

Hide & Seek with Philip Jackson: The Hidden Curriculum in *Life in Classrooms*

By Kelly Waldrop

Hide and Seek is a simple game. The seeker closes her eyes and counts. The other players hide. When the seeker is finished counting, she seeks, looking for those who have hidden in the hopes of chasing them down and tagging them before they reach the designated home base. Simple. And yet, any child can tell you, there are a many factors that can make the game endlessly complex. The field of play, for example, can have an enormous effect on the success of the players and is usually dictated, not as in many games by an attempt to maximize the skill of the player, but more often on the purpose of the game. Having been shooed outside by weary parents in search of peace on a beautiful summer day, the field of play becomes the wide open spaces of a backyard, the home base a tree in the middle of the yard, always visible by all players, a field of play that privileges those who are fleet of foot. Or, having been locked up inside, whiling away a cold and dreary December Saturday, the field of play becomes the twisted warren of the home's interior, with home base the living room sofa, almost always out of sight of the seeker and hiders alike, a field of play that privileges those who pick crafty hiding places and have the fortitude to quietly wait out the other players.

Likewise is education, as illuminated by Philip W. Jackson in his groundbreaking 1968 work, *Life in Classrooms*, incredibly simple yet infinitely complex. Its overt purposes are obvious, yet a multitude of factors outside the control of any of the players, whether they be students, teachers, or administrators, impact the ability of all involved to succeed in their various tasks. The contemporary reader, wading through page after page of Jackson's sexist language, like the seeker rooting out the hiding, must ferret out that which Jackson intentionally illuminates

for us along with that which is obscured to discover new ways to look at schooling and educational research.

### **Philip Jackson: Seeker of Educational Insight**

Philip Jackson is overwhelmingly viewed by those in education as a key figure. After earning his Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1955, Jackson took a position as a Professor of Education at the University of Chicago, where he worked until his retirement. Jackson served over his career as Chairman of the Department of Education, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, Director of the University's Benton Center for Curriculum and Instruction, and Principal of the University's nursery school. He also held leadership positions in such organizations as the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, the National Academy of Education, the American Educational Research Association, and the John Dewey Society (Eisner, 2001).

Jackson's contributions to the field of education do not end with his tremendous leadership efforts, which are rather overwhelmed by a wealth of salient and sagacious research and writing on what it means to educate and be educated. Beginning with his first major publication, *Creativity and Intelligence* (1962), which he wrote with fellow psychologist Jacob Getzels, Jackson began breaking new ground by attempting to illuminate the relationship between IQ and creativity (Eisner, 2001, p. 200). Jackson then became interested in studying and attempting to describe and explore the lived experience of the classroom. The studies he designed and carried out over the next few years in the University of Chicago's Laboratory School culminated in what many consider to be his most enduring work, *Life in Classrooms*. With his following major works, *The Teacher and the Machine*, *The Practice of Teaching*,

*Untaught Lessons*, and *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art*, Jackson continued his efforts to explore the richness of the educational setting as a place to discover new ideas and ways of thinking.

Jackson would teach graduate students in Education by having them read seminal works by authors such as Aristotle, Plato, Dewey, Wordsworth, and Wittgenstein, and engage his classes in discussions about what the works, many of which not overtly concerning education, might have to say about the ways in which we teach and learn (Hansen, 1996, p.133). Having read and reread *Life in Classrooms*, I was not surprised to learn that Jackson was influenced by Aristotle, since I detected in it a mindset similar to my own, as a teacher of writing and rhetoric. Jackson approaches the subject of the lived experience in the classroom as if he were deliberately applying Aristotle's rhetorical triangle, where the argument, or in this case the classroom, is a complex web of the identities (for Jackson both the backgrounds and the physical selves), the emotions, and the intellects of the individuals involved within the context of the learning environment. Having come from a background where he was encouraged to focus almost exclusively on the intellect and within a field of education that focused almost exclusively on the intellectual aspects of the learning process, Jackson breaks all the rules of the game when he spends the entirety of *Life in Classrooms* focused on seeking out the physical and emotional factors of the teaching and learning process as they impact and are impacted by the learning environment. In doing so, he makes an enduring argument for the complexity – much of which is allowed to languish unconsidered by many – of the life of students and teachers in classrooms.

Jackson concerned himself as a researcher and as a teacher with opening avenues of exploration. Of his work in *Life in Classrooms* he writes that he is not necessarily interested in making great changes, but that he is hoping to “awaken concern over aspects of school life that

seem to be receiving less attention than they deserve” (p. vii). He is most interested in shedding light into the dark corners and seeing if there is anything interesting hiding there to which he or fellow scholars might give chase. In the process, he has opened up doors to a great number of later educationists to question the hidden curricula of our schools and the ways those hidden curricula may affect our students and teachers. Along the way, Jackson reveals some hidden agendas of his own, through the use of provocative and patriarchal language, that serves to complicate and obscure his messages, while at the same time offering a fascinating irony, i.e. that a work that is inherently sexist could have given rise to many theoretical offshoots that have effectively shed light on the hidden curricula of patriarchal forces in our schools.

