Political Pragmatism and Educational Inquiry†

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Introduction

In 1967, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* declared that classical pragmatism no longer existed in any vital form. "While there continues to be an interest in the philosophies of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Schiller, pragmatism as a movement…cannot be said to be alive today," it observed. However, because pragmatism "has helped shape the modern conception of philosophy as a way of investigating problems and clarifying communication rather than as a fixed system of ultimate answers and great truths," the *Encyclopedia* concluded that pragmatism had fulfilled its purpose. "To have disappeared as a special thesis by becoming infused in the normal and habitual practices of intelligent inquiry and conduct is surely the pragmatic value of pragmatism."[1]

While this sounds as if it ought to be satisfactory, evidently it hasn't been, for pragmatism has since reemerged as a distinctive, if fragmented and circumscribed, philosophical movement. In philosophy of education, a large part of the pragmatist enterprise has had to do with revisiting and reintroducing Dewey for democratic educational purposes; by contrast, pragmatism in the rest of the philosophical world has tended to align itself with newer political and intellectual movements, including cultural studies, feminism, and postmodernism.

The purpose of this essay is to argue that contemporary educational pragmatism, if it is to be true to its own principles of emergent inquiry and progressive social change — and if it is to make a significant contribution to educational change — cannot rely upon the classical pragmatists' writings as a blueprint for action or inquiry.[2] The distinctive contribution that pragmatism has to make to educational understanding is an emergent method of inquiry that avoids reifying prevailing conditions. Ironically, to the extent that classical pragmatism has employed a problem-centered method, it has tended to take up political inequities as departures from an idealized norm, thereby reifying prevailing conditions. If pragmatism's emergent method of inquiry is to avoid assuming the very social, political, and cultural conditions that it offers to interrogate, it must abandon its problem-centered approach in favor of an approach grounded in politicized experience.[3]

Problems as Interruptions in Experience

In classical pragmatism, inquiry proceeds from an interruption or disequilibrium in experience and is addressed to the solution of particular, concrete problems considered in context. According to Peirce's provocative formulation, "the action of thought is excited by the irritation of doubt, and ceases when belief is attained."[4] Doubt, as understood here, is neither existential nor willed but an intrusion from without: it is "the privation of a habit."[5] Ordinarily, we rely on tacit or conscious beliefs, Peirce claims, but when hesitancy and indecision interrupt habit, inquiry is set in motion. In *How We Think*, Dewey defines such interruptions as problems, a

problem being "whatever…perplexes and challenges the mind so that it makes belief at all uncertain."[6] "A question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved, sets up an end and holds the current of ideas to a definite channel….*The nature of the problem fixes the end of thought,* and *the end controls the process of thinking*."[7]

Given such a description of how purposes shape inquiry, critics have argued that the contextual, problem-centered character of pragmatism limits its ability to identify and analyze structural problems.[8] If, for example, girls' performance in computer classes is made the focus of inquiry, a problem-centered, contextual approach may yield a richly observed, sympathetic, and informative analysis, but the very definition of the problem will preclude any fully structural analysis.[9] Almost inevitably, the problem posed will take the form, "Why are girls reluctant to program?" or "Why do girls as a group consistently perform less well than boys, in computer classes?" The problem will not take the form, "Why do boys typically thrive in computer programming classes?" or "How is boys' superior performance in computer classwork related to the historically male-dominated character of academia, the organization of the workplace, or the construction of maleness as not-femaleness?" Put pragmatically, the reason that we do not frame the problem in terms of boys or academia or the workplace is that boys' success does not give rise to a disruption of our system of beliefs. Since conditions of success constitute the field of meaning within which girls' inferior performance on scientific and technological tasks can be detected and assessed, such conditions cannot themselves be "the problem."

