Eye Magazine

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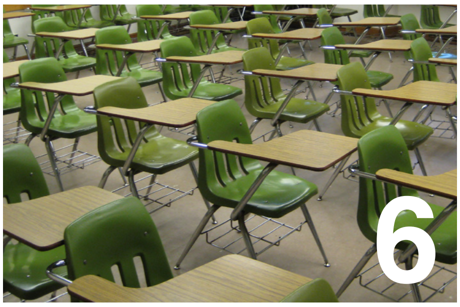

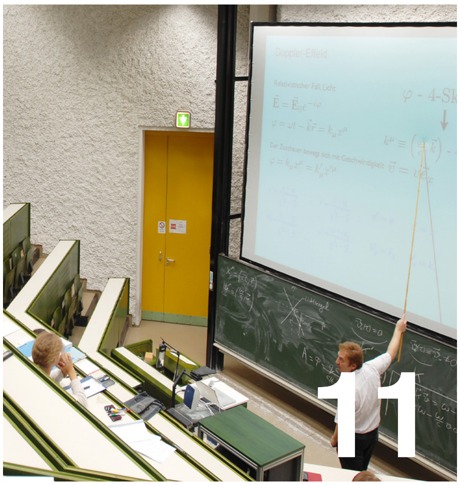

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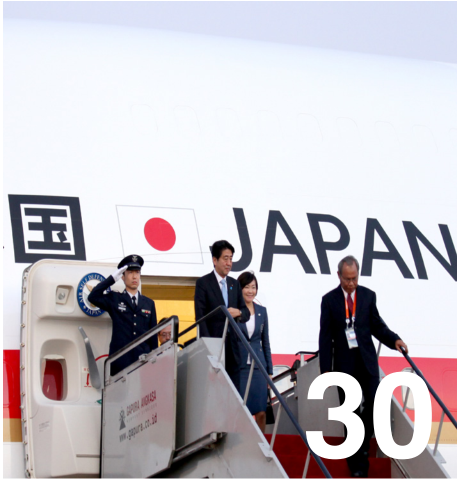

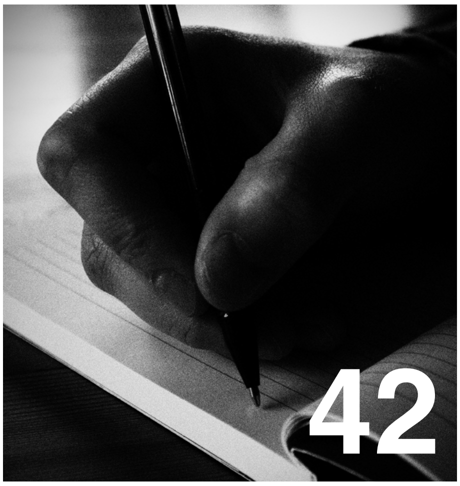

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Eye Magazine
Issue 3 | Spring 2014

Editor
Michael Liam Kedzlie

Design
Thaddeus Pope

Subscriptions
magazine@iafor.org

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A word from the editor

Welcome to this the third edition of Eye magazine the International Academic Forums own in-house e-magazine publication. Through Eye magazine, we hope to enlighten you to various views and opinions of our contributors, many of whom, have presented full research papers at our various conferences. We are very excited by this particular edition of the magazine as we have a new design layout thanks to my colleague, Thaddeus Pope, IAFOR's Media Manager, as well a some great articles to interest you as the reader.

As the new editor of Eye magazine one of my goals is to provide opportunities for the latest research presented at IAFOR's conferences and subsequently published in our various official proceedings and journals the opportunity to reach out to a new audience. Of course that research has to be able to be digestible to the non-specialists. So hopefully, with Eye magazine a specialist in the area of international relations can inform and enlighten a language learning expert and likewise a cultural studies exponent can speak to an economist, or a lawyer to an environmental engineer, without the burden of over-specialist terminology found within one's own traditional research silo. To that, Eye magazine is in many ways, an extension of our focus on developing interdisciplinary knowledge and research synergies.

In this latest edition I wish to thank those contributors who have kindly written articles and submitted photos to make it all happen, to make it an interesting and vibrant read. This edition has some fabulous articles. Craig Sower throwing down the gauntlet with respect to the direction of modern education. Doug Forster with his wonderful essay on the movie Peggy Sue got Married filtered through the socio-political perspective of Reagan's America. Barry Natusch and Beryl Hawkins with their critical examination of 'Abenomics' and the resulting media discourse here in Japan. It is also a pleasure to publish the opinion editorial of Dr Jerry Platt who provides a critical analysis of the current university rankings, which are becoming over prescribed, described and with people like Jerry around – thoroughly debunked. I first became aware of the research in this area following Jerry's address at last year's Asian Conference on Education. Also in this edition we have featured an interview by Gary Swanson with Robert Roth, which will also be soon available on IAFOR's Channel. The interview looks back on Richard's long career as a journalist and media professor. It highlights the exciting journalism program at North Western under Brad Hamm and Richard's current role in the Middle East. The video of this interview is available on IAFOR's YouTube channel.

Also in this third edition of Eye magazine we also get a chance to meet up with Canadian environmentalist Severn Cullis Suzuki whom Rebecca Irby recently interviewed on video, something that will be available shortly on IAFOR's YouTube Channel. Rebecca Irby also contributes an informative report on a New Jersey based education program – the Developing Safe and Civil Schools Initiative. Hong Kong based Japanese writer Jun Kobayashi introduces us the architectural culture of the colourful Wan Chai district in Hong Kong, and Anis Bajrektarevic provides us with a fascinating perspective of the current Syrian issue. Young Indian writer and academic Vineet Kaul offers a delightful short piece on the personal joy and torment of the writing process, something, which many of us can relate to as professionals or academics. This edition features an excerpt from the keynote speech of Professor Svetlana Ter-Minasova's Keynote Address at the Asian Conference on Education in which she reflected on the past attitudes and practices that she experienced first hand as a young student then ambitious professor of foreign languages under then Soviet Russia.

Lastly at IAFOR we felt that you, as a reader of Eye, should also have the opportunity to contribute to this new exciting magazine venture. Thus we hope that it can give you the opportunity to also creatively focus your own vision, perspective and insight as a contributor to future editions. We trust that this edition of Eye magazine will be an informative, interesting and exciting way for us to communicate with you, and you in turn with us.

Sincerely,

Michael Liam Kedzlie
Editor
mkedzlie@iafor.org

FEATURE : Craig Sower

Photograph by Aaron Loessberg-Zahl / Flickr

Progressively Worse Classrooms

HOW LONG CAN WE TOLERATE DECLINING STANDARDS? BY CRAIG SOWER

A paper titled "American Progressive Education and Yutori Kyoiku" elicited interesting responses at the ACE 2013 Conference. Immediately after the presentation, an attendee raised his hand and said, "As an educator in California for the past 25 years I disagree with everything you said." He went on to blame conservatives for current problems in California schools. Such comments from American teachers are not surprising, but the comments from two Asian attendees were. During the break, a Malaysian woman said, "Mr. Sower, I am agreeing with you in every particular. I did not know where this style of education was coming from, but it is having a very negative effect in Malaysia. Public schoolchildren are unprepared for higher education and it is getting worse." A Taiwanese woman agreed, though she thought the "new" ideas came from Japan. These reactions illuminate a divide between an entrenched establishment that favors progressive education, and a growing sense among parents and teachers that something is deeply wrong. Objections to progressive education are not new.

The origins of the movement are detailed in the original paper, but the main points are these. American intellectuals educated in Germany in the late-1800s were inspired by the Prussian model of an efficiently organized society under the leadership of experts backed by the power of the state bureaucracy. They returned home imbued with ideas about an ostensibly rational Statism and began to advocate similar changes in America. Leaders of the movement (Stanley Hall, John Dewey, Edward Thorndike, David Snedden, and William Kilpatrick) were also inspired by Rousseau. Working principally at Teachers College at Columbia University (TCCU), they replaced traditional curricula with a differentiated curriculum that put the masses on a vocational track while giving elite students a better education. They de-emphasized reading and dumbed-down courses. From 1910-1950, academic content in American schools was slashed by 60% as "life-adjustment" courses rose ten-fold. They established an ongoing hegemony over teacher education and placed pupils' self-esteem above learning facts or developing good habits. A century later, in Japan, yutori kyoiku (stress-free education) reduced the school week from six days to five in 2002, and cut "educational requirements by a third." Scholastic performance cratered in

both countries. Progressive education results in a two-tiered system with well-educated elites on top, poorly educated masses below, and lower overall academic achievement, as is demonstrated in the U.S. and Japan. This is not a bug, it's a feature.

The results are clear. In America, the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress tests of 4th- and 8th-graders showed that performance has flat-lined. The 2012 average SAT reading score fell to 496, the lowest since data became available in 1972. Writing, at 488, was the lowest since being added to the test in 2006. U.S. scores also declined in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). In math, the US slipped from 18th out of 27 countries, to 25th out of 30. In science, the U.S. fell from 14th out of 27, to 21st out of 30. U.S. students remained number one in self-esteem. American teachers blame inadequate support. However, as performance declined from 1970 to 2009, staffing doubled and total inflation-adjusted spending per student for K-12 public education increased from $55,000 to $151,000.

In Japan, "declining scholastic abilities of Japan's children and university students—formerly ranked at the top of the world—is said to be a failure of the [Ministry of Education's] policy of yutori kyoiku." This occurred as academic contents were cut and class size was reduced from a post-war average of 50 to the current 35. Japan's free-fall shocked the nation.

Japan PISA Ranking

	Math	Science	Reading
2000	2	2	8
2003	6	2	14
2006	10	5	15

The ideas at issue began with the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the enlightened genius who sent his five illegitimate children to foundling homes before sitting down in 1762 to pen his extended sermon on childrearing, Emile. Rousseau's suggestions of easy, "natural" learning are seductive. Imagine a world where children effortlessly learn language and history, science and math. Imagine discipline and moral behavior arising spontaneously. Imagine schools where teachers need no lesson plans, but guide students in seamless harmony with the children's interests. Imagine it all, for imagination is as close as you will get. Regardless, American elites in the late-19th century embraced Rousseau's unproven assertions about the nature of children, learning and teaching, and founded an approach that is "progressive" only in the sense that it creates progressively worse classrooms. Since Japan's yutori kyoiku follows suit, Japanese parents should familiarize themselves with the origins of this philosophy before deciding if it is good for their children. Perhaps Malaysian and Taiwanese parents should, too.

The traditional ideal of a liberal education rested on three principles: 1) rigorous study disciplines the mind; 2) this benefits all students; and 3) studying the cultural, scientific, and religious heritage of the nation adds value to the society and uplifts the community as a whole. Disdainful of American social, religious, and

political institutions, progressives pursued their own vision instead. One person who took issue with the strange new definitions of democracy and education being advanced was William Maxwell, superintendent of New York City public schools. In a paper published in 1914, he blasted the dismal outcomes of the fads, panaceas, and easy answers pushed by academic theorists: "It was so comfortable to imagine that, thru interesting reading and thru story-telling and thru counting the petals of flowers and the legs and ears of animals, and writing about them, children could learn arithmetic, and composition and grammar, and that those tiresome drills to which old-fogy teachers and superintendents pinned their faith could be neglected with impunity! Hence thousands of teachers followed this new will-o'-the-wisp. The results were deplorable."

Another dissenter was Paul Shorey, classical studies professor at the University of Chicago. He opined in a 1917 article: "The things which, for lack of better names, we try to suggest by culture, discipline, taste, standards, criticism, and the historic sense, they hate…the tendency of their policies is to stamp out and eradicate these things and inculcate exclusively their own tastes and ideals by controlling American education with the political efficiency of Prussian autocracy and the fanatical intolerance of the French anticlericalists. Greek and Latin have become mere symbols and pretexts. They are as contemptuous of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Racine, Burke, John Stuart Mill, Tennyson [or] Alexander Hamilton…as of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil or Horace." He was to be proven right. It was not just that educationists were removing the classical curriculum from high schools it was that they sought to remove scholarship altogether. Their assault was not only on the education of the children of the lumpen proletariat, whom they were apparently willing to consign to sweatshops and farms, the progressives were bent on the diminution of a common cultural understanding even for would-be elites.

Shorey's concerns were echoed thirty-six years later. In 1953, Arthur Bestor, a former TCCU professor, wrote: "Progressive education became regressive education, because, instead of advancing, it began to undermine the great traditions of liberal education and to substitute for them lesser aims, confused aims, or no aims at all." Bestor dismissed progressives' claims of innocence about their future designs on the curriculum: "We must face the facts. Up-and-coming public school educationists are not talking about substituting one scholarly discipline for another. They stopped talking about that years ago. They are talking—as clearly as their antipathy for grammar and syntax permits them to talk—about the elimination of all the scholarly disciplines" (emphasis his).

Nor are Japan, Malaysia, and Taiwan the first non-Western countries progressives have tried to seduce. In the 1920s, TCCU professor William Kilpatrick advanced his own version of progressive education, "The Project Method." His variant consisted of student-led activity for activity's sake. Students made newspapers, sewed dresses, and produced portfolios. Like other progressives, he adamantly opposed academic curricula. In 1925, he wrote of "activity leading to further activity" (emphasis his) and of "growth in richness of life and growth in control over experience…If we can each day get him [the child] to do better than the day before, we can gradually build up a finer quality of living. The details of doing it are as infinite as there are children and situations." Almost any activity one could imagine would fit his model so long as the teacher had nothing to do with planning it. It mattered only that students be enthusiastic. In 1928, Kilpatrick and Dewey traveled to the U.S.S.R., meeting with educators including Soviet People's Commissar of Enlightenment Anatoly Lunacharsky, professor Albert Pinkevich, and S. T. Schatzsky. The Russians praised The Project Method effusively. Knoll writes, "Viktor N. Sulgin, head of the Institute of Educational Research in Moscow, called the concept the 'withering away of the school' and declared the 'metod proektov' to be the one and only truly 'Marxist' and 'democratic' method of teaching." The Russian reformers planned to implement the method throughout the country.

