Comment and Response

Is It True What He Said About Educational Psychology? Comments on Travis*

A Comment by Philip H. Winne
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Recently in this journal, Travis (1979) commented caustically about educational psychological science. Amidst criticisms of educators, strong appeals to nationalism, and convoluted characterizations of Marxian conflict, I found the little that was written about educational psychology to be defamatory and unrepresentative.

In this necessarily brief rejoinder, I have not the opportunity to weigh carefully all the evidence that would be necessary to prove the scientific value, practical worth, and ethical character of educational psychology and educational psychologists. What I have done, in accordance with Travis' (p. 26) good counsel that we debunk grandiose claims, is show that his claims about educational psychology arise from "bunkful" evidence and reasoning.

SCIENTIFIC EFFECTIVENESS: WHERE WAS THE EVIDENCE?

The fundamental purpose of science is to generate and test causal explanations about phenomena that are then systematically integrated to create theories (Braithwaite, 1953; Glass, 1972; Kerlinger, 1977). Because educational psychology adopts this purpose (e.g., see Cronbach, 1977, chap. 1), and because it uses rigorous epistemological rules to judge the validity of theoretical propositions tested by empirical data (e.g., see Cook & Campbell, 1979, chaps. 1-2; Ellsworth, 1977), it is a science by operational definition.

Travis attempted to imply that the science of educational psychology "has become bogged down in a swamp of confusion while running amuck in the world of commercial hype" (p. 24). His implication is both unsubstantiated and illogical.

*The comments which follow are made on a previously published article by LeRoy D. Travis, "Hinterland Schooling and Branch-Plant Psychology: Educational Psychology in Canada Today," *Canadian Journal of Education*, 4(4), 24-42.

Because "educational psychology is born between education and psychology" (p. 26), hereditarian reasoning would lead one to predict the status of the offspring from that of its parents. Travis made several mistakes here. First, he erred in judging the status of the psychological parent. The few selected quotations he reported about the status of developmental, personality, and social psychology unjustly represent these domains (e.g., see the contents of annual series like *Advances in Child Development and Behavior, Progress in Experimental Personality Research*, and *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* for contrasting evidence on diverse topics). Since Travis cites Schmidt (1973) on the inseparability of developmental psychology and education, let's examine evidence here. The October 1979 issue of the *American Psychologist* was devoted entirely to psychology and children. In his overview of the 40 reviews therein, White (1979, p. 814) said: "Developmental psychology, all in all, has been reasonably successful." Each of the remaining 40 authors in that issue reviewed empirical research in various areas. Unanimously, they judged that progress has been made in both science and its applications, ranging over areas like reading instruction (Williams, 1979), theories of emotional development (Yarrow, 1979), and even early childhood educational interventions (Weinberg, 1979). Lest I mislead here, note that every author has also described controversies within their area, and the set of articles as a whole is diverse. But diversity and controversy are not commensurate with "confusion, disarray, and impotence" (Travis, p. 24).

The second flaw in Travis' hereditarian stance is the stance itself. Sciences are not judged by their origins but by the validity of their theories (Kuhn, 1962). Unfortunately, Travis nowhere cites any datum, principle, or causal explanation from the published literature of educational psychological science which he proves by reference to data to be invalid or even inaccurate. Rhetorical claims about educational psychology's presumed weaknesses, and those about related disciplines, simply are not acceptable proof. Contrastingly, educational psychologists who have systematically reviewed data-based evidence about research on teaching (Brophy, 1979; Gage, 1978), developmentally-oriented theories of instruction (Case, 1978), cognitively-oriented theories of learning from instruction (Glaser, 1979; Wittrock, 1978), motivational moderators of instructional effects (Tobias, 1979; Weiner, 1979), and operant-based theories of learning in classrooms (Copeland & Hall, 1976) found solid prior achievement and good prospect for advancement in the future. Again, none of these scientists denies controversy, but neither do they mistake it for weakness.

On balance then, though one always can find a "doom-and-gloom" prophet or two, as would be expected where diversity is encouraged and honored, there is a great deal more of positive evidence about health and

growth in educational psychological science and its scientific parent, psychology. But what of the other side of the family, education?

PRACTICAL UTILITY: WHAT WAS THE LOGIC?

Data about schools' effects are rife with difficulties. Effects themselves are diverse (Walker & Schaffarzick, 1974) and are usually stated in exceedingly imprecise terms (see Dyer, 1967, pp. 14-15, regarding word magic). Measures of effects often are inappropriate and misinterpreted (Carver, 1974). And strong methodologies for validly identifying the causes of observed effects nearly always are compromised (Reicken & Boruch, 1974). As if these problems in knowing what schools' affects are and what produces them aren't enough, evaluations of effectiveness (effectivenesses might be more accurate) are as variable as the values that determine the reference points people use for evaluative comparisons.

