

Achieving Widespread Democratic Education in the United States: Dewey's Ideas Reconsidered

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Abstract

Excellent, democratic education that furthers each person's potential, success and happiness for her own and others' well-being is not yet widespread in the U.S. today. Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* has much to say about the possibilities and challenges of achieving this goal. This paper examines Dewey's ideas about how a public for widespread, excellent education can form through the development of sound public opinion based on widely disseminated, accurate and relevant information and through the restructuring of associations among people. The crucial role of the educator in the formation of a public emerges through this examination.

Introduction

What is necessary in order to achieve widespread, democratic education in the United States today? The definition of democratic education employed here is based upon the interpretations of John Dewey's ideas in papers written by colleagues and one of the authors of this paper over the past few years (Hlebowitsh, 2007; Hollier, 2007; Jenlink, 2006; Jenlink, 2007; Lambert, 2007; Rodgers, 2006; Romano, 2007). In Meadows's interpretation, democratic education is a powerful force that cultivates the potential of each person and fosters his success and happiness. Each person's happiness and the well-being of others in a democratic society are mutually dependent. This paper will discuss the question of how to achieve widespread excellent education in a democracy for everyone in the U.S. today. The idea "excellent education in a democracy" means:

the curriculum for democracy described here along with ideas for concomitant teacher education are aimed toward preparing all students to be

successful in society for their own and others' benefit. All members of a democracy and especially educators need to think through standards of learning skills and subject matters that will prepare students for this success. In addition, a curriculum for democracy would include subject matters and skills aimed to develop the strengths and talents of all children. Again, this development of all humans is aimed toward the improved quality of life experiences for everyone. This improved life experience is based upon a constant re-working of what a democracy means and which actions and decisions will sustain it. This constant inquiry belongs to all members of a society and educators need to help prepare people to engage in this necessary conversation. (Meadows, 2007, p.35)

All of the above will be summarized as either "democratic education" or as "excellent education" throughout the rest of this paper.

John Dewey's book, *The Public and Its Problems*, has much to say about the possibilities and challenges of achieving this democratic education. Dewey (1927) describes how a public emerges when people understand "the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities" (p.184). This paper's main question can be understood as, "How can we build a public or constituency to bring into being democratic education for all people in the U.S. today?" Dewey (1927) provides promising responses to this question, as in, "The prime condition of a democratically organized public is a kind of knowledge and insight which does not yet exist. . . . some of the conditions which must be fulfilled if it is to exist . . . is freedom of social inquiry and of distribution of its conclusions" (p.166), and "There can be no public without full publicity in respect to all consequences which concern it" (p.167). Dewey's ideas offer guidance for how we might understand and achieve this free social inquiry and the full distribution of its conclusions in order to conceptualize and provide an excellent education for everyone.

In order to explore these questions, first, the real problem of a lack of democratic education for everyone in the U.S. today will be defined. Second, Dewey's ideas about a public, what it is and how to help it form, will be discussed in order to explore how to achieve widespread democratic education for all. Third, two conditions that Dewey sets forth as being necessary for a public to form will be defined: the forming of true public opinion and reconstructing associations among people. Finally, two intellectual antecedents necessary to form a public will be explored: correcting the fallacy that thought needs to be spent on fitting the individual into the society when these are already interconnected and then, recognizing that people have the robust intelligence needed to participate in and continually recreate a true democratic society. Interspersed throughout this discussion of conditions and intellectual antecedents is an exploration of the role of the educator in helping to bring about these conditions and intellectual antecedents in order for widespread democratic education to become a reality for everyone in the U.S. today.

The Problem: A Lack of Excellent Education for All in the U.S.

Democratic education as defined in this paper is not yet widespread in the United States. This can be seen from the disparities in the quality of education. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics, 2001 NAEP Summary Data Tables showed, "Only three in 10 black 17-year-olds (and four in 10 Hispanic 17-year-olds) have mastered the usage and computation of fractions, commonly used percents and averages—compared with seven in 10 white students. And only one in 30 Hispanic 17-year-olds (and one in 100 black students) can do multi-step problem solving and elementary algebra—compared with about one in 10 white students" (Education Commission of the States, 2008). These disparities indicate that not everyone is learning what they need to know to succeed, one of the elements of democratic education. The mathematical skills and reasoning capabilities described in this citation are needed to obtain work and succeed in most living wage jobs. Furthermore, a person needs to know how to use and interpret fractions, averages, and percentages in order to make sense of things like taxes on a grocery bill, taxes taken out of one's pay, and items related to social issues such as the expenditures on schools by a local municipality.