Alas, they acted too hastily. Knoll writes that on September 5, 1931, shortly after the adoption of Sulgin's new curriculum, Stalin, "condemned the 'ill-considered craze for the project method'…declaring [it] was not suited for teaching the knowledge and skills necessary to increase industrial production and strengthen communist consciousness. Indeed, there was considerable risk that…progress achieved in the field of general and scientific education in recent years would be jeopardized." One searches in vain for further mention of the hapless Mr. Sulgin. Other advocates of progressive education also seem to have "withered away." Commissar Lunacharsky was purged the year after he met Dewey, his name dropped down the memory hole during the Great Terror of 1936-38. According to Ravitch, "In the mid-1930s the reformer Schatzsky committed suicide. Professor Pinkevich was arrested in the regime's mass purges of intellectuals and died in a forced-labor camp." While anyone who has sat through a faculty meeting can understand the impulse to send academic gasbags to Siberia, one wishes today's progressives better luck.

Today, progressive educators dress up

Photograph by AJARI / Flickr

their weak curriculum with happy-talk about critical thinking and interdisciplinary problem solving, but the results prove Rousseau and Dewey were wrong. Many parents now use their wallets to get around dumbed-down public education. In the U.S., there have always been private schools for those with money or connections. In Japan, families rely on juku (private cram schools) to prepare their children to enter elite institutions. Unfortunately, this does not help the vast majority of children who are trapped in public schools that fail to prepare students for anything beyond low-level jobs. The result is a system in which a few lucky students receive a high-quality liberal education, and everyone else receives mush. In other words, it produces precisely the kind of statist society Bismarck had in mind: clever shepherds tending a pliant flock.

There remains, however, the problem of culture. Do Americans really want to be herded by their betters? If not, then perhaps schools using more traditional methods may yet prevail. There are some hopeful signs. At Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy charter schools (featured in Waiting for Superman) students do daily homework, drills, and other effective, old-fashioned activities. Similarly, students at traditional Catholic high schools—many in inner cities—are twice as likely as public school students to graduate from college. Japan poses a different challenge to progressives. While top-down decision-making is familiar to most Japanese, radical change is not. After all, Confucian and Zen Masters are bywords for tradition. Finally, how might Malaysia and Taiwan react to progressive academic failures?

Elites have pushed progressive education in America, and yutori kyoiku in Japan, based on false assumptions about children, learning, and teaching. Under their leadership, academic performance has collapsed in the U.S. and will continue to deteriorate in Japan unless these practices are changed. Japan's decline in scholastic achievement followed a course similar to the decline in American academic performance when progressive "reforms" were enacted. Empowering experts over the objections of parents and teachers, reducing contents, and shortening study time inevitably results in poorer performance and a two-tiered system.

Prof. Craig Sower is a Professor of English at Shujitsu University, Okayama, Japan, where he has taught writing and teacher-education at graduate and undergraduate levels since 1998.

Rating the Rankers

A look at the 6 current prominent University Rankings
by Professor Jerry Platt

There is little agreement on what constitutes a quality university or that raters go to great lengths to differentiate their rankings product – neither explanation offers much support for trusting university rankings. The categories of admissions selectivity and student demographics, finances and spending, services, and financial aid are exclusively American concerns. Inclusion of international diversity has been characterized by some as a British effort to improve rankings of their schools relative to the Americans. The tendency to focus on input measures is evident throughout. Rather than an exhaustive listing and critique of all known university rankings, following are my selective comments regarding two American and four global University ranking organizations.

U.S. News & World Report
The most well-known university rankings are the annual publications by U.S. News & World Report. Given that some universities are in their second millennia, and that few institutions resist change quite like a university, how much can university rankings really change year to year? Quite a bit, according to the magazine's spokesperson leading up to the 2014 release date: "Many school ranks will change in this year's edition compared with the 2013 edition". Not so much, according to the empirical evidence. The actual correlation between 2014 and 2013 rankings was 0.991 for U.S. national universities and 0.989 for liberal arts colleges. Perhaps rankings change more gradually, over time. The evidence suggests otherwise, at least at the top. For U.S. News & World Report, the criteria indeed has changed over time, from solely peer assessment to consideration of some 16 factors, but rankings of top schools have reshuffled ever so slightly over the past 30 years.

Forbes / CCAP Rankings
Forbes Magazine has formed a partnership with The Center for College Affordability and Productivity, ostensibly to construct rankings consistent with "our firm belief in 'output' over 'input'. We're not all that interested in what gets a student into college, like our peers who focus on selectivity metrics such as high school class rank and SAT scores. Our sights are set directly on ROI: What are students getting out of college?" (11). Apparently lost on Forbes is the irony that their #1 ranked school for 2013 is Stanford University, most assuredly one of the most selective institutions among the 650 sampled, with extremely high median high school class ranks and standardized test scores among incoming students. Regarding the "college affordability" in the title of the Forbes rankings partner, note that annual tuition at Stanford is $42,690.

Shanghai Academic Rankings of World Universities
The first international ranking system was developed in 2013 in China, possibly in an effort to identify institutions after, which to model their own. The criteria are decidedly elitist, restricted to just research productivity and recognition – and Nobel prizes. The top three rankings for 2013 were Harvard, Stanford, and University of California, Berkeley.

QS World University Rankings
One year after the Shanghai rankings first appeared, the London Times partnered with Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a London-based education survey research firm, to produce the Times Higher Ed / QS World University Rankings. Since 2010 the two organizations have published separate ratings, although collaboration continues. For the 2013/14 rankings, half the weighting applies to their own global surveys of academic (40%) and employer (10%) reputation; the remaining half is derived from faculty-student ratios (20%), faculty research citations (20%) and international students (5%) and faculty (5%). The current top 10 rankings include six American and four British universities. Given the heavy weighting, the surveys merit scrutiny. It also is questionable to place much weight on the proportion of international staff or students on campus. To the extent it contributes at all to academic excellence, what would seem to matter is a global mind-set rather than mere foreign presence. For the last year (2009) in which THE/QS combined to produce rankings, 11 Japanese universities were included among the world top 200 universities. As is evident from the graph below, they are highly ranked despite weak international representation. Conversely, if Prime Minister Abe wants to increase Japanese representation at the high end of such global rankings, simply increase the number of non-Japanese faculty and students on campus. Does this really connote excellence?

Times Higher Education Rankings
Despite weights reported to four decimal places, the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings actually places more than 40% weighting on worldwide reputation and international presence. The top 10 rankings go to 7 American and three British schools.

CWUR World University Rankings
A new entry in 2012, the Center for World University Rankings (CWUR) eschews surveys and data submissions by the universities to build a ranking system robust against manipulation that it claims measures quality of education and research. Identically to Shanghai, however, in 2013 it ranks Harvard #1 and Stanford #2.

FEATURED : Jerry Platt

University Rankings

Crossing Disciplines, Borders, and Credulity by Jerry Platt

Rankings are ubiquitous in modern society, an irresistible pairing of 21st-century capabilities in data access, packaging and distribution to the timeless tendency of human nature to recognize, invoke or impose comparisons. For thousands of years rankings invariably were derived from census data, and were limited to comparisons among regions within a sovereign jurisdiction.

For 150 years we followed the dictates of Adam Smith and the market magic of his "invisible hand", then came the Depression. Governments around the world lacked data, metrics, or strategies to intervene and influence the direction of their economies. It was a short step from measuring each country's GDP to sorting and ranking by GDP, and then by GDP per capita, and then by further variations on this and other themes.

Of course, there is no obvious way to compare apples to oranges, or wealth to health, so such rankings necessarily are somewhat subjective. The UN chooses to assign equal weights to each of its three categories, an attempt at neutrality that nonetheless is value-laden. Whatever the widgets being considered, many of the most recognized rankings in play today follow this neutrality model.

No entities seem off limit: a cursory web search offers up rankings of American presidents, of hospitals, of the social value of songs, of radio broadcasters, of country corruption perception, and of so very much more. Perhaps most common of all are rankings of universities.

Many rankings are harmless, mere conversation fodder. However, University rankings almost never are without consequences that matter. Parents often are (mis-) guided by rankings in selecting a college for their child, and internally administrators use rankings as a tool to garner increased funding. Recently the stakes have increased.

In the United States, the Obama administration has announced a plan to develop metrics and create university rankings, and to then use those rankings to help guide allocation of Federal government student financial aid and other resources. Even as critics express concern over basing public policy and resource allocations on rankings that invariably rest on questionable assumptions and often suffer from measurement and methodological deficiencies, the politicos seem intent upon marching ahead.

The ranking of Universities have been around for nearly a century. As documented by Myers and Robe (5), in 1900 Alick MacLean of England contributed to the heredity v. environment debate of the day by ranking universities in the order of "eminent men who attended them" (6). Several such periodic rankings based on distinguished alumni or faculty reputation followed over the next half-century. Of particular interest given the current Obama initiative, in 1910 Kendrick Babcock, a U.S. Federal employee with the Bureau of Education, created a set of American university rankings. A draft of his rankings found its way into newspapers, and the uproar from college deans and presidents who felt slighted led President Taft to issue an Executive Order prohibiting its official release. No administration has tried since.

Reputation-based rankings received a boost in 1983 when the magazine U.S. News and World Report began publishing and updating rankings of American universities. In 1988 it expanded the criteria beyond reputation to include objective input/output data, including admission and graduation rates, faculty publications and economic resources. Competitors emerged, and in 2003 Shanghai Jiao Tong University released its first "Academic Rankings of World Universities (7). Competition is this market today includes the QS World University Rankings since 2004 (8), the Times Higher Education Rankings since 2010 (9), and the CWUR World University Rankings since 2012 (10).

Why Do University Rankings Vary?

The seemingly simple example of American college football is instructive. Even with an empirical and unambiguous scoreboard for each game, a (usually) fixed set of games, and the single objective of winning games, it proves impossible to construct rankings upon which all reasonable folks might agree. With over 300 teams each playing perhaps 12 games, there are likely to be multiple teams with the same win percentage. To ferret out differences, one turns to less obvious metrics, over which judges may disagree as

Photograph by Seth Sawyers / Flickr

to their selection, their measurement, their relative importance, and so on. Imagine now repeating this exercise for another unit of the university, such as the physics department, for which there is no clear measure of "a win". Now extend the exercise to each individual unit of the institution, and then somehow aggregate across these disparate units to arrive at a university measure. Do so for all universities in your universe of interest, regardless of big or small, public or private, in London or Leeds, in Latvia or Lithuania. No small task, indeed.

Rankings differ because different choices are made in their construction, and there are a surprisingly large number of choices that must be made, at least implicitly. Following are ten such choices.

CONSTRUCTION CHOICES

1) Institutional Objectives

Surely university rankings should be guided by institutional objectives. Just as surely, those objectives differ among universities, as do the resources available to pursue objectives. For example, one university may aspire to change the world through fundamental research. If successful, it will recruit brilliant faculty and students, and provide sufficient resources and an environment conducive to research productivity. It then will acquire a reputation for excellence in research.

A different university, perhaps operating with a fraction of the resources available to the first, may aspire to change the world by creating opportunities for the otherwise disadvantaged to challenge engrained social strata. If successful, it will be appreciated by those who benefit, dismissed by those who are threatened, and likely be overlooked by rankings that focus on reputation, resources and selectivity. Both universities are changing the world, arguably for the better, but ranking systems that impose a single monolithic objective implicitly favor one institution over the other.

Almost all current university ranking systems are based on reputation or variables that correlate highly with reputation, the dominant driver of rankings dating back to Alick MacLean in 1900. Absolute measures of success that are tied to reputation, such as alumni achievement and research production, invariably receive greater emphasis than do efficiency measures, such as value-added per student or return on investment; equity measures, such as providing opportunities for the socially disadvantaged, are rarely considered.

2) Sample Selection

You want to rank American universities. Do you include the Rhode Island School of Design, a prestigious but highly specialized institution? Do you include Gustavus Adolphus College, a prestigious liberal arts institution that indicates it does not require standardized test scores for admission (on which basis U.S. News & World Report excluded it)?

3) Variable Selection

Input measures often are readily available for universities, either through self-reporting or from government or other official and standardized sources. Output measures often are more elusive, in part because of intrinsic measurement problems and in part because schools sometimes safeguard such sensitive information. Valid rankings may require a balance between input and output measures, perhaps including meaningful output/input ratios. Given the varying objectives of different universities, the varying conditions and cultures that prevail across countries, and the diversity of activities across departments on any given campus, how do you decide the appropriate set of input and output measures?

4) Variable Measurement

You want to measure student satisfaction as one component of your rankings? Do you rely on a direct measure that is easy to access but may be biased, such as the website www.RateMyProfessor.com (as does the Forbes/CCAP Rankings)?

5) Data Collection

Do you rely upon data within the public domain that approximate your variables of interest, or do you request data directly from the schools to assure exact responses to the variables of interest? U.S. News & World Report does the latter, and in the process incurs missing data problems from non-responsiveness.

6) Variable Normalization

For whatever reason, you want to rank universities by assigning equal weight to retention rate and median standardized test score for the entering class. You have:

University	RetRate	TestScore
X	90	500
Y	70	700
Z	50	900

If you sum the measures, then rank #1 = University Z, at 950. Note, however, that they would remain #1 even if their retention rate approached 0. The problem is that retention rates and standardized test scores are measured on different scales, so that in this instance the nominal equal weighting in effect weights test scores about 10 times more than it weights retention rates.

7) Variable Correlations

Assume that you add entering grade point to retention rate and standardized test score, and intend to give equal weight to each underlying factor in deriving rankings? Assume further that admissions data (grade point and test score) are highly correlated (say +0.90). If you assign equal nominal weight to the three variables, then in essence you are weighting test score nearly double retention rate, since grade point is so highly correlated with test score as to be a surrogate for it. retention rate, since grade point is so highly correlated with test score as to be a surrogate for it.

