mentor Teacher is higher in Virginia.

Keywords: teaching internships • Spain • US • comparative education • rural education



INTRODUCTION

When I was thinking about applying for a Fulbright Scholarship, I was more interested in finding a public host university than a private university for selected elites. The main reason that supported this preference was my interest in getting to know the diversity America is worldwide known for. Considering my academic trajectory in comparative education, I wanted to learn as much as possible about American education, as well as delve into the Appalachian sociocultural background of The University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA Wise). One of the practices that I enjoyed the most was related to how teaching internships were implemented. Since both my home institution (Universidad de Extremadura, Spain) and UVA Wise belong to rural regions, I considered contrasting my experience assisting teaching interns in both places. The purpose of this paper is to extend to the academic community how future teachers are trained through their internships in rural areas of Spain and the United States from a comparative perspective.

Methodologically there is a triangulation between participant observation and official primary sources from both institutions. But first it is important to provide an approximation to the context of these institutions and briefly describe them.

The 21st Century has been incredibly influenced by the advent of globalization and postmodernism in every social and educational context of western societies. However, a rural exodus continues to take place, translating into a significant problem for the development of the less inhabited areas. In the case of Spain, Extremadura not only is the Autonomous Community that has a higher percentage of rural population (49.1%), but also is one of the regions in which the population has encountered a higher decrease and, according to predictions, will continue on this trajectory in the future. The situation is also applicable to Appalachia (US), particularly as Appalachian counties are currently the ones that suffer the biggest population decrease. Due to the great geographic extension of Appalachia, this paper's focus is centered on the area of Southwest Virginia, where UVA Wise is located.

In terms of background, the Teacher Training College (*Facultad de Formación del Profesorado*, in Spanish) is the oldest center at the University of Extremadura (UEX). It was initially an autonomous institution named Normal School for Teachers from Cáceres (*Escuela Normal de Maestros de Cáceres*, in Spanish), but when the UEX was created in 1973 the New School became part of it. Today, UEX provides undergraduate, graduate and PhD programs at two campuses located in Badajoz and Cáceres and two university centers in Mérida and Plasencia.

In 1954 a modest College opened its doors for the first time in Wise County (VA, US) – it was initially named Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia. Currently, UVA Wise is a residential campus of a public College of liberal arts located in a rural area in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia that provides undergraduate Higher Education programs to 2,021 students. It is part of The University of Virginia and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College.

TEACHING INTERNSHIPS AT UEX AND UVA WISE

This section summarizes the main observed differences and similarities between teaching internships while teaching in Spain (UEX) during Spring semester 2022, and in the US (UVA Wise) during my Fulbright PostDoc during Fall semester 2022. Observations are divided in five topics: curricula, seminars, portfolio, supervisors and their duties, and evaluation.

In relation to the teaching internship curriculum, UVA Wise students followed a similar manual, with independence of their field and level of expertise as future teachers. However, at UEX teaching interns would follow different manuals (student guides for the course) depending on the degree

they were enrolled in (Bachelor's in early childhood education, Bachelor's in primary education, and Master's in secondary education). This is one of the main strengths teaching internship at UEx have in comparison to UVA Wise, because the curriculum differs in terms of specificity within their area, field, and educational level as future teachers. This means that each group of students are composed of peers that are enrolled in the same degree. From my perspective, this enables students and teachers to focus on a more individualized teacher training. At the same time, gathering students from different degrees in the same seminars implies that groups of students are varied, and for me that is a qualitative strength of UVA Wise.

Regarding the academic seminars, both institutions require compulsory attendance and participation for all teaching interns, even though their periodicity differs. On one side, at UEx three are the number of seminars (4 hours each) that students must attend, whereas at UVA Wise the seminars (2 hours each) take place weekly during the whole semester. This means that students at UVA Wise receive more hours of training and guidance in relation to their teaching internships than students at UEx, at least in relation to the seminars.

At both UEx and UVA Wise, two main figures are responsible for the accurate learning and development of teacher interns, which are: The College Supervisor and the Mentor Teacher. The College Supervisor is the main academic reference point that students have during their teaching internships at UEx and UVA Wise. Their duties pertain to the teaching and management of seminars, providing guidance to students and evaluating their portfolios. In addition, College Supervisors at UVA Wise perform another task that is not contemplated at UEx: visiting students (4-5 times) at schools during their teaching internships for observing and evaluating their teaching performances. These visits impressed me as they are something normal and even obvious in the US, whereas this practice does not occur at any public Spanish university. In Spain the relationship between College Supervisors and Mentor Teachers is mostly limited to administration and, perhaps, an optional online meeting. For this reason, the relationship between College Supervisor and Mentor Teachers in Spain is not as significant as those in the US. This relationship and contact is crucial for the further progress of students, the development of their skills at schools, and professional growth.

Another major difference between both teaching internships is in the aim and scope of portfolios that students must write about their teaching experience. On one side, UEx students has the option of presenting a portfolio which mainly consisted of describing the experience of their teaching internship: Introduction or summary of the portfolio; detailed description of the school they have been doing their teaching internship at (classrooms, context, students, teachers, internal organization, etc.); unit and lesson plans; professional development activities; journal; and reflection on teaching internship. In terms of UVA Wise students, they must include not

only information relating to their training internship (lesson plan, unit plan, bulletin boards, use of technology, impact on student learning, classroom management, parental communications, professional development activities, reflection on internship and future education plans), but also to their own academic and professional achievements and ideas (resume, teaching philosophy of education, educational tests, documentation, transcript, etc.). While in Spain the focus is predominantly on the academic, its scope is limited to internship experiences; in contrast, US portfolios facilitate the entrance and trajectory of students into the working world.

In relation to students' assessment, in both cases it is a combination of evaluations from Mentor Teacher and College Supervisor. Differences are evident in *what is* evaluated and *how*. At UEx, students obtain their grades from the Mentor teacher who evaluates students' teaching skills at school, and the College Supervisor, who evaluates seminar attendance, participation, and portfolios. At UVA Wise, the Mentor teacher evaluates the student's teaching skills at school, whereas the College supervisor evaluates students' teaching performance during school (visits), portfolios, and seminars' attendance. Students' assessment, mentoring and monitoring in the US seems to be more complete than in Spain due to the combination of several evaluation techniques and instruments. It encompasses a more personalized assessment, which can be linked to individualization that, according to Spring among other authors, has traditionally characterized American education.

CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS OF TEACHING INTERNSHIPS FROM A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Teaching internships in Spain have a clear academic tendency, whereas at UVA Wise are more focused on the profession itself and guaranteeing the proper integration of students into the labor market. This is a reflection on how American education leans towards pragmatism, whereas in Spain the importance of theory is emphasized. However, the main conclusion relates to the relationship between teaching internships and the attention that must be paid to the rural environment both universities are part of. It is important to establish relationships between teaching skills that are transmitted and the rural areas in which those skills are implemented and developed.

