

Peering through Hinges: Looking Back and Looking Forward

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While this issue of *Educational Considerations* does not have a deliberate editorial theme, the context surrounding its publication calls for analysis. Scholars know all too well how long it takes from the first embryonic idea through the early exploratory drafting, through the gathering of background research and data, through analysis, through multiple rounds of feedback and revision, to finally see fruition when our work reaches a wider audience through publication. Given that extended timeline, the invention and crafting of the manuscripts in this issue of our journal happened before the world recognized what COVID-19 was, much less what it would become.

Unintentionally, this issue is a kind of time capsule—a glimpse into where we were as educators, researchers, and scholars before the pandemic. I suspect COVID-19 will take its place in our cultural consciousness as a hinge moment (Garreau, 2001; Lindsay, 2021). As much as we look forward to a return to normal, pre-COVID-19, the new normal that is emerging will not be the same as the old, and while we cannot fully predict the impact of a global pandemic, we know our social, economic, and professional process will be impacted. Just as 9-11 changed systems in profound ways that are now accepted as routine, COVID-19 will alter the fabric of our lives.

What I mean to suggest is that we can examine the contributions to this issue in light of what would be done differently now. What assumptions did the authors make that we would not today?

As just one example, I would call your attention to the work of my colleagues at Kansas State University, Pedro Espinoza and Kay Ann Taylor. Here they report research from an important new study conducted by means of culturally-informed methodologies. Specifically, they gathered testimonios through pláticas with Latinx teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in elementary, middle, and high school environments. I am excited to share this research with a wider audience because I believe it is important. The findings of the study are compelling, to be sure, but beyond those results reported here, the methods and methodologies employed offer provocative glimpses into adaptations of qualitative research aligned culturally to the participants and the phenomena under investigation.

However, looking at their work today, it is impossible not to apply a COVID-19 lens to our reading because it is impossible not to recognize how the pandemic exacerbated the challenges CLD teachers, students, and families encountered in our nation's schools under the best of times. From the beginnings of public schools' move to remote learning, we began immediately to collect anecdotal evidence about how CLD students and families were not served equitably. What would Espinoza and Taylor find today? What new and powerful testimonios could be gathered now?

We could ask the same questions of each of the contributions to this issue of *Educational Considerations*, viewing each contribution through a lens constructed by this unique moment in

our shared history. I say this not to diminish the works in any way. Rather, I think the nature of hinge events invite this sort of analysis and speculation.

At this admittedly early point, it seems evident our new normal in educational practice will be marked by a quickening of trends already in existence long before COVID-19 came onto the landscape of our lives. I will identify three interlocking areas: technology, community, and access.

We have long been moving in the direction of ever more sophisticated instruction and interactions mediated by technology. It almost goes without saying that this long-term trend was advanced by a decade or more under duress, and while teachers, students, and families may have a short-term desire for a return to a face-to-face modality, I predict the remote structures put in place over the last year and a half will not go away. Rather, I suspect we will discover that some of our new processes are now permanent. As examples, I wonder if we will ever again see a professional conference that does not include, at the very least, the possibility of remote participation. I wonder if we ever again will see a full site visit by a large team representing an accrediting body. I wonder if K-12 schools will find better ways for students who cannot physically attend school beyond a brown envelope full of worksheets and assignments delivered for completion.

I could go on, of course, but the point is the profession will go on. We, however, will never be quite the same again.

As we find new channels for teaching, learning, and engaging with one another, we will inevitably add layers of nuance to our sense of community. Again, this trend has been in place for many years, pushed forward by everything from email to texts to social media. Certainly, the recent months have accelerated that process in terms of schools and schooling. We have learned to expand both the size and the depth of our communities, and the impact will be both lasting and profound.

My third theme, inextricably connected to technology and community, is access. It is easy to assume everyone involved in education, from pre-school children to senior scholars, will benefit from exciting new levels of access to each other and to the wider community. Unfortunately, our experience and our history suggest otherwise. I would refer once again to the work of Espinoza and Taylor reported in this issue. We simply have to find ways to extend access to those marginalized individuals and groups who have historically been excluded.

This is both the opportunity and the danger of hinge moments. Lindsay (2021) notes that decisions and actions taken as a result of hinge moments impact the future for years after the event. The positive or negative effects of COVID-19 are certainly not inevitable, but instead depend on us and the actions we take as educators.

References

Garreau, J. (2001, October 14). Hinges of opportunity. *Washington Post*.

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