### **What Jackson Found: A Synopsis**

*Life in Classrooms* is divided up into five sections: The Daily Grind; Students’ Feelings About School; Involvement and Withdrawal in the Classroom; Teachers’ Views; and The Need for New Perspectives. All will be synopsisized below, with the first section receiving a more thorough treatment, as it sets up and contextualizes the other four sections and as it is the one that receives the most focus in later literature. The Daily Grind, which is probably the best known of the entire work, outlines in imagistic and almost poetic language the reality of what it means to live one’s life, as either student or teacher, within the brick and mortar walls of the American public education system. Jackson identifies the key physical and emotional facts of daily school life, including the simple requirement of attendance and the problems inherent in not having chosen to be there in the first place; evaluation, both by the teacher and by peers; and time spent waiting, either for a particular favorite activity or for everyone to complete a current activity. In this section, Jackson focuses on what he calls the “three facts of life” with which

students must cope in schools, “crowds, praise, and power,” which make up what Jackson is the first to dub the “hidden curriculum” (pp. 33-4).

Much of the course of school life, as described by Jackson, is dictated by the sheer number of students in the classroom. Jackson argues, “Only in schools do thirty or more people spend several hours each day literally side by side” (p. 8). Jackson’s skill as a rhetorician is first thrown into relief in these pages as he lures the reader into indulging in the mental exercise of trying to come up with exceptions to this rule, only to agree a page later that two other institutions, prisons and mental hospitals, are similar especially in the compulsory nature of attendance (p. 9). Crowd control, according to Jackson, is one of teachers’ main functions as they may participate in “as many as 1000 interpersonal interchanges” each in a given school day (p. 11). This daily fact of classroom life is intrinsically connected to the other issues of evaluation and power.

Having one teacher to deal with many students sets up various complex issues as the teacher negotiates who will have attention, who will receive goods and services, and who will be praised and/or penalized. The number of students in the classroom dictates the pace at which those issues are resolved. The quality of student evaluation is directly linked to the crowded classroom but is not all encompassing. Regardless of the numbers of people with whom students and teachers must interact, evaluation is another daily eventuality that is unique to the school environment. Jackson notes that “most people seldom encounter tests outside of their school experience” (p. 19). Whether they are being officially evaluated by the teacher on class material, rated on their behavior as the teacher determines who will get extra time at recess, or evaluated even less formally by students who will decide who will be popular and who will be judged as

not socially worthy, students are evaluated in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of things throughout their school day.

The fact of the crowds and the pervasiveness of praise (or its opposite) contribute to and complicate the relations of power within the school. Jackson notes that a big part of the power imbalance between students and staff in school is related to time, as teachers become the “official timekeeper[s]” of the institution (p. 12). As noted above, the amount of time and attention given to a student by a teacher is dictated as much by the number of students present as any other factor. Additionally, Jackson notes that students rarely get to choose the time at which they complete a task and never are given the opportunity to decide when to take a break.

In addition to the triple threat of crowds, praise and power, Jackson adds what he calls the “four unpublicized features of school life: delay, denial, interruption, and social distraction” (p. 17). Successfully meeting the challenge of schooling is as much, in this view, about learning to negotiate the hidden curriculum and to sublimate one’s own wants either indefinitely or at least until the institutionally approved time for them to be addressed. Learning to wait patiently through any number of delays, or accepting having one’s preferences being denied altogether, becomes for many students in Jackson’s view a necessity for educational success, especially since students are required to attend school and in school have no control over the way in which their time is spent. Jackson connects the failure to accept these truths with problems of student motivation. He argues that failure to be suitably motivated and engaged in the classroom is frequently diagnosed as “failure to comply with institutional expectations, a failure to master the hidden curriculum” (p. 35). This connection of the hidden curriculum to student motivation and engagement is the main concern of the next four chapters of the book.