8) Variable Weightings

You somehow have constructed a single perfect measure for each of education effectiveness, efficiency and equity, and now you want to weight the measures so as to aggregate the information. Do you assign equal weightings? Random weightings? Do you choose weights to reflect the statistical quality or face validity of the data?

9) Variable Aggregation to Scores

Having decided how to weight the variables, do you then combine them in a linear manner? Would you prefer a geometric aggregation that imposes penalties for compensation among individual indicators? There also are multi-criteria approaches to consider, if your goal is to prohibit a very high score offsetting a low.

10) From Scores to Rankings

Finally, you have scores for each university, from which you easily can construct rankings? Should you? If ranking 800 universities, it is likely that you are not confident that University # 583 is truly "better" than University # 584, so why suggest otherwise?

PRESENTATION CHOICES

Not only do university ranking systems vary in their construction choices, they also vary in what they present, and how. Following are five presentation choices.

1) Reporting

What to report? What, if anything, to hold back? Some ranking services provide only the rankings, some provide category standardized scores and/or weights, some provide the raw data, but few provide the raw data in a friendly format to download. While there may be understandable concern that consumer-modified analyses might misrepresent publisher intentions, or that there could be usage without attribution, these are not concerns unique to rankings data, and in any event should be trumped by a spirit of transparency and support for replication of scientific results.

2) Sensitivity

All of the university rankings are presented with an air of finality, as if the evidence has led inescapably to the resultant rankings. None provide confidence intervals or sensitivity

Photograph by uniinsbruck / Flickr

analyses of their rankings, despite the obvious fact that the many choices enumerated earlier rather clearly suggest that different choices would lead to different rankings.

3) Documentation

Some services provide careful documentation of data sources, rationale for inclusion, weighting scheme, and so on; many do not. Why trust those that don't?

4) Accessibility

More often than not, university rankings are packaged online in a manner not conducive to downloading and analyzing. Even when the ingredients are supplied, they usually are packaged as a pdf file or a separate pull-down menu item for each attribute. Control sometimes seems to border on paranoia, such as at the QS site:

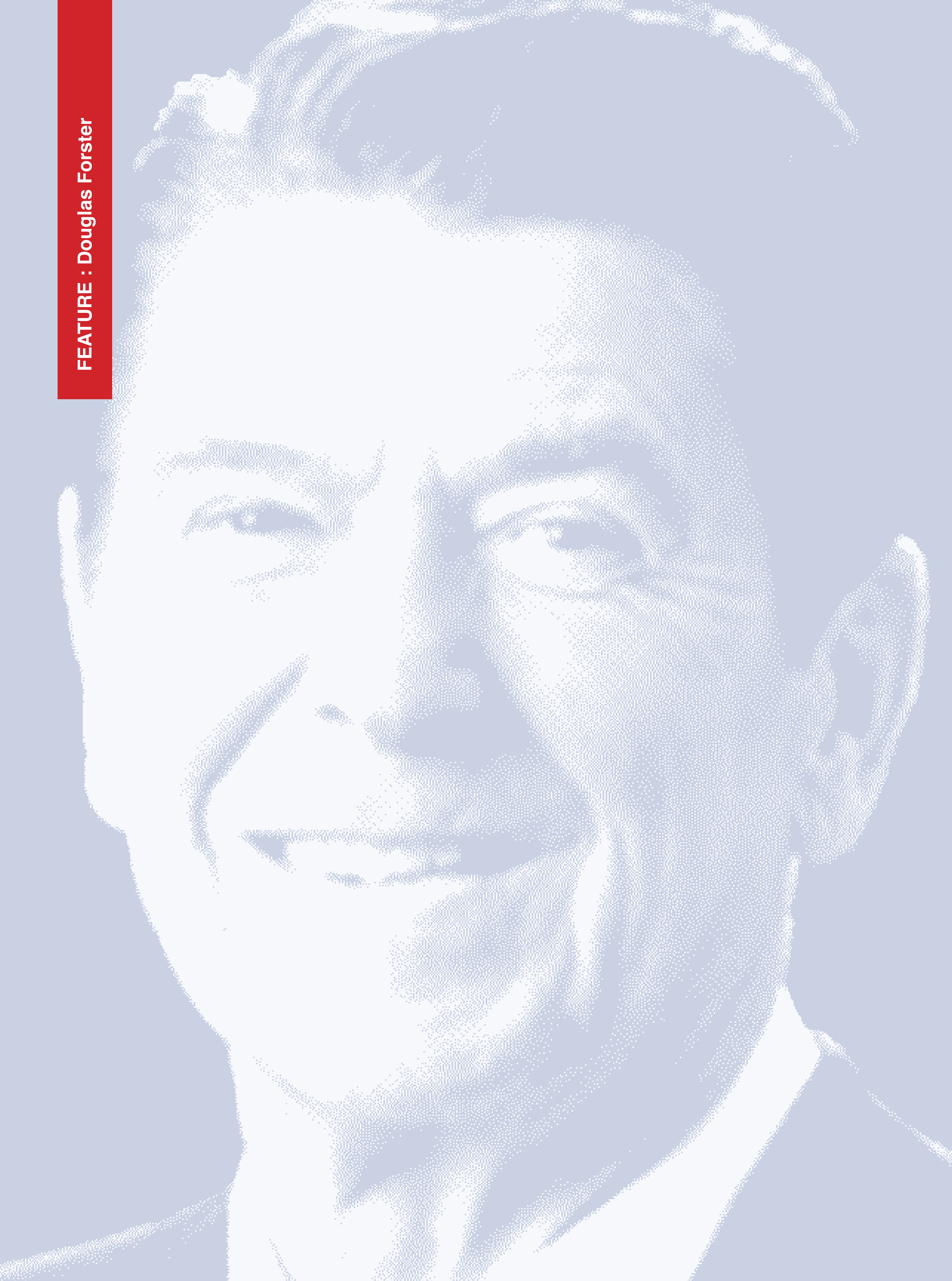
5) Reproducibility

Most sites make data access so ponderous only the hearty persevere.

It is evident that current published university ranking services are rather cavalier with regard to the difficult choices that should be made in constructing rankings. Consider the matter of correlation among attributes included in the ranking scheme, a problem not adequately addressed by any of the ranking services discussed.

It is evident that variability across rankings for any given university is roughly proportionate to its median ranking, with the highest-ranking institutions experiencing the least variation in ranking, independent of criteria or weighting choices. If rankings are to convey significant meaning, it will be in ferreting out differences among the many non-elite schools. These are the very schools that differ most in objectives, which somewhat negates the value of monolithic ranking services that implicitly impose the same criteria and weights across all schools.

Dr. Jerry Platt is a Professor at Akita International University, Japan, and Professor Emeritus at San Francisco State University, and is the current Vice Chair of the International Academic Forum.



One Big Happy Family?

Subverting Reaganism in Peggy Sue Got Married
by Douglas Forster

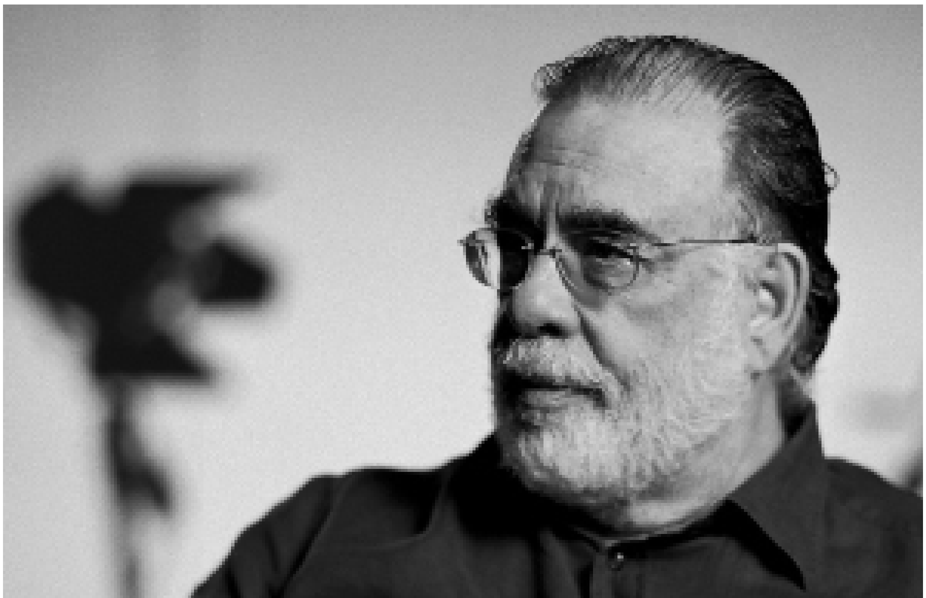
While much critical analysis has been done on the "Reaganite cinema" films made during Ronald Reagan's presidency, Francis Ford Coppola's 1986 Peggy Sue Got Married (PSGM) has received limited attention. Most scholars have focused on how the film promotes traditional family values, i.e. the reinstatement of the nuclear family headed by a strong, patriarchal father figure, as ensconced in Reaganism. However, a closer analysis reveals that the film also reflects Reagan's (1989: online) championing of "new patriotism," as well as the reactionary backlash against women's rights causes. Because Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) makes the seemingly fatalistic choice of reuniting with her estranged husband Charlie (Nicolas Cage), the film suggest that even a conservative's approach to social issues might be far more nuanced than what the mythologized Reagan storyline suggests.

PSGM reflects Reagan's belief that "tampering with the space-time continuum was not dangerous but beneficial...it was...absolutely necessary for happiness and comfort" (Nadel, 1997: 20-21), even if it meant bending the truth so much as to "rewrite" history. Like a movie, Reagan's assurance that his economic policies would eventually lead to a balanced budget was completely illusionary. He asked the American people to be like moviegoers who, in pursuit of short-term rewards, accept the illusionary and illogical space-time continuum of film.

Comparing Reaganism in Peggy Sue Got Married with Back to the Future

PSGM seems to resemble Robert Zemickis's 1986 Back to the Future (BTTF) because of its "use of an imagined past to escape from a bitter present" (Crowdus, 1994: 91). In fact, both films are symptomatic of the American "cultural impulse to internalize the power of time" as well as America's "deeply-rooted chronophobia" (Carter, 2000: 257-266). They "reverse the arrow of time," reflecting the "American passion for the new" as a symptom of a deeper collective urge: the desire to escape time altogether" (ibid.). However, unlike Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox), Peggy Sue actually knows her future: an adult life filled with compromise and disillusionment. Both films offer a nostalgic look at a seemingly "simpler" era in American culture. We must remember, however, that time is not synonymous with change, order, or sequence. For Marty and Peggy Sue, their trials of personal redemption necessitate being redeemed from time.

Both films create an "intensely nostalgic atmosphere that pervades the film" (Babington, 1998: 94). However, the film is much more than a "sentimental journey into the past" because "the idea of time travel... is itself absurd" (Bawer, 1992: 37). Some critics have read the narrative as being simply nostalgic and, therefore, conservative. However, the film's coherence as a text stems also from acknowledging the potential ways of seeing how the film undermines the Reagan cultural fantasy that there is a stable, idyllic past to which the United



FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA: PHOTOGRAPH BY FICG.MX - FLICKR

Photograph by APEC 2013 / Flickr

States can easily or simply return. Peggy Sue's time travel back to 1960 occurs before the feminist movement and the sexual revolution. Even though Peggy Sue is given the opportunity to imagine a different kind of life, in the end she reasserts her identity as a wife and mother. The message seems to be that it is okay for Peggy Sue and Charlie to give up their dreams because in doing so, it reunites the family and awards them with "middle-class success: money, stability, security" (Young, 2008: Online). In particular, marriage is imagined as a woman's most important accomplishment.

PSGM also reflects the Reagan ideological rhetoric in a similar, yet different, way as BTTF. Whereas BTTF was about legitimatizing the strength of the father's role and re-envisioning history, PSGM attempts to reinvigorate the case for family and marital values at a time when 1980s America was experiencing a decline in such values and institutions. Reagan based his presidency not only on economic reform and military might, but also on reestablishing "traditional" family values. Peggy Sue only had two options: either she reconciles with Charlie or she starts life anew without him. With Peggy Sue, the film confronts the illusory separation of the American family from the marketplace, as couched in Reaganomics and the championed attitudes of laissez-faire capitalism. But the film also seems to highlight—if not champion—the indispensible dimension of consumerism.

Peggy Sue's journey into the past is very different from Marty's in BTTF: she is given another chance to realize her teenage dreams, whereas Marty was fighting for his very existence. The problem is that Peggy Sue avoids the riskiest and most potentially rewarding choice in her extraordinary opportunity—which becomes a contentious point for some of the film's sharpest critics. For Corliss

(1986: 16), the message is clear: "The movie is a plea to treasure life's ordinary gifts." This certainly reflects Reagan's persistently sunny speeches about the nation's future. Like BTTF, PSGM also serves simultaneously as an endorsement as well as a subtle critique of the artificial and symbolic class of life embodied in Reaganism. However, by digging deeper into the film's texts and contexts, we can envision how the critique of family values portrayed in PSGM moves well beyond the polarizing gender and sexual politics of the 1980s into a broader examination of the troubled relationships the American family has with consumerism and capitalism as championed during the 1980s.

Reuniting the Nuclear Family

The rhetoric of Reagan and the New Right in the 1980s resurrected the traditional American family version, but it also effectively sheared away some of its most traditional elements, such as the extended family model, its economic emphasis on shared labor, and patriarchal hierarchy where women and children had been relegated to subordinate roles. Within the fantasy text, the film attempts to resolve this social and political displacement. However, we are distracted from this ideology due to the ambiguity of Peggy Sue's time travel. In making sense of the choices, we can see many imaginary discourses, although intricately subtle in many instances, which go beyond the evident nostalgic connections between the 1950s and the 1980s in the film.