Focusing teaching on the context and place in which education occurs is one of the most relevant strengths that teaching interns at UVA Wise have over UEx students. While the importance of context is encouraged through the students' portfolio (theoretically, descriptively) at the UEx, this is not specifically the case at UVA Wise. At the same time academic supervisors at UEx barely have contact with the very education centers where students undertake their internships, which can be translated in a somewhat limited perception of the reality that students are immersed. This does not happen

at UVA Wise, as recurrent visits from academic supervisors to school as the teaching internships take place (practical, active) is an embedded practice. In this light, it is possible to deduce that the balance between theory and practice can be improved in both institutions contrarily.

Guiding students towards their professional path is important all around the globe, and especially in rural areas, where there is a very high percentage of youth unemployment. Globalization and postmodernism have an unavoidable impact that is latently applicable in higher education too. Teacher interns must be trained for developing the necessary skills that the globalized society of the 21st Century requires. However, at the same time, local needs may not be ignored. Hence, universities and colleges located in rural, remote, and depopulated regions will be required to train future teachers encountering problems and challenges that people from these areas experience, i.e., rural exodus, isolation (lack of good public transportation), unemployment, etc. In order to improve teaching internships at both institutions, the following measures are suggested:

Spanish education supports the notion that to offer good education, it is important to go beyond the standards of learning by studying and analyzing the school context and the close reality around it – thereby, enabling it to be adapted to the direct needs of the school community. The theoretical and academic importance of considering and analyzing schools, their context, and its impact on teaching (especially in rural areas) that UEx promotes through students' portfolios could be implemented at UVA Wise. This could be done by adding an extra section as part of students' portfolio, at the level as other areas within the degree, i.e. teaching philosophy.

External visits are very much integrated in teaching internships within the US, whereas in Spain this emphasis is barely apparent. For this reason, it is difficult for Spanish education policies to provide as many *in situ* visits at schools from College supervisors as are allowed in the US. This measure will not only be challenging in Extremadura, but all over Spain. However, I believe it is something Spaniards can definitely learn from Americans. What could be feasible is scheduling at least one or two face-to-face meetings between the College supervisor and the Teacher mentor at school. This would contribute to College supervisors' attaining a better knowledge of the school, the area itself, the mentoring teacher, etc., and would positively lead to a more individualized guidance of students, in accordance with the context and reality in which their teaching internships are taking place.

In addition, I would suggest training Spanish and American faculty to: a) teach through a local-global ('glocal') perspective, which consists of merging the needs of a globalized world that also considers local needs and particularities; and b) achieving a better balance between theory and practice within teaching internships by progressively adapting the manuals.

HOW MY FULBRIGHT WORK IMPACTED ME

This publication will allow the academic community to know more about the strengths and weaknesses of teacher training through teaching internships in rural territories of Extremadura and Southwest Virginia from a comparative approach. By doing this, it aims to increase the visibility of higher education in rural areas. One of the main goals of the Fulbright Program is the fostering of exchanges with the purpose of increasing mutual understanding among nations, and that is exactly what this paper seeks to engender.

Of course, being a Fulbrighter in Southwest Virginia has impacted me in several ways. This contribution is only a part of it, emanating from the collaboration with other colleagues from the Education Department. For me, being able to experience the two described realities *in situ* has been an incredible opportunity. Maybe it can be even perceived as a romantic tribute to the origins of comparative education in which travelers (i.e., Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris), share their perceptions after being abroad learning from other models. In essence, the Fulbright experience has helped me becoming familiar to American education beyond the books.

Initially, the purpose of the scholarship was not studying this topic. I prepared a combined project for teaching and research entitled “Pedagogy as a scientific discipline: epistemology, history and current situation at Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe.” What I mean with this, is that the Fulbright experience provides as many possibilities as scholars desire, not being just limited to the project itself, but so much more. That said, during my stay at UVA Wise, I participated in a Faculty Colloquium with a contribution entitled “Pedagogy as a scientific discipline in European Higher Education: The cases of England, France, Germany and Spain from a comparative perspective.” I presented the main results of my PhD, which were the starting points of the research project that I developed during my stay there, entitled “Pedagogy as a scientific discipline: epistemology, history and current situation at Higher Education in the United States of America.” I received feedback from colleagues and faculty members, specialized both in education and other areas. As for the research part, this experience has enabled me not only to learn from the history of Pedagogy as a discipline in the US, but also to closely collaborate with a colleague, writing a paper that is in the process of being published. In addition, I joined other colleagues in training activities, among which I highlighted specialized courses about Institutional Review Boards (IRB) for future research works.

The Fulbright experience provides as many possibilities as scholars desire, not being just limited to the project that has been accepted, but much more.

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Dr. Sianes-Bautista at the Faculty Colloquium at UVA Wise (US)

BIOGRAPHY

Alicia Sianes-Bautista (PhD) is Lecturer at the University of Extremadura (Spain). She was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholarship at The University of Virginia's College at Wise (VA, US) in 2022. Her research interest is International and Comparative Education. She can be contacted at: sianes@unex.es

CULTURAL ARTIFACTS, YOUTH AND DRAMA: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO BUILDING SELF-EFFICACY

DANIEL A. KELIN, II

ABSTRACT

During my 2009-2010 Fulbright-Nehru fellowship in Chennai, I conducted a drama-based program in collaboration with the Sharma Center for Heritage Education. Participating students explored the mythological iconography of Mahabalipuram to increase interest in their cultural heritage. I later conducted an analogous approach at home in Hawai'i, where many students are geographically removed from their cultural home. My goal was to help students better understand how culture, community and their own experiences contribute to their learning.

Keywords: cultural literacy • folklore • self-efficacy • English learners



INSPIRATION FROM MY 2009-2010 FULBRIGHT-NEHRU EXPERIENCE

One tenet of a Fulbright fellowship is how the experience influences work in your home institution. In 2005, I traveled to Chennai, India to volunteer for the Sharma Center for Heritage Education, an organization that conducts culture and community-focused programs in local schools. I worked with two small groups of children to devise short vignettes around local folklore and the issue of contaminated water resources. We presented these scenes to appreciative parents and community audiences. The director of the Sharma Center, who was enthusiastic with the work, suggested that I use this creative approach to help students make stronger connections with their cultural past. This led to my successful application for a Fulbright-Nehru fellowship.

In 2010, I returned to Chennai for six months to collaborate with the Sharma Center in two schools, one in urban Chennai and the other in a rural setting outside of the city. I guided 5th, 6th, and 7th standard students in exploring the mythological iconography of Mahabalipuram through drama to increase their interest in and involvement with artifacts of their cultural heritage. Mahabalipuram, located along the coast of southeastern Tamil Nadu, is home to a group of monuments that consist of rock-cut cave temples, monolithic temples, bas-relief sculptures, and structural temples as well as the excavated remains of temples. According to the Sharma Center Director, many of the students had little knowledge of or had never even visited the historical site, despite living so close.

After a visit to Mahabalipuram to closely examine the rock carvings, the students devised original stories inspired by the iconography. After performing their stories for their families and peers, the students read and listened to the historical myths that inspired the carvings. Teachers noted that after the experience the students began to closely investigate and share stories related to those at the monument, and expressed a desire to revisit the site with their families.

This experience inspired me to consider how I might apply an analogous approach to work through my home institution in Hawai'i, a place where many students are living apart from their cultural home. One specific group I was most interested in working with was elementary-aged students in English Learner (EL) programs.

