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For the Love of Knowledge

William W. Brickman and
His Comparative Education

This article discusses William W. Brickman's contributions to the field of comparative and international education. Through archival research of Brickman's collection at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, interviews with his former colleagues, students, and family members, and a content analysis of his publications and the two journals he edited, the authors examine Brickman's role in founding the Comparative Education Society, his notion of comparative education scholarship, and his service to the larger academic community through a lifelong career as journal editor. In addition to his contributions to advancing historical research and qualitative methodologies in comparative education, Brickman should also be remembered for his relentless efforts to protect academic freedom by encouraging epistemological and methodological diversity of the field. Brickman's role as a scholar, educator, and editor can therefore be best understood through his unyielding love of knowledge—like the philosophers of the past.

A man's feet must be planted in his country,
but his eyes should survey the world.

—George Santayana

I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail,
not to scorn human actions, but to understand them.

—Benedict de Spinoza¹

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William W. Brickman left a unique legacy in the world of education. He is known as “the architect of the Comparative Education Society” (Swing, 1987, p. 1), remembered as “one of the nation’s foremost scholars” (Torah World, 1986, p. 1), and considered “a rare renaissance man in an age of specialization” (Parker, 1987, p. 3). Notwithstanding their wide-ranging connotations, these superlatives have one common thread. They highlight Brickman’s limitless love of knowledge. Like philosophers of the past, Brickman understood that “he had not attained the truth, but he was constantly engaged in seeking it” (Brickman, 1971). Brickman (1971) was “willing to learn from anyone and to respect everyone.” He strove to understand, not to critique, dominate, or undermine others. Throughout his life, he worked diligently “to sift fact from fancy and to eliminate error from erudition” (Brickman, 1971). Being a true scholar meant becoming “somewhat like Plato’s philosopher, a lover of knowledge” (Brickman, 1965).

Brickman’s desire to understand educational issues in their entirety opened an intellectual space for him to explore issues of wide-ranging breadth and meticulous depth—from the history of comparative education, to state/church relationships in education, to the role of learned ladies of the sixteenth century, to Jewish education. As one of his former students, Elizabeth Sherman Swing (1987), highlighted, “the intellectual curiosity of this twentieth-century Renaissance man was as inexhaustible as his energy” (p. 4). For Brickman, understanding educational phenomena implied a simultaneous pursuit of historical, comparative, and international inquiry. His ongoing quest for knowledge was contagious to his students and colleagues. It was reflected in his scholarship and the communications he had with some of the greatest education thinkers of the twentieth century. He was a prolific writer who published twenty-nine books, a prized journal editor for *School and Society* (later renamed *Intellect* and now *USA Today Magazine*) for twenty-three years (1953–76) and *Western European Education* (later renamed *European Education*) for seven years (1979–86), the first president of the Comparative Education Society and the only member to serve the society twice, and respected by some of the most distinguished educators of his time, including William C. Bagley, Isaac L. Kandel, George Counts, John Dewey, Maxine Greene, and Robert Ulich, to name a few.

Brickman brought his passion for the pursuit of knowledge to comparative education. While his version of comparative education—one based on contextualized, historical scholarship—was only one of many varieties of comparative educations in the history of the field dating back to John Amos Comenius’s *Didactica magna* (The Great Didactic) in the seventeenth century, he valued diversity in both theoretical orientations and preferred methodologies—the “tools” of comparison—during the professionalization of the field in the late 1950s. When the search for “epistemological certainty” (Coulby, 2002, p. 42) took American comparative education on the path of positivist techniques, quantitative methodologies, and modernization ideologies in the 1960s and 1970s, Brickman did not waver in his commitment to historical scholarship. Instead of criticizing the “scientific” preoccupation of the field, he aimed, rather, to achieve Truth through a steadfast pursuit of historical,

comparative inquiry and his belief in academic freedom. His intellectual openness and generosity envisioned comparative education as a space that would be capable of embracing different theoretical orientations and methodological approaches. He therefore devoted his academic life to preserving such an intellectual space in comparative education through his own historical scholarship and lifelong career as editor.

Brickman's commitment to historical scholarship, however, had serious implications for his reputation in the field. During the 1960s and 1970s, when the field was moving toward the "science" of comparative education with escalating speed, Brickman was regarded by the editors of *Comparative Education Review* as a specialist in the history of comparative education; they published five of his nine articles in the journal on the history of the field. Today, many comparative education scholars remember him primarily for the study trips he organized early in his career, without paying due respect to his larger contributions to the field. It is unfortunate that the historical accounts of comparative education as a field tend "to discount earlier versions of the field or cast them as inferior and defective" (Rust, Johnstone & Allaf, 2009, p. 123). Today, it is fitting to revisit Brickman's legacy in comparative education and raise him and his scholarship from the ranks of "forgotten men, forgotten themes"² (Kazamias, 2009, p. 37).