In another example from the National Center for Education Statistics, 2001 NAEP Summary Data Tables, "Only one in 50 Hispanic and black 17-year-olds can read and gain information from specialized text—such as the science section of a newspaper—compared to about one in 12 white students" (Education Commission of the States, 2008). Reading skills and comprehension capabilities are, like those in mathematics, needed for most living wage jobs today. Furthermore, people need to learn to read and understand specialized scientific information in order to be informed about such issues as environmental pollution, medical findings, and automobile safety as they try to take care of their health and safety and that of their dependents. They need to learn to understand such specialized texts in order to be informed about these issues and participate in their community, for instance, to respond to industry's plans to establish a pollution-producing plant nearby. There are many more such examples of people not knowing what they need to know in order to achieve societal success, care for those they love, and participate knowledgeably as citizens.

What makes the reality that these statistics portray even more troubling is that some are learning what they need to know and some are not. This stark reality does not contribute to a democracy where everyone succeeds in a mutually beneficial way. Alex Kotlowitz (1992) writes about an "other America" and Jonathan Kozol (2005) notes that there is "apartheid" in the U.S. educational system today; they both seem to agree that these disparities need redressing. We live in a society marked by a growing division between haves and have nots in terms of material wealth, educational quality, and quality of life. For example, the *New York Times* reported that "the top 10 percent of Americans collected 48.5 percent of all reported income in 2005" (Johnson, 2007, ¶19). Also according to the *New York Times*, "There are 93 million production and nonsupervisory workers (exclusive of

farm workers) in the U.S. Their combined real annual earnings from 2000 to 2006 rose by \$15.4 billion, which is less than half of the combined bonuses awarded by the five Wall Street firms for just one year" (qtd. In Herbert, 2007, ¶6). In another example, that of school funding for the 2002-2003 school year in the Chicago area, there is evidence of the disparity of educational resources. A Chicago suburb with only 8% low-income students receives \$17,291 per pupil, while Chicago, with 85% low income students, receives \$8,482 per pupil (Kozol, 2005, p. 321). This reality cannot remain if we are to have a true democracy in which everyone learns what is needed to succeed, to fulfill on their talents, and to constantly reshape the society into a true democracy (Meadows, 2007, p. 35). Dewey's ideas about how to help a public establish a constituency for widespread excellent education for everyone is an urgent and pressing concern.

Dewey's Ideas About Forming a Public and How This Relates to Establishing an Excellent Education for All in the U.S.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey (1927) defines a public in a democracy as people who experience the effects of things and who have a "common interest in the consequences of social transactions" (p. 137). It follows from this that a public in Dewey's sense is a group of people who have come to know a shared concern and who demand that their shared concern be addressed by elected officials (Dewey, 1927, p. 15-16). However, a public does not seem to be a special interest group that lobbies for its interests to be fulfilled at the expense of others' interests. Instead, people who constitute the public are aware of the effects that events and policies have on them and want these effects regulated for the betterment of everyone. Dewey's idea, however, is not a utopian one, where self-interest ceases to exist. His public seems to be one where people are aware of the "indirect, extensive enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior . . ." and who have a "common interest in controlling these consequences" (Dewey, 1927, p. 126). Another essential idea about the formation of a public for Dewey is that it is an intellectual problem that everyone has the capacity to engage in. He writes, "The problem of a democratically organized public is primarily and essentially an intellectual problem, in a degree to which the political affairs of prior ages offer no parallel" (Dewey, 1927, p. 126). Given this, his ideas for forming a public involve people's knowledge of social and political affairs.