IDENTIFYING A NEED BACK HOME

I conduct arts-centered residencies in local schools as the Honolulu Theatre for Youth (HTY) Director of Education. Many of the schools include quite ethnically diverse student populations, with EL programs that contain a high percentage of Pacific Island and Asian ethnicities, many of whom are first-generation immigrants. In Hawai'i, specific grade levels ostensibly receive lessons about the islands' history as well as that of the greater Pacific region. However, there tends to be little recognition of some students' home cultures, even those who constitute a significant portion of a school or class. In his writing, Django Paris laments that school curriculum and lessons often fail to include the literacies of some students, specifically students of color, leaving them under-represented and negatively affecting their sense of worth.

APPLYING A PARALLEL APPROACH THROUGH MY HOME INSTITUTION

As I carried my Fulbright-Nehru experiences home, I set myself three tasks to help achieve one over-arching goal. The tasks included: engagement of students through creativity-focused experiences, placing cultural artifacts connected to the participating students' own ethnicity at the center of the learning, and democratizing the sessions by providing students opportunities to help shape the learning experiences. Engaging in these tasks would give students control over their learning with the over-arching goal of building their self-efficacy. An extension of Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory, self-efficacy is belief in one's capability to organize and execute one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment in order to achieve self-relevant goals.

BUILDING CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE SKILLS TO VALUE CONTRIBUTION

The creative learning journey with the students begins with drama-based activities and games that encourage an atmosphere of positive and joyful partnership and helps build a foundation for supportive collaboration. The attendant skills help students to not only gain greater control over their own success, but also prepare them for cooperatively dramatizing stories from their own and their classmates' cultures. Collaborative activities encourage students to cultivate empathetic attitude towards all, learning to value the skills that differing partners bring while also enhancing their communicative abilities. In a small study conducted by Steele and Kelin, group members developed ways to challenge and support each other, learning early in the process that when their collaboration broke down, they would accomplish very little while the groups around them steadily progressed. In those moments, the groups needed to problem-solve, suggest ways to overcome their difficulties and make everyone in their group feel successful and included. One student, who proved to be an effective leader, said, "I'm letting everybody share their ideas and we're using their ideas... Trying to make our group balanced, and just do the best we can." By collaborating on their creative choices, groups gained communal ownership over their process and creative products.

As students develop the concept of comfort as a creative collective, we begin the process of dramatizing cultural folk tales. I present a list of tales from various cultures representative of the participating students that includes title, island/nation of origin and a tiny summary. 'The Demon and the Taro. Marshall Islands. A demon tries to trick children using magical taro.' In any given creative learning session, students jointly decide which story they desire to explore in that session, offering them opportunities to have greater control over the process, from planning to assessing and revising their creative work. This raises students' responsibility as well as their investment. Students move from passive listeners to active leaders and collaborators. Students not only have power of their work, but discover the breath of their own creative capabilities.

To be inclusive of all students, we explore various forms of decision-making to embrace different norms and individual comfort levels, ensure that no one voice dominates over time, and foster the understanding that listening, compromising, and making strong contributions together offer them tangible power over how we proceed. We work from the premise that we will eventually play with every story on the list.

Once we select a text, students artistically interact with the story through a series of scaffolded drama strategies. Before reading a selected text, students individually and collectively dramatize short sequences reflective of the tale's central themes ("transformation"), character action ("She conjured magic."), and key vocabulary (with a focus on non-English words). As they draw on personal experience and knowledge related to the story, characters,

and themes to generate their artistic interpretations, students more readily visualize the text and develop ownership over their work. As we begin reading the text, we occasionally pause for the students to create, revise, and expand on key story events. At certain times, if they desire, student volunteers will read aloud short passages. With at least one text, I cut a printed version into small pieces. Groups then piece the text back together as they presume it might read. When we read the text aloud, students listen more closely, curious as to how close they came to the actual order.

As students build the comfort to take greater risks with their artistic creations, I give them more complex tasks. It might be pantomimed encounters between characters or collaborative actions that demonstrate story problems or conflicts. Student partnerships might play with vocalizing a piece of narrative text or improvise a few lines of dialogue that accompany character action they created or they may devise short vignettes and scenes. Eventually, groups share their work with each other, offering supportive comments about each other's creative choices, which encourages greater risks and richer creative work. Each exploration concludes with a reflective conversation about the story to help students consider what makes a narrative engaging and what aspects of the story mirror their own lives.

HIGHLIGHTING MORALES IN CREATED STORIES

One core question we consider helps us all wonder why a story is necessary: What did people who created this story want us to think about? What values are being expressed through the story? How does this story help us learn about life, culture, and ourselves? I endeavor to be open to students' suggestions, helping them to realize that one story can mean different things to different people. And I seek opportunities for them to make connections between stories to discover strong similarities between tales from various places, just as we find similarities among ourselves. Alim, Paris and Wong ask readers to consider educational experiences that avoid expecting students of color to conform to white, middle-class norms, and instead focus on, honor and even analyze those same students' cultural practices and investments, raising their profile and purpose within the classroom.

AT THE CORE IS SELF-EFFICACY

After creatively playing with as many tales as our project schedule allows, students 'write' their own stories. To match how folk tales are shaped by many voices over time and reflective of place and community, the students come together to shape an original narrative. We list various character types and identify which we might like to feature in our story. We then create a story circle, spontaneously piecing together a beginning, allowing ourselves to pause and proceed as desired, to discuss misperceptions or dead ends. Once we have the beginnings of a story idea, small groups each dramatize

different segments of our ever-expanding story. I encourage them to keep adding characters as necessary or desired and elaborate on the story events. As the groups build on the story, I encourage them to think about the tales we explored. What made each or any of those stories so engaging? How might they use what they discovered in the other tales? What might they include that would surprise and thrill the other groups?

We share the developing segments twice. After the first share, each group offers feedback to the others. Which ideas were engaging? What might each group add or expand? What might help them improve their work? We avoid any judgement. The students are there to strengthen their own sense of themselves and their capacity for success. After the second share, each group suggests an ending for the story. I find this one of the more enlightening aspects of this experience. Just as we previously discussed the multiple possible meanings or messages of the folk tales, we get the chance to experience how different groups might interpret our tale in various original ways.

A growing body of research supports the value of embedding cultural and communal artifacts, values, and norms in children's daily learning. Education that reflects lived experiences gives greater meaning and purpose to the learning and, possibly most importantly, encourages pride in who they are and what they can accomplish when given the opportunity to be agents of their own learning.

MY PERSONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Although I had previously conducted programs in other countries, including the short stint in India referenced in the opening paragraph, this first Fulbright-Nehru fellowship in Chennai immersed me deeply in unfamiliar territory. Everything, from food to religion to cultural norms to even daily transportation choices, differed significantly from what I grew up with and my own daily norms back home. The experience encouraged me to not only rethink my daily routines but also put greater trust and faith in collaborating with students. My especially limited knowledge about Indian cultural norms and societal expectations encouraged me to let go of control and welcome what I could learn from the students even as I guided them. I embraced my personal expertise with drama while simultaneously reveling in gaining greater understanding about this new world around me through the students' life experiences and expertise, just as the students were building a deeper appreciation about their community and themselves. I have carried this personal learning into other creative experiences. In my more recent Fulbright-Nehru fellowship (2019-20) and Specialist project (2022), I have taught college-aged teaching artists to embrace a similar attitude towards in-school drama work through the National School of Drama (Theatre-in-Education Wing) in Tripura.