Insofar as a system works for us, it makes sense to stop and look at things only when there is a non-functioning of the system. What this means, though, is that a problem-centered approach to inquiry usually will be geared to the restoration of the status quo. What counts as knowledge, accordingly, will depend on what serves the expectations and purposes of those who identify and frame the problems. Dewey indicated as much when he pointed out that we prefer not to understand why we have slums, since — while we deplore them — we are unwilling to live without them. Observing matter-of-factly that we (meaning a culpable, middle- and upper-class "we") are "mostly satisfied" with the existence of slums, Dewey explained, "We do not "naturally" or organically need them, but we *want* them. If we do not demand them directly we demand them none the less effectively. For they are necessary consequences of the things upon which we have set our hearts."[10]

While classical pragmatism's problem-centered approach can identify structural conditions insofar as observed inequities conflict with beliefs about equality, the power inequities and conflicts of interest such inquiry acknowledges are likely to be understood in terms of their deviation from democratic ideals. Since it is not experience *per se* that is examined, but instead departures from the expected or preferred course of events, the givenness of the overarching context (experience, or nature, or democracy as an ideal) is unavoidable. When, for example, it is taken for granted that the nuclear family provides the most natural and nurturing environment for children, and that primary childcare is the lot of mothers, the "problem" of having both a family and a career becomes a woman's problem. The question then is never

raised as to who profits by the prevailing conceptions of work and of workers, of parenthood, or of family, or whether radically altered social and material arrangements might be desirable. Instead, the problem becomes that of how women are to cope, or of what adjustments can be offered in women's working conditions so that "their needs" can be met.

Politics and Problem-Centered Approaches to Inquiry

At least two factors limit the political radicalism of problem-centered approaches to inquiry. One is that a problem-centered approach risks reading "difference" as "deficit." Thus, the problem-centered approach to bilingual issues in the schools focuses on "the problem" of children who speak Spanish or Navajo, for example, rather than English, as their first language; instead of bilingual children being seen as potentially more skilled than students who speak only English, bilingualism is addressed in terms of a lack to be remediated. In reducing difference to deficit, such analyses often ignore the integrity of "at-risk" students' experience, rendering a complex, valued orientation to the world as a kind of dysfunctionalism. Rather than *suffering* from the problems of a racist and class-biased society, "at-risk" children *become* the problem.[11] Indeed, Du Bois notes exactly this phenomenon in his famous opening to *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which he points out that even sympathetic whites take a stance towards the situation of Blacks that implicitly asks, "How does it feel to be a problem?"[12]

The other reason that problem-centered approaches to inquiry cannot be relied upon to yield a fully political analysis is that the very emphasis on pluralism and contextualism that is in many cases a strength of problem-centered inquiry tends to preclude structural and institutional analyses. In Cornel West's terms, such inquiry may provide cultural but not social understanding.[13] What this means is that we may gain an excellent phenomenological sense of power relations without understanding how structures of power operate to maintain privilege. In taking up the problem of how women are misinterpreted, for example, Carol Gilligan and Deborah Tannen have provided sensitive and perceptive accounts of "women's experience" that help the reader to understand what that experience may look and feel like from within.[14] From the perspective of pluralism, these accounts add a great deal to our understanding, and help to undercut androcentric assumptions. Yet what we fail to find in these analyses is any account of how women's moral or relational patterns are shaped by heterosexuality, race, class, ethnicity, or patriarchy. While men's and women's patterns of experience are shown to be almost breathtakingly complementary, the function of this complementarity is not examined. Since liberal pluralism assumes cultural rather than political forms of difference, and since pluralism requires that each cultural context be taken on its own terms, there is no mechanism for understanding gendered patterns as functions of one another. The problem of difference is thus reduced to a problem of miscommunication based on (fully correctable) androcentric assumptions.

Like classical pragmatism, political pragmatism is a form of instrumentalism geared to emergent ends-in-view. Like Deweyan pragmatism, it refers knowledge to experience, to the consequences of ideas and action, and to the possibilities

inherent in present relationships; it also places considerable faith in education and communication as ways of creating the conditions necessary for democratic social change. Where political pragmatism differs from classical pragmatism is in its recognition of *systemic conflict between social groups* and its view of *experience under such conditions as itself political*. The result is a form of pragmatism that, rather than starting out from "problems" in experience, starts from experience as a kind of work — namely, the work that must be done either to maintain or to change existing power relations.[15]

All pragmatism, of course, is political insofar as it recognizes and analyzes the role of interests and purposes in the construction of meaning, and insofar as it develops tools for the purpose of deliberate social change. Indeed, Cornel West sees radical potential in classical pragmatism specifically because it denaturalizes understanding and urges the development of a form of "critical intelligence" aimed at articulating the connections between ideas and action.[16] Yet because classical pragmatism focuses primarily on cultural forms of meaning, it refuses any explicitly political framework other than that of an emergent democracy. It does so for the same reason that it avoids theoretical frameworks of any other sort — namely, that such frameworks interpret experience in light of pre-existing frameworks of meaning rather than allowing experience and action to yield possibilities that might confound theory. Pragmatism's commitment to understanding social meanings and possibilities as emergent is a key contribution to what Cornel West calls creative democracy; its rendering of politics in terms of deviance from the democratic ideal, though, falls back upon an individualistic and moralistic worldview in which "politics" are added on to experience and can be removed from experience by appeal to some variation on the scientific method.