Travis asserted that Canadian education is in a "vexing condition" (p. 26), though the precise nature of this state was neither described nor referenced. Data exists to support a more balanced view. For instance, Robitaille and Sherrill (1979, p. 52) found that there were some areas of mathematics where British Columbian students' achievement was "relatively good" and some areas where "improvement is needed." But reports themselves seem rare since according to Holmes (1978, p. 69), "Canada is singularly deficient in student achievement data" for judging schools' effects. Thus, Travis' assessments of schools' effects, not to mention their effectivenesses, seems like an immaculately conceived evaluation void of dirty data and precise denotation of reference points.

The syllogism Travis followed to false conclusions about educational psychology's lack of practical utility used this ill-grounded conception about schools' lack of effectiveness as the major premise. The minor premise that must be entertained next is that principles from educational psychology are actually used and used validly in school practices. Much data suggests this to be overly naive and untrue (e.g., Stallings, 1975), and teachers' self-assessments in this regard also seem unlikely to be valid (see Hook & Rosenshine, 1979). Thus, serious doubts are raised about whether principles of educational psychology have been tried in fact. Where a moot major premise is followed by a doubtful minor premise, to conclude that educational psychology is impotent or irrelevant concerning practical matters is foolish. Science not practised cannot have practical value.

As for Travis' encouragement that educational psychologists pronounce on the "limits of human educability" (p. 38), this seems impractical and exceedingly unethical. Scientists study variables that change in response to contexts and conditions. It does not follow logically that a maximum or minimum value of a variable observed in one context is either a limit or a limitation since this value may change with a change in context. Connot-

ing such values as limits may force on educational psychology the fate of a self-fulfilling prophecy, especially where public concerns for accountability fail to take into account context and setting as co-determinants of change (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Runkel, 1978).

Thus, educational practice is a poor context for judging qualities of educational psychology per se. Issues about school effects and effectivenesses aside, it is naive and premature to use school effects as reliable gauges of educational psychological science's potency or utility. The controlled testing of principles from educational psychological science is a reality toward which applied educational psychologists can orient much more profitably (see Leinhardt, 1978) than are attempts to discover limits of educability. But such testing will need more support from schools than it has received in the past.

A SOBERING POINT OF CONCURRENCE

Flaws in logic and lack of data about educational psychological science notwithstanding, Travis does make a sage observation that I echo robustly. There is by no means sufficient research output by Canadians in education. Arlin's (1978) estimate that associate professors of education made an average of only 1.3 contributions each to published knowledge in an eight-year span paints a bleak picture. To concretely illustrate the point, generalizing this statistic to all professional ranks predicts that Canada's 56 full-time professors of special education (see Bunch & Sanache, 1979, Table 5) will publish about nine articles this year. Even if an exceedingly liberal proportion of these are basic contributions to this area within educational psychological science, say 50%, I predict no awesome breakthroughs (cf. Travis' quote of Sears [1975] p. 37) in the science made through a meagre 45 articles in the 1980s. If the research apprenticeship for doctoral students is an integral element contributing to their later productivity, there is little in the way of an offset to be expected in the future, owing to a serious lack of apprenticeship experiences per se. I don't intend to single out the domain of special education; the sample is one of convenience and likely generalizes to other areas. But there is a clear message that the average Canadian university hasn't adopted the criterion of contribution to scholarly knowledge as essential to promotion to middle-professorial rank. And, since applications of a science depend on advances in the science itself, neither seems likely to show strong growth in the upcoming decade. These facts hardly encourage a policy of isolationism. They indisputably show much need for more Canadian basic research in education.

A CONCLUSION

To be responsible is to be answerable for events within one's control. Are educational psychologists responsible for Canadian education? No. Educa-

tion is controlled by educators working within bounds set by democratic laws, not by science. Are educational psychologists responsible for others' use of the products of their science? No. Nature may be taken advantage of, but it cannot be determined by scientists who don't control the practice of their science. Should educational psychologists be responsible for educational practice by virtue of their scholarship? That is a question to be answered by the populace, not merely by educational psychologists — unless educational psychologists are to be granted political power of the sort Travis (p. 28 ff.) decried. I hope they will not be so burdened. And I also wish that educators, politicians, and other non-scientists would not entice educational psychologists down garden paths by suggestions about how to consummate their science. But human we are, with passions as well as rationality. Caveat emptor should be heeded by educational psychologists as well as by educators.

NOTE

Thanks are extended for the thoughtful analysis of drafts of this paper by members of the Instructional Psychology Research Group.

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A Comment by Thomas B. Greenfield

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Travis (1979) is a messenger bringing bad news to educational psychologists in Canada. Though he speaks only to psychologists, his words apply with equal force to all those who think of themselves as social scientists trying to understand Canadian education and to do something helpful about it. His message is simple, though it comes in two parts that stand somewhat in opposition to each other. More about this duality later. He tells us first that psychologists will have to do their own thinking about educational problems if they are to speak credibly about Canadian schools. Secondly, he attacks psychology itself because it ignores encompassing forces that overwhelm both psychologists and the truncated world they have chosen to study.

