

WorldCanvass: Why School? Education and Social Transformation

Part 2

Joan Kjaer: Hello, and welcome to WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa. I'm Joan Kjaer, and we're coming to you from MERGE in downtown Iowa City. Our topic tonight is Why School? Education and Social Transformation, and in this segment, our guests will look at schools in the US a little more closely, and discuss whether and how they serve as agents of change within society. Just next to me is Sarah Bruch, assistant professor in the UI Department of Sociology. Thanks for being here, Sarah.

Sarah Bruch: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: Next to her is David Cassels Johnson, associate professor in the UI College of Education. Thanks, David.

David Johnson: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: At the far end, we have Mimi Young, assistant professor in the UI College of Education. Thank you, Mimi, for being here.

Jemimah Young: Thank you for having me.

Joan Kjaer: Sarah, let me first turn to you. What do you see happening in American schools? You've heard the first segment here, and we kind of had an overview of education and philosophies behind education. But what do you see happening in American schools today?

Sarah Bruch: Yeah, thanks. I think that's a great question. I think for me, as a sociologist, one of the things I think a lot about is how schools are places of contention. So, a lot of times we like to think that things will get better over time, that each generation, there will be less inequality or less inequity, and that schools are one of the places where we'll see that happen. But one of the more critical ways to think about the role of schools and what's happening in schools, especially in the US context, is that actually, change won't occur unless you make it happen, that it is a site of contention, that it is a site of struggle, and that there are different interests competing for what we do in schools in the US.

Sarah Bruch: And a couple of examples of that would be, in terms of equity, especially around race. We like to have integrated, diverse schools, but how we go about doing that, and what happens when we do that, in terms of how do the students actually experience those diverse or integrated schools, and whether or not that's a positive experience for them, is something that we should talk a lot

more about, and I think that's kind of where the crux of a lot of the conversations are.

Sarah Bruch: And I think a second thing about that is how students experience schools in terms of the mission of creating citizens in schools. So, we heard in the first segment about, yes, schools create workers. They also create citizens. That was one of the reasons we started public schools in the US. But how they go about doing that, and what are the sites of contention around that, I think is one of the big issues on the table.

Sarah Bruch: So, because it is a site of disagreement, much of what we've done in civic education is really pull back what we teach kids, in terms of their formal curriculum. So, we teach them the structure of government. We teach them how to be a citizen, in terms of what are the knowledge and skills you need to have to be a citizen. But we pay a lot less attention to things that would actually educate youth, in terms of how to think about social issues, and how to critically evaluate evidence and arguments, which is really another part of being a citizen in the US.

Joan Kjaer: Could I just go back to one of the first remarks you made, and just ask you whether it is a universal truth that we in our schools are looking for diversity? Are there not places in the country where people would be quite happy not to have any diversity?

Sarah Bruch: I think that's obviously a big question, obviously. In a lot of surveys that are done in the US public, people ask whether or not people want their children to go to diverse or integrated schools, whether that be racial diversity, socioeconomic diversity, or just any kind of social demographic or social identity diversity. And I think the vast majority of people would say yes to that question, whether there's some social desirability bias in those responses, sure. But I think a lot of businesses, a lot of folks from a more utilitarian perspective say, "Diverse teams make better decisions." Those kind of utilitarian reasons. But I think also, from a more value-based perspective, a lot of folks would say, "I think I want my kids to be exposed to different." What that kind of difference is clearly can be different in different context, but I think that understanding that we're not all the same, that that's actually something that is a benefit.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. In some communication we had before the program, you said that a lot of attention is on formal curriculum and citizenship creation, but the way people learn from their broader circumstances and their friend networks and so on really affects the way they behave in school, the way they're treated in school?

Sarah Bruch: Yeah. One of the things I look a lot at is how students experience schools more broadly, not just what the curriculum or teaching is, in terms of the formal curriculum. And a lot of what I and other people focus on is, how do young people experience different forms of public authority? So, whether that be a teacher or a principal or a police officer, and how that experience with that

public authority affects how you think of yourself, not just as an individual, but as a civic or as a citizen. A civic being or a citizen.

Sarah Bruch: I think it's important, because it teaches you lessons. It teaches you lessons about how do people in authority think about people like you? How do people treat people like you? And then, based on that treatment and how you perceive what's going on, do you think that authority is legitimate? Do you trust your teachers? Do you trust the government? Do you trust the folks in positions of authority would do things right by you or people in your group?

Sarah Bruch: And I think that that's a really important thing that a lot of people are looking at, and there's some really sort of disturbing results from the research in this area, which really suggest that much like you might expect, people with more socially marginalized identities are treated in specific ways across our public institutions, not just in schools, in a way that further marginalizes them, and makes them less likely to participate in their communities and in our political system, and that has pretty large ramifications, in terms of being a democratic society.