Jackson's second chapter, *Students' Feelings About School*, surveys studies conducted by other researchers regarding students' attitudes toward school and the degree of satisfaction they have with their educational experiences. From open-ended questionnaires to studies asking students to select from lists of adjectives to describe their experiences, Jackson reports that most studies suggest that most students do not have strong feelings one way or another about schooling. Some report on embarrassing situations and many point to boredom as a problem, but overall, the research suggests that school is not something students analyze in depth. Jackson argues, however, that a significant number of students report dissatisfaction and is worth further exploration. A final set of studies discussed by Jackson takes on the issue of student satisfaction along with whether or not teachers are capable of predicting which student will report being satisfied or dissatisfied. Jackson notes two main findings. Teachers are not overly adept at anticipating which students will claim to be either satisfied or dissatisfied, with most teachers assuming that students who perform well will be satisfied and those who perform poorly will be dissatisfied, which Jackson points out as a "common-sense" and, therefore, according to Jackson, a worthy assumption (p. 80). Nonetheless, the researchers discussed cannot demonstrate a link between student attitudes about school and educational achievement. Further, the teachers involved were shown to be more adept at predicting the attitudes of satisfied girls, dissatisfied boys, and students of both genders with high IQ's.

Chapter 3, *Involvement and Withdrawal in the Classroom*, reviews studies conducted relating to student attention and involvement in classroom activities. Jackson includes studies ranging from those that simply have observers watching students and attempting to gauge attention, to those that attempt to differentiate from the appearance of attention to actual attentiveness, and finally, to those that attempt to determine the impact of attentiveness on

academic performance. Jackson makes several key connections here. First, he notes that although complete inattention is easily detected, researchers have a difficult time determining when engaged students are thinking about the course material based on their outward appearances alone. The studies also suggest that attention may relate to scores on achievement tests but not necessarily to intellectual ability nor to students' attitudes toward school. Jackson notes that there are significant correlations between the ability to engage students in classwork and the hidden curriculum, noting the many rules and regulations that are intended to minimize interruptions so that students may focus on the task at hand. He notes that these rules are often more prevalent in lower grade levels. In this section, Jackson recursively connects the overt curriculum to the hidden curriculum, noting that the appropriateness of material to the students, which can either heighten or kill interest, is equally important as the appropriateness of the classroom conditions that make focusing on the overt material possible. Nonetheless, Jackson's final word on the subject in this chapter is that "often it is school that is boring, not just arithmetic or social studies" (p. 111), suggesting that no matter how salient the overt curriculum, the hidden curriculum can impede student involvement.

The chapter entitled, *Teachers' Views*, contains the results of Jackson's own study, where he interviewed fifty teachers from middle-class, suburban schools, who were chosen by their administrators as being excellent educators. Jackson states, "The goal of the interview was to find out how these teachers know when they were doing a good job, how they dealt with the fact of their own power and that of their administrative superiors, and what pleasures, if any, life in the classroom held out to them." (p. 119). He collects their responses according to four themes "immediacy, informality, autonomy, and individuality" (p. 119). In discussing immediacy, the teachers talk about the daily relationship they have with their students and how those daily

interactions are the best gauge for how well they are doing their jobs, as well as how well the students are doing in understanding the material. Some rather prophetic discussions given the current high-stakes testing movement cover the inability for a class's performance on a single test to accurately measure a teacher's success. The comments on informality relate the importance of the interpersonal relationships between the teachers and their students as a key factor in measuring teacher effectiveness. In another almost disturbingly forward-looking section, teachers discuss the importance of autonomy in the classroom, especially as it relates to the freedom to control curricular content and the freedom from administrative evaluation in the classroom. The teachers state in the strongest possible terms that loss of control over curriculum and a high level of evaluation would result in them quitting their jobs. Key to these concerns was the belief in the need to honor the individuality of the teachers and the students and its importance to curricular content and pace. The second half of the chapter is taken up with Jackson's analysis of the teacher's responses, where he critiques them in harsh terms as being overly concerned with the concrete minutiae of their daily lives with students, too emotionally involved with their students, unable to rationally analyze the phenomena in their classrooms, and lacking in a technical vocabulary to discuss, especially with university researchers like himself, what they do each day. Jackson ends the chapter by considering that some of these traits may be necessary to succeeding in negotiating the hidden curriculum of schools and making school life less institutionally harsh and difficult for their students.

In his final chapter, *The Need for New Perspectives*, Jackson discusses the "engineering point of view" of teaching and the effort of some to try to turn teaching from "an art into a science" (p. 165). Although not entirely sold on the idea, Jackson argues that given the major contributions of the testing movement and textbook and curricular improvements brought about

by engineering point of view, “it would be foolish to call into question” its overall merits (p. 165). Jackson notes, however, that the problem with the engineering point of view is its inability to deal with the complexity of life in classrooms, or more simply, the hidden curriculum. He discusses teaching as “opportunistic” (p. 166) in that it must take advantage of the moment, especially the moments when students are engaged and make what seem to be intuitive leaps toward understanding that can’t be anticipated or planned for. Also unaddressed by the engineering perspective are the wide array of teachers’ concerns, which extend beyond learning objectives to include issues relating to the hidden curriculum, such as whether or not they have been fair in dealing out praise and time to their students. Jackson argues that we need to “seek an understanding of the teaching process as it is commonly performed” before trying to fix it from the outside and that we should strive to “preserve, rather than transform” the artistry of teaching (p. 175). Returning to the concerns voiced in Chapter Four, Jackson renews a call for teachers and researchers to develop a common, sophisticated vocabulary that will allow them to communicate more clearly and give teachers an “effective set of descriptive terms for talking about what they do” (p. 176).

