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Academic Grandparents: Things They Never Thought to Tell Us

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Introduction

Gary Moorman

I was honored when Donna Alvermann offered me the opportunity to chair the Panel "**Academic Grandparents: Things They Never Thought to Tell Us"** at the 2015 annual conference of the American Reading Forum. This was a co-sponsored session with the Reading Hall of Fame, a somewhat mysterious group of outstanding reading scholars and educators. Information about the group can be found at their website: http://www.readinghalloffame.org/

Donna's plan was to examine the impact of "academic grandparents," exploring the impact of our predecessors in moving our field forward. What role their accomplishments should play is seldom brought under scrutiny. As Donna writes in the proposal "With all due respect for our predecessors, the panel opts to raise questions about that role in current times."

In the presentation, four scholars chose a metaphorical academic grandparent, one who had impact on their professional growth, especially initially in their careers. None of the presenters had ever met their grandparent in person, their acquaintance based solely on written texts. At the end of the four presentations, a fifth scholar, who had seen written drafts of each of the four presentations, reacted.

The presentations and the essays in this manuscript were built around three key questions:

1. **What's the trade off between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new?**
2. **To what degree would our academic grandparents likely rebel?**

3. **If we could engage in conversation with our academic forebears at the end of this panel session, what might we gain collectively?**

These essays, considering the highly academic and philosophical content, are surprisingly readable. To capture this and hopefully set the stage for your reading them, I will provide only the grandchild, grandparent (along with dates of birth and death), and a brief quote from each essay that personally I found particularly insightful, provocative and/or humorous.

Donna Alvermann. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) French existential philosopher:

> Considering that Simone de Beauvoir and I were separated at birth by two generations and two continents—to say nothing of the social, familial, disciplinary, and linguistic disconnects between us—it is little wonder that I marveled to myself when her name came instantly to mind as my metaphoric grandparent when I think about digital media literacy education.

George Hruby. Richard Rorty (1931-2007) American neo-pragmatist philosopher:

> Both (conservative and liberal intuitions) hold that education is about truth and freedom; but conservatives believe you teach the truth so students can be free; liberals believe you teach to free the student so they can know the truth.

Mona Matthews. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) Russian social psychologist:

> Given the central role Vygotsky (1962) gave to language, he likely would rebel against instructional programs and US educational policies that by design constrain children's use of language. These include early reading programs, such as Success For All (Success for All Foundation), that deliver instruction via scripts teachers must deliver verbatim, and English-only policies that mandate that English be the only language used in schools to deliver instruction.

Christine Mallozzi. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) French trans-disciplinary philosopher:

> To me, it seems that Foucault's favorite activity was to be obtuse, so the most likely thing he would do is to not rebel at my claiming him in my academic lineage, perhaps because rebelling is what we might expect of him.

David Reinking. Reactor:

> Are we too obtuse in our scholarly work removing it too far from the pragmatic day-to-day challenges of advancing literacy in schools and classrooms? Are those challenges too prosaic to meet our intellectual needs? Do the intellectual stances identified in this collection of grandparents do real work in classrooms and/or the policy arena?

I hope these "trailers" provide a quick preview to these five wonderful essays. During the discussion after the presentations at the conference, it was suggested that it would be great if the four grandparents could sit around a table and have a discussion, not unlike what these essays present. It was agreed that in all likelihood the four would wear black turtlenecks. I invite you to put on a metaphorical black turtleneck and engage in a discussion with these academic titans.

Simone de Beauvoir: Grandparent of Digital Media Literacy Education

Donna Alvermann

Considering that Simone de Beauvoir and I were separated at birth by two generations and two continents—to say nothing of the social, familial, disciplinary, and linguistic disconnects between us—I still marvel at the fact that her name came instantly to mind as my metaphoric grandparent in digital media literacy education. Given that Simone de Beauvoir was no longer living when 21st century digital technologies became commonplace, how could her work possibly connect to digital media literacy education? The connection lies not with the digital but with de Beauvoir's commitment to the existentialist concept of individual freedom.

Key question 1: What's the trade off between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new?

During most of the 20th century, a time in which de Beauvoir was active, mass media was on the rise. It was a time in which relatively few individuals could expect to reach large audiences in any single broadcast. Enter the digital age and its expansion of "the possibilities for individual participation in the growth and…realization of a truly democratic culture" (Balkin, 2004, p. 1). However reconfiguring the past and its emphasis on mass media produces its own set of controls that can limit freedom of speech and democratic participation. As Balkin goes on to say, "Safeguarding freedom of speech will thus increasingly fall to legislatures, administrative agencies, and technologists" (p.1).

I would argue that Simone de Beauvoir ran up against similar threats aimed at muting her voice. Case in point: While writing *The Blood of Others*, which was published in 1948, de Beauvoir is said to have worked out "her intention to express the paradox of freedom experienced by an individual and the ways in which others, perceived by the individual as objects, were affected by [that individual's] actions and decisions" (Bair 1990, p. 305). This fictionalized account of de Beauvoir's personal experiences in Paris during World War II, explores her commitment to the existentialist concept of individual freedom. When her book appeared in the United States, it was lauded by most as being a fictional primer on essentialism and de Beauvoir as being "the most Existential of all the Existentialists" (Bair, 1990, p. 306).