While holding to the emergent and experience-based emphasis in classical pragmatism, political pragmatism frames experience itself as political. Experience, on this view, is shot through with political meaning. To paraphrase Dewey, there is "no such thing in [experience] as seeing or hearing *plus* [politics]. The [experience] is [politically] pervaded throughout."[17] What might seem an entirely private act — walking into a record store, going on a date, or buying junk food at the supermarket — may become, in the case of African Americans, gays, or those on welfare, something that strangers feel entitled to comment upon or police. From the perspective of privilege, being "political" appears idiosyncratic and particularistic (and usually selfish). But from a perspective in which much that others take for granted must be fought for (including non-stereotypic status, normalcy, a legitimate claim to anger and passion, civil rights, unself-consciousness, and a recognition of one's intelligence, authorship, or authority), there is no such thing as experience minus politics. The liberal and individualistic conception of "experience" assumes a unitary model; political theorists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Dorothy Smith, Audre Lorde, and Patricia Hill Collins point out that the experience of oppressed minorities is double. To survive, members of oppressed groups develop "a dual consciousness" attuned both to the expectations of the dominant order and to "a self-defined standpoint."[18]

> Ella Surry, an elderly Black woman domestic, eloquently summarizes the energy needed to maintain independent self-definitions: "We have always been the best actors in the world….We've always had to live two lives — one for them and one for ourselves."[19]

Whereas classical pragmatism addresses problems in context, political pragmatism focuses on the situation that gives rise to particular forms of political experience. Its concern, accordingly, is not with disequilibrium but with how equilibrium has been achieved: with the work — and the silences and forms of ignorance — necessary to maintain order and control.[20] Like Deweyan pragmatism, political pragmatism has both critical and creative purposes. On the one hand, it articulates the relation between ideology and social conditions, making explicit what Dorothy Smith calls their "coordering."[21] On the other hand, political pragmatism seeks to develop intellectual and practical tools for fostering non-incremental change.

Ultimately, political pragmatism is concerned with inquiry into alternative social arrangements not yet imagined. To this end, it draws upon existing theories and critiques; but because critiques are inevitably a response to existing conditions, and thus both contingent upon and circumscribed by existing tools and forms of experience, it focuses on change itself as a way of knowing.[22] Political pragmatism *starts* from political descriptions rooted in the experience of work, but aims at forms of change not yet envisioned as possibilities — not yet imaginable under current conditions. Thus, it does not start from the designation of problems. It starts with the acceptance of trouble ahead.

> And when there is a promise of a storm, if you want change in your life, walk in to it. If you get on the other side, you will be different. And if you want change in your life and you're avoiding the trouble, you can forget it. So Harriet would say, "Wade on in the water, it's gon' really be troubled water."[23]

Political Pragmatism

Political pragmatism, as I shall be describing it, refers to a method and an orientation toward change, rather than to a fixed theoretical framework; some of its practitioners identify themselves as pragmatists, but many if not most of those that I would call political pragmatists are identified with other traditions. Among those who do identify themselves in the political tradition of pragmatism are Cornel West and W.E.B. Du Bois, along with feminist pragmatists such as Nancy Fraser and Phyllis Rooney.[24] But to an important degree, the work of James Anderson, Patricia Hill Collins, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Dorothy Smith, and Carter G. Woodson also fits within the tradition of political pragmatism. In suggesting that political pragmatism may include postmodern, socialist, and Afrocentric pragmatists, I do not mean to override scholars' own self-descriptions as Marxist theorists, Afrocentrists, queer theorists, postmodernists, or feminists, of course. Rather, I wish to demonstrate the potential their work has for political pragmatism as a form of inquiry. Much in the way that Woodson's work has informed the Afrocentric tradition, his work and that of others may inform the political pragmatist tradition.