### **Hidden in the Shadows: Critiquing the Work**

Although, as mentioned above, Jackson’s work here is held in high regard and has born a tremendous amount of fruit in the years since *Life in Classrooms* was first published, many have also critiqued his views. From Cherryholmes (1988) to Giroux (1983), authors question Jackson’s blithe commentary that the hidden curriculum is a fact of life that must be accepted, and further that educational success requires mastery of this curriculum. Jackson occasionally discusses the difficulties created by the hidden curriculum, such as the problems it may cause in

student engagement with the overt curriculum, but his agenda seems to lean toward finding ways to help students and teachers cope with the hidden curriculum, rather than finding ways to dismantle it. Jackson's comfort with what he calls the engineering point of view is also a cause for concern, since it seems at odds with the progressive stance that he takes throughout most of his other work.

Moving beyond these larger concerns and reading Jackson's text for its semiotics, as one can only imagine that Jackson himself would do were it not his own creation, there are deeper issues of concern here. It is unsurprising, although not entirely forgivable, that this text, written in 1968, is awash with patriarchal language. In the opening chapters, the pronouns exclusively situate all of Jackson's hypothetical teachers and students as male, in accordance with the custom of the day. But the sexist nature of the book goes much deeper than that and is heightened when one considers it in terms of Sadker and Sadker's (1994) work *Failing at Fairness*.

In 1970, only two years after *Life in Classrooms* first appeared in print, Jackson wrote in an essay for the NEA Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's compilation *The Unstudied Curriculum*, that researchers must begin to focus on what is not easily observed and encouraged others to turn his "hidden curriculum" from the daily facts of life of schooling to more complex and less obvious issues, and many did just that, in that compilation and in the years beyond (Overly, 1970). Apple (2004) would take up the hidden curriculum as evidence of the school as institution working to reify the class system. Giroux (1983) would discuss it as the work of hegemony perpetuating and recreating power systems. Most ironically, however, given the pervasive nature of sexism within the book, Sadker and Sadker turn the hidden curriculum on itself and demonstrate ways to read *Life in Classrooms* for its patriarchal agenda.

*Failing at Fairness* is the result of the authors' long term quest to root out and exemplify what they call a "powerful hidden curriculum" that works to "shortchange girls and women as they study along with boys and men" (p. ix). Throughout the work, it is clear that Sadker and Sadker are commenting directly on many of the issues first unearthed by Jackson *Life in Classrooms*. From their use of the specific term, "hidden curriculum," to their inclusion of critiques of the work of Kohlberg and Rosenthal, which is featured prominently alongside Jackson's in *The Unstudied Curriculum*, it is clear that Sadker and Sadker are intentionally using and taking on Jackson's work. Among the many excellent and important discussions of the ways in which schools reinforce the male-dominated nature of our society, the authors point out the omission of the feminine from school texts, from the use of the masculine to represent the neutral position, which is shown to call up mental images of males alone, to the absence of women in both text and pictures. Sadker and Sadker convincingly demonstrate the damage caused by patriarchal language in text intended for every kind of student, from the kindergartener to the undergraduate teaching major.

As noted above, the simple and expected subtle use of the masculine pronouns when discussing hypothetical and/or theoretical teachers and students in the beginning of *Life in Classrooms* is an easy example to find. Likewise, one can find gender stereotyping throughout the book. Much of this is overt, as when Jackson comments, "Many of the behaviors that the teacher smiles upon, especially those that have to do with compliance to institutional expectations (e.g., neatness, passivity, cleanliness), are more closely linked in our society with feminine than with masculine ideas" (p. 25). Or when Jackson suggests that the chores with which students may help teachers are "feminine in character" (p. 68). Or when he notes that we should not be surprised that many of the teachers he interviews for Chapter Four deal with their

work in a highly intuitive, rather than rational (Jackson's opposition), way, since most of them are women and we should not "be surprised to find female teachers behaving like other women" (p. 146). This obvious form of sexism is not the end, however.