The first message is addressed to Canada as hinterland. He warns us not to sell out our ability to explain what we see around us. We betray our role as scientists by palming off second-hand explanations simply because we don't have the courage, insight, and willingness to explore what is true in our own world. The second message points out how psychologists have been "soft on power." By failing to see their own power, psychologists have also failed to notice how they themselves have been manipulated to serve ends that serve neither themselves nor their clients. In this critique, the science of psychology appears suddenly as no science; instead, it is reduced to a mechanism of social control that keeps psychologists in place even as they keep others in theirs. Or, as Thomas Szasz (1976) puts it, the arbitrary and inconstant language of social science creates not understanding, but a "distorting mirror reflecting familiar faces as monstrous masks" (p. 177).

Travis' appeal for a liberated hinterland is compelling, if not novel. The more such calls are heard in this country, the more it seems that Canadians sell out to the temptations of metropolitan culture and knowledge. In doing so, the uncritical speak of "freedom of choice" and "What's wrong with Disneyland anyway?", while the intellectuals and artisans invoke the need to test themselves against "international standards," by which they mean any standard that is not their own. Travis unwittingly illustrates the truth of this thesis when he repeats the popular belief (p. 34) that decisions on Canadian stock exchanges are made on Wall Street. While the interdependence of the Canadian and American economies is undeniable, the "pop" truth that the economic movers and shakers live in the Big Apple blinds us to the many occasions when the Canadian and American markets behave quite differently. For example, every school child knows that the Great Depression began in October 1929 when the bottom fell out of the New York market and even J. P. Morgan's millions couldn't stop it. In Canada, however, the markets did not collapse until

nearly four years later when the boards of the Winnipeg grain exchange recorded enormous losses and those on Bay and St. James Streets showed similar collapses in the ensuing months. But who remembers such things in the face of truths celebrated in American media and academic writing?

I said earlier that Travis' two messages go oddly together. They do so because it is not clear what kind of liberation Travis is urging on psychologists in Canada. He does make plain that he aims to free our schools from "American-concocted psycho-educational prescriptions" that are regularly imported to cure our "socio-cultural pains . . . with American professors, books, and mass media" (p. 33). How we can achieve this aim is not so clear. Would it be sufficient if psychologists in Canada simply took the methods of a social science developed by metropolitan scholars and applied them to Canadian problems? Sometimes Travis appears to argue that such limited change would suffice to resolve the problem. The issue is whether liberation of Canada's psychological hinterland will be achieved by changing the psychologists who use the science or whether we need also to change the science that the phychologists use. He castigates Canadian education, for example, for its faddism and points out that our "turmoil" is due to the fact that we have adopted educational changes without "research evidence that they would yield educational gains" (p. 27). Such argument is straight out of metropolitan thinking in the research and development movement of American psychometric rationalism. Can we foresee a time in Canada when the policy-makers of the Québec Ministry of Education will be basing their decisions on the empirical research of psychologists in Edmonton? And when will the Alberta Ministry be searching to ensure that its intended actions do not fly in the face of theory affirmed by psychologists in Québec?

This issue may be clarified by looking at the case of Canada's economic dependence, a state that Travis refers to frequently and deplores strongly. One question arising in this domain is whether Canada would be better off building its own cars even if they looked exactly like American cars. Is ownership of the means of production the only issue or must we also be concerned with what is produced? Would we not be better off if we scrapped attempts to build Canadian versions of Chevies, Fords, and Chryslers and turned our attention to building one wholly new car (called, perhaps, the Chimo) that met our needs and looked and worked like no other car on earth. That is more or less what the Swedes, Germans, and Japanese do and they have profited by it enormously.

After wavering on this point early on in the paper, Travis appears to opt ultimately for the Chimo solution. He wants us not only to do our own work, but to do our own thinking as well. Though the title of his paper and its opening salvos are directed at freeing the hinterland from metropolitan direction, the latter part of the paper focuses on the attack on psychology as a science. Thus the reader is left with a number of unresolved questions. Should Canadian scholars in education simply aim

for liberation from metropolitan direction that has made them into branch-plant thinkers? Would we be satisfied with old psychology as long as it was Canadian-owned? Are the methods of metropolitan psychology acceptable as long as Canadians employ them? Or do we want a new, more liberating psychology than the old? The dilemma here is also that many of the ideas about a liberating social science are metropolitan ideas, as a glance at Travis' references will confirm. Perhaps a country that prohibits its high-school students — even those beyond the age of majority — from reading its own best contemporary novelists has need of a few metropolitan ideas. Margaret Lawrence's *The Diviners* was banned from Grade 13 classrooms in Ontario because she acknowledges that sex can sometimes (but not always) exist with love and that some people doubt that everything going on in this world should be attributed to an all-wise God. So perhaps this case and many others that could be cited should remind us that we do indeed have need of a few metropolitan ideas from Freud and Weber.

And what about Canada's own metropolises and hinterlands? Should language programs in Montréal serve as models for those in Vancouver? Should research at OISE make Maritimers believe that they now have answers to questions that puzzle them?[1] What also is the reality of Canadian education that educational psychology should attend to more closely? Surely there is not a single reality but rather a number of realities, each with competing claims for validity.