Dewey's Ideas about How to Help a Public Form: Conditions, Antecedents, and the Educator's Role

Dewey made a claim in 1927 that still seems too true today, given the disparities in educational resources and achievement among U.S. students: the public is in "eclipse." He asks, "What are the reasons for its eclipse? What hinders it from finding and identifying itself? By what means shall its inchoate and amorphous estate be organized into effective political actions relevant to present social needs and

opportunities?" (Dewey, 1927, p. 125). These questions relate powerfully to the question of this paper: How can a constituency be grown to establish democratic education for everyone? In the following, Dewey's ideas about how to help a public form in terms of the question of this paper will be explored.

Dewey's Ideas on the Formation of True Public Opinion

For Dewey, a public forms in a democracy when people identify their shared interests and concerns. One of the main conditions for forming a public is the formation of true public opinion. He writes, "public opinion is judgment which is formed and entertained by those who constitute the public and is about public affairs . . ." (Dewey, 1927, p. 177). What and how people think about social issues are key to their forming a public. For public opinion to contribute to the forming of a public, Dewey writes that first, it must be the result of ongoing investigation into social issues, second, that people's opinions need to be based on accurate information and third, that the formation of true public opinion requires that this information be widely disseminated.

Public Opinion that Contributes to the Forming of a Public is Part of Ongoing Investigation into Social Issues

For Dewey, in order for public opinion to contribute to the forming of a public, it needs to be based on knowledge of the results of investigation into social issues that truly matter, such as excellent education. He also advocates social inquiry that explores how people are effected by what goes on in a society and how they are mutually interdependent on one another. He writes, "Unless there are methods for detecting the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions and their consequences, what passes as public opinion will be 'opinion' in its derogatory sense rather than truly public . . ." (Dewey, 1927, p. 177). Dewey means that a public can form only if people are aware of the many ways that they are affected by events and ways in which their actions affect one another in ongoing, important, and intricate ways. He emphasizes people's awareness of their interdependence and their many, often unseen, connections to one another. For example, the negative implications of some members of a society receiving less than an excellent education may go unnoticed but are nonetheless very real. When any one person's talents go undeveloped and unrealized, everyone suffers a loss. Likewise, a person who has not been helped to realize her talents and dreams in life may actively harm others through neglectful or openly aggressive acts. When people do not make connections, which are the scaffolding of true public opinion that builds a public, "thousands feel their hollowness even if they cannot make their feelings articulate" (Dewey, 1927, p. 135).

True Public Opinion is Based upon Accurate and Timely Information

In order for public opinion to be true, people need to have access to accurate and contemporary information, according to Dewey (1927), that is the result of ongoing

ing and relevant social investigations (p. 179). He described the opposite situation when he wrote in 1927, "Opinion casually formed and formed under the direction of those who have something at stake in having a lie believed can be public opinion only in name" (Dewey, 1927, p. 177). People need to be educated in ways that help them distinguish truth from falsehood in social affairs. A shared understanding of social issues that are based on accurate information is essential for people to form a public, allowing them to recognize shared concerns and have them addressed.

Public Opinion Requires Wide Dissemination of Accurate Information that is the Result of Ongoing Social Inquiry

For Dewey, it seems that a democratic public can only form through shared knowledge about social issues that are relevant to people's lives and that is accurate and the result of current inquiry. He seems to say that for something to be known, it needs to be shared among people when he writes, "a thing is fully known only when it is published, shared, socially accessible" (Dewey, 1927, p. 176). So, the results of social investigations need to be disseminated to all people. However, this is not enough for Dewey's public to form: the information needs to be "sown, not by virtue of being thrown out at random, but by being so distributed as to take root and have a chance of growth" (Dewey, 1927, p. 177). A democratic public forms only when ideas are rooted so that they can grow. What might Dewey mean by this? He goes on to explain that "communication of the results of social inquiry is that same thing as the formation of public opinion" (Dewey, 1927, p. 177). People need to have accurate information and transform it into deep knowledge about the social issues that affect them in order to form true public opinion about the issues and how they should be addressed. Jeffrey Scheuer's book, *The Big Picture: Democracy and Journalistic Excellence*, seems to make this point as well: accurate, reliable, and relevant information needs to be provided through the media in order to sustain a democracy.