Although Brickman's legacies in comparative education are many, we will focus on three: his role in founding the Comparative Education Society, his notion of true comparative education scholarship, and his service to the larger academic community through a lifelong career as journal editor. We hope to illuminate Brickman's legacy in and influence on the field of comparative and international education through archival research of his personal and professional material held at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University; interviews with some of his former colleagues, students, and family members; and a content analysis of his publications and the two journals he edited. Despite our cursory attempt at what can only be described as a daunting task of uncovering the life and work of a man who had, for example, conducted seventeen different research projects four years before his death and who had been simultaneously working on five handwritten books during the last year of his life, we hope to inspire more faculty and students in comparative education to reach into the history of our field to understand its present. As Robert Cowen (2009) rightly observed, "we have a lot of unseen history," which needs urgent revisiting now and in the future (p. 7).

The formation of the Comparative Education Society: More than "junket-like tours abroad"

William W. Brickman's journey toward comparative education began during his childhood in the multilingual Lower East Side of New York City in the early twentieth century. It was a poor section of New York filled with tenements for immigrants and the working class. The buildings "were a bad after-thought of a heedless day"

(Riis, 1890, p. 20), crowded, impoverished, and forgotten. This neglected area of New York became Brickman's linguistic playground. He was surrounded by parents who spoke Yiddish, Hebrew, Aramaic, Polish, German, and Russian; newspapers written in English, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Yiddish, and Greek; and store signs, movies, plays, and radio in most of these languages. Despite the terrible living conditions and disease-laden streets, Brickman was inevitably exposed to culture, language, and history of all sorts. When his brother, born Morris but called Moish and later changed to Murray, was born in the "three-room, cold-water, gas-lit, unheated" tenement, the young Brickman at the age of two years and eight months greeted "each visitor with the proud declaration, 'Der dokter hot gebrakht a baybie in a shretchel.' The last word was my Yiddishization of satchel, one of the few English words that I had heard" (Brickman, 1985).

After graduating from the City College of New York with both a bachelor's degree in German and a master's degree in education, he would combine his love of linguistics, education, and history into a 1938 dissertation titled "The Contribution of Herman Lietz to Education" presented to the faculty of New York University (NYU) as one of the first Jewish Orthodox doctoral candidates. Graduating with a terminal degree as the war in Europe saw the United States' involvement, Brickman's fluency in German made him a vital candidate for the war effort. As an officer in the United States military during World War II, Brickman conducted trilingual interrogations, learned the Bavarian, Austrian, Silesian, Rhineland, Berlin, and Leipzig dialects of German, and became conversant in Czech. Among the few European languages Brickman could not speak (to his disappointment) were Finnish, Gaelic, Basque, Albanian, and Icelandic.

After World War II ended, Brickman transitioned from military service overseas (on one vita he labeled his profession during those years as "special agent") to professor in the history of education department at NYU. While at NYU, he became convinced professors of education who taught "courses which refer to systems of education and educational theory in other lands" had been "treated in a very superficial and dead manner, no doubt because of the almost total absence of contact by American educators with education abroad" (Brickman, n.d.). Brickman set out to remedy this problem by arranging one of the first academic study tours to Europe with Professor Gerald Read of Kent State University and Dr. Bess Goodykoontz of the U.S. Office of Education to "add life and meaning to the teaching of courses in foundations of education, history of education, and comparative education" (Brickman, n.d.). Following in the footsteps of Kandel and Ulich, Brickman was convinced that one could not engage in a true comparative study without the intimate knowledge of foreign languages and first-hand familiarity with the political, economic, and social contexts of the countries studied:

Dr. Ulich stressed what Dr. Kandel had said earlier, namely, that knowledge of a foreign educational system is derived from "personal study and familiarity" and not from documentary materials alone. Time and again, Dr. Kandel impressed this point on the present writer. (Brickman, 1966, p. 7)

The first trip occurred in the summer of 1956 and included school visits, conferences, discussions, interviews, and cultural experiences during a five-week period (see Photograph 2).³ In Brickman's (1966) view, a study tour like this represented "alternate, short-term" solutions for the many teachers and professors lacking international experience, while providing additional time for the formulation of a "program of systematic visitation of professors of comparative education" in order to provide "adequate experiences for foreign school observation" (p. 7). More importantly, however, Brickman (1972) believed that "firsthand visitation" was only one of the core competencies necessary to engage in the study of comparative education, which went hand-in-hand with the following, equally important competencies: scholarship, language skills, objectivity and open-mindedness, source readings in original languages, and precision in analysis and terminology. When the study tours led to the genesis of the Comparative Education Society in 1956, Brickman (1977a) considered it "an act of rashness perpetrated by a relatively younger generation" (p. 398). He would have preferred a less spontaneous professionalization of the Society.⁴ As he admitted ten years after the establishment of the Society, "it might have been desirable to exercise more deliberation in the establishment of an organization designed to raise standards of study, teaching, and research in comparative education" (p. 8).