Joan Kjaer: That kind of leads very naturally into the conversation we might have with you, David. Your work is as an educational linguistics ... you research educational linguistics and teach in this area?

David Johnson: I work in language education. That's my background, is educational linguistics.

Joan Kjaer: So, tell us what educational linguistics means.

David Johnson: It's sort of leveraging the tools from linguistics to focus on educational problems.

Joan Kjaer: So, educational language policies are one of the ways in which there may be attempt to minimize differences between students, or to accept the variety of language backgrounds that students may have?

David Johnson: Yeah, historically, that really hasn't been the case. I hate to echo what Sarah said, and what Amanda said and David said, at the risk of turning this forum into a real bummer, but the history of educational language policy has been one of linguistic marginalization, subjugation, intentional eradication of languages, in order to maximize the differences. So, you said minimize the differences. That's sort of the history of language policy throughout the world, actually, is they are used to secure privileges for the ruling class.

David Johnson: And so, that's of the history of language policy in this country and everywhere in the world, but there have been exceptions to that, for sure. Think about the US context, 1974, Lau vs. Nichols, unanimous Supreme Court decision. In that decision, they decided that the same instruction for what we call English language learners, or kids that don't speak English as their native language, the same instruction for them as their native English-speaking counterparts is

unequal instruction, exact opposite way that it works in France, actually. In order to be equal, everyone is educated in French.

David Johnson: And in fact, to not provide accommodations, and they didn't specify what kind of accommodations you could provide, but to not provide any kind of accommodations violates the students' civil rights. They relied on the Civil Rights Act for that decision. So, that's a landmark decision in educational policy in the US. Most schools have to have what they call a Lau plan. You have to have a plan in place for how you're going to accommodate these students.

David Johnson: The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which ushered in the ability for schools to offer education in two languages, the goal of which is bilingualism, biliteracy, and content knowledge in both languages. The Native American Languages Act of 1990, which provided funding for the education in indigenous languages in the US. Most people, a lot of people would say, too little too late in this case, because the state did a pretty good job at eradicating most indigenous languages along the way.

David Johnson: But there are these opportunities that educators have, these federal policies. I think a lot of the work happens on the local level, though. For example, in the state of Iowa, we've experienced about a 300 percent increase over the past 20 years in the number of English language learners in schools. There's still a lot of work to be done.

David Johnson: At the same time, the number of native English speakers has shrunk. So, Iowa is not really a state where people move to. It seems to be a state that people leave, a lot of times. But so, we're experiencing a demographic phenomenon in which there's rapidly-changing linguistic ecology, and educators are tackling these issues, I think, in ethical, pedagogically astute, responsible ways. So, there's a lot of good work, I think, that happens on the local level, so I put a positive spin on it.

David Johnson: So, there is social transformation. Bilingual education is alive and well in the state of Iowa. There are schools around Iowa in which kids are educated in more than one language. So, I'm encouraged by the talent and the capacity in Iowa schools, it's just we need to realize the full potential that we have with this changing linguistic ecology and diversity in Iowa, and everywhere in the United States, for that matter. And the world.

Joan Kjaer: Could I ask you, and I may also ask Mimi this question. If you look at a minority student here in Iowa. Our black population is very small, considering the population of the state. If you have black students in the classroom who carry with them a different kind of social interaction, the way they might talk, the way they're most comfortable talking or behaving, it's very natural, it feels good to them, it's culturally where they come from, but it doesn't sort of fit with the standard kid in a white Iowa classroom. Are those students automatically likely to suffer because of this difference in the way they present themselves linguistically?

David Johnson: Yeah. I mean, it's not just different languages. There's definitely different dialects of English. As a kid who moved to Iowa ... I moved to Iowa when I was a kid. I moved from the South, from the Appalachian Mountains, and I had that dialect, and I remember sort of how my interactions with teachers at that time, and the expectations that they have. I mean, language ideologies are deeply entrenched, the way that we judge other people based on the way that they speak is deeply entrenched. It's part of our human makeup. I mean, people ...

David Johnson: So, yeah, I mean, there's a history of marginalizing, not just minoritized languages, but minoritized dialects. And African American language is definitely one of them, one of the ones that's gotten the most attention in US educational policy, it's gotten a lot of attention from linguists. But there's a lot of work that goes on as well, to sort of overcome those obstacles and try to encourage those students to achieve equal educational opportunity.

David Johnson: We're all socialized into language in different kinds of ways. It's not just ... Appalachian English is another good example, in which kids are socialized in a language in kinds of ways that might not reflect what happens in school. There's this sort of language ... there are these sociolinguistic norms of interaction that are privileged in schools, which are based on primarily white, middle class sociolinguistic norms.

