

HEQA.2021-08-02

[00:00:00] **Jack Schneider:** Welcome to *HEQ&A*, the podcast of the *History of Education Quarterly*. I'm your host, *HEQ* co-editor Jack Schneider. Every few weeks, we'll dive into recent work from the journal, asking authors how their projects challenge or extend what we know about a topic, exploring what's interesting and surprising about it, and then taking a step back to consider broader implications. In the second half of the show, we turn our sights to teaching. So, if you're an educator, make sure to stick around until the end. And now let's hear from one of our authors.

[00:00:52] **Kate Rousmaniere:** I'm Kate Rousmaniere. I'm a professor in the department of educational leadership at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Also, related to this article, I'm the former mayor of the City of Oxford. My article is called "What Happened to Your College Town? The Changing Relationship of Higher Education in College Towns, 1940 to 2000." And the article is about the history of college towns. And in this case, mostly small college towns. In particular, it's about off-campus housing. In my role as mayor of the City of Oxford, I began to really understand how cities understand the role of the university, what the university means to them.

[00:01:28] Many of us who went to college in small college towns probably have this image of a college town and how great it was and how fun it was. But when you work for a city, you see a college town in a totally different perspective. And one of the main things you see is student behavior and student life. And then the impact of students on things like economic development, residential housing, specifically residential housing, the case of off campus housing and how rental and home ownership occupations are really strange and also employment because when you live in it, when there's a city where the largest part of the population is only there for three quarters of the year, that means that you have a very strange economic situation and residential situation.

[00:02:06] So I focused on off-campus housing because I found off campus housing is just one of the most interesting dynamics in which students basically take over a college town and people live in college towns are very nostalgic about how "in the old days it wasn't like this." So of course, as a historian, I said, well, "What's with that?"

[00:02:24] So I went back to look at what happened to the history of college towns and off-campus housing and found that a lot of this had to do with structural and legal and financial issues that faced higher education in the 1970s. Essentially the end of *in loco parentis* as a legal doctrine. So universities legally wash their hands of students when they left campus, various economic pressures, and also the withdrawal of federal and state funding from higher education that used to support a lot of higher education issues.

[00:02:52] The other thing--the surprising thing I found (of the many surprising things) about, I found about this article. One is that over 50% of students live off campus in higher education. And that is historical. In fact, originally everybody lived off campus. There was no campus, but then starting at about the turn of the century, you begin to have dormitories. And then in the fifties and sixties, there was some federal and state funding for college

residence halls on campus. But then in the seventies, for, a variety of reasons, including student culture and student dynamics, which is what people may think is the real reason why kids move off campus is because it's more fun and they're freer, but it also had to do with legal and financial issues at universities.

[00:03:33] Suddenly you have this overwhelming number of students living in off-campus housing and universities, setting regulations that essentially push students off campus. So what happens in the seventies is students start moving off campus, and university washes their hands of them and the towns are left with them and suddenly have to deal with this totally changing geography and cultural dynamic in their town. So that's what it's about.

[00:03:56] This study challenges and extends what we know about the topic of higher education in part, because the work I know in higher education has tended to center on academics and professors and the academic life. Well, in fact, if half of all students live off campus. And in fact, probably in your own memory, you remember your off campus life, as much as your on campus life.

[00:04:16] The question about what happens off campus is a really important topic that very few people have looked at. The other thing is there is some new work on the history of student affairs and student life. And so this draws a bit on that work. And the other thing I really like about this topic is it begins to look at a historical problem through a structural lens.

[00:04:33] So one of the most informative piece of work I read in preparing for this research was Rothstein's *The Color of Law*, which is about how residential segregation shaped the civil rights movement and all the problems that the United States has faced with segregated communities, including education. So when you begin to look at structural and legal and financial and governmental elements, you look at something different than the social history components that we might've looked at before.

[00:05:01] Most studies of college towns have centered on wacky students and the wacky things they do and fraternities and sororities and stuff. Well, in fact, a lot of college town life, really the stresses and strains that a city faces, has to do with road construction and housing issues and, uh, whether or not they can evaluate a renter or a real, you know, legal aspects of rental housing.

[00:05:22] So that's what I like about it. It's all interesting and surprising because we don't know anything about it. When I told people that I was doing work on college towns and off-campus housing, they would start talking about how much fun they had at the bars and all these kinds of things. But the other thing people often talk about is student engagement, how great it is that students do this volunteer work in college towns, which is really wonderful. And yet from a city perspective, again, the really interesting thing is the economic and residential and sort of legal and policy aspects of it. I mean, the planning commission of any city in a college town is dealing more with college towns issues than anybody almost in student affairs is dealing with. So that's, what's interesting about it.