PSGM pulls the earlier decade forward as a back text into the 1980s by giving Peggy Sue her autonomous, self-directed voice to speak her own experience by challenging authority and refusing to be an obedient teenager in 1960. Non-conformity stretches only so far as PSGM seems, in some respects, to promote "traditional" family values. However, what it ignores ideologically is just as important—the "unsaid" text reveals and reflects, as did BTTF, Reagan's reliance on "forgetting" the past. Reagan's (1983: Online) demonization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," or the appropriation of "welfare queen" (Fialka, 1976: Online) to characterize the abuse of government benefits, emboldened many segments of his constituent base to deploy their own tools of rhetorical assault in "culture war" (Teixeira, 2009: Online) issues. Rather than be aimed at bridging ideological gaps in public issues, the culture war rhetoric solidified an identity wholly antagonistic to the prevailing sociopolitical culture, and which preferred division and enmity over collegiality. Indeed, the secular paths of conservative and liberal can converge in the aggregated experiences that constitute one's emotional, intellectual, and philosophical maturity. It is the ultimate capacity that the choice between conservative and liberal is a false one, a pseudo-war fomented by those who stand to profit by the manufactured conflict.

We must remember, however, that Peggy Sue has come from 1986, a time when the American nuclear family and traditional family values were seemingly in peril— despite the Republican Party's and the Christian far-right's pleas to restore the nation's family values. Peggy Sue's own marriage and family had collapsed. The sanctuary from the brutalities of the outside world had been compromised. Reassuring comfort was couched in easily definable and readily solvable explanations of how and why the stability of the family would rectify all of America's social, economic, and cultural ills. Perhaps Peggy Sue's decision to reunite with Charlie is simply the most pragmatic solution when faced with the inevitable death of her hopes and dreams. And shouldn't we expect her to choose the path that will ensure the birth of her future children? Arising from the film's enigmatic tone is an awareness of the artificiality of the conservative-liberal divide: maturity versus immaturity, selflessness versus selfishness, disinterested truth versus power at any price. In 1980, there were Reagan Democrats who crossed the ideological divide, hoping for a statesman able to breach the political gridlock that frustrated both sides of the aisle. Twenty-eight years later, many independent voters—including those who had described themselves as Reagan Democrats—cast their ballots for Obama, hoping for a prudential judge of national affairs. The question remains whether, in the larger sphere, individualism can trump selfishness.

Greed is Good?

Gordon Gecko's (Michael Douglas) oft-repeated quote, "...greed is good. Greed is right," in Oliver Stone's 1987 Wall Street, accurately reflects Reagan's pro-business presidency and the bull market of the 1980s. And in PSGM, we find that Peggy Sue is selective in how she describes the past 25 years to Richard. Peggy Sue seems more excited about the possibility of making Richard and herself rich using her knowledge of future commodities Materialism is the safe haven removed from the psychological and emotional stresses of relationships, fidelity, sexuality, and uncertainties about the genuine forces of love. And for Peggy Sue and Richard, it seems that greed is good. All of the excitement had seeped out by what Peggy Sue left out of her description of the past 25 years, particularly the social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. In PSGM, the "movements of history become defined solely in terms of technology and commodities—twenty-five years of social, political, and economic history become repressed" (Bartosch, 1987: 3-4). Just like Marty in BTTF, instead of using this unique time travel opportunity to intervene in history, Peggy Sue does nothing. While not appropriating the tone of

Gordon Gecko in Wall Street, PSGM echoed the more affable, personable tone of Reagan's message that one's self-interest was justified, especially for the purposes of empowering the individual to reap for his or her family the symbols and manifestations of the American Dream and economic success. Absent of irony or satire, the film engendered a gentler yet still disturbingly skewed view of Reaganism, and a championing of capitalism with no worries about wider social or ethical responsibilities.

Photograph by Jaysin Trevino / Flickr

Challenging Reaganism

PSGM promotes a Reagan-friendly ideology in the way that it is pro- marriage/anti-divorce, and in how it promotes "traditional" family values. Underneath the film's nostalgic veneer, PSGM represents a compelling endorsement of Reagan's, and the country's, political swing to the right, while ignoring the most important economic, political, and social issues. Feminist critics have also been especially harsh on the film. As a grown, mature woman, Peggy Sue's potential outside her marriage with Charlie is given little attention. By choosing to stay with Charlie, the film seems to reverse the gains made in the women's rights movement. PSGM, like BTTF, underscores Reagan-centric ideology in suggesting that the nuclear family must be preserved at all costs. On the surface, the film served an ideal platform for arguing that the nuclear family should—and could—be preserved.

Yet, these same fatalistic elements—that Peggy Sue has no power at all over her past or her future—constitute potentially subversive challenges to the Reagan rhetorical peroration about the American Dream being equally accessible to all who aspire toward it. Critics can turn these lamentations into incisive and deeply critical commentaries that can expose the utter incoherence of Reagan's promise that contemporary Americans could, in effect, have it all. Reagan's success at forging a new political coalition was predicated on his strongly optimistic orientation toward the future, which ironically, would not resemble the harsher antagonistic tone taken by today's neoconservatives who have appropriated their own mythological version of Reagan's legacy. What often is overlooked is the oversimplification of that optimism, which carried over into Reagan's policies, and which failed to address the still-entrenched problems of a market economy unapproachable for millions of Americans. Admittedly, searching for those subversive anti-Reagan elements in PSGM must be centered almost exclusively on these limited fatalistic contexts.

The Subversive Deconstruction Of Reaganism

PSGM refuses to view the turbulent 1960s and 1970s as a period of healthy self-doubt and self-interrogation. Instead, it attempts to offer us solace in its fatalistic, nostalgic depiction of a "better" past, which never really existed. Unfortunately, Peggy Sue will never reap the full benefits of pleasure from a sense of timelessness, being only connected to her intuitive, instinctive, subconscious experiences for the extremely limited purposes of making sense of the shortcomings in her marriage. Still, this fatalistic realization reveals that in order to achieve anything approaching the Reaganesque vision of the American Dream requires individuals to settle for mediocrity and lowered expectations when it comes to a stable family and independent career-driven wealth.

However, the prevailing analysis can be extended. On the surface, the film gratifies a broadly defined audience willing to accept a nostalgic depiction of a time as believable yet uncomplicated entertainment. On the other hand, because the film skips over so much social, economic, and cultural territory, which surely anyone would have been confronted with had he or she been in Peggy Sue's circumstances, one wonders if the best to be hoped for in a world influenced by Reaganesque ideals about family and capitalism amounts to settling for a lot less life-sustaining value. The subversive deconstruction of Reaganism may not be readily apparent, but it becomes evident as the film is viewed more than a quarter of a century after its release.

Dr. Douglas E. Forster is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Japan Women's University in Tokyo Japan, where he teaches American Culture and English.

From the Midwest to the Middle East

Gary Swanson interviews Richard Roth about his life and work in journalism

At our most recent MediAsia Conference held in Osaka last November, the 2013 MediAsia Conference Chair and Keynote Speaker Professor Gary Swanson interviewed highly respected Journalist and Educator Professor Richard J. Roth Jnr. Professor Roth was the IAFOR MediAsia 2011 Keynote Speaker, and is a journalist with over 40 years of experience, a former Pulitzer Prize Nominee, Newspaper Editor and is currently the Dean of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University (Qatar). Professor Swanson, a former NBC News correspondent is currently the Mildred S. Hansen Endowed Chair in Journalism at the University of Northern Colorado, USA and is an internationally recognized and highly acclaimed documentary producer, director, editor, photojournalist, media consultant and educator.

GS: Richard. How long have you been involved with IAFOR?

RR: For 3 years. I came 3 years ago as a keynote speaker and came back last year with a couple of my faculty members and we had a panel presentation and was a keynote of that session. Came back this year to sit in the audience and watch. It is always fun to be here. You know it is interesting to know what happens here, especially as this becomes a great venue for young faculty members to present their research, which they often cannot do in giant venues, so this is great for them.

GS: In 2011 you gave a keynote speech. What was that about?

RR: I was talking about the Arab Spring and how the media really in the Gulf and the broader Middle East covered it and how social media the new media really drove the Arab Spring.

GS: What is your professional background?

RR: Well my background is really as a journalist, a newspaper journalist. I started off as a kind of a general assignment reporter in Buffalo, New York back in 1971 and a few weeks later I found myself involved in the famous Prison Riot at Attica, New York and that was inside the Prison for 3 or 4 days before what turned out to be the bloodiest confrontation amongst Americans since Antietam. After that, I got into being an investigative reporter for a while, but I drifted sooner or later into being a financial writer. So I spent a lot of time in Wall Street and other things like that and then the newspaper went out of business and I came to a crossroads. I wanted to do journalism, I was offered a job in television and really at some point I could not find myself doing that so I went off to Indiana to be editor in chief editor of a newspaper, a middle size newspaper, and did that for 6 years, and I kind of serendipitously fell into academia at Du Bois University where you and I met. I was there for I guess 7 years at which point I had been tenured and I found myself in the business of teaching these students about a world in journalism that I realized didn't exist anymore, the internet had come along and so I left there and went to the Wall Street Journal in New York to become part of the editing team for its – then new – online division. I did that for a while and then went to North Western in 1998 and been there for, I guess, fifteen, sixteen years. So…kind of both newspaper journalism and the teaching of it!

GS: Which do you enjoy the best? The professional side or the teaching?

RR: I don't know…I guess the teaching part because I can now influence young people to go do this new kind of journalism and new technologies of journalism. I must say that, when I was a young reporter those were kind of the best days of my life. Better than being editor-in-chief and right now being a Dean is one thing, but I like the teaching part. It's better than sitting in the office shuffling papers.

GS: What's it like in the Middle East?

RR: Well, it is way different than I thought it would be back in 2008 when I went there. I had lived this kind of notion…my view of the world. While I traveled my view, of the Middle East anyway, was colored by my colleagues – the press in the US. There is so much conservative information and misinformation. I have gotten there and I found the people to be lovely and the religion to be a real force in their lives. Islam is something that is demonized


Photograph by Alexander Pratt

so much in the US, but one gets there and finds that these people actually stop and pray five times a day. They live their lives around their beliefs, and yes there are certainly people who read the Koran the 'wrong' way or different way and they become over the top. Yet, the same is true with Christianity, in the US anyway, with the right wing Christians. I have really just come to enjoy it and from a personal side where I am situated in Qatar it is kind of like the center of the world. I have been able to visit so many places so that when I lived in Chicago I had to go to New Delhi sometimes from there and it was an all-night, 18 hour flight or something…now I can be in New Delhi in under two and a half hours, Istanbul in three hours. I have been to all kinds of places. Down in South East Africa, Darussalam, Zanzibar and Kenya in five hours, one five-hour flight. I couldn't do these things when I used to believe Chicago was the epicenter of the world. One could always fly non-stop from Chicago to any place in the world, but it was also fourteen or eighteen hours of doing it. So, it's been great.

GS: Now, Dr Brad Hamm gave the keynote speech today for the MediAsia - Film Asia 2013 and it sounds like there is a new direction that North Western is taking. What can you tell us about that?

RR: Well I'd say that Brad's biggest idea, the one that he brings to the school, is he believes every undergraduate student there, should spend time outside United States. At least two weeks for a short program or go away for, you know, ten or twenty weeks. And get involved in something. I think it is a genius big idea that if he can pull it off, if he can raise the funds for it…So many Americans don't travel outside of the US and right now only about forty percent of Americans have passports and of those, half of those people with passports are over age 60. And a lot of those who have passports only have gotten them recently so that now they could go to Canada or Mexico. Used to be you didn't need a passport for that. So Brad wants them to have the cultural and intellectual opportunities to travel, to come to Asia particularly is of interest to him. So, I think that it is a great idea, a big idea. He is also very much aware of the need to get students involved in the new media, the new technologies because they are ever changing. He still wants to teach them journalism. He wants them to all learn all of the things, you know. Why is it that I am a newspaperman? If I were a newspaper student today he would say that's not enough. You also have to be a television student, you have to learn how to use the television; you have to learn how to use all of those things. Yes things are changing, the school is changing – it ought to be ahead of the curve, but it needs to catch up really fast and then be ahead. He, I think, is way ahead in this notion of these international experiences for students.

GS: What would you say to students now, or aspiring journalists, about the future?

RR: Well, I would say that the future of journalism is probably greater than it has ever been. So much of the world is now open, gosh, we can go to Burma now and everybody, in some ways, becomes a journalist, but it is more important for people to become trained in such a way that we can verify. And that's kind of become the new part of journalism…Verifiability is, I guess, the thing that the internet has brought to us. Dan Rather couldn't verify what he had to say and he lost his job as, perhaps, the most famous news anchor in the United States. He went on the air, made some statements and there were bloggers all over the country within hours proving him wrong. So we teach our students about verifying what they have. If you can't verify it you cant go with it. That's the big change in journalism brought to us by the internet.

GS: I guess my last question is…you talk about verification and bloggers, but how do we know, as journalists, what we were getting from freelance photographers, videographers, freelance writers, bloggers…how do we know that's accurate?

RR: We don't always and one sees…there aren't any, or many, journalists right now who are involved in Syria right now. Who can get in and do things. And if they can these journalists had to use iPhones to capture their video. In the beginning they didn't know they had to turn it horizontal, but they figured it out after a while, because they weren't trained in it. They were trained to be some other kind of journalist and they were suddenly handed an iPhone and said 'This is the only way you are ever going to get it'. But, there is a lot of video that comes out of there, there was a lot of video out of Tunisia first and those networks that used it took a chance. They usually went on and said 'this is a video we can't verify' and you have to tell the public that. There are a lot of people who have planted stories wrongly, you know, falsehoods with the press and if they can get away with it they will. So the press needs to figure out how to verify and, you know, there are ways of doing that. Triangulating through not just taking what somebody gives you as a source, but finding someone who was, perhaps, a witness to the same thing and they would describe it in the same way and so forth. It is a big problem, but there are a lot of people out there with cameras and cell phones and taking pictures…Can you fake a picture? Look, we have been faking pictures in history since, in the US, 'Honest Abe'. Of all people Abraham Lincoln faked a picture of him using a senator's body, Senator John C Calhoun… Lincoln liked the pose so they took his head and put it on the Calhoun's body. And this is before photo-shop and was still nicely done, one can hardly tell. This has been going on for forever, and now people have the chance and the ability to do it in the most seamless ways. The can move a character in and out of a scene…it is hard, but I think there are techniques for detecting it. It's a problem but it is our future I am afraid.