Like the textbooks Sadker and Sadker discuss, Jackson also provides gendered examples of students that offer a clearly sexist view. When Jackson discusses the issue of teacher evaluation, he includes the following examples: "Sarah is a neat and pleasant girl. She is a good helper;" "William is a good worker;" "John is a good worker;" "Liza has a listening face" (p. 23). Note that, as holds true in the textbooks Sadker and Sadker explicate, the male students are active and good at doing, while the females are relegated to passive roles and descriptions of their appearance, rather than their abilities. When discussing the issue of attentiveness and the difficulty in gauging it by appearance alone, Jackson wonders "about the girl who is furiously writing over by the window" and whether she is taking notes or "dashing off a message to her boyfriend." He also considers the "young man who is gazing at the ceiling" and whether he is considering the classroom discussion or "conjuring up images to fit the contours of the cracks in the plaster" (p. 87). While the male student is either engaged in work or in a process of creativity, the girl is either engaged in work or in concerning herself with a boy. Continuing to follow Sadker and Sadker in gender analysis of the text, we find an even more subtle and distressing form of sexism than this.

In his second and third chapters, as Jackson discusses research done by others, he does so in a way that positions the male as the neutral or normal position and the female as the exception. He does this by pointing out each instance in which the researchers conducting the studies are female. Take the following for example, "With respect to the children's liking of their present teacher, Sister Josephina found an even smaller amount of discontent than did

Tenenbaum” (p. 51). Note that Tenenbaum is both male and uninflected, while Josephina is given her full title and, thus, gendered. This could be argued away by saying that Josephina, being a nun and having a quite feminine name, is gendered without Jackson’s actions making it so. This is not the case, however, in this situation alone, but an overall pattern in the work. Later in the same chapter, Sister M. Amatora Tschechtelin’s work is discussed alongside that of L. F. Malpass. As should be expected, Malpass is referred to by last name alone, while Tschechtelin is referred to by Sister M. Amatora (pp. 78-79). Again, one could argue that the author’s ecclesiastical identity could be creating the issue, and again, additional examples make that conclusion unlikely. Jackson continues the next chapter by juxtaposing work done by Bryce Hudgins and Henriette Lahaderne (p. 100-101). Hudgins is, as always, Hudgins, but Lahaderne is “Miss Lahaderne” throughout the discussion. Jackson’s naming formula serves to highlight certain researchers as feminine and distant from himself and those he considers to be his closer kin and true colleagues. This pattern of distancing is further complicated in the disturbing treatment of women in Chapter Four, Teacher’s Views.

Jackson tells us that the interviews that make up the basis for the chapter were conducted with 50 teachers without giving us information at the outset about the gender of those involved. Although the majority of the pronouns used in this section continue to be masculine, Jackson does identify several of his subjects as female by using feminine pronouns, as he relates their responses to his questions throughout the first four sections of the chapter. The use of pronouns in these early sections seems to be entirely driven by the gender of the respondent. In the fifth section, however, things change dramatically as Jackson begins to critique the teachers’ responses. Regardless of his stated intention not to be critical but only to shed light on that which has been in darkness, Jackson launches into a fairly scathing attack on what he calls the “human

failings” of his subjects (p. 149). As he takes them to task for their lack of a technical vocabulary and the simplicity with which they view their work, Jackson switches exclusively to the use of female pronouns. One could argue that this is driven by the fact that, as Jackson notes for us, “almost all of the interviewees were women” (p. 146). This in itself begs the question of whether or not his critiques apply only to the female and not the male teachers interviewed. Further, it becomes clear, as he discusses the “weakness of their intellectual tenacity and the intuitive softness of their talk” (p. 146) that he is talking not only of his subjects, but of a hypothetical/ideal female teacher.

Take for example the following quote, “the focus of the teacher’s concern is on her concrete experience with a particular group of students” (p. 147). As Jackson argues against the teacher’s inability to analyze her experience in an abstract way, he also feminizes her and reduces all of his subjects, or given the above analysis, only his female subjects, to a single feminine entity, the non-intellectual female. Further down the page, his patriarchal world view comes into clearer relief when he argues against the “emotional ties” his female teacher has with her students by writing, “Of course everyone cares to some extent about what he is doing and about his daily associates. To that extent, then, teachers are no different from anyone else. But the intensity of the teacher’s emotional investment in her work, if we can believe the way she talks about it, often exceeds this common concern.” Note that the neutral and normal “everyone” is male and that “teachers” when discussed as like that normal male are plural, yet when Jackson returns to his critique questioning the benefit of emotional attachment and the female teacher’s reliability as a witness to her own world, she becomes again the lone, small and vulnerable woman. This single female entity, “the teacher” and “her” abilities, or more clearly her lack of abilities of value to Jackson, are the subject of the rest of his critique from whom he only

broadens his focus back out to teachers in the plural and the specific group of teachers he interviewed as the section comes to a close.