Contrary to popular belief, Brickman's influence did not stop at these "study tours." Firmly believing in Ulich's and Kandel's philosophy of comparative education, Brickman aimed to move comparative education beyond the "junket-like tours abroad" and the resultant courses taught by amateurs (Brickman, 1954, p. 398). By professionalizing the society, Brickman (1966) hoped to raise standards in all aspects of scholarship, thus "preventing dilettantes from pre-empting the field" (p. 8). At the time of the establishment of the Society, for example, he observed that the term "comparative education" had been used "too loosely and too irresponsibly":

The field was wide open, and anyone who so desired could leap into the vacuum. What the Comparative Education Society tried to do was to gain recognition in the academic and professional world as a group of scholarly-minded, serious specialists with high standards of teaching, research, and publication. (1966, p. 8)

Indeed, Brickman's vision of the Comparative Education Society was wide and diverse. The Society's origins—or what has been called the prehistory—date back to 1954 when Brickman held informal meetings in New York City with comparative education scholars and students. Around the same time, he took responsibility for organizing the first annual conferences of comparative education held at NYU. The goal of the first conference on April 30, 1954 was "to bring together those who teach and those who are otherwise engaged in comparative education to discuss some of the fundamental problems of this field" (Brickman, 1973, p. 28). A group of thirty-five conference participants, including scholars Robert Ulich and Maxine Greene, pondered issues of far greater importance than the "study tours." They discussed topics like the nature and value of comparative education, avenues of



Photograph 2. One of the first activities organized by the Comparative Education Society was a European study program, which took place from August 18 to September 17, 1956. Photograph courtesy of Hoover Institute archives, Stanford University, William W. Brickman Collection, Box 118.

action toward a revival of comparative education, methods of teaching comparative education, and desirable types of research in comparative education.

It is clear that Brickman was genuinely concerned with the future direction of comparative education. He thought that the field was too preoccupied with practicalities (such as “study tours”) and not enough with building its theoretical and methodological foundations. At the third annual conference of comparative education in 1956, Brickman devoted his address to “The Theoretical Foundations of Comparative Education,” where he explained the importance of moving beyond practical ends and toward theoretical considerations in making comparative education a legitimate field of study:

Comparative Education is very often regarded as basically a practical field. It is often defended as an area of study on the ground that it is of great value to school and university administrators, to educational officials in the government, to individuals engaged in organizing student and teacher exchanges, and to experts going on foreign technical assistance missions. There can be no doubt that these are worthwhile functional values of Comparative Education. Yet, it is important to ask ourselves if we have done our duty to this field in stressing its practicality. Any practical work which is founded on ideas and scholarly data must necessarily be rooted in a theoretical basis. Without a strong theoretical substratum, the practice tends to lose direction and its professional character. (Brickman, 1973, p. 116)

Quot homines, tot sententiae

Brickman believed that there was no one correct way of doing comparative education. His call for formulating the theoretical basis for comparative education went out to scholars of different theoretical and methodological backgrounds. While acknowledging the need for “more exploration and more rigorous thinking,” he appealed to his colleagues not to forget the words of the Roman playwright Terence—“*quot homines, tot sententiae*” (“so many men, so many opinions,” quoted in Brickman, 1973, p. 125). In outlining the general principles of comparative education, Brickman insisted that differences were “not only inevitable, they were desirable” (1973, p. 125).

This belief in the value of diverse opinions was also reflected in the original goals of the Comparative Education Society. Of the eight goals formulated during the third annual conference of comparative education, four echoed Brickman’s appeal for collaborative exploration of different theoretical and methodological approaches to comparative education, including (1) encouraging cooperation among specialists in comparative education throughout the world in joint studies, exchange of documents, and first-hand descriptions of education; (2) cooperating whenever possible with such organizations as UNESCO, the International Institute of Education, and the Pan-American Union; (3) promoting intervisitation of educators and on-the-spot study of school systems for a better understanding of the theory and practice of education throughout the world; and (4) cooperating with

specialists in other disciplines, particularly the social sciences, and interpreting educational developments in a wider cultural context. The other four goals included promoting and improving the teaching of comparative education in colleges and universities throughout the world, encouraging scholarly research in comparative and international studies in education, generating interest in comparative education among professors of all areas of professional education and in other disciplines, and facilitating the publication of studies and up-to-date information on comparative education.⁵

During the first decade of the Comparative Education Society,⁶ academics and education professionals engaged in rigorous debate about the epistemological nature of the field. In this process, the Society's journal, *Comparative Education Review (CER)*, became a "testing ground in which new ideas and concepts about comparative education were allowed to compete" (Campisano, 1988, p. 43). In part, this was possible due to the skillful editorship of George Bereday, the journal's first editor, who was recognized for using the journal to provide "an outlet for scholarship of different viewpoints and perspectives" (Altbach, 1984, p. 6) and expanding "the parameters of the field giving room to the breadth of interests, talents, and perspectives" (Campisano, 1988, p. 69). Brickman acknowledged Bereday's "brilliant editorship" by highlighting its respect for theoretical and methodological diversity, which was central to the advancement of the field:

the *Review* has indeed covered the significant issues, problems, and developments in the various aspects of education in international perspective. It has stressed historical and socio-political-cultural-economic contexts, as well as scholarly documentation. It has given space to veterans and newcomers, to Americans and foreigners. The book reviews, bibliographies, editorial introductions, news notes, and other features have made the *Review* the indispensable source for all who are concerned with education on an extra-national scale. (1973, pp. 17–18)