Prof. Gary Swanson is the Mildred S. Hansen Endowed Chair in Journalism at the University of Northern Colorado, USA. Prof. Richard Roth is the Dean of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University (Qatar).

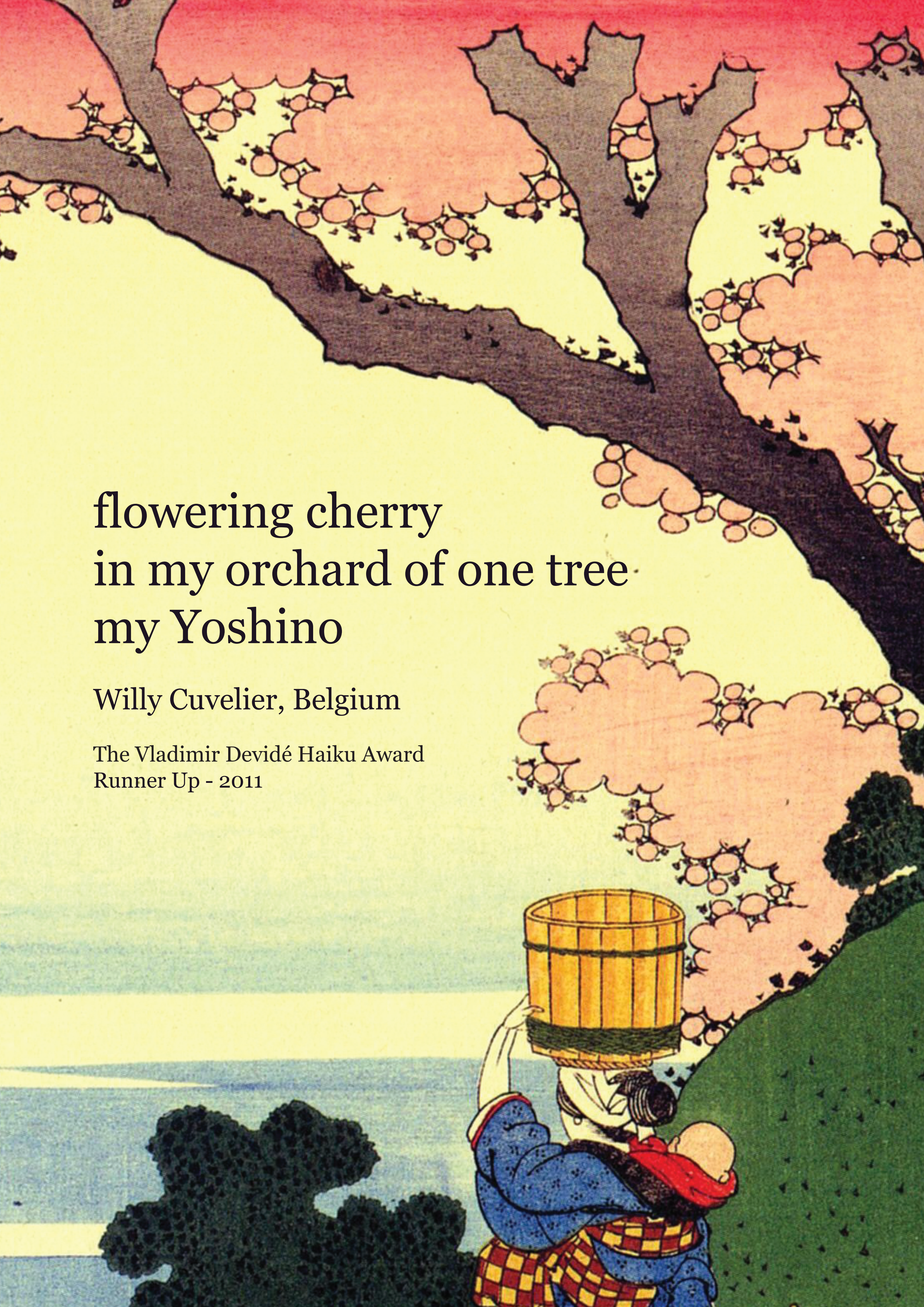
IAFOR KEYNOTE

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM PROFESSOR SVETLANA TER-MINASOVA'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE ASIAN CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION (ACE), IN OSAKA, JAPAN

During her address to the ACE 2013 delegates, Professor Ter-Minasova reflected on the past attitudes and practices that she experienced first hand as a young student then ambitious professor of foreign languages under then Soviet Russia.

During the Soviet period the situation with Foreign Language and Learning Teaching (FLLT) as part of the educational system went through a series of dramatic ups and downs. In the early years of Soviet power the attitude to foreign languages was negative: they were treated as luxuries of "people's enemies" - aristocracy and bourgeoisie. The most unfortunate one was French as it was most closely associated with the Russian elite society. However, in the late 1920-ies, after heated debates, foreign languages were returned to secondary school curricula. As usual, a pendulum swung forth, one fashion substituted for another one; the new campaign with the slogan: "Foreign languages - to the masses" introduced foreign languages into educational institutions with the same enthusiasm as the previous campaign had banished them. Since that time foreign languages have always been part of the curriculum in the Soviet system of education, but the official attitude to them was far from being positive. Languages of "capitalistic countries" were seen as a suspicious subject that led straight into the arms of "potential enemies", which actually meant the rest of the world. People who studied foreign languages as their major subject as well as their teachers were also suspicious for they were potential spies, potential emigrants and/or potential cosmopolitans. They lacked loyalty and patriotism because they did not seem to be satisfied with their own language, culture, country, and world. This attitude, though slowly growing milder over the years, remained dominant to the end of the Soviet period. Consequently teaching languages of potential enemies was a dangerous profession. My father never stopped worrying about my having chosen to study and teach English as my way in life. For decades, under such circumstances, generations of teachers, who never set, their eyes - or ears – on a native speaker of a foreign language, taught generations of students without any proper equipment, and without authentic ELT materials, They developed chalkboard theories and poor-but-honest, necessity-is-the-mother-of-invention techniques, and they did it brilliantly!

Prof. Ter-Minasova is the President of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University, in Russia and is the Honorary President of the IAFOR's International Language Research Institute.



flowering cherry
in my orchard of one tree
my Yoshino

Willy Cuvelier, Belgium

The Vladimir Devidé Haiku Award
Runner Up - 2011

SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST, SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI, GIVES EYE MAGAZINE AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW. AS A 12-YEAR-OLD SEVERN GAINED GLOBAL ATTENTION WHEN SHE SPOKE AT THE UN RIO EARTH SUMMIT IN 1992 AND BECAME "THE GIRL WHO SILENCED THE WORLD FOR 6 MINUTES"

Rebecca Irby recently caught up with Severn Cullis-Suzuki on her latest speaking tour 'Love is the Movement' on Valentine's Day – February 14th, 2014 in Nagoya, Japan. Cullis-Suzuki was touring with the newly release environmentalist film 'Occupy Love' by Velcrow Ripper.

Canadian based culture and environment campaigner and writer Severn Cullis-Suzuki, who at the comparatively youthful age of 34 describes herself as a veteran activist for 'intergenerational justice' recently visited Japan speaking to packed auditoriums during her Love is the Movement tour. Cullis-Suzuki is the daughter of David Takayoshi Suzuki, a prominent Canadian academic, science broadcaster and environmental activist. David Takayoshi Suzuki is best known as host of the popular and long-running CBC Television science magazine, The Nature of Things, seen in over forty nations. He is also well known for criticizing governments for their lack of action to protect the environment. David Suzuki was awarded the Right Livelihood Award in 2009. His 2011 book, The Legacy, won the Nautilus Book Award. He is a Companion of the Order of Canada. In 2004, David Suzuki was selected as the greatest living Canadian in a CBC poll.

Severn began following in her father's footsteps from a very young age. She founded the Environmental Children's Organization with friends at nine years old. She made a name for herself internationally as "the girl who silenced the world for 6 minutes" where she famously told world leaders at the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992 'if you can't fix the environment please stop breaking it', she was twelve years old.

In the 20 years since Rio, Severn has continued to engage with world leaders and everyday people as her activist activities continue. She is a Champion for the Canadian Earth Summit Initiative 2012 WE CANada, host of the APTN-TV series 'Samaqan – Water Stories, and board member of the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society and the David Suzuki Foundation. Severn is an Earth Charter Commissioner (earthcharterinaction.org), and she and the Skyfish Project brought the 'Recognition of Responsibility' pledge to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002. Severn has participated in four speaking tours in Japan with the Namakemono Club.

When looking at the world today in comparison to 1992, many activists like Servern argue that the state of the environment is in a worse place, that globalization and corporate power has had devastating effect on the environment. Severn contends that the political landscape is very different now. "We have world leaders that can't actually lead for the good of the people, I almost don't believe my words. When I see how beholden they are to corporations that have facilitated their rise to power in the current system, they are not able to make the leadership moves that will get us towards our carbon free economy, that will get us towards a world that will limit our global warming to under 2 degrees, so where does that leave us?

Servern has recognized through her travels and after meeting all kinds of what she describes as incredible people – that the real leadership exist more often at the municipal and grassroots level and that global governance is in real crisis. "I think we have really ignored the strength of our democracies, we've really ignored our governmental processes - we have to strengthen that, we have to reform that."

For people concerned with the environment or other social issues in the world today Severn recommends a very un-fashionable though orthodox idea - "we have got to start running for office". She understands this goes against what most people working for social change may think is a effective action. But she believes "we have to bring the honor back to politics because that is the system, the structure that we have for guiding our society and if it is not working we have to completely toss it out and find something new."

According to Severn the best thing we can do is, "look at our own sphere of influence. I really believe that where you are passionate, where you are skilled, where you are interested, that is the place in which you are going to make your mark in the world. That is the place where the world needs you to encourage sustainability. Every aspect of our lives is unsustainable so there is room for improvement everywhere. We need our media to be actually reporting what is going on. We need the public more informed. We need engineers to develop new technology, we need teachers to be educating children about the natural world we need everybody. We need doctors to be thinking about wellness, how health is affected by our environment and look at the holistic picture. We need all hands on deck at the moment. Where our hearts are - that is where we are going to make our mark on the world."

Often people say, "What can I do? Really? I feel like I can't create any positive change." Severn believes in the power of everyday people making small powerful actions. She believes in "the little tiny actions that I take like not drinking bottled water or drinking out of my own reusable cup.

The conversations from other people noticing that instead of me lecturing them have been far more effective because it's showing, it's modeling another possibility. And it is doing it in a way that is not heavy-handed. It's a way of showing a brighter future and it is really the spirit of building a vision other than fighting the negative paradigm, that I think we really need to be involved in because it is far more empowering, far more enjoyable, and I think it is far more effective. So don't underestimate the power of those small efforts because they are actually extremely powerful."

Severn Cullis-Suzuki holds a B.Sc. in Biology from Yale University and a M.Sc. in Ethnoecology from the University of Victoria, Canada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JAPAN'S ABENOMICS STORY A QUINTESSENTIAL DIALOGIC NEWS EVENT

by Beryl Hawkins
and Barry Natusch

Photograph by APEC 2013 / [Flickr]

Ever since Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe implemented his aggressive, controversial "Abenomics" economic policy in 2013, the international and domestic news outlets have churned out an array of stories, resulting in recent headlines foreshadowing an increasingly ambivalent economic picture, ranging from the adulatory to outright attacks.

In a recent German (Deutche Welle) news article dated February 12, 2014, entitled "Is Japan's 'Abenomics' losing its luster?," Bloomberg News analyst William Pesek claims that, on the one hand, Abenomics is a "splashy and fascinating marketing campaign," but on the other hand, it "has so far failed to deliver quite what it promised". In Japan the Nikkei Asian Review of Feb 20, 2014, published a recent commentary, "Fading Japan", in which the writer went so far as to declare, "many see (Abenomics) as a reckless bet on untested economic theories."

While the media pundits continue to test Japan's "economic waters", it is our belief that the increasing role of social media in shaping public perceptions may also

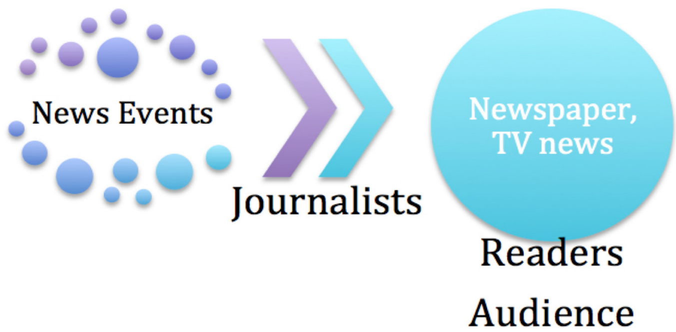
have an influence over the future direction of Shinzo Abe's policies. This is in large part due to the inherent nature of the Abenomics story itself. The Abenomics story is what we have termed a "dialogical" news event.

In our study of the international and domestic media coverage of Abenomics in English language print and social media from January – October 2013 (click here to view the full article in the conference proceedings), we have attempted to illustrate the story's applicability to a dialogic news model. The most important feature of the dialogic news model is the ability to participate instantaneously in a news event through new media technologies. As more social media users and bloggers generate their own content and feed in more comments, the proliferation of newer stories and comments in turn affects the ongoing dissemination of the Abenomics story. At the same time these social media comments breathe "new life" into an existing story, hence the story continues as part of the public debate for a much longer period of time than stories have in the past.