The final section of the chapter shows Jackson backing off from his critique by arguing that many of the problems he has pointed out in the previous section may have actual benefits by allowing the teacher to “soften the impact of the impersonal institution” (p. 152) and “make the classroom more tolerable for students” (p. 154). As you will have undoubtedly and correctly assumed, this section, which does much to ameliorate the viciousness of the attack of the previous section, marks the return of the exclusive use of the masculine pronoun. As Jackson describes for his reader the benefits and beauties of the art of teaching, rather than its failings, the teacher once again gets the privilege of being male.

Much of this emphasis on gender is heightened by an additional linguistic issue within the text. Jackson uses what I have come to think of as a “language of desire” to discuss life within the elementary school classroom. This language, at least to the contemporary ear, casts a delicate sheen of sexuality over the work. He discusses the environment in schools as one of “social intimacy” (p. 8) and notes that “students must learn to employ their executive powers in the service of the teacher’s desires rather than their own. Even if it hurts” (p. 30). He talks of the need for students to “keep their private fantasies in check” (p. 32) and of their needs to promote “discipline” over “desires” (p. 36). It doesn’t take a Freudian expert to note the significance of Jackson’s word choice when he suggests that researchers should “probe more deeply” issues of student satisfaction (p. 54). More examples are evident throughout the text as Jackson connects motivation to maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain (p. 61), student motivation to desire (p. 74), and the concern for classroom order to a delicate balance of desires (p. 107). My goal here is not to suggest that Jackson has some sort of overtly or even covertly sexualized view of school

or that he is intentionally discussing it in these terms. Much more than a sophomoric attempt to point and giggle at suggestive language, in the context of highly sexist language, issues of gender become heightened. They also point to an area of hidden curriculum, the sexual nature of the individuals within the school setting, that is left hidden by Jackson and only teased out by later researchers like Sadker and Sadker.

### **Through the Curriculum Window: A Classroom View Turned Upside Down**

I have attempted to show that Jackson's book is woefully flawed due to its patriarchal language and clear sexist agenda, yet it is likewise not without its beauties nor without a richness that is in part owing to those same flaws. When challenged to consider Jackson's work in terms of the metaphor of "curriculum windows," without a doubt the window becomes that of the long, vertical rectangle of glass embedded in the side of the classroom door. One can easily imagine Jackson standing outside that door looking in on classroom activities, making notes about the "daily grind" he sees taking place within. This window, which gives the viewer a glimpse into the life that goes on in classrooms, is an apt metaphor for the many benefits and uses that can still be made by considering Jackson's work, including the importance of outside observation, the necessity of carefully considering the language we use when discussing education, the uses to which seemingly outdated notions can be put in observing contemporary phenomena, and a focus on the bodily, gendered experiences of teachers and students.

Much of the evidence given by Sadker and Sadker focuses on the need for outside observation. They demonstrate repeatedly that teachers dedicated to justice and equality can easily and unwittingly fall into sexist patterns of behavior, such as giving more attention and providing better, more detailed instruction to male students. This concern has been in the back of

my mind since I was first introduced to it early on in my teaching career as a graduate teaching associate. Not having the benefit of regular outside observation and feedback, I have often wondered whether or not my intentions to balance my classroom behavior as it relates to my students' genders are actually borne out in practice. Sadker and Sadker conclude in their final chapter, "Given the hectic pace of classroom life, clocked at several hundred to a thousand interactions daily, most teachers cannot monitor accurately who receives their attention. An outside observer – a colleague, parent, or even a student – must help" (p. 267). Apple (2004) also notes the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the teacher by suggesting that the attempt of the researcher to immerse herself in the life of the classroom is the only way that "teaching of a less overt, hidden curriculum can be documented" (p. 15). Whether one is interested in ameliorating a sexist agenda within the hidden curriculum, as Sadker and Sadker are, or simply interested in shedding light on unconsidered classroom phenomena, as is Apple and Jackson before him, the importance of the outside observer cannot be overestimated.

Ensuring that teachers and those observers are able to communicate with each other is also an important message Jackson imparts that has lasting implications. In a graduate education class I took several summers ago, I was one of only two students out of twenty-five or so who were not public school teachers. The teacher asked for a showing of hands of how many students in the class considered themselves to be intellectuals. I was the only one who raised my hand. I was also one of two who was there, not for the purposes of continuing education required for teacher certification, but for the purpose of obtaining a PhD and becoming a researcher of educational matters. The gap between the university researcher and the classroom practitioner, it would seem, is no less significant than it was when Jackson published his book in 1968. Although I would never condone nor align myself with his elitist perspective on teachers and

their intellectual capabilities, he does have a salient point that the two groups, one of dedicated outside observers and the other of equally dedicated entrenched troops, must continue to find ways to work together to examine and discuss what takes place in classroom settings.