[00:06:05] I think one of the broader implications of this work is thinking about the structural, governmental, fiscal, and policy aspects of education in schools. I think we do that a lot in K-12 educational history, but I'm not sure we do it much in the history of higher education. In some ways it's moving away from social history or maybe it's broad--maybe I'm broadening the concept of social history to include things like government and policy. The other thing I thought a lot about as I was writing this was to think about our neighbors. So we write about a school or we write about a, uh, college, or we write about a community, but what's going on with the neighborhood that's next to that thing that we're looking at--how are they experiencing that? How are the people who are outside of my community experiencing my community? That's a really interesting part of it. Sort of looking at the, what am I not looking at things?

[00:06:59] Musical interlude

[00:07:02] **Jack Schneider:** The second half of the show is dedicated to thinking about teaching. We ask authors to put on their guest lecturer hats and take students into the weeds. What should they pay attention to, methodologically speaking? What else should they be reading if they want to take a deep dive into the historiography? And where are there opportunities for further research?

[00:07:18] **Kate Rousmaniere:** [00:07:18] I draw on a lot of archival research in this document, and I think in an early footnote, I just, some, one of the reviewers asked, how did you pick these places? And the answer? I think I say it more formally in the essay, but the real answer is I was traveling around the country and I ended up in these towns where there were big college towns and they had a nice archive.

[00:07:40] So the University of Florida, one of the key actors here is a guy named Carl Opp who directed off-campus housing at University of Florida. He's a terrific character, and I just ran into him by accident. I happened to be at the University of Florida or was on my way someplace else. I visited Sevan Terzian and I went into the archives and the archivist came out to me and said, "I know you're sort of interested in off-campus housing. I have some uncollected papers of a guy named Carl Opp. Are you interested in looking at them? So the total randomness of that is I think something that historians of education all around will, will talk about, you just have to go there. You can't do a lot of this work online. You really have to go there and be with them and make friends with the archivist and tell them what you're interested in and then amazing things happen.

[00:08:23] And so that's where a lot of this research came from. So that's one methodological question. And then I also did legal research, legal and policy and finance research. Which is somewhat hard to do, but because I had some experience in city work, I knew where to look. I also talked to people in my city and in other cities, and I know how to find that stuff. So I stepped far outside of my comfort zone to find other kinds of research, but that's important too.

[00:08:48] I've always been interested in school architecture and design and geography--studies of cultural geography. Thinking that if you're looking at higher education, thinking about campus, how a campus is shaped and how it's designed and even, uh, there's some

work also on K-12 school, design, architecture and geography. So I think that's the first place to go. Again, to think about the neighborhood. Where is the place in which your subject is located and then what does it look like? And then also I urge people to read policy and legal documents, and again, they were hard, sometimes hard to access. I mean, they're easy to access. Legal documents are really easy to get on Lexus Nexus. You can get them in any library. It's interpreting them that's sort of the problem. And I did talk to some friends who are lawyers and they helped me kind of read those things. How to, you don't have to read the whole thing. You just have to read the precis in the beginning. So, but I do think legal and policy documents are very important to read when you're thinking about organizations in society.

[00:09:45] I wrote an essay on this topic specifically about students of color and their challenges with residential aspects of higher education and desegregation. The short version is that students of color were admitted to higher education institutions to sit in the class. Well, barely. When they finally were admitted to sit in the class, they were not allowed to live on campus. And so there's this whole other history of marginalized students. And this works for African-American students, also students with disabilities. There's a whole history of students with disabilities who were excluded from higher education and K-12 schools because they literally couldn't get into the building. And also international students. Because international students in higher education fit into this weird, they were sort of students of color sometimes, and sometimes they're not--in terms of how they are identified, in terms of residential. Also LGBTQ students, there's a, some history about in the history of student affairs, how LGBTQ-identified students were excluded from residential living in various ways that were totally unscientific early on, and then how that continues as life goes on.

[00:10:50] So I think there's a lot of work that can be done on the overall topic of what can be done is on the history of student life in higher education, how did they live? And this could include things like student activities and athletics, as well as fraternities and sororities about which there has been some good, really good writing.

[00:11:13] Musical interlude

[00:11:15] **Jack Schneider:** Check out *History of Education Quarterly* online. The journal is published by Cambridge University Press and it's carried by most academic libraries. You should also be sure to follow *HEQ* Twitter handle: @histedquarterly, which regularly sends out free read-only versions of articles, and the show's Twitter handle @HEQandA. And don't forget, subscribe to the show so you don't miss forthcoming episodes. We're available on iTunes, Stitcher, and wherever you get your podcasts. HEQ&A is produced at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Our producer is Jennifer Berkshire and our theme music is by Ryan Shaw. I'm Jack Schneider. Thanks for joining us.