Insofar as Woodson calls for emergent knowledge rooted in the distinctive cultural, historical, and political experience of an oppressed people, he is a political pragmatist.[25] A contemporary of Dewey's, he shares Dewey's faith in education and, like Dewey, rejects elitist instructional programs in favor of experience-based

education. But unlike Dewey, he accepts the notion of systemic conflict between social groups, and addresses issues of race and racism head-on. While he calls for gradualist change rather than revolution, it is not because he believes that communication between whites and Blacks will lead to progress; rather, it is because he believes that African Americans need to develop intellectual tools geared to their own purposes before they can begin to bring about social change of a kind that would serve them well. Like Audre Lorde, he does not believe that you can dismantle the master's house with the master's tools.[26]

Rejecting Eurocentric schooling as at best irrelevant to Blacks, and at worst a lie and a cheat, Woodson declares that progress for Blacks can never result from a system designed to serve whites. Yet he does not see African traditions and systems as unproblematic tools for Black Americans either, for they speak to an altogether different social experience. In order for African Americans to develop a framework for progress suited to their own situation, needs, goals, and possibilities, therefore, he urges Blacks to reacquaint themselves with their African heritage, but to build towards a distinctive future based on their experience as workers. By articulating that working knowledge to a goal of economic self-sufficiency for the Black community, he argues, African Americans can begin to explore and develop new tools and new possibilities articulated to Blacks' needs and values.[27]

Woodson thus points to a key theme in political pragmatism: work coupled with change serves as the ground for emergent political knowledge. There is a distinction to be made, therefore, between the working knowledge that is already available within a certain kind of experience and emergent knowledge that is yet to be developed. Though both forms of knowledge are grounded in work, one sort of work has to do with survival, while the other has to do with deliberate, organized efforts towards change.

Survival knowledge may be experienced as immediate, but is in fact mediated by communal analysis and education. Grounded in experiences of coping or of servicing others' needs, survival knowledge makes sense of those contradictions and tensions in experience that are rendered visible by the labor necessary for survival. While the recognition of contradictions may be more or less immediate, the articulation of political patterns of a systemic character depends on individual experience being understood in the light of a shared group experience.[28]

Because trouble is always around the corner, parents in the African-American community have to be explicit in telling their children how to cope.[29] Whether it is a question of how to conduct oneself when stopped by a traffic cop or being prepared for store clerks to scrutinize one's every move, minority children need to be protected early from the kind of naïveté which walks into danger, while at the same time they need to be toughened up sufficiently not to feel too keenly the sting of everyday racial insults. In some cases, community coping knowledge is directed inward and has to do with ways of maintaining supportive relationships.[30] In other cases, survival knowledge is explicitly oppositional. John Ogbu points out, for example, that African Americans as a community readily identify the American economic system as not working for them; as a result, he argues, each generation

develops coping skills that take into account the actual conditions faced by members of the group.[31] But whereas Ogbu considers such coping skills to be counterproductive, a political pragmatist orientation such as Collins's regards at least some of these skills as part of how a community creates spaces for itself — how it claims possibility and creates the beginnings of alternative social meanings.

Survival knowledge also may be grounded in service work that maintains the conditions for others' flourishing. Collins refers to such knowledge as that of the outsider/within; Dorothy Smith speaks of it in relation to Hegel's parable of the master and servant.[32] As Black domestic worker Rosa Wakefield explains:

> There is hard work behind everything we do….[I]f you eats these dinners and don't cook 'em, if you wears these clothes and don't buy or iron them, then you might start thinking that the good fairy or some spirit did all that. They asked a little white girl in this family that I used to work for who made her cake at one of her little tea parties. She said that she made it and then she hid her face and said the good fairies made it. Well, you are looking at that good fairy.[33]

Those who maintain the conditions necessary for others' flourishing come to know more about those conditions than those who merely profit from the conditions. While the white child chooses ignorance of the conditions upon which she relies,[34] Mrs. Wakefield knows exactly what goes into making fairy tea parties possible. To the extent that her labor makes the child's experience possible, she knows much about that experience that the little girl does not know — in addition to knowing more about her own.