David Johnson: So, if you didn't grow up around being socialized into those norms, the way that teachers ask questions, the way that they read books to the kids and hold up the book like this. The way that they ask questions to which they already know the answer, display questions. Not a very common speech act in every community in the world. But kids who grow up in homes that reflect those sociolinguistic norms are obviously advantaged when they go to those schools, and kids who don't are disadvantaged.

David Johnson: And so, I think that it's important to establish critical language awareness among the teachers for these types of differences, and to encourage the linguistic and different cultural diversity that kids bring to the class.

Joan Kjaer: Thank you. Mimi, you're an assistant professor of social studies education, if I understand correctly, and I think much of your work focuses on achievement and educational outcomes for marginalized and minority populations, and also special focus on black women and girls. Can you reflect on what you've heard so far here, and then share your own thoughts?

Jemimah Young: Sure. Just kind of segueing a little, speaking of linguistics, there's a documentary called Talking Black in America, and it's actually a documentary from a team of linguists, and educational linguists, if I'm saying that correctly, in which a lot of the context relates to education. And when we talk about this whole notion of what is standard English, who speaks standard English, and what English is standard? The way we speak, we ... I would say "y'all." I'm from Texas. The way y'all speak here in the Midwest is very different from how people speak. You

guys. I'd never heard that. You guys speak, compared to how we speak in Texas, as well as adding those different dialectical differences.

Jemimah Young: For instance, in the school setting, you may have a student who says, and I talk to my students about this, a black student, a black child, a black girl, says, "Miss, can I ax you a question?" Right? And the teacher, I think probably as part of some kind of compulsion, or probably what they've been taught in their teacher ed program, honestly, they correct the students and say, "Do you mean, you want to ask me a question?"

Jemimah Young: And what that does to a child who, in their mind, already has an oppositional view of their teacher, and has a great deal of respect for people who speak like them ... Their pastor says "ax," their coach says "ax," their grandmamma says "ax." Everybody says "ax." The only person who doesn't say "ax" is this white female person standing in front of them.

Jemimah Young: And so, I think it's important to affirm these different languages, as well as vernaculars and dialects, because they're part of who we are as people, and no one is absent for an accent or dialect. We all have accents and dialects, and that speaks more to this system of hegemonic oppression that we see in the school system. To say that there is a standard means that there is things that are not standard. So, just speaking to that point. As far as, did you have a question embedded in the second part of what you were asking?

Joan Kjaer: Oh, I don't remember, but what you've just said is terrific. So, what does social transformation in the context of education mean to you?

Jemimah Young: That's a great question. One, I think it's something we need to talk about, because it's not a new notion, right? It's just been packed and unpacked and packaged again. We call it social transformation. Previously, we called it social change. That's how I'm more familiar with this term, as a concept, as social change. Previously, we're kind of vacillating back and forth about the notion of social justice. And then previous to that, it was social action. So, we've seen a history, and to me, it patterns, this terminology patterns whatever new reform is in place, in my opinion.

Jemimah Young: But I say that to say, what do we mean when we say social change? When this was first presented to me, it was presented as social change in our education system. And I don't know that you can talk about change in a system in a complementary type of way. Change is the antecedent of a system, not the other way around. When we say change, is that a proxy for control? Is that a proxy for confusion? And what do we mean by change? Do we talk about change so that we don't have to enact it? So, I'm obviously a little bit more critical of this notion of social change, social transformation, because I've yet to see it, as far as the demographics of students that I research. I've yet to see it serve to their benefit.

Jemimah Young: Previously, we talked about, for instance, in a K through 12 setting, as compared to higher ed, for example. I'll go into my background as a multicultural and urban education. So, I can go into a very large school district. All of the property taxes pool into the school district, and they're supposed to be equitably, another word that's been repackaged. Equity, diversity, equality, and the like. But they're supposed to be equitably distributed.

Jemimah Young: But when we look in these schools, I'll go into one school in the very same district, you have an ID that swipes you to get into everything. You wave your hand, water comes, toilet paper, paper towels, and the like. But then, I'll go literally two miles away in the same school district, and you have students who have to use the toilet paper as their hall pass to go to the bathroom. They don't even keep the toilet paper in the bathroom. Everything is broke. The books are recycled. And the demographics of these schools look very similar to pre-Brown vs. Board of Education.

Jemimah Young: And so, when we talk about social change, I don't see that as something that benefits all students, and in fact, to the group that it benefits, it serves as the same detriment to other minoritized and marginalized populations. When we look at higher ed, an example that was brought up earlier was the GI Bill. That is something that wasn't afforded for all people, especially people of color. And this is not something ... I think some of you all may be ... we have a younger crowd in the audience, but when we think about the precedence of this, this is not something that was 50 or 100 years ago.