The Blood of Others was not without its critics, however. Richard McLaughlin (1948), a reviewer writing for the *Saturday Review of Literature,* raised serious doubts about "the ultimate achievement of [a state of pure individual freedom], since if the existentialists insist on total responsibility they also urge total involvement" (p. 13). Following this line of reasoning in regard to total involvement, McLaughlin argued, would

make it virtually impossible for anyone to remain untouched by the resolve of others. In fact, attempting to do so would deny a basic existentialist tenet, namely, that other people possess the *same* desire for total responsibility for their decisions and actions. This paradox, of course, has implications for media literacy education, especially in instances involving contested rights over individual freedom.

Key question 2: To what degree would our academic grandparents likely rebel?

Despite finding Simone de Beauvoir's writing on existential liberation relevant for my work in digital media literacies education, I am aware that she would likely rebel at the thought of my using the video "Webcam 101 for Seniors" in my online course titled New and Digital Literacies, LLED 7910e. But first, some background on this video.

Writing as a scholar of new materialisms, Sonia Kruks (2010) uses de Beauvoir's experiences of the infirmities and oppressions she encountered in advancing age to illustrate how they provide insight into "the cultural and discursive media we produce" (p. 262). Specifically, Kruks calls attention to how society in a for-profit economy is largely responsible for the degradations of old age that devalue people who are no longer economically productive. Citing de Beauvoir's allusion to the aged as "pure objects" (p. 271), Kruks goes on to explain how exterior forces (e.g., the media) that make fun of old people and their infirmities by materially objectifying them as "useless…not worthy of respect" (p. 271) can lead to oldsters interiorizing those same labels.

A case in point that links this situation to digital media literacy is a popular YouTube video that went viral in September 2011. Titled "Webcam 101 for Seniors," this video had a hit rate of 11,910,266 views as of November 17, 2015. The full version of the video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcN08Tg3PWw) was uploaded by the retired

couple's granddaughter who had tried to teach Bruce and Esther Huffman from McMinnville, Oregon, how to record themselves using Esther's new laptop. Within four days of their repeated fumbling and eventual success (though unbeknownst to them), their video had attracted over 2.2 million views, according to OregonLive.com (http://goo.gl/foDc92).

Labeled as "adorable" by OregonLive.com on September 15, 2011, the couple's display of advancing age and their cheerful online acceptance of being "computer illiterate" is a prime example of how de Beauvoir's work can be made relevant by educators today. For example, I have used it as a critical literacy activity that invites students in my online New and Digital Literacies course to explore who was Othered by whom, for what reason, and with what possible gain. Further discussion has sometimes led to exploring the tensions between personal freedom and social responsibility—an activity that has the potential to backfire and reinforce the very stereotypes I am trying to disrupt.

Key question 3: If we could engage in conversation with our academic forebears at the end of this panel session, what might we gain collectively?

Perhaps if the academic forebears of the other three presenters were to join us in a post-session conversation, we would find one or more taking exception to my claim that Simone de Beauvoir's work has relevance for 21st century media literacy education. It is also possible they would point to several missed opportunities for linking de Beauvoir's work in the political arena and her travels abroad (e.g., to Havana, Cuba) to media literacy education. What I would be most interested in learning from a post-session discussion is this: Would de Beauvoir and the other three panelists' metaphoric academic grandparents

take offense at our proposing and then presenting this particular panel discussion at the American Reading Forum?

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Richard Rorty: The Grandparent Who Told Us We'd Poke Our Eye Out

George Hruby

My first encounter with the work of American neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty was as an undergraduate philosophy minor (English major) by way of his edited volume on the linguistic turn in Anglo-analytic philosophy (Rorty, 1967). The book summarized the discursive post-positivism that followed the collapse of logical positivism in the 1950s, and the alternative epistemic foundations for making truth claims entertained in its wake. I did not read his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Rorty, 1979) until the late 1990s, but knew of Rorty's neo-pragmatist critique of linguistic representation and his disparagement of philosophy as a knowledge legitimation project. This was largely

through essay-length Rorty, and it was the impact of a collection of his essays (Rorty, 1989) that prompted my application to graduate school.

Recently, I have been reflecting on Rorty's few but uncanny essays on the culture wars surrounding educational reform (e.g., Rorty, 1987, 1990, 1999). I believe his seemingly simple analysis, though now three decades old, still has merit, and is useful for negotiating conversations with educational stakeholders holding different ideological convictions than my own. As the director of a statewide literacy professional development center, and in order to maintain the center's funding, I am regularly required to find common ground with members of the state educational bureaucracy, the legislature, the state Chamber of Commerce, and an assortment of generally conservative ad hoc advocacy groups. I also communicate regularly with rank-and-file teachers, administrators, parents, and, best of all, students who have come to college to become a teacher like the teachers they had. The overwhelming majority of these people hold conventional views on what schools and learning are about, views notably distinct from the more rarified constructs we advocate from the academy. Rorty's ideas have helped me bridge this divide in ways that are effective without robbing me of a good night's sleep.

Key question 1: What's the trade off between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new?