However, Brickman's vision for a vibrant epistemological diversity of the field began to fade in the mid-1960s, with science and statistics becoming the dominant tools in comparative education. When Harold Noah took over the editorship of *CER* in 1967, the principles of "scientific rationality" increasingly became more visible in the journal's publications. Based on their analysis of *CER* articles prior to 1977, Altbach and Kelly (1986) note that the "state of the art" in comparative education at that time reflected "the theoretical dominance of structural functionalism, combined with positivist methodological assumptions" (quoted in Crossley, 1999, p. 250). Furthermore, Kelly and Altbach (1988) argued that the interpretative traditions, critical theory, and conflict studies "scarcely entered the discourse of the field and were not promoted through its major journals and texts" (p. 14). Reflecting on this change, Noah (1968) himself admitted to "the growing attention given in our field to the social sciences" and by extension the emergence of science and statistical tools, challenging the field's former grounding in educational history and philosophy.

In retrospect, some scholars referred to this period of comparative education

as “stifling orthodoxy” (Rust, Johnstone & Allaf, 2009, p. 132) and even “historical amnesia” (Watson, 1999, p. 235). Others pointed out how such developments came at a high “epistemological and methodological cost, namely the sacrifice or almost total abandonment of the historical dimension in comparative education research” (Kazamias, 2009, p. 156). Scholars practicing historical scholarship in comparative education, including Brickman and his predecessors Kandel and Ulich, were inevitably displaced from comparative education, as the rapid decline of their publications in mainstream comparative education journals during the 1960s and 1970s clearly attest. However, it did not signify the death of historical scholarship in comparative education. Quite the opposite, historical scholarship was alive and thriving—as Brickman’s scholarship confirms—albeit in different education spaces.

**Brickman’s comparative education:
The “leading edge of educational history”**

William W. Brickman’s worldview began with “a reverence for history, with recognition that present and future were a function of the past” (Swing, 1987, p. 4). He understood the field “in line with the statement of the late Dr. I. L. Kandel, the world-renowned expert in the field, that comparative education is ‘the prolongation of the history of education into the present’” (Brickman, 1977a). Brickman eventually codified his definition of comparative education as the “analysis of two or more national systems of schools and other formative institutions and influences, parts of systems; or of learning, teaching, and related problems and developments—in the light of historical, political, cultural, economic, social, religious, and other factors” (Brickman, 1972).

In Brickman’s conceptualization, comparative education was the “leading edge of educational history” (Brickman, 1977a). Even after the call to add “international” to the title of CES was recognized, Brickman continued to believe the study of international education was included, almost inherent, in comparative education by design, which the founding documents of CES make clear. In any case, Brickman squarely placed both fields of study under the larger academic branch of the history of education, negating any reason to debate the inclusion or exclusion of “international” in the study of comparative education. It is almost as if Brickman had an ordering system for the academic study of education. First came international education, where the scholar would review the concrete methods and material of some part of an education system and how those systems moved to other countries. Second came comparative education, where the scholar would systematically compare two or more systems—or parts of systems—and use theory to explain the differences and/or similarities. Last came the history of education, to provide a fuller understanding and give detailed explanations as to how and why the present systems studied came into existence. Each study supported the next, creating a firm ground for the history of education to stand.

This three-tier system has its flaws, of course. Namely, how can international education be first in Brickman's conceptualization if he had labeled comparative education the "leading edge" of educational history? One way to clarify this is to view international education not necessarily separate from but rather supplementary to comparative education, like development education and intercultural education. Erwin Epstein outlined this viewpoint in a letter to the *CER* editor:

If a correlation is found between length of name and base of popular support, we might eventually wish to name our organization the International Comparative Development and Intercultural Education Society! Only then might we satisfy all of the people all of the time. Until that time, let our rose keep its name, and we'll be sure it smells as sweet. (Epstein, 1968, p. 378)

Whatever his opinion, Brickman remained relatively silent on the debate to change CES to CIES. He preferred to spend his time figuring out how comparative education fit into the history of education, and supported other scholars who did the same in the economics of education, the sociology of education, and other disciplines.

Brickman's historical scholarship

Brickman's process of comparison was systematic; it was as orderly as the military, as honest as his belief in academic freedom. It fused international, comparative, and educational history into a seamless process that resulted in profoundly deep understandings of the many topics and interconnections throughout history and across linguistic and geographic borders. He preferred outlines to organize ideas, lectures, research, and historical events. He outlined everything from "The Writing of the History of a College or University" in 1954 to a "Tentative Prospectus for a Boys' Yeshivah Academic High School" in 1965, and from "Education for Leadership in a Global Society" in 1980 to the "History of International Education: The Educational Work of the League of Nations—1919–39" (n.d.). His archives are filled with hundreds of typed outlines on every topic of interest. Taken together, the outlines provided not only a holistic view of his corpus but also a method to his process, which started with bibliographies and literature reviews.