DIALOGIC NEWS MODEL

IN RETROSPECT: REAGONOMICS

Whereas the Abenomics story fits into a dialogic news model, the Reaganomics story of the 1980s (the origin of the term "Abenomics"), was what is known as a monologically reported story. The monologic model of news dissemination is a one-way flow of news information from the news event to the media audience through journalists.



MONOLOGIC NEWS MODEL

President Ronald Reagan's economic policies during that period, also led to a serious shift in U.S. economic policy. The mainstream media covered the public debate by parading out a host of financial and political experts to support the pro-Reaganomics faction. However, at the same time, the media covered the ongoing mass demonstrations, town hall meetings and other social protest events occurring on the local, statewide and national level sponsored by the anti-Reaganomics faction. In the midst of these skirmishes, radio and television talk shows reached an unprecedented level of popularity, becoming the newest participatory forum for citizens. Both factions could freely air their sentiments, sometimes resulting in blustering, fiery debates. These talk shows were a precursor to the social media interactions that we are witnessing today because these programs allowed citizens to actively engage in the "Reaganomics" debate.

ABENOMICS 101

Stirring up as much controversy and public debate as its U.S. predecessor, Abenomics is currently considered one of the most prominent economic stories in the news and is likely to have staying power among media audiences. This is predicated on the fact that in Japan certainly, and to some extent beyond Japan, it was a big story throughout 2013, as shown by measuring its impact through the Galtung and Ruge (1965) analysis. The Abenomics story scored highly on all the following Galtung and Ruge criteria:

• it has been in the news continuously since late 2012,
• it contains a mix of good news and bad news,
• it is easy to understand even complex economic issues thanks to its use of the "arrows" story metaphor,
• it is about a topic that affects people's daily lives (i.e. economics),
• it is about a celebrity politician (Shinzo Abe),
• it is both a domestic story (about Japan) but with applications internationally.

The story thus built a momentum throughout 2013.

Central to understanding Abenomics is the concept of "three arrows", which is derived from a traditional Chinese story. This is a story of a man at the end of his life who was trying to teach his three sons a lesson about working together. He asks each of them to take an arrow, and snap it, which they all do. He then tells them to take three arrows and try to snap them. They cannot. The moral of the story is that while one arrow can easily be broken, three cannot.

In economic terms, the three arrows of Abenomics are flexible fiscal policy, aggressive monetary policy and growth strategy. The economics is actually more complicated than this but the three arrows policy provided a simple summary of the Liberal Democratic Party's economic policy throughout 2013.

OVERALL MEDIA RESPONSE

The overall press response to the three arrows policy fluctuated from the beginning of 2013 to the end of the year, both domestically and internationally. While the Abenomics story garnered positive press responses in early 2013, by the middle of the year, stories were beginning to reflect an increasingly ambivalent economic picture.

Moreover, it became evident that Abenomics news stories reflected differing perspectives across different countries and regions. To investigate the story more closely, more than 220 stories on Abenomics were collected from major news publications using the LexisNexis database. Articles from twelve newspapers from Asia and 22 newspapers from the U.K., U.S. and Canada and Australasia were selected for content analysis. The news items were classified as generally supportive or critical of Abenomics.

An overview of the country-by-country analysis in our study reveals that the perspectives of the stories were largely influenced by the nature of the relations between Japan and other countries. In the U.K., for example, the news reportage focused heavily on whether or not Abenomics policies could exacerbate the European economic crisis. Australasian countries are most concerned about their trade relationship with Japan, so after closely monitoring Abenomics, they began to lose confidence in this policy as the year progressed. As might be expected, the Chinese media took a dim view of the Abenomics policy from the middle of the year onwards, perhaps stemming from the deteriorating relations between the two countries over the Senkaku Islands territorial dispute.

To illustrate the diversity of story headlines, the following are offered as examples.

Positive news stories:

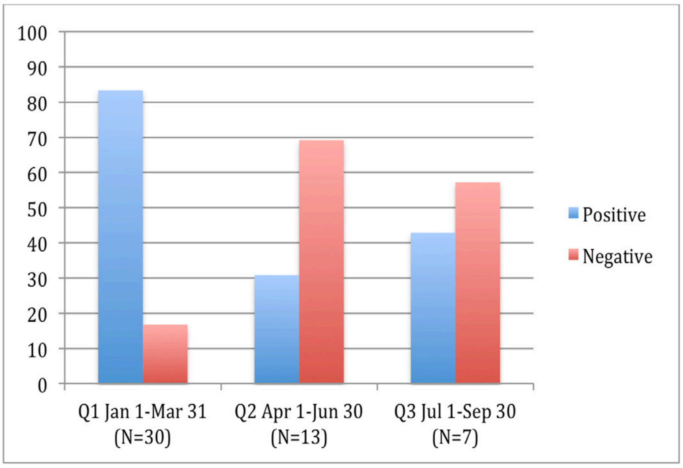
- "Abe's second honeymoon" (New Straits Times Malaysia, February 1, 2013)
- "Japan's urban rich loving Abenomics" (The Nikkei Weekly, Japan, April 29, 2013)
- "'Abenomics' is big in Japan as economy takes upturn" (The Daily Telegraph, London, July 8, 2013)

Negative news stories:

- "Abenomics isn't trickling down yet" (The Japan Times, March 5, 2013)
- "The dangers of Abenomics" (South China Morning Post, April 8, 2013)
- "Fate of Japan's PM hinges on economy: Failure to deliver growth may rapidly erode support" (The Straits Times, Singapore, July 22, 2013)

JAPANESE MEDIA RESPONSE

In Japan, most articles were positive at the start of the year but turned negative after that. In the aftermath of the election success of the Liberal Democratic Party on December 16, 2012, a mood of optimism appeared in the news stories together with the hope that the economy might recover with the implementation of the Abenomics policies. In the middle of the year, a major correction to the stock market occurred which appears to have coincided with some skepticism in the news reporting after that.



Japanese Positive and Negative News Coverage of Abenomics in English (Quarter 1 to 3, 2013)

WESTERN MEDIA RESPONSE

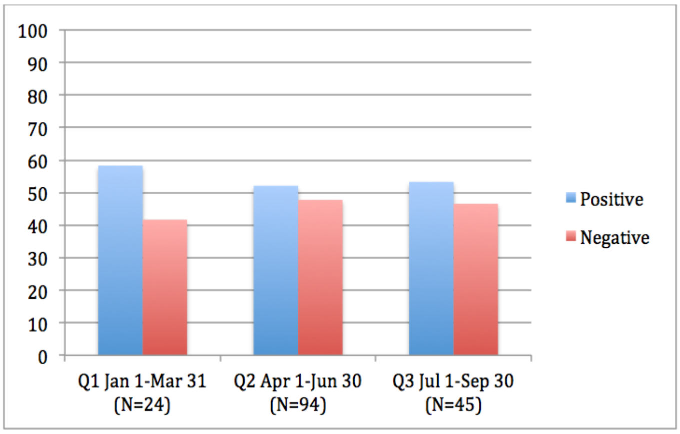
Among some Western countries (the UK and the US), there appeared to be a relatively even split between positive and negative Abenomics news articles. The United Kingdom articles, for example, began with a somewhat higher proportion of positive news stories, but reached a balance of positive and negative stories on this issue towards the end of the year. Several journalists took the angle that Abenomics could be a strategy for coping with the ongoing European economic malaise.

In North America, there was greater initial enthusiasm about the effect of Abenomics policies. By the middle of the year, however, more of a balance was being struck between positive and negative articles. Possibly, with Japan being part of the G8 member nation group, there was concern about how Abenomics would pay off its internal deficit. Perhaps also, there was some reluctance among G8 delegates to directly criticize a member nation, resulting in an overall balance of positive and negative coverage. Other political factors, such as the Obama administration being under increasing pressure to manage federal spending, were referred to in the Abenomics articles.

Similarly, in Australasia, a fairly positive trend was apparent for Abenomics policies at the beginning of 2013. As the year progressed, a rise in negative reports assessing the impact of Abenomics appeared. This might be due to the fact that Australasian countries depend on trade with Japan considerably. They therefore watch economic developments in Japan closely because it directly affects their trade

Photograph by Chuck Hagel / Flickr

relationships. For example, if Japanese consumer spending is reduced substantially through Abenomics, primary goods exports (farm and agricultural products) from Australasia might fall. Furthermore, Australia depends on China and Japan for exports of raw materials. Therefore, any downturn in those economies would adversely affect the Australian economy.



International Positive and Negative News Coverage of Abenomics in English (Quarter 1 to 3, 2013)

ASIAN MEDIA RESPONSE

Some Asian countries showed a reverse trend in news coverage as compared with Western countries. For example, the Singapore press carried a rising number of positive Abenomics stories and a declining number of negative ones throughout the year. This is possibly reflected in Japan and Singapore's generally cordial relations. The two countries also experience fewer territorial or trade disputes than Japan's closer Asian neighbors.

Although Thai newspapers produced a relatively small sample of news stories, they showed a slightly more ambivalent stance on Abenomics throughout the year. Japanese companies have a strong presence in Thailand. The country also depends on Japan for industry such as tourism, which may have some connection with the ambivalent nature of reporting on Abenomics.

By contrast, in the Chinese media, most articles from the middle of the year and onwards were overwhelmingly negative. This could be due to China's lack of interest in Japan's economic success. It could also be attributed to China's dispute with Japan over territorial issues in the South China Sea (Senkaku Islands) during this period. A combination of these reasons could explain why there was so little coverage of Abenomics by Japan's close neighbor.

To summarize the major print media coverage, it is clear that reporting of Abenomics differs in print media stories according to country. This may be due to factors such as the attitude of reporters towards the Japanese government. For example, there may be more pro-government reporting in Japan, as opposed to anti-Japanese government reporting in China. Secondly, reporting might reflect the shared economic problems between other countries and Japan such as in North America and the United Kingdom. Third, reporting in other countries might be affected by a dependent trade relationship with Japan such as in Australasia, Singapore and Thailand.

OVERALL SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSE

Following a news story by accessing a variety of print and social media underscores the fact that different methods of analysis are required to approach contemporary content analysis. Print media, with its basis in rational argumentation, can be analyzed in terms of traditional discourse-based content analysis, whereas social media, may be better understood by using a social media communication model.

Social media generates a markedly different news flow compared with print media. It is immediate, opinionated, individualistic, conversational, and sometimes idiosyncratic. It challenges accepted orthodoxy bordering on the adversarial. It is the democratization of news dissemination where professionals engage directly with informed and uninformed readers.

Comments on posts about Abenomics on blogs and online news aggregators were collected throughout the year from a variety of sites. The categories of comments fall into four main groups: (1) Positive Comments, (2) Negative Comments, (3) Discussion Comments, and (4) Other, as can be seen in the examples taken from The Economist below.

The Economist blog comments are mainly technical arguments including statistics to support the writers' viewpoints, suggesting that the readership appears to have been a mix of informed professional economists and finance experts. There are also instances where discussion between the commentators themselves occurred forming a thread.

(1) POSITIVE BLOG COMMENTS

ADDING TO OR SUPPORTING POST:

"A large portion of Mr. Abe government spending is is financed by debt. Such anomaly can happen in Japan only because the debt market is over 90% held by Japanese banks including Bank of Japan itself (holding about 10%) and domestic Japanese savers, particularly pensioners."
nkab, Jun 14th, 14:56 - Recommend 29

SUPPORTING OR DEFENDING SUBJECT OF POST:

"Have the Japanese people truly accepted the need for reform? We can only blame so much on Abe."
Ohio Jun 13th, 17:42 - Recommend 15

Photograph by Kyle Hasegawa / Flickr

(2) NEGATIVE BLOG COMMENTS

ATTACKING VIEW IN POST:

"Five years of Austerity not meeting it's targets and we are all just supposed to sit and wait."
Generic Dave, Jun 15th, 09:12 - Recommend 24

ATTACKING SUBJECT OF POST:

"Mr.Abe himself has no sense of fiscal discipline."
Akiakich, Jun 18th, 00:25 - Recommend 6

(3) DISCUSSION BLOG COMMENTS

ADDING TO OR CLARIFYING ONE'S OWN COMMENT:

"Japan's government debt is diminishing rapidly because Bank of Japan is absorbing them at a very fast pace."
Mike Tyson Ironman in reply to *Akiach*, Jun 19th, 05:10 - Recommend 4

RESPONDING TO ANOTHER COMMENTATOR:

"Well. I think you should be more precise. It is the Japanese media that is against constitutional reform."
Mike Tyson Ironman in reply to *ShOm82*, Jun 17th, 05:41 - Recommend 5

(4) OTHER BLOG COMMENTS PRAISING POSTER PERSONALLY:

"I think this article correctly observed that "it (Mr Abe's "third arrow" of structural reforms) is so wide of (off) the mark that one is left wondering if Abenomics has failed before it even properly began."
nkab, Jun 14th, 14:56 - Recommend 29

ATTACKING POSTER PERSONALLY:

"The pseudo scientific nonsense fails yet again and here comes the galore of justifications by the modern quacks, the mob stands in awe and reverence."
Mberg, Jun 14th, 05:06 - Recommend 1

POSTING WITH HUMOR:

"An awful lot of money and credibility is being invested in getting Mrs Watanabe to believe in the likelihood of any inflation at all. There are few signs yet that she is even paying attention."
TomasHirst, Jun 14th, 11:04 - Recommend 0

Sample of Blog Comments on Abenomics from The Economist, 2013

As another example of social media, The Japan Today news aggregator comments are reflective of the views of Japanese and foreigners living in Japan. While there is technical discussion of Abenomics technicalities on this site, some of the commentators, however, are highly engaged with each other, even to the point of hurling deprecatory remarks back and forth about, for example, the price of local bread.