This is a strikingly Rortian question. For Rorty, as for Faulkner (1950/1975), the past is never dead or even past. Convention in language, as in belief and practice, is requisite for community and thus meaning. So, although it is morally necessary (and always desirable, indeed, a Rortian obsession) to freshen things up with new vocabularies, new arguments, new arrangements, these must be relatable to deep and over-inscribed

networks of conventional expectation in order to have any value or function as language or social practice (Rorty, 1989). To extend a well-worn metaphor, we rebuild the boat as we sail it, one plank at a time, yet regardless are perpetually at sea. The adolescent belief in absolute freedom from a presumed (but in fact ever changing) status quo is naïve (Rorty, 1999). We can never be entirely free from conventional assumption. We can at best displace certain elements, repositioning sets of conventionalities with alternative sets, even though, upon closer examination, these will often turn out to be functionally similar to what we displaced. Nonetheless, we should refuse to settle for the merely comfortable and remain ironically hopeful that we can make displacements on behalf of inflicting less cruelty and promoting greater happiness than before (Rorty, 1989, 2000).

Key question 2: To what degree would our academic grandparents likely rebel?

In response to two works of educational philosophy inspired by his ideas (Arcilla, 1990; Nicholson, 1989), Rorty noted "the dangers of over-philosophication" (Rorty, 1990, title). I love this 8-syllable mouthful of a word, indicating the headful of ideas with which we often distract ourselves while more urgent fires are burning.

Philosophy hasn't much to say about education, argued Rorty (1990), because education is a technical domain addressing technical issues requiring technical expertise (the sort we have as scholars of education). Not having that expertise, himself, Rorty felt it would be foolish for him to address those issues. As to our (perhaps compensatory) concern for epistemological foundations, from the standpoint of a neo-pragmatist like Rorty, the assumptions we bring to bear in addressing our technical questions must pay their own freight, that is, they are justified only in so far as they get us the results we seek, what James (1907) figuratively termed their cash-value. If not, we must seek or fashion

new assumptions. And, in any case, philosophy is no longer the place to find epistemological certainty (Rorty, 1979), so you education kids get off his philosophical lawn!

However, Rorty (1999, 2000) observed that not *all* questions surrounding education are technical questions. There are, in fact, public questions of social value and meaning, and these kinds of questions are at the core of the culture wars surrounding education and its reform. What sort of a nation are we, and what sort of nation do we wish to become? What sorts of people do we want our children to grow up to be? What sort of society do we hope they will live in? What role do we imagine education playing in these outcomes?

These are not, properly speaking, technical questions, and thus are fair game for general discussion and philosophical interrogation. In such a public discussion, our technical expertise as scholars of education is irrelevant. It provides us no basis by which to preempt social conversation on these issues, as if our fellow citizens were potential students upon whom we could impose our sense of professional prerogative, calling them to order so that we might correct and control their self-constructed understandings. Instead, to engage in a public conversation, we actually have to listen, not just to seem polite while we await an opportunity to correct the mistaken, but to listen so as to actually *hear* and respect the conventional assumptions, values, and intuitions at play in the worldviews of others, perchance, at least for brief moments, to empathize with their sensibilities, even as we may disagree with the conclusions to which they arrive.

Rortian Resistance. As a philosopher, Rorty's work was regularly cross-examined and challenged by other philosophers, and his analyses are widely engaged across the

philosophical spectrum, including in educational philosophy (e.g., Peters & Ghiraldelli, 2001). Ramberg (2009) summed up the substantive arguments with Rorty's ideas succinctly: "Rorty's conversationalist view of truth and knowledge leaves us entirely unable to account for the notion that a reasonable view of how things are is a view suitably constrained by how the world actually is" (n.p.). Rorty would disagree.

Philosophical debate is different from what we mean by *criticality* in the dialectical sense employed in education. So I will disregard the dismissal of Rorty due to a purported inadequacy of radical chic (e.g., Archilla, 1995, p. x, criticized Rorty for his residual "positivist impatience with existential mystery"). More seriously, Reich (1996) voiced a concern for Rorty's elitism.

Rorty's seeming reservation of the ironic stance for those who have had the benefits of a liberal arts curriculum seems elitist, classist, and in its description narcissistic. Rorty allowed that most people were perfectly happy living lives neatly fenced by conventional assumption. Given his utilitarian approval of the pursuit of happiness, provided it did not contribute to the misery of others, who were academics to disabuse conventionalists for their supposed false consciousness? In any case, the default to "commonsensically nominalist and historicist" (Rorty, 1989, 73), but not ironic, truth claims was as typical of university professors as of Walmart employees. Being keenly aware of one's inability to be certain is hardly a common attribute of the professional class. Yet I still struggle with his calling out academics like myself for our desire to be the more knowledgeable others (Rorty, 1994).

Key question 3: If we could engage in conversation with our academic forebears at the end of this panel session, what might we gain collectively?

I believe Rorty would have fun with us, delighted that he had a second chance to make more friends (Rorty, 2007), share language play, and gently lead our thinking to places it had neither been before nor would likely have gone. He would remind us of the crucial need for empathy to hear other voices than our own. He might suggest we are so taken up with getting our message out, advocating, lecturing, conferencing, proselytizing, elevator speechifying, blogging, and otherwise broadcasting our demands and promoting our careers, we never spend much time actually listening to others, particularly those beyond our hallowed halls but at the mercy of our teacher education systems. Nor do we listen to realize anything like the solidarity necessary for a better world.

