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"It Was the Worst of Times, It Was the Best of Times":

Reflections on Our Times

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I dedicate this editorial to all Ukrainian people fighting heroically against one of the greatest evils of the twenty-first century—the Russian invasion and its intentional genocide of the Ukrainian people

Since the inception of *i.e.* in 2010, a team of dedicated National College of Education (NCE) faculty and our colleagues from other universities have been working tirelessly to promote the journal and its mission and to sustain and enlarge its prominence among the contributing and reading audiences in this country and beyond its borders. Today, we are proud to report that *i.e.* stands firm on its grounds. We are a peer-reviewed, ERIC-certified journal on par with other similar establishments. (Please visit our website: [https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/.](https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/))

Our editorial team is comprised of four dedicated and highly qualified professionals whose responsibilities include evaluating manuscripts and making decisions based on multiple reviews, improving criteria for evaluation, promoting our journal at professional conferences, and taking turns writing editorials, among a few others. We do not take time off in the "off season" (we publish twice a year, but we accept submissions on a rolling basis, which means that we work throughout the calendar year), and we do not ask for a reassigned time even when we are on sabbatical.

As editors, we take turns writing editorials, trying to make them appealing to our audiences in terms of our personal voices. Well, it is my turn to invite you on a reflective journey of our times building on a metaphor borrowed from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (1859).

I must confess that writing this editorial was a challenge unlike any I've faced. This editorial went through at least 15 drafts. When writing it, I have been consistently experiencing bouts of "writer's block" that defied all possible reasonable explanations. I started writing it in early March, and no, I was not procrastinating. There were other forces at work that prevented me from completing the final draft of

this editorial on time. The reasons for that are yet to be examined in further studies ... But suffice it to say, the editorial eventually came to fruition.

I give this personal disclosure in order to shed light on the issues discussed in this editorial, issues that I am discussing from my personal point of view. I am an American, and I am also a Ukrainian American. I am Ukrainian by origin. I came to the United States in 1994 to study at Northern Illinois University (NIU), where I received my advanced degrees in education. I have been a full-time faculty member at National Louis University (NLU) since 2004. I am a full tenured professor teaching graduate courses in educational foundations and research and supervising doctoral student research work, among other professional responsibilities. Mine has been, without any exaggeration, a very fulfilling career thus far. Alongside my professional life, I have always been free to celebrate who and what I am as a Ukrainian American in this country.

This is not to say that I did not experience freedom when living in Ukraine before I came to the United States. I grew up and was educated in Ukraine under relatively peaceful and favorable conditions, and I rejoiced at Ukraine's gaining independence in 1991. Yet it was the destiny of my parents that had weighed heavily on me since childhood. Both of my parents, ethnic Ukrainians, spent 10 years in gulag camps under Stalin's regime for unlawful and unjustified reasons, which has been the destiny of thousands of Ukrainians and people of other nationalities within the former USSR. I documented the history of my parents in my very first U.S. publication, "Maria's Story: Surviving Stalinist Gulag" (2001).

I often wonder whether there are events in our lives that propel us to undertake what we might not have otherwise considered doing. So, whether because of