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# Education as a Moral Responsibility: Foucault's Subjectivity and Confucian Cultivation

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EDUCATION AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY:  
FOUCAULT'S SUBJECTIVITY AND CONFUCIAN CULTIVATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy & Practice

by

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To Awen

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Research Questions .....	6
Chapters Overview .....	9
LITERATURE REVIEW: STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS—	
THE MAKING OF THE DOCILE SUBJECT .....	12
Overview .....	12
The Self as a Docile Subject .....	16
The Self as Hurried/Stressed .....	18
The Self as Undifferentiated/Assimilated .....	22
The Self as an Entrepreneur .....	26
The Self as Digitized .....	27
Conclusion—The Self as a Lifetime Achiever .....	29
FOUCAULT’S SUBJECTIVITY:	
POWER, CONTROL, AND LIMITATIONS .....	32
Technologies of the Self: Opposition .....	34
A Transgressing Subject Through Power and Domination.....	37
Subjectivity.....	39
The Disciplined and Punished Subject in Education.....	42
Writing as Autobiography .....	48
The Care of the Self .....	55
Conclusion .....	61
CONFUCIAN CULTIVATION OF <i>REN</i> (仁)	
AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY .....	68
Limitations of Cartesian Rights-Centered Individualism .....	72
Nature, Moral Goodness, and Cultivation in Confucian Thought .....	78
Rights and Moral Responsibility in Confucian Thought.....	89
Cultivation of <i>Ren</i> (仁) as Responsibility: Working toward Changes.....	98
EDUCATION AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	108
The Power of <i>Ren</i> in Ancient Chinese Rulings.....	111
Iowa Redistricting—Diversity the Political Way.....	117
Moral Responsibility in Higher Education.....	127

CONCLUSION: ENVISION AN EDUCATION AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY .....	134
REFERENCES .....	142
VITA .....	150

## ABSTRACT

The current state of education focusing on standards and assessment, according to Wu (2004), reduces education to “technical problems and individual deficiencies, subject to surveillance and quality managerial procedures” (p. 308). This work uses Foucault’s discourses of discipline and power to understand standardization as a political utility of control that makes children docile subjects through “a set of practices by which one can acquire and assimilate” (Foucault, 1988, p. 31). The process of standardization provides an ineffective grounding for achieving a worthwhile life as children are shaped as results-driven individuals (Shun & Wong, 2004). Baker (2008) believes that only through “a moral notion of reasoning” can a sense of responsibility be learnt (p. 191).

The Confucian cultivation of *Ren* represents a moral notion of reasoning. It understands the very foundation of human existence, not as an epistemology based on a dichotomous way of thinking, but as a moral responsibility. Not relying on an extensive accumulation of knowledge, the cultivation of *Ren* is based on a belief that all children are born with a moral goodness that can be led to a moral responsibility. Moreover, it emphasizes the carrying out of the benefit for others through respect, propriety, and relationship, rather than the seeking of rewards for one’s own.

Furthermore, I explain the Confucian notion of rights as embedded in the autonomy of the self. The more the self becomes morally responsible toward others, the more one’s rights are assured. I cite the United States law cases on higher education to support the claim that the political protection of rights may be necessary, but it is not the only condition to achieve autonomy and justice. In the case of Iowa Redistricting Policy, when a moral responsibility is

absent in the policymakers, an ideology of segregation continues to persist under the cover of diversity, which indirectly pushes the practice of discipline and assessment to its extreme. I conclude that the Confucian *Ren* celebrates a responsible living that cares children as lifetime achievers rather than results, rights-driven subjects. Moral responsibility can transform the existing power relations and make social, educational changes.

## INTRODUCTION

Raise our head high and drop our head low, we will find the *way*.

— Zisi<sup>1</sup>, 中庸 (*The Mean and Constancy*)<sup>2</sup>

My first experience with a parent-teacher conference in Iowa was deeply disturbing. I was ready to hear about moments of my preschooler interacting with her friends at school. But I was not ready at all to talk through pages of evaluation prepared by the teacher. Assessments? Why?

This is not why we send her to school, especially at the age of 4. Why is education so eager to hurry children (Hatch, 2002) to demonstrate skills like counting numbers? What is the point of assessment if children are reduced to numbers that do not reflect their capacity, especially for those who are beyond the maximum or below the minimum of the measurement scale?

Throughout the conversation, the focus on curriculum objectives and dimensions, as well as meticulous behavioral instructions and expectations, was overwhelming. I worried, what would it mean that some children are “the dream kids for teachers?” What would it mean that some children are identified as low-achieving?

I learned that my 4-year-old was assigned to a letter spot on a carpet, an intended get-together space for group activities. As everyone was assigned to fixed letter spots, those who were unruly were placed nearest to the teacher to guarantee obedience. The opportunity for recess would be

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<sup>1</sup> Zisi (子思, c. 481–402 BCE), Chinese philosopher. The only grandson of Confucius, Zisi is debatable the author of *The Mean and Constancy* (中庸).

<sup>2</sup> Texts in Chinese are translated by myself, including “中庸” (*The Mean and Constancy*), “论语” (*Analects*), “史记” (*Records of the Grand Historian*), “孟子” (*Mencius*), and “子道” (*Zidao, or The Way of the Son*).

taken away if one failed to be quiet and calm on the carpet. “Mom, Do I have to go school? Why do I go school?” my preschooler asked. So I asked myself, why do children think they are in school? What do we teach about why they are in school? Hatch (2002) explains,

Systems set up on the premise that there are certain standards that everyone must attain. We teach students that meeting those standards is the reason they are in school. Children learn that doing the work that’s put in front of them at a level that will get them by is the stuff of schooling. In such a system, performance goals dominate learning goals. School tasks have no intrinsic value: they are only means to achieve the extrinsic rewards or avoid the punishments built into the system. (p. 460)

A year later, I walked down the hallway once again to my now 5-year-old kindergartener’s classroom for another parent-teacher conference. I heard a voice calling out, so stiff and cold, “Stop right there!” I immediately froze, worried and confused about whether the voice was directed at me or someone else. A student was picked out of the walking line, and the teacher pointed fingers at the student, demanding, “Is that how you walk in line? Go back to the end!” From the student’s appalled face, I knew the child was traumatized by the experience. What has driven education to such a disciplinary extreme? Do we remember that we are working with complex human beings? According to Foucault (1995), discipline works at the cost of greater intervention. It embodies a tight and more meticulous implementation of control that disrespects humanity. “It is no longer the body, but the soul” that is being punished (p. 101). Discipline, i.e., the meticulous control of the operations of the body and soul, becomes “the formula of domination” (p. 137).

I realize that the extreme discipline I happened to observe at school that day does not necessarily reflect the teacher’s belief. In fact, as Apple (2013) acknowledges, educational transformation is a social movement in which educators are not the real engines. Rather, the

incident was driven by a system of punishment and assessments that has overrun education for operational convenience and control. It is so forcefully implemented that any consideration of individual difference is eliminated. The fact that discipline and assessment start so early in children's life shocked me, scared me, and shut me down at that moment in the school hallway.

With the "meticulousness of the regulations, fussiness of the inspections, and supervisions of the smallest fragment of life and the body" (Foucault, 1995, p. 140), young children's impulses for learning are stressed; going to school becomes a dull experience. Schools and classrooms have become so tedious that my kindergartener starts to count in minutes and asks, "Teacher, when will school be over? When can I go home?" If I can't help but feeling stressed by one incident, how do children face it day-by-day? My heart sinks at the fact that a "history of utilitarian rationalization of detail" (p. 139) has led education astray. Education has become a continuation of politics. Disciplines have become "a political anatomy of detail" for control and domination (p. 139). Capitalism has transformed itself into a pursuit of standardized investigation. As educators, how do we work against the excessively disciplined and standardized curriculum that fuels children with a strong sense of individual entitlement for the rewards of one's own? How do we work against the notion of children's nature as "fickle and unreliable, and an inferior function to be controlled by transcendental reason" (Kim, 2014, p. 87)? As children are trained to become result-driven subjects, how do we help them develop a sense of responsibility toward others that is essential for lifetime achievement?

As I feel my little girl's frustration with the school, I recall my 20 years of experience in America trying to assimilate to the place. Over time, I tell myself: maybe the memories before my journey to America, the culture, or the place I grew up in, gets in the way. Maybe I need to

let it go. Yet the experience of raising a child for the past five years puts an end to my doubt. I know that the current state of education my child now encounters is problematic—without the elements of standards and assessments, I witness magic in her; with it, I see limitations. Having shared my personal motivation for writing this work, I move on to the theoretical outline.

The current state of education focusing on discipline, standards, and assessments, according to Wu (2004), reduces education to “technical problems and individual deficiencies, subject to surveillance and quality managerial procedures” (p. 308). In this work, I use Foucault’s discourses of discipline and power to understand standardization as a process to make children docile subjects through “a set of practices by which one can acquire and assimilate” (Foucault, 1988, p. 31). Foucault (1995) writes,

[D]iscipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; one the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude,’ a ‘capacity,’ which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.... [D]isciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (p. 138)

The process of standardization trains children to be docile bodies that conform to a political utility of control and domination. It provides an ineffective grounding for achieving a worthwhile life; children are shaped as results-driven individuals that lack the moral consideration for others (Shun and Wong, 2004). Baker (2008) believes that only through “a moral notion of reasoning” (p. 191), a notion that appreciates the difference of others, can one learn a sense of responsibility. Different from the current state of education focusing on the imposition and standardization of knowledge, in Confucian thought, the accumulation of knowledge is

considered secondary to the cultivation of moral responsibility. In addition, Confucius believes that all children are born with a moral goodness that can be cultivated toward a moral responsibility. However, the innate moral goodness does not automatically lead to a moral responsibility. It needs to be cultivated through respect, propriety, and relationship.

For the main body of this work, I use Confucian philosophy—a discourse that is profoundly different from the Western discourses of subjectivity and power—to understand the very foundation of human existence, not as an epistemology based on dichotomous thinking, but as a moral responsibility based on the cultivation of *Ren* (i.e., benevolence for others). More specifically, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* understands the appreciation of differences, the working out of conflicting relations, or the “entitlement of others” (Chan, 2006, p. 245), as the precondition for individual autonomy, not the other way around. It emphasizes the carrying out of good intention for the benefit of others, rather than the seeking of rewards for one’s own.

In Confucian thought, human rights are approached differently from the Western way of claiming rights relying on legal and political forces. Rather, they are embedded in the autonomy of the self through the cultivation of moral goodness. The *Ren* self becomes autonomous and its rights are assured in carrying out the good intention for the benefit of others, rather than from the pursuit of one’s own rewards. Other scholars have also echoed on the value of bringing in a discourse that is profoundly different from the Western discourses of subjectivity and power (Apple, 2013, Smith, 2008). By embracing the complexity of relations, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* demonstrates a creative resiliency not only in achieving autonomy, but also in carrying out the good intention for the benefit of others, which is fundamental in lifetime achievements,

Confucian *Ren* understands that feelings of achievements do not dwell in pursuing one's own rewards, but in knowing that the benevolence for other people is delivered.

## **Research Questions**

Lifetime success in many ways is like the development of Chinese bamboo. In the beginning years, Chinese bamboo shows no visible signs of growth above the ground. Not until the fifth year do people observe miraculous growth. Real-life achievements take much longer than a few years and much more persistence than preparing for tests. This work concerns the following questions: first, how is moral and social responsibility understood in Foucault's and Confucian thought? Second, what kind of subjectivity is constituted in the current state of education focusing on disciplines and standards? And thirdly, how does Confucian cultivation of *Ren* guide the self toward a moral responsibility that complements the results-driven subjectivity?

Zizek (2006), Wu (2004), etc., acknowledges the challenge for educational change under the political utility of control<sup>3</sup>. Foucault also points out any effort, including resistance, produces new modes of subjectivity and power, and eventually becomes a tool of oppression. Given the challenge of educational change, the Confucian *Ren* as a moral responsibility provides useful insights to not only understand the limitation of the results-driven subjectivity, but also to make social changes possible. Confucius<sup>4</sup> believes that social changes can be brought about if patience and perseverance are cultivated toward a moral responsibility that carries out the good intention

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<sup>3</sup> Zizek (2006) writes, "It is better to do nothing than to engage in localized acts whose ultimate function is to make the system run more smoothly... It [resistance] is a revolt which poses no effective threat, bombarding the power with impossible demands" (p. 334).

<sup>4</sup> Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC) was a Chinese teacher and philosopher in the Spring and Autumn period in Chinese History.

for the benefit of others. Not relying on discipline and standard to impose knowledge, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* allows children to grow as lifetime achievers, rather than as rewards-driven subjects. It cultivates the patience and perseverance toward a moral responsibility that is critical in real-life achievements. It focuses on the carrying out of good intention for the benefit of others, rather than the pursuit of one's own reward.

More specifically, the externally imposed standards have little to do with the seeking of *Ren*. To learn is to cultivate *Ren*, not to accumulate knowledge. Learning is not associated with the habit of getting rewards from external incentives. On the contrary, the absence of external incentives signifies the initiation of *Ren*. The self, especially the leader, must choose *Ren* voluntarily. For example, when asked how to keep thieves under control, Confucius replies, "If your highness is not greedy, people would not steal, even if you reward them for doing so" (12: 18). Using this analogy, if educators allow education to be the pursuit of rewards, we only allow punishment and control to prevail. Just like the key to understanding thieves is to see the "greed" in rulers, the key to understanding standards is to see them as rooted in the technology of control and dominance.

Like Foucault, Confucius sees discipline as authority that trains children to conform to a political utility of control, rather than as a way to encourage them to grow as autonomous and morally responsible individuals. To Confucius, discipline does not bond people together, nor do they serve the purpose of working toward the common good. Zisi (2012) in *The Mean and Constancy* records, "It is frivolous and ineffective to transform people with the use of command or authority" (33). The rewards-driven subjectivity conforming to authority essentially takes away the self's impulse to feel for others. Confucius sees no other way but to encourage the self-

cultivation of *Ren* as a moral responsibility. Mencius (2012) adds to this point in *Mencius*, “We use moral principles to save a nation from drowning in a corruption. We use hands to pull a sister-in-law from drowning in water. Why, do you say we should rescue a corrupting nation with my hands” (4A:13)?

The art of archery is a good example to demonstrate the importance of moral cultivation in education. Zisi (2012) in *The Mean and Constancy* writes, “In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns around and seeks the cause of his failure in himself” (9). In the instance of archery, we can’t blame the bow or the wind, nor the archer, for missing the target, just like we can’t blame the children, teachers, and schools for not getting the outcomes. The art of the archery lies in the archer’s calm aiming and releasing of the bow. Similarly, the art of education lies in helping children to become lifetime achievers, rather than to pressure, standardize, and punish them for the purpose of governance. As the Master indicates, we turn to the moral cultivation of the self.

In short, the cultivation of moral responsibility complements the results-driven subjectivity and allows children to grow as autonomous, responsible individuals capable of lifetime achievements. Confucius says, “One can subjugate the commander of a large army, yet, one can never bend the will of common people” (9: 26). If education continues to construct children as results-driven subjects, social change for the betterment of all would not be possible. However, if education sets the will of children as a moral responsibility toward others, children can do wonderful things, not only in their own lives, but also to others and society.

## Chapters Overview

In Chapter One and Two, I introduce and review standardization and its effects on the self accordingly. In Chapter Three, I rely on Foucault's discourses of discipline, technologies of the self, and governmentality, to understand how the self is disempowered as it engages with an education of standardization. In Chapter Four, I use Confucian thought to explain how the self is empowered through a lifelong cultivation of *Ren* as a moral responsibility, and becomes autonomous and capable of transforming the existing power relations. While both Foucault's discourses and Confucian thoughts have a focus on the interchanging dynamics of order and chaos, Foucault emphasizes the discursive transgression of power relations, whereas Confucius embraces and cultivates the uniqueness of human nature as morally responsible.

In Chapter Five, I focus on the application of Confucian cultivation of *Ren* and its implication for education. I use legends in ancient China to show that the practice of *Ren* modeled by rulers has tremendous educational, social power beyond the typical idea of education associated with schools, classrooms, and knowledge. The practice of *Ren* modeled by rulers sets up a good example for people to learn and develop a moral responsibility. This model of *Ren* does not rely on external laws to reinforce conformity; instead it is based on a belief that people are the foundation of the states and that people by nature have the moral goodness to recognize *Ren*. In other words, although not all people are *Ren*, but by nature they can recognize *Ren*. Together the ruler's practice of *Ren* and people's recognition of *Ren* can transform the established social, political power. Furthermore, I use the case of Iowa Redistricting Policy to argue that, when a moral responsibility is absent in those leading and establishing policy for education, education does not deliver the equality of educational opportunity for all children. Lastly, I cite the United

States law cases on academic autonomy to support the claim that people's moral responsibility plays a critical role in the protection of academic autonomy, which complements the legal enforcement.

I conclude that the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* as a moral responsibility provides helpful insight to understand the limitation of the current state of education focusing on standards. It reminds educators that children, not the governance of control, are the foundation of the states. To work toward the social, educational change oriented for the common good, education needs to care children as lifetime achievers, rather than to train them as results-, rights-driven agents. Education should encourage a moral responsibility in children, rather than to reinforce a subjectivity that seeks only reward for oneself. In children's eyes, there is no binary of words and pictures, orders and chaos, reasons and instincts, or rights and responsibility. They exist only because people construct them.

To finish, Foucault's deconstruction of discipline and punishment, technologies of the self, and governmentality, help to understand how power relations operate. Yet, without connecting to Confucian thought, I could not see a way that addresses the limitation of standardization. I'm able to connect with the consideration of people as the foundation of the states, which reveres the uniqueness of human nature as morally responsible. Confucius understands that, what truly bonds people together, is not the dominant economic or political power, but the moral responsibility practiced by both the leaders and people. Maybe invisible at times, people's moral responsibility will rise above circumstances and transform the existing power relations. Zisi (2012) writes, "Nothing is more visible than when it is hidden" (*The Mean and Constancy*, 1).

In summary, education should be a lifelong cultivation of moral and social responsibility. It is not simply the vocational preparation as Dewey opposes, nor a “technical mutation” of hierarchy and control as Foucault opposes (Foucault, 1995, p. 147). Most importantly, education should not be reduced to numbers that can be standardized, as Taubman (2009) and others oppose.

Education should be a cultivation of *Ren* as moral, social responsibility: “help others whenever we wish to do the same to ourselves; enable others to express themselves and communicate whenever we wish to accomplish the same” (*Analects*, 12: 2). Without cultivating a moral responsibility in children, education is limited to the accumulation of knowledge that is results-, rights-driven; without it, children are trained and limited as agents that conform to a political utility of control, rather than as autonomous, responsible individuals. Moral responsibility as *Ren* can complement the political, legal enforcements in working toward the betterment for all.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS—THE MAKING OF THE DOCILE SUBJECT**

On February 27, 2017, columnist Hannah-Jones writes in *The New York Times*, “Have We Lost Sight of the Promise of Public Schools?” The author asks these questions: “Is public school a dead end? Is education oriented toward the proliferation of profit-driven and privately funded? Would public school still matter? Have we forgotten what ‘public’ really means?” These questions are not new, and yet still provoking and fundamental. If the trend of public education complying to capitalism has become inevitable, why do people’s voices like Hannah-Jones’ rail against the labeling of public school as an industry? How does the corporation of education work through standards and assessments on people? How does an education focusing on standards and assessments disempower people in the mask of fair competition and free market choice? This chapter reviews standards and assessments and their effects on students, teachers, and educators. I start with a brief historic overview of public school, and then move on to a more detailed literature review on standards and assessments presented as the following: self as subjectivity, self as hurried/stressed, self as undifferentiated/assimilated, self as entrepreneurs, self as digitized. I conclude with the self as a lifetime achiever. For the purpose of discussion, I include voices of both proponents and opponents.

### **Overview**

The word “public” derives from the Latin word *publicus*, meaning “of the people.” It used to stand for a communal ownership of institutions and society that supports common good over individual advancement. This is how public infrastructure such as public school came into place

in the United States. Becoming widespread in the 1800s, according to Hannah-Jones (2007), public school was not intended to provide advantages for any particular individuals, but instead sought to shuffle “the wealthy and working class” in a way that would create a common sense of citizenship and national identity. However, this was not the case in practice. Not until the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s did African Americans start to have the same legal rights to access public schools. Nevertheless, according to Hannah-Jones, the limited sense of public good “was a unifying force because it meant that the rich and the poor, the powerful and the meek, shared the spoils— as well as burdens—of this messy democracy.”

After the 1950s, just as African Americans started to gain access to public schools, the voucher movement offered and supported white Americans to pay for private schools that worked against school desegregation and toward privatization. From the beginning, privatization was a convenient and effective way to break the understanding of public schools and set people apart once again. By cutting costs and maximize competition among schools, privatization sets public schools in a competitive free-market-based system of school choice. By doing so, it eliminates the geographically based system of public education. According to Coffman (1993), modern democratic society has no absolute power like kings of ancient Egypt or China, but rather a lot of rulers with greater or lesser power, in Foucault’s term, the collective dimensions of governmental powers. Coffman writes, “It is not their control of the food supply or of the economy in general, but instead the educational system that concerns us” (p. 5).

Starting in the 1950s, standards and assessment have been the instrument for educational reform driven by political rather than educational purposes. According to Gratz (2000), the primary purposes of standards and assessments are two-fold: to push students to learn faster and

prepare them for competitions in a global market, and to address the achievement disparity between high- and low-achieving students. Standards proponent Hauser (1999) argues that, without raising standards, American education will continue to be “a vast sorting system based largely on social class and racial background, with the outcome determined for many children before the game began” (p. 64). Following Hauser’s argument, standards and assessments can combat achievement gap, thus work against the system’s built-in failure destined for low-achieving students. With all respect to the author’s good intention, do standards and assessments deliver their vision? Are they improving the low-achieving?

Little evidence in the literature supports the claimed causal link between standards and achievements. Allen (1991) argues that in their empirical study, the adoption of higher standards in science class results in ninth graders’ achievement improvement. In the study, a proportion of ninth graders were placed in a more demanding science class whereas the rest remained in the less rigorous version. Students in the controlled group were required to work extra, either on their own or get tutoring from peer and teacher, before and or after school, until they scored 100% on the test. Making a causal link between higher standards and achievements, the author also points out that students, when asked, attributed their three-week science success to their own effort and motivation rather than to the enforcement of higher standards. It is thus questionable whether the observed improvement in science should be attributed to extrinsic factors such as standards or to intrinsic factors, such as student motivation and effort. The enforced standards may have provoked a short-term boost of incentive for learning science, but their long-term effect is unknown.

On the other side, opponents of standards have questioned the assumed causality between standards and achievements, and are concerned about their negative impacts on students and teachers. Hatch (2002) asserts, “Using the threat of failure as a tool to motivate young children and their teachers is an absurd notion that characterizes a system designed to punish rather than improve” (p. 459). Gratz (2000) also points out that standards and assessments are designed primarily to identify and punish rather than to improve “poor-performing” schools and students (p. 683). The author reports, “If you look at the evidence about kids retained, they don’t get better over the long time. They fell further behind” (p. 686). It is necessary to point out here that standards designed to identify the poor-performing are not the same as competing in the world economy. The one-size-fit-for-all standard fails to address the complexity of achievement gap in which students’ social, cultural, and racial background play a role.

Many other researchers converge on this point. Nave (2000) et al. agree that the effectiveness of standards-based movement in raising student achievement is still an open question. The author also points out that the standards-based movement is a “reform on the cheap” (p. 129). Brady (2000) explains, capitalists in power seek inexpensive strategies and quick fixes to education giving the appearance of solutions. Eisner (2001) argues that standards and assessments reduce learning to a causality between standards and entitlements of the self (p. 370). They fail the “ethical commitment to do what is right” for children (Hatch, 2002, p. 461).

These researchers agree that in the process of standardization, all children, not just the poor-performing, are prepared as docile subjects for the market of global competition. Eisner (2001) writes, “Education has evolved from a human development serving personal and civic needs into a *product* our nations produce to compete in a global economy” (p. 370). Standards and

assessments have become the enforced exercise, in Plato's term, "the element of slavery," for the executions of a purpose other than the development of children. They function to enslave people. This review focuses on how standards and assessments operate and shape the self as a docile subject, hurried/stressed, undifferentiated/assimilated, as entrepreneurs, digitalized, as well as how they limit the self as a lifetime achiever.

### **The Self as a Docile Subject**

The most important and greatest puzzle which every man faces is himself.

— Boring, 1950

Based on Foucault's theorization of governmentality, Raaper (2017) argues that the "neoliberal discourses of accountability have turned assessments into a complex technology of governmentality that manages educational processes as well as student subjectivities" (p. 322). Discipline as a specific technique of power "acts on individuals by approaching them both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (p. 322). Comparing two universities that are impacted by neoliberalism to a various extent, Raaper's study reports that, like any other disciplinary technology, assessments constrain and control not only academics but also people's subjectivity. Standards act as engines for generating products. Taubman (2009) speaks specifically on the subjectivity of supervisors and student teachers. The author explains that, teaching, when aligned to a set of standards and driven by the need to grade them, ignores the complexity—"the autobiographical, situational, and temporal, relational, contingency—of the specific class on a particular day" (p. 123). Raaper adds that the imbalanced power relation between the assessor and assessed has been shifted to a "complex field of politics shaped by global, national, and

institutional contexts” (p. 335). Davies and Bansel (2010) argue that technologies of assessments “produce specific types of academic subjects that fit with the programmatic ambitions of government” (p. 9).

As mentioned above, Raaper and Taubman et al. consider standards and assessments as disciplinary power through Foucault’s governmentality through which children are trained as docile subjects. To differ a little, Olssen (2006) differentiates assessments from standards. To some extent, the differentiation of assessment and standards makes sense because children practice standards on a daily basis without necessarily feeling assessed all the time. Thus the impact of assessments may be more indirect than the impact of standards. In a way, standards work as disciplines that precondition children as docile subjects for the purpose of assessments that serves for governmentality of control. Olssen argues that understandings of standards and assessments must include discourses of both discipline and governmentality, for how subjectivity is “to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what method” (Foucault, 1997, p. 89) are all intertwined and inseparable.