Rorty suggested there are discernably different conservative and liberal intuitions informing the culture wars surrounding education in the US. Both hold that education is about truth and freedom. But conservatives believe you teach the truth (how the world works) so students can be free (to realize their destinies in the world). Liberals believe you teach to free the student (of their false consciousness, their unexamined assumptions) so they can know the truth (who and where they are). Conservatives are comparatively absolutist about the truth, but more ambivalent about freedom (at least for others), while liberals are the opposite – that is, they are comparatively absolutist about freedom (especially for others), but more relativist about truth (Rorty, 1999).

Since there are no absolute truths, according to Rorty (1979, 1999), what conservatives are really proposing is to inculcate the young in the conventionalities that the parental generation would have students take to be true, or, in other words for conservatives, *socialization* is the purpose of education. For historical reasons (local control of the schools, caution regarding children), this view dominates in the K-12 school

curriculum (Rorty, 1999). In some quarters we are now calling this "college and career readiness."

On the other liberal hand, as noted, Rorty (1990, 1999) denied there could be freedom from accepted convention, only a displacement of parochial conventionalities with alternative, fresher ones. And this, he argued, is what pertains in the non-vocational postsecondary curriculum. The alternatives are numerous, moreover, and across the liberal arts and sciences the student encounters many different possibilities. Finding the ones that make the most sense for the student essentially amounts to education as *individuation* (Rorty, 2000). Eventually, of course, some semblance of vocational preparation forces college students to accept the institutionally determined conventions of a professional discourse. But that discourse will be appropriated on behalf of a professional persona, not of the self, and with suitable reflection, humility, and empathy, the space between the persona and the self will prove the breeding ground for compassionate irony.

Thus, according to Rorty (2000), *socialization* followed by *individualization* is the de facto compromise in American education, and although there are exceptions, they either must duck or else be the target of societal refusal. Extremists aside, most Americans of either ideological stripe are comfortable with a secondary curriculum that prepares the student for a useful and effective role in society. And most who are able to see their own children to college for a liberal arts foundation expect their children's sense of possibility to be enlarged so that they may live a richer, more meaningful life. Or at least have a finer lease on the discourses of power. When either the K-12 (conservative) or post-sec (liberal) view tries to colonize the other (make post-sec about conventional pragmatics or K-12

about personal liberation), societal pushback defeats the effort. Which may go some way in explaining the historical impact of teacher education's visions of educational reform.

Rorty's guidance on the liberal and conservative intuitions about education has helped me to empathize with those who hold opposite intuitions from my own, even as I disagree with their conclusions. I note that Rorty's ideas were subsequently substantiated by psychological research on consistent value differences between self-labeled conservatives and liberals (e.g., Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2007), and by more recent social science research on the best way to convince someone from an opposite ideological stance to arrive at the results you would prefer (hint: start from *their* intuited truths and values as the foundational basis for your argument, not your own; Feinberg & Willer, 2015). Rorty would not be surprised at this finding, because he held that the foundations we often take as determinative of our conclusions are really not.

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Lev S. Vygotsky: The Grandparent Who Encouraged Me to Hang Out with More Knowledgeable Others

Mona Matthews

I found identifying my academic grandparent difficult. For two decades, my reading and research have deepened as well as broadened my theoretical beliefs, so I struggled with identifying a singular influence. However, once I considered that grandparents are second-degree relatives, with grandchildren sharing only 25% of their grandparents' genetic make-up, I settled on Vygotsky.. From Vygotsky I inherited a belief that learning is a social enterprise (Wertsch, 1991) with individuals learning about the world and the values of their culture through their day-to-day interactions with the more experienced members of their community.

My introduction to Vygotsky occurred in the early 80's when I entered graduate school. Then, as well as now, my professional study is motivated by a need to understand early literacy development, particularly reading acquisition. When I entered graduate school, Vygotsky's ideas were beginning to weigh substantial influence on conceptions of

learning and teaching and as such gave support to the emerging views of beginning reading as a process that begins at birth. As a consequence, researchers, such as Sulzby (1985) and Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) turned their investigative eye towards examining young children's understandings of print while others sought to understand ways that families used print in their day-to-day lives (for example Taylor, 1986). For me, Vygotsky's theory brought order to my nascent views of how young children become literate and focused my attention on children's interactions with print within classroom settings. With this as background, I address the three questions that frame this problems court.

Key question 1: What's the trade-off between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new?

When I consider this question within a Vygotskian framework for learning, I see no trade-off. Rather bringing the past forward and reconfiguring it could stand as a succinct, albeit simplistic, illustration of Vygotsky's conception of the learning process. The past, considered within this context, loosely reflects historical as well as developmental aspects of a performance; a performance that moves forward, yet embedded within its current expression. Thereby, reconfigured, reflecting an across-time response to changing contexts likely resulting in alterations in the use of tools, and nudged by the artful guidance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). Vygotsky depicted this process in his description of teaching within young children's ZPD (1978).