PERPETUATING THE LEARNING

The learning approach outlined here began with historical sites and cultural tales. Other possibilities include personal stories or experiences, local events of note, interviews with students' relatives or local people who experienced historical events. Public artworks, museum artifacts or curiosity about certain geographical or man-made features could inspire a learning journey. Connecting with local art work and historical sites can help students gain new perspectives about their community and its role in their own, their neighbors' and ancestors' lives. Encouraging students to find and share stories or anecdotes, from the past as well as from their own experiences, demonstrates respect for cultural values and norms while cultivating students' sense of self and their place in the world.

Encouraging students to find and share stories or anecdotes, from the past as well as from their own experiences, demonstrates respect for cultural values and norms while cultivating student's sense of self and their place in the world.

At the core of this work is building collaborations and self-efficacy skills. Students learn more about each other through both the creative work as well as the stories themselves, directly experiencing the value of respect, support, and empathy. As they work together to explore, interpret, and make sense of the content material, they become more active, engaged, and curious learners that come to have a better understanding about how culture, community, and personal experience are all an essential part of learning, while gaining the capacity to be agents of their own learning process. My 2009-2010 Fulbright-Nehru fellowship in Chennai offered me the opportunity to lead, experiment with and learn from the Sharma Center students, expanding my repertoire of teaching approaches that ultimately well-served my work through my home institution in Hawai'i.

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2009-10 Fulbright-Nehru fellowship, Children's Garden School, Chennai, India.

Courtesy, Daniel A Kelin, II

BIOGRAPHY

Daniel A. Kelin, II is the Director of Drama Education at the Honolulu Theatre for Youth in Honolulu, Hawai'i. He has received two Fulbright-Nehru fellowships (2009-2010, 2019-2020) to India and is currently on the roster of Fulbright Specialists, having completed a program in 2022 in Agartala, Tripura. He can be reached at Daniel.kelin@fulbrightmail.org. For more information and resources from Daniel's Fulbright-Nehru experiences, visit www.DanielAKelin.com

INTERVIEWS

FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES INTERVIEWS

FEMI MIMIKO: FORMER VICE CHANCELLOR ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY

JOHNBOSCO CHIKA CHUKWUORJI & HABIBA ATTA

ABSTRACT

Professor Femi Mimiko has served in a variety of leadership roles in Nigeria's higher education. His Fulbright Fellowship at the US Military Academy at West Point helped shape his career. It provided him a global network and honed his sense of the importance of understanding others. Although a recognized leader in Nigerian higher education, he is always committed to his students and a teacher at heart. In this interview, Professor Mimiko suggests that the advancement of society is the essence of higher education.

Keywords: Africa • democracy • development • Fulbright • higher education



INTRODUCTION

Femi Mimiko is Professor of Political Science at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Nigeria; where he also trained, earning a PhD in International Relations in 1992. He was at different times, Head of Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University; Head of Department of Political Science, Dean of Faculty, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Acting Vice-Chancellor; and from 2010 to 2015, Vice-Chancellor, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Professor Mimiko has held numerous prestigious international positions including SSRC-MacArthur Foundation Visiting Scholar at Brown University in Rhode Island; Korean Foundation Visiting Fellow at The Academy of Korean Studies in Seoul; Senior Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Professor at the United States Military Academy (West Point) in New York; and African and African-American Studies Associate at Harvard University in Massachusetts.

Professor Mimiko's research interests include Comparative Political Economy, International Relations, Development and Transition Studies, along with Higher Education Governance. His particular focus has been on how the international political economy affects the development process and its implications for governments, aid agencies, multilateral institutions, and civil society organizations. As a development practitioner who frequently

consults with international organizations, Femi Mimiko facilitates the design and implementation of strategies for the consolidation of peace and security in conflict situations, and enhancement of democratic governance across continents.

An accomplished teacher, researcher, and keynote speaker at international conferences, Femi Mimiko is the author of some 120 research publications, and six books. He is a public intellectual who contributes insightful articles on critical national and international issues in several newspapers and magazines published across the world; he has been interviewed frequently in important international electronic media, including the BBC. Professor Mimiko has helped shape the direction of public policy, especially on education in Nigeria.

INTERVIEW

1. Why did you apply for the Fulbright program?

I had always desired the Fulbright fellowship; it is widely regarded as the flagship of all fellowships in my area of study. The program administrators at the US Embassy in Abuja sent just a single application form to our university. Being a relatively new university, it was our first shot at the Fulbright. Suffice it to say that when I got selected, I was not just so excited that I was going into the Fulbright program, but that through me, my university was having a window open into one of the most prestigious fellowships in the world. Another reason for my excitement was that I was headed for the US Military Academy – with its global reputation – as a visiting professor!

2. How did the Fulbright program affect your career and personal life in the long run?

My career trajectory cannot be fully accounted for without the Fulbright! I had been a Reader (Associate Professor) for some years when I got the fellowship. When I returned from my Fulbright, I was appointed Chair. Shortly afterwards, I was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor and moved over to Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU). Two years later, I was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of Adekunle Ajasin University, on secondment from OAU.

3. Have your cross-cultural experiences altered any aspects of the way you interact with people around the world?

The first cross-cultural experience that my Fulbright provided was the opportunity to interact with the men and women of the US Army. I was blown away by their dedication, deep knowledge, patriotism and capability. I came away with the impression that the American soldier is trained to be able to fix anything and deal with every challenge. The Fulbright, and all the conferences and meetings we were able to participate in, all made it possible for me to meet so many people from different nationalities, working

on different intellectual and social programs, with massive impact on human understanding and the quality of human life. It is exciting that I still maintain my contacts with many of the folks I met some 20 years after my Fulbright experience. I am a testament, if you will, to the underlying motive of the Fulbright program – fostering global understanding.

4. The Fulbright program in Nigeria is exclusively for people who teach in the university to travel to the US to study or do research. Would you encourage researchers to go for the Junior Fulbright Program (before earning PhD) or the Senior Fulbright program as mid- or late career scholars?

From my experience on the Fulbright program, I am of the very strong opinion that scholars at all levels of their intellectual engagement – early, mid, or late career scholars – should take advantage of the Fulbright program. The advantage, and fillip it adds to your career are simply unquantifiable. As well, what it means to the body of knowledge that exists in your country, upon your return back home to the development of your career, is not something that should be missed or underestimated.

5. From 2010 to 2015, you were a Vice-Chancellor (President) at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko in Ondo state, Nigeria. What were your greatest achievements?

As Vice-Chancellor, I worked very hard to deepen the quality of University's academic program. We recruited good staff, especially at top level, from across the country. We brought in a number of very senior professors from other parts of the world. We supported many of our younger academic colleagues to study for and obtain the PhD degree from universities here at home in Nigeria, and abroad. Our curriculum was updated, and we received the National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation; as well as that of all the relevant professional accreditations. We quadrupled funding for research, and got everyone busy undertaking one research project or the other. We put in place a governance system that enabled us to run our academic program unbroken for the five years we were in office. We also demonstrated that it was possible to engage students in such a way that you bring out the best in them. My students had very deep trust that our administration was going to do the right things always, and always protect their interests. We encouraged them to organize within the entire gamut of student unionism; gave them responsibilities that built their self-confidence, and launched a student's work-study scheme that enabled several of them to put in two hours of work every day for the University and get paid twice a month. This enabled many of the indigent students to get by, funding their own education. It also put the entire student population on the pathway to recognizing the dignity in labor.