Educators' and Teacher Educators' Roles in Forming True Public Opinion

Given the above three requisites for public opinion to help form a public, educators may play a large part in the development of true public opinion. They could help people use their intelligence to understand the results of social investigations. Dewey's (1927) ideas can be interpreted to support this idea when he writes,

Inquiry . . . devolves upon experts. But their expertness is not shown in framing and executing policies, but in discovering and making known the facts upon which the former depend. . . . It is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns. (p.209)

Also, people need to be able to make judgments between differing results about education in the example of this paper: what are the findings about how students

learn best? What do these findings mean? What are the implications of this finding for how schools should be structured? What special interests may be getting in the way of the need for all children to be educated well? Educators can help people learn to use their intelligence to address such questions.

Educators can also help people sift through information to discern what is reliable and valid and what is not. Teaching people to be critical of information presented to them is important in the formation of a democratic public. In *The New Media Monopoly*, Ben Bagdikian (2004) states that we live in a time where five dominant media firms control the sources that were controlled by fifty firms only twenty years ago (p. 27). Information is coming from a less varied media and people need to be cognizant of the vested interests of the owning corporations in the information they report. Too often, information is propagated in ways that do not indicate that there may be another set of supposed facts or other views on the subject. Educators need to help people seek out alternative views and results in order to make judgments among them and to understand where the interests of some may be impeding the accurate understanding of social issues by many.

Finally, educators can help people demand information that is relevant to their judgments about important social issues. Educators can ask students to read newspapers and magazines and ask about what is and what is not being reported. They can help facilitate "the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion" (Dewey, 1927, p. 208). Dewey states that this is the need that we should address to solve the problem of a public. Educators are in a position to help with the communication and dispersion of ideas if they bring about meaningful discussion and debate. In order for educators to be able to do these three things for their students, teacher preparation programs must prepare teacher candidates through education to

1. Help people use their intelligence to understand the results of social investigations;
2. Help people sift information to discern what is reliable and valid and what is not;
3. Help people demand information that is relevant to making judgments about important social issues.

The Importance of Forming Associations for a Public to Form

A second, very important condition for the forming of a public, according to Dewey, is the formation of associations among people. He starts out his discussion of this by illustrating the fallacy in thinking that there is any such thing as an individual isolated from social interconnections. He writes, "an individual, whatever else it is or is not, is not just that spatially isolated thing our imagination inclines to take it to be" (Dewey, 1927, p. 187). This idea will be explored below along with Dewey's ideas about the important aspects of forming associations as a precondition for a public to form.

The Importance of Seeing the Fallacy in Pitting the Individual against Society

In response to what he sees as a prevailing misunderstanding about an individual's independence from all others, Dewey (1927) uses the analogy, "The tree stands only when rooted in soil; it lives or dies in the mode of its connections with sunlight, air and water" (p. 186). Likewise, he argues, no person is isolated: an individual is only who she is in the context of her social interconnections. Furthermore, a social body is only what it is in relation to the individuals who comprise it. He uses the example of a marriage and describes how a man is not who he is independent of the union. He writes, "But *as* a member of the union [marriage] he cannot be treated as antithetical to the union in which he belongs. As a member of the union, his traits and acts are evidently those which he possesses in virtue of it, while those of the integrated association are what they are in virtue of the status in the union" (Dewey, 1927, p. 188). Dewey means that we are confused about the individual and the social and consequently set each up against the other when in fact, the individual is shaped by the associations she has and vice versa. Dewey points out that thought spent trying to fit the individual into the social is wasted and could be better spent on thinking about reconstructing associations among people.

The Need for Reconstructing How People Associate

Dewey discusses what he sees as the problem that needs to be addressed rather than the fallacious one that so often is addressed: what is the relation of the individual to society or how to free the individual from the constraints of society. Instead, Dewey (1927) poses this: "the actual problem is one of reconstruction of the ways and forms in which men unite in associated activity" (p. 192). He argues that many have been associating with others in one realm of association and that this one realm has become dominant.