Both forms of survival knowledge offer important insight into social and personal experience as coordered; while such knowledge is contextual, it is also attuned to systemic relations. It explains these in terms of predicted consequences, instrumental relations, and constrained possibilities, however, rather than in terms of a fully elaborated, formal theory. This, then, is the descriptive dimension of knowledge in political pragmatism. Inquiry, here, is understood neither as a response to some interruption in experience, nor as a willed problematizing of experience, but as the ongoing activity of meaning-making in communities wherein knowledge is a contested commodity. It is, in a strong sense, the refusal of ignorance.

Whereas survival knowledge names existing power relations, the other dimension of knowledge in political pragmatism is emergent: it creates possibilities by walking into trouble. James Anderson takes such an approach in his argument regarding how to we ought to read and teach history.[35] Specifically, he proposes that we take on racism rather than explaining it away. Instead of characterizing racism as a problem or "tragic flaw" in history, he says we need to regard race and ethnicity as tools created for particular political purposes — tools susceptible to change.

> It will not suffice to add on to traditional syntheses of the American story more information about various minority groups.…Discussions of race and ethnicity at the end of traditional history lessons — or special units on particular minority groups — may only serve to abstract issues of race even further from the larger historical context in which they arose and developed. The challenge is to weave the evolution of race as an American ideology into a new synthesis.[36]

In other words, we do not know yet how to think about race and racism without assimilating them to our existing understandings. To rethink these understandings

we cannot look to "progress" or "improvement," nor can we look to the mere correction of error. We need to learn new ways to think about history and race themselves. Through change in the form of shifts rather than linear progress, it becomes possible to envision new possibilities — but this will entail losses as well. As Emerson wrote in "Circles," "The terror of reform is the discovery that we must cast away our virtues, or what we have always esteemed such, into the same pit that has consumed our grosser vices."[37]

In educational inquiry, such an approach to knowledge means recognizing and walking into trouble, rather than identifying and solving educational problems. It means starting from the recognition that education is a potent, political form of engagement — instead of seeking to depoliticize, tame, or proceduralize the process so as to eliminate problems. Finally, it means accepting the risk of uncertainty. We cannot wait to teach children until we are certain that we are not being racist, sexist, or otherwise oppressive; but we also cannot afford to leave the inquiry to others and implement it later.

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1. H. S. Thayer, "Pragmatism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 6, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co. and the Free Press, 1967), 435.

2. Of course, this is not at all to say that we have nothing to learn from Dewey, Mead, Peirce, or James. But to rely on their methods as final or unproblematic tools is to ignore their function *as* tools developed for distinctive purposes. A contemporary, emergent pragmatism must develop tools responsive to social conditions we now recognize as being organized by relations of culture, class, race, gender, and sexuality.

3. Problem-centered approaches also have specifically pedagogical limitations. Critiquing the instrumentalist conceptions of learning associated with pragmatism and the project method, William C. Bagley pointed out early in the century that "much of learning is 'of a non-purposive sort.'" Bagley, "Projects and Purposes in Teaching and Learning," *Teachers College Record* 22 (1921): 296, quoted in Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 173.

4. Charles S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover, 1958), 118.

5. Charles S. Peirce, "What Pragmatism Is," in *Selected Writings*, 189. See also 188 and 190.

6. John Dewey, *How We Think* in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, series ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 6: 1910-1911, ed. Bridget W. Graubner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 121.

7. Dewey, *How We Think*, 122-23. Emphasis in original.

8. C. Wright Mills, for example, argues that in Deweyan pragmatism, "The answer to all problems becomes man's use of intelligence to work 'his' way out of the difficulties 'he' faces." As a result of this individualization and particularization of problems, he claims, any structural response to social conditions is displaced by "*a politics of reform of situation*. Adaptation is one step at a time; it faces one situation at a time." (Emphasis in original.) Mills, *Sociology and Pragmatism: The Higher Learning in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 382. Quoted in Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 126.

9. See Sherry Turkle and Seymour Papert, "Epistemological Pluralism: Styles and Voices within the Computer Culture," *Signs* 16, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 128-57, for an excellent example of a problem-centered, contextual analysis of girls' performance in computer classes. While the article does not claim a pragmatist orientation, it does assume a problem-centered approach, as indeed do most analyses of girls' and women's educational performance.

10. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, series ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 2: 1925-1927, ed. Bridget A. Walsh (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 301.