Travis' questions are not new, but they express complex, important issues that need to be explored in psychology and education. He sounds his jeremiad with such clarion force that his questions may force themselves even on those who would prefer to ignore them. How sweet it is to hear his message — but I worry that he is in danger of being dealt with as ancient kings used to deal with those who brought them unwelcome news. More likely, in our Canadian hinterland fashion, we will simply ignore his message. We will just decide not to hear it, bemused as many of us are by the last 1,000 hours spent listening to our own voices giving students assignments from texts that mean little to us. If we do pause to listen to his powerful manifesto, we may agree with his pleas for freeing the hinterlands from metropolitan direction. And then we may realize how difficult this goal is to attain unless we first think through what a non-imperialistic, non-universal social science might look like. To do such thinking, we probably need all the support we can get from metropolitan centres, whether these be Canadian or alien, local or distant. Certainly, Travis has used metropolitan knowledge to back his arguments for freeing Canadian hinterland psychology from metropolitan control. Indeed, though he deplores how metropolitan opinions "overwhelm the less publicized views of Canadians" (p. 33), his paper makes little effort to demonstrate what those opinions are. Perhaps part of his difficulty here lies in the fact that Canadian social scientists (like Canadians generally) don't have strong

opinions, but are happy to expound the technical component of metropolitan knowledge and to support unquestioningly the implicit assumptions and ideology it contains.

Against the largely undisturbed tranquillity of social science in Canada, the clear-eyed observer will note that metropolitan knowledge is eating away at the whole foundation of objective social science and causing turmoil in such fields as sociology and organization theory. It is eroding the notion of a single reality that can be explained by psychology or by any social science. So Travis can argue against placing unbounded faith in schools and, by implication, in any theory that claims to understand them. After all, what can schools do in the face of intractable social problems or against the plain evil that fills so much of the world? Thus he argues that psychologists are "especially well-situated to disabuse people of unwarranted faith in the power of psychology and schooling to cure the world of its pains and deficiencies" (p. 38).

If, however, we push Travis' argument a bit further, we may see that the liberation of hinterland psychology in Canada can best be furthered in consort with forces that would deny psychology or any social science its long-standing claim as the method or the only method of understanding that yields deep and powerful truths about the human condition. Literature, art, and philosophy can also do that, and it is to these doors of perception that the social sciences must turn if they are to find good earth and clean rain to nourish their withering roots. Inspiration from such sources will be needed as much in hinterlands as it is in metropolises.

NOTE

[1] On this point, Canadians may not have to bother their heads, since OISE is now in process of being ejected from the academy as represented by the University of Toronto. This expulsion raises the question of whether a new and independent OISE would survive in today's political and economic climate. So much for metropolitan experiments in Canadian education.

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A Comment by Roger H. Barnsley

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At the most basic level the purpose of writing and publishing is to communicate ideas to those who read the manuscript. Generally, this communication is enhanced when the writer and the reader share similar characteristics such as professional and educational background. Thus, being both a psychologist and a professor, I reacted with interest to Travis' (1979) article.

Indeed, there were expectations on my part that Travis and I would share certain academic and professional characteristics. For example, from academic training generally emerges a sense of objectivity, an avoidance of unwarranted emotional overtones in scholarly work, and a reasoned restraint in moving from particular observations to broad general principles. Thus, it was with a sense of surprise when I encountered such phrases as "frenetically trendy," "illusion-mongering," and "promiscuous involvement" (passim) in a scholarly publication.

Further, the generalizations that appear, both directly and by implication, are similarly far removed from my academic expectations. For example, the following quotations are observed: "... psychology ... has become bogged down in a swamp of confusion while running amuck in the world of commercial hype," "... schooling and psychology are nowadays characterized by confusion, disarray, and impotence," "... the disorders Canadians suffer are not as dramatically evident as are those enjoyed by the Americans," schools are characterized by "instability and confusion," "psychology is assessed as sharing that state of confusion and disorder ...," "like teachers, psychologists' ideas and practices are disordered by political processes," (passim) and so on. Surely, these and the many more statements of similar style that appear in Travis' article may make interesting hypotheses, but certainly cannot warrant, even when placed in context, the broad and general principles that are implied.

Next, my experience with psychologists has led to an expectation of a reliance on observations and data in making statements of fact. Indeed, maintaining the distinction between statements that have been based on observation, as opposed to those that are derived from opinion, would appear to be both central and critical to the role of a psychologist. As a result, one becomes extremely interested in discovering the data on which Travis based such statements as: Canadian schooling and psychology is characterized by "... technical deficiencies, insufficient knowledge, professional rigidities, or an undersupply of talent ...," "... educators in this country have been enticed down many garden paths ...," "... teachers continue to follow the seductive sirens," "... business is culture and culture is business ...," and "the psychologist who would meddle with the distribution of power forfeits the support of powerholders and invites punishment from them" (passim).

Space restrictions prevent the inclusion of an exhaustive list of the preceding types of assertions to be found in Travis' paper. However, it should be sufficient to state that as academic psychologists, Travis and I do not share a similar methodology or style. Such a discrepancy may or may not be important, but as found between mono-lingual speakers of different languages, it makes dialogue exceedingly difficult. Thus, to the extent that I understand Travis' concerns, I will respond to several selected but apparently central issues that appear in his manuscript.