In fact, I offer this process, i.e., carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new, as a way to explain how Vygosky's ideas have travelled through time. For example, Hatano (1993) proposed the inclusion of core Piagetian

constructivist assumptions to create a “constructivist Vygotskian conception” (p. 155). Palincsar and Brown (1984) incorporated several aspects of Vygotsky’s theory in their design of Reciprocal Teaching, including the importance of dialogue, the need to situate instruction within a social context, and the value of adult support. Lave and Wenger (1991) appropriated his ideas in their construct of legitimate peripheral participation, wherein new members of a community gain knowledge of essential tasks by working alongside more experienced members of the community.

However, as I carried forward Vygotsky’s ideas related to the social and cultural influences on early literacy learning, I began to find they lacked the depth I sought. This led me to search for theories and research describing human development. Although elements of these theories and research were familiar--all maintained Vygotsky’s focus on social and cultural origins of learning—others offered more depth in explaining how these origins influence children’s learning. To illustrate, I offer a brief discussion of where I found such depth.

Terrence Deacon (1997), a biological anthropologist, in his book *The Symbolic Species*, addresses the question “Why are humans the only species to have its own language?” To answer this question he examines how the evolution of language results from human’s unique capacity for symbolic representation. This capacity enables humans to create, “symbolically mediated models of things- whether theories, stories, or just rationally argued predictions” (p. 434).

Tomasello (2000) in collaboration with others (Tomasello, Carpenter, Cal, Behne, & Moll, 2005; Tomasello, Kruger, & Ratner, 1993) explain how humans possess the ability to understand and share the intentions of others, to be mind readers, so to speak.

This ability, emerges around nine months, and enables the infant to focus on the intended goal of another's behavior. Around 12 months, the toddler begins to attend to the strategies the person uses to achieve that goal. Around age four, the young child's intention sharing evolves into an ability to share the beliefs of others. This is referenced as "collective intentionality," (Searle, 1995, as cited in Tomasello, et al., 2005, p. 684) wherein the child shares similar understandings of the rules, social norms, that guide the behavior of those within their community (Tomasello, et al.,). Tomasello (2000) references this process as the bedrock of cultural learning.

Tomasello (2003) in his book *Constructing a Language*, proposes a usage-based view of language development wherein children learn language by using language. This ability to construct language while they use language results from two powerful cognitive processes. One is their ability to read the intentions of others, described previously, and the other is their ability to find and form patterns, which enables them to acquire increasingly expanded patterns of that language. These two processes provide young children with more powerful learning mechanisms than previously believed, and raise questions about the validity of theories, such as that proposed by Chomsky (1977), which purport infants possess an instinctive capacity to learn language.

Finally, Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) offers a comprehensive and detailed explanation of how humans grow and develop across time (Thelen & Smith, 1994). From a DST perspective, the human represents a dynamic developing system that changes across time as a consequence of the interaction of all available components within and outside the body (Thelen & Smith, 2006, p. 258). These components interact and change asynchronously, occurring at different rates, and nonlinearly, occurring with spurts,

regressions, plateaus, (Thelen & Smith, 1994, p. 85). A DST offers literacy researchers a reference when looking for answers to questions such as, what makes literacy learning nonlinear? How do changes that occur in a child's literacy development become more complex over time? How do behaviors seemingly unrelated to reading and writing--invented spelling, emergent reading-- appear to emerge suddenly into a coherent understanding of what written language represents?

Key question 2: To what degree would our academic grandparents likely rebel?

Vygotsky would likely not support all uptakes of his ideas. In fact, some likely would lead him to wage an all-out rebellion. One of the most obvious is the use of the ZPD by the Accelerated Reader Program (Renaissance Learning), a program widely used in classroom across the U.S. This program uses the STAR assessment system to identify books within students' ZPD, defined as books identified as neither too easy nor too difficult. Even though teachers are encouraged to use their professional knowledge, a computer program, not the classroom teacher, identifies books at students' ZPD, sets individual goals for each student, and monitors students' comprehension. Thereby, it relinquishes key aspects of the ZPD such as mediation, scaffolding, MKO, to a computer program.

Given the central role Vygotsky (1962) gave to language, he likely would rebel against instructional programs and U.S. educational policies that by design constrain children's use of language. These include early reading programs, such as Success For All (Success for All Foundation), that deliver instruction via scripts teachers must deliver verbatim, and English-only policies that mandate that English be the only language used in schools to deliver instruction. These practices and policies not only run counter to the

central role Vygotsky ascribes to language, they run counter to the Marxist ideology that grounded his work (Wertsch, 1985). The latter would likely lead him to view these practices and policies as implemented by the elite to maintain social order and retain their privilege.

Key question 3: If we could engage in conversation with our academic forebears at the end of this panel session, what might we gain collectively?

Vygotsky died at the age of 37, so the primary responsibility for explaining, testing, and detailing his theory and their pedagogical applications fell to others (for example, Wertsch, 1991). Further, most have learned about Vygotsky's ideas by reading translations of his writings rather than the originals (for example, Cole: Vyotsky,1978; Hanfmann & Vakar: Vygotsky,1962). Thus, I wonder, how would he critique their translations? Also given, that in the time since Vygotsky's death, some of the same psychological tools he knew, although available today, such as books, maps, writing utensils, etc. have evolved to produce new forms and functions. Moreover, their availability has expanded across economic strata. How would Vygotsky revise his theories to account for the evolution of these psychological tools and their expanded access? Finally, Vygotsky focused on social and cultural origins of learning and applied a genetic analysis to develop his theory (Genetic Roots of Thought and Speech, n.d.). Marie Clay (2001) acknowledges but offers little explanation of the influence of social and cultural origins of learning, yet she was a careful researcher who provided detailed accounts of how young children change over time in their reading development. What advice might they offer to each other?