Individuals find themselves cramped and depressed by absorption of their potentialities in some mode of association which has been institutionalized and become dominant. They may think they are clamoring for personal liberty, but what they are doing is to bring into being a greater liberty to share in other associations, so that more of their individual potentialities will be released and their individual experiences enriched. Life has been impoverished, not by a predominance of "society" in general over individuality, but by a domination of one form of association, the family, clan, church, economic institutions, over other actual and possible forms. (Dewey, 1927, p. 194)

Dewey encourages us to broaden our realms of association if we want to form a public rather than allowing ourselves to be dominated by one form of association. Why does he think this would help and how could we go about this? He claims that community, which he seems to advocate building as progress toward forming a public, is about face-to-face interactions with others. "In its deepest and richest sense a

community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse . . . enriching the experience of local associations" (Dewey, 1927, p. 211). However, face-to-face engagement is not enough. Dewey (1927) writes, "Vision is a spectator; hearing is a participator" (p. 219). How we really form associations, then, is by being in touch with people and hearing their concerns. Participating with other people through listening to them is paramount for Dewey and others (Haroutunian-Gordon and Meadows, 2008). Dewey (1927) also writes, "there is no substitute for the vitality and depth of close and direct intercourse and attachment" (p. 213). This is something that any of us could do to help build a constituency for democratic education for all in the U.S. today: to deliberately broaden our associations to people we do not normally associate with and to converse and listen in ways that help us understand their concerns, share ours, and see that we share common concerns for everyone to be educated well.

However, for Dewey, associations in and of themselves are not enough to form a society or a public: "the fact of association does not itself make a society. This demands . . . perception of the consequences of a joint activity and of the distinctive share of each element in producing it" (Dewey, 1927, p. 188). We could investigate how our lives are impacted by the work and the life experiences of others. For example, the food that we eat every day is the consequence of many, many people's thinking, time, and efforts. Recognizing this and how it benefits us and sometimes harms us by mistakes that are made would draw us closer to people with whom we do not normally associate face to face.

The Role of Educators in Helping Associations to Form

Educators can help people become aware of how interrelated they are with others in terms of both their activities and the consequences of those activities. The situation is challenging, as Dewey (1927) describes: "It is not that there is no public, no large body of persons having a common interest in the consequences of social transactions. There is too much public . . . too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition . . . with little to hold these different publics together in an integrated whole" (p. 137). Dewey suggests that people need to become aware of their shared concerns across differences. Teachers can and do (through such collaborations as Northwestern University's Urban Suburban Consortium) help students from different parts of a metropolitan center interact and interrelate with one another. Through such exchanges, students who may think that they have nothing or little in common may discover common concerns, such as a shared concern for opportunities to fulfill their respective life dreams through education. For example, two groups of high school students were brought together by their teachers to talk across their differences: one predominantly Caucasian student body in an affluent area and the other a student body marked by socioeconomic, cultural, and racial diversity. Students from the more affluent school came to understand that the students from the other school wanted to fulfill their life dreams but were often challenged by prejudice and socioeconomic hardship. This realization of shared concerns may

have become what Dewey calls a common denominator for these students. Dewey (1927) writes, "How can a public be organized . . . when it literally does not stay in place? Only deep issues or those which can be made to appear such can find a common denominator among all the shifting and unstable relationships . . . and without abiding attachments, associations are too . . . shaken to permit a public readily to locate and identify itself" (pp. 140-141). As educators bring about better conditions of debate and discussion, they can help us become aware of common denominators across differences that will ultimately make our associations stronger.

In another example from Northwestern University, two teacher candidates designed and conducted a research project wherein they discussed the same readings with students in their respective student teaching classrooms, one in an urban public school and the other in a suburban neighborhood school. The students in the urban classroom were African American and those in the suburban classroom were Caucasian. These teacher candidates wanted to know if these fourth-grade students would "become more tolerant of people from different cultural traditions if they engaged in interpretive discussions about the meaning of texts that came from a variety of cultures." They chose one text from "Caucasian America, two from Africa, one from French Canada, and one from thirteenth century Moorish Spain" (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2004, p. 44). Then, they led a series of discussions sequentially on each text with students in their respective classrooms. For the last two discussions, they brought some of the urban students to take part in a discussion with the suburban students. And in the very last discussion, they brought some of the suburban students to the urban school. When one of the authors of this paper viewed a presentation by Haroutunian-Gordon that included an excerpt of a videotape from one of these last two discussions, she was struck by something that happened there that seemed to be an example of people associating across differences. In the middle of a discussion about a question in which many students were giving their different views, one of the children from the urban classroom asked one of the visitors from the suburban classroom something to the effect of, "What do you think about this? You have not said anything yet, and I want to know your view." Haroutunian-Gordon presented this as a remarkable happening: this African American child, who had never before met the visiting Caucasian child, really wanted to know what he thought about an issue about which she and others had passionate and differing views. Awakening and cultivating this desire to know what people who are different from ourselves think and feel is an important part of what Dewey and we are calling for in restructuring the associations among people.