His bibliographies and literature reviews began early in his career. Brickman was known for such reviews in *School and Society*, an extended version of the various bibliographies he habitually created. He became a formal contributor to the publication in 1946 when he returned from the war. "I am delighted to inherit you as a collaborator with *School and Society*," Kandel wrote Brickman. "We greatly need the kind of composite reviews which you have begun to write."

Brickman began a long career of pulling together books and articles on a variety of topics published as educational literature reviews or as bibliographies (titled "books for educators" in *School and Society*). Brickman recruited graduate students to search for citations and references as he worked on his literature reviews and bibliographies. One of Brickman's research assistants at the University of

Pennsylvania remembered such impossible tasks as searching for the citation of an anonymous quotation in a foreign language unknown to the assistant (personal communication, Raymond E. Wanner, March 2, 2009). Indeed, Brickman's archives are littered with annotated citations, sometimes in rolodex form but often scribbled on scrap paper and envelopes, haphazardly placed in folders labeled, in one instance, "AMvS"—his abbreviation for Anna Maria van Schurman, a seventeenth-century learned lady, as Brickman called her. His method, as disorganized as it may have appeared, produced an almost unthinkable breadth and depth of analysis. "I certainly appreciate," John Dewey exulted in a letter dated November 3, 1949, "your sending me that wonderfully complete reference list. But I appreciate even more the pains and thoroughness with which you have done the work no doubt," adding, "Needless to say the list is prized and will be carefully preserved. I never dreamed of having anything of the sort."

Readers of *School and Society* were equally impressed by Brickman's reviews. In an August 2, 1948 letter, Edward L. Thorndike called his reviews "scholarly, sensible and well-written." Frederick Rogers of Monterey, California wrote Kandel on April 30, 1947 to explain his respect and admiration of the educational reviews: "It is gradually being borne in upon your readers that in William W. Brickman *School and Society* has a rare jewel. How he does it all defeats my imagination; I mean particularly the number of books reviewed, plus the very evidently alert and well informed critical apparatus he brings into the lists." His ability to bring together vast quantities of sources—both primary and secondary—was all part of his larger methodology of historical research.

Before writing, Brickman outlined more than bibliographies and literature reviews. He would continue with lists of cultural figures in different countries, side-by-side comparisons of education systems and languages, extensive reports on trips abroad, chronological outlines of educational events in various countries, and eventually a detailed outline of a potential manuscript. This method required Brickman to learn new languages and cultures of different countries, to work in archives around the world to find primary documents, and to take extensive field notes for every trip abroad. His archives, case in point, contain a box of little notebooks, one for each trip, filled with thoughts, ideas, and observations from experiences abroad. These would turn into typed notes (often labeled "for private circulation only") with titles such as "Books, Blue Jeans, and Bellbottoms" and "Learned Lady of the Lowlands." All of his collected information would then be slowly turned into manuscripts. Sifting through his archives, it is common to find myriad outlines of the same topic. Each iteration of the outline became longer and more complete than the last. Eventually, for some of the topics, hand-written manuscripts, some as long as 800 pages, would emerge among his papers.⁷

Brickman explained his research methodology in a document detailing the work for his doctoral students of educational history:

The history of education, as one of the constituent areas of the field of history, is a scholarly subject which is studied on the basis of the examination, analysis,

and interpretation of primary source materials, as far as possible in the original languages. International educational history comprises (a) the development of education in countries other than the United States and (b) the interaction of nations in educational and cultural affairs throughout time (1977a).

This type of work required proficiency in multiple languages. Yet Brickman noticed a decline in foreign-language study in the United States, which would make his preferred scholarship nearly impossible. Near the end of his life he observed, “the change in the history of American Society and education from multilingualism to unilingualism and from a cosmopolitan to a constricted curriculum” (Brickman, 1981) should be of great concern to the institution of education.

There were two important debates in comparative education during Brickman’s years.⁸ The first centered on the methods of comparative education research, the second on the tools. The debates on methods asked whether the field should use social science methodologies or develop its own. George Bereday argued for the latter while Harold Noah, Max Eckstein, and Arnold Anderson preferred the former. Before 1969, “there was a lively debate between those such as Bereday, who felt that comparative education should develop its own methodology, and Anderson, who argued that comparative education is not a discipline but, rather, a topical area that should utilize social science methods” (Altbach, 1991, p. 498). Brickman remained relatively silent on this debate, preferring to focus his energy on the tools of comparison.

Brickman had clear beliefs on the debate over the proper tools of comparative education. What tools should the field emphasize in research and scholarship? Noah, Eckstein, and Bereday believed the field should rely on science and statistics. Brickman, by contrast, thought the tools of comparison required a firm grounding in the study of history and cultures. With the publication of *Towards a Science of Comparative Education* (Noah & Eckstein, 1969), however, the field shifted methodological emphasis and popularized science and statistical tools in comparative education. Science and statistics eclipsed Brickman’s preference for historical and cultural tools in the field of comparative education.