11. See Frank Margonis, "The Cooptation of 'At Risk': Paradoxes of Policy Criticism," *Teachers College Record* 94, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 343-64. It should be noted, though, that problem-centered approaches do not necessarily assume a deficit orientation; the Turkle and Papert article referred to earlier, for example, does not assume a deficit model.

12. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1903/1969), 43.

13. West, *American Evasion*, 104.

14. See, for example, Carol Gilligan, "Teaching Shakespeare's Sister: Notes from the Underground of Female Adolescence," in *Making Connections*, ed. Carol Gilligan, Nona P. Lyons, and Trudy J. Hanmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 6-29; and Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990).

15. Political pragmatism first appears in the work of early twentieth-century African Americans such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson. In *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1995), George Hutchinson offers a rich account of the infusion of pragmatism into the specifically liberatory political traditions of the first three decades of the century.

16. West, *American Evasion*, 97-99.

17. The actual quote reads as follows: "There is, therefore, no such thing in perception as seeing or hearing *plus* emotion. The perceived object or scene is emotionally pervaded throughout." John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, series ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 10: 1934, ed. Harriet Furst Simon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 59.

18. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 91.

19. Ibid.

20. Like Dewey's and Mead's pragmatism, political pragmatism considers history, anthropology, and sociology indispensable to philosophical inquiry, but it relies on them to provide political as well as cultural understanding.

21. The critical "articulation" function of political pragmatism, then, refers both to "articulate" in the sense of "clearly expressing" and to the joining and coordinating function indicated in the usage "articulated locomotive." On "coordering," see Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 123, 141, and 212.

22. See Audrey Thompson and Andrew Gitlin, "Creating Spaces for Reconstructing Knowledge in Feminist Pedagogy," *Educational Theory* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 125-50.

23. Sweet Honey in the Rock, "Wade in the Water," in *Sweet Honey in the Rock Live at Carnegie Hall* (Chicago: Flying Fish Records, 1988).

24. See Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993); W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968/1940); Nancy Fraser, "From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Response to Richard Rorty," in *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 153-59; and Phyllis Rooney, "Feminist-Pragmatist Revisionings of Reason, Knowledge, and Philosophy," *Hypatia* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 15-37. See also the entire Spring 1993 issue of *Hypatia*.

25. Both this paragraph and the following one refer to Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1933/1972).

26. See Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Trumansberg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1984): "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (112).

27. Alain Locke, an African-American pragmatist writing in roughly the same time period, also emphasized the importance of setting aside the frameworks assumed by whites, and argued that directly addressing racism as a problem would only reify racist relations. Locke explicitly takes a pragmatist line in several of his writings, but for the most part does not fall within the political pragmatist tradition, since

he relies on creativity, communication, the abandonment of false ideas, and escape from politically polarized argumentation as the major tools needed for social change. Nevertheless, as an African American, he had a much more vivid sense of racial injustice than Dewey, for example, seems to have had, and his writings speak directly to issues of race and racism. See Leonard Harris, ed., *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

28. In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey talks about group-mediated political understanding in terms of the indirect consequences shared by members of a group, and this goes some distance towards capturing what is understood in political pragmatism, but it is also significantly different in a couple of respects. First, oppressed groups are likely to see themselves as sharing not in indirect but in direct consequences of others' actions; second, they are less likely to see themselves as individuals who happen to have a shared problem than as members of a distinctive group with a common experience.

29. Janie Victoria Ward, "Racial Identity Formation and Transformation," in *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*, ed. Carol Gilligan, Nona P. Lyons, and Trudy J. Hanmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 215-32. See also Rose M. Brewer, "Black Women in Poverty: Some Comments on Female-Headed Families," *Signs* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 331-39.

30. See Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); June Jordan, *On Call* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1985); and Kesho Yvonne Scott, *The Habit of Surviving: Black Women's Strategies for Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

31. John U. Ogbu, "Societal Forces as a Context of Ghetto Children's School Failure," in *The Language of Children Reared in Poverty*, ed. Lynne Feagans and Dale Clark Farran (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 117-38.

32. See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 11-13; and Smith, *Everyday World*, 78-79.

33. Rosa Wakefield, cited in John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New York: Random House, 1980), 88.

34. On ignorance and power, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Privilege of Unknowing," *Genders* 1 (Spring 1988): 102-24.

35. James D. Anderson, "How We Learn about Race through History," in *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 87-106.

36. Ibid., 102.

37. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles," in *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), 288.