Considering the prevalence of Vygotsky's ideas and theory and their application in current conceptions of teaching and learning, I am certain many at ARF would be interested in Vygotsky's responses to these questions. My guess is that he would be equally as interested to engage in conversation with the academic grandparents of my fellow presenters.

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Michel Foucault: The Grandpere Who Seemed to Forget Women Have Bodies, Too

Christine Mallozzi

It may have begun in fourth grade with Madam Berkley, then later with Madam Horton, Madam Cauvin, and Madam Robana who taught me to love the French language and French culture with a capital amour. As I got older, I realized that being an American Francophile meshed nicely with my own self-loathing. Like Groucho Marx, "I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member," so I pine after a culture who certainly would never accept me fully, as the waiter at La Tour d'Argent made apparent when he asked if I would *please* stop speaking French to him.

Thus, my unsteady relationship with my Grandpere Michel Foucault is no surprise to me. Indeed, Foucault has posthumously met resistance from many women scholars, most who I count as a generation ahead of me, my metaphorical parents. In Hekman's (1996) edited volume titled *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*, women such as Butler and Alcoff took Foucault to task for what he did or did not do, could or could not do for a still nascent Third Wave feminism. In *Disciplining Foucault*, Sawicki (1991) examined Foucault's work regarding feminism, sexuality, power, and motherhood, and proposed that feminists' differences from Foucault should not be a wedge but a starting point to form coalitions among speaking feminist subjects. Just like many siblings use

holiday gatherings to bond over emotional buttons pressed by the previous generation, Sawicki reminds me that Foucault's work can strengthen feminists' resolve to speak their own truths. And yes, the grandparents' generation may drive the parents' generation crazy but remain entertaining, warm, and inviting to the grandchildren, leaving most of the family members shaking their heads in confusion. Here is where I find myself with my Grandpere Foucault.

Key question 1: What's the trade off between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it to envision or generate the new?

This question is the most political one we've been asked to answer as a panel for two reasons. The first is due to the fact that I have centered much of my work on women teachers' bodies. Critical and post-structural feminists such as Bartky (1988) and the aforementioned Butler (1989) and Sawicki (1991) have debated the usefulness of Foucault's work for theorizing gendered bodies. Some interpretations are that he discusses at best a genderless body and at worst a masculinized body, ignoring women's bodies all together. Others suggest that the suppleness of Foucault's theories lies in keeping the materialities of bodies vague, while carefully outlining the discursive structures involved. Therefore relying on Foucault's work simultaneously acknowledges discursive history of bodies but may further displace more recent and less acknowledged scholars (i.e., women, feminists, and gender scholars) who more explicitly attend to the particular experiences of female bodies and non-cisgendered subject bodies and their many intersections. And if you are wondering if the growing alphanumeric string of LGBTTIQQ2SAA is necessary, I'd argue that for Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Transsexual

(and some would add Trans*), Intersexed, Queer, Questioning, 2 Spirited, Assexual people, and Allies, a few extra letters is the least we can do.

The second reason the question of carrying the past and/or reconfiguring something anew is political for me is the matter of citations. With publishing word limits being a reality for me, the more I cite my Grandpere Foucault, the less I am able to cite the women who are doing work that is just as solid. I am troubled by the thought that the women who were doing the same or similar intellectual work as Foucault, women who may even have been his contemporaries, never have received and may never receive the type or level of accolades Foucault has gotten. Accepting citations as a subversive act within a patriarchal system of higher education and research means I have had to talk out of both sides of my mouth. I have to show I know the key players, yet I also must undermine those people, mostly White, western men, who have dominated theoretical work. I encourage myself (as I am encouraging you) to think who else is doing this work? Remember the root word in seminal is no accident, and the use of literature deem to be semen-al should be questioned at every pass.

Key question 2: To what degree would our academic grandparents likely rebel?

To me, it seems that Foucault's favorite activity was to be obtuse, so the most likely thing he would do is to not rebel at my claiming him in my academic lineage, perhaps because rebelling is what we might expect of him. Of course, I imagine him stating the importance of exercising my freedom, that I am freer than I feel I am (indeed we all are) and that I am free to call him Grandpere; it is part of the post-structural analysis afforded to me to not take my familial family tree nor my conventional academic family tree with my Mama Donna Alvermann as natural. Suspending naturalness and

practicing permanent questioning as an act of freedom was thankfully Foucault's bag (Rajchman, 1985). I also imagine him shaking his head at me, the granddaughter who forced herself on him, the granddaughter who fashions herself a bit of a rebel despite all the ways that she concedes to conventional body standards and the comfort she feels in critical feminist theory. I imagine him saying, "C'mon Christine, you know better." But do I? Did he?