Jemimah Young: My own dad served in the military for 30 years, and he retired, and he did not have a GI Bill. GI Bills oftentimes are passed down to their children. So, I went to school with people that I had to pay for my education, and my white counterparts had this GI Bill, which is substantial, to help pay for theirs, and our parents served side-by-side fighting for this country. So, when we talk about educational change, I have yet to see it realized in a broader context.

Joan Kjaer: Are there policy initiatives that you ... are there things that you can point to, that you have your hands around, and say, "This is what we need to do?" Are there a couple of things you can say would make a big change right away?

Jemimah Young: No.

Joan Kjaer: So, it's all about the larger culture? It's about the way we treat each other in the full community?

Jemimah Young: I think there are ... this is, again, a system, an education system. Systems are not designed to necessarily benefit people. It's designed to benefit the system. And so, there are so many components to this that have to be interrogated, disrupted, dismantled, and I think the way that we, I don't consider myself as part of the we, but the way in which we've gone about this notion of social change is, we want to keep the system the same while still having the goal of

serving or changing or enacting or transforming, and that's not what transformation is. Norms must change. The system must change. People must change.

Joan Kjaer: Yes. I'm going to turn to you guys, and ask for a response to some of these very challenging thoughts.

Sarah Bruch: Yeah, I mean, I think I would say that I completely agree that things are systemic, that inequities or inequalities are systemic, not just in educational systems. I think that one of the biggest challenges to creating change, whether it's social or otherwise, is that there's a mismatch between what we say we want, in terms of we want everybody to have an equal chance, we believe in the American dream, we want to reduce inequities, and what it would actually take to see those through. Because I think a lot of people want to stay in their comfort zone. So, they want to have that neighborhood school. They want to be able to, if they're in a privileged group, they want to be able to go and say, I can buy into a neighborhood where my kid will go to the good school.

Sarah Bruch: And I think that both of those things are not compatible with each other, and that because a lot of times folks that, on the one side will say, "I value diversity and I want everybody to have an equal chance," but then will turn around and buy a house in a good neighborhood, so their kid goes to this good school, and lobby the school district or other officials to say, "These are the advantages that I want for my child." Those aren't compatible, and that's a mismatch that I think a lot of people as individuals don't really grapple with, and that's one of the things that's reflected in our policies and practices now, of that sort of ambivalence of whether or not we'll actually make ourselves accountable to live by the principles that we espouse.

David Johnson: Yeah, I mean, I agree with both of you that schools are a part of a larger network of systems, which serve to basically reinforce social inequity. Education can't escape this larger network of systems. Maybe we shouldn't expect it to, either. I mean, it's sort of a lot to ask, for schooling to solve these problems, to engage in social transformation. I'm interested in Mimi's interrogation of that term.

David Johnson: But I would say though that, at the end of the day, when I want to feel good about the profession, because this is what we do for a living, I do think about the educators that I work with, who are committed to whatever their vision of social justice is for the kids that they work with. And so, I do think there are talented, committed individuals out there working to provide equal educational opportunities for the kids' lives. But it's a tough job.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah, absolutely. And Mimi, we had a chance to talk before we started this segment, and you have some thoughts on homeschooling.

Jemimah Young: I do. I think that parents, we have to recognize that parents are a child's first educator, and the value in that, and I think that there's something to say, especially if you would kind of poll the homeschooling community. If parents felt like they were the first educator, that they were a valued member of their child's education team, and that they were a stakeholder, that perhaps they wouldn't be pulling their kids from our systems to begin with.

Jemimah Young: I also think that parents are very resourceful in finding ways to create an education for their child that reflects their own values and morals. And then also, within the body of my work, one of the largest-growing groups within the homeschooling community are black parents, and that's due to things that, again, serve as counters to this notion of social change, like the criminalization of black children in schools, and the opportunities or the lack thereof, and just the social conditions, the trauma that a lot of black students, particularly black girls, face when they go to school. And this is not just K through 12, it's higher ed. And we have a lot of testimonies to that.

Jemimah Young: And so, I think that I just wanted to make sure as educators, we affirm other mediums or outlets for schooling, because remember, when we talk about schooling and education, those terms are oftentimes used synonymously, and they're not, right? Schooling is the system by which we educate, and education is what we receive. I've seen a lot of students who are very happy, well-adjusted, successful, professional homeschooled children.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah, thank you. Well, wow, this has flown by, and I want to say thank you so much to Sarah Bruch and David Johnson and Mimi Young for being with us in this segment. Please stay with us for the next panel, where we'll take a cross-cultural look at the role of schools in both enforcing cultural and social norms and transforming them. WorldCanvass programming is available on iTunes, the Public Radio Exchange, and the International Programs website. I'm Joan Kjaer. Thanks for joining us for the segment.