Brickman’s preference appeared in what he did and did not assign as required reading. On the one hand, he required students to read Bereday’s (1965) *Comparative Method in Education* in a 1965 class on the foundations of education while he was a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Although Bereday supported similar positivist techniques as Noah and Eckstein, Brickman nonetheless assigned this seminal book in multiple courses. On the other hand, of the syllabi found in his archives, *Towards a Science of Comparative Education* appeared only once as recommended, not required reading. Swing confirmed Brickman’s dislike of the book but explicitly remembered reading it for class (personal communication, March 4, 2010). Brickman obviously took a firm stand in opposition to science and statistical tools in comparative education. He emphasized instead history and cultural studies as his preferred tools for comparative education in his classes.

“The history of education,” Brickman wrote (1977b), “offers a body of knowl-

edge helping toward the understanding of the educational scene of the past and present. It is especially useful in aiding the individual to comprehend current educational problems, since all have roots in the past,” adding, “no claim can be made that the scholarly knowledge of the content of educational history and of the methods of historical research has been instrumental in supplying the basis for the solution of particular problems in education.” He preferred the discipline of Bagley, who was known to sit quietly in Room 283 at Teachers College, Columbia University working on the “essentials” even if that kept him from the bleeding edge of Dewey’s Progressivism. If during the educational debates of the early 1930s Bagley (cited in Null & Ravitch, 2006) “would rather be right than Progressive,” then during the 1970s Brickman would “rather be right than scientific.”

More than an editor: Brickman’s pursuit of academic freedom

Brickman devoted a significant part of his academic career to editing journals and other publications. As early as 1942, he served as both editor of *Education Abstracts* (1942–44) and assistant managing editor of *Modern Language Journal* (1942–46). Between 1947 and 1949, he acted as editor of *School and Society*—the only journal in the country that was published weekly at that time—while its official editor, Isaac L. Kandel, was away at his alma mater, the University of Manchester, as the Simon Research Fellow and Professor of American Studies.⁹ Brickman succeeded Kandel as editor of *School and Society* four years later in 1953 and served in that capacity for twenty-three years until 1976. In the history of the journal, he became one of two editors who served the journal for more than twenty years, surpassed only by the journal’s founder, James McKeen Cattell, who edited *School and Society* for twenty-four years (1915–30) before selling it to the Society for the Advancement of Education. In 1979, Brickman accepted the editorship of *Western European Education* (later renamed *European Education*) and continued there until 1986. His editing career spanned forty-four years, interrupted only twice by a four-year and a three-year hiatus.

For Brickman, editing was a noble endeavor. It was much more than a technical compilation of the most recent scholarship. And, it was much more than a powerful opportunity to shape, influence, and control the future direction of the education field. Despite the few published articles—not editorials—where Brickman used historical scholarship, his preferred methodology did not bias his editorship. For him, editing was his foremost academic duty to advance academic freedom and integrity of scholarship in the academic world. It was a “constant campaign on behalf of the freedom of every member of the intellectual community” (Brickman, 1969, p. 268). Time and again, Brickman devoted his editorials to examining many “significant matters of editorial policy and practice” (Brickman, 1958, p. 315). In *School and Society*, for example, he strived to follow in the tradition envisioned by Bagley to make the journal “an unbiased, impersonal, disinterested medium of information” without becoming “the mouthpiece or organ” of any specific viewpoint—a tradi-

tion later supported by Kandel (quoted in Brickman, 1958, p. 315). Throughout his lifelong career as an editor, he tried to live up to this policy of “resolutely maintaining the freedom . . . without grinding any particular pedagogical axe” in order “to hear all points of view on controversial issues, even in the face of public opposition” (Brickman, 1958, pp. 315–16). Commenting on the role of academic freedom in educational journals, Brickman wrote:

Criticism must not be regarded as an attack. In a democratic society, criticism is a right and a duty. . . . Individuals will keep on presenting viewpoints on educational questions—regardless of the popularity of their opinions—as long as they are responsible, have something to say, and can defend what they say. Any other policy stifles thinking and promotes the kind of conformity which constitutes a danger to a democratic society (1958, pp. 316–17).

Moreover, Brickman practiced what he preached, even if it meant putting himself and the journals he edited at risk of public attack, outrage, and opposition. On September 19, 1953, *School and Society* published a critique on the education and certification of teachers by Arthur E. Bestor Jr. At the time, one popular explanation of the problems in public education placed the blame on professors of education who preferred research and theory to practice, leaving teachers inadequately trained for their profession. Many scholars adamantly disagreed with Bestor’s attack on progressive, secondary, and higher education and blamed not only the author but also the editors who gave him space to publish. Brickman was one of those editors.

After publication of the article, Brickman received countless letters criticizing his professionalism and conduct as editor. (One box in Brickman’s archive is devoted entirely to loose letters, many dealing with the Bestor article alone. For this reason, we define this article and ensuing uproar as the “Bestor incident.”) Simply because readers disagreed with Bestor, Brickman was attacked as a poor editor. Brickman engaged in folly, many scholars believed, for publishing the piece. “I have been considerably surprised and distressed,” wrote W. H. Sauvain, then acting head of the department of education at Bucknell University, one month after the Bestor incident, “that you . . . would lend your columns to such an article as that recently written for you by Arthur Bestor,” adding, “such articles in reputable journals does far more harm than good to our profession.”