To summarize the Abenomics social media coverage, it is clear that social media, being more individualistic and mercurial, reflect the characteristics of the dialogic model. The growing number of comments on blog postings in the U.S., the U.K. and Japan suggests a rising international public awareness of the steps being taken to revitalize the Japanese economy. The increasing number of discussion threads by informed readers also attest to this. The posters themselves, and the commentators who respond, defend their views, give more examples, take the discussion in other directions, supporting and attacking each other, seriously and wryly. This shows how engaged both writers and commentators become with the story. This appears to lead writers and readers to a deeper understanding of the issues involved, perhaps more than a single long newspaper article written by a single expert might do.

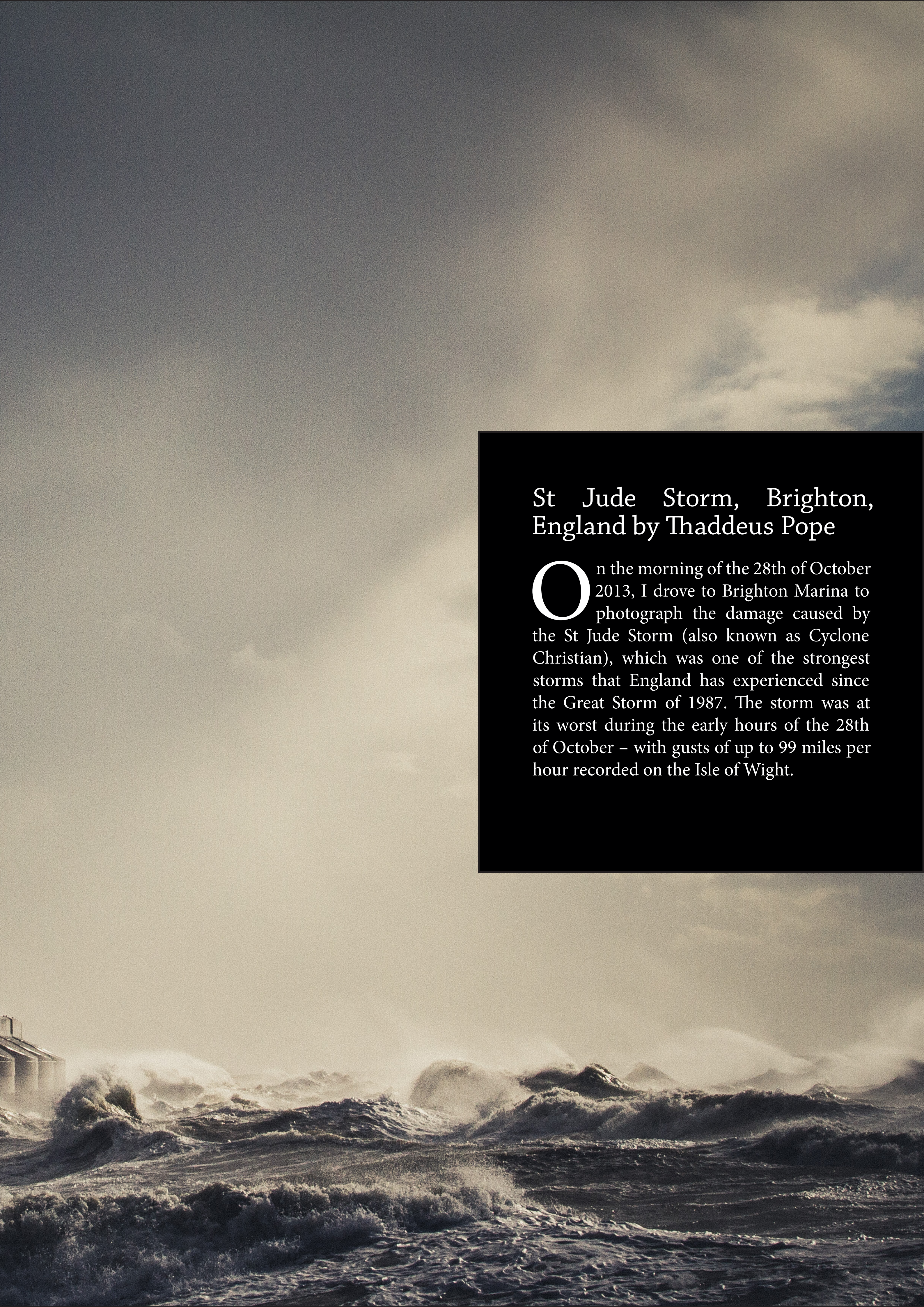
CONCLUSION

While Reaganomics in the 1980s was a monologically reported story, Abenomics in 2013 was a dialogic news event. In the future, social media involvement could trigger seismic political movements as has already occurred in the Philippines in 2001 when millions of people texted against the corruption of the incumbent president, Joseph Estrada, and ousted him. The Arab Spring of 2011 resulted in the overthrow of Tunisian leader Ben Ali, Egypt's leader Hosni Mubarak, and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. The implication here is clear: the dialogic model increasingly gives people a voice. On the other hand, some politicians already use social media skillfully such as US President Barak Obama in his deployment of Narwhal in his reelection campaign of 2012. And the voices of social media participants have become an influence both inside and outside Japan which may even cause Shinzo Abe to modify his policies.

Much as Wikipedia has diminished the authority of traditional encyclopedias written by "experts" and democratized the process of encyclopedia-writing, the dialogic model of news dissemination has changed the reporting and discussion of news. Typifying this approach to engaging with news stories nowadays, Chris Anderson, editor of Wired comments that he receives news from "Twitter, in my inbox, on my RSS feed, through conversations. I read articles from mainstream media but I don't go to mainstream media directly. It comes to me. I pick my sources and I trust my sources."

This dialogic approach to news dissemination is not so new. As early as the 1930s, Mikhail Bakhtin was describing a dialogic approach to literature where writers fed their creative imaginations by responding to what others were writing. As he put it, "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction."

Prof. Barry Natusch is a Professor at the College of Economics, Nihon University in Tokyo who specializes in international relations, economics and sociolinguistics. Beryl Hawkins is a former US radio journalist, talk show host, media strategist, professional voiceover artist/narrator and producer. She teaches Broadcast Voice Training and Journalism at Temple University Japan in Tokyo.



St Jude Storm, Brighton, England by Thaddeus Pope

On the morning of the 28th of October 2013, I drove to Brighton Marina to photograph the damage caused by the St Jude Storm (also known as Cyclone Christian), which was one of the strongest storms that England has experienced since the Great Storm of 1987. The storm was at its worst during the early hours of the 28th of October – with gusts of up to 99 miles per hour recorded on the Isle of Wight.

Developing Safe and Civil Schools

by Rebecca Irby

In lieu of the ongoing violence in American schools, the US Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Institute for Educational Science, a growing number of state Departments of Education, foreign Educational Ministries and UNICEF are looking for ways to decrease violence in schools and create a positive climate and environment for learning.

The idea of social intelligence is not new, nor is the idea that school climate affects academic achievement. The concept has been studied for a century and for over three decades researchers and educators have been recognizing the increased importance of school climate. Looking at one state in particular and their statewide initiative will help provide some background to this growing movement.

The Developing Safe and Civil Schools initiative, or DSACS, involved over 250 schools in the American state of New Jersey. One of the core issues found during the research phase was fragmentation of all the different evidence-based programs being implemented in schools. This fragmentation led to reduced effectiveness of all the programs in place, frustration and demoralization of staff as well as erosion and interference with the academic success of students. The unique quality setting DSACS apart from it's predecessors was that it was a framework from which to coordinate all existing programs and give students, teachers and administrators a common language through which to more efficiently communicate and operate. By having a common framework and language this helped create a stable and safe environment where students can excel.

"There is … powerful evidence that school climate affects students' self-esteem and self-concept. School climate also colors school-based risk-prevention efforts. Effective risk-prevention and health-promotion efforts are correlated with a nurturing school climate. It also promotes academic achievement. As a result of these findings, fostering socially, emotionally, and physically safer schools has become a primary focus of the U.S. Department of Justice and virtually all state education departments." (Cohen, 2006, p. 212-213.) As students come to grips with an increased pace of life, greater economic pressure and dependency on their parents, breakdowns of their neighborhoods and family, weakened bonds with their parents due to the demands of work and school, drugs, mental health, not to mention the climate of war and social violence going on in the world around them, school buildings need to be a place for children to feel safe. No one can prosper in an unsafe environment. This is why, as educators and policy makers, it is our responsibility to ensure that when children come to school not only are we teaching them academics, but we are also educating them in mind, heart, body and spirit. A student who is smart but not mentally fit is a danger to society. High test scores do not indicate the well-being of the school.

In January of 2013 the NJ School Board Association sponsored a program, "Safe and Secure Schools: Perspectives after Newtown", to assist school districts in assessing their

Photograph by Jan-Erik Finnberg / Flickr

security measures in the wake of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Dr. Maurice Elias, director of the DSACS initiative, during his keynote address brought up two important points: "People with dignity don't harm others," and a quote by Theodore Roosevelt: "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society".

Dignity as a skill? Can that be taught? Dignity may not be a skill, yet dignity is something that comes out of self-esteem, and self-esteem is built and realized when young people have had a chance to learn about and form essential life habits. And this framework for learning essential life habits - social emotional character development (SECD) - is perfectly suited to be implemented in the place where children spend the majority of their time and can be reached systematically: school. The skills and habits needed for success in school and life can be broken down into five areas:

1. Self-awareness: being able to recognize your emotions, values, strengths and limitations
2. Responsible decision-making: being able to make ethical and constructive choices about personal and social behaviors
3. Relationship skills: the ability to form positive relationships, work well in teams and deal effectively with conflict
4. Social awareness: the ability to show understanding and empathy for others
5. Self-management: the ability to manage your emotions and behaviors in order to achieve your goals

Two separate studies in 2006 and 2011 show SECD skills are linked to student gains in social emotional skills, improved attitudes about themselves, others and school, positive classroom behavior and 10 to 11 percentile-points gained in standardized achievement tests. These skills also are shown to reduce the risk of conduct problems, aggression and emotional distress. Data coming out of the DSACS initiative, for 48,000 students across all demographic, geographic and socioeconomic levels, is remarkably consistent. Bullying can be linked to school climate and is most strongly and significantly related to the respect that students feel in the school, especially among their peers. Where there is a respectful school environment, bullying is less likely to exist. In the high schools specifically, sampling 13,593 students across all socioeconomic levels, higher scores on the school climate survey correlated to lower incidences of violence, vandalism, substance abuse and weapons possession.

To better prepare our children to deal with the ever changing world in which we are living a successful 21st century school must emphasize a positive, caring environment inside the school building as much, if not more than, high quality academics. Educating a child in mind, heart, body and spirit will give them the essential skills they need to be successful in school and life.

1. From Cohen, J. (2006). Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being. Harvard Educational Review, 76 (2), 201-237.

Educated at Rutgers University in the United States, Rebecca Irby is a Nagoya-based education & technology consultant.

Photograph by Alex Murphy / Flickr

THE WRITING LIFE
BY VINEET KAUL

Seriously, I don't know how to write. Which is unfortunate, as I do it for a living? Mind you, I don't know how to live either. Writers are asked, particularly when we've got a book coming out, to write about writing. To give interviews and explain how we did this thing that we appear to have done. We even teach, as I have recently, students who want to know how to approach the peculiar occupation of fiction writing. I tell them at the beginning—I've got nothing for you. I don't know. Don't look at me.

I've written six books now, but instead of making it easier, it has complicated matters to the point of absurdity. I have no idea what I'm doing. All the decisions I appear to have made—about plots and characters and where to start and when to stop—are not decisions at all. They are compromises. A book is whittled down from hope, and when I start to cut my fingers I push it away from me to see what others make of it. And I wait in terror for the judgements of those others—judgements that seem, whether positive or negative, unjust, because they are about something that I didn't really do. They are about something that happened to me. It's a little like crawling from a car crash to be greeted by a panel of strangers holding up score cards.

Something, obviously, is going on. I manage, every few years, to generate a book. And of course, there are things that I know. I know how to wait until the last minute before putting anything on paper. I mean the last minute before the thought leaves me forever. I know how to leave out anything that looks to me—after a while—forced, deliberate, or fake. I know that I need to put myself in the story. I don't mean literally. I mean emotionally. I need to care about what I'm writing—whether about the characters, or about what they're getting up to, or about the way they feel or experience their world. I know that my job is to create a perspective. And to impose it on the reader. And I know that in order to do that with any success at all I must in some mysterious way risk everything. If I don't break my own heart in the writing of a book then I know I've done it wrong. I'm not entirely sure what that means. But I know what it feels like.

I do no research. Given that I've just written a book that revolves around

HOW ABOUT YOU? IF YOU DIDN'T WRITE, WOULD YOU BE DOING SOMETHING ELSE? DO YOU HAVE CREATIVE OUTLETS IN ADDITION TO WRITING?

two Indian Met police detectives, this might seem a little foolhardy. I have no real idea what detectives do with their days. So I made some guesses. I suppose that they must investigate things. I tried to imagine what that might be like. I've seen the same films and TV shows that you have. I've read the same sorts of cheap thrillers. And I know that everything is fiction. Absolutely everything. Research is its own slow fiction, a process of reassurance for the author. I don't want reassurance. I like writing out of confusion, panic, a sense of everything being perilously close to collapse. So I try to embrace the fiction of all things.

And I mean that—everything is fiction. When you tell yourself the story of your life, the story of your day, you edit and rewrite and weave a narrative out of a collection of random experiences and events. Your conversations are fiction. Your friends and loved ones—they are characters you have created. And your arguments with them are like meetings with an editor—please, they beseech you, you beseech them, rewrite me. You have a perception of the way things are, and you impose it on your memory, and in this way you think, in the same way that I think, that you are living something that is describable. When of course, what we actually live, what we actually experience—with our senses and our nerves—is a vast, absurd, beautiful, ridiculous chaos.