Unfortunately, it is also important to ensure that the observers are dedicated to the improvement of schooling and not simply engaged in the draconian style of surveillance that many states and school districts are attempting in the name of teacher accountability. Teachers in one school district in Tennessee, with whom I am acquainted, tell the story of the district mandating their administration to observe and document their performance a certain number of times each year to help determine promotions and salary increases and to build cases to fire teachers if needed. The administration had to go to their school board and explain, using elementary math, that the number of times and mandated durations of observations was physically impossible, since it added up to more time than was in the school year. Administrators would have literally had to do nothing but observe their teachers and still would not have met the requirement.

Notions of the necessity of teacher accountability are washing through our society on many levels, from movies like *Bad Teacher* to laws requiring districts to put in place absurd plans like that described above. In my own state of Ohio, State Bill 5, which was eventually repealed by popular vote, included both funding cuts for police and fire departments and requirements for accountability measures for teachers. As the Bill's popular vote was approaching, I one day found myself overhearing a conversation by two women as we waited for our daughters' dance class to end. They were discussing how they would vote for the measure, and one expressed to the other how conflicted she felt, since she wanted to vote the Bill down in order to show support for the police and firemen but also wanted to vote for the Bill because she

felt teachers needed to be held accountable to do their jobs well. I was struck dumb in amazement at her different assessments of these groups of public servants, the police and firemen who held her esteem and unqualified support and the teachers who needed to be forced into doing good work. I couldn't help but conclude that sexism was at least in part responsible both for her attitude and that general perception in society, since it is an unquestionable truth that one big difference in those groups is gender demographics. I cannot prove this assertion, of course, but Jackson's work and its combination of sexist language and notions about the importance of observation forces us to consider that while observation can and should be a way to help teachers and students work together more effectively, issues like gender politics can easily turn observation into a hegemonic method of control.

Jackson's work, specifically the use of both patriarchal and provocative language, demonstrates the importance of examining the language we use to discuss education. For the purposes of this work, issues of sexist language and the effect it may have on the reader and the field is a necessary source of attack. This is not the only way in which this focus on the language of the field can bear fruit. Cherryholmes (1988) writes, as have others, about curriculum theorists' attachment to the language of death. She makes insightful connections between the field's linguistically volatile extremes and an inherent turbulence in the field due to its lack of tethering to a stable subject (See Chapter 7, "Poststructuralism, Pragmatism and Curriculum"). Cherryholmes also highlights the importance of language as she explains the poststructuralist perspective on speech as action and/or practice (pp. 7-8). Thus, the language researchers use to discuss education is implicated in the nature of education itself. Looking back at Jackson's language from this perspective, it is still ironic, yet not entirely surprising, that a focus on the

patriarchal nature of the hidden curriculum as clearly explicated by Sadker and Sadker was born out of the highly sexist and sexualized language Jackson uses to describe curriculum.

I am not suggesting that Jackson and his linguistic choices are responsible for the sexist nature of education, nor am I offering a harsh critique of those choices. We are not, in many real ways, in control of either the language we use or the way in which that language is interpreted by others. When sharing the title I had crafted for this paper, “Hide & Seek with Philip Jackson,” one of my colleagues snickered and said, “That sounds dirty.” I was at once horrified and gratified as my title became in a strangely recursive way an example of the way language sneaks up on us, even the language we are trying to wrestle into conveying our point. As I struggled to relate my thoughts on Jackson’s ideas, specifically my ideas on his sexist and sexualized language, I had devised a title that at least some would find sexually suggestive, even though this was not my intent. Again the importance and interplay of the outside observer is highlighted. Looking as just such an observer at Jackson’s work, I am able to see much in his linguistic choices which he likely never intended and probably never considered. Those linguistic choices may have resulted in a heightened awareness of gender and sexuality that lead those like Sadker and Sadker to question the ways in which the hidden curriculum works to reinforce the sexist nature of our society. The natural conclusion is that it is more than worthwhile, and maybe even necessary, that we examine historic and seminal texts (the linguistic connotations of that word choice are, I’m sure, lost on few) like Jackson’s for insights into the nature of injustice in our schools, for they can potentially lead us to the means to dismantle them.

Jackson’s linguistic choices, especially those that are sexist and sexual, lead us to consider carefully the ways that gender and sexuality are at play in a school setting. Sadker and Sadker take the connections between gender, sexuality, and education into a startlingly stark and

unpleasant light. They share that in 1994 one in six college women reported being raped (p. 183). Things have improved in the intervening years, but they have not improved nearly enough. The Campus Sexual Assault Study conducted in 2007 for the U.S. Department of Justice says that 19%, or roughly one in five, college women report having experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault, with 8.5%, roughly one in twelve, reporting rape (Krebs et al). Additionally, Sadker and Sadker highlight a disturbing connection between the ability to succeed in school and teenage pregnancy. They explain that “school frustration, failure, and neglect” contribute to the problem, as most students who drop out due to pregnancy were found to be “in academic trouble” as early as fifth grade “and by middle school were trapped in a cycle of failure” (p. 116). The issues reported are not just limited to students, however. “Of the 220,000 teachers in California, 145 lost their licenses between 1985 and 1990 because of sexual misconduct with students” (p. 114). This issue is also, unfortunately, not one of the past. An Associated Press investigation in 2007 discovered that from 2001-2005, 2570 teachers had their licenses revoked due to accusations of sexual misconduct. A continuing and timely issue, sex and sexuality in our schools peeks out from the hidden depths of Jackson’s text and is found in the daily reality of our classrooms.