1. Effects of Power on Education and Educators. Basically, Travis argues that educators and psychologists have paid little attention to power. It may be, as Travis suggests, that behavioral scientists have spent insufficient time studying the powerholders. However, it should be readily apparent that psychologists have investigated the tools of power for at least 50 years and thoroughly understand their function.

To be more specific, Travis argues that the resources of the powerholders in western capitalist society are the judicious use of money and the economic system in a behaviorally contingent and politically appropriate fashion. Clearly, the use of response contingencies (reinforcement, punishment, etc.) is one of the most systematically researched and well understood of any behavioral phenomena. Thus, to the extent that the powerholders seek to control the behavior or others through economic contingencies, the effects should be quite predictable and not, as Travis suggests, misunderstood.

A further tenet of this argument is that, "Financed by the public purse, the educational apparatus (employing teachers) is therefore affected by the conduct and desires of those who control capital and the state" (p. 31). Given our knowledge of the effects of reinforcement schedules, this appears to be an unwarranted conclusion. Teachers have traditionally encountered the economic system through a fixed interval schedule for reinforcement — one of the least effective contingencies for controlling behavior. If the powerholders were so intent on furthering their own designs, one would suspect that they would have chosen a more effective reward system.

At this juncture, it is instructive to note just how effectively one group of educators, namely university professors, have isolated themselves from the effects of political and economic pressures through the establishment and maintenance of the tenure system. As a member, for the past three years, of the Canadian Association of University Teachers Academic Freedom and Tenure committee, I would observe that there certainly are cases where non-academic concerns have affected a professor's career (e.g., the recent case of Professor Webber at Memorial University of Newfoundland). However, when one looks at the many universities in this country and the thousands of academics, it appears that tenure has been a most effective system for the protection of academic freedom. Further,

I would argue that teachers at other levels of the educational system have also been quite successful in generating professional security through a type of de facto tenure system. Thus, I would take a position orthogonal to that of Travis and argue that Canada's educators are quite well protected from the power of the state. This is not to deny that Travis' concerns are not valid, but rather to argue that his conclusions should be viewed as exceedingly exaggerated.

2. Political and Power Influences on Psychology. Travis implies that as a result of living in a capitalist society, psychologists' understanding of human beings is obfuscated by the very system itself. Thus, Travis argues that business influences on psychology deserve examination. To deny that environment influences human behavior or that culture and politics are not significant parts of that environment would be foolish. On the other hand, to vigorously state such general propositions at this time is to offer only well known observations about the obvious.

A more important point that follows from these concerns, and one that should have been addressed by Travis, is that psychology is an exceedingly diverse discipline and that many of its areas of concern are absolutely free from political and economic pressures. For example, it is quite hard to imagine the intrusion of such factors into the understanding of such basic areas as memory, sensation, perception, the structure of language, brain-behavior relationships, psychopharmacology, motor skills, and so on. The point is that Travis' concerns regarding the validity of psychological pursuits do not merit the general significance he proposes. Further, to the extent that political and economic factors do exist, their importance would be limited to particular and well defined areas of human behavior.

3. The Americanization of Canadian Psychology. The final point which I wish to consider is Travis' contention that Canadian psychology has been colonized by the United States of America. Clearly, one would not argue that a country with ten times the population of Canada would not make a much larger impact on any discipline than our smaller nation. However, Travis' implications go far beyond this simple quantitative assertion and, as such, miss the independence and importance of the contribution made by Canadians to the discipline of psychology.

Examples of the independent nature of Canadian psychology are numerous. Historically, the work of Hebb, Penfield, and their colleagues at McGill University and the Montreal Neurological Institute heralded in the true beginnings of modern neuropsychology. Or, as a Canadian, Blatz from the University of Toronto must not be forgotten. He and his co-workers at the Institute of Child Study pioneered day care and nursery school programs. Continuing in contemporary times, our national character and problems have been frequently reflected in the work of such investigators as MacArthur and Berry in regard to Northern Native Peoples, Lambert and Tucker in relation to the development of school

immersion programs as a vehicle for learning a second language, and the many researchers in Newfoundland who monitored the cognitive changes in children who were part of the Resettlement Program. The list could be lengthened, but it is sufficiently long to demonstrate that Travis' conclusions are again overly zealous.

In summary then, were the contentions outlined by Travis valid in the general sense, there would indeed be cause for concern by Canadian educators and psychologists. However, I for one am unable to accept the conclusions reached by Travis as they have the appearance of being based on insufficient data and a result of subjective analysis. Indeed, one gets the feeling that Travis set out to catch a big fish in the "hinterland" pond. It is my opinion that this fishing expedition resulted in an empty creel.

REFERENCE

Travis, LeRoy D. Hinterland schooling and branch-plant psychology: Educational psychology in Canada today. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 1979, *4*(4), 24-42.

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A Comment by Thomas O. Maguire

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Travis' (1979) article is important for two reasons: (a) It opens the debate on political influences on Canadian psychology particularly as this debate applies to education; and (b) It begins to carve out some boundaries for psychology within the Canadian educational context.