So I love hearing from people who have no time for fiction. Who read only biographies and popular science? I love hearing about the death of the novel. I love getting lectures about the triviality of fiction, the triviality of making things up. As if that wasn't what all of us do, all day long, all lifelong. Fiction gives us everything. It gives us our memories, our understanding, our insight, our lives. We use it to invent ourselves and others. We use it to feel change and sadness and hope and love and to tell each other about ourselves. And we all, it turns out, know how to do it.

I'm still drawing on some questions I solicited on my Facebook page a while back. This comes from Gregg Chamberlain, and it's one I get asked a lot in blog interviews: If I wasn't a writer, what would I be doing? Would I have some other creative outlet?

What I usually say: What would I be if I wasn't a writer? Institutionalized.

Seriously. Like a lot of writers, I feel like if I couldn't write, or didn't write, I'd go crazy. Completely bonkers! Even taking a step back and considering the question seriously, it's still tough to answer because I can't imagine what else I'd be doing. I've spent so much of my life on stories and writing, that a huge chunk of my current identity would be totally different. I'm a writer because around the time I graduated from college, I decided there wasn't anything else I wanted to do with my life, my career, my time. It took about twelve years after that to be able to write full time, but I did it because I didn't give myself much of a choice. I don't want to consider what other career I might have gone into besides writing, because it would change my life too much, and I like my life the way it is.

The question of what other creative outlet I might be doing if I didn't write is a little less traumatic to consider, because I've always had lots of creative outlets. Art, sewing, theater, and music. Looking back, I think I could have made a career at any of them — if I had chosen to put as much time into any one of them as I put into my writing. Writing won out because it's easy to do any time, any place. A pen and paper, that's it. Art and music have steeper learning curves, I think, and the rewards aren't as immediate. Theater usually needs collaborators. I sometimes think in an alternate universe, I did follow one of those other paths, and in that universe I'm wondering what would have happened if I'd become a writer.

I've been on a couple of panels over the last couple of years about other creative outlets writers have. Lots of writers knit, make jewelry, play in bands, and so on. I do find I really love making things with my hands after days and days of working mostly with my brain. But I don't consider trying any of my crafty hobbies professionally.

How about you? If you didn't write, would you be doing something else? Do you have creative outlets in addition to writing?

Vineet Kaul is a final year Ph.D student in Media & Communication at DA-IICT University, Gujarat India.

THE MENA SAGA AND (NOT) LADY GAGA

BY ANIS H. BAJREKTAREVIC

LET'S GET SY(I)RIA-OUS: WHERE IS THE COUNTER NARRATIVE?

The MENA theatre is situated in one of the most fascinating locations of the world. It actually represents, along with the Balkans-Caucasus, the only existing land corridor that connects three continents. It also holds over a half of the world's proven oil-gas reserves (56% – oil, 48% – gas). Further on, the Gulf OPEC states and Libya have –by far– the lowest costs of oil extraction, thanks to the high crude 'purity' which simplifies and cheapens the refinement process. These petrol-exporters also enjoy the close proximity to open warm seas for the fast and low-cost, convenient overseas shipments. Hence, the costs per barrel of crude for Libya and the Persian Gulf states are under 5USD, for other OPEC members below 10USD. This is in a sharp contrast to countries such as the US, Russia, Norway, Canada and many others that bear production costs of several tens of USD per barrel – according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Therefore, it is an absolute imperative for the external/peripheral powers to dominate such a pivotal geo-economic and geopolitical theater by simply keeping its center soft (e.g. by pre-empting, preventing or hindering the emancipation that might come through any indigenous socio-political modernization and economic diversification). This is the very same imperative that has remained a dominant rational of inner European and Asian machtpolitik for centuries.

No wonder that the competition in the MENA theatre, which has a lasting history of external domination or interference (and largely the Versailles, Anglo-French drawn borders), is harsh, multiple, unpredictable. The region is predominantly populated by the Sunni (Arab) Muslims. With its high population density and a demographic growth far outpacing the economic one, this very young median population (on average 23–27 years old) – that is frequently lacking any (universal) access to education, health and housing – is dominated

Photograph by James Gordon / Flickr

by juvenile, mainly unemployed or underemployed, but socially mobilized and often angry males.

An exceptional fact that the Middle East is a cradle of all four monotheistic religions is thus turned into its own paradox: Fueled by severe socio-economic exclusions and exacerbated by exploitation of the Shia–Sunni and of Muslim–Jewish–Christian antagonism, political radica-lization is surely one of the most convenient instruments of tacit control aimed at preserving local governing authorities predatory-alienated, unauthentic and weak, if not incapacitated.

It should not be of any surprise that each and every one of the predominantly Sunni-Muslim Balkans-MENA countries of the secular republican type, where the external powers have brokered the political settlement – often by compromising the very sovereignty and territorial integrity, is enveloped in perpetuated instabilities, remaining thus paralyzed. So far, not a single absolutistic monarchy has been significantly affected. Starting in Bosnia – nearly 20 years ago – followed by Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya as well as in the post-Spring Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, all the way to 'ungoverned' Mali, South Sudan and Algeria's south, and up to the post-assassination revolt-torn Tunis or anti-Avanti Mursi' Cairo, a purposely dysfunctional and indecisive central government seems to have been put in place.

POLICY OF TIMING OR NO SPRING ON A SINGLE STRING

Conclusively, most observers would agree that while the so-called Arab Spring had a cross-Arab impact, this was still far from a pan-Arab ripple effect: It was more of a spontaneous social revolt; a series of isolated events (related to each other more by Al-Jazeera-connecting-pots potting and fanning), rather than a directional process. To channel something so unexpectedly inflammatory and cross-Arab, while studiously avoiding pan-Arabism let alone any hint of real structural socio-economic reform and political emancipation – that could have only been achieved by lighting the torch of Islamism. Lacking any enlightenment, this torch far too often and far too easily brought about the extremist blindness of Islamo-fascism.

No Spring on a single string, right?! How could any social cohesion indispensible for the MENA democratization possibly work where primary loyalties are (returned) to sect, tribe or ethnicity? This dilemma relates not only to democracy, but also to the very quest of secularism – for the one presupposes the other – ever since the French Revolution. In this or any other part of the (developing) world, institutionalization of democracy without secularization of state inevitably leads to a dysfunctional,

Photograph by Thierry Ehrmann / Flickr

destabilizing and (self-)debilitating government: divinization of the post and personalization of power. The current state of the MENA republics affected by the Arab Spring as well as that of the GCC monarchies provides the best proof of this.

For one thing, as it now seems, the euphorically tam-tamed 'Facebook revolutions' across MENA were rather a strategic distractions 'innocently' dressed up in the diverting banality of social media networks. The very same role those networks well played elsewhere too. Hence, is it of any surprise that the broad and universal right of self-determination has been sadly reduced to the right of internet-freedom? Contrary to the established apotheosis, many fundamental human rights are currently compressed like a zip-file, emailed and entrusted to just a pair of omnipotent, self-centered and self-interested non-state and semi-state actors of unilateral globalism/egoism: private IT corporations and shadowy intelligence agencies.

Presently, the announced reduction of the American physical presence in Afghanistan, the limitations it faces in the nearly failed (nuclear bomb holding) Pakistan, and the massive overextensions suffered all over the southwestern flank of the Euro-Asian continent including the recent US Army pullout from Iraq, is felt within the GCC (and in France, UK, Israel and Turkey too) as dangerous exposure to a neighboring (increasingly anticipated as assertive) Iran as well as to Russia and China behind it. Right now, Syria pays a proxy-war price for that: This multi-religious country of subtle ancient cultural layers may end up entirely combusted, thereby creating a dangerous security vacuum in the heart of MENA. Or to use the words of frustration of the senior French diplomat who recently told me in Brussels: "we have to demonize and quickly delegitimize the legitimate Syrian government, and topple al-Assad in order to convince Israel not to bomb Iran…"

"Western national interests will no longer determine the moral and political impulses of today's global community… Whatsoever the outcome, Syria's agony has underscored a further irreversible weakening of the West's dominant global role…" claims India's former Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh. Perhaps so; the West has indeed become too weak to architecture, but it certainly remains strong enough to destabilize its conceived political peripheries:

As recently, the 'Group of Friends of Syria'- induced recognition of the so-called Syrian opposition means also that Turkey is now practically at war with Syria. At this point, let me be both instructive and predictive: The fall of al-Assad will most certainly trigger the dissolution of Syria. It will also lead to a formalized federalization of Iraq, in a desperate move to prevent its total decomposition as well as to a serious crisis of Lebanese and Jordanian statehood – in both cases probably beyond reparation. The winners in such a scenario would then seem to be Israel (a country that remains enveloped in its traumatic European holocaust past and detached from its present neighborhood) along with the GCC monarchies – at least in the short run. However, over the long term the 'winners' would be the Kurds and Shias even though the northern portions of Syria have already been occupied by the Turkish Army for quite some time.

Consequently, with any proclamation of a Kurdish state (inevitably being of a Black Sea –Eastern Mediterranean stretch, a dream line of all Russian tsars in past), the Erdoğan government (as well as Iraq) would not be able to survive – as it has already created enough enemies at home and in its near abroad. Ergo, besides the dispersed, rarified and terrified MENA Christians, the moderate (Arab) Sunnis are definitely the long-term losers.

Anis H. Bajrektarevic, is currently Chairperson for International Law & Global Policy Studies in Vienna, Austria

Photograph Source / Wikipedia

WAN CHAI

CAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY REVITALIZE A CITY? HONG KONG'S VIVIDLY COLOURFUL WAN CHAI DISTRICT BY JUN KOBAYASHI

Hong Kong has, besides those shopping spots and skyscrapers, various houses and buildings designed to contain both Chinese and Western styles. This exotic city has more than 500 graded historical buildings and most of them are waiting for either urban renewal or conservation by the government and neighborhood.

Wan Chai was the area developed earliest in Hong Kong, the origin of the name was "a small gulf", and before reclamation started, it was close to the sea. Nowadays, Wan Chai is a core area in Hong Kong for both working and living, has the second smallest population in the 18 districts in Hong Kong, and most residents have a high income. Hence, Wan Chai has many buildings that are of historical value and cheerfully colored. Here is the Blue House cluster and some other vividly color building in Wan Chai.

THE BLUE HOUSE

The Blue House was built in 1920 and at some point in time was used as a hospital and school respectively. It is called Tong Lau by the locals, (literally, "Chinese building"), and has adopted both western and Hong Kong styles in collective housing with a store and a residence at colonial days. The first floor was used as a temple in the 1920s, and later as clinic for a physician from the 1950s afterwards. The Blue House is used for housing but the amenities are very old. The residents are using a common kitchen, and living without a toilet. Residents have someone remove the excrement every night and nowadays most are using public toilets. There is a "Wan Chai neighborhood place", newly established in one corner of the first floor at the Blue House, open for everyone who wants to know more about the Hong Kong history. The future plan for the Blue House is opening to tourists and offering a tearoom as well as a place for art activities. Furthermore extra flats are to be created for new eight households, but those new tenants must be traditional craftsmen, artists or social entrepreneurs who agree with the theme of Blue House.

Photograph by Roaming the Planet / Flickr

THE YELLOW HOUSE & THE ORANGE HOUSE

The Yellow House was collected by the government like the Blue House, has become a heritage item, and was built in European style. The Orange House is comparatively new, built around 1950 and was a part of the Blue House for storing the wood. It is due to development that the Orange House has a gallery and became a place, which promotes civic art activities. In the Blue House cluster plan, the Blue House will be a museum of Chinese medicine and the Yellow House will be a tea museum.

THE GREY HOUSE

In the beginning, the Blue House was a grey. However, when the government

Photograph Source / Wikipedia

decided to paint it, blue was they only color they had in stock. If you visit the Blue House you can see there is a gray house connected. This grey house is maintained by an individual owner without ever changing the color in honor of the district's past.

THE GREEN HOUSE & THE WHITE HOUSE

Besides the Blue House cluster, Wan Chai has many historical buildings with various colors. For example, the Green House, same as the Blue House, was made to adopt the style of both Chinese and Western buildings in the 1920s, with a stylish balcony and stores. After the renovation in July 2013, the Green House changed to a modern "commix home base" as it left the wall, the tiled roof, and the wooden stairs and French door of red brick. It is opened as a workshop for animation and comics. Furthermore, the conspicuous white building is located in a place, which is separated by a few minutes walk from the Blue House. This white building was a post office, built in 1913, and is now used as an environmental-resources center.

THE RED HOUSE

Finally, if you go down the main road Queen's Road East, and up a steep hill to the top, there is a house called the Wan Chai Haunted House by local people. This building was issued by a millionaire in 1918, is referred to as 'Nam Koo Terrace' and consists of red bricks laid in western style. Nam Koo Terrace in Ship Street was very close to the sea where ships went back and forth frequently in '30s and '40s. This was the area in which the Chinese people gathered in Hong Kong and it was one of the most prosperous places within the Chinese community in the '30s and '40s. During the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, the owner of Nam Koo Terrace died suddenly for unknown reason while in the house. Later, the Japanese army used this place as 'a guest house' of the service club. Nam Koo Terrace remains empty after the war, and a developer bought this estate in 1988 but it is still vacant at the moment.

It can be said that the neighborhood with the colorful buildings is the area where the housing division developed before World War II, and the features of the street of prewar days is kept comparatively well. The Blue House cluster is not only a nostalgic atmosphere, but also indispensable to telling history of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is surrounded by mountains and has less land suitable for living; therefore people in Hong Kong expanded the coastline little by little through means of reclamation. If you pay attention to the tram route in Wan Chai you can see the old coastline in the front of those old buildings. Recently people have started to talk about "Collective Memory" in Hong Kong and began thinking about the importance of heritage whilst rethinking their own history. Although many issues are waiting to be solved it is a good move for both the government and local level. If you have chance to visit Hong Kong, you should try to walk around Wan Chai area for sightseeing besides shopping and enjoying the cuisine. You will definitely discover a different Hong Kong.

Jun Kobayashi is a Hong Kong based writer and editor. Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Jun has an interest in Chinese Architecture, especially the historical Wan Chai district.

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