A final example of people restructuring their associations happened when the coauthors of this paper, a teacher candidate and a teacher educator, worked outside the context of student and teacher by recognizing their common denominators of a shared interest in John Dewey's ideas and in making excellent education for everyone a reality. These common denominators fueled conversation and the joint activity of writing and presenting a paper on how teacher educators and teacher candidates can come together and encourage one another to build a constituency

(Blatchford & Meadows, 2008). By associating outside the realm of graduate student and teacher educator, they turned shared sentiments into a way of action.

Educators could also help people see how they rely upon others' actions that may otherwise be invisible, such as the production of food, the availability of lights in buildings, and the availability of potable water. This knowledge may be the beginning of a growth from merely associative to truly social interactions. For when connections among people are brought to consciousness, shared concerns and interests may begin to form, which are the bases of a public.

Intellectual Antecedents for a Public to Form

Dewey (1927) discusses several "intellectual antecedents of a method" that are necessary preconditions for forming a public (p. 185). By this phrase he means that certain widespread ways of thinking need to be correctly established in order for people to form a public. An example is found in the above discussion of associations: Dewey insists that intellectual energy should stop being wasted trying to solve the false problem of how to fit the individual into the social when they already are inextricably entwined. Instead, he advocates thinking through how to form associations that will help a public form. Another intellectual antecedent is explained below and the role of educators and teacher educators in its establishment is described.

An intellectual antecedent pertinent to growing a constituency for widespread excellent education in the U.S. today is correcting the untruth that, "masses are intellectually irredeemable" (Dewey, 1927, p. 205) or that people are incapable of reasoning and judging for themselves about social matters. Dewey reports on a widespread belief of his day, one that we think is also a widespread misconception today. He writes that in order for a democratic public to form, widely distributed and reliable information needs to be available to the masses of people so that they can make good judgments and form reliable opinions as discussed in the section on forming true public opinion.

Educators at all levels and in all contexts can help people use their intelligence to participate in a democracy by teaching them to seek and demand reliable and accurate information. As Dewey (1927) writes, "the actuality of mind is dependent upon the education which social conditions effect" (p. 209). Our thinking capabilities are developed when society ensures that we have access to widely disseminated, accurate information that is the result of social inquiry relevant to social issues that impact people. Educators can assist people in questioning the reliability and accuracy of information and in not accepting all information as accurate. Educators can also assist people in sharpening their thinking capabilities in educational settings such as schools and teacher preparation programs by asking students to think deeply and critically. Educators can also teach students to notice what is missing from available information and to seek out and demand access to this missing information. Dewey (1927) writes, "We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is dormant and its communications are broken, inarticulate, and feint until it possesses the local community as its medium" (p. 219).

Public opinion is formed through mouth-to-mouth communication made possible through increasing associations among people across differences, and through this process, people's intellectual endowments are confirmed, liberated, and expanded. Educators and teacher educators can assist mightily in this awakening of people's ability to address pressing social issues, such as providing excellent education for everyone through helping people form associations and develop true, public opinion. The result of educators helping associations to form is the awakening of the great intelligence that lies dormant, in our collective lap, as Emerson puts it. With associations formed and life dreams fulfilled, the best in each individual is brought out, including his or her robust intelligence.

Obstacles and Challenges to Restructuring Associations: Ideas for Further Inquiry

The fact that our towns, cities, and neighborhoods are increasingly segregated by race and class poses major obstacles to the goals of this paper. Although there are still some areas of the country where people of differing races, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic status do live and work side by side, these are not the norm. A question for further inquiry is: If people are not regularly interacting with others who differ from themselves in significant ways, how can they associate, much less restructure their associations, in order to build a public for the excellent education of all? Examples of practical ways to overcome the obstacles that segregation poses to the goals here need to be examined.