Would he rebel against media theorist Kroker's (2006, March 13) supposition that that we have veered into a primitive post-humanism? Kroker, among others, argue that technologies "accelerating at the speed of light" (Purgar, Kroker & Kroker, n.d., ¶2) drive a virtual truth and have taken parasitical possession of our bodies. If you don't believe Kroker, I challenge you to withstand the feeling of withdrawal when you leave your cell phone at home, the phantom limb itchiness like an appendage has just been lopped from your body. In one way, Kroker is saying that we have not begun to reach the ethics of Foucault (1984/1986) who offered the care of the self, meaning to live life as a work of art and turn away from self-sacrifice. But Kroker is also saying that as a society we doubt that we ever will live life as a work of art because we are positioned by fear, panic, and violent sacrifice to capitalism, war, religion, and other social forces. For this, I believe Foucault (1984/1985) would have words about why have we forgotten the value of pleasure situated in the body. Perhaps embodied pleasure would be a lovely way to rebel against the concept of a cynical ideology. I am not so certain however that my metaphorical grandfather would have words for what that rebelling with pleasure means for my female body.

So it is with this notion I come to the last question:

Key question 3: If we could engage in conversation with our academic forebears at the end of this panel session, what might we gain collectively?

To answer this question, I pay homage to my actual familial grandfather, my Pop Pop. Please do not question that I love and miss this man, but among other things, he was sexist. As years pass, I soften my memory of his sexism. The photographs from our family albums sanitize the unsavory aspects of my Pop Pop. I argue the same is true for Foucault, and the Internets have become the family album. We can watch his debates with Noam Chomsky (Chomsky & Foucault, 1971). He has a Facebook page (Michel Foucault, n.d.) and is super-meme friendly (e.g., Riding the Sociological Roller Coaster, 2013). But if we could have a conversation with my Grandpere Foucault we would all see he is a man with flaws. He's just a smart dude in a black turtleneck. Sure we could ask him to set the record straight on all the questions we have. I know I would ask him if he intended to leave women's bodies out of the conversation, but I also believe his answer would leave me unsatisfied. Did I mention he liked to be obtuse? Nevertheless, I would take pleasure in asking the question and believe the question would honor the pursuit for freedom that Foucault has inspired in me.

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Reaction and Remarks

David Reinking

I'm a genetic grandparent, and at a stage where I'm becoming an academic grandparent (my doc students are now graduating their own students), although in a much more modest way than the well-known and influential intellects our panelists identify. So, I like the grandparent metaphor. It reminds us that we are products of the intellectual traditions to which we have been exposed and to which we gravitate in our professional and personal lives. I also like the framing questions for this session because they help us to deconstruct and challenge those perspectives, acknowledging that the world evolves, as does our own thinking. We are not just clones of those who have become before us. Grandchildren eventually grow up and have their own grandchildren.

Given the philosophical bent of the panelists' choices, it may also be relevant to juxtapose another metaphor with the grand-parenting theme here. Wittgenstein (1980) asked rhetorically in questioning the notion of progress in philosophy: "Philosophy hasn't made any progress? If somebody scratches the spot where he has an itch, do we have to see some progress?" And, I like Critchely's (2015) riff on that theme in a piece eulogizing his mentor, the philosopher Cioffi:

> Philosophy scratches at the various itches we have, not in order that we might find some cure for what ails us, but in order to scratch in the right place and begin to

understand why we engage in such apparently irritating activity. Philosophy is not Neosporin. It is not some healing balm. It is an irritant, which is why Socrates described himself as a gadfly (np).

In reading the panelists talking points I thought of another quote from Wittgenstein (1980): "When you are philosophizing you have to descend into primeval chaos and feel at home there" (p. 65). The grand-parenting theme, as expressed by the panelists, seems to reflect that mixture of chaos and grounding.

Donna

Donna identifies Simone de Beauvoir as her academic grandparent citing Beauvoir's radical commitment to individual freedom. Knowing Donna well, her affinity to Beauvoir's stance is no surprise to me. But, she is willing to put that affinity in harms way, noting the paradox of a full commitment to individual freedom that must also acknowledge a necessary coexistence among others who wish to express their own freedom inspired by different values.

Donna's interest in digital media literacies, which she compares to the rise of mass media in Beauvior's day, is a prime example. Digital media extend exponentially our ability to express our individual freedom. But, how can we balance the foundational individual freedoms in a democratic society with achieving an equally foundational commitment to equality and social justice that includes the freedom to reject such goals? The inherent tensions of that paradox are no less than the history of American democracy and the role of literacy in sustaining it. One only has to look at current headlines to see these tensions, from Donald Trump to trigger warnings to big-brother monitoring of social media and to censoring content of the Internet.

I wonder whether de Beauvoir would rebel against Donna's use of "Webcam 101 for seniors," or would she respect Donna's resistance to it.

George

I have to confess a bias for George's academic grandparent, as a descendent of candidates for my own academic grandparents, which include Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewy. Richard Rorty would no doubt have identified these pillars within a pragmatic tradition as his own grandparents.

In his explanation of Rorty's influence on his perspectives, George cites what he calls the well-worn metaphor that "We rebuild the boat [of language] as we sail it. But, we are perpetually at sea." We never reach the shore. I'm also reminded of a complementary land-based metaphor: "Our knowledge is an island in a sea of ignorance. As our island of knowledge grows, so does the shoreline of our ignorance."