WorldCanvass: Why School? Education and Social Transformation

Part 3

Joan Kjaer: Hello, I'm Joan Kjaer. Welcome to WorldCanvass, from International Programs at the University of Iowa. Glad to have you with us. This is part three of our program, Why School? Education and Social Transformation. In this segment, we're going to expand our geographical scope and look at these issues cross-culturally. Joining us for this segment are Angela James, senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. It's so nice to have you here, Angela. Thank you.

Angela James: And I'm extremely excited and happy to be here, and I'm honored. Much gratitude.

Joan Kjaer: Thank you, and ours to you. And next to her is Greg Hamot, professor in the UI College of Education. Thank you, Greg.

Gregory Hamot: Thanks for having me come, Joan.

Joan Kjaer: And also, we'd like to welcome ... No problem. And also, we'd like to welcome EunJung Kim, a graduate student in the UI College of Education. Thank you.

EunJung Kim: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: So, Angela, pleasure to have you here all the way from South Africa. Long flight, I know.

Angela James: And may I tell you, I just arrived after 12 today.

Joan Kjaer: Well, we're just lucky you made it in. And speaking about South Africa, we know that in these past three decades, four decades, there's been tremendous change. Social change, political change. I'm sure the same is true of the educational system in those years. Could you give us an idea of what the South African schools were like prior to the 90s, and what kinds of transformations have you seen in the way schools operate, the way people interact with one another?

Angela James: Okay. Thank you. I think when you speak about transformation, one of the things that we really have to ask is, well, who decides what the transformation is going to be, and why even transformation? Just to go back to the question that you asked about schools in South Africa pre, post-Apartheid, when I think about my own schooling, we all had different groupings, and we all lived in particular different areas, based on your racial divisions or your racial classification. And quite clearly, the policies were really aligned to the different groups that you were in.

Angela James: Policy with schooling was for laborers, and the quality of the schools, I would say, in many instances, were very diverse, with highly-resourced schools and extremely poorly-resourced schools. And I must say presently, I could tell you that there are still very poorly-resourced schools presently in South Africa. I mean, when a child falls in a pit latrine, because of inadequate sanitation at a school, that is really unacceptable. Not in this day and age, especially since we are over 20 years in democracy.

Angela James: So, when I think about the inequalities that are present across the schooling sector, yes, there have been developments with regard to the curriculum and the fact that across all the schools, if you think of government schools, there's one curriculum, which is now in place. And I think that is a good development at this point in time. And the fact that also, there is recognition with regard to indigenous knowledge systems, when in the past, that was not even thought about. It was not even given any relevance whatsoever.

Angela James: So, those types of aspects, and looking at gender, taking the gender aspects into account. Taking, for example, assessment policies and the whole aspect with regard to the types of knowledges that we need to be focusing on, and the relevance of that knowledge for the various groups of children that we have in our schools.

Angela James: We really need to consider that we still do have schools where there's so much violence that is happening. And when you start asking questions about why is there that type of violence, and why are there these poorly-resourced schools? I mean, I can take you to a school where there are no windows present in that school. Windows is a small thing. But are the teachers fully qualified being with the children in those classrooms all the time?

Angela James: And really, what we need to think about is, what is schooling ultimately, and what is it that we should be working with within each of our communities in which we have our schools? And yes, we have private schools and government schools, and our government schools are arranged in quintiles, from quintile one, which is no fee paying, to quintile five, which were the so-called ex-model C schools, or the ex-white schools in the past. And children are attending these schools all across the divide.

Angela James: But I think what is essentially important for me is, do we understand our children, and is it about a child attending school and ticking the box that the child has attended school? Or is it about how we are creating the possibilities and the opportunities and the freedom for the children to be? I may not just be talking about the South African context, but I am also saying that there are a number of different aspects that need to be taken into account.

Angela James: And I know that for some of the schools in South Africa, some of the things I've just spoken about now are in place, and are actually happening. But is it for the majority? No, it's not. And isn't that what education should be about? Where

we consider every single child, no matter who, what, where that particular child is, and who the parents are, and what particular economic setting they actually come from. And even the political.

Angela James: I think so often, the political and the economic drive education, which is not and should never be the case. It is about communities, understanding what it is, not in terms of their needs. We must move away from that thinking. But in terms of their desires. If we work with desires, then we are actually looking at how we are enhancing every single person, and really working with the mind of an individual.

Angela James: Who am I? What is it that I am capable of? And at what point do we actually work with children, so that they get to that point where they can understand exactly who they are? Now, maybe not exactly, but they are on the road. It's a journey. But they can understand who they are into becoming the types of people that they would like to become, as well.

Angela James: So, yes, I've answered your question, but more in a roundabout way, in getting us to think more broadly about these particular aspects. And in terms of the social injustices that are in place in education, they are very apparent across our schools.

Joan Kjaer: What kinds of initiatives are there, on the national level, perhaps, to address these concerns? Are there some?