The present levels of segregation in the U.S. have not happened by accident but have been intentional in differing ways and reflect the concerns and interests of many groups. The differing interests and concerns that result in segregation and related racial, class, and cultural realities that divide people from one another need to be taken seriously into account and inquired into if writers and philosophers such as ourselves want to continue in effective ways to establish a public for excellent education for all.

An area for further inquiry that relates to taking these realities into account includes Charles Mills' ideas in *Blackness Visible*, where he suggests that some white philosophers have not developed strong enough ways to stand up to segregation by race and class because they have not developed their thinking about democracy with a cogent enough view of how segregation presents obstacles to democracy. One particularly interesting and important area to explore includes Mills' statement that in sociology circles in the U.S., racism has often been equated with individual prejudice and not with unjust structural inequality.

Conclusion

We began our exploration with the premise that education in a democracy has three fundamental purposes. The first is to prepare all students to be successful in society for their own and others' benefit. The second is to develop the strengths

and talents of all children toward improving the quality of life experiences for everyone. The third is to help people engage in an ongoing conversation about what a democracy means and about which actions and decisions will sustain it. We then demonstrated the real problem of a lack of democratic education for everyone in the U.S. and focused on the real and growing division between those who are learning what they need to in order to fulfill the definition of democratic education and those who are not. We describe this situation as not being workable to sustain a true democracy.

The main question of the paper is how to achieve widespread excellent education in a democracy for everyone in the U.S. Dewey's idea of a public relates powerfully to this question. For him, a public is formed when people experience deeply the fact that individuals affect everyone else in a society in a multitude of important and yet often unacknowledged ways. Moreover, everyone has an interest in regulating the consequences of how they affect one another in working together toward the goal of improving life experiences for everyone. For example, a shared awareness of an interest in having everyone experience an excellent democratic education is a crucial step in forming a public toward this end.

In this paper, we have described how forming this public requires the formation of accurate public opinion, a restructuring of individuals' associations with others, and the establishment of essential intellectual antecedents. This growth of a public involves everyone learning how to use their intelligence to learn about and to think about social issues to form accurate public opinion. Educators and teacher educators have a crucial role to play in this process. For example, educators need to teach students how to use their intelligence to consider societal issues that affect their lives, how to sort through misinformation and to take notice of the lack of information about important social issues, and how to constantly seek and demand accurate information about pressing social issues from media sources.

We examined two intellectual antecedents of Dewey's for building a public. We have described Dewey's realization that pitting the individual against the social is a fallacy and how he encourages us to not waste energy on that but instead to put energy into reconstructing our associations so that everyone's talents and abilities will be developed and their life experiences will be enriched. His second antecedent corrected the fallacious belief that most people are incapable of reasoning and judging for themselves about social matters. Instead, educators need to help people develop and use their intelligence.

To conclude, educators within preschool, elementary, middle and secondary schools, colleges and universities can help people develop, strengthen, and utilize their intelligence to participate in a democracy and address social issues such as providing excellent education for all by teaching people the value of and how to do the following:

1. seek and demand reliable and accurate information
2. constantly question the reliability and accuracy of information

3. look for what is missing from available information
4. think deeply and critically about information made available to them
5. form associations across differences and listen to others in ways that form accurate public opinion

Furthermore, teacher educators have a particular responsibility to teach future teachers how to do the above with their future students. The result of educators teaching and supporting people in these ways will be the awakening of the great intelligence that lies dormant in our collective lap, as Emerson puts it.

Educators are key to establishing and maintaining this democratic education whereby each individual's talents and abilities are nurtured and developed for the benefit of themselves and others in the society. Furthermore, educators play an essential role in teaching people how to question whether what is happening in schools and society is truly democratic and to take actions to bring issues to light and change things to make them more democratic. One thing that everyone needs to realize is how important excellent education for everyone in the U.S. is today and to come together as a public to speak out for and to achieve that.

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