In addition to Foucault’s concepts of discipline and governmentality, rationality is another pivotal lens the literature uses to discuss the effects of standards and assessments. Foucault (2001) theorizes power relations as demonstrating a history of rationality, always pursued differently from period to period and in various ways as the more effective means of governance (p. 325). Eisner (2001) argues that the use of standards and assessments is only necessary if people are to function rationally. “Measurement is one way to describe the world and quantification is not good for everything” (p. 368). Trained to become docile subjects, children are expected to function rationally and effectively. The management of children as rational

subjects secures the effectiveness of governance. “A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost” (Foucault, 1980, p. 155), or in Marshal’s (1995) term *Busnoper*, a particular form of bio-power that is “redirected at the subjectivity of the person, not through the body but through the mind” (p. 322).

### **The Self as Hurried/Stressed**

Hatch (2002) sees the proliferation of standards and assessments as threats to early childhood education. “It’s wrong to label a 7-year-old second-grader a failure; it is criminal to do it to a 4-year-old preschooler” (p. 459). To Hatch, it is totally inappropriate to expect children at the age of 4 to perform on academic tasks and label some as failure. It does little benefit but to damage their future achievements. Boud and Falchikov (2007) also respond to the hurriedness of assessments on children that damages their future confidence. In *The Hurried Child*, Elkind (1994) argues that young children are put under debilitating stress in a curriculum dominated by standards and assessments. Homework has been increased, free play is curtailed and constructed toward academic learning, recess is shortened or eliminated, and so on. Children are stressed because their need to play and be physically active is overthrown for mandatory, seated exercises on worksheets. Recall Plato’s thoughts on learning as playing, “There should be no element of slavery in learning. Enforced exercise does no harm to the body, but enforced learning will not stay in the mind. So avoid compulsion, and let your children’s lessons take the form of play” (Cited in Eisner, 2001, p. 371). Elkind warns, “When young people’s developmental needs...are ignored, when their human differences in growth rates and behavior are deemed deviant, and when they are given little or no space to live and to grow, they are stressed” (p.

188). Instead of rushing children to achieve and perform, the author argues that waiting, until they are ready, shows no academic disadvantage in the long term.

Lynott and Logue (1993) argue against Elkind's et al. perspectives on the hurriedness of children. First, the authors assert that claims of the hurried child authors fail to take into account the diverse experiences of contemporary American children from a historical perspective. In other words, harsh realities for many African American children in the past are overlooked. The authors argue that the "lower class children have always grown up faster than their middle and upper class counterparts" and "hurrying is more problematic for middle class children because the lower class children see the 'need' for early independence whereas hurried middle class children today do not" (p. 481). Note here that the authors limit the independence of African American children as the ability to earn a living rather than to achieve lifetime fulfillment. Educators know well that the need to survive cannot substitute for the need of lifetime achievements. Standards and assessments limits and trains children, particularly African American children, to a mere physical survival of living.

Lynott and Logue (1993) also criticize that families of the past have been romanticized by the "hurried child writers." They argue that the way children are raised has always been deemed problematic in every historical era (p. 487). Again the authors ambiguously equate the challenge of feeding children in the past to the challenge of living at one's full potential. The authors critique that the hurried child writers fail to acknowledge the decreased empirical evidences of behaviors in youth, such as drug use. However, one question remains: the evidence of decreased behaviors itself cannot simply be claimed as the outcome of standards and assessments. It is only wishful thinking that there's a causal link between decreased behaviors and external standards

and assessments in evidence. As mentioned before, Allen's (1991) study is an example of such empirical evidences.

Going back to the theme of this section, stress is contagious. It passes back and forth between teachers and children. Stressed teachers teach to the test and unfairly seek ways to eliminate the low-performing scores. Taubman (2009) refers to teachers' stress as the seduction of a profession.

The best way we educators can address serious social, political and economic problems is to comply with regulatory agencies and their mandated audit practices, subject ourselves to control from afar, render ourselves and our situations as quantifiable data, and surrender to normalizing discourses that drain our subjectivities. (p. 144)

Also speaking to the stress of being audited in a system of standards and assessments, Power (2003) describes depressed, exhausted, and nervous teachers.

The auditee is undoubtedly a complex being simultaneously devious and depressed; she is skilled at games of compliance but exhausted and cynical about them too; she is nervous about the empty certificates of comfort that get produced... She fears the mediocrity of the auditors at the same time as she regrets their "powerlessness to discipline the "really bad guys;" she loathes the time wasted in rituals of inspections but accepts that this is probably what "we deserve;" she sees the excellent and competent suffer as they attempt to deal with the demands of quality assurance at the same time as the idle and incompetent escape its worst excesses... but wonders why, after all her years of training, she is not trusted as an expert anymore. (p. 125)

Taubman (2009) breaks down teachers' stress into four reasons: the fear of dwindling resources, the shame of failing to meet up the heroic figure portrayed in media, the fantasy that teaching is responsible to everything, and the mourning for the "lost idea of racial integration and eradication of poverty" (p. 128). According to Taubman, standards and assessments are offered for teachers, in the name of empowerment, in order to make the stress more manageable. While the American public may not "have any idea about the seriousness of efforts to dismantle public

education, piece by piece,” teachers are seduced into “busily grading, assessing, evaluating, ranking, rating, and of course preparing for the next test” (p. 127). Yet at the same time, they feel lost, “Who am I or what am I? A prompter for the big screen?” The “hollowing of teacher identities and intellectual work” (p. 105) aggregates rather than alleviates the stress day-by-day. Herein lies the irony of stress management for teachers.

Beal and Hendry (2012) investigate another form of irony: parental stress of school choice. As standards and assessments market schools as products and data that are now available to be compared, parents are given the impression of empowerment hoping that their input and participation can lead to better match of a school for their children. The process is complicated and stressful. The stress lies in not only that the “parents’ school choice behavior does not always reflect rational choice theory” as presented in school data (p. 524), but also that school choice policies fail to consider “parents’ personal histories and class, racial, ethnic background, and/or the racial and socioeconomic divisions in school systems” (p. 527). Again, the stress lies in the irony of empowerment masked as empowerment. To explain, the disguised empowerment of choice casts parents as consumers but only with the condition of accepting education as standards and assessment. In addition, minority and low-income parents are disempowered because school choice policies “privilege middle-class, professional parents with the time and flexibility to navigate complex school choice systems.” The authors conclude, “The result is a segregated, homogeneous student population” (p. 525).

In short, the limiting standards and hurried assessments successfully clone the macro social, racial, and class stress in teachers and parents into the micro school and classroom settings. Cited by Beal and Hendry, “School-wide desegregation ‘may not be synonymous with desegregation at

the classroom level” (p. 526). Standards and assessments serve as the “immutable mobiles” that “can move across context and cross local, state, and national borders, from one community of practice to another, and transforming these as they go, but not being themselves transformed in the process” (Taubman, 2009, p. 114). As contagious as it can be, stress consumes teachers, students, and parents.

### **The Self as Undifferentiated/Assimilated**

Eisner (2001) argues that, rested on rationalization and quantification, standards and assessments promote comparison in student performance without consideration of their differences. In addition, standards and assessments promote comparison in outcomes of schools without consideration of different curricula, approaches of teaching, and allocation of time for instruction. Taubman (2009) in *Teaching by Numbers* adds that comparison-based standards ignores the larger social, political, or economic complications but instead focuses on the mechanism of individual deficiencies. “Never sensitive to the specificity of context, history, or unique experiences, differences are cast as faults of students, teachers, schools, or families” (p. 114-117).

To Taubman (2009), teaching to the comparison-based standards is reduced to enforcements of numbers. Losing the complexity and contingency, this form of teaching has less and less to do with the students. It becomes more and more a process of maximizing output and minimizing input, a game pertaining not to the differences and meanings in learning, but rather to the efficiency of products. As the teacher’s input and interaction with students in classrooms become silent, teaching by standards can easily be replaced by mechanics and machines. Ball (2015)

argues that the technology of governance requires educational practitioners to “set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live in an existence of calculation” (p. 213).

What should be the purpose of educational standards and assessments? Looking back, the recognition of standards and assessments as the understanding of differences is not new. Walsh (1985) argues that assessments are meaningful only if differences of children and their environment are taken into consideration, otherwise assessments will remain harmful, inaccurate, and inappropriate. Starting in the 1900s, assessments were mainly a means to understand rather than to normalize individual difference (as well as to identify specific abilities). On the one side, Walsh (1985) asserts that the “tests and assessments have had tremendous utility for individuals, for organizations, and for a society concerned with the development and nurturance of individual potential and the facilitation of productivity and high quality of life” (p. 370). On the other side, Walsh points out, the controversy of using standardized tests and to what extent, are not technical, statistical, or methodological, but an intended value choice.

More specifically, by design, assessments allow the systems to “select some and reject others” (Walsh, p. 392). In other words, standards and assessments disregard the pre-existing low achievements that are the results of previous conditions, such as the inequality of educational opportunities. Standards and assessments disregard the social, racial, and family background, and continue to reinforce and perpetuate the achievement gap in a meritocratic system of seemingly fair competition and free market. Thus “any discussion of race differences in test performance must account for the fact that blacks and whites develop in drastically different socioeconomic, cultural, and educational environments” (p. 379). Walsh points out, “Tests constructed by and for the cultural majority [i.e. the white middle-class] are simply inappropriate and unfair. Walsh cites

Jensen's (1969) study of intelligence that attributes the observed difference of intelligence in white and African American children primarily to genetic factors. Jensen's failure to take into account the differences of socioeconomic, cultural, and educational environment, has led to a widespread public outrage at the time. Taubman (2009) laments on the unchanged ideology of segregation behind the assimilation of differences.

[O]ur schools are more segregated today than at any time since *Brown vs. Board of Education* [1954]... yet it is impossible to hear a discussion of this fact... We hear a good deal of talk about diversity..., but one would assume from reading the standard that we live in an integrated society, where diversity is really only about being sensitive to the Other's cultural differences [original capitalization]. We also hear much about closing the achievement gap but not about closing the economic gap or closing the racial gap. (p. 153-154)

In addition to examining the assimilation of differences as segregation, Shahjahan (2011) critiques that evidence-based education continues a colonial discourse that promotes "hierarchies of knowledge and monocultures of the mind" (p. 182). From an anticolonial perspective, Shahjahan argues that standards in evidence-based education shares a common ground with colonial schooling in that the "irrational, feminine, i.e., the differences, are considered as the colonized inferior to the rational, masculine, of the colonizers" (p. 184). Without the violence of conquest, standards represent a benevolent form of assimilation "by construing the superiority of rationality as symbol of civilization, a gift only the most civilized mind can render" (p. 186).

On the subject of what to teach to children, politics of standards and assessments assume that whatever is known by the dominant elites should be taught to the next generation. Eisner (2001) opposes the notion of teaching to a fixed curriculum. Brady (2000) adds that teaching should focus on the student's "here and now" rather than the "preprocessed, canned information" (p. 651). Teaching should be about discovering where children are, what their strengths are, and

where additional guidance is needed, i.e., to discover the uniqueness and differences, rather than to strip away any autobiographical characteristics. According to Eisner, educational evaluation “takes time, it is intensive and complex... subtle, particularly if used to provide information to improve the process of teaching and learning” (p. 369). The author suggests that educational assessments need to increase variances to better understand differences. The real measure of educational achievement should be “what students do with what they learn when they can do what they want to do” (p. 370).

Lastly, standards and assessments demand a fact-based curriculum that promotes a singular process of recalling rather than multiple ways of learning. According to Brady (2000), how children process information involves more than just recalling facts. Learning involves processes of categorizing, translating, hypothesizing, valuing, generalizing, or synthesizing, to name a few. Standards- and assessments-enforced curricula reduce learning to a process of recalling that lacks the genuine intellectual challenge. The intellectual dullness sets limitations in the curious mind and often turns students off. Cook (1951) writes about the consequences of the elimination of individual difference, particularly in students with higher ability.

As long as children of all the people remain in school, it will be impossible to reduce the variability of instructional groups significantly through promotion policies. [If insisted], the efficiency of the school is reduced through the accumulation of low-ability pupils and the lessening of educational opportunities for the more able. (p. 21)

In summary, standards and assessments ignore student uniqueness, reduce teaching to a fixed curriculum, and dwindle down intellectual challenge. They serve to assimilate differences and train children to become docile subjects that conforms to the political utility of control. I finish this section with Lipman’s (2004) summary.

Students are reduced to test scores, future slots in the labor market, prison numbers and possible cannon fodder in military conquests. Teachers are reduced to technicians and supervisors in the education assembly line—“objects” rather than “subjects” of history. This system is fundamentally about the negation of human agency. (p. 179)

### **The Self as an Entrepreneur**

From a Foucauldian (2004) perspective, standards and assessments rest in diffuse power that optimizes outcome and favors minimum input as the ideal path of governance. Rationalization plays a central role in the process of optimization. Olssen (2006) argues, in neoliberalism, human individuals are to be shaped in terms of a classification of skills, knowledge, and ability—in other words, to become “entrepreneurial and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals” (p. 219). A neoliberal education of standards and assessments actively creates conditions for an effective market order, extending economic criteria into educational spheres. Cited by Olssen, standards and assessments universalize the “entrepreneurial form through the promotion of an enterprise culture” (p. 218). Besley and Peter (2007) also argue that individuals learn to “refashion themselves as the ‘entrepreneurs’ who apply certain managerial, economic, and actuarial techniques to themselves” (p. 164).

Furthermore, according to Olssen (2006), preparations of entrepreneurial individuals require a “redefining of law and of juridical institutions so that they function to correct the market mechanism and discipline the non-entrepreneurial behavior” (p. 218). They require a flexible rationalism in which the concept of lifelong learning is often used as “the magic spell in the discourse of educational policymakers” (Lambeir, 2000, p. 350). Marshal (1996) points out that, what constitutes the neoliberal discourse of lifelong learning are skills and information. In this sense, learning as the entrepreneurial self is reduced to skills that must adapt over and over again

for external market demands. Yet the self is never fast enough to update skills in order to achieve job security. As the survival responsibility is shifted from the system to the self, this entrepreneurial self, although competent of updating skills demanded by the market of opportunity, and presumably rational as well, can never live its life independently from the market demand.

Trained to be rational and responsible for its autonomy under the conditions of updating skills and information demanded by the market, the entrepreneurial self in an entrepreneurial culture enables the “abolition of welfare obligations of states” (Olssen, p. 221). “Not only must individuals learn, but they must learn to recognize what to learn, and what and when to forget what to learn when circumstances demand it” (p. 224). In short, an entrepreneurial culture promoted by standards and assessments not only limits learning to an individual pursuit of information, it also avoids social responsibility under the cover of autonomy.

### **The Self as Digitized**

Friedman (2006) in *The World is Flat* presents a world of rapid technological competition in which the key for people’s thriving is to reorient learning as “digitized” (p. 278). According to the author, standards and assessments presented in the digital world make students work harder and get teachers motivated. Friedman writes, “The best way to make kids love learning is either to instill in them a sense of curiosity, by great teaching, or stimulate their own innate curiosity by making available to them all the technologies of the flat-world platform” (p. 304). This part of the review concerns the following questions: How would technologies of the flat-world stimulate innate curiosity? Why are corporations so invested in education testing? How does school-based

digital learning impact children? What are the consequences of learning experienced in the digital world?

The introduction of internet access in schools and its hidden effects on learning concern many researchers. To start with, Hope (2015) explores how e-safety policy documents serve to limit individual thought. The author construes the e-safety agenda “as a more subtle description of the governmentality strategy as it encourages certain forms of social actions while restricting the possibility of other types” (p. 345). Four themes arise in the research as the consequences of this agenda: the homogeneous construction of online children, the muting of children voices, the responsibility of children, and the diagnostic inflation of risks.

Hope (2015) reports that in the e-safety policy, ambiguity exists in the definition of child age and the social complexity of children. According to the author, the policy speaks of a child who may not exist or who exists merely as an artifact. The homogeneous representation of children creates a “crude simulacrum” that portrays them as potentially at-risk rather than as “one of being” (p. 345-346). Children are no longer considered the key social actors that are capable of affecting policy and practice. Furthermore, children’s views are dismissed as irrational rather than as providing insight. Adult perceptions dominate the policy, for example, “We need to keep listening to parents and those who work with children, [but not the children themselves]” (p. 347). As children are positioned as both at-risk and irrational, the e-safety policy ignores the imbalanced power between children and adults, however, holds children responsible for appropriate online conduct. By shifting the responsibility away from the system, children are mobilized “as agents of social control” (p. 348) and trained into “self-policing behaviors” (p. 350). Hope summarizes, notions of children becoming self-policing justify “the advocacy of

crude, generic controls” that serve “to cast a net of social control wider while encouraging students to accept dominant policy discourses” (p. 350). In short, school-based digital learning prescribes only the standards and judgements that are deemed acceptable by the system.

O’Brien et al. (2014) argue that e-learning technology, within a standardized framework, relentlessly sets limitations for the acceptable and unacceptable. It defines “not only what one should learn but also how one should learn” (p. 285). It is not just a technology, but a technology of disciplinary power. E-learning allows programmers to integrate standards, goals, and other descriptions into the design. It embeds the encoded standards deeper into the lives of its users. O’Brien et al. writes, “With every iteration of the attempt to perfect the technology, we are—whether our role is to be a spider or a fly—less and less able to live without the webs that we weave and that entrap us” (p. 293). In short, e-learning and e-safety policy limit learning to the promotion of standards for the purpose of dominance and control.

### **Conclusion—The Self as a Lifetime Achiever**

Thacher (1999) raises a critical question: “Why today’s children arrive at our privileged school doors with social skills... *far less* developed than those of prior generations” (p. 51)? Where does the “odd feeling of powerlessness” come from? (Taubman, p. 94). What has the current state of education focusing on standards and assessments been doing to children? In this review, I have so far focused on the limitation of standardization as a process to train children to become docile subjects that conforms to a political utility of control and domination. It provides an ineffective grounding for achieving a worthwhile life. Eisner (2001) believes that, “The

function of schooling is not to enable students to do better in school. The function of schooling is to enable students to do better in life” (p. 369).

First of all, standardization misses the purpose of education for challenging conversations. Students are trained to yield away from challenging conversations that are portrayed as difficult and confrontational, but instead seek comfort in instant rewards. They find ways to cut corners in studying for the test and plan their time accordingly. Eisner (2001) argues that the process of rational planning and learning just for the grade has very little to do with an intellectual disposition where “risk-taking, exploration, uncertainty, and speculation” can emerge. These dispositions are in fact essential for lifetime achievement.

Second, an education of standards and assessment train children into a belief of individual entitlement for rewards that is isolated from their responsibility for others and society. From a social perspective, Coffman (1993) argues that education should not be limited to “subject-matter specifics, but include... social sensitivity and personal adjustment, the attitudes and values necessary for functioning as members of democratic society” (p. 6). The author cites,

[T]ests have thus far been developed only for the objective concerned with the students’ *intellectual* development, or with his purely *rational* behavior [original italics]. Objectives concerned with his non-rational behavior, or objectives concerned with his emotional behavior, or objectives concerned with such things as artistic and aesthetic values and tastes, moral values... etc. have been seriously neglected in educational measurement. (p. 7)

When education is set for individual reward, notions of inclusiveness, tolerance, and solidarity with others are excluded. Eisner points out that educators need to redirect education toward the “processes, conditions, and culture that are closer to the heart of education” (p. 372). Children need a fresh and humane vision of education instead of the current state of standards

that focuses on the production of an indifferent, docile subject. They need an education that can help them become responsible humans, who can shape the society, rather than being shaped as docile bodies.

This review adds to the growing body of literature on a critical perspective of standards and assessments. Observing my daughter's experience with standards and assessments at school, I believe that rushing into the practice of standards and forcing out children's impulse for playing bring little benefit to lifetime achievement; rather they serve the purposes of governance, rationalization, commodification, assimilation, segregation, and colonization. Standards and assessments de-humanize children, knowledge and learning. "Why do we continue on educational reforms that have already been tried and found ineffective in the past" (Coffman, p. 6)? In summary, education should not be working toward individual entitlement or rewards at the expense of tolerance and consideration for others. "We don't need a collection of standardized workers, but rather a vast variety of talents developed to the fullest" (p. 8). Education should be for the well-being of all.

## FOUCAULT'S SUBJECTIVITY: POWER, CONTROL, AND LIMITATIONS

The space of freedom for the individual is love—it is the only space, the only moment in life, where the various precautions, defenses, conservatism break down, and one tries to go to the limit of one's being, so it is fundamental.

*Julia Kristeva: Interviews*, p. 121

The turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization: it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection... the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality, and in which he is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the “mask” that characterize him and make him a “case.”

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 192

In this chapter, I use Foucault's discourses of discipline and power to understand the current state of education, which focuses on standardization as a process to make children docile subjects. Foucault's theory provides a powerful lens to see standardization as serving to a political utility of control. However, it is based on a utilization of power relations dominated by memories of opposition. Consequently, Foucault's care of the self is limited to an exercise of centrality for people who are already in domination. Furthermore, it is a rational mastery of the self relying on reason (Wang, 2004, p. 28). I write this chapter with the following two questions in mind: first, how in particular do I connect with Foucault's discourses on discipline and punishment as I struggle with my little girl in the current state of education? Second, given the

consideration that this work unarguably evolves life, particularly educational experience, why am I not comfortable writing it as an autobiographical work? What can be learned from the way I feel? The first question leads to the significance of Foucault's work in understanding standardization and the second to its limitation.

Reading Foucault helps reveal how power relations operate, are imposed upon, and control children in education. However, Foucault's discourses, including his thoughts on the care of the self, do not necessarily provide insight for social change. Knowing that the current state of education reinforces a results-driven and docile subjectivity does not automatically provide a way of change for education. What should educators do after having learned the fact that the current state of education is not aimed at preparing children for lifetime achievement, but rather at training them for the purpose of political control? As I read more on Foucault's work, I felt stuck considering the dichotomy of liberation and oppression. Then I came across Hendry's (1998) message: "I suspended the notions of agency as dependent on a unitary subject, resistance as oppositional and power as a possession" (p. 39). Simple yet illuminating, reading her message was a turning point for me. She reminded me of my original motivation in writing this chapter: opposition is just a method. It is not the end, but rather only a beginning of understanding. To go beyond opposition, I need to understand where opposition originates first.

To give an outline of the chapter, I begin with the notion of opposition from which Foucault's technologies of power and the self originate. After having understood the development and constitution of subjectivity, I move on to the disciplined and punished subject. For the second half of the chapter, I use "writing as autobiography" as a transition from the significance of

Foucault's work to its limitations. Without engaging in a conversation on morality, Foucault's discussion of the care of the self remains problematic and thus impossible to achieve.

### **Technologies of the Self: Opposition**

Foucault's technologies of the self can be traced back to Rousseau's narratives on power and the self. According to Baker (2001), Rousseau's "self" embodies three types of power: physical power, or bodily strength; metaphysical power of will, or the capacity to make choices; and social power that exists within a civil society (p. 272). To Rousseau, the pure physical power contains only a Newtonian inscription; neither good or bad, it is simply a function of the self's survival instinct without any moral bindings. Unlike the physical power, Rousseau's metaphysical power of will is the desire to cause things to happen to oneself, and consequently, to others in both positive and negative ways.

By separating the body from the mind, Rousseau accepts the opposition of feeling from reason. Although acknowledging that the self's physical power and metaphysical power of will constitute the embryo from which social power grows, Rousseau separates social power from these two. Furthermore, knowing that feelings are inseparable from the constitution of social power, Rousseau accepts the opposition of the self from social power. Consequently, both the self and social power are conceptualized as fixed with boundaries, rather than as emerging and

lived<sup>5</sup>. Rousseau does not acknowledge that it is precisely the mental, subjective nature of the self that makes it possible to convert power relations into categories. According to Baker (2001), Rousseau's conception of social power eventually becomes a unique commodity of human relations that can be possessed, converted, and exchanged. Thus inequality, enabling "the execution of one's Will over and against or with others," becomes an "uneven and unequal possession... redundantly relational and exchangeable" (p. 274). Baker explains,

[Social power and inequality], being almost null in the state of nature, draws its growth from the development of the body, our faculties, the progress of the human mind, and finally becomes stable and legitimated by the establishment of language, property, and laws. Social inequality is hence originally predicated in physical or natural differences... but society gives currency [categories, standards, discipline and punish, and so on] to those differences in ways that convert them into uneven social tools, such as richness and poorness, that make masters and slaves out of people. (p. 275, added bracket)

Rousseau does not intend to justify inequality, nor enslavement, in his conceptions of power and the self. For Rousseau, it is the institutionalization of enslavement, rather than the disadvantage of the enslaved people themselves, that forces power to leave the body and eventually the mind. Rousseau foresees social power's tendency for categorization and control, and warns against these tendencies as subjugations of the self. Rousseau (1992) opposes the unnaturalness of servitude in enslaved people and is concerned about oppression of all people. He writes:

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5 Transitioning from Enlightenment to postmodern thought, Dewey's six philosophical positions on relations support the argument that, without subjective judgment, power relations are not possible. Dewey (1902) explains that relations "have no objective existence or counterpart" and are "purely mental product, stating something of emergence when facts have really nothing to do with one another" (p. 201). Moreover, relations are products of the processes of judgments, and these judgments can never be free of subjective choices. Once reduced to identities for the function of representations, relations are no longer the same as what Dewey refers as the relatively objective, namely the practical modifications of relations.

We must not, therefore, look to the degradation of enslaved peoples as a basis for judging man's natural disposition for or against servitude, but look rather to the prodigious achievements of all free people who have strived to protect themselves from oppression. (p. 85)

Foucault's discourses on the technologies of power and the self provide a powerful lens for examining the prodigious achievements of modern civilization to which Rousseau refers to.

Though both Rousseau and Foucault discuss the notion of resistance, Foucault does not see the self as fixed, but rather as a subject that changes from time to time and practice to practice.

Specifically, the subject is constituted not only by the imposition of power relations, but also by the self's conscious resistance and transgression. This is precisely what Foucault means by self-constitution. I discuss more on Foucault's subjectivity in the section on "subjectivity through technologies of the self."