The incident grew exponentially with each issue of *School and Society* when Brickman published rather than censored some of the very negative letters sent to him. Debate, Brickman believed, was healthy in academia, and he gave space for various opinions of the time in *School and Society*. There were, however, a few notable scholars in support of Brickman. “Don’t let them shake you about the Bestor Article,” proclaimed the president of Teachers College, William F. Russell, in a November 23, 1953 letter. “I don’t agree with him, but surely he has a right to be heard. You were exactly right in publishing the article—and more power to you.” Brickman concurred with Russell: “Criticism of the educational establishment and effort is necessary, but it must be founded on scholarship and reason” (Brickman, 1968, p. 230). One year later, Brickman wrote an educational literature

review in *School and Society* on the various strands of criticism in American public education. He appealed to the use of logic to examine the claims and arguments of individuals—not the individuals themselves. It is worth reprinting in full the last paragraph of his essay:

Very little is the product of individuals who are hostile to the aims and practices of the public schools. It is necessary to examine all statements of dissatisfaction, as well as those of defense, in the light of logic, faithfulness to fact, and other objective considerations. The attitude of bellicosity which has all too often greeted those within the profession who have ventured to call attention to weaknesses in the fabric or function of the school must give way to a greater degree of receptivity to dissenting ideas. American education has nothing to gain from administrative policies which frown upon differences of opinion. While this practice of discouraging controversial sentiment on educational matters is not confined to any one branch of the profession, it is vexing to find it among educationists, who, as a group, have openly committed themselves to the teaching of independent thinking. It would be wholesome indeed to see the educational conventions and conferences once more become the battleground of contrasting ideas. Just as the schools are not the private province of the teaching profession, the education of teachers is not the personal preserve of the educationists. (Brickman, 1954, p. 140)

Although Brickman cherished academic freedom and a diversity of theories and methodologies in the study of education, as evidenced during his editorship of *School and Society*, by the late 1970s he noticeably reacted to the shift away from historical scholarship in the field of comparative education by becoming editor of *Western European Education*. He actively began to preserve the shrinking space available for (what was quickly becoming) the former, forgotten methods and tools in comparative education. The journal, which had been edited by a former student of his (Raymond E. Wanner), was the perfect journal for Brickman to forge a stronghold for historical scholarship. Brickman had the freedom to edit as he pleased. As editor between 1979 and 1986, he continued Ursula Springer's founding intention of promoting both a marginalized geography (Western Europe) and methodology (cross-national, qualitative studies) in comparative education within the journal's pages (Silova & Brehm, 2009). Yet Brickman pushed the limits in his editorials, often publishing long historical analyses having nothing to do with the issue at hand.¹⁰

Brickman's time at the journal can be understood as a reaction by the once-famous scholar who, although having started the Comparative Education Society, took on the editorship of a much smaller journal than *School and Society* to keep alive a dying breed of comparison. That *Western European Education* was devoted to Europe seems to be both a welcome coincidence to a scholar who devoted his career to studies and languages of Europe after serving in World War II and a conscious realization that European education scholarship maintained a similar diversity of thought and methodologies to the comparative education Brickman remembered. In this light, the journal became a way of preserving not only a marginalized meth-

odology but also scholars like himself, whose prominence was overshadowed by men “bearing computers on their backs” (Noah, 1968, p. 125).

Remembering Brickman: The past and future of comparative education

In 1981, William W. Brickman turned sixty-eight, the mandatory age of retirement at the University of Pennsylvania at the time. Although granted the coveted emeritus status, Brickman was not keen about the new label. Since he likened the word to that of a disease, he created more attractive variations for himself: “Emeractive,” “Activeritus,” and “active retirement.” Active was exactly how he spent his retirement. In one letter he wrote to all of his graduate students notifying them of his newly changed status at the university, he not only offered to write recommendations in the future and see through his current students’ dissertations, but also explained his plans to write a seven-volume series of studies of the world history of universities. Although he never completed such a series, Brickman was intensely trying to show retirement does not mean an end to scholarship. In fact, he even began his own publishing company with his wife, Sylvia, called Emeritus Press, as both a jab at the conventional conception of emeritus status and a place for him to continue publishing. And continue publishing he did.

This episode in Brickman’s life is an example of how he lived his entire life: dedicated to family, friends, and colleagues; motivated to attain the highest level of scholarship; and humorous and light-hearted to all those around him. “Dr. Brickman set, always, exceptionally high standards for his students and was there to show them how such goals might be achieved,” wrote Ronald E. Ohl, one of Brickman’s students, in a July 3, 1980 letter to the prominent linguist Dell Hymes. “As always, Dr. Brickman was, himself, the best example of a truly fine scholar, representing what I believe every university hopes for its students.” We would extend this thought further by arguing that Brickman represented what any academic and professional association (including the Comparative and International Education Society) would hope for in its leaders—an individual of uncommon commitment to furthering the field, while preserving its theoretical and methodological diversity through academic freedom and integrity.