Angela James: Yes, there are, as I have spoken. Obviously, at different levels. There would be, within the government sector, looking at the curriculum and the structure of the curriculum across all the schools, and the fact that there's now one common curriculum, and there's an understanding ... well, there is an understanding in terms of policy, but we could question it in terms of implementation, and the preparation of teachers, and also the access to resources for all of these initiatives to be implemented in the most effective ways possible. So, it would be at the curriculum level.

Angela James: It's also within teacher professional development, and looking at the policies that are present there as well, too. Across all the universities, there are concerns with teacher professional development. There is consensus about what it is that one needs to be looking at. In the past, each person did ... not each person, but each institution did as they thought would be the best possible for the student teachers, or preservice teachers as we say it today. So, even at the teacher professional development, there are definitely policies with regard to that.

Angela James: There's a lot of initiatives with regard to STEM education, and from the government sector, from NGOs. There are NGOs, for example, like the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, which really gets so many young people out into different ... it's a competitive field, but it's really unpacking and understanding

the dimensions with regard to research and the investigations that one has to do. But that's not the only one. There's also developments in robotics that are taking place across the board. There are so many types of Olympiads.

Angela James: So, there's a complexity, and there's really, I would say, a commitment from various sectors across the board, whether it is from industry, it's from community-type organizations, it's from educational settings, for there to be development across the board with regard to education. But I do want to say, it also is about the will of the teacher in the classroom as well, because ultimately, it's the teacher and the child that have that intense relationship.

Angela James: So, in education, it's relationship that matters. What types of relationships are there within the school setting? You could even look at, for example, a principal and teachers. What types of relationships are there in those types of settings, as well? So, any development that takes place does take place on different levels, but it's about the intimate aspects, and the connections that one has amongst different sets of people that is entirely important, as well.

Angela James: If a child is not comfortable where he or she is, or where the child is, then how does one expect that child to really grow in that type of setting? I don't want to say be educated. I do want to say grow, because there's a lot in terms of how the child sees himself or herself within those particular settings.

Joan Kjaer: Is there thorough racial integration, or do kids go to schools that are near their homes, again marking economic privilege throughout the schools?

Angela James: Well, we do have a policy where children in districts ... obviously, you attend the school in your district, and already, that's a marker, because districts are so clearly divided. And in the past, we had areas that were called township areas, and those were the areas where only black people lived. Those areas are still in place today, and they may not be called a township as such, but quite clearly it's a lot of people who, economically they are not absolutely privileged, and the schools, I must say, some of the schools in those particular areas are really fantastic schools.

Angela James: And you can get ... I actually do this activity with the students where we read an article which looks at the A+ performance of learners from a very rural school, with really, the resources are so lacking in that school, but the children perform so well. So, the questions we need to ask are, is it about, do resources really make a difference, or is the presence of resources just an enabler for the performance to just be a bit better?

Angela James: So, yeah, I want to raise a lot of questions about that, but certainly, there are issues with regard to the different schools, the different settings, the access to resources. The access, for example, to computers. Our first year, a lot of our first-year students come in, and they've never laid their hands on a computer.

And so, we have to then have classes for these particular ... computer literacy classes for these particular students.

Angela James: And I think that's the important thing, is that we need to understand, who are our students, and what is it that we could be working with in order for us to enhance them, to levels where they can really just fly.

Joan Kjaer: Well, thank you. Thank you so much. I'd like to move next to you, Greg. You've been here at our university for quite a long time, and you've been deeply involved in global education, and you've obviously been educating future teachers through the College of Education for a very long time. You're also the associate director for the UI Center for Human Rights, and have spent no small amount of energy studying education outside the US. What are some of the observable differences in education in democratic societies, as opposed to authoritarian societies?

Gregory Hamot: Well, the basic difference is that, in a democratic society you have, at least idealistically, you have a critical eye toward all values, mores, beliefs, with the notion of some sort of reconstruction of society, reconceptualization of it in a progressive sort of way. You can do that in an authoritarian society, because it will collapse. It can't examine itself. It would implode, basically.

Gregory Hamot: And as a result, an authoritarian society has a very set ideological framework that cannot be erred from. And we do too, in a democratic society, by the nature of the beast, but the ideal is for it not to be ideologically set, but to be intellectually ... I think the words that have been used are interrogated, disrupted, deconstructed, and so on and so forth. That, in essence, should be the difference between an authoritarian and a democratic system of education.

Joan Kjaer: So, you have done a lot of work and spent a lot of time in post-authoritarian societies, and looked at education there. What can you tell us?

Gregory Hamot: It was absolutely fascinating listening to my colleagues in the first two panels, because of course, you know, I'm an American educator, as are they. But I kept imagining to myself, what if you ... we have a lot of problems to deal with, but what if you woke up one morning, and the democracy that we have, however you want to define it or evaluate it, is no longer here, and we're a theocracy? What do you do now?