The purpose of this section is to bring awareness to the limitations of opposition as a way of thinking. As a method, opposition helps to clarify the problem being investigated, but it is not the goal of investigation. Rousseau's sympathy for the enslaved and for the subjugations of all people in general are encouraging but limited. Although recognizing the commodification of social power and its tendency for domination and control, Rousseau fails to acknowledge the interchange of body and mind, feeling and reason, and self and society. Foucault, by contrast, sees the interchange of the self and society as the precondition for categorization, subjugation, and commodification. As a result, Rousseau's self is fixed and isolated, while Foucault's self actively transgresses power relations. I turn to Foucault's technologies of power from which his technologies of the self derive.

## **A Transgressing Subject Through Power and Domination**

Foucault does not specifically use the term “technologies of self” until very late in his works. His early works focus mainly on the technologies of power and domination from which the transgressing subject is constructed. In Foucault’s earlier works, such as *The Order of Things* (1994) and *Discipline and Punish* (1995), the concept of subjectivity is secondary to his preoccupation with power and domination. Foucault often refers to the subjugated subject in these earlier works, whereas the subjectivity correlates specifically to the technologies of the self in his later works. A critical characteristic of the subjugated subject (i.e., the embryonic version of subjectivity) is its urge to transgress through the continuity and discontinuity of power relations. On the one hand, Foucault’s transgressing subject is made possible by Rousseau’s conception of the self as fixed, superior to, and opposite from the world of nature and society. For, without opposition, there would be no boundaries necessary to transgress. On the other hand, Foucault’s transgressing subject moves beyond Rousseau’s predetermined and fixed identification of the self as the oppressed.

To begin with, Foucault’s transgressing subject investigates into conjunctures of ruptures, hidden rules, and justifications that underpin the continuity of power relations. Through a non-linear and constant remaking of power relations, Foucault’s transgressing subject (1972) questions continuity.

These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without questions, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected of course, but the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized. (p. 25)

A couple of points help to understand Foucault's transgressing subject. First, the transgressing subject is discursive. According to Olssen (2006), it investigates not only "the regulated and legitimate forms of power in central locations," but also the "powers at extremities"—the regional and local forms and institutions; not just as one domination over another, but something that circulates; and lastly, not in a deductive manner, but ascending—"starting from its infinitesimal mechanisms each of which has its own history, its own trajectory, its own technologies and tactics" (p. 21). In other words, the transgressing subject must trace multiple entrances of power relations, the descent and emergence of power relations in the context of history, and particularly the "jolts and surprises," rather than the origin of history (pp. 14-15). It must respond to the "haphazard conflicts," rather than the regulative and mechanical power relations that are already established (p. 15). Zebrowski (2008) interprets the transgressing subject as an individual, active organism that rejects the universal conclusion and generalization. The author writes, "The organism is far from passive—the interaction is almost a spiral of continuing change and action. There is not a direct line from environment and organism, but instead a constant remaking of both the world and the individual" (p. 316). Olssen and Zebrowski concur that Foucault's subject must actively and consciously transgress power relations in order to have a sense of existence.

Second, the transgressing subject refuses any predetermined identifications. It is multi-dimensional, rather than fixed or physical. Olsen (2006) adds that the subject does not assume a "universal governing structure of self-realization" (p. 8). Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) summarize, "The Concept of Man is fraud, not that you and I are nothing" (p. 11), but that the constitution of the self is changing and not limited to fixed features of material bodies, such as

gender, age, or other physical characteristics. Furthermore, the transgressing self must investigate into specific techniques of control. Foucault (1988) summarizes, the transgressing subject is not to “accept knowledge at face value but to analyze the so-called sciences as very specific ‘truth games’ related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” (p. 18). It must see beyond certain forms of ethics as the universal model for freedom<sup>6</sup>.

In summary, Foucault’s technologies of power and domination determine “the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). As a consequence, the subjugated subject must be an active agent in transgressing power relations. Foucault’s transgressing subject derives from the determination of individuals’ conduct, as well as the individuals’ submission to certain ends and domination. Next, I turn to Foucault’s technologies of the self from which the concept of subjectivity is fully developed.

## **Subjectivity**

In “The subject and power” (1982), written a few years before his death in 1984, Foucault had become increasingly and explicitly interested in the subjectivity, in how a “human being turns him-or herself into a subject” (p. 208), or, to put it differently, how models of self-knowledge are constituted through historical technologies of power and domination. According to Foucault (1997), subjectivity investigates the “problem of the relationship between subject and truth” (p. 290). It concerns the following questions:

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<sup>6</sup> In an interview, “Truth, power, self,” Foucault (1988) confirms, “I think there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically represented on every side of the political rainbow...” (p. 15).

How was the subject established, at different moments and in different institutional contexts, as a possible, desirable, or even indispensable object of knowledge? How were the experience that one may have of oneself and the knowledge that one forms of oneself organized according to certain schemes? How were these schemes defined, valorized, recommended, imposed? (p. 87)

It is these schemes, techniques, or procedures that Foucault calls the “technologies of the self.” Foucault (1997) explains the concept. First, “neither the recourse to an original experience nor the study of the philosophical theories of the soul, the passions, or the body, can serve as the main axis in such an investigation” (p. 87). To Foucault, the specific conditions, by which the subjectivity is constituted, are created “through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power” (Foucault, 1982, p. 290). These conditions are externally imposed, rather than internally initiated by the subjects themselves. Thus, the original experience of the subject itself does not automatically lead to the questioning of its conditions. Second, the investigations of subjectivity “could not be properly accounted for simply by talking about ideology” (p. 290), for two reasons: first, the techniques and procedures used for the constitution of subjectivity “exist and vary in every civilization.” Second, they are “suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends” (Foucault, 1997, p. 87). In short, the constitution of subjectivity is “a matter of placing the imperative to ‘know oneself’” through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge (p. 87).

Foucault’s (1988) notion of subjectivity raises questions about the world and people in a way very different from the Western tradition of philosophical inquiry. These questions—“what are we in our actuality?” “What are we today?”—constitute “a field of historical reflection” on the self (p. 145). Gutman (1988) agrees:

If there has indeed been an immense labor to turn man into a subject (an individuated self and a defined personage in the social order) in order to subject him more completely and inescapably to the transversals and furrowing of power—and I think Foucault has conclusively shown that this is indeed the case. (p. 103)

Foucault (1988) explains the technologies of the self as an effort to not only “show the arbitrariness of institutions,” but also to find “which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made” (p. 11). In “Technologies of the self,” Foucault defines,

[T]echnologies of the self... permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operation on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (p. 18)

A few points help to clarify understanding on the concept of subjectivity. First, subjectivity is historically constituted. It has no universal content and varies from in one specific form to another, whether mad or sane, delinquent or not delinquent; second, subjectivity is constituted by the subject itself, it is self-mastery; and thirdly, it is ontological, always distinguishing itself from the physical body. On the one hand, Foucault follows Descartes’s dualism of mind and body. While the Cartesian subject is invariant and transcendental—dwelling in the conscious and existing without the reality of objects—Foucault claims that subjectivity is constituted not through the physical body that engages in practices, but rather through the ontological nature of the subject. On the other hand, Foucault does not provide a clear base for what the ontological nature of subject is. Foucault seems to suggest two contradictory meanings here: first, subjectivity is both socially and ontologically constructed, and second, subjectivity would simply not exist without the ontological nature of the subject. However, it is not clear whether the ontological nature of the subject to which Foucault refers exists without the reality of objects, like the Cartesian subject does. Foucault (1997) strives to explain subjectivity.

It is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself. You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desire in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes, a different type of relationship to oneself. It is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of subject in relation to the games of truth which interests me. (p. 290)

Again, this explanation goes back to the historical dimension of subjectivity mentioned before. It does not address the question of whether the ontological nature of the subject exists with or without the reality of objects. Foucault does not provide clarification on the relation between the subject's ontological nature and its social reality; rather he always refers to the historical dimension of the constitution of subjectivity concerning the history of how the subjects act upon themselves in both theory and practice. In addition to the historical dimension, Foucault's subject is also disciplined and punished.

### **The Disciplined and Punished Subject in Education**

Foucault (1988) asserts that subjectivity is constructed and shaped in a system of penalty and prohibition. A constant feature of the Western culture, according to Foucault (1995), punishments had disappeared as a public spectacle by the beginning of nineteenth century. When more hidden,

[Punishment] leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness; its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability, not from its visible intensity; it is through the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment that mechanics of punishment works. (p. 9)

No longer the constituent element of penalty, punishments lose its intensity of physical pain, but "at the cost of greater intervention" (Foucault, 1995, p. 75). The punitive power, a certain technology of power, is "produced permanently around, on, within the body" (p. 29). It is linked

to the fact that individuals are under the control of authority, of governmentality. Foucault (1988) refers to governmentality as “the contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (p. 19). Its sole interest is in the “principle of rationality” (Foucault, 1991, p. 89); its objective “is to reinforce, strengthen and protect the principle of rationality” (p. 90). Governmentality is a science of ruling the state’s economics and politics. It means “to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising toward its inhabitants, and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control” (p. 92). Since to govern means to govern things, people are to be disposed of certain tactics so that they can be arranged for the convenience of governing “at the level of consciousness...regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals” (p. 100).

Rooted in a history of discipline and punishment, the institutionalized standards of education seek docility in the individuals, however, not through “the form of the ethical community... but certain specific technique called... the police” (Foucault, 1991, p. 153). According to Foucault (1988), the modern society “did not initiate it [the police]; rather it accelerated it, changed its scale, [and] gave it precise instruments” (p. 139). Educational standards are one manifestation of these political techniques. Citing Turquet’s analysis on the technique of government<sup>7</sup>, Foucault argues that policing breaches out to people’s conditions. Life as a whole, starting from education, is the object of policing.

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<sup>7</sup> Turquet proposes four specializations of executive police powers. The first is to look after the positive, active, productive aspects of life, especially those concerned with education. The second is to look after the poor, widows, orphans, and the aged, who require help. Policing should not only be concerned with people who are reluctant to go to work, but also take care of public health, diseases, and so on. The third is to specialize in commodities and the fourth, territory and space. In short, the task of police branches out into all of people’s living conditions.

One effect of policing is biopolitics, or biopower. Foucault (2004) refers to biopolitics as the endeavor to rationalize problems (e.g., problems of health and race) that are presented to the governmental practice. Its internal rule—maximum economy—is to maximize the effect and minimize the cost. Recognizing its regressive and possessive nature, Foucault argues that exercises of biopolitics cannot be limited to a test of optimization, but instead should concern for “the lawfulness of its scheme for achieving effects” (p. 74). To Foucault, standards work as the extension of biopolitics, and hence, are justified by rationality and the state’s competition in global market. However, the scheme is implemented without considering the lawfulness.

To Foucault, both the police and biopolitics disguise their repressive and possessive nature in the promise of individual success. Limited primarily to the maintenance and reproduction of economic relations, they shift the responsibility of care from the state to the individuals themselves. Foucault (1988) points out that it is no coincidence that the great public welfare movement emerged in the period of World War II. To Foucault, the political technologies of the self are the “instrument for the reproduction of economic relations” (p. 152). Their exclusive aim is the conversion, reinforcement, and development of the state’s strength, rather than the care of the individuals. Foucault uses the term “political utility” to explain the coexistence of political structure and the promise of individual success.

It is clear that the governments don’t have to worry about individuals; or government has to worry about them only insofar as they are somehow relevant for the enforcement of the state’s strength... But there is in this perspective something which we call a kind of political marginalism, since what is in question here is only political utility. From the state’s view, the individual exists insofar as what he does is able to introduce even a minimal change in the strength of the state, either in a positive or in a negative direction. It is only insofar as an individual is able to introduce this change that the state has to do with him. And sometime what he has to do for the state is to live, to work, to produce, to consume, and sometimes what he has to do is to die. (p. 152)

Educational standards work as a form of cultural prohibition and control working for the political utility. According to Foucault (1995), disciplines work as a “coercive, corporal, solitary model of power” to assimilate and transform individuals into subjects obedient to rules, habits, orders, and authorities (p. 131). Disciplines imply an interrupted, constant coercion and supervision. Children are supervised, manipulated, corrected, and trained to obey and become skillful in ways that fulfill the reproduction of economic relations; children become subjects “out of the methods of punishment, supervision, and constraint” (p. 29). Foucault (1988) asserts, “The meticulousness of regulations, the fussiness of the inspection, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body...provide, in the context of school... an economic or technical rationality...” (p. 140). In short, political utility assures “a relation of docility-utility” (Foucault, 1995, p. 137).

Conforming to political utility, schools become the machines that seek to “implement the mechanism or the perfect army,” of the disciplined, docile mass in civil society (Foucault, 1995, p. 168). Foucault writes,

It was an effort to adjust the mechanism of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behavior, their identity, their activity... another policy for that multiplicity of bodies and forces that constitutes a population. What was emerging no doubt was not so much a new respect for the humanity...[but that] controls become more thorough. (pp. 77-78)

In practice, educational standards produce subjected, practiced, and docile bodies by dividing education space into “as many sections as there are bodies so that each body is supervised, assessed, and judged, at each moment” (p. 141). With the disappearing of punishment as a public spectacle, however, the idea of imprisonment is transferred into disciplinary cells in school

practice. Children are assigned disciplinary places that correspond to particular functions. Unruly children would be placed between others who are well behaved. The cell-like spaces not only make it convenient and efficient to supervise, but also break down communications among children. Disciplines work as an art of rank, hierarchy, and reward, which “carves out individual segments and establishes operational links” (p. 148).

Within the divided disciplinary space, no time is wasted but spent on establishing operational links. Children are accustomed to “executing well and quickly the same operation” (Foucault, 1995, p. 154). School time is divided into successive segments, one after another, each of which has a strictly enforced start and end time. My daughter often expresses her struggle with the rigidly divided, cell-like structure of time at school. The following conversation provides a glimpse of school experience.

“Mom, I’m so tired!”

“What did you do at school?”

“Nothing!”

“What classes did you have? What happened in Music today?”

“We were busy. We didn’t have time.”

“But what were you busy for?”

“They made us do this and do that. We were busy. I didn’t have time for anything.”

So I try to be specific, “What about math? Are you still working on numbers 5-10?”

“No. But Jon didn’t want to do it. The teacher said, ‘Jon, what do you choose, go to the principle’s office, or work on your sheet?’ Then Jon started to make a funny noise and we all started to laugh.”

This “busy-for-nothing” is a constant theme in our conversations, which always end up with someone being punished, either by being sent to the principal’s office or not getting to attend recess. These conversations give an idea of how school experiences are for children. I can’t help but think that discipline at school really functions as a tool to obtain efficiency. For example, when we as parents have a conversation at home, sometimes a disagreement, we are often

stopped by our daughter: “Mom, that is a ‘level three voice,’ thumbs down, not allowed.” What worries us is not that she imitates the teacher’s way of enforcing the voice level; instead, what worries us is that school disciplines are training her to shun away from conflictual, confrontational conversations on a daily basis.

Within the disciplinary spaces, children are accustomed to follow what are told, when to start, and when to end. The opportunity for finding the solution within their own time frame is taken away. When discipline works exclusively for efficiency, order, and function, there is no time available for playing and exploring. Within the disciplinary spaces, it is forbidden to waste time on figuring things out. There’s no time within, nor in between, the time blocks. As my daughter is getting more and more used to the clear-cut instruction given by her teachers, it is more and more challenging for us to explain to her at home that people do not always agree with each other. She often stops us by eliminating the disagreement: “I don’t care who started it. It does not matter who started it.”

So as parents, we realize that discipline and standards control children not only on the scale of constraints, prohibition, and obligation for the efficiency of movement, but also on the “working of individuality” (Foucault, 1995, p. 137), the internal organization, “their morals, their occupational capabilities, their honesty” (p. 159). They demand a transformation of behaviors in the development of knowledge children have about themselves. They misleadingly promote a belief that behaving and performing well on the given instruction at school leads to rewards and a lifetime happiness. Doing something right is exclusively linked to a reward, be it a sticker, a hallway ticket, or a choice of being able to sit with a friend at lunch time. Everything is used as a reward and linked to disciplines. Only the assimilated and docile ones can fit in and survive.

Foucault (1995) writes, “Since the population is nothing more than what the state takes care of for its own sake, of course, the state is entitled to slaughter it, if necessary” (p. 160).

Foucault (1988) contrasts the disciplinary space with the art of listening. If children have the option of just listening or being silent, they are not under the pressure to respond to the teacher’s questions. This type of listening allows children to listen to the voice within themselves as they listen to the teacher’s. Foucault explains, “You keep silent at the lecture. You think about it afterward” (p. 32). The art of listening is linked to a realization that children are not under the constant supervision of the teacher. Allowed time and space, children are not under the urgency to know. Foucault points out that the Western tradition of inquiry has always overemphasized the “knowing yourself” but forgotten the caring of the self (p. 19). Particularly, when the knowing is limited to the knowing of discipline and standards, education reinforces only the observation and internalization of the rules established by external authorities. In short, discipline and standards seek to fulfill primarily an economic agenda. They promote a rewards-driven subjectivity as children are divided, isolated, and trained to become docile bodies.

### **Writing as Autobiography**

The pleasure a writer knows  
is the pleasure of sages.  
Out of non-being, being is born;  
out of silence,  
a writer produces a song.  
In one year of silk, there is infinite space;  
language is a deluge  
from one small corner of the heart.

*Wen Chu: The Art of Writing*, Third Century A.D.

Rousseau's advocacy for the importance of emotion over reason was a great contribution to the early Romantic movement in the 1700s. In Rousseau's age, rationalism was so privileged that it problematically devalued the spontaneity of feelings. According to Baird and Kaufman (2008), "The more sophisticated and learned society became, the less happy, less virtuous, and more corrupt the people became" (p. 765).

Rousseau's Romantic self labors on the abundance of the self's feelings in confession through which the self is liberated from rationality. Insisting upon the self's singularity, Rousseau (1953) writes, "My mind needs to go forward in its own time, it cannot submit itself to anyone else's" (p. 118). Rousseau approaches the self's emotional significance not as rooted in similarity to others, but in "exaggerated sensibility" (Gutman, 1988, p. 235). The self's emotive life, the primacy of feeling, is the basis of Rousseau's individuality. Life for Rousseau is meaningless without feelings; life is driven by the urge to confess unreservedly. Rousseau (1953) writes,

I have only one faithful guide on which I can count: the succession of feelings which marks the development of my being, and thereby recall the events that have acted upon it as cause and effect... The memory of them is too dear ever to be effaced from my heart. I may omit or transpose facts, or make mistakes in dates; but I cannot go wrong about what I have felt, or about what my feelings have led me to do; and these are the chief subjects of my story. The true object of my confusion is to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul. (p. 262)

Rousseau's confession in recounting the detailed episode of life demonstrates a "signal importance of Western tradition," i.e., to commit actions and feelings in writing (Gutman, 1988, p. 103). As the emergence of feelings becomes dependent on the activity of writing, the writing itself becomes a relief and pleasure. It serves multiple purposes in the Western traditions of power and self.

First, the inclusion of individual experience, as well as the exposure of personal shame in writing, not only serves to unburden the self, but also reveals the self's weakness. Rousseau makes a cause-effect connection between the social order and the self: by making the social order hostile, the self retreats to the confession of feelings. Without investigating deeper into the questions of what makes the social order hostile or what makes the self weak, Rousseau reinforces the opposition of the self and society. Although Rousseau intends to rebel against the overvaluation of reason by asserting the claims of emotions, his commitment of feelings to writings reinforces the opposition of the self and society. In other words, the primacy of feelings in writing creates a sense of superiority and control in the self. As the self retreats to confession and thus becomes more isolated from society, its sense of superiority reinforces a fixity, rather than an interchanging of boundaries. Rousseau's confession in writing continues the Western tradition of opposition, simultaneously making the self weak and the social order hostile. It justifies for the superiority of the self based on an acceptance of the opposition between the self and society, reason and emotion.

Second, Rousseau's openness of feelings makes the self subjected to the public gaze. Gutman (1988) explains, Rousseau's commitment of feelings to writing makes subjectivity segmented: "a subject to be discussed" in the public gaze, "a subject in the political sense of being in an inferior relation to power," and "a subject that the self recognizes as its own subjectivity" (p. 108). This segmentation of the self relies substantially on the primacy of feeling and makes the solicitation of subjectivity possible. In becoming an object available for examination under the public gaze, the segmented self ultimately makes the world alien and inhospitable. Rousseau (1953) writes, "I now led, so to speak, a double life" (p. 252). The internal division of reason and feeling, and well

as of self and society, sets Rousseau in permanent conflict with himself. Rousseau admits, “I found myself isolated and alone” (p. 252).

The temporary comfort and the sense of centrality found in the self’s commitment of emotions to writing have given way to isolation and loneliness. Becoming subjected and segmented, Rousseau’s romantic self recognizes that the exaggerated sensibility has contributed powerfully to its dilemma. The comforting sense of centrality found in writing is only an exaggerated, false notion of self-reference in which the self portrays itself as the arbiter of order, value, and meaning within the space of writing, which has little to do with how the reality operates. Rousseau (1953) describes this notion.

The impossibility of attaining the real persons precipitated me into the land of chimeras; and seeing nothing that existed worthy of my exalted feelings, I fostered them in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart... altogether ignoring the human race, I created for myself a society of perfect creatures. (p. 398)

Trapped in isolation and delusion, Rousseau realizes the limitation of autobiographical writing as a way to attain happiness. In his last work, *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, Rousseau (1982) profoundly remarks, “True happiness is indescribable; it can only be felt, and the stronger the feeling the less it can be described, because it is not the result of a collection of facts but a permanent state” (p. 224). Here I similarly relate my unease with writing autobiography: why do I not feel relief or pleasure in writing things down? For me, writing autobiographically does not necessarily lead to a critical understanding of power and the self, nor did it for Foucault. Instead, it is the making of dominance and control, as well as of objectivity and subjectivity, with which Foucault himself concerns. Moreover, the elaborations of individual experience committed in writing serve as the immense labor that makes subjectivity possible.

Foucault (1988) points out that writing is “one of the most ancient Western traditions” through which “the self becomes something to write about, a theme or object” (p. 27). Although I agree with Foucault on this point, what differs between us, I suspect, is that the Chinese part of my identity does not possess a central agency as much as Foucault does as a Western philosopher.

Confucius, for example, did not write any books in his lifetime. He believed that teaching is not an embodiment of a set of standards, but rather is an intimate, changing relationship between the teacher and student—one that cannot be simply recorded or replicated in writing. I do not claim that I am in any way Confucian, but the urgency to write in general is not a characteristic of Confucian thought, particularly when the writing involves how the self relates itself to nature and society. Whereas the Western self opposes itself and inevitably constructs itself as superior to nature, the Confucian self immerses itself within and reveres nature. In Chapter Four I discuss Confucian thought and elaborate on this point. For now, I continue with the Western tradition of committing actions and feelings to writing that serves as a precondition to the constitution of subjectivity.

Rousseau in the end realizes that feelings committed in writing alone cannot transcend categories and divisions. Not only does writing lose the uniqueness and significance of human existence, it also solicits a public gaze of subjectivity. Can one write autobiography in a way that resists the fixity, division, and categorization while, at the same time, reserving the ineffability of feeling and experience? This is surely a challenge to many. Rousseau’s (1982) writing in the “Fifth Walk” of the *Reveries* already stunningly resembles the style of novel: “There, the noise of the waves and the tossing of the water, captivating my senses and chasing all other disturbance from my soul, plunged it into a delightful reverie in which night would often surprise me without

my having noticed it” (p. 67). As the detailed recounting of life episodes is no longer sufficient to convey the self’s feelings, notions of centrality and division finally start to dissolve away in Rousseau’s writing, and instead, notions of the undifferentiated other start to emerge. In Rousseau’s journey, the division of the self from the world has been proven to be incapable of engendering lifetime happiness for him. In the attempts to regain the self’s deprived sense of power, the abundance of details creates a segmented subject available for the public gaze, making this self powerless.

Foucault (1978) comments on the strong inclination to speak as a constant feature of Western culture rooted in centrality and opposition.

Western man has become a confessing animal. Whence a metamorphosis in literature: we have passed from a pleasure to be recounted and heard, centering on the heroic or marvelous narration of “trial” of bravery or sainthood, to a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depth of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage... The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement. (pp. 59-61)

To Foucault (1994), writing, as a way of gathering and collecting thoughts, is a personal exercise of reasoning that conforms to the tradition of authority. He writes,

The essential requirement is that he be able to consider the selected sentence as a maxim that is true in what it asserts, suitable in what it prescribes, and useful in terms of one’s circumstances. Writing as a personal exercise done by and for oneself is an art of disparate truth—or, more exactly, a purposeful way of combining the traditional authority of the already said with the singularity of the truth that is affirmed therein and the particularity of the circumstances that determine its use. (pp. 208-212)

Foucault (1994) explains further by differentiating reading from writing. As a “mental agitation, distraction, change of opinions and wishes, and consequently weakness in the face of all the events,” reading “turns the mind toward the future, makes it interested in novel ideas, and

prevents it from providing a fixed point for itself in the possession of an acquired truth” (p. 211). Writing, however, resists reading’s scattering effect “by fixing acquired elements, and by constituting a share of the past” to which the self can always withdraw (pp. 211-212). Writing is a process of appropriation of the collected and making it the truth of one’s own mind. It is a rational action in the writer that concerns more with the authority of the past, but less with the uncertainty of the future. To Foucault, the deliberate recounting of details in writing autobiography does not guard against the commitment of foul thoughts or actions, but rather conforms to a tradition of reasoning that is already established.

Sword (2017) asks successful scholars to describe their feelings about a piece of writing that they are proud of. One of the responses is, “It was written from the heart” (p. 109). Sword argues that feelings of achievement, pleasure, and pride associated with writing dwell in “knowing that their work has made a difference to other people” (p. 109). This type of writing that makes a difference for other people, rather than reinforces one’s own centrality and superiority, reaches out to the “public life of the time” (p. 114). The writing resembles more like a letter than a diary. It speaks to the public, not read only by the writer. It concerns the feelings of others, rather than being obsessed with one’s own feelings, as in Rousseau’s confession. To write for others means to be a “vulnerable observer” (p. 115), rather than someone who speaks as the voice of a white, middle-class male, like Foucault. Rousseau’s self is willing to expose its own vulnerability, yet not very observant of others’ feelings; Foucault’s subject is observant of its surroundings, yet itself is very secure. How does the self care for itself in a way that is simultaneously vulnerable and observant of others?