From the day he was a little boy in New York’s Lower East Side to his time in Cherry Hill, New Jersey as an “Emeractive” retiree, Brickman’s love for knowledge guided his work as an educator, scholar, and journal editor. He consistently aimed for Truth in the study of education by being meticulous in research, fastidious in historical scholarship, and honest in life. Furthermore, Brickman exemplified the principles of academic honesty, integrity, and freedom in pursuing his own scholarship and furthering comparative education as a field of study. Yet Brickman became to some extent a casualty of the epistemological shift toward science and statistical tools in comparative education during the 1960s and 1970s. The neglect of historical scholarship has been long and drawn-out, resulting in the marginalization of the

“traditional historian-cum-philosopher-cum-humanist” (Kazamias, 2001, p. 440) approach in comparative education. Honoring the legacy of Brickman allows us not only to reevaluate critical contributions of the founding members of Comparative and International Education Society, but also to reimagine the past as we strive for a more inclusive future of comparative education—one open to the multiplicity of theoretical and methodological perspectives. Whether called “neo-comparative education” (Broadfoot, 2000) or neo-historiography, the task is to problematize the existing discourses and revisit the historical accounts of the development of comparative education as a field of study today and in the future.

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Notes

1. These two quotations were found in William W. Brickman’s archives held at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. They were carefully written on small note cards as if preserved for future use. More interesting, as unorganized as Brickman’s papers are, these two quotes were placed atop a pile of papers in one of the few folders in the collection. Since his archives have not been cataloged, this folder must have come from Brickman himself, making the two quotes stick out more than his other papers.

2. Andreas Kazamias (2009) does not include Brickman in his list of “forgotten men” in comparative education, even though he devoted an entire chapter to those educators who were forgotten primarily because of their historical scholarship (such as Sadler, Kandel, Ulich, and others). Brickman has therefore become the “most forgotten” in comparative education, adding another superlative to the long collection that has defined his career.

3. One of the first activities of the newly formed Comparative Education Society was the European study program, which took place on August 18–September 17, 1956. The goal was to “provide a significant first-hand experience in Europe for professional educators who has a responsibility for teaching courses or phases of courses that dealt with education in other lands” (Read, 1955, p. 53). The visits were primarily to schools, teachers’ colleges, and universities in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, France, Holland, and England. The program also comprised lectures, symposia, formal and informal discussions, accumulation of documents and books, and other related activities. As Brickman (1966) later reported, one of the outcomes of the study trip was the enrichment of the courses given by the participants not only in comparative education, but also in related fields.

4. In preparation for the first study tour, Gerald Read became aware that the travel expenses for an organization would be substantially lower than for an unorganized group. This financial consideration served as a catalyst for the establishment of the Comparative Education Society during the third conference at NYU on April 27, 1956 (Brickman, 1966).

5. These eight goals appeared in a document titled “summary of the meeting to establish

The Comparative Education Society” in Brickman’s archives. It should be noted that these eight goals are not all reflected in the current purpose of the CIES constitution. The use of “cooperation” is the most obvious difference in the current purpose of CIES and that of CES. Although CIES currently supports “theories,” “related areas of inquiry and activity,” and “comparative, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and international studies,” it makes no explicit appeal for cooperation as Brickman had emphasized in 1956. Also, it is interesting to note that Kazamias and Schwartz (1977) list only four goals of the Comparative Education Society in their historical account of the Society’s foundation, including (1) promoting teaching and research in comparative education and international studies in institutions of higher learning; (2) promoting the study of education as a phase of the work of other comparative and international disciplines, area studies and centers of international studies; (3) facilitating publication and distribution of comparative, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and international studies contributing to interpretation of developments in the field of education in their broad and interrelated political, economic, and social context; and (4) encouraging exchanges and other visits by educators. Again, the goals directly focusing on the collaborative nature of the society are omitted from their retelling of the formation of CES.

6. The Comparative Education Society was renamed the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) on July 5, 1968 by a vote of 149 to 51 (letter from Alan Peshkin, Walter Kaulfers, and William Spencer to Barbara A. Yates, July 5, 1968 in William W. Brickman Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University).

7. As organized as Brickman was, his archives remain as cluttered as his home office. Only Brickman, these authors would like to believe, could possibly know the exact location of each document in his archives.

8. We thank Erwin Epstein for clarifying this idea.

9. The Simon Research Fellow program was set up at the University of Manchester to bring distinguished scholars to campus for one academic year (Null, 2007). During the 1947–48 academic year, Kandel became the first Simon Research Fellow, and one of his tasks during this time was to build a new American studies department at the university. Halfway through his appointment, Kandel was offered the position of professor of American studies, which he held until October 1949 (Null, 2007).

10. Brickman once wrote a thirty-five-page editorial on the educational contributions of Martin Luther for one issue of *Western European Education* (the title of the present publication until 1991). Considering each issue consisted of only ninety-six pages at the time, the editorial director for M.E. Sharpe, Arnold C. Tovell, was noticeably upset when, on December 13, 1983, he wrote Brickman saying, “Since the Journal promises translations, I think you should keep your essays to not more than 12–15% of any issue. OK?” Brickman obviously pushed the limits of *Western European Education* beyond the comfort of the publisher.

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