Gregory Hamot: And so, in all the seminary countries that I worked with, they literally went to be one night totalitarian, woke up the next day, democratic. Which is a mind-boggling shift in social psychology. It's a mind-boggling shift in shifting from learned helplessness to I'm on my own. And so, what I've learned is that if you're going to do that, if you're going to overthrow the previous paradigm and shift to another one, in this case the democracy, if there is no preparation, which is usually not the case ... or, is usually the case, when there's no

preparation, you have to start with the youth in the country, because the adults are pretty much, the boat has sailed. The ship has sailed.

Gregory Hamot: And so many times in these countries, I've seen that all the resources go to the top, and not to the educational system in this transformation from an authoritarian to a democratic society. The mere process is simple as something like, something we do in our classrooms very commonly would be have a discussion.

Gregory Hamot: When we first began working with the Polish Ministry of Education in 1991, my colleagues went back, and they were university professors. They were developing a teacher education program, the people I worked with at that time. They said, "That was a great idea, but our students got into fistfights." Because prior to the dawn of democracy in Poland, there was the professor, and they professed, and the student listened and memorized, and that was the way things went. The didactic method was very straightforward. The idea of having one's own opinion and having to warrant that assertion or opinion with facts and data was an unknown concept in education.

Gregory Hamot: So, it was challenging in that regard to help develop a sense of, what is it you need? And there's a philosopher, former ... lay philosopher from Columbia University by the name of Jacques Barzun, who wrote an article called Can Democracy Be Exported? And the answer to that question, I agree with him, is no. But it can be imported. A country has to be able to look at the rest of the democratic world and say, what parts of this fit our sociocultural existence, our sociopolitical existence, that we can build upon with our youth? Because spending it all on the adults is not going to work, or at least that's what I've found out.

Joan Kjaer: What about the role of human rights in education?

Gregory Hamot: Globally, or here in the United States?

Joan Kjaer: Well, maybe both.

Gregory Hamot: Well, here in the United States, it's virtually nil, and I don't mean that derogatorily or pejoratively. If you look at the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, you will see a lot of the Bill of Rights in it. So, we have not ignored the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so much as teach it by not knowing we're teaching it, in many cases. Not that we teach it well or that we accomplish much. That's up to the students to decide, and the parents.

Gregory Hamot: But globally, in democracies, it has become the foundation of their constitutional structure, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So, when I worked in, for instance, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, you have to work with the curriculum design and development from what it is that's commonly shared, and the one thing that's commonly shared in all of these democracies is their

constitution. And so, when we had to analyze these constitutions to see what exactly it is that these countries are hoping to achieve, you could see the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights written between every line, practically.

Gregory Hamot: So, in some ways, the rest of the world that has turned democratic since the fall of Communism has probably got more of a human rights educational vein in their system than we do.

Joan Kjaer: You shared a thought with me: educating for democracy as a habit of mind. What does that mean?

Gregory Hamot: That's something that I stole from a guy named John Dewey. John Dewey and his work, along with all kinds of people who succeeded him, focused on an interesting concept at the turn of the last century that hadn't been really considered, or at least hadn't gelled, which was the idea that democracy is not the institutions. Democracy is the way we think, or as he wrote, how we think. And the idea of having a problem, an issue, a trend, or something that you are dealing with interpersonally and intrapersonally, which means it projects from you to the society in which you live, is something that requires all of the best available evidence to bring to bear in resolution of that problem.

Gregory Hamot: So, in a multicultural society, like ours, or South Africa, it gives you a remarkable amount of information, of perspectives, and so on, to apply to issues and problems. To separate people from each other in educational systems would be to deny each of those groups the others' inputs, and would deny them that habit of mind of, let's come to a consensus on the best idea.

Gregory Hamot: And this is really what democracy is, at least to me, is the ability for all voices to be able to contribute to the solution, and come up with the one that is both in our own self-interests, our enlightened self-interests, as de Tocqueville called them, and the common good. And that's a pretty tricky balance in society, to be able to pull those two things off.

Gregory Hamot: But that's why sometimes democracies don't succeed. And as you can see in Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary and Poland right now. You can see it in Russia, obviously, there is a retraction, too, of the authoritarian society. Life is a lot easier when someone tells you how to do it than it is when you have to figure it out yourself with your friends and your colleagues and family.

Joan Kjaer: Right. Well, thank you so much. Now, I'd like to go to EunJung. And you're from South Korea. You're a teacher in South Korea, and now you're getting your PhD at the University of Iowa. So, there have been social and demographic changes happening in today's South Korea. Can you tell us how those changes affect education?