In spite of periodic annoyance with the way in which Travis puts his arguments, and in spite of disagreement with many of the causal attributions he makes, I find myself in agreement with many of his conclusions and almost all of his prescriptions. But to begin, let me purge myself of reactions I had to the style of presentation so such considerations can be excluded from the more substantive matters.

As I read, there were times when I thought that Travis' leaps into diatribe were unnecessary, even dysfunctional. The best example occurs where he asks, "Are educational psychologists implicated in the creation of this instability and confusion, or is the substance and character of educational psychology so trivial that teachers perceive it as indistinct from or on a par with the chimera, hype, and pap of the commercial culture's hucksters, whose illusion-mongering not infrequently guides

teachers' thoughts and actions?" (p. 25). The question being asked is relatively simple: "Are educational psychologists creating confusion, or are their findings inconsequential?" Yet in order to unpack this I must wander through pap, hype, and illusion-mongering until I am filled with resentment at the clumsy attempt to piggy-back political dogma on some possibly insightful idea. I would much prefer the political analysis presented in a way that encouraged examination, rather than being flogged with overstatement.

THE DATA BASE FOR THE COMMENTARY

In considering the Travis paper, I found it useful to try to keep some picture of the educational establishment in mind. By doing so, I found that some of what Travis said did not ring true in spite of the fact that it is well entrenched as part of the public lore. Since the reader may disagree with my comments, it might be useful to give a brief explication of the data base that I shall be using.

First of all, education as a public enterprise is in this country a provincial matter, and since much of what Travis is concerned with is political, it is important to realize that there may be substantial differences in the way that education is viewed politically in the different provinces. My own experience is in dealing with various people in the Alberta Department of Education. These experiences might be quite different elsewhere.

Secondly, when Travis talks about teachers, I have tried to use the teachers that I know: those whom I have had in classes, those I have worked with in four school districts across the province, and those whom I have met through my children's school.

In other words, I shall try to assess Travis' arguments by particularizing them to the settings in which I have some familiarity, rather than assessing them against what others say happens in education.

TEACHERS AND EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Although I am sure that Travis distinguishes teachers from education, as I read the paper, I thought that he did not make it clear when he was talking about one and when he was talking about the other. I am convinced that there is a vast, sometimes contradictory discrepancy between the ideas of the educational establishment (departments of education, writers about education, teacher trainers), and the behaviors of teachers in the classroom. When Travis talks about ". . . psychology, the once bright and leading light for teachers," and asks "why is our schooling so frenetically trendy?", I think about particular teachers, principals, and superintendents, all of whom are experienced professionals, but none overly impressed by the canons of psychology and certainly not frenetically trendy. In fact, I wonder if many experienced professions are "frenetically

trendy." The day to day involvement with educating children makes one pessimistic about trends.

Yet education has been trendy. Open area schools, free schools, semesters, trimesters, OBE, CBE, and VBE are all examples, perpetrated from beyond the classroom. Perhaps they have had passing effects on the classroom, but for any innovation, I am inclined to bet on the success of the classroom inertia. As I visit classes, I am struck by the basic similarity to classrooms in which I sat thirty years ago.

It seems to me that much of what Travis talks about applies more to education than to teachers. This will be a recurrent notion as we go through the paper.

POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATION

I am pleased to read the affirmation that education regularly adjusts itself to numerous forms of political exigencies. That is exactly what is supposed to happen. An educational system is just another social institution, and it should be responsive to the will of the society.

However, at the classroom level, I am reluctant to give wholehearted support to the notion that teachers are or even should be overly responsive to individual powerholders since the views of such powerholders may be contrary to some common good. Fortunately, in the school settings with which I am familiar, the teacher is buffered from such influences by the misconception held by most activists that the power to make change lies at the top. I would be surprised to hear that teachers are exposed to much overt pressure from those who are seen as powerholders. Further, the more subtle influences that Travis describes, like striving to please our betters, are likely to be subverted by two interrelated factors: (a) most face-to-face education takes place behind closed doors, and (b) sycophants don't get the kind of reinforcement necessary to keep them in the classroom. I would guess that the experienced teaching force is largely made up of two groups, a group of independent, high ego strength folk, and a smaller group of lazy nine to three-thirty people who are in it for an easy buck. Neither seem particularly susceptible to political influences.

POWER AND POLITICS

In his definition of power, I think that Travis misses one essential ingredient, and that is the willingness of the target to be influenced. This is a bit beyond Travis' dependency condition of the target. In working within the university context, I have often been struck by how some of my colleagues attribute power to other members of the academic hierarchy. They allow deans, chairmen, and even other members of staff to hold influence over them well beyond anything that is legislated. As my colleague Steve Hunka is fond of saying, "When you ask permission, you implicitly give someone the right to deny it." So, I believe that there is a factor which

might be paraphrased as "I give you this power over me." This is an important factor in the power relationship because in some cases it may be the dominant factor, but in all cases it is under the control of the target, and does allow for some modifications.