### **Future Seeking and Finding: Observations Worth Making**

As a long-time lover and student of literature, I was somewhat stunned at a colleague’s assertion that we needed to address in our writing what the value might be in contemporary readers reading forty and fifty year old texts like Jackson’s. If Aristotle and Shakespeare are still relevant, Jackson and his early contemporaries should also certainly be, I reasoned. Among other pearls of wisdom found in Jackson’s lifetime of educational observation, teaching, and writing is

the value of history. As noted above, he has been known to encourage his students to turn to historic texts for answers to contemporary educational questions, and his works, although not very old by literary standards, can serve similar purposes for us today.

I recently attended The Rouge Forum, an educational conference dedicated to justice in education, where I sat in on a presentation discussing the Occupy the Department of Education event, the organizations behind it, and effective educational reform efforts. In that presentation, Johnson (Johnson & Poetter, 2012) argued that academic writing is powerless, useless, and pointless, since things like what I have written here and books like Jackson's are not widely read and certainly not read by those with the political power to make tangible change in our school systems. He says that their only value is that of allowing young professors to achieve tenure and secure positions that will allow them access to power to potentially affect change. Johnson spends much of his time and energy writing blogs and creating podcasts for his internet presence @ The Chalk Face, a site dedicated to meaningful and just educational reform. These kinds of writings, he suggests, are the kinds that have a better chance at having a positive impact on education.

Although I sympathize with his frustrations at the lack of a broad audience for educational research, I could not disagree more with his conclusions. The notion that one kind of writing has more power than another due to the number of readers it may have misses entirely the subtlety and pervasiveness of power. An author cannot control the way in which his work is interpreted nor the power it may have to affect change. Johnson's arguments are not entirely without merit, however. Part of the power of *Life in Classrooms* is that contemporary readers can easily see their own school experiences past and present in that historical portrait. In many ways, not much has changed since Jackson first wrote about the daily grind in 1968. At the same time,

a great deal has changed. Even since Sadker and Sadker (1994) wrote *Failing at Fairness*, we have seen impressive strides made in the achievement of girls in school. Girls now outperform boys in every assessment measure, from classroom grades to standardized tests, in all subjects, and a greater number of girls than boys go on to college (Francis, 2002). That said, more work is still to be done. Scholars have demonstrated that gendered silos of learning within higher education, where male students get the overwhelming majority of degrees that result in high paying jobs, contributes to the continuation of the salary gap between male and female wage earners (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2010; Freeman, Snyder & Connolly, 2005; St. Rose, 2010).

I am certain that Jackson did not set out to affect change in the ways female students achieve and it is impossible to determine what effect, if any, Jackson and Sadker and Sadker had on the improvements we have seen. Reading Jackson's work in today's climate of high-stakes testing and teacher accountability highlights the role of sexism in the disrespectful social attitude toward teachers. Education remains a highly feminized field, among one of the low paying degrees earned mostly by women. Unfortunately, just like the daily grind, the attitude of the academy, our government, and our society is much the same as it was when Jackson wrote his scathing critique of his unthinking, over-feminized teachers with limited vocabulary. Yet, a new reading of Jackson highlights the differences between the teachers he interviewed forty years ago and teachers today. Although a full examination of those differences is not within the scope of this paper, elementary teachers are prepared differently now than they were in 1968 and work today using different teaching and learning theories. I dare say if Jackson were to interview 50 exceptional teachers today, his experience would be significantly different, and that is a book I would love to read.

Macdonald (as cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2004) writes, “The world today is not the same, and a different reading of history is needed to help make sense of the contemporary world” (p. 217). As educational scholars, the impact our writing has is not in our control, regardless of the kind of writing it may be, but it will have an impact, for language has a power all its own. Language defines us, controls us, and gives us power, and when we set out, as Jackson did, to seek new ideas and concepts in our explorations, we find new things in our societies, in our schools, and in ourselves. Reading those kinds of works will change us and the way we view the world around us. They are bells that cannot be unrung. Writing those kinds of works will change the world around us, maybe not in the way we expect, but certainly, inevitably, and hopefully for the better.

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