George's affinity for Rorty might be considered a counterpoint to de Beauvoir's commitment to individual freedom by acknowledging that we are never completely free from conventional, often unspoken or unanalyzed, assumptions. For example, Alfred North Whitehead advised historians who wanted to understand an era to consider what they did *not* write about. Our individuality can be expressed only within certain collective bounds.

Yet, perhaps paradoxically, shared assumptions don't obviate sharp disagreements among those who have different priorities within those bounds. Nonetheless, theoretically at least, within a democratic tradition there is a greater commitment to open dialog and compromise. Our failure to realize that other cultures lack that commitment likely

explains in large measure our ineffective strategies in dealing with the Mideast and radical Islam.

For example, in relation to schooling, I think of Egan's thesis in *The Educated Mind* (1997). He argues that American schools have three incompatible goals: socialization, encouragement of conformity, and development of individual expression and potential. Advancing one undermines the other two, much as prisons have the mutually exclusive goals of punishment and rehabilitation. It is, he says, as if Plato and Rousseau tried to open a school.

Metaphors are relevant here too. Lakoff (1995) has argued that the difference between American conservatives and liberals is in essence the perception of government as a disciplinary father or as a nurturing mother. Also relevant is Labaree's (2010) thesis that American education today is about credentialing and as a way to insure that upper-class parents can be assured that they will stay one step ahead of the aspirations of the lower classes.

As George says (and I wholeheartedly agree) "the assumptions we bring to bear in addressing our technical questions must pay their own freight, that is, they are justified only in so far as they get us the results we seek, what James (1907) figuratively termed their cash-value." But Rorty also argues that education must go beyond technical competence. We must know the purpose of education as a societal endeavor as a starting point for all that we do in teaching, but also in research. For me, following Karl Hostetler (2005), it is improving people's wellbeing. George also says, "We have to listen!" coming into direct contact with those with whom we disagree. In that sense, we need to more

firmly embrace democracy's commitment to finding common ground and to reaching acceptable compromise.

Mona

Mona identifies Vygotsky as her academic grandfather. She certainly isn't alone. He is arguably the most influential theorist of language influencing our field. Not only did he open our collective eyes to the role of social factors as fundamental to literacy, but his ideas have clearly permeated the research-practice barrier.

In regards to the first question posed in this session, she argues that there is no tradeoff between carrying the past forward and reconfiguring it toward the new. I agree. If any academic grandparent can remain perennially current in the world of literacy, perhaps it is Vygotsky. It is difficult to imagine a future in which his fundamental observations about literate activity within social contexts is negated. Further, Mona observes that his views find equally friendly ground in Piaget's constructivist's orientation and in the distinctly different cognitive work of Palinscar and Brown (1994).

Yet, Mona positions Vygotsky more as a springboard to the work of other theorists who provide compatible, but deeper, understandings of human growth and development, specifically related to language and literacy. In terms of what Vygotsky might rebel against, she cites examples of the not uncommon phenomenon that justifies the lament of some leading intellectuals that they might be protected from their disciples. Perspectives can be and are misappropriated and misinterpreted to bolster positions and actions that would make our grandfathers role over in their proverbial graves.

I might add an example from Peter Johnston's talk at the conference on Thursday. He referenced "scaffolding" as a "cold metaphor" because it doesn't capture the nuances

of students' engagement with literature under the circumstances he outlined. According to many of my colleagues much more knowledgeable about Vygotsky than I am, there has been much distortion of Vygotsky's ideas, most often by those who have not read the translations of his original work.

Christine

Interestingly, like Donna, Christine also invokes Michele Foucault, another French intellectual as an academic grandparent. Why is it that European intellectuals are so attractive to many in our field (one could add Sarte, Baktin, Derrida, Habermas)? I can recall only one instance of an attempt to connect literacy themes to eastern philosophy—Gaskins (1998).

But unlike the other panelists, for Christine, Foucault as a grandparent serves more as a bête noir inspiring in her, if I understand correctly, a stance of approach-avoidance. Our intellectual grandparents can be irritants as well as inspirational thinkers. So, her relationship to her grandparent is much in the vein of the quotes about philosophy from my introduction. It seems that she and others like her who are interested in feminism, sexuality, and her case the gendered bodies of teachers, are attracted to Foucault's ideas about power, while being distressed with his implicit or explicit patriarchal orientation.

My favorite quote from her written talking points is: "To me, it seems that Foucault's favorite activity was to be obtuse." An unanswered question I have is whether the language of philosophy must be obtuse. Can profound ideas be expressed simply and powerfully or must they inherently push against the expressive limits of language. It seems an important question for educators and even more important to those of us interested in literacy.

The same might be asked of our field. Are we too obtuse in our scholarly work removing it too far from the pragmatic day-to-day challenges of advancing literacy in schools and classrooms? Are those challenges too prosaic to meet our intellectual needs? Do the intellectual stances identified in this collection of grandparents do real work in classrooms and/or the policy arena? If so, how? In this collection of academic grandparents we have hints, but not answers. I think we need to look more toward explicit answers. Otherwise, we risk only scratching some intellectual itch amounting to no more than "philosophication."

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