6. A lot of professors who have been vice-chancellors would go into politics after their tenure or migrate to other countries. Why did you return to your teaching job in the university?

Quite a number of journalists had asked a similar question of me, and I often wonder why. For, the truth is that I did not start my academic career with the plan to become a Vice-Chancellor. I wanted to be a teacher and researcher, and later, when I had gotten up enough in the system, I aspired to be a full professor. And so, for me, the Vice-Chancellorship was by-the-way. After spending five years as VC, I had already missed my students so much, especially graduate students with whom I had a lot of robust intellectual engagement, I could not wait to get back to class. Indeed, when the University community began a project of getting the Ondo State House of Assembly to amend the laws so that I would be able to get a second term of five years, and continue my good work, I publicly declared that I was not available for a day longer than my five years.

I also did not consider going to the NUC as several of our colleagues would readily do immediately after their vice-chancellorship; again, for the same reason, that I had missed my students and needed to get back to the classroom. I will give anything to continue to have the opportunity to help deepen the intellectual outlook of younger folks. That was why I chose to be a lecturer in the first place. Let me add, however, that one thing I craved, after my return to OAU, was the desire to replicate what we did at AAUA elsewhere, preferably on the plane of a bigger and older university. That explains my attempt to become the Vice-Chancellor of two of Nigeria's first-generation universities, OAU, in 2017, and University of Ibadan, in 2021. Unfortunately, this did not work out. I guess, from this lengthy response of mine, you have an idea why I did not consider anything outside of the university system after my vice-chancellorship.

7. You have been very vocal on local and international issues in recent times. Do you have any plans to join politics?

I guess I have always been vocal on national and international issues. I did my very first newspaper article for The Guardian back in 1987. It was a critique of the direction of Nigeria's foreign policy. I went on to run a regular weekly column, at different times for Hope newspaper, Akure; and later the defunct Lagos-based Comet, the progenitor of today's The Nation. A good number of those articles were published in a book under the title, "Democradura: Essays in Nigeria's Limited Democracy." I have been privileged to be consulted on sundry issues of relevance to national development and global understanding, on several electronic media, including the BBC; and many newspapers and magazines, across the world.

The truth, even in the realm of pure intellectualism, is that I have come to a stage now in my career where I do more policy related research and publications. I have always held what I call a utilitarian view of scholarship: the entire purpose of the academe, of scholarship, of intellectualism, is the advancement of society. This is what has guided my scholarship.

I have always held what I call a utilitarian view of scholarship: the entire purpose of the academe, of scholarship, of intellectualism, is the advancement of society. This is what has guided my scholarship.

Now to the issue of whether I want to go into politics, my attitude is that, yes, I am a Political Scientist, but I do not have to be a partisan politician to function as a Political Scientist. I see my usefulness only in relation to identifying the more responsible elements in the political space, people who mean well, and I give them the little support I am able to, especially in sharpening their focus on developmental issues, and deepening their commitment to the execution of their mandate, either as elected or appointed officials.

8. Several academics are in Nigerian politics but the political system has not been very efficient. Why is this so?

That one is an academic is not a guarantee that they would do well in public office. A number of factors account for responsible leadership, and good education is just one of them. This is often taken for granted, but the truth is not everyone possesses the capacity to get things done. I have lived and researched long enough on the subject of development, and political and economic transition to know that many folks who seek positions, or are drafted into same, do not know a hoot about what to do with such big titles and the big offices they hold. There is also the issue of integrity, character, social commitment and clarity of thoughts and vision. Of course, courage of conviction is also essential. As an office holder, are you strong enough to push back on some of the more destructive proclivities that you find entrenched in the system; or are you the type that would just let things pass, allow sleeping dogs to lie, because you do not want to be put down as a disrupter? So, the point I am making is that there are so many issues that account for effectiveness in public office. Yes, if you are an academic, your education may predispose you to acting well. But beyond that, there is nothing that says that being an academic, ipso facto, makes you a competent, efficient, or responsible player in public office.

9. How satisfied are you with the number of Nigerian scholars who have the chance to study, research, or teach in the US through

Fulbright; and to what extent is Nigeria’s diversity reflected in the program by way of inclusiveness and accessibility?

I am a member of the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nigeria (FAAN), where hundreds, I dare say, of us, are. I actually gave the keynote address at our 14th Annual Conference held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, in April 2022. I have found these academics, including our junior colleagues who went through the junior Fulbright program, quite impressive and doing well in their different areas of endeavor. I would wish that the American government makes more slots on the Fulbright available to Nigerian academics.

10. Given your experience in international relations and development, what impacts do you believe the Fulbright program can play in the global peace and development today?

The primary goal of the Fulbright is to facilitate global understanding. When people work in silos, when they do not interact, it is pretty difficult to understand each other’s cultures and tendencies. But with interaction, you develop deep understanding of the different cultures and can cultivate the attitude of engaging other cultures on the basis of respect. All of this helps promote peace and stability in the global system. I wish the world had had many more Fulbright alumni. It certainly would have made the world a better, more secure, peaceful, and enjoyable world.

This interview conducted on August 20, 2023 has been edited for clarity and to assist in reading.

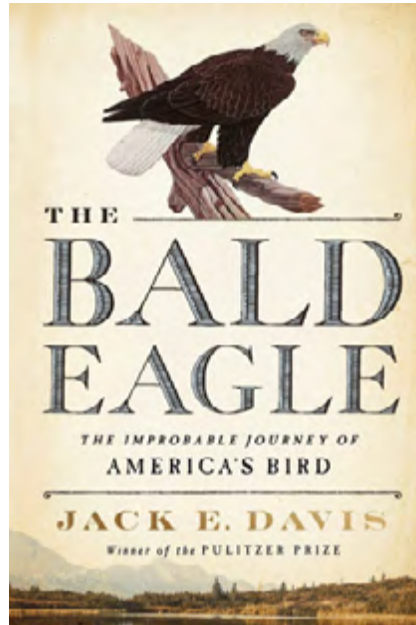
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REVIEWS

A NATIONAL BIRD AND AN INTERNATIONAL MESSAGE

DANIEL HOPKINS



The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird by Jack E. Davis, who was a Fulbright Scholar to Jordan in 2002.

Jack E. Davis has enjoyed a celebrated career as an environmental historian since his time as a Fulbright Scholar to Jordan over twenty years ago. The author of 10 books, including the Pulitzer-Prize-winning *The Gulf: The Making of an American Sea* (2019), Davis has followed up with *The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird*. Here, Davis crafts a comprehensive narrative for a species that became so important to the country and whose story is so important for the world.