An important point that Travis makes in relation to power is that we have not directly studied the powerful. Although perhaps not a direct analogy, psychological investigations of rape have operated in a similar way. Psychologists and sociologists have spent far more time in considering the consequences to the victim, and in describing the context of the crime, than in studying the assailant. Indeed social programs have been aimed at rape prevention through having females avoid dangerous situations, rather than being aimed at the group of potential rapers, adolescent boys.

In his discussion of power, Travis seems to believe that in some way the powerful have seduced the educators into becoming the solutions to every social problem. Even if this is so, it must be overwhelmingly clear that the educational establishment, if not the instigator, must have been a most willing partner.

The American plans to bring about social and economic justice through the various aid programs to education were supported if not stimulated by the educational establishment. However, I am only partially convinced that a substantial proportion of experienced teachers ever believed that the school was the place to cure all ills.

At the classroom level there is likely some disposition on the part of beginning teachers to feel an obligation to assist in solving all problems for all children, but they are soon disabused by the untenable task of being all things to 30 children.

Nonetheless, the public expectation has been aroused by the educational establishment, and Travis is correct in pointing out that teachers do not escape the charge of failure that more properly lies with the rest of us.

EDUCATORS AND THE POWER OF CAPITAL

There are some people who see the business or owning class as being behind everything that happens in society. I suspect that no amount of argument, fact portrayal, or testimony will change their views. At the risk of being branded a running dog lackey, or at least a dupe, I would like to suggest a view of the relationship between business and education as intense ambivalence.

The long chain of connections that Travis traces from the greed of the business class to the activities of the educators is a tenuous one. While it is true that the state controls education, and to a large extent in many provinces it is the business class (including those stalwarts of individual enterprise — the farmers) who controls the government, I am amazed at how little business is able to influence schools. For example, in spite of the enormous amounts of money that are spent in technical education both at

the secondary and post secondary levels, there has been a dramatic increase in company education programs to train workers for particular jobs. Surely if business had the clout that Travis claims, it would move those costs of training into the public sector, thus reducing the training overhead. It strikes me that business people have a healthy respect for the ability of education to suck up resources without showing much evidence of change.

In talking about the ideological features of business that are found in education, the example selected is not very compelling. That individuality, creativity, and self actualization in schools are desired characteristics for national and international business runs contrary to my day to day encounters with either IBM or McDonald's. Whether the business is hamburgers or computers, management and employees are strange exemplars of individuality, creativity, and self actualization.

A significant point that Travis makes that is worth underlining relates to the trend in government funding for research from unsolicited grants to requests for proposals. Allegedly these favor the entrepreneur, but what seems to be happening is that academics are becoming entrepreneur-consultants to the detriment of creative educational research. Hunka (1977) explores this trend in depth.

MONEY AND MANNERS IN THE HINTERLANDS

The wholesale, uncritical importation of American ideas and solutions to social problems is something that should be of concern to all of us. Not because of chauvinistic protectionism, but because there is no reason to suppose that the educational ideas that are in vogue in the United States have much application in this country. In fact, the evidence suggests that many of the ideas do not even apply in that country.

The political structure of education is far different in the two countries. The belief that education can cure social ills was far more deeply entrenched there. Also federal legislation of social justice has a much stronger tradition in that country than in Canada. As a result the American child in school is likely to be more strongly influenced by the moves made in Washington through such things as equal rights legislation, program funding, and demands for evaluation than is the Canadian counterpart. In this country, for the most part, educational decisions that affect most children are made within 200 or 300 miles of their home, either at the provincial or local level. This suggests that, left alone, Canadian educational systems should be more responsive to regional concerns than to national social issues.

Even if the educational structures of the two countries were more similar, the big national issues are different, so there can be no justification for importing American solutions since it often implies importing the problems as well.

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND PSYCHOLOGY

There is little that I can say about this section. I am not sure that it is political factors that have brought about the defects in psychology, but the defects are there, and if you are collecting devastating assessments of various branches of psychology, here is another one from Lumsden (1976): "Test theory has had few major ideas. I can list only five.... The shreds of theory that have been developed and the time-worn true score models are not rich sources of ideas about testing, and the ideas that are generated seem to relate mainly to the internal workings of the models" (p. 251).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As I said at the beginning, I disagree with many of the causal attributions in this paper, but I find myself aligned with the prescriptions. It is time for educational psychologists to take their responsibilities seriously. The search for knowledge about the human condition has been taking a back seat to utilitarian research, often undertaken for personal gain. In faculties of education we have over-responded to the call for teaching and service to such a point that people are being promoted to higher levels of academia with virtually no research experience whatsoever. It is time to recommit ourselves to scholarship through investigation, thought, and academic debate; the Travis paper is a step in this direction.

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A Comment by Alan D. Bowd

university of victoria

Travis (1979) presents an insightful analysis of the political and economic underpinnings of Canadian education. However his penchant for extravagant linguistic imagery and mixed metaphor — psychology is at once "bogged down" and "running amuck" (p. 21) — is not infrequently irksome. More serious is the absence of a clearly and explicitly articulated

ideological basis for his observations. For the present writer, occasional perplexity was tempered with approbation however. Travis attempts so much in his short paper. Not only does he describe the relationship between an applied science (educational psychology) and a social institution (schooling), but he does this within a contextual analysis of the capitalist politico-economic system. As if the task itself challenges him too little, he accepts the further duty of relating all this to the peculiar situation of Canada. Travis' canvas is indeed broad — perhaps that is why its outlines are sometimes blurred.