EunJung Kim: Yeah. Korean society has been experiencing a lot of change in terms of demographics, because of an influx of foreign workers from mostly Southeast

Asian countries and China, and also the increase of international marriage, that affects actually the total government and policy, in terms of education. The Korean government initially took their first step of multicultural education in 2006, and since then, we have been implementing multicultural education in South Korea in our educational system.

EunJung Kim: So, this is very new to us, because our society used to be a homogenous society, in terms of the demographic, the ethnic background. But now, we have different types of people, in terms of cultural and also race and ethnicity, of course. And these are changes into Korean educational system, because our teachers had never experience multiculturalism before 2000, but now we have to implement all multicultural education. This gives us challenges and possibilities to embrace different types of society. How can we create for our next generation? The demographic change challenges us, and also gives us a lot of possibility to education, or special educators.

EunJung Kim: For me, I never heard the term multicultural education when I was in school, even in college. We also had a big, long-held notion of single-blooded nationalism. Yeah. So, that kind of historical background actually has been challenged by the demographic change recently. So, that also gives us, as a teacher, huge challenge, or a lot of possibilities for the next generation.

Joan Kjaer: Are people from some of these different ethnic backgrounds becoming citizens of South Korea, or they are just living there as essentially temporary and non-citizen ...

EunJung Kim: Both. Some people who, especially are married to a Korean man, we have an increasing number of international marriages recently. Actually, I'm from a multicultural family, too. My husband is a white male American. Korean families now have a lot of diverse cultural backgrounds, which is very unprecedented in our history. So, these international marriage couples, especially from southeast countries and China, they became Korean citizens. Whereas foreign workers actually have a hard time to be Koreans, because of a strict law about that.

Joan Kjaer: So, because of the multiculturalism and the changes in the needs of education, what are some of the most tangible things that you think have changed?

EunJung Kim: First of all, as I said, I never had actually educational background in terms of multiculturalism and multicultural education, but now every university has at least a basic course, a [inaudible 01:18:55] course, for multiculturalism. There is multicultural education for preservice teachers. This is a huge change. And also, as an inservice teacher, they have a lot of professional development for how to implement multicultural education into a school system.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

EunJung Kim: And that is also challenging to us as a teacher, because we still have the notion of single-blooded nationalism. That defines, actually, what Koreans, kind of about their Korean identity. But now we have, with different types of cultural background of people, and they became Koreans. But due to the long-held ideology or notion of single-blooded nationalism, Koreans have a conflicted feeling and attitude toward people who have a different background. Like, do they really ... are they really Koreans, or not? It's a big question for us. And that's why I'm passionate about this subject which I'm focusing on as my dissertation. I would like to have more different kinds of Koreans in my country to embrace diverse background.

Joan Kjaer: If you could look ahead 50 years, do you think that ... An older generation will have passed away, presumably, who really had the single-blooded notion in their minds and in their experience. Do you see South Korea moving in this direction, where it's much more fully accepted?

EunJung Kim: I hope so. Yeah. Truly, I really want to see that different future, because I had a serious experience even in my country on the street with my daughter. Not everybody actually thinks like that. Of course, maybe people think my different type of family on the street is the future of Korean society, but at the same time, older generation, people from older generation, they thought, it's kind of tainted into their pure blood concept of what Korean is.

EunJung Kim: One of my harsh experiences was, it happened on the subway with my daughter, and actually with my husband, too. One old guy, old person, was very nice to us, actually, asking where my husband came from, and all kinds of questions. But as soon as my husband left, got off the subway to meet his friend, and the guy's attitude totally changes to me, like saying ... He mumbled, actually, not facing me directly, but mumbled, "These days, the young generation just get married to foreigners, and our old blood got tainted." He didn't exactly directly say it to me, told me, but you know he was talking about me, and everybody heard, actually, on the subway.

EunJung Kim: So, I hope ... I was angry, actually, but at the same time, as I got off the subway, what can I do for my daughter? She was little, so she didn't know what was going on exactly, but at the same time, she's going to have that kind of experience sooner or later when we go back to Korea. What can I do as a teacher, or what can I do as a mom? That's why I want to focus, actually, on my study. I'm going to educate at least my students, and I'm going to work on this long-held concept with my co-workers, my teachers, right? So, that's why I'm working on this dissertation, too.

Joan Kjaer: Well, thank you so much. It's great to have you here. And I'm afraid we've come to the end of our segment, but boy, I want to say thank you very much to Angela James, to Greg Hamot, and to EunJung Kim. And thanks to all of you for coming tonight, and everybody listening to the program. This was the final WorldCanvass of this season. The new season begins in September, and I hope

This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).

we'll see many of you then. All WorldCanvass programs are available on iTunes, the Public Radio Exchange, and the International Programs website. So, for all of us at the International Programs, thank you very much for being here, and please say thank you to our guests.