The Bald Eagle forces the reader to reflect on several ironies about America's bird and America's relationship with the bird. First, while the bald eagle poses as noble and free, many of the earlier characterizations of the bird (even by John James Audubon) included words like "tyrant" and "thief." Many bald eagles do steal the dinners of ospreys, leading to Benjamin Franklin's famous jest that a more moral bird, like the turkey, should be on the national seal instead. Yet, Davis acknowledges putting human characteristics on the bird's behavior was unfair.

While Americans closely associate their national values with the prestige of the bald eagle, the bird's plight more closely mirrors that of the original peoples of North America, a second irony. In the

Davis makes clear that just as Native Americans were ignominiously uprooted from their homes and ancestral lands, "America's Bird" was too.

next section of the book, Davis makes clear that just as Native Americans were ignominiously uprooted from their homes and ancestral lands, “America’s Bird” was too. He goes on to demonstrate the relationship between the bald eagle and the myriad of Native American tribes living across North America. By doing so, Davis paints a picture of two species, alike in their natural heritage and suffering a similar fate, and reminds us, “Anthropology preserved artifacts but not Indians; the Great Seal of the United States preserved a symbol but not a bird” (200-201). Further, he does an effective job identifying a new cultural paradigm toward the natural world: “Inevitably, nature as a resource eclipsed nature as cultural identity” (8). Indigenous peoples saw themselves as a part of nature, with eagles, at times, even representing deities; the Americans, however, believed that nature was something to be tamed, and eagles were nothing more than “predatory pest[s]” (163).

This appraisal of bald eagles as a predatory nuisance certainly contributed to their precipitous decline. As recently as 1978, the bald eagle was listed as “endangered” in forty-three out of the forty-eight lower states. Davis identifies multiple causes, such as protective ranchers and habitat loss, but he focuses much of his attention on the devastating impacts of DDT, providing an effective summary of its history and how it came to impact bald eagles specifically.

Davis continually reminds us of the dual roles the bald eagle played throughout American history: “In one universe people hunted it down; in the other, the Americanization of popular culture raised it up. The bald eagle was object and ornament” (136).

The Bald Eagle, however, is ultimately a patriotic and inspirational survival story. From Charles Broley, a retiree in Florida who pioneered tagging bald eagles, to Doris Mager -- the “Eagle Lady” -- who staged a “nest-in” (literally living in a bird’s nest in a tree for six days) to raise awareness and funds for the bald eagle, Jack Davis provides a complete account of the successes of grassroots lobbying, scientific preservation, and government regulation. Scientist and volunteer- led “hacking” programs helped introduce bald eagles back into their native habitats, and the 1940 Bald Eagle Protection Act was the first law that actively worked to protect America’s bird. The greatest protections came, as Davis noted, from the Endangered Species Act which required a 330-foot distance between development and bald eagles nests. Between this and other protections for birds and the environment, bald eagle numbers have rebounded from the brink of extinction to over 10,000 nesting pairs in the lower forty-eight in 2007, the same year they were taken off the endangered species list.

Therefore, Fulbrighters past, present, and future can use this book as a lesson in coming together to protect the environment and to protect our natural heritage worldwide. As Davis so deftly put it, “No species is independent of other members or parts of an ecosystem” (300). This applies to the natural world and our international community alike. The lessons learned from the devastation of the bald eagle and its subsequent restoration and protection can and should be spread around the world. Jack Davis knows the value of international exchange and learning from each other: That is what he has done as a Fulbright scholar and as the author of this book.

Jack E. Davis, *The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird*. New York: Liveright: 2022. 432 pages. \$29.95.

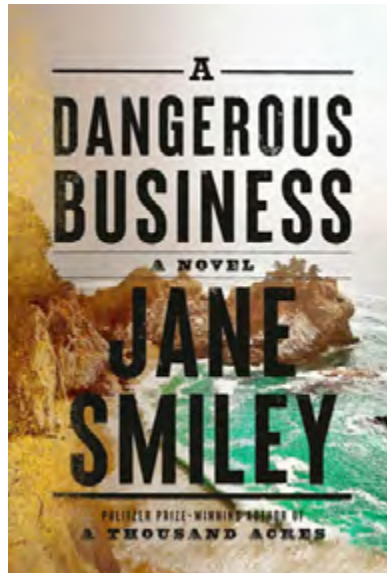
BIOGRAPHY

Daniel Hopkins graduated summa cum laude from Boise State University in history, political science, and secondary education. In 2021, he received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Malta where he taught secondary and university classes. He has a strong interest in international education and immigrant and refugee education, having taught, tutored, and mentored diverse student populations around the world. Currently, he lives in Casablanca, Morocco, where he teaches AP American History and English at the American Academy. He can be reached at danielhopkins@u.boisestate.edu



A DANGEROUS BUSINESS, INDEED

KATHERINE ARNOLDI



A Dangerous Business by Jane Smiley who was a Fulbright Fellow to Iceland in 1976-77.

When we set off on our Fulbright adventures equipped with a proposal and itinerary, we are told that what we will encounter on the ground may change not only our plans for research but also, ultimately, ourselves. I first heard this at an orientation in Washington, D. C. for Fulbright Fellows going to South America. Okay, I thought, I can understand how my experience in-country may be nothing like what I imagined, but *my life*? How on earth could my entire life change?

This is precisely what happened to Pulitzer-prize winning author Jane Smiley. According to “Iceland Made Me” in *Fulbright Chronicles*, Vol. 1, Smiley embarked on her 1976-7 Fulbright Fellowship to Iceland as a scholar of the *Icelandic Sagas*, but left as a writer. During the dark days of the Icelandic winter, she began writing a novel based on her grandparents’ desire to start a ranch in Idaho that was “an Icelandic tinged combination of wind and sky and snow and grass, making the best of isolation and hard work, tragedy, luck and magic” (14).

Except for the snow, this could be a good description of *A Dangerous Business*, in which our sex worker narrator Eliza Ripple’s life will change again and again while trying to make the best of one bad situation after another. She grows up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, with parents who are

Our sex worker narrator’s life will change again and again while trying to make the best of one bad situation after another.

Covenanters, “chosen,” according to Eliza, to “never enjoy a single worldly thing” (41). Her scowling mother administers whippings followed by prayer sessions, detailing her sins, until Eliza feels irrevocably “damned” (67). At eighteen, she falls in love with the tall and handsome Liam Callaghan, whom her parents see as not only without prospects, but also soulless, so they pawn her off instead to an older man, Peter Cargill, who takes her to Monterey, California, in the 1850’s to seek his fortune.

Peter Cargill turns out to be even worse than her parents, beating her, making her his servant, and violently “putting it to her” twice a day, indicating that Eliza does not yet have the word for rape. When she gets pregnant, he takes her to a doctor who gives her a concoction, an abortifacient, and then to another doctor who gives her a diaphragm to prevent further pregnancies. While grateful for that, Eliza is not sorry when this brute of a husband is killed in a bar room brawl, except that she is then left adrift and penniless.

Enter Mrs. Parks who offers Eliza employment at her brothel where Eliza finds that men “do their business”—indicating that Eliza has still not yet found the language for this sex, either. Eliza concludes that the clients treat her better than her husband, but, Mrs. Parks, who has clearly been around the block and even employs a bodyguard to remove the violent or rowdy clients, reminds her that just “being a woman is a dangerous business and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise” (61).

A dangerous business, indeed, because soon young women who work in the brothels are disappearing, and mutilated bodies are turning up in rivers or wrapped around trees and, since no one seems to care, Eliza and her friend Jean, who works at a brothel for women and likes to dress as a man, take it upon themselves to find out who the murderer or murderers may be. Every one of Eliza’s clients is a suspect as we meet them one by one.

While Eliza arrives in Monterey emotionally shut down, her experience in this new country, little by little, opens her up. She is overcome with the smell of pines, or the brilliant light on the tops of the trees, or by Monterey oaks with their long and gnarly limbs, or by hawks, pelicans, and a condor’s dark shadow as it flies overhead. She learns to be as aware as the once-wild mustang she rides in the mountains while she and Jean look for clues and evidence.

A book is a journey to another world and this one is, too, as the story surprisingly twists and turns, just like the roads down to Monterey Bay. Some of the swerves in plot raise moral dilemmas not so easily dismissed, but our narrator and her friend end up with lives changed in ways we could never have guessed. What Eliza and Jean find involves the importance of the heart finding its own true home.

This is precisely what happens to us on our Fulbright experiences, as we are transformed and expanded by a heightened awareness, not only by all we are experiencing on the ground but also by our increased knowledge of ourselves. We, perhaps for the first time, are able to see how trapped our awareness is by our culture, and we examine our preconceived perceptions to see the possibility of breaking free. Then, like Eliza and Jean, we can also find our own road, our own true home.

Smiley, Jane. *A Dangerous Business*. New York: Knopf. 2022. 208 pages. \$28.00.

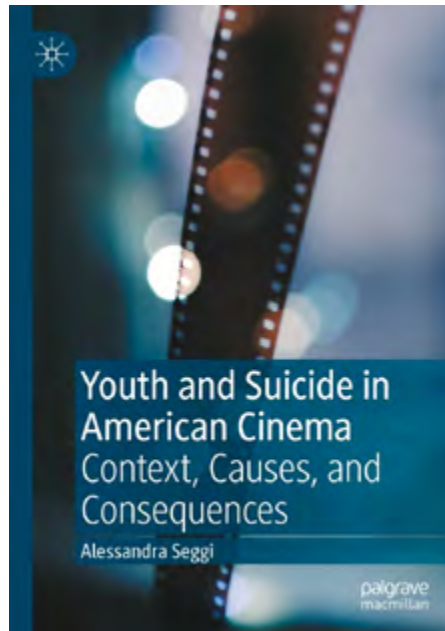
BIOGRAPHY

Katherine Arnoldi, Ph.D., creative writing Fulbright Fellow to Paraguay (2008-9), received two New York Foundation for the Arts Awards (Fiction/Drawing), the De Jur Award, and the TransAtlantic Fiction Award. She's the author of the graphic novel, *The Amazing True Story of a Teenage Single Mom* (Hyperion, 1998), nominated for a Will Eisner, won two American Library Association awards and was named a Top Ten Book of the Year by *Entertainment Weekly*, as well as *All Things Are Labor, Stories*, (U. Mass Press, 2007), which was a Juniper Prize winner. She is currently a lecturer at Mercy College, New York, teaching fiction and poetry. She can be contacted at Karnoldi2100@gmail.com



REEL LIFE CONSEQUENCES OF SUICIDALITY IN FILM

KATE BRENNAN



Youth and Suicide in American Cinema: Context, Causes and Consequences by Alessandra Seggi, who was a Visiting Fulbright Scholar from Italy to The New School, New York City, 1999-2000.

Like all art forms, film often reflects real life. However, in *Youth and Suicide in American Cinema*, author Alessandra Seggi re-conceptualizes the Wildean notion that most of the time, it happens the other way around. In today's blue light-tinted world, we often use film as a template—consciously or unconsciously—after which we model relationships, body image, world views and the things we buy. This is especially true for young people, who live in a “society of the spectacle, where life is like a movie, not the other way around” (88).

In her book, Seggi assesses the consequences of living in such a society. According to the World Health Organization “[T]here is increasing evidence that media can play a significant role in either enhancing or weakening suicide prevention efforts” (110). The author sets out to explore the impact of film suicides on real-life suicides by drawing from a sizable pool of films and deconstructing their portrayals. In mapping out the etiology of suicidal behavior, no stone is left unturned; in each film, Seggi takes stock of the “social facts” outside of psychological contributors to suicide, capturing the sociocultural panorama of each example she cites.

The book focuses on youth specifically, as youth are among the most vulnerable to media influences. On top of the regular strains of adolescence, they are also growing up in a media-saturated era that allows them to consume media products on personal devices and “binge watch” on streaming services. Seggi is careful to first and foremost establish an understanding of—and with—her audience, whom she says are “over-regulated by the adults, who essentially make choices for them, while also being alienated from them” (62). She argues films about youth, made by adults, are “not so much descriptive of youth experiences as prescriptive” (77), and as a solution, she invites youth to change the way they consume media.

In addition to offering film analyses, the book equips young audiences with a proactive media literacy strategy. Readers are presented with a list of questions divided into four clusters: initial reactions to and opinions of the film; the film’s portrayal of suicide; accuracy vs. allure; and life-affirming changes viewer might choose to make. The questions are thoughtful and versed in pillars of contemporary media studies such as Culkin’s theory, which states a media-literate population is essential.

In addition to offering film analyses, the book equips young audiences with a proactive media literacy strategy.

With the savvy of a film professor, Seggi first teaches readers to identify types of suicide portrayals—altruistic suicide in *It’s a Wonderful Life*, attention-seeking suicide in *Better off Dead*, and even a satire of glorified suicide in *Heathers*. Next, she implores readers to poke holes in these films and consider the effects these storylines might have on vulnerable audiences. This method aims to shatter the trance film so often lulls us into—away from the theatrical, Romeo-and-Juliet portrayal of suicide as a resolution and away from the juvenile idea that suicidality earns one social rewards, such as love.

Small changes to the ways in which suicide is rendered on-screen can result in a tangible impact on a more complex system. To back up this claim, Seggi compares the Werther effect (copycat suicides following media reports that include suicide methods) to the Papageno effect (reporting on suicide responsibly by presenting non-suicide alternatives to crises). She uses the television show *13 Reasons Why* as an example of both, noting how the producers initially included a scene that shows a suicide method in detail, then later deleted it following advice from medical experts.

Seggi’s goal is not to change what viewers watch, but rather how they watch it. Because frankly, Hollywood is Hollywood and capitalism is capitalism—films that include suicide prevention measures like hotlines, therapy, healthy relationships, and good self esteem rarely haul in big revenue. If a film includes suicide, Hollywood will more likely than not present suicide two-dimensionally, with a smattering of drama, romance, and sexiness—anything

that sells. But through the media literacy exercise, Seggi provides youth with armor to protect themselves against a system that procedurally exploits them. The book is written as an act of service for all unfortified youth, reading like a voice that cuts through static to say, “I’m here, I’m listening.”