As Travis points out, there can be little disagreement with his primary thesis that education serves political ends, that in time of reactions, economic stress, and revolutionary consolidation it is most explicitly politicized. Travis reserves his most telling criticism for liberals who continue to view schooling as a means of effecting modest political change through intellectual enlightenment; their error lies in a failure to confront the reality that those who hold power in society are the same ones who actually control its educational institutions.

Travis' case is put carefully and persuasively, if not particularly originally (cf. Bowles & Gintis, 1976). He argues that in modern capitalist states (like Canada) teachers and psychologists both are essentially without power. He also exposes the myth of classlessness, not now so viable, and recently propagated by educational psychology texts like that of DeCecco. But he does not bring all this together in a coherent way to tell the reader how important the class system is in a corporate capitalist state, and how it is maintained and reproduced by educational institutions. In fact, while criticizing DeCecco for his "fanciful conceptions" of class, Travis nowhere defines the alternative. He speaks of power and class, but not of exploitation, alienation, and class-conflict.

Travis' views on schooling and educational psychology in the Canadian context are exemplified in the title of his paper. (For one so critical of trendiness his choice of terms seems a little out of character.) Travis is very concerned about educational "hucksterism" bolstered up by the jargon of psychology, which he characterizes with typical linguistic extravagance as being both "hollow" and "inflated." He repeatedly alludes to Canada's second-hand research and scholarship which is "predominantly American in execution, style, and content" (p. 34). We are presumably spared the intensity of American afflictions by our branch-plant status — "the disorders Canadians suffer are not as dramatically evident as those enjoyed by the Americans" (p. 21).

It is not Travis' colorful description of the symptoms of our educational malaise with which I take issue, but rather his incomplete account of etiology. The economic system and class structure to the south are replicated in this country, a circumstance which Travis passes over too rapidly in his review of "American-concocted psycho-educational prescriptions for the cure of socio-cultural pains" (p. 33). Our school system, bolstered by

the social sciences with psychology in the vanguard, rather than "fostering social equalization, fosters only a belief in its equalizing powers" (Nicholson, 1978, p. 654). The failure of progressive educational reform in both the U.S. and Canada stems from the "contradictory nature of the objectives of its integrative, egalitarian and developmental functions in a society whose economic life is governed by the institutions of corporate capitalism" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 45). In this context the gimmickry, the cant, the "grandiose ideological dreams" may be recognized as the icing on an educational cake that is not only nutritionally lacking but half-baked.

Travis' paper is a statement about the present situation of Canadian educational psychology. However the author is obscure in his analysis of the nature of educational psychology and its position vis à vis education on the one hand and psychology on the other. The traditional idea that educational psychology is "that part of psychology about which teachers ought to know" is not, in fact, very far from Travis' position. For him educational psychology is not to be identified with "pure" psychology nor with education, but lies somewhere between. Essentially Travis relies upon an imagined consensus regarding the nature of educational psychology which actually leaves the issue of definition unresolved.

The problem of discussing educational psychology as if it were a part of psychology (a discrete content area) is that there is no area of psychology which has not had significant implications for education practice (Nixon, 1976). Educational psychology is perhaps better understood as a process; educational psychologists are those who engage in psychological research within the context of educational problems (Bowd, 1978). Although a more coherent definition is not critical to Travis' position (educational psychology in Canada retains its branch-plant character in any case), it is helpful in conceptualizing the role of educational psychologists. The author's disclaimer that " I do not want the reader to assume that my suggestions comprise a comprehensive view of the educational psychologist's role" (p. 37), does not exempt him from providing a fundamental characterization of it.

Travis' analysis of education and the social sciences is a radical one. Presumably his final suggestions are offered in the light of his early admission that the amelioration of our social ills will depend upon "radical and massive changes in the economy" (p. 26). He tells us that as educational psychologists we must become realists; we must recognize the political mythology of the ruling class and expose it to our curriculum and instruction colleagues. We must tell the public of the limitations of schooling and of psychology as remedies for our society's economic and cultural distress. But Travis admits that only rarely does one encounter an educational psychologist who is competent and willing to perform these functions.

Perhaps the activity of a minority in drawing collective attention to the issues Travis has confronted will continue and increase. There are signs elsewhere of a growing political consciousness within psychology (Tefft & Hamilton, 1979). Contemporary educational psychology lacks the critical attention to ideology which is more characteristic of philosophy. As Nicholson (1978) points out, it is senseless to analyze the concept of education in isolation from the social institution of schooling; likewise it is a futile endeavor to describe the functions of educational psychology in Canada without attending to the economic and political order. Travis' paper is an important one because its author addresses these issues directly and with erudition. Let us hope that the discussion he has stimulated will continue.

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