


EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Between the Global and the Local

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Globalization, we're often reminded, has produced an unprecedented flow of goods, labor, and ideas across borders. Headlines tend to describe it as a recent phenomenon that has relied heavily on the rise of new technologies.¹ Historians, however, paint a different picture.

Two of the articles in this issue reveal ways that global interests have intersected with local experiences—long before email, the internet, and social media made their debut. Consider the case of the Dominican Republic. US officials crossed borders to assume control of the island nation between 1916 and 1924. Although now a faint memory in popular consciousness—suggesting similar fates for interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan—the scale and scope of this military occupation was staggering. Generals and admirals of one country decided the policies of another, including such sensitive matters as the handling of taxes, customs, debt, land, health, welfare, internal improvements, and freedom of speech. Among the most important decrees shaping the Dominican Republic's future were ones having to do with education policy. To date, historical research has told us much about the occupier's perspective. Alexa Rodriguez's article flips the lens and advances our understanding of the experiences and local agency of those occupied.

While Dominicans experienced the full weight of US military power in the early twentieth century, US foreign policy took softer, subtler approaches with other countries in later decades.² Spain, for instance, received special educational attention from US officials during the Cold War, engaging a country with a long and incredibly complex history. Politically, socially, culturally, and economically, it might make better sense to talk of multiple Spains—Moorish Spain, Roman Catholic Spain, Catalanian Spain, Basque Spain, Socialist Spain, Fascist Spain, and so on. The divisions are contentious, long-standing, and ongoing. At times, differences between groups led to peaceful resolutions; at others, they led to violence.³ The US waded into this thorny set of conflicting national aspirations during the Cold War with offers of educational and cultural exchanges. But these offers, too, had their own sets of conflicting interests. Senator J. William Fulbright had a vision for the programs

¹Gholam Khiabany, "Globalization and the Internet: Myths and Realities," *Trends in Communication* 11, no. 2 (2003), 137–53.

²Michael J. Sullivan, *American Adventurism Abroad: Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since World War II* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

³Giles Tremlett, *Ghosts of Spain: Travels through Spain and Its Silent Past* (New York: London, 2008).

that took his name—a vision that included peace and mutual understanding, as well as the expansion of US influence.⁴ Oscar J. Martín García’s groundbreaking article in this issue tells us something wholly new about how factions within Spain viewed, interpreted, and responded to US educational interventions.

The other two feature articles in this issue are quite different in their topical focus. In his article on seventies-era school reform in West Philadelphia, T. Philip Nichols examines a school that embraced the possibilities of “innovative” reform. The history of that school, Nichols argues, offers insight into the contested understandings of innovation in education, and reveals the kinds of demands that educational change efforts place on teachers and communities. In his article on Disney nature films, Charles Dorn shows readers how the so-called *True-Life Adventures* taught a very particular form of appreciation for the natural world. Using hard-won findings from the Walt Disney Archives, Dorn examines how students and educators responded to these films, as well as how the films established conventions for nature documentaries that continue to be produced today.

As readers of *HEQ* will have noticed by now, our editorial team has sought to organize articles into themes whenever possible. We believe that doing so makes each contribution more powerful, and fosters the interplay of ideas that characterizes the best kinds of scholarship. Why, then, have we paired the articles on West Philadelphia and Disney nature films together with two articles about the intersection of global interests and local experiences? And why have we further added Ben Justice’s powerful Presidential Address on “white goods” and Peter N. Stearns’s insightful historiographical essay on student anxiety to the medley? The answer is twofold.

Our first priority at *HEQ* is publishing high-quality historical research on a broad range of topics. While diverse in subject matter and focus, the six pieces in this issue all examine new evidence or provide new interpretations that challenge and extend what we know about each topic. Whether they speak directly to each other or not, these articles are outstanding contributions that we’re proud to publish.

The second answer, in the case of Charles Dorn’s article, is that we tried to create an issue with thematic unity. When we received his manuscript on Disney’s *True-Life Adventures*, we immediately began discussing the possibility of gathering together work on the history of environmental education—whether formal, as in a school curriculum, or informal via something like a television program. Knowing that the process of securing permissions from Disney would take some time, we had confidence that relevant submissions would appear. Yet they didn’t.

Seeking to offer encouragement, our editorial team issued a call for submissions related to the history of environmentalism and education, especially topics with broad relevance to current global issues. The call expressed a particular interest in the advancement and diffusion of knowledge about the environment in formal and informal settings; developments in curriculum and instruction in such areas as conservation, wildlife preservation, ecological stewardship, and climate change; the

⁴Sam Lebovic, “From War Junk to Educational Exchange: The World War II Origins of the Fulbright Program and the Foundations of American Cultural Globalism, 1945–1950,” *Diplomatic History* 37 (2013), 280–312.

evolution of academic research in issues related to environmentalism, with a particular emphasis on the role of government, funding agencies, professional communities, and grassroots organizing; and equity and access to environmental education, with particular focus on underrepresented communities around the world that have traditionally received less consideration in histories of environmentalism and education.

The submissions never materialized. Thus, rather than appearing alongside other work exploring environmentalism and education, “‘I Never Saw as Good a Nature Show Before’: Walt Disney, Environmental Education, and the *True-Life Adventures*” appears alongside the three outstanding but unrelated feature articles included in this issue.

On the one hand, this is hardly a problem. If anything, this issue is evidence of our commitment to publishing first-rate work on the history of education. Our team will always prioritize submissions that contribute to our understanding of the past and creatively shed light on current challenges, whatever their topical focus. And the works in this issue—addressing power, colonialism, race relations, foreign policy, and environmental education—do just that.

On the other hand, we want to strongly encourage work that will help us better understand what will increasingly become the most pressing challenge facing Americans and people around the world: our changing climate. Why do we take the perspectives we do on the environment? How has education shaped what we know about the natural world? What has the role of different actors, whether governmental or non-governmental, been in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors? How have issues like race and class shaped the way we engage with the environment?

As readers enjoy this issue, we also hope that it will inspire some to begin exploring the broad topic of environmentalism and education. Particularly in the case of climate change, global interests will continue to intersect with local experience in powerful and perilous ways, and the past, no doubt, has something to say about that.