To take things up a level, this book is not just a helpful tool for youth but also for anyone who has been affected by suicide. In the preface, Seggi shares a personal anecdote about how she came to understand suicide from an early age that establishes a sense of trust which remains throughout the book. She applies an exceptional level of care to discussions around the social stigmas of suicide and emotions like guilt, blame, and heartache. A lingering lesson from this book is that film as a medium can also be healing, and if we can learn to dismantle the etiology of on-screen suicides, perhaps we can begin to untangle our real-life grief as well.

Alessandra Seggi, *Youth and Suicide in American Cinema: Context, Causes, and Consequences*. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2022. 341 pages. \$129.99.

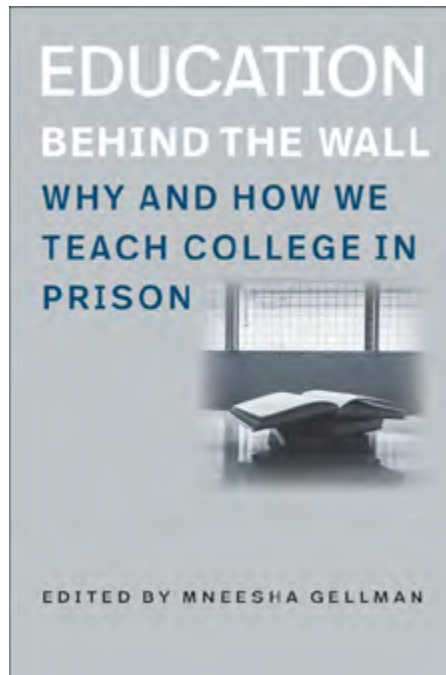
BIOGRAPHY

Kate Brennan is a member of the 2022 cohort of journalists from Fulbright Germany’s Berlin Capital Program. A newspaper and online journalism graduate of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, she is a recipient of awards from organizations, such as Hearst, the Online News Association, Scholastic and the Society of Professional Journalists. She is a full-time writer for a publication based in New York City that emphasizes women’s stories, and recently collaborated on a podcast about Afghan women who were or are currently living under the Taliban. She can be reached at katebrennan.nyc@gmail.com



LEARNING FROM COLLEGE-IN-PRISON PROGRAMS

DAVID STOLOFF



Education Behind the Wall: Why and How We Teach College in Prison by Mneesha Gellman, a Fulbright Scholar to Mexico, 2020.

As a Professor of Education at Eastern Connecticut State University, our state's designated public liberal arts college, I appreciated *Education Behind the Wall* for its introduction to college-in-prison programs, discussion of enhancing learning and teaching throughout higher education, and efforts to end the cradle-to-prison pipeline for too many people in the US. Editor Mneesha Gellman, founder and director of the Emerson Prison Initiative, has gathered contributors to this text who, as she writes in the introduction, “exhibit the ethics of care for their craft of teaching that is a hallmark of college-in-prison programs” (2).

Kimberly McLarin and Wendy W. Walters (both faculty in the Emerson College Creative Writing project) reflect on why they teach literature inside Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Concord (MCI-Concord). They differentiate between learning and teaching in the “privilege industry” – a four-year liberal arts college – and “punishment industry” – the prison classroom. MCI-Concord students, they explain, “do not conceive of their education as a product, but as a pathway” (22.) McLaren and Walters aim to make their classrooms at both Emerson and Concord “in subordinate spaces” – spaces that are “open to both emotional and critical responses to the text, as well as

challenges to the constructed authority of the text, the syllabus, and even the role of the professor” (25.) They find that “our incarcerated students come to class with energy, enthusiasm, and delight, eager to debate and discuss” (31), not what they find in some “privileged industry” classrooms.

Shelley Tenenbaum (a Clark University sociology professor) comments that “teaching in prison brings a range of rewards that include intellectual excitement, appreciation from students, a sense of accomplishments, and new perspectives” (36). She finds that the college-in-prison students have deep insights beyond her own book knowledge on dehumanization and violence, more often come prepared to class, and are close readers of the text— but there will always be challenges for regular attendance.

Elizabeth B. Langan (a retired teacher from the Boston Public Schools system and now a tutor with the Emerson Prison Initiative), examines the school-to-prison pipeline by identifying similarities in the structure of middle schools and prisons—around security issues, trauma-laden students, and the goals of vocational vs. college readiness programs. She finds that students in the college-in-prison programs have begun to work their way out of the cradle-to-prison pipeline by “working toward a future of agency, social and economic competency, and useful and engaged lives” (72).

Other contributions by librarians, Africana Studies, creative writing, and economics professors—and one by a student himself—highlight a variety of issues intrinsic to college teaching in prison. Stephen Shane (a professor with the Emerson College Writing Center) introduces the “hows” of teaching by explaining that one of his goals is “to support students as they find their voices as writers” (77) through memoirs, profiles, academic research essays, and open letters. Cara Moyer-Duncan (of the Emerson College Africana Studies program) provides guidance on one prison’s logistics, program and course design, faculty selection, and syllabi that must be reviewed by the Department of Corrections, and considers censorship and media guidelines for college-in-prison classrooms. Christina E. Dent (an Emerson College librarian) developed a system of research request forms to overcome prison limitations in accessing online research tools. Sarah Moran Davidson (a Columbia University Economics professor) discusses “challenges and approaches to teaching quantitative courses in college-in-prison programs” (135) that also include overcoming limited access to the internet, collaborative projects, and tutors. Bill Littlefield (a Curry College English professor and NPR contributor) makes the important point that the prison instructor learns from his students, and Alexander X, the student, writes how his experience broadened his horizons.

Professor Gellman concludes that education is a form of recidivism intervention, structural intervention and reform of the prison system, and freedom for even those who are in prison. In college-in-prison programs, “students are treated as intellectual interlocutors, with ideas to be seriously contemplated, critiqued, and redrafted”... letting “students who are incarcerated be students first, and people who are incarcerated second” (195).

In college-in-prison programs, students who are incarcerated are students first, and people who are incarcerated second.

In *Education Behind the Walls*, the authors focus on introducing the reader to key issues and processes in these dynamic institutions – higher education and prisons – and suggest more humane approaches to learning and living productively in both. The actual assessment of college-in-prison programs can be found elsewhere, such as at the Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison website. Prisoners’ perspectives on the cradle-in-prison pipeline are on display in *You Don’t Know Me: The Incarcerated Women of York Prison Voice Their Truths*, a chronicle of best-selling author Wally Lamb’s college-in-prison writing class. However, from reading *Education Behind the Walls*, I developed a renewed appreciation of those teachers who seek to dramatically change the lives of the imprisoned through innovative teaching strategies that emphasize learning agency to develop skills in successful living, service and self-actualization.

Gellman, Mneesha, ed. *Education Behind the Wall: Why and How We Teach College in Prison*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press. 230 pages. \$35.00.

BIOGRAPHY

David L. Stoloff, a social foundations professor in the Education Department at Eastern Connecticut State University, was a Fulbright administrative exchange fellow at Chang Mai Rajabhat University (Thailand) during 2007-2008; he offered workshops on online teaching for English language university faculty. He was also a Peace Corps high school teacher in Zaire, taught at high schools in Israel and California, and was an educational researcher and curriculum developer in Montreal, Dallas, and Los Angeles. His research includes explorations into additive assessment, personal archives for learning, intercultural connections among universities, and undergraduate global field experiences. He can be reached at stoloffd@easternct.edu



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