## **The Care of the Self**

Foucault only uses the term “care of the self” very late in his work. Developing from the technologies of power to the technologies of the self, Foucault’s care of the self investigates acts and practices (both permitted and forbidden), as well as feelings, thoughts and desires, especially those that are hidden. Foucault (1988) refers to the care of the self as the self’s efforts to “transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, and immortality” (p.18).

By reading the Greek’s notion of the “art of life” as “taking care of the self,” or “concern with the self,” Foucault (1988) explains the care of the self as involving three relations: the self with political life, defective education, and knowing the self. To explain, the care of the self does not exclusively involve a preparation for political life, but operates independently from it. In addition, it is not obligatorily educational, but rather a way of living that does not stop at the moment of death. In other words, the care of the self concerns the knowledge of oneself involving both education and relationships.

For Foucault (1988), limiting the care of the self to “a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform into a permanent principle of action” is a process of making the self more subjective (p. 31). The current state of education focusing on standards assimilates children in ways that are fundamentally against Foucault’s notion of caring for the self, a notion in which the self does not accept any knowledge deemed important by external authorities. Relating to the third relation mentioned above, according to Foucault (1988), philosophical tradition has overemphasized the knowing of the self but forgotten the care of the self. Whereas knowledge of oneself in Greek culture is only the consequence of taking care of the self, in

modern society it is limited to the principle of knowing the self through discipline and standards. The current state of education limits the self to a set of standards, emphasizing a knowing for a purpose of acquirement, assimilation, and transformation that sacrifice care for children.

According to Foucault (1988), the care of the self inherits neither “the tradition of Christian morality that makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation,” nor “the secular tradition which respects external laws as the basis for morality” (p. 22). To Foucault, to care is to escape from all possible rules, including morality. It is thus difficult “to see the concern for oneself as compatible with morality” (p. 22). In an interview, Foucault (1997) responds,

Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on. I am stuck by this similarity of problems. (p. 256)

Seeing the care of the self and ethics as incompatible, Foucault (1997) insists that he does not believe in finding alternatives. He responds, “You can’t find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people” (p. 256). To Foucault, the problems of scientific knowledge, power relations, and human society cannot be solved by engaging ethics. On the one hand, Foucault acknowledges the simultaneous fluidity and stability of power relations from which subjectivity is constructed. He writes about the relation between ethics and social structures.

For centuries, we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great and social and economic structures, there were analytical relations, and that we couldn’t change anything... I think we have to get rid of this idea of an analytical or necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures. (p. 261)

On the other hand, Foucault (1997) offers little insight beyond the statement “not everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous.” He writes, “My position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism” (p. 256). On the topic of ethics, Foucault responds, “ethics can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relations with the juridical per se, without an authoritarian system, without a disciplinary structure.” Yet his investigation stops with a comment that “all that is very interesting” (p. 260). In the end, Foucault sees subjectivity constituted through power relations as limiting the care of the self, however, he is unwilling to question the very base of scientific knowledge on which subjectivity, power relations, and human society are built. In other words, Foucault observes others and investigates power relations from a secure standpoint where “it’s not at all necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge” (p. 261). However, the fact that standards limit the self to a set of practices, as Foucault has deconstructed, is precisely an ethical problem. Isolating the problem of standardization within the realm of scientific discussion does not change anything, just as the care of the self Foucault advocates is not possible without the consideration of morality.

Furthermore, Foucault also relates the care of the self to writing. As much as feelings, thoughts, and desires are concerned, Foucault presents these elements in a way different from Rousseau. While Rousseau’s self is willing to expose its vulnerability and indulge itself with its romantic sensibility and imagination in writing, Foucault relies on the abstract representations of feelings. Although Foucault (1988) accepts that each of his works is part of his own biography —“for one or another reason I had the occasion to feel and live those things” (p. 11)—his writing is not obsessed with the feelings themselves, but focuses on the abstract representation of

feelings. As both ways are attempts to reclaim power, Rousseau's works appear autobiographical while Foucault's do not.

Foucault expresses his reservation on writing a confession of feelings. Seeing the limitation of writing autobiographically as the reinforcement of the past, rather than as the betterment of the future for the purpose of the care of the self, Foucault (1994) asserts that writing involves a culture that is strongly stamped "by traditionality, by the recognized value of the already-said, by the recurrence of discourse, by 'citational' practice under the seal of antiquity and authority" (p. 211). However, Foucault considers his own writing as emerging, rather than solely the reinforcement of the past. In an interview, Foucault responds, "If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is also true for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end" (p. 9).

For Foucault, the process of writing resembles the essence of life, which is not to be conclusive but explorative. Writing could be a way of caring for the self, of getting in touch with oneself, of living with oneself only when it is not conclusive. On the one hand, Foucault's care of the self hints at the notion of unification in which the self is encouraged to get in touch with itself, which could be a way of caring for the self; but on the other hand, Foucault's self remains trapped in its dominant status accepting the tradition of opposition, just as he perceives writing as trapped in a culture of traditionality. Foucault's notion of the care of the self seems to contradict itself, for he sees no way of getting in touch with oneself, but to submit to a tradition of opposition. Toward the end of his work, the care of the self becomes more and more urgent to Foucault, for he increasingly realizes that living would become impossible or suffocating without

breaking from a culture of traditionality. When asked whether Foucault sees himself and his work as upsetting “the established laws and somehow anticipating the coming freedom,” his response is “No.” As a powerful lens to understand how power relations operate, However, Foucault’s works do not shed light on social change, for he simply does not believe in change. According to Martin (1988), any effort, for Foucault, is “a tool, an instrument of oppression” (p. 10).

Foucault (1994) in *The Order of Things* argues that once words, discourses, characters, classifications, equivalences, exchanges, representations, identities, and orders are all abolished completely, “it is difficult to rediscover how that [the same] structure was able to function” (p. 304). Foucault sees no other way to “express the order of things so completely and openly” (p. 303), but to accept rationality and opposition that have been made so “directly accessible to us” (p. 304). Foucault (1994) writes about the opposition of nature and human nature as he considers the care of the self.

It is essential to observe that the functions of ‘nature’ and ‘human nature’ are in opposition to one another... But both cannot succeed... without each other, and it is in there that the communication between them occurs... This establishment of communication between nature and human nature, on the basis of two opposite but complementary function — since neither can take place without the other — carries with it broad theoretical consequences. (pp. 309-310)

For Foucault (1994), nature is “not merely the unwinding of the fundamental chain of being, but offers jumbled fragments of it, repeated and discontinuous” (p. 310). However, the “series of representations in the mind is not obliged to follow [nature’s] continuous path of imperceptible differences.” (p. 310). Thus nature’s great, endless, continuous surface must be reprinted with “distinct characters, in more or less general features, in marks of identification — and,

consequently, in words” (p. 310). In the process of making representations of nature, or “chains of being,” discourse and subjectivity emerge. Foucault argues that the relation human has with nature is “definite and predictable to functional moments” (p. 310). It is limited to “the mechanisms of knowledge and by their functioning” (p. 310). For Foucault, the self has no place in the communications of nature and human nature. To communicate with nature, and similarly, to care for the self, requires abandoning everything that is associated with human sciences.

Foucault writes,

As long as the [same] language [of human science] was spoken in Western culture, it was not possible for human existence to be called in question on its own account, since it contained the nexus of representation and being... It cannot, therefore, be objected... Or rather, these objections may well arise and command respect, but only on the basis of a discourse which is profoundly other. (pp. 311-312)

To summarize, Foucault conceptualizes the care of the self as the following: first, it is a way of living throughout one’s life, not limited to politics or a set of practices by which the self is assimilated and transformed; to care is not to make the self more subjective. This raises a question: how is the care of the self possible if there is no self but constituted subjectivity? In other words, how could one care for itself without making itself more and more subjective? These questions inevitably involve both ethics and scientific knowledge. Foucault does not see the two as compatible, nor does he believe in finding alternatives. Moreover, he does not believe that it is possible to question the very base of scientific knowledge from which subjectivity is constituted.

For Foucault, the care of the self is not a matter of knowing what good and evil lies within oneself, but “of who was being designated, or rather *who was speaking...*” (p. 305, original italics). Following Foucault’s definition, the care of the self suggests a notion of embracing the

evilness within the self, and of questioning and stepping away from its center. When asked why he often selects marginal thinkers and madmen instead of the mainstream figures to build his theoretical arguments, Foucault responds, “My reason will be snobbish: It’s impossible to see figures like Bopp and Ricardo as obscure” (Martin, 1988, p. 10). Foucault’s choice of the word “snobbish” may be a personal matter, but his choice of a dominant voice weakens his theoretical argument.

Foucault’s subjectivity speaks as a dominant voice. This voice’s urge to care for itself demands a breaking from all rules, making the care incompatible with either traditions or ethics. To Foucault, to care is to reject everything from which his subjectivity is constituted. Thus Foucault’s notion of the care of the self creates a dilemma: on the one hand, the self has the urge to care for itself and to break all rules; on the other hand, everything is a tool for oppression and nothing can be changed. According to Gutman (1988), “The great architect of the modern self ends up discovering that the building he has constructed is, when it comes right down to it, uninhabitable’ (p. 116). Rousseau, abandoning his ego entirely in the end, retreats to a reverie in which “the self and nature, me and not-me, are merged into an undifferentiated and undivided unity” (p. 115). Foucault’s subjectivity relentlessly seeks to reclaim its humanity in effort to care for itself, however, the effort is futile.

## **Conclusion**

According to Stallman (2002), power in the West is considered “a measure of an entity’s ability to control the environment around itself, including the behavior of other entities” (p. 98). To prove its worth, the transgressing subject analytically questions the historical condition from

which the subject is constituted. Wang (2004) writes, “Even Foucault, a rebel against modern Western tradition, does not directly challenge the duality... the priority of self over other” (p. 74). Wang asserts that Foucault’s care of the self is not possible without the constant “transgression and endless critique” (p. 119). How does the transgressing subject challenge the epistemological foundation of reason and opposition? How does the subject counter the privilege of its own centrality?

Tamboukou (2008) argues that the “undoing of opposition” is possible only through narrative (p. 105). The author explains that narratives and counter-narratives allow the transgressing subject to embrace effects of power relations without retreating back to the subjective illusion of absolute freedom or objectivity. By focusing on the contingency, rupture, and refusal of any transversal, universal principles, the self can create spaces in which memories can unite with historical knowledge. Endres (2007) adds that generalizations about “where” and “when” the events occur become less significant or relevant in the making of social shifts, for the generalizations disconnect from people’s feelings, and only make new forms of control possible (pp. 173-174).

Foucault’s care of the self is based on an utilization of power relations dominated by memories of opposition, rather than the intimate, intense, interpersonal relationships that are caring, reciprocal, and emotionally charged. Not only is the care of the self an exercise of centrality for people who are already in domination, it is also “a rational mastery of the self,” a “constant return to oneself and care for oneself for which Foucault advocates, so that one’s soul can be perfected by reason” (Wang, 2004, p. 28). Tobias (2005) argues that the care of the self advocated by Foucault is agent-centered and oriented toward individualism more than

collectivism (p. 67). It represents the “rationalist ways of knowing” rather than other ways oriented toward caring for others (p. 216).

For Wang (2004), the care of the self requires de-centering the self from its own centrality through “calls for the simultaneous recognition and transcendence of historical, social, and cultural limitations” (p. 26). By traveling back and forth within the self’s own history, the self “can free thought from what it silently thinks” and, consequently “think differently” (p. 9). The discursive process questions “the implicit universality of the present through tracing the differences of the past and opening up a space for thinking differently, thereby transforming the given” (p. 28). In short, the creation and re-creation of a space in which the self thinks outside its own history of centrality, as well as the tradition of opposition, is critical for the care of the self. Without disrupting centrality and opposition, the care of the self that Foucault advocates is not possible.

Foucault (1988) foresees the controlling tendency of discipline and punishment. His discourses offer a powerful lens to see the limitation of educational standards. Children are assimilated and transformed into self-centered agents of knowing, rather than caring individuals who are not only observant of others’ condition, but also compassionate in working toward the betterment of others’ condition. Popkewitz (1997) et al. agree that Foucault’s technologies of power and self allow the subject to transgress multiple power relations by giving attention to the productive dimensions of power relations, rather than focusing solely on the negative dimension of power. By doing so, Foucault’s technologies of power and self offer a continuing problematization of the categorization, standardization, and control practiced in the current state of education. However, Foucault’s subject remains a rational self that leaves centrality and

opposition intact, even while Foucault tries to deconstruct domination and subjectivity. Without questioning centrality and opposition from which subjectivity derives, domination cannot be deconstructed by Foucault's genealogical discourses themselves. In short, Foucault's discourses offer one way but not the only way to understand knowledge, power, and especially social change. Foucault does not believe in change, nor does he engage with ethics, for he thinks that everything becomes a tool for oppression. Valverde (1999) explains,

Foucault's work contributes to ethical reflection insofar as it definitively shows that there are no positions beyond power. There is no such thing as morally pure resistance; there is no such project as liberation from power as such. All political and personal practices of freedom are necessarily intertwined with the micropower that have been disavowed by traditional radicalism... And all political and personal practices of freedom involve constituting their subjects. There is no such thing as liberation, not only because power is always implicated in liberation as in domination, but also because there is no preexisting human essence to be liberated. (p. 667)

Related to the contingency of memory, Valverde (1999) agrees that Foucault's care of the self "underestimates the continuing role of memory work in constituting ethical practice" (p. 668). Foucault's care of the self ignores the complex, adaptive aspect of human nature in which life, death, and memory together constitute the self's existence. The constructed subjectivity turns the violence of opposition back onto itself and, hence, becomes unable to care for itself. Foucault's care of the self demands a breaking from all rules, including laws, traditions, as well as ethics. To care means to void everything on which the constitution of subjectivity is built. How would the care of the self be possible if it relies on the same base it demands to break from? Since centrality and opposition, from which the entire framework is built, are not called into question, the care of the self to Foucault is not possible.

Feminist critiques argue that Foucault's technologies of power and the self focus on how power happens in particular ways, but not on who exercises the power. Ramazanoğlu (1993) asserts that people do not disappear from their theories. It does matter "*who* is speaking in creating the truths" (p. 15). Foucault's discourses are not responsive to women's subordinated experiences, memories, and myths. Fleener (2004) interprets her book title *Curriculum Dynamics: Recreating the Heart* as "Recreating He-Art" to critique and reject the "male-oriented logic of domination inherent in modernist thinking" (p. 4).

Drawing on Jantzen's spirituality, Hendry (2008) points out the limitation of Foucault's care of the self as it relates to women mystics. The author interprets Jantzen's spirituality as a notion of caring for women, a notion that "brings about at political and structural levels conditions which will foster the dignity of each individual and the welfare of the community" (p. 207). In particular, Hendry studies women mystics and how their embodied knowledge brings forth previously inconceivable conversations. The author explains that, in this mystical tradition, the symbolic embodiment of women's sacrifice internalizes pain in exchange for "personal and social transformation" (p. 207). Representing not only rebellion, but also compassion, women mystics enact a moral caring "based on choice" that goes beyond "caring as instinctual" (p. 208). This moral caring is simultaneously a private and public act that seeks social justice. Hendry writes, "There is an interdependent relationship between the self and society that contrasts with poststructural, especially Foucauldian, understandings of self against society. The mode of *with* versus *against* implies a different civilization orientation toward subjectivity and society" (p. 215). Through "a state of egolessness," women achieve a harmony between the inner, subjective soul and the external world (p. 217).

Popkewitz (1997) adds that, “How people feel and tell the truth about the world is part of and expressive of social transformations by which relationships with the world and our selves are established” (p. 150). In other words, what contributes to social transformation is not just a rational way of thinking, but also the way people feel. Moving away from the tradition of opposition, Solé and Goodwin (2000) focus on understanding and building of dynamic relationships between human systems (namely the heart) and their biological contexts. They argue that mechanical model of opposition fails to embrace the dynamic nature of the heart, on which the human’s living systems adapt and thrive. Solé and Goodwin write that over the history of science,

We have had the organism as the expression of a vital principle, as a machine, as a complex chemical network, as a result of natural selection. None of these attempts to characterize life is wrong. Each gives a distinctive insight into the nature of organisms, but each also is limited.... Information has meaning only within a context, and the living context still evades us. (ix)

Investigating the cardiac output of a living heart, Solé and Goodwin (2000) found that the normal heart has a noticeable irregularity in the pattern of beats and the degree to which this pattern varies from the young to the old and from the healthy to the unhealthy. They discover that too much order in the pattern of a heartbeat is dangerous. People who experience cardiac arrest often have the most predictable and regular patterns of heartbeat. An irregular heartbeat is not only normal, but also desirable – it is a natural yet deliberate strategy of the heart to respond appropriately to the unpredictability of both external and internal conditions. Not only is a healthy heartbeat irregular, a healthy heartbeat avoids locking into any particular frequency in order to prepare and respond constantly to environmental stimuli, such as seasonal and emotional changes. The authors also find that the healthy pattern of cardiac output differs from one

individual to another. To maintain a balance, the heart does not always respond to changes by beating faster; instead, it tempers, holds, or stops. Healthy and natural are only meaningful in terms of individual context and the uniqueness of the heart.<sup>8</sup>

Fleener (2004) uses the heart as the metaphor for curriculum, school, and education. She argues that schools can become the heart of the society only when people recreate “the heart of schools” (p. 190). Fleener explains, “Our way, the Western way, has been the way of the beast, rejecting and denying wholeness, relationship, creativity, meaning, purpose, and value” (p. 182). The “Western way” has in large ignored the living systems, particularly humans, with a life of their own, a “heart” of their own. Recreating the heart of curriculum, school, and society requires “letting go” of the desire for control; it requires a “caring way of interacting” (p. 186). The caring of the self is ultimately caring of others. This is where Foucault falls short: his care of the self does not focus on caring for others, but rather tied to a subjectivity that conforms to the tradition of rationality and opposition. To finish, I quote William Hazlitt, “The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves.”

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<sup>8</sup> Solé and Goodwin (2000) write, “The characteristic dynamics of health are the result of nonlinear influences that describe the dynamic coherence of the whole organism as a single unified system, an emergent entity with distinctive properties of subtle dynamic order. The state of health is a normal biological attractor that combines both order and chaos. (pp. 116-117)

## CONFUCIAN CULTIVATION OF *REN* AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

The current state of education focusing on standards and assessments, according to Wu (2004), reduces education to “technical problems and individual deficiencies, subject to surveillance and quality managerial procedures” (p. 308). In the previous chapter, I used Foucault’s discourses of discipline and power to understand standardization as a process to make children docile subjects through “a set of practices by which one can acquire and assimilate” (Foucault, 1988, p. 31). The process of standardization trains children to be docile bodies that conform to a political utility of control and domination. I argued that standardization provides an ineffective grounding for achieving a worthwhile life; children are shaped as results-driven individuals that lack the moral consideration for others (Shun and Wong, 2004). Baker (2001) believes that only through “a moral notion of reasoning” (p. 191), a notion that appreciates the difference of others, can one learn a sense of responsibility. However, Foucault (1997) argues that “between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great political and social and economic structures... , we couldn’t change anything” (p. 261). In addition, questions of human existence are not possible “as long as the [same] language [of human science] was spoken in Western culture” (Foucault, 1994, p. 310), except “on the basis of a discourse which is profoundly other” (p. 312).

In this chapter, I use Confucian philosophy—a discourse that is profoundly different from the Western discourses of subjectivity and power—to understand the very foundation of human existence, not as an epistemology based on dichotomous thinking, but as a moral responsibility based on the cultivation of *Ren*. By not reducing the conception of the world into dichotomy,

Confucian cultivation of *Ren* focuses on interrelations to develop a moral understanding that addresses the problem of subjectivity (Baker, 2001) and the “violence ingrained in logo-centrism (Wang, 2004, p. 319).

Other scholars have also echoed on the value of bringing in a discourse that is profoundly different from the Western discourses of subjectivity and power. Apple (2013) writes, “I have come to an immense amount of respect for the creative resiliency and political and educational courage of people in what we in the North somewhat arrogantly call the ‘Third World’” (p. 13). Smith (2008) adds that conversations between East and West are urgent. The author writes, “When these conversations work, both East and West can understand their character, their power, and their foibles in ways that each could have never experienced through simple self-reflection” (xi). These scholars, according to Apple (2013), share a collective acceptance in which dichotomy is seen as “impossible and delusional” to the understanding of emergence, complexity, and relations (p. 22). Embracing the complexity of relations, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* represents a “constant effort, constant struggle and constant organized and personal action” oriented toward the benefit of others. It demonstrates a process of creative resiliency in carrying out moral responsibility (p. 22).

To explain, the cultivation of moral goodness constitutes the very foundation of human existence, whereas the accumulation of knowledge is considered secondary. In fact, the cultivation of moral goodness does not necessarily rely on an extensive amount of knowledge. This notion is different from the implementation of educational standards which considers accumulation of knowledge most important and ignores the learning of responsibility.

More specifically, the Confucian notion of learning responsibility is based on a belief that all children are born with a moral goodness that can be cultivated toward a moral responsibility. However, the innate moral goodness does not automatically lead to a moral responsibility. It needs to be cultivated through embracement of others, differences, tensions, and ambiguities. Confucian cultivation is a self-initiated learning that does not rely on external enforcements; it eventually becomes part of the self that cannot be taken away. Just like water finding its way as it adapts to and shapes around mountains and villages, the self realizes its moral goodness as it works through conflictive relations. Moral cultivation integrates the self as participating, responsible members who are capable of making social changes, just like the moving water never lacks but gains transformative power as it shapes around its environments. In short, the Confucian effort to work through conflictive relations and to go beyond the linear perfection of subjective reasoning differ fundamentally from the results-driven subjectivity. Most importantly, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* emphasizes the carrying out of good intention through respect, propriety, and relationship, for the benefit of others, rather than for the rewards of one's own.

One complication of Confucian *Ren* involves the concept of human rights. Specifically, the Confucian focus on interrelations is often critiqued for compromising individual rights. In the West, human rights, such as social and educational rights, are defined as how free the self can be from governmental interference or constraints. However, the fact that rights have been made more and more political rather than social and cultural (i.e., the politicization of rights) does not necessarily protect rights equally under the laws for all people. Political, legal intervention assumes that rights can be protected equally whereas in reality only the privileged few are granted justice.

Confucian thought approaches rights differently from Western concept of human rights as relying on legal and political forces. Rather, Confucian notion of rights is embedded in the autonomy of the self through a cultivation of moral goodness. The more the self becomes morally responsible toward others, the more one's rights are assured. The Confucian cultivation of moral responsibility understands the appreciation of differences, the working out of conflictive relations, or the "entitlement of others" (Chan, 2006, p. 245) as the precondition for individual autonomy, not the other way around. The *Ren* self becomes autonomous and its rights are assured in carrying out good intentions for the benefit of others, rather than from the pursuit of one's own rewards. Political and legal protection is not the only condition required to achieve autonomy and justice of rights.

This chapter is an effort to understand the limitation of the current state of education in which disciplines and standards are implemented to an extreme at the expense of moral responsibility. It aims not to provide a comprehensive study of individualism or human rights, but instead focuses on Confucian notion of moral responsibility as a complement to the results-, rights-driven subjectivity. My intention is not to oppose Confucian thought to modern ethics, but rather to learn from Confucian *Ren* as a moral responsibility. To Confucian, the innate moral goodness of human nature is the core of genetic inheritance that can be brought into realization through cultivation. Nuyen (2007) writes about the Confucian choice of cultivation as a moral responsibility, rather than as a chance of genetic inheritance: "What I am given by chance is my tradition, and what I manage to do with it is entirely my choice and hence entirely my responsibility" (p. 94). Confucian *Ren* celebrates a responsible living, an art of life, toward social changes, because it believes that "what is decreed for me changes with how I behave" (p. 93).

I start with limitations of rights-centered individualism in understanding responsibility. I explain that Cartesian separation of mind from the body produces a highly inflated, dominant, selective form of consciousness that fails to appreciate the complexity of nature and others, making the value of responsibility unrecognized and incompatible with rights. I then introduce some key concepts in Confucian thought. I explain that Confucian thought embraces the moral goodness of human nature and encourages the body to learn from and mirror the complexity of nature, resembling the way water adapts and shapes its environment. Not attempting to avoid the hierarchy of power relations that may be inevitable in civilization and beyond human control, Confucian focuses on relations of mutual respect, such as family piety, rather than external disinclines and laws, as a way to cultivate the innate moral goodness toward social responsibility.

I then move onto the complication of Confucian thought concerning the concept of human rights. I explain that Confucian thought approaches rights fundamentally different from the way rights are approached today. The Confucian notion of rights is embedded in the autonomy of the self through a cultivation of moral goodness. I conclude that in carrying out the good intention for the benefit of others, rather than from the pursuit of one's own rewards, the *Ren* self celebrates the cultivation of moral responsibility by which social changes can be brought about.

### **Limitations of Cartesian Rights-Centered Individualism in Understanding Responsibility**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes the interdependence of rights<sup>9</sup> and a working society: “without civil and political rights, the public cannot assert their

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<sup>9</sup> At the International Institute of Human Rights, Vasak (1979) for the first time talks about three generations of human rights: first-generation civil/political rights, second generation economic/social/cultural rights, and third generation solidarity rights. With the exception of solidarity rights, both civil/political rights and economic/social/cultural rights are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as *the* human rights.

economic, social, and cultural rights; similarly, without livelihoods of a working society, the public cannot assert or make use of civil or political rights” (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>). The question remains: how do we to work toward the livelihood of a working society? How can one claim one’s own rights without considering other people’s rights? In short, how can one claim one’s own rights without a moral responsibility for others?

The dichotomy between rights and responsibility can be traced back to Descartes’ cogito, *I think, therefore I am*. To Descartes (1924), “the nature of intelligence is distinct from that of the body” and any dependence on the body is “manifestly an imperfection” (p. 23). Following Descartes’ theory of the independence of human intelligence, political and social rights in modernity are synonymous with the achievement and freedom of the mind. By separating the body from mind, the innate moral goodness that dwells in the body is altogether ignored.

Descartes explains the dichotomy of body and mind.

I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this ‘me,’ that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is. (pp. 21-22)

To Descartes, a human’s capacity to think can transcend everything, including the innate feelings toward others. The supremacy of thinking isolates the self from its natural tendency of feelings for others in social relations. As Smith (2008) observes, the dichotomy of subject and object, of mind and body, “get in the way of a more complex, organic, fluid, and interwoven understanding of the universe” (p. 15). Referring to the problems of dichotomy as the subject’s

“uncoupling from nature, world, or environment,”<sup>10</sup> Baker (2001) asserts that “the problem of the subject cannot be simply reduced to a problem of freedom,” for “the subject/environment schema dissolves the compactness of the conception of the world” (p. 21). This is not to say that Descartes (1924) does not value the learning from nature and others. In fact, Descartes writes, “It is good to know something of the customs of different people in order to judge more sanely of our own, and not to think that everything of a fashion not ours is absurd and contrary to reason” (p. 6). However, the Cartesian subject’s relation with nature and others is based on a desire to control and conquer, rather than its feelings for others as the embryo of moral responsibility that is fundamental in the Confucian cultivation of *Ren*.

Using Dussel’s<sup>11</sup> “two-sided myth,” Smith (2008) explains the Cartesian desire of conquest implied by the logic of dichotomy (p. 23). The author explains the surface side of the myth —“Through our construction of Reason, we are the ‘carriers and defenders of liberty for the world’” (p. 23); and the underside of the myth —“all those who do not comply with our myth of liberty, underwritten by reason, we have the right to destroy, either directly through military and

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<sup>10</sup> “Binary schematisms are the precondition for the emergence of the figure that in modern philosophy has gone by the name of the subject. Its indispensable precondition is the possibility of having true *and false* opinions (what’s more, being able to *have* them indisputably), as well as the possibility of acting correctly *and incorrectly* or morally right *and wrong*. When one takes knowledge into consideration, it becomes clear that the problem of the subject cannot be simply reduced to a problem of freedom. Instead, the subject individuates itself only in a life history of true and false opinions, of correct and incorrect actions... – as the mirror of the world, it could be nothing more than merely right. Thus the subject is “subject” (if one still seriously accepts this quality of ultimate substratum as part of the concept’s meaning) only for... realizations that binary schematisms have held upon” (pp. 20-21).

<sup>11</sup> Enrique Domingo Dussel (1934-), Argentine philosopher and writer, one of the primary figures in the philosophical movement referred to as the Philosophy of Liberation that seeks to critique structures of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and so on, posing direct challenge to discourses of Euro-American philosophy, and emphasizing socio-political responsibilities.

colonial conquest or through strategies of exclusion, silencing and denial” (p. 24). Smith argues that rights-centered individuals are not at all free but entrapped in the two-sided myth of reason and conquest. They conform to a politics of exclusion, a logic of denial that is indeed “a denial of the West’s own history”<sup>12</sup> (p. 24). Jardine (2008) adds that the singular logic of dichotomy and this logic’s subsequent politics of exclusion are indeed “the logic of war” (xi). These authors concur that conversations between East and West can bring out voices of responsibility that deconstruct this myth, particularly, the myth of conquest and exclusion.

Adding the element of biological control to the already problematic logic of dichotomy, Dworkin (2002) elaborates on the idea of responsibility, namely, an individual’s creative relations with nature, culture, and others. The author refers to the notion of responsibility in two parts: an individual’s responsibility for their actions and society’s responsibility for helping each and every human succeed. From the perspective of biological control, Dworkin’s notion of responsibility involves the consolidation of choices and chances: choices made by individuals and societies, and chances controlled by biological nature. Dworkin argues that the availability of biological alteration has fundamentally challenged the individual’s responsibility in making choices. How can one be responsible for something that is out of one’s control? The author explains, “Our physical being...has long been the absolute paradigm of what is both devastatingly important to us, and in its initial condition, beyond our power to alter and therefore beyond the scope of our responsibility” (pp. 444-445).

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<sup>12</sup> “If globalization means anything beyond the parochial Euro-American vision of economic integration, it has something to do... with an emerging sense of globalized community no longer binarized by those policies of inclusion/exclusion that continue to control the minds of those controlling the systems of global power” (p. 26)

Dworkin (2002) seems to suggest that the individual's creative and emerging relations to themselves, as well as to others and nature—in other words, their responsibility—are limited because of the alteration of biological control. Either way: without biological control, humans have nothing to do with the biologically-given, and with it, however, an in-depth understanding of its medical terms is not easy and thus made obsolete to the individual. Caught in the midst of biological chance and responsibility, Dworkin calls for an ethical individualism in which neither individual nor social responsibility should be compromised by the developed alteration of biological control. Dworkin believes that the idea of ethical responsibility can prevent humans from falling into an oblivion where scientific developments, such as biological control, take over humans' creative relations to themselves, others, and nature.

Dworkin's ethical individualism shares common ground with the Confucian cultivation of *Ren*. Like individualism, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* is foremost a caring of the self. Rather than isolating the self's rights from its responsibility, the Confucian *Ren* aims to cultivate a moral responsibility toward others that eventually opens up a possibility, or creates a condition, for maximizing the care of the self. Moral responsibility should not be abandoned because science has expanded the scope of chances and complicated the consideration of choices. The challenge is how to work toward a moral responsibility with regard to science, nature, and others.

Science will continue to advance as it already has, from biological control to artificial intelligence to, eventually, discoveries beyond human anticipation. In the game of Go<sup>13</sup>, humans now stand little—if any—chance in winning against programmed computers; for thirty years,

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<sup>13</sup> The game Go (围棋) was invented in ancient China more than 2,500 years ago. Despite its relatively simple rules Go is very complex, even more so than chess.

programmed computers have dominated humans in the game of Chess. Yet the fact that machines have absolute dominance over humans in winning certain games does not in any way diminish the value, challenge, and fun of these games. People play games not just to win, but to learn in the process. Machines cannot substitute what people can learn from and reflect in while playing. The reflection of learning is a unique human capacity that machines don't possess. Confucius lived in a period when constant war, rather than scientific development, has complicated the consideration of responsibility. Yet he did not negate the moral responsibility, just as humans do not simply quit playing Chess or Go because they cannot beat machines.

Shun and Wong (2004) agree with Dworkin and others that the “Western morality provides ineffective grounding for duties to others because it cannot show the individual how the performance of these duties is related to achieving a specific conception of the good and worthwhile life” (p. 2). The ineffectiveness can be argued in a way as it relates to the privileged way of claiming rights. In modernity, the more one's rights are spoken out, the more one's rights can be claimed. The embodiment of voice as the essential vehicle of individual rights is challenged by post-structural discourses. Derrida (1973) questions the privilege of speech-as-presence in which the excellence of the voice becomes a sign of the transcendental consciousness. In trying not to be recognized as the subjects of incompetence, Cartesian individuals must speak out in defense of their rights. Shun and Wong agree that “being able to make individual claims against others is not an essential feature of all philosophical acceptable moral systems, Confucian in particular” (p. 16). Moreover, the isolated emphasis on rights without adequate understandings of responsibility tend to convert all general conflicts into complications of rights. By doing so, society as a whole can easily become dysfunctional.

According to Bluhm (1996), the Cartesian model “contains no concept of natural community, no concept of human sharing” (p. 313), and it continues to limit the way individuals think and relate to others.

In summary, the Cartesian separation of mind from the body produces a highly inflated, dominant, selective form of consciousness that fails to appreciate the complexity of nature and others, making the value of responsibility unrecognized and incompatible with rights. Roets (2004) expresses that the “mentality of self, autonomy, and freedom have run its course... We should abandon the myth of objective knowledge and adopt a thinking that avoids the disjunction of normative and spontaneous thought” (p. 31). In Wang’s (2004) words, we should “see and value the interdependence of rights and responsibilities” (p. 32). This, however, requires a different way of relating to nature and others that is not designed for conquest and control.

### **Nature, Moral Goodness, and Cultivation in Confucian Thought**

Though preoccupied by power and subjectivity rather than ethics, Foucault (1988) nevertheless denies “a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom” (p. 15). Specifically, the author comments, the “history of science does not develop in the same way as social sensibility” (p. 14). However, Foucault does not address how the development of social sensibility, by which people “react in very different ways to the same situation” differs from the development of science (p. 14). Realizing that the difference between development of science and social sensibility involves people and ethics, Foucault does not engage in discussions of moral responsibility, which plays a critical role in the development of social sensibility. Unlike Foucauldian theory, Confucian thought embraces the innate moral

tendency for contingency and focuses on cultivating the patience, tolerance, and responsibility towards others, rather than on constituting subjectivity built on rationality.

A few words on the historical background of Confucianism. Before the end of eighteenth century, Guangxu (光绪), the last emperor of the Qing (清) dynasty in Chinese history, discontinued the civil service examination system in which Confucian classic-reading was the main practice. By the 1970s, when I was growing up in China, Confucian classic-reading was long gone and replaced by vernacular Chinese literature that focuses on learning for utility. The May 4th Movement in 1919, along with Dewey's visit to China, marks a radical break from the Chinese tradition of Confucianism. The introduction of pragmatism brought a shift in Chinese culture and education, from its history of Confucianism to a new era of modernity adopting Western values, especially democracy and science. According to Wu (2004), Confucianism at the time was attacked as an obstacle to modernization, and Chinese language was deemed an object of knowledge "detached from the inner landscape of moral identity" (p. 67). In spite of the tremendous socio-economic changes that China underwent at the time and continues to undergo, Confucian values have remained remarkably stable within the culture and among the people, although it is not necessarily emphasized in public schools. Aware that the essence of Confucian thought is not easily understood by simply knowing the texts or studying the culture from the outside, I read the *Analects* hoping that my experience of living in the culture for over twenty years would illuminate my understanding of the texts.

Only recently have I started to read *Analects*<sup>14</sup>, one of the Four Books<sup>15</sup> of Confucianism. I was eager to bring a balance into my daughter's education, which focuses so much on outcomes at the expense of tolerance and consideration for others. Children are forced and disciplined to go in a way that impedes their impulses for playing and exploration. So, without the Chinese language and culture background, I introduced to her the original *Analects*.

For someone like me who lived in China for over twenty years, reading *Analects* is not easy, for the writing itself is condensed, concise, and concrete, but at the same time symbolic. The meaning of the texts is interwoven within the language and should not be taken as absolute. For my daughter, who is just beginning to speak but does not read the language, the challenge was beyond her anticipation. But I wanted to engage her in an activity where understanding is completely irrelevant at the beginning. I wanted to cultivate her ability to live with ambiguity, to enjoy and appreciate doing something that is completely alien or maybe nonsense, and most of all, to try something that brings absolutely no reward at the beginning. I wanted her to tolerate the ambiguity of not understanding the texts, and to allow meaning to emerge, rather than to have me to impose or associate meaning to the texts right away.

The essence of Confucian reading is to take time in understanding by indulging in the format of repetition, just like children's play and exploration. The seemingly "going nowhere" repetition of the texts cultivates a habit of persistence and patience. The practical aspect—the mastery of

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<sup>14</sup> The most important book of Confucianism, *Analects (Lun Yu)* is a collection of short dialogues between the Master Kung Tzi and his students and rulers.

<sup>15</sup> The Four Books of Confucianism are: 中庸 (*The Mean and Constancy*), *The Great Learning*, *Analects*, and *Mencius*. The Five Classics of Confucianism are: 易经 (*Books of Changes*), 尚书 (*Books of Document*), 诗经 (*Books of Poetry*), 礼记 (*Books of Rites*), 春秋 (*Books of Spring and Autumn*). Together the Four Books and Five Classics are the core Confucian texts.

language—comes along with the unraveling of meanings, just as outcomes of learning come through children’s repetitive play. Different from the modernist view<sup>16</sup>, reading *Analects* aims not at the practical aspect of learning the language, but the cultivation of perseverance for lifetime achievements. To Confucian, the practical aspect of learning is the byproduct of the cultivation. Confucius says, “Seek *Ren*, gain *Ren*” (7: 15). Likewise, seek utility, gain utility. In reading *Analects* with my daughter, I plant a seed of perseverance, a tolerance for the ambiguity of meanings, which is the seed for moral responsibility toward others. Without the perseverance and capacity to live through ambiguous, conflictive relations, moral responsibility would not be possible. If we seek only the utility of mastering the language itself, we will get only the utility. But in the cultivation of perseverance, the mastery of the languages will come along.

Unlike the ontology of the modern self that resides in a mind of rationality, the Confucian self dwells in the body. The body is all there is. The body reserves and represents everything. Furthermore, the body is not subordinate to the mind; feeling is not subordinate to knowing. In the body dwells the consciousness; in the body dwells meaning. When Confucius says, “Cultivating the self,” he means, “Caring for the body.” When Master Zeng, one of the Confucian thinkers, was ill, he summoned his students around and said, “Look at my feet! Look at my hands” (8: 3). When death was imminent, Master Zeng was not entangled with his afterlife

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<sup>16</sup> To clarify, my use of “modernist view” instead of “Western view” is not limited to the United States, but also applies to modern China, for the utility emphasis of learning has been adopted by and is also practiced in modern China. Since my focus for this dissertation is on the education in the United States, for the urgency of my daughter’s education that could be applied to the education of others, I don’t discuss in details the challenges of education that modern China now faces. The truth is, I don’t live in China any more, and I don’t really know what is going on. I use “modernist view” because on some aspects, the challenges of education I do discuss here may not be uniquely Western.

but observed his failure in preserving the body given by his parents. Confucius sees taking care of the body as the foremost responsibility of sons and daughters. Chaibong (2001) affirms, “In Confucianism, what determines and confirms my being is not the metaphysical, the transcendental, or the rational, but my physical body” (p. 317).

Confucian thought turns to nature as a way to take care of the body. When students are gathered around, Confucius asks each to speak of the activity that inspires him<sup>17</sup>. Zi Lu (子路), a senior student, responds that he would make the state’s army stronger within three years. Ran Qiu (冉求) expresses interest in making people abundant, and Gongxi Chi (宫西赤) in managing rituals of propriety. Zeng Dian (曾点), the most junior says, “In late spring, after the spring garments have been sewn, I would go out with five or six capped youth<sup>18</sup>, and six or seven boys and girls. We would bathe in the River of Yi, and dance in the wind on the altar of Wuyu<sup>19</sup>, then chant to return.” Having listened to students’ response, Confucius sighs deeply, “I’m with you.” Zeng Dian is puzzled with Confucius’ reactions and lingers after the other three have left. He asks, “What about the others’ words? Why did you smile?” Confucius replies, “There is no deference in their words” (11: 26). This conversation carries multiple messages. One meaning is the Confucian openness and deference to nature that encourages the body to mirror and learn from the nature’s complexity.

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<sup>17</sup> At the time, Confucius’ students are all males.

<sup>18</sup> The “capped youths” to which Zeng Dian refers to, are those who have reached the age of 20. The “capping ceremony,” a ritual in Zhou dynasty, marks their entrance into public life. For girls, age and ritual vary.

<sup>19</sup> The altar of Wuyu is used for a ritual during which people pray for rain or health.

The Confucian self dwells not only in the body, but also in the belief in moral power. Confucius believes that all humans are born with the moral goodness necessary to cultivate a moral responsibility. Confucian thought departs from Rousseau's concept of nature,<sup>20</sup> which is based on a mechanical notion of form and matter. To Rousseau, not only does the innate goodness depart from the body as individuals grow from the original state of nature into participants in civilization, the innate goodness is also limited to instincts and feelings, resembling the "natural state of merely animal goodness" (p. 234), that "contains no moral content" (p. 241).

To Confucius, however, it is precisely this innate moral capacity that can be brought into a social responsibility. In Confucian thought, education is secondary to the active cultivation of moral goodness, whereas, for Rousseau (1952), education is the passive giving up of one's innate goodness. Confucius does not believe in a learning that is not initiated by students themselves, nor does he consider accumulation of knowledge as important as the cultivation of moral goodness. In regard to self-initiated learning, Confucius remarks, "No guidance from the master until one ponders and raises questions; no prompt from the master until one stammers at expression of thoughts. Teach no further if one cannot derive from one to another three" (7: 8). In regard to knowledge, Confucius says, "If one can treat people with respect, exert efforts in dealing with parents and states, be trustworthy in keeping one's words with friends, although one may not have accumulated knowledge, I call the one learned" (1: 7). To Confucius, acquiring

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<sup>20</sup> According to Baker (2001), Rousseau's concept of nature has six elements: original state, untamed animal appetites without religious or moral reasonings, matter and force, uniform laws of motion, and that which is not made by humans, and those potentials or dispositions revealed by institutions that humans later establish.

knowledge does not automatically lead to the cultivation of moral goodness. As a moral philosophy, Confucianism does not focus on acquiring knowledge as modern education does. Rather it focuses on cultivating the moral goodness of human nature through relations, just like water finds its way around mountains and village.

As clean as it can be, water can do harm in many ways. It may cause severe damage and danger, but still be clean. The inability to be responsible for oneself and others is considered a loss of moral power in compassion and empathy, a failure to ensure the prominent of the self's innate moral goodness. Yet the morally lost are not deprived of chances to change in the future and can still do wonder through cultivation. The Confucian cultivation is a conscious and bodily choice that is never too late to make. According to Baker (2001), the Confucian notion of human nature as morally responsible "marks the uniqueness of human beings rather than subjugating humanity to matter as the final reality" (p. 238).

To say that Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of moral responsibility is not to say that Confucian thought is free of hierarchy. In other words, the *Ren* self thrives through (rather than avoids) the hierarchy of power relations and thus becomes autonomous. Rousseau wants to see children as free of the hierarchy of power relations because they by nature lack the moral capacity to participate in civilization. But the exclusion of morality from human nature<sup>21</sup> itself does not prevent hierarchy. Baker (2001) agrees that hierarchy is indeed assumed in Rousseau's

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<sup>21</sup> "Nature, as an original state, as untampered with, as a unified state, as regular laws of motion, as untamed appetites, as potentials and dispositions that civil Man's institutions brought into view, could not only be considered objective in all of its Rousseauian forms, but its objectivity announced quite loudly the origins of the foundations of inequality, of subjectivity, among Men in civil society.... It is precisely because the young were thought to lack morality, reason, and religiosity—progress of the mind—that they could not be considered real citizens" (pp. 242-247).

original state of human nature. The tensions between abundance and hungers, beautiful and deficient, noble and weak, natural and savage, reside in Rousseau's notion of human nature. However, these tensions constitute the "paradox of modernity that is more stated rather than resolved" (Baker, 2001, p. 248).

Just as nature proceeds with or without human intervention, social hierarchy may be something beyond human control. Rousseau avoids morality in attempt to avoid hierarchy, whereas Confucius accepts morality. However, the Confucian acceptance of morality does not mean Confucius accepts hierarchy as it is. Rather Confucian *Ren* lives and thrives through the hierarchy of power relations. In carrying out of *Ren*, social hierarchy is destabilized and transformed (I explain this point more in Chapter 5). In short, the Confucian acceptance of morality does not conflict with the transformation of social hierarchy. It embraces the notion that humans cannot have absolute control over nature or the very civilization built upon reason. The Confucian tenderness and liberality toward human nature is woven into the interdependence of self, nature, and others through which rights and responsibility are brought to a balance. Chaibong (2001) affirms that the Confucian self lives and thrives in "the intricate intersubjective social network within which it [the body] is placed" (p. 317).

Having explained the Confucian choice of body and moral power in relation to nature, I move onto the Confucian choice of family piety over the external enforcement, such as disciplines and laws. Confucianism does not rely on legal enforcements to cultivate moral responsibility<sup>22</sup>, nor

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<sup>22</sup> The Lord of Ye says to Confucius, "There is a righteous man in my village. His father steals a sheep, and he testifies against him." Confucius says, "The righteous men in my village are different. Fathers cover up for sons and sons cover up for fathers. Righteousness lies within relations" (13: 18).

attempt to avoid social hierarchy. Rather it embraces social hierarchy through its value of family piety based on mutual respect. Within the family, children rely on their parents' guidance rather than the socially founded, external authoritative system of penalties associated with laws.<sup>23</sup> The Confucian choice of family piety emphasizes the relations children have with others, not only parents, but also with sages and seniors in general, from which children learn and get ready for responsible, social participation. Not at all limited to the family, the father-son relationship, for example, symbolizes extra-familial relationships. When asked whether or not to act upon learning, Confucius recommends consulting with different familial and extra-familial relations for each student<sup>24</sup>. For those who are reckless, Confucius suggests consulting with father and brother; for those who habitually hold back from actions, he suggests moving forward without. Thus whether or not to consult with father and brother depends on the specific character of the students. To Confucius, taking into consideration other's insights, be they a father, brother, teacher, farmer, or sage, is an essential way of learning to work out conflictive relations. The father-son relation is intended only as an example of such relations in which mutual listening is essential.

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<sup>23</sup> Rousseau (1992) writes, "It is manifestly contrary to the law of nature, however defined, that a child should govern an old man, an imbecile should lead a wise man, and that a handful multitude goes in want of necessities" (p. 137).

<sup>24</sup> Zilu asked, "May one immediately put into practice what one has learned?" The Master said, "When father and brothers are alive, how could one immediately act upon what one has learned?" Ran You asked, "May one immediately put into practice what one has learned?" The Master said, "Yes, one may."

Gongxi Hua said, "When You are asked, 'May one immediately put into practice what one has learned?' you said, 'Your father and brothers are still alive.' When Qiu asked 'May one immediately put into practice what one has learned?' you said, 'Yes, one may.' I am confused, and presume to ask about this." The Master said, "Qiu often holds back, and so I encourage him forward; Ran You often encroaches upon others, and so I draw him back" (11: 22).

Family piety is not a relationship of blind conformity, but mutual respect. To Confucius, respect does not come automatically with age or correspond to social status; it is not imposed, but earned. Just as responsible parents love their children by taking their thoughts and opinions into consideration, children learn to make responsible choices by learning from the models of their parents. It is a process of mutual respect. Confucius emphasizes the importance of not just the father-son relationship, but all family relationships and any other relations where mutual listening must apply. Critiques of Confucianism often misunderstand the father-son relationship as blind rather than mutual conformity. From the mutual conformity emerges a mutual respect; from the mutual respect, changes are possible. Not only emphasizing mutual respect in family relations and other relations in general, Confucius particularly stresses how those ruling in power should cultivate *Ren* in themselves in order to become better at working with conflictive relations.

The mutual respect of relations is often overlooked. This is why some scholars critique the Confucian emphasis on interrelationship as compromising individual human rights. Rosemont (2004) argues that Confucian individuals are unable to discover good life independently or claim individual rights without attaching themselves to authorities. The author fails to understand family piety as mutual respect and conformity which makes destabilization of social hierarchy possible. In addition, the author's account reveals some mistakes commonly made in Western commentaries on Confucianism: first, Chinese people are assumed to be followers of Confucianism, while, in reality, most are not. Second, the author mistakenly considers certain behavior patterns or habits associated with Chinese people as Confucian. Living in a society where Confucianism is the main moral philosophy does not automatically make one a follower

of Confucianism. Likewise, Confucius uses certain behaviors as demonstrations and examples, like the father-son relationship, to discuss his philosophy. They are not meant to be taken literally. Rosemont's critique of Confucianism as serving and perpetuating the hierarchy of power relations takes the father-son relation literally. It fails to understand the relation as a mutual respect and conformity.

Together the Confucian choice of human nature as bodily and moral, as well as its value of family piety over legality, lays the foundation for the cultivation<sup>25</sup> that mirrors the complexity of nature and culture. Cultivation takes place in the self's bodily movement, just like water gains momentum and power in moving. Similarly, the self becomes aware of its moral power through working out conflictive relations, just like water can do wonderful things as it adapts and shapes around nature. The moving water takes the shape of its environments but never lacks transformative power; the cultivated self interacts with others but never loses a sense of responsibility embodying the power to change society. In being responsible for others and in destabilizing the established social relations, the self becomes autonomous. Nuyen (2007) writes, "We can take comfort in the fact that it is our nature, our *Xing* (性), to follow the Way as exemplified by ancient wisdom and values, [and] that it is not in our nature, not in our *Xing* (性), to choose against that nature, just as water by its nature does not run upward" (p. 95). The Confucian cultivation, according to Smith (2008), follows "the way of developing the mind so that it may be a base for the arising of wisdom..., not to produce yet more knowledge..., but precisely to produce the capacity to discern and judge the true *nature* of... the economy of actual

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<sup>25</sup> On the point of cultivation, Descartes' (1924) concurs that all good things pertaining to birth require "long exercise and meditation, often repeated" (p. 18).

human requirements” (p. 28). Just like water can change nature in following the natural way of running downward, Confucian cultivation can transform society in following and working out conflictive relations. *Ren* is the celebration of living — it changes people and society. I explain *Ren* further in a later section.

In summary, Confucian thought embraces the moral goodness of human nature and encourages the body to learn from and mirror the complexity of nature, resembling the way water adapts and shapes its environment. Not attempting to avoid the hierarchy of power relations that may be beyond human control and inevitable in civilization, Confucian thought focuses on relations of mutual respect, for example, family piety, rather than external disciplines and laws, as a way to cultivate the innate moral goodness oriented toward a social, moral responsibility.

### **Rights and Moral Responsibility in Confucian Thought**

The Confucian emphasis on cultivation and interrelation is often critiqued as impeding the practice of individual autonomy and compromising individual human rights. In ancient China and Confucian thought as well, rights are perceived fundamentally different from the way rights are understood in modern societies. Not a political but mainly a social and cultural value, rights in Confucian thoughts are embedded in the autonomy of the self. In fact, human rights in the United States, before the American Bill of Rights in 1791, have also been mainly a cultural and social value, although often manipulated for political reasons. Moreover, educational rights are not considered equal to all in the United States until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yet the politicization of human rights in general, and educational rights more specifically, still do not

necessarily protect rights equally for all people. Hintzen (2002) asserts that “rights constitute deceitful instruments to keep the bourgeoisie in power at the expense of the rest of the population” (p. 71). Whether or not the politicization of rights is an ideal way to promote equality and democracy, however, is not the focus here. Given the explanation that rights are mainly a social and cultural value in Confucian thought, it is not appropriate to critique the Confucian emphasis on morality cultivation for not addressing the complication of human rights that is uniquely modern and political.

Concepts of human rights vary between Confucian and modern ethics, and, subsequently, the cultivations of people’s moral responsibility differ from culture to culture. In particular, modern ethics focuses more on claiming individual rights, defined as freedom from governmental interference, and centering on how free of constraints the self can be. Confucian thought focuses on cultivating a moral responsibility through which autonomy and freedom can be achieved. The more the self becomes morally responsible toward others, the more one’s rights are assured. Most importantly, Confucian thought believes that moral responsibility is the vehicle of rights and can lead to a humane, harmonious society, whereas in modernity, individual freedom is believed to lead to a democratic society; in practice, however, rights are not equal for all. In Confucian thought, a humane, harmonious society is not synonymous with the modern, democratic society. Recognition and protection of human rights may be necessary, but legal protection is not the only condition required to achieve autonomy, freedom, and democracy. Political, legal intervention alone cannot protect rights for all. They cannot substitute the moral, social values of rights and responsibility that serve as the essence of Confucian thought.

Wang (2004) challenges the rights-centered individualism that is dominant in modern ethics. The author asks, “How can we espouse the freedoms and rights of individuals under a rational governing structure without reducing them to egoistic and atomistic entities and subjecting them to the growing danger of alienation under modernity” (p. 319)? Rooted in rationality, reason, or, as Wang puts it, “the law of contradiction” (p. 319), the political enforcement of rights assumes that people’s rights can be protected equally by laws, whereas, in reality, only the privileged few are granted justice. Human rights are not simply political phenomena; they have been made more and more political in modern societies. Political protection of rights is not only problematic but fundamentally impossible. Wang cites Derrida: “there is no possibility of justice without shattering the illusory authority of laws and norms and overcoming the violence ingrained in the ‘logo-centrism’ of Western metaphysics” (p. 319). The discourse of human rights is a product of modernity, not applicable in ancient China. It makes little sense to critique an ancient philosophy like Chinese Confucianism for not addressing or anticipating the political complications on the concept of human rights. To clarify, my focus is on the social, cultural values of rights and responsibility as captured in Confucian thought, not the political, legal complication on the concept of human rights as perceived today, although it is the latter that motivates this writing.

To begin with, the concept of rights is not so much of a concern in ancient China. As a moral philosophy, Confucian thought approaches rights in a way fundamentally different than most societies do today. Rights, in Confucian thought, come about as the self learns from the complexity of nature and thus cultivates the moral goodness. Li (1992) asserts that the rights dimension of Confucian thought is an element of human nature, *Renxing* (人性). In Confucian thought, caring for oneself can be developed naturally from the innate instinct for survival, but

this act is not exclusively human. The Confucian notion of rights is embedded within the elements of human nature, elements other than self-care, that are distinctively human. Hintzen (2002) acknowledges that humans are moral beings rather than beings of rights relying on legal enforcement. What makes one human is not how well one can speak out and defend their rights through political, legal enforcement, but rather how well one fulfills social roles. The greater the individual's ability in fulfilling social roles, the more respect one will receive, and the more rights one's rights will be granted by others. It is the moral responsibility, a person's ability to carry out good intentions, rather than the desire to care for oneself, that sets humans apart from other species.

Second, Confucian thought does not turn to legal protection as a way to cultivate moral responsibility, for Confucian thought does not see people as entities of the hierarchy built upon reason within which legality operates. People, according to Chaibong (2001), "are considered both the means and the end of human flourishing, not something to be limited, abolished, or otherwise overcome" (p. 315). China is a people's republic; it stands in the service of the people. Whether or not the modern Chinese government should increase legal enforcements on human rights (i.e., to make it legal and political, or otherwise let them remain ethical and ideological) is another topic. At least in naming the country, the Chinese government has been persistent in preserving the very essence of Confucian thought.

Thirdly, the Confucian notion of rights is not fixed with social status, but the result of being respected and responsible. People's rights are assured based on their respectfulness, regardless of

social roles and status. In *Analects* (16:12)<sup>26</sup>, Confucius praises Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi's (叔齐)<sup>27</sup> moral virtues because they refuse to go along with the ruler's violence and cruelty in governing the states. They are respected, remembered, and praised by people whereas the Duke, who has wealth and high social status, is not. To Confucius, the assurance of rights depends on people's recognition of one's *Ren* rather than one's wealth and social status. Legends of *Ren*, like Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi, chose not to conform to the ruling power but to live with dignity. It is their rights to live with dignity, not their responsibility to follow a ruler who is not *Ren*. If Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齐) did not choose to die with dignity, they would have been granted all rights because they were respected and their *Ren* had been approved by people. In Confucian thought, the self's rights depend on how much the self is respected. Rather than constantly defending or claiming one's own rights, the *Ren* self focuses on the cultivation, the carrying out of good intention, for the benefit of others. The more the self is respected by others, the more one's rights are granted by others. Contrary of the Confucian notion of rights that is not linked to wealth and social status, human rights in modern societies are. According to Hantzen (2002), "hierarchically, the more rights one is to enjoy, the higher status one may be deemed to be" (p. 55).

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<sup>26</sup> Confucius remarks, "Duke Jing of Qi had a thousand of horses [symbolic of his wealth and social status], but on the day he died, the people could find no virtue to praise him. Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齐) starved beneath the Mountain Shouyang (首阳), but the people praise them till this day. It is not the wealth that matters, but only having the difference in people's respect."

<sup>27</sup> Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齐) are two brothers who lived in China at the time of transition between the Shang and Zhou dynasties. It was a time when their country was misruled with high taxes, mass hunger, violence, and cruelty. They refused to follow the minister's way and starved to death underneath the Mountain of Shouyang. They are remembered in Chinese literary culture for moral virtue.

Maybe what makes people respect Bo Yi and Shu Qi so much is that they did not choose to live at the expense of their *Ren*. To Confucius, “The ones that are *Ren* do not seek to live on at the expense of *Ren* [wealth, social status, and so on], but at times sacrifice their life to complete *Ren*” (15: 8). To summarize, the Confucian notion of rights is embedded in the belief that the innate desire to care for oneself can be carried out in human’s moral cultivation of *Ren* toward a humane society where rights correspond with mutual respect, rather than with a hierarchy fixed with wealth and social status. It is when rights are disassociated from the compensation of seeking that the self becomes autonomous.

Furthermore, the Confucian notion of rights is based on an autonomous self, capable of reflective engagement and consideration of others. People must be able to act upon their independent will before they practice being responsible to others. This notion of autonomy and freedom is supported and consistent throughout the detailed textual evidence in *Analects*. Confucius says to his students, “One can seize the general in charge of the three army divisions, but one cannot deprive the will (or heart’s intent) of common people” (9.26). Mencius<sup>28</sup> also says, “One cannot be perplexed when wealthy and honored, or deflected from one’s will when poor and obscure, nor can one be made to bow before superior force” (3B. 2). The two messages converge on the Confucian notion of autonomy: a notion of being able to persist and reflect on the intent of the heart. Confucian autonomy, or the intent of the heart, cannot be taken away by elements of hierarchy, such as wealth and social status.

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<sup>28</sup> Mencius (Meng Tzi, 孟子, 372 – 289 B.C.E), Chinese philosopher, the most famous Confucian thinker after Confucius.

Not only capable of acting upon one's independent will, the Confucian autonomous self must furthermore question authorities before they can make choices accordingly and live with dignity.<sup>29</sup> The mutual respect of father-son, of mother-daughter, of teacher-student, and so on — symbolic of the creative practice of ritual — provides a way to claim dignity different from that of claiming rights. Rituality is a mutual repeating, following, and conforming based on examination and choice. Xunzi (荀子<sup>30</sup>) says in *Zidao* (子道, *The Way of the Son*):

If a father has a son who's able to give honest suggestions, he would not choose to do things contradicting propriety. If a scholar has a friend who's able to give an honest suggestion, he would not make irresponsible choices. How could a son be called filial for simply following the order of his father? And how could one be called loyal for simply following the order of the ruler? One can only speak of filial respect and loyalty after one has examined the reasons. (29)

In short, Confucian conformity does not always line up with the way power relations operate, as in the case of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who deny the compensations promised by the ruling power and choose to die with dignity. According to Smith (2008), the Confucian notion of rights and responsibility as interdependent and emerging leads to a belief that “everything in life is self-organizing and co-constructive—that is, everything is constructed through every other thing, and

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<sup>29</sup> “Zigong said, “If a son follows the order of the father, that is filial respect; if one follows the order to the ruler, that is loyalty. But what is the answer of my teacher?” Confucius said, “How ignorant that is! You do not know filial respect and loyalty. In antiquity, a state of ten thousand war-chariots was never diminished if there were four ministers giving honest suggestions; a state of one thousand war-chariots was never endangered if there were three ministers giving honest suggestions; and a family with one hundred war-chariots would not bring harm to its ancestral temple if there were two family ministers giving honest suggestions. If a father has a son who's able to give honest suggestions, he would not choose to do things contradicting propriety. If a scholar has a friend who's able to give honest suggestion, he would not make irresponsible choices. How could a son be called filial respect for simply following the order of his father? And how could one be called loyal for simply following the order of the ruler? One can only speak of filial respect and loyalty after one has examined the reasons.”

<sup>30</sup> Xunzi, 荀子(312–230 B. C. E), a Chinese philosopher and one of the major Confucian thinkers after Confucius and Mencius.

what happens to one somehow influences what happens to everything else in a movement of constant adaptation and change” (p. 22). Smith’s notion of everything existing in every other thing is similar to Confucian way of “obtain by yielding.” As Zigong (子貢) describes, “Our master is modest, friendly, reverential, and frugal; he obtains by yielding. The way our master seeks things is different from the way others do” (1: 14). To apply the notion of “obtain by yielding” in the interchangeability of rights and responsibility, the Confucian way of claiming rights does not seek what benefits oneself, but instead what benefits others.

The understanding of responsibility and rights as interchanging and transformative, has made headway in postmodern theories. Derrida’s conception of identity as both presence and absence<sup>31</sup> can be applied to the transferability of rights and responsibility in which two seemingly opposites interchange with and transform into one another. Egéa-Kuehne (1997) writes about Derrida’s conception of “double duty,”—“This double duty [for example, traditions and differences, integration and alterity] calls for responsibility, the responsibility to think, speak, and act within aporetic situations, under double contradictory imperatives” (p. 160).

Applying Derrida’s concept of “double duty” in teaching and learning, Egéa-Kuehne (1997) asks: “isn’t it [teacher’s responsibility] to encourage them [students] to take risks in learning and discovering the other, the unknown, while building up a greater sense of responsibility toward self-directed learning, and therefore truly unique identity building?” (p. 161). This notion of learning responsibility differs fundamentally from the dominant, educational practice of

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<sup>31</sup> For example, Derrida sees identity not as fixed but fluid. Egéa-Kuehne (1997) explains Derrida’s concept of identity: “every form of presence contains an absence, and every absence a presence” (p. 158). To Derrida, “whether or not it [the absence or presence of certain characteristics of identity] is in evidence is only a matter of mind and perception” (p. 157).

standards and assessment. Rather than reinforcing the rationale of results-driven, the process of learning responsibility focuses on building a moral flexibility and perseverance that emerge from appreciation of differences in others.

The perseverance to struggle, to put in effort without outcomes, and to work through conflicts, differ fundamentally from the rights-centered, results-driven individualism. Baker (2001) believes that only through “a moral notion of reasoning” (p. 191), one that appreciates the differences of others, can a deep sense of responsibility be learnt. Baker’s moral notion of reasoning and Derrida’s concept of “double duty” share the understanding that a sense of responsibility can emerge only through the appreciation of others’ differences and the recognition of relations as mutually transformative.

Derrida’s understanding of responsibility as the appreciation of differences and others aligns nicely with the Confucian cultivation of *Ren*, in which the appreciation of others is not set against, but rather fundamental to the prosperity of states. Confucian thought emphasizes working through interpersonal relations as the essential component of a humane and prosperous society. Moral responsibility is considered a contribution rather than a hindrance to recognition and protection of individual rights. It sees the working through conflictive relations as the precondition for individual freedom, not the other way around. Confucian rights are embedded in the fulfillment of responsibility. Entitlements to one’s own rights would not be possible if not carried out with responsibility to others. Chan (2006) asserts that responsibility, or “the entitlement of others,” has a “firm basis in Confucian ethics” (p. 245). Contrary to frequent misinterpretations, the cultivation of moral responsibility is considered a privilege, rather than a constraint to the autonomy of the self. It is convenient yet futile to reject Confucian thought

based on patterns of behaviors observed from the outside of the culture that do not represent the very essence of moral responsibility. I turn to an explanation of how Confucian *Ren* works toward the destabilization of social hierarchy.

### **Cultivation of *Ren* (仁) as Responsibility: Working toward Changes**

Unlike Foucault's concern about how subjectivities are constructed through power relations by themselves (i.e. technologies of the self or *tekhnē* of the self), the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* does not focus on the technologies of the self, but the art of life. It cultivates a responsible living that embraces the constant struggling of others in relation to the self, not vice versa<sup>32</sup>. Foucault (1988) is right in pointing out that the truth in the Confucian art of living is related not to “an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility” (p. 57)<sup>33</sup>. However, Foucault is not right that the Confucian art of living is “first and foremost in relation to itself” (p. 57). Rather, it is first and foremost a cultivation of the self, a “reverberation in the body” in relation to others, in its intensity, quality, and duration (p. 57). It is in the benefit of others that the self is respected and honored, and thus celebrated as *Ren* (仁).

Understanding rights and responsibility as interchanging and organic, the Confucian cultivation of *Ren* promotes a moral responsibility that cherishes other people. People of *Ren* are not only independent, autonomous beings capable of moral feelings, but also responsible beings of human-relatedness. The Cultivation of *Ren* does not celebrate the loving of oneself due to the

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<sup>32</sup> Constitution of subjectivity embraces the practice, the constant struggling, reminding of the self in relation to others.

<sup>33</sup> Constitutions of subjectivity, according to Foucault (1978), is strictly geared to a form of knowledge-power in Western civilization.

achievement of one's own rewards, such as wealth or social status; rather it celebrates the loving of others in action. When Fan Chi (樊迟) asks about *Ren*, Confucius responds, "Loving people" (12: 22); when Zhong Gong (仲恭) asks about *Ren*, Confucius responds, "Do not do to others what you would not wish to have done to yourself" (12: 2). The essence of *Ren* as loving people, as carrying out actions for the benefit of other, is fundamental and consistent throughout *Analects*. Confucius remarks, "People need *Ren* more than water or fire. I have seen people die in treading through water and fire; I have not seen anyone die in treading through *Ren*" (15: 34).

Confucian *Ren* is confirmed in the "look of others." People learn about other's *Ren* through observing their action and intention. Confucius says, "See their actions, observe their past experiences, examine their intentions and habits, how can anyone hide? How can you not know what kind of persons they are" (2: 10)? To Confucius, everything about the self, both feelings and intentions, are manifested, reflected, and revealed in the self's actions through the body. People's intersubjective vision of the self constitutes and eventually develops as a social sensibility. The intersubjective vision does not always follow the dominant way of knowing and reasoning. When social sensibility converges with respect, it becomes powerful. People follow *Ren* when they recognize it. This is how rulings of *Ren* and people's recognition of *Ren* gain the power to make changes.

This is also why claiming oneself as *Ren* by the self is one thing and being recognized as *Ren* by others is another. Confucian cultivation of *Ren* as responsibility toward others has an intersubjective or social dimension. What people say about their good intentions is not meaningful until these intentions are faithfully carried out in actions and observed by others. When Sima Niu (司马牛) asks about *Ren*, Confucius responds, "The ones who speak with

reluctance” (12: 3). To Confucius, the easily said cannot be *Ren*. How could something hard to carry out be easily said? For example, it’s easy to say that “I treat everyone with kindness,” but it is hard to carry it out. Because it is hard to carry out, Confucius chooses not to say it, for saying “I treat everyone with kindness” means little. If one cannot explain “how” to treat everyone with kindness, Confucius believes that it is better not to say it. This is why the *Ren* self speaks with reluctance, for saying without knowing how, and knowing how without actually carrying out the good intentions, are not meaningful. In Confucian thought, the ones who say one thing but do another are referred to as “*Xiaoren*” (小人), and the ones who are ethical and capable are referred to as “*Junzi*” (君子). In achieving transparency and consistency in the body, thoughts, and actions, those of *Ren* earn people’s respect and become capable of making changes. Certainly saying that the self’s character is dependent on “the look of others” is not to say that the Confucian self relies solely on the look of others to maintain an understanding of oneself. Instead, Confucian thought emphasizes the intersubjective relations in carrying out good intentions through which people develop social sensibility.

Confucian thought suggests *Li* (礼, rituals of propriety) to be the vehicle for *Ren* (仁). When asked about *Ren*, Confucius responds, “Conquer yourself... Don’t look if it is not *Li*, don’t listen if it is not *Li*, don’t say if it is not *Li*, don’t do if it is not *Li*” (12: 1). The Confucian notion of *Li* permeates everyday life in the acts of seeing, listening, talking, and doing that simultaneously cultivates the relations and bond people together. Li (2007), using the analogy of “language,” explains *Li* as the “cultural grammar” and *Ren* (仁) as the culture itself (p. 311). Starting with the simple imitation in the bodily movements, rituals of *Li* can emerge with ease and transform from

*Li*'s public dimension to a creativity that is more private and free. As the carrier of *Ren*, *Li*'s public dimension allows the self to connect with community and *Li*'s private dimension allows the self to connect with oneself. Just as the style of writing varies from person to person, *Li* can be changed or suspended over time depending on the circumstances. In the case of getting married, for example, *Li* represents a particular set of ceremonial motions that may differ greatly from one community to another. At the same time, because *Li* "is embedded in people's everyday behavior as grammar is embedded in everyday expressions" (p. 318), it has an "outwardness" that involves "social objectivity" (p. 322). Thus, *Li* builds on creative efforts rather than an isolated set of rules and actions. Confucius explains the role of *Li* in bringing out the holistic personhood of *Ren*.

The Master said; [If one]<sup>34</sup> is intelligent to acquire, but not *Ren* to keep, [one] will lose it even if [one] acquires. [If one] is intelligent to acquire and *Ren* to keep, but not solemn in dealing with people<sup>35</sup>, then people will not respect. [If one] is intelligent to acquire, *Ren* to keep, and solemn in dealing with people, but does not act according to *Li*, it is still not good. (15: 32)

To Confucius, *Li* is simultaneously private and public—*Li* is always a private event subject to change according to particular needs, as well as a public phenomenon that welcomes the concepts of community and relationship—just as grammar by nature is public and yet flexible in

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<sup>34</sup> Notice that Chinese as a language does not start each sentence with the subject of "I" even when expressing one's own ideas. This implies the notion that everyone is capable of practices of *ren* [benevolence, 仁] and that everyone can become a master of loving oneself and others. In addition, the implied "I" suggests a humble appreciation of the self and nature in Chinese culture.

<sup>35</sup> Interpretations of the original text vary. Some translate it as "solemn in presenting to people" and others as "solemn in dealing with people." Both capture the manner in presenting but not the essence of what is presented. Confucius seems to suggest both the seriousness and diligence in ruling and the solemnness in presenting to people.

personal use. Both the private and public dimensions of *Li* are preserved and transferred into the cultivation of *Ren* (仁); the two support each other.

The Confucian rituals of *Li* can be confused with the enforcement of standards, for, in both systems, the self is expected to follow certain routines. There are two crucial differences: first, in who initiates the practice, and second, in whether there is a choice of how, when, and where. Practices of standards are assessed externally, whereas practices of rituals are not. Ritual practices have nothing to do with putting up a good character artificially in order to acquire a respectful look of others, but rather aim to cultivate the body as a private event that is not under the public gaze. The purpose of following *Li*'s public dimension at the beginning is only to initiate something that the self has not acquired on its own. In other words, the learning of *Li*, which at first involves imitation, preconditions the self-initiated learning that eventually becomes part of the self and cannot be forgotten.

For example, during the Chinese New Year celebration, children are gathered around senior members of the family to convey their best wishes with the gesture of a bow. In response, senior members would give a red pack with some money in it to wish for a year-long health. This is a good example of rituals in family bonding. Confucius never prescribes any ritual but only emphasizes the value of it. When to do it (before or after the meal); where to do it (in the family room or at the dinner table); and how to do it (verbally with or without the gesture of a bow) all depend on the specific families.

Even young children who may not understand the value of rituals, including babies who are still carried in their parents' arms, are nevertheless included in the family circle. For members who are not able to be physically present—whether traveling or having passed away—their

absence are felt by those who remain. Yet the inability to be present at the time of family gathering does not disqualify them from future reunion. This is different from enforcing standards which, if not met, will result in future disqualification, and will therefore delimit the self's chances for lifetime achievement. To Confucius, rituals represent the symbolic opportunities for people to express mutual respect and love. They are events that people look forward to. Just like the July 4th fireworks in the United States, these rituals are a celebration of independence and a commemoration of those who fight for it. It is these rituals that everyone looks forward to.

As years pass by, feelings about family rituals may change, yet the hope to stay connected overcomes other circumstances. The Confucian practice of rituals brings people together. Feelings, thoughts, and actions converge toward a sense of responsibility — to be there in a family circle, to be there in a social circle, and to be there in a life circle. Confucian thought persists on challenging the self to remain responsible throughout the life circle.

From fifteen, my heart is set upon learning; from thirty, I support myself; from forty, I'm no longer doubtful; from fifty, I realize the propensity of my *Tianming* (天命) [i.e., my responsibility or the purpose of my existence]; from sixty, my ears are attuned to the advice set against; from seventy, I can be as free as my heart desires, and yet without overstepping the acceptable boundaries. (2: 4)

To Confucius, the practice of ritual carries the symbolic meaning of learning for lifetime. The essence of rituality lies in the effort to keep challenging oneself, opening up for more and more possibility rather than closing down on a fixed, secure standpoint. People apply different rituals of working and learning. Writers in particular enjoy their private modes of ritual to enhance the way they are connected to the works. Rituals bring people a sense of joy and satisfaction. Again, Confucius never prescribes how one should learn at the age of fifteen or seventy. He only

emphasizes the symbolic ritual of learning in a life circle. In short, rituals do not impose constraints but instead aim at integrating the self as participating, responsible members of the family and society, i.e., cultivating *Ren*.

Relating *Li* to the modern practice of science, Nuyen (2007) argues that *Li* serves to guide individuals to connect with “settled convictions” and to create new relations. The author writes, “There is no need to think that these ‘settled convictions’ are unsettled in the age of biological control, as they are convictions formed in the process of building up social relationship, a process that remains to be accomplished after the biology has done its work” (p. 89). The author agrees that as long as individuals cultivate a sense of responsibility toward *Ren*, their choices made through practices of *Li* cannot be genetically engineered. The Cultivations of *Ren* based on *Li* reinforces the notion that human relations cannot be manufactured or substituted by biological control. Machines may do lots of things better than humans, but they do not possess the ability to make responsible choices like humans do. Education should prepare children for what machines cannot do, rather than prepare them to compete with what machines do best, i.e., following orders and performing standards. Why train humans to become something that cannot survive in the future? Future generations do not need more machines, but instead need people who can make responsible choices. How science advances, how genetic science alters the biological chance, should not alleviate people’s responsibility for making choices oriented toward the benefit of others. Nuyen (2007) writes, “What I am given by chance, is my tradition, and what I manage to do with it is entirely my choice and hence entirely my responsibility” (p. 94).

Confucius believes that the innate moral goodness of human nature is the core of genetic inheritance that can be brought into fuller realization through the creative practice of *Li*. Unlike

Dworkin's notion of cultural background and genetic inheritance as an absolute given, Confucius sees both cultural background and genetic inheritance as relevant elements—cultural background as emerging from creative practice of *Li* and genetic inheritance as the realization of innate moral goodness. Nuyen (2007) explains, “The chance inheritance of traditional wisdom and values will continue to guide us in making responsible choices, in marking out responsible behavior from irresponsible behavior...” (p. 94). Confucius and Nuyen concur that culture and biology are not transcendental and fixed, but rather changing factors interdependent with the choices humans made, make, and continue to make in the future. Nuyen writes, “What is decreed for me changes with how I behave” (p. 93). The Confucian life is about choices, not chances.

In addition to the cultivation of *Ren* through *Li*, the Confucian responsibility also resides in the concept of respect or reverence for others, namely *Jing* (敬, respect). Without *Jing*, *Li* is limited to mechanical repetitions. Chan (2006) explains two notions of *Jing* relevant in practices of *Li*: *Jing* as a state of mind when supported by a strong sense of responsibility, and *Jing* as an intentional state pertaining more directly to people's behaviors. To explain, *Jing* as an intentional state is often directed toward and associated with social ranks, laws, authority, or age; it also tends to appraise these factors themselves as having values. On the contrary, *Jing* as a state of mind requires a “self-reflection and self-awareness in scrutinizing whether one has consciously identified, understood, and carried out one's duties” (p. 242), especially when external objects or rewards are absent.

Chan (2006) points out that modern notions of respect (as, for example, sympathy, recognition, and appraisal) are all limited to intentional attitudes toward specific external objects, thus making respect something to be evaluated. These notions are limited to a fulfillment of duty

that can be monitored by external instruments. The part that cannot be monitored—the part that cultivates a state of mind—is overlooked. The Confucian notion of *Li* cultivates *Jing* as a state of mind by which the self, not the external instrument, makes the judgment. This state of mind is manifested the presence of the body, for without *Jing*, it's better to have no rituals at all. Confucius remarks, “Be present in ceremony as if the spirit of *Tian* (天) is there, or otherwise it's better not to do it” (3: 12).

Together, Confucian notions of *Ren*, *Li*, and *Jing* imbue the self with the complexity of nature. To be creative, to be free, is to immerse oneself in and unite with nature. To be free is not to escape into nature, but rather to gain inspiration from nature's complexity. Wang (2004) writes that “love and freedom can be pulled in opposite directions if we see love as merely a relation with and freedom as only freeing from” (p. 136). Autonomy and freedom come from an ability to care and be involved with others. Autonomy and harmony can only be brought about through complex interactions. Wang (2009) supports the notion that moral responsibility must be brought into consideration of harmonious society. Wang writes,

The ultimate ground of a peaceful and harmonious community is not the sacred power of some divine or societal authority, but the genuine care and reverence among individual persons within the community. The root of justice lies in the *sensus communis* [common sense] of the human heart..., in the judgments we make in our heart and our conscience, in the contest of a humane concern for the people in our community. The roots of justice are not in divine or political power or in the authority of reason, but in the heart of the people. (pp. 327-332)

To finish, Nelson (2009) points out that Confucian notions of *Ren*, *Jing*, and *Li* may not be directly relevant for or contribute to scientific research, political policies, or activist initiatives. However, these concepts provide invaluable insights in considering cultural background and responsibility as fluid and transformative. Without reducing culture and nature to a “teleological

realization of potentiality with a fixed trajectory and end” (p. 298), Confucian notions of *Ren*, *Jing*, and *Li* cultivate a moral responsibility that helps to exam into the political, racial, educational tensions that Foucault’s genealogical discourse is not able to address. Nelson writes, “The dominant Western conception of ‘nature,’ as an inherently extrinsic and derivative realm dependent on divine and human production, construction, and calculation, is fundamentally inadequate to the holism” (p. 298). Confucian notions of *Ren*, *Li*, and *Jing* together nurture “the conditions of all things from which responsibilities emerge without anticipation or calculation” (p. 306). Not implying a “coercive obedience to a mysterious external substance or law,” the responsiveness or receptivity of *Ren*, *Li*, and *Jing* transform “the socially defined and limited responsibilities of the convention defined by customary common life” (p. 306). The Confucian *Ren*, *Li*, and *Jing* require breaking down various precautions, defenses, conservatisms. These notions create a sense of freedom and love through which social sensibility emerge.

Confucius reveres people’s collective, social sensibility, a sensibility beyond individual subjectivity. When social sensibility converges with respect, the two together becomes powerful. In the next chapter, I focus on the application of *Ren* and its implications for modern education by using ancient Chinese legacy, the Iowa Redistricting Policy, as well as the United States law cases. I argue that people’s collective responsibility can transform legal, political powers. As my writing about Confucian *Ren* comes to a pause here, I realize that what I have done in my life so far is nowhere near *Ren*, with the exception of my willingness to read *Analects*. I did it not for any tangible reward. I am willing to slow down and wait for results to emerge. I am willing to take on the responsibility to make changes, first in myself, and then for others.

## EDUCATION AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Education is to prepare children for their lifetime achievement and to bring the equality of educational opportunity for all. It should bear a potential to change society for the common good, rather than to conform unquestionably to a political utility of control. If the current state of education focusing on standards continues to reinforce the construction of an individual, results-, rights-driven subjectivity at the expense of moral responsibility, education would lose its purpose and social change for the benefit of all would not be possible. In the previous chapter, I introduced the Confucian *Ren* as a moral responsibility that cultivates people as responsible individuals capable of carrying out benevolence for others. I explained that the Confucian *Ren* self does not seek the rewards of one's own, nor do they rely on legal forces to claim rights.

Having laid out the difference between the Confucian *Ren* self and the individual, results-, rights-driven subjectivity, my focus in this chapter is on the implications of *Ren* for modern education. I draw on two examples: the Iowa Redistricting Policy implemented in public schools and the United States law case on academic autonomy in higher education, namely *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005). I use the Iowa Redistricting Policy to argue that political manipulation of the Redistricting Policy cannot deliver the equality of educational opportunity for all. In the case of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005), I maintain that the legal enforcement alone does not protect the academic autonomy and people's moral responsibility can complement the legal enforcement. These two examples suggest that when moral responsibility is present, it can lead to social change. However, when moral responsibility is absent, particularly in those establishing educational policy, remnants of segregation will continue to exist in public, educational spaces.

How then do children learn about moral responsibility when it is not encouraged or modeled in education?

In Confucian thought, learning moral responsibility is not limited to education or schools. The practice of *Ren* modeled by ancient Chinese rulers has tremendous educational and social power beyond the typical idea of education associated with schools, classrooms, and knowledge. The practice of *Ren* modeled by rulers sets up a good example for people to learn and develop a moral responsibility. This model of *Ren* does not rely on external laws to reinforce conformity; instead it is based on a belief that people are the foundation of the states and that people by nature have the moral goodness to recognize *Ren*. In other words, although not all people are *Ren*, they can by nature recognize *Ren*. Together the ruler's practice of *Ren* and people's recognition of *Ren* can transform the established social, political power.

In the case of the Iowa Redistricting Policy, the existing power relations are not at all changed, but rather perpetuated. Under the cover of diversity and closing achievement gap, remnants of segregation continue to persist. Without addressing the pre-existing social, racial, and economic background of African American students, the Iowa Redistricting Policy, as it has been practiced so far, does not deliver on its alleged commitment of diversity. In addition, people's empathy toward marginalized others, as well as their good intentions for public schools, is not reflected in the policy. The practice of *Ren* modeled by ancient Chinese rulers helps educators to see the limitation of the Iowa redistricting Policy: when moral responsibility is absent in those establishing educational policy, not only is diversity an empty concept, the equality of educational opportunity is also not possible. Instead, remnants of the "racially

exclusive past” (Mitchell et al., 2010, p. 294) continues to exist in the name of diversity and closing achievement gap.

The so-called “achievement gap” between African American and white students in Iowa is in fact an opportunity gap (Ravitch, 2013). Based on the student population published in the Iowa School Report Card, some predominantly white schools continue to exclude African American students. Those public schools do not share the responsibility in providing the educational opportunity for African American students. Other schools that share the responsibility, however, are not provided with additional support in developing the educational environment needed by African American students. As a whole, the public education space continues to be a “reified racialized space” (Mitchell et al., 2010, p. 294), a space where the opportunity gap persists. I conclude that a moral responsibility committed for the equality of educational opportunity must address the social, racial, and economic background. Only by understanding “the ‘raced’ nature of space” (p. 296) and by working out these tensions that exist both in and outside of the school context, can educators work toward the closing of achievement gap.

Contrary to the absence of moral responsibility practiced in the Iowa Redistricting Policy, I cite the United States legal cases on academic autonomy to support my claim that moral responsibility not only exists in ancient China, but also in the modern United States. In the case of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005), people’s collective effort plays a critical role in the protection of academic autonomy. To give an outline of this chapter, I begin with the practice of *Ren* modeled by ancient Chinese rulers to explain its educational power in leading people toward a recognition of *Ren*. I then use the Iowa Redistricting Policy as an example opposite of the practice of *Ren*. I maintain that the absence of moral responsibility in those establishing educational policy allows

segregation to continue in public education spaces. Lastly, I cite the United States legal cases to support my claim that people's moral responsibility can complement the legal enforcement of academic autonomy in higher education.

### **The Power of *Ren* in Ancient Chinese Rulings**

The Confucian cultivation of *Ren* as moral responsibility delivered educational opportunity for common people. Before Confucius, education was a privilege for nobility and royalty alone. However, Confucius believed that education should be for all people. He remarks, "There's teaching; there's no division of class in teaching" (15: 38). Confucius makes education possible for common people based on his belief that people, not political power relations, are the foundation of states. Furthermore, Confucius' democratic inclination for education is reflected in a broad love for people. Confucius remarks, "All people within the four seas are my brothers and sisters"(12: 5). The *Ren* of Confucius supports him to deliver education for common people. As equal brothers and sisters, people have the opportunity to realize their moral goodness and learn to be responsible for each other through the cultivation of benevolence, compassion, respect, propriety, and relationship.

In Confucian thought, people seeing, recognizing, and following *Ren* do not rely on an extensive amount of knowledge but a moral willingness to follow its innate goodness, which can be encouraged and led by the practice of *Ren* modeled by leaders. The legendary emperors<sup>36</sup> in

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<sup>36</sup> The deeds of five legendary emperors — the Yellow Emperor (皇帝), Zhuanxu (颛顼), Yao (尧), Shun (舜), Yu (禹), are recorded in Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, Chapter 1, "Five Emperors." Although considered the legend, archaeological findings, such as excavations of underground artifacts, some are also words, have provided clues and information for the existence of ancient China in the development of human history.

ancient China (2699–2101 BC) are the models of *Ren* that have been long celebrated, particularly by common people. At the time, the lives of Emperor Yao (尧, 2333-2234 BC), Shun (舜, 2233-2184 BC), Yu's (禹, 2283-2101 BC) were tied closely to the people's when dealing with frequent tribal wars, opening fertile lands, and facing natural catastrophes. Their practice of *Ren*, especially Yu's, reached and touched people's hearts, because they shared a common responsibility with people as they found ways to live in peace with nature. Sima Qian<sup>37</sup> (2007) in *Records of the Grand Historian* writes about Emperor Yao: "He is benevolent and wise as the Sky. Close to him, people's heart feels the warmth of the sun; look up to him, people see clouds generously covering the earth. He is rich but humble, noble but not indulgent" (p. 2).

Yao is the first Emperor in Chinese history who gave his ruling to someone outside of the family line, a decision historically called the "demise," based on that person's ability in carrying out *Ren*. According to Sima, Yao asked, "Who can continue the responsibility in my position?" When people recommended his son, the Emperor replied: "Ah! Foolish, ferocious, he cannot be used to continue my responsibility" (p. 2). When another person outside of the family line was recommended, the Emperor replied, "Crafty in words and ingratiating in actions<sup>38</sup>, he cannot be used" (p. 2). Yao kept on searching, "Let's find someone in the people far and hidden" (p. 2). So finally Shun (舜) was recommended. Shun had a blind and ignorant father, a stubborn mother, and an arrogant brother, yet he was able to live with his family in harmony. Emperor Yao sent

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<sup>37</sup> Sima Qian (135 – 86 BC), Chinese historian, the father of Chinese historiography, author of the first comprehensive and systematic book, *Shiji* (史记, *Records of the Grand Historian*) on the Chinese history.

<sup>38</sup> Confucius in *Analects* remarks the same, "Crafty in words and ingratiating in actions are rarely *Ren* (1.3).

Shun on various missions to see Shun's ability and most importantly, to see how people perceived Shun. Years later, Shun's *Ren* was recognized by both Yao and people. Yao passed away twenty-eight years after he demised his ruling to Shun. Sima records,

People are sad and grieve as if their own parents had passed away. For three years, no music is played. Yao knows his own son, unworthy to rule. If he lets Shun rule, no one but his son will benefit; If his son rules, people will suffer and only his son benefits. Yao says, "I can't make the people suffer and only let one person benefit." So he passes his ruling to Shun. (p. 2)

When three years of mourning came to an end, Shun intended to return the ruling back to Yao's son. Yet the political power inherited by Yao's son had disconnected him from the people and deteriorated. People came from all around to show respect to Shun. As the time came again to pass on the ruling, Shun asked the same question that Emperor Yao asked: "Who can continue Emperor Yao's responsibility in my position?" So Yu (禹) was recommended. Sima writes, "Yu is diligent: his earnestness does not deviate from virtue, his *Ren* is kind and loving, his words can be depended on, his voice musical, his body balanced and his movement solemn and in propriety" (p. 5).

Emperors Yao, Shun, and Yu lived through a period when floods assailed villages, overran hills, and fast expanded to encompass mountains. People's lives were deeply troubled. It was mutually understood by both the ruling power and by the people that whoever succeeded in governing the water would establish the political power as the next emperor. Yu's father, Gun, was a brother of Emperor Yao. A very influential leader among tribes, Gun was considered Emperor Yao's strongest political competitor. Opponents of Emperor Yao's *Ren* argue that, sending Gun to govern the water, a mission very hard to accomplish, is more political, and even cruel, not *Ren*. Yao expected Gun's failure so that he had a legitimate reason to eradicate Gun

politically. As expected, after nine years, Gun failed to govern the water and was imprisoned to death. The reason why Emperor Yao may not have personally favored his brother Gun as the next ruler, and instead wanted to pass on his ruling to someone outside of the family line, is unknown. Political as it may have been, Yao's *Ren* in choosing Shun instead of his unworthy son is undeniable.

Aware of the difficulty and political implication of water control, Emperor Shun appointed Gun's son, Yu, to the same task. Again, opponents of Shun's *Ren* argue that Shun wanted to eradicate Yu, just as Yao wanted to eradicate Gun. The questions remains, however: if Emperor Shun so deliberately wanted to kill Yu, why and how did his ruling eventually pass onto Yu? The choice was beyond Emperor Shun himself and his political power because the people chose Yu to be the next ruler. For thirteen years, Yu lived and worked with the people and successfully managed the rampant water. Sima records,

He travels all over the land to learn about rivers and mountains. He marks divisions of the high land and rivers based on the characteristics of the soil using lines of stakes. Yu grieves that his father was punished for not being able to govern the water. Tired in the body and distressed in the mind, he lives away from his home for thirteen years, not daring to enter when passing by his house a few times. With ragged clothes, a simple diet, and poor living conditions, he saves and devotes his budget to work. When traveling along the dry land, he uses a carriage, on the water he uses a boat, in swamps a sledge, over the hills he wears shoes with spikes. On the one hand he holds a measure, and on the other, a compass. Yu envisions opening up nine provinces, diverging nine rivers lines, managing nine lakes, and measuring nine mountains. He distributes seeds for people to plant in low lands. In making roads commutable so food can be sent from areas of surplus to that of scarcity, Yu works for the distribution of wealth and resources in the land. Journeying over nine mountains, following the course of nine rivers, Yu unites the nine provinces by clearing hills of wood, banking swamps, and dredging and leading streams to join rivers. In order to drain the nine streams into the four seas, he deepens channels and canals and connects them with the rivers. So everywhere within the four seas is habitable, and everywhere has a road that leads to the capital. (p. 5)

Knowing that his father died in a conjuncture of civic matters and political battles, Yu had reasons to choose revenge against Shun's political power, rather than to take the given responsibility fully. Politically, Yu may not have had a choice but to continue the work unfinished by his father. But he chose to do what benefitted the people. He lived through the burden knowing that his father was imprisoned to death and that he too may face the same destiny. Under all circumstances, the Great Yu completed water control so people could live on and prosper.

Opponents of Yu's *Ren* argue that Yu cultivated and established political forces by dealing with water and people. But governing water was a risky task no one was willing to take. Yu could have lived and commanded on dry land. Why risking his life to govern water for the benefit of others that is so hard to accomplish? Yu may have been forced into the risk, but he chose to work with people and for the maximum benefit of people. Yu's *Ren* was driven by the benefit of other people rather than his own. Confucius remarks, "Seek *Ren*, gain *Ren*, what complaint could there be?" (7:13). Yu sought *Ren*, so people responded to and followed his *Ren*. As Yu's *Ren* was recognized, Yu accumulated a reputation that laid the foundation for the growth of his political power.

Confucius remarks, "If names are not set correctly, speaking cannot be fluent<sup>39</sup>; if speaking is not fluent, things cannot be done successfully" (13: 3). Yu governed water and people finally lived on to prosper. This is the reason that Emperor Shun could not deny, no matter how crafty his political argument could be. Yu's *Ren* as responsibility in governing water convinced the

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<sup>39</sup> Confucius means that, if the names are used correctly, the language could be fluent in a way that makes sense or be convincing to people. Here Confucius does not refer to the reason that constructs argument in modern language, but rather the culture that is accepted by people.

people and the people responded to it. This was a power that no emperor, not even the Sky<sup>40</sup> could ignore. In Confucian thought, “the intent of people’s hearts” is the converged, consolidated, collective, social, moral responsibility (or, to use Foucault’s words, social sensibility), which lays the foundation for all civilization and power relations.

Yu sets his mind to follow rather than to conquer<sup>41</sup> the complexity of nature (namely, the nature of water), by diverting and converging the water to the low lands and then to the sea. He taught people to grow crops that were suitable for various types of soil, so more and more lands became fertile and habitable. The famous episode of his legend—“pass by home but do not enter”—sets an example for people: Yu could leave aside the tangible comfort and personal benefits of home, and instead devote his life wholeheartedly for the benefit of other people. The *Ren* Yu seeks was not driven by any results or rewards that could be measured or foreseen in advance. It is based on the loving of others that is carried out in action with an uncertain future. Yu’s willingness to take on the risk in seeking *Ren* conveys a powerful message: “if Yu can do that for people, why can’t people do the same?” So, the Great Yu received the power of the Sky from Shun’s hand because he was approved by people. Years later, Yu followed the footsteps of Emperor Yao and intended to pass the ruling back to Shun’s son, but the people all came to respect Yu. He said, “Ah! With the assistance of virtue, your people will grandly respond to your pure intention. With a serene heart, Heaven will manifest the blessing in you” (p. 5). So, Yu went on to lead an era of abundance.

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<sup>40</sup> Sky (天) is the symbolic representation of Heaven in Chinese culture. Its power lies in its own course of balancing the nature and human world in which the converged intention of people’s hearts is observed by the Sky.

<sup>41</sup> Yu’s father failed because he sets his mind in governing, changing, or setting limits for the water. When the flood is so bad that no river banks can contain it.

To summarize, the ancient rulers who sought *Ren*, particularly Yu's governance of water, set a powerful educational model. These rulers' moral responsibility was rooted in a belief that people, not power relations, were the foundation of the states. I will now apply this message to modern education, where the *Ren* model is absent, particularly in those establishing educational policy. Children are not seen or cared for as the core of education, which is contrary to the Confucian way of seeing people as the foundation of the states. In the following section, I discuss the implications of Confucian *Ren* in the Iowa Redistricting Policy.

### **Iowa Redistricting—Diversity the Political Way**

In recent years, the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSA) has been working on a redistricting policy that aims to achieve better socioeconomic balance and close the achievement gap (I discuss more on achievement gap later). In the policy, school district boundaries are changed as an effort to achieve a more balanced distribution of the number of students qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) at each school. Starting in the fall of 2014, two-thirds of K-6 students were faced with the challenge of changing schools. However, the schools' statistics shown for the years of 2014-2016 do not necessarily reflect the alleged commitment. While the ICCSA overall has an average of 35% qualified for FRL, Kirkwood Elementary, for example, continues to have 69% of enrollment in FRL. Other schools like Wickham and Lincoln, however, have a lower than 5% (See Table 1)<sup>42</sup>. In addition, with an average of 19.8% in African American students population, Kirkwood continues to have a high percentage of 43%, while schools like Wickham and Lincoln are only at 4% (See Table 2).

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<sup>42</sup> All data are drawn from <http://reports.educateiowa.gov/schoolreportcard>.

Table 1. Percentage of FRL (ICCSA 2016 Average: 35%)

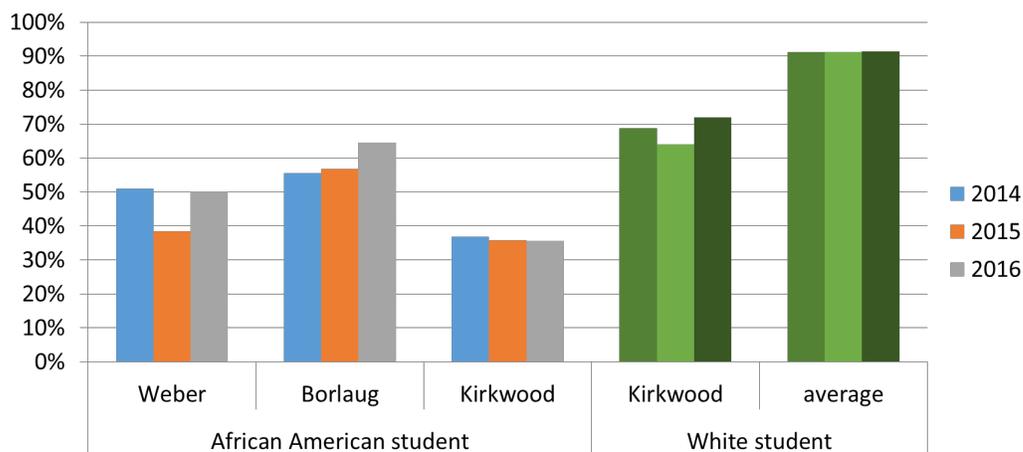
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Weber	10.4%	15.5%	33.7%	40.9%	42%
Borlaug			23.5%	24.3%	26.3%
Wickham	5.7%	5.5%	6.3%	0.8%	4%
Lincoln	5.5%	5%	3.8%	4.1%	6.1%
Kirkwood	61.7%	67.7%	71.6%	68.7%	68.6%

Table 2. Percentage of African American Students (ICCSA 2016 Average: 19.8%)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Weber	11.4%	10.4%	22.2%	26.1%	26.8%
Borlaug			12.5%	13.7%	16.1%
Wickham	2.5%	2.3%	3.5%	2.7%	3.6%
Lincoln	5.5%	2.1%	2.1%	3.4%	4.1%
Kirkwood	36.8%	35.0%	36.4%	41.9%	42.8%

Obviously these data do not reflect the socioeconomic and racial diversity that the Redistricting Policy claims to do. According to the former Vice President of ICCSD School board, Marla Swesey (resigned), “When we’re talking about students’ education, it should not be political. It should be what is right for student’s achievement and what’s not” (<http://www.thegazette.com/>). Given the observed inconsistency between data and the promised racial and socioeconomic diversity, I look further into student proficiency (scores on Iowa Test) to see if the redistricting efforts have had any effect on the student’s proficiency score at each school (See Table 3).

Table 3. Proficiency: African American Students vs. white Students



Through the years of 2014-2016, the proficiency score for African American students in Kirkwood remains at an average of 35%. In schools with less than 4% African American students, no proficiency for this group is available, since subgroups with less than 10 students are intentionally redacted. Given the limited data, it is hard to compare the proficiency of African American students between these two significantly different types of schools. So instead, I examined proficiency scores historically within Kirkwood itself. But no proficiency change in African American students was found. This is not surprising, since neither the percentage of African American students population nor the percentage of FRL was affected by the redistricting act.

Some schools, however, were affected by the policy. Weber Elementary experienced the most significant increase in African American students, from a historic average of 10% to 26%. The proficiency in African American students in 2014 was 50%; in 2015, it dropped to 40%; and in 2016, it bounced back to 50%. Again, since no proficiency before the year of redistricting act is available (subgroups with less than 10 students are intentionally redacted), it is hard to see how the increase in African American students at this particular school affected the proficiency of this

group. Based on the limited data through the year of 2014-2016, the proficiency for African American students in Weber maintains at about 50% with a population of 25% African American students. This proficiency is higher than Kirkwood but lower than Borlaug, which is another elementary school that was affected by the redistricting policy. As a new school opened in 2014, Borlaug has approximately 15% African American students and the proficiency for this group is 60%.

In summary, the proficiency of African American students is relatively stable (about 50%) at Weber when its African American population remains at 25%; the proficiency at Borlaug is 10% higher than Weber when African American population is kept at 15%; and there are no proficiency changes (35%) at Kirkwood when African American population stays at 43% high. Together, these data lead to the following hypothesis: with an average of about 20% African American students in the district, if all schools share some responsibility in providing educational opportunity for African American students by maintaining a 15-25% African American population, like Weber and Borlaug do, the overall proficiency for this group can be increased to 50-60%, somewhere between that of Weber and Borlaug. This level is significantly higher than that of Kirkwood (35%).

According to Ravitch (2013), education reformers often say that African American students have made no progress for decade. This is simply not true based on the data mentioned above. In the case of Iowa Redistricting, there is significant improvement in the proficiency of African American students who are given the opportunity to learn in a school environment where classrooms are not about constant settlement of behavioral challenges. Public schools, like Weber, can in fact significantly improve the proficiency in students who are previously

disadvantaged. If all schools in the district can keep a 15-25% of African American students population, more African American students would have the educational opportunity to increase their proficiency by a 15-25%. Another fact is worth noticing: the proficiencies for white students and other ethnicities in all schools are not affected (an average of 90%) with or without the inclusion of African American students.

So why are some public schools willing to share the responsibility in providing educational opportunity for African American students while others are not? Why are some predominantly white schools not willing to include African American students in an educational space that is public? Why are these schools not sharing the responsibility in providing educational opportunity, especially when the inclusion of a higher percentage of African American students, as data have shown, does not necessarily affect the proficiency of their existing student body? If not proficiency, what are the other implications?

I group my discussion as follows: first, I discuss how feelings of empathy toward marginalized others, as well as people's good intention for public schools, is not enough in working toward the equality of educational opportunity. The exclusion of African American students in the predominantly white schools will continue to persist if a moral responsibility is absent in carrying out the good intentions for public schools; second, the root cause of low-achievement needs to be addressed, including the question of how to provide an environment that meets the educational needs of African American students in a public, however, racialized space. Thirdly, I argue that without offering extra-curricular support, such as social service and after-school programs, the policy addressing the "achievement gap" will only serve as a tool to identify and perpetuate, rather than to close the achievement gap.

Boler (1999) raises the question of how to develop modes of moral understanding in order to build democracy in education. The author describes “the experience of reading a newspaper in a state of numbness, that all too familiar strategy for absorbing information without feeling it” (p. 156). On the one hand, this “habit of mind...has its immediate value... as a form of self-protection” (p. 156). However, in the case of Iowa Redistricting, in which some predominantly white schools are not sharing the responsibility of providing educational opportunity for African American students, the habit of exclusion does not necessarily demonstrate any immediate value as a form of self-protection. As mentioned above, the proficiency for white students in these schools does not get better as they exclude African American students. In fact, the proficiency for white students in Borlaug and Weber is as good as Wickham. On the other hand, according to Boler, “because of the reluctance of the average mind to make this translation [from the habit of mind to moral responsibility] into human terms, the teacher must take the responsibility for stimulating it” (p. 156, added brackets). Educators know well that it is not just the teacher’s, but the whole society’s responsibility to work against a habit of mind that dwells in the comfort of feeling empathy toward others. Boler questions the way policy makers politically manipulate people’s empathy in the name of diversity.

Across the political and disciplinary spectrum, conservative and liberals alike advocate variations of empathy as a solution to society’s ills... Empathy is promoted as a bridge between differences, the affective reason for engaging in democratic dialogue with the other. But who and what... benefits from the production of empathy? In what ways does empathy risk decontextualizing particular moral problems? In short, what is gained by the social imagination and empathy, and is this model possibly doing our social vision more harm than good? (p. 156)

Empathy alone does not deliver the good intention, nor does being sensitive to others’ cultural differences. Only when the empathy and good intention are carried out can they disturb the

existing power relations and lead to the equality of educational opportunity. Boler (1999) asserts that education should be seen “as a means to challenge the rigid patterns of thinking that perpetuate injustice” (p. 157). It should encourage a critical, self-reflective evaluation of the complex relations of power and emotions through which a consciousness of exclusion can be transformed. The Iowa redistricting Policy fails to carry out the good intention people have for public schools because the consciousness of exclusion persists. This case provides an example of the political manipulation of people’s empathy toward the marginalized in relation to public schools. While more and more money is spent transporting students from their homes to more distant neighborhoods, expanding school facilities, and providing computer access, little support is given to teachers and students in an effort to address the root cause of achievement gap. This leads to the second point of discussion mentioned above: addressing the cause of low-achievement.

In particular, Weber had 10% of African American students before the percentage is increased to the current 25%. Due to multiple reasons, some teachers in Weber left their jobs. For the year of 2016, the staff retention in Weber has dropped a 15% (<http://directory.iowa.gov/organization/index>), whereas staff retention at other schools was stable. The reasons are the following: first, most existing teachers are not experienced in working with the different behaviors that this body of students brings to classrooms. Second, based on information learned at PTO meetings (Parent Teacher Organization), school orientation, and public hearings on school’s reform, teachers are not provided with professional training in support of their inexperience in this regard. Thirdly, due to these two reasons, teachers often feel that they are challenged in working with this group of students. Teachers have no other option or resource of support but to send the students to the

principal's office. Ironically, in the past two years, Weber has changed its principal three times. How can the principals become community and visionary leaders? How do they develop and share close relations with students, parents, and teachers when the position holder is frequently changing (Jones and Kennedy, 2008)?

As a result, teachers reinforce discipline and punishment without providing the learning environment appropriate and adequate for marginalized students. Mitchell (2010) raises the question of "how to meet the educational needs for students of color once they arrive on predominantly white" schools (pp. 294-295). The author asserts, "This arrival of groups who have been historically excluded has created a unique dilemma" for both the teachers and students themselves as well (p. 295). As the inclusion of marginalized groups "signals an increase in diversity" in schools, however, it assumes that the public school space is "race-neutral" (p. 296). According to Mitchell, marginalized students are in fact entrapped in a racialized space, which is not equipped to provide the unique support these students need.

In addition to the lack of support for teachers, students are not provided with extra-curricular support, such as after-school programs. At the time of school dismissal, the same group of students, who got off the bus in the morning, got on the bus again and were sent home. Simply increasing the number of marginalized students in public school does not bring the equality of educational opportunity, nor does it close the achievement gap. The social, cultural, racial, and economic challenges that marginalized students face outside of the school context must be addressed. Mitchell (2010) asserts, "Educators must possess critical understanding of race and space" embedded in the history of schooling (p. 305).

Not only for African American students, learning in general in Weber is impeded. Who has time for playing, exploring, and learning when the teachers are constantly trying to maintain a class order? Instead, teachers teach to the tests and students learn to master the testing points. The mandate to prepare students exclusively for standardized tests is carried out to the extreme. Children are not learning “how to socialize with others, how to listen... how to communicate well...while engaging in the joyful pursuit of play and learning that is appropriate to their age and development” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 7). Learning is reduced to a process of fact-recalling that lacks intellectual challenge. This intellectual dullness sets a limitation in the curious mind and often turns students off. As a consequence, the manufactured diversity impedes learning for all students. Superficial diversity at schools does little for racial and socioeconomic equality, but instead impedes upon the development of learning conditions that meet the educational needs for all children. Under the cover of diversity, the privilege of the predominantly white schools persist. Their exclusion of African American students—the unwillingness to share the responsibility in providing educational opportunity—casts another challenge to the already problematic implementation of standards and assessments in schools like Weber.

Thirdly, in relation to standards and testing, many researchers also question the use of achievement gap as a tool to identify and punish the low-achieving students. According to Hatch (2002), achievement gaps serve to identify the low-achieving students as failures. They punish and delimit students from future educational opportunity. The author asserts, “Using the threat of failure as a tool to motivate young children...is an absurd notion that characterizes a system designed to punish rather than improve” (p. 459). Instead of punish, education should discover where students are, what their strengths are, and what additional guidance is needed. It needs to

builds upon each student's uniqueness, rather than to strip away their characteristics through disciplines and punishment. The standardized test score is but not the only variance to understand the achievement gaps. Grodsky (2008) et al. point out, "Our society is stratified along the lines of race and SES [socioeconomic status]; standardized test scores reflect that fact" (p. 399). The real issue is how policymakers, educators, and gatekeepers should respond to the differences.

Without addressing the differences of students' living environment, discussions of the achievement gap operate under an ideology of segregation. Public education in the United States has come a long from explicit segregation. Educational rights have been made legally equal after the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. However, the legal protection of educational rights alone is not enough in carrying out the equality, as well as the quality, of educational opportunity for all, especially for marginalized groups. Ravitch (2013) points out that public schools are in trouble because of racial segregation. The author recalls,

The period in which achievement gap was narrowed the most was the 1970s and 1980s, in response to some factors, one of which is desegregation... The source of the gap is not secret. African Americans have been subject to a long history of social and economic oppression and disadvantage; higher level of poverty, low level of education... Policies are insufficient to overcome generations of racism. (p. 58)

Educators know well that achievement gaps begin long before children start school. They are rooted in social, political, and economic structures that cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon for which schools and teachers alone are held accountable. Schools cannot close the achievement gaps independent of wider social change. Policymakers talk a lot about closing the achievement gap, but not about closing the socioeconomic gap. Ravitch (2013) asserts, "What we call achievement gaps are in fact opportunity gaps" (p. 62). It will take a whole society's responsibility to address the opportunity gaps.

To summarize, under the cover of diversity, the Iowa Redistricting Policy conforms to an ideology of segregation that excludes African American students in some predominantly white schools, while other schools—schools that share the responsibility in providing educational opportunity for African American students—are set up with an additional challenge, adding to the already problematic implementation of standards. The absence of moral responsibility in the policymakers indirectly pushes the practice of teaching and learning “to the tests” to its extreme, which is not oriented toward the goal of benefitting children as lifetime achievers. Without addressing the social, racial, economic background that exists outside of the school context, and without providing the curriculum support that serves the educational need of marginalized groups, the achievement gap will continue to exist. Rather than setting up a model of *Ren* that leads people to recognize and learn moral responsibility, as discussed in the section about ancient rulers in China, the Iowa redistricting Policy sets a negative model through which children are accustomed to a habituated numbness and unwillingness in carrying out good intentions for the benefit of others. It deviates from an ideal of public school that bonds people together and brings equal opportunity and quality education to all. Yet, not all efforts to improve education in the United States lack the moral responsibility. In the following section on law cases, people’s moral responsibility is not missing but plays a critical role in the protection of academic autonomy.

### **Moral Responsibility in Higher Education: The Protection of Academic Autonomy**

The power of people’s collective moral responsibility is not only demonstrated in the ancient rulers of *Ren*, but is also found in United States higher education. In this section, I fast forward from ancient China to the modern United States. I include this application for two reasons: first,

as discussed in Chapter 4, the Confucian self is foremost an autonomous self whose rights are assured through its *Ren*, although the Confucian self is often critiqued and misunderstood as incapable of claiming individual rights. Second, the law cases indicate that people's moral responsibility does exist and play a critical role in the protection of academic autonomy in addition to the legal enforcement. However, if education continues to reinforce the individual, results-, rights-driven subjectivity at the expense of moral responsibility, the power of people's moral responsibility may not rise above the surface during critical, social circumstances. I begin with a little background on human rights.

At the International Institute of Human Rights, Vasak<sup>43</sup> (1979) for the first time talks about three generations of human rights: first generation civil/political rights, second generation economic/social/cultural rights, and third generation solidarity rights. Racial discrimination is considered a violation of civil/political rights. Both civil/political rights and economic/social/cultural rights are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as *the* human rights. The UDHR recognizes, "Without civil and political rights, the public cannot assert their economic, social, and cultural rights; similarly, without livelihood of a working society, the public cannot assert or make use of civil or political rights" (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>). The question is: what makes of the livelihood of a working society? Is legal enforcement alone enough to establish the livelihood of a working society?

In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action confirms that all "human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and related. The international community must treat

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<sup>43</sup> Karal Vask: Czech jurist, became the first Secretary-General of the International Institute of Human Rights in 1969, a position he held until 1980.

human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis” (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx>). In practice, however, two of the three protected human rights are not given equal consideration. Civil rights have historically been given priority at the expense of economic, social, cultural rights such as academic autonomy and freedom, especially at times of national emergency. On the one hand, the law claims that academic autonomy and freedom is an essential aspect of American education on the grounds of four essential freedoms—who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study. Justice Frankfurter in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* (1957) delivers the following often-cited statement:

It is the business of a university to provide that atmosphere which is the most conducive to speculation, experiment and creation. It is an atmosphere in which there prevails “the four essential freedoms” of a university—to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study. (<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/354/234.html>)

There are, however, complications. On the other hand, the alleged “modern terror-suspects right” is one example of how national security can be used to justify violations of academic autonomy and freedoms. Prioritizing national security over academic freedom of speech becomes a practical decision in which yielding academic freedom of speech is a prerequisite and proof of one’s loyalty to the nation. In *Schenk v. United States* (1919), Holmes delivers the opinion of the Supreme Court explicitly pointing out that in circumstances of war where certain acts create “a clear and present danger,” the academic freedom of speech is no longer protected by the First Amendment. Thus it is within the power of Congress to punish such acts at the expense of academic freedom. Holmes delivered the following opinion of the court:

We admit that, in many places and in ordinary times, the defendants, in saying all that was said in the circular, would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done.... When a nation is at war, many things that might be said in times of peace are such a hindrance to its efforts that their utterance will not be protected by any constitutional right. (<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/faclibrary/Library.aspx>)

How then should academic autonomy and freedom be practiced when it conflicts with legal enforcements on national security? According to Egéa-Kuhne (2001), academic freedom bears the responsibility in working through tensions, double injunctions, and contradictions. In denouncing the censorship of institutional power and its effect under any guise, this responsibility brings the justice of rights. The *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005) in the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut is a case in which the military and its recruitment processes compromised academic freedom of speech. However, the Yale Law School (YLS) faculty's and student's collective effort to resolve this conflict eventually earned the court's support for academic freedom of speech.

More specifically, Yale Law School (YLS) in 1972, and then again in 1978, enacted a non-discrimination policy (NDP). The NDP barred against discrimination on the basis of religion, race, and national origin, as well as sexual orientation. This NDP also applied to the recruitment of military service on campus. After having been accused of violating the Solomon Amendment<sup>44</sup> in 2003, YLS faculties voted to approve a temporary suspension of the NDP to declare their compliance with the Solomon Amendment and also to avoid a \$300 million funding loss to Yale University ([www.lexisnexis.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu](http://www.lexisnexis.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu)). Later in 2003, a letter was issued by the

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<sup>44</sup> The 1996 Solomon Amendment is a United States federal law that allows the Secretary of Defense to deny federal grants (including research grants) to institutions of higher education if they prohibit or prevent military recruitment on campus.

Department of Defense informing Yale that the temporary suspension of NDP “remains an obstacle to military recruiters” and that the “Yale University be determined ineligible for the Department of Defense funding” unless “a change of policy sufficient to overcome the deficiencies” would be issued.

During the primary years of conflict, 2003-2004, a total of only five Law School students agreed to interview with the military recruiters and none had accepted employment. This may have been the key point that won the court’s support because the court observed the fact that, for two years, coercive enforcement of Solomon Amendment and subsequent suspensions of NDP had not advanced any effective military recruitment. The enforcement of Solomon Amendment without respecting YLS’s existing non-discrimination policy practically failed. Legal enforcement of national security could demand a violation of academic freedom, however, it could not punish the collective, moral responsibility that emerged from people and the social context as a whole. To some extent, legal forces can practice power when people accept it as good and necessary for the working of society. In the case of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005), it was a practical decision for the court to put a stop to the coercive and unsuccessful enforcement of Solomon Amendment as an effort to best retain the government’s intention for bettering the livelihood of a working society. It is rather ironic that violations of academic freedom over national security can both start and fail for the same practical reason.

What makes the winning of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005) and the losing of *Schenk v. the United States* (1919) possible, since both cases concern academic freedom? One could argue that the failure of *Schenk* and the success of *Burt* involve the question of whether or not the nation is at war. However, this argument makes little sense given the fact that the conflict between YLS and

Department of Defense occurred during 2001-2005, a period characterized by heightened national security after the “9/11” attack in 2001. Rather, YLS’s success lies in the faculty’s and student’s collective responsibility at a time when they felt that academic autonomy and freedom were compromised. The essence of academic rights is not to create supremacy for limited groups of people, nor to sever faculty’s and student’s beliefs from political consideration. Moral responsibility can exercise its power rather than comply unquestionably to political and legal forces. In short, The legal enforcement of academic autonomy and freedom alone cannot better the livelihood of a working society without the consideration of people’s collective responsibility.

To summarize, Confucianism was one of the generations of philosophy<sup>45</sup> to which ancient practice of *Ren* was passed on. The practice of *Ren* modeled by rulers is the original seed for Confucian *Ren*. To Confucians, *Ren* can only become part of the self and become powerful when it emerges from within the self voluntarily, rather than when it is externally imposed politically. As the symbolic models of *Ren* demonstrate, the ancient practice of *Ren* do not rely on political, legal enforcements, but instead carry out *Ren* in the actions of the rulers themselves. The legendary Great Yu governed water for the benefit of the people without seeking the reward of his own. His *Ren* touched people’s hearts and thus won him the political power. In the case of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005), YLS faculty’s and students’ collective responsibility sustained the effort to protect academic freedom. Together their moral responsibility denounced the censorship of institutional power, in this case, that of the military. However, when the moral responsibility is absent, as in the case of the Iowa Redistricting Policy, education conforms to an ideology of

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<sup>45</sup> The other two generations of philosophy are Taoism and Buddhism.

segregation that excludes African American students, and goes against the ideal of public education for which Americans have fought. Confucian *Ren* is not passive empathy; it carries out good intentions for the benefit of others. Together the moral responsibility in leadership and people's recognition of *Ren* can transform political power. Only in taking on the moral responsibility can educational change become possible.

## **CONCLUSION: ENVISION AN EDUCATION AS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

In 1916, Lewis Terman revised French physiologist/psychologist Binet's Test of Intelligence and renamed it the Stanford-Binet Test of Intelligence. Terman used the Stanford-Binet Test to sort schoolchildren according to their cognitive ability. Following the years of the World War I, Terman transformed the Army Alpha Test<sup>46</sup> into the National Intelligence Tests for schoolchildren as a way to capitalize on the "efficient military grouping procedures" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 88). As Terman's ability test gained popularity, educators are led into the idea that performance evidence, such as test scores, can measure student's knowledge and learning, as well as to predict, diagnose, and explain individual differences. Terman's pursuit of efficiency in ranking and sorting students, along with other social factors, such as the booming urban enrollment and the need for industrial competition, propelled the institutionalization of standardized testing in public schools.

However, questions remain: how can the comprehensive learning and human behavior be measured scientifically? How should policymakers and educators respond to students' achievement differences reflected through test scores? In 2001, the NCLB added a federal mandate that all states implement accountability systems. Public schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress are subject to restructure and fund change. The enforced accountability further complicates the already controversial practice of standardized testing.

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<sup>46</sup> The Army Alpha Test was used to identify officer candidates from a large pool of recruits and then place the rest of recruits in positions where they could function most productively.

In practice, standardized testing has shown tremendous effects and limitations on curricular content at the expense of the quality of learning. Standardization sets boundaries for what teachers should teach, what student should learn, and how well students should learn. This is not to say that there should not be expectation in learning, nor to question the value of scientific method used in testing per se. The problem lies in the fact that standardization associated with accountability pressures teachers and schools to describe students' achievements in terms of test scores. Consequently, teachers develop rigid curricular instructions in order to follow precisely the predetermined standards aligned with the tests.

In addition, discipline is carried out to the extreme that carves out individual difference, which is “fundamentally important to the future of the human species” (Gallagher, 2003, p. 85). Foucault’s discourse of discipline and power provides a powerful lens to understand standardization as a process to make children docile subjects. Not only to produce docile bodies in students, the absolute discipline leaves no place for the development of qualities such as “cognitive flexibility, self-direction, cooperation resourceful, perspective-taking, the ability to communicate clearly, and use of strategies such as planning and goal-setting” (Gallagher, pp. 96-97), which are fundamental for lifetime achievements. As children are shaped as results-driven individuals and trained to conform to a political utility of control, they are not cared as lifetime achievers.

Although the historical rationale for standardized testing was to ensure that all children have the opportunity for educational advancement and that the “increasingly sophisticated measurement tools would result in a more objective and equitable system of assessment” (Gallagher, 2003, p. 84), in practice, the use of test scores does not deliver its

alleged democratic ideal. Winfield (2007) points out that standardized testing uses test scores as a tool to justify for racism and classism in which “boundaries remain intact” and “compromise and consideration are not built in to the system” (p. 152). The author asserts,

One did not enter into the public discourse in order to *discover*...[but rather] to *convince* and compel others to believe what was presented. The influence of this early parameter ensured that from the very beginning, education was a conduit for training and advocacy rather than an environment of discovery and learning. (p. 152, original italics)

Grodsky (2008) et al. also point out, “The real issue is [not the test scores, but] the stratified distribution of knowledge and skills reflected in the scores” (p. 400). Standardized testing functions as a means of “social reproduction” rather than “social redistribution” (p. 389). The authors write,

Our society is stratified along the line of race and SES [socioeconomic status]; standardized test scores reflect that fact. To try to hide this truth by designing a test that shows no difference in the achievement of those historically advantages and those consistently denied OTL [opportunity to learn] would be both disingenuous and regressive. (p. 399)

Winfield (2007) further points out, “Education as a social institution was conceived and developed during the height of the eugenics movement and in many ways is the product of eugenic ideological thinking” (p. 99). The author explains, “Eugenic ideology, replete with imperatives and proscriptions” (p. 151) is “more closely aligned with a capitalist paradigm and the desire to accumulate wealth rather than a democratic one” (p. 155). For the purpose of creating a superior Nordic race, standardized testing derives from a eugenic ideology that perpetuates a hierarchical conception of human race.

In summary, education’s current reliance on standardization represents a persistence of eugenic ideology that dismisses a historical introspection of domination associated with power.

As test scores are considered the only reliable and valid evidence of students' ability, education is reduced to a procedural model that eliminates the political and cultural conflicts from the center of curricula debate. The high-stake testing diverts attention away from the difficulty issues of institutionalized racism and classism.

Most importantly, standardization impacts "not only non-Nordic and poor people, but everyone" (Winfield, 2007, p. 149). It creates in the minds of all children a causal link between individual economic advancement and test scores. The result is an individualistic, ontological, docile, rational, and rewards-, rights-driven subjectivity that lacks the consideration for others. Foucault's subjectivity is reduced to "strategies of knowledge and power" (Wang, 2004, p. 137) and thus incapable of caring for itself or feeling achieved. With this subjectivity, children would grow up to pursue "good" lives without having the opportunity to realize the value of a moral responsibility toward others. In short, standardization perpetuates racism and rejects human nature's moral imperatives toward others.

The Confucian *Ren* offers helpful insights to see education as a way of living to one's potential, rather than a way of training agents that thrive in competition. It understands that life is more than just economic advancement and that feelings of lifetime achievements dwell not in the material abundance of one's own, but in the delivery of others' benevolence. Believing that all children are born with a moral goodness that can be cultivated toward a moral responsibility, the Confucian *Ren* provides a moral grounding for the development of children's subjectivity. As a result, subjectivity of Confucian *Ren* is relational, reflective, and moral.

To build something stronger and higher, Confucius focuses to work on the foundation. Just like the Chinese bamboo, it develops strong root before showing visible signs of growth. The

Confucian *Ren* allows children to grow the same way Chinese bamboo grows. Confucius remarks in the *Analects*, “Establish [or work on] the root, then the *Dao* (道, the way) is born” (1: 2). What is the root? What is the *Dao*? This message captures the very essence of Confucian thought: *Ren* (仁, benevolence) is the root and *Ren* is the *Dao* (道, the way). Confucius believes in the moral goodness of human nature, which is the seed of *Ren*. He also believes that this moral goodness needs to be cultivated toward the *Ren Dao*, which is the carrying out of good intention or the practice of *Ren*, especially in rulers.

Confucius stresses the importance of the practice of *Ren* for rulers as much as it is for people. If the leaders govern in the *Dao* of *Ren*, people would respond in the *Dao* of *Ren*; if the leaders rely too much on legal forces, people would strive to avoid the punishment. In the case of Iowa Redistricting, the absence of a moral responsibility in those leading and establishing policy for diversity allows remnants of segregation to persist. Achievement gaps continue to be opportunity gaps and thus perpetuated. The diversity practiced in Iowa Redistricting is against the Confucian way of *Ren Dao*: when the leadership of education claims one thing but does another, people lose their sense of respect toward the leadership and the cohesion of public education suffers.

If the *Dao* of *Ren* is present in the leadership, people by nature would recognize it, the same way children by nature recognize the love of their parents when they are indeed loved. Together the practice of *Ren* in the leadership and people’s response to *Ren* can transform the existing political power, not the other way around. The legendary Great Yu governs the water for the benefit of the people without seeking the instant reward of his own. Yu’s *Ren* is not passive empathy that denies the existing power relations; rather it thrives through the working of conflicting power relations. In this sense, subjectivity of Confucian *Ren* is also transformative.

The more responsible the one is, the more one's rights are assured. So Yu's *Ren* wins him the political status and changes the existing power. In the case of *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (2005), the YLS faculty's and student's collective effort changed the Court's decision and complemented the legal protection of academic autonomy.

The Confucian choice of *Ren Dao* over legality as a way of governance can be applied to the current state of education focusing on discipline and standardization. To Confucius, learning is meaningful only when it is emerged from within the self voluntarily rather than externally imposed. It involves not externally imposed disciplines, but an intimate communication with the nature and people around. Only when the learning is disconnected from external rewards can it become part of the self and become powerful. Moreover, the accumulation of knowledge is secondary to the establishment of root (i.e., *Ren*). Confucius remarks, "Those who learn but do not think are lost. Those who think but do not learn are in great danger" (2: 15).

In Confucian thought, to think is to think *Ren*, to learn is to learn through relations and conflicts, not simply knowledge, nor discipline. The same way children feel the love of their parents, children by nature can recognize the ways they are disciplined and trained at school for a purpose other than caring. My daughter often comments, "They don't care!" She knows that teachers only "care" about the test scores, but she does not know that teachers do so because education has been reduced to standardization and discipline. But educators know the fact that children are trained to be docile for the purpose of a political utility. If educators cannot help but to care a little for the welfare of the future generation, they should recognize the limitation of standardization as it exists in education.

The Confucian *Ren* embraces the innate, moral, caring feelings humans have toward the others. Confucius admires the wandering into nature as a way to nurture the body, because in the body dwells the heart, and in the heart dwells the moral responsibility. Just like the water simultaneously takes the shape of environments and moves with transformative power, the Confucian *Ren* transforms the existing power for the benefit of other people. Just like the water never loses but gains momentum in shaping around its environment, the Confucian *Ren* does not lose but gain power and autonomy in taking on the moral responsibility. Without the practice of *Ren* in leaderships, public education would not deliver the equality of educational opportunity for all children. Without incorporating the element of moral responsibility in everyday classroom, children would continue to be trained and limited as results-, rights-driven agents, rather than cared as autonomous, responsible individuals who are capable of leading worthwhile lives.

It takes a courageous, conscious, and moral choice to recognize the racism as it exists in education and within the memory of people itself. As a member of the dominant culture, Winfield (2007) had initiated a moral introspection as an effort make changes.

I am a white American, I am privileged, and my ancestors were no doubt active participatory agents in the above tracing [of the collective memory of eugenics]... I cannot begin to imagine the stories of those who exist, and have existed outside this dominance... Like an alcoholic, dominance requires frequent refreshment, is a master of manipulation, can be charming and seductive, and is dying internally. (p. 164)

To end, education as a social institution, should not be reduced to a technological model that eliminates the political and cultural conflicts from the center of curricula debate. Test scores should not be used as a tool to justify for racism and classism in order to keep the boundaries of control intact. In addition to the learning of knowledge, considerations for others should also be built in to the system. Education should encourage the uniqueness of human nature as morally

responsible and work toward the benefiting of children as lifetime achievers, rather than as rewards-driven subjects. In children's eyes, there is no dichotomy of rights and responsibility.

The Confucian *Ren* understands people's collective memory, not simply as a way of social reproduction or continuity that is passed generations after generations, but as a way of social transformation—it believes that people's innate moral awareness can be encouraged and cultivated into a moral responsibility for others, especially if the practice of *Ren* is present in leaderships. As a member outside of the dominance, I believe the choice of reading the *Analects* with my daughter could be a starting point and seed for a moral responsibility that would bring care for more children.

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## VITA

Wei Guan was born in Xi'an, China. As a music teacher, she loved to teach children and participate in local choirs as a soloist. After moving to the United States, she continued to study her Master in Vocal Performance with Professor Stephen Swanson in the University of Iowa. Yet performance of music on stage did not satisfy her need to live into the culture. For her doctoral study, she chose education as a window to inquire about the American society and to understand how subjectivity of a foreigner is constituted through power relations. Wei Guan plans to graduate in December 2017 from the Louisiana State University, where she studies her Ph.D. in education with Dr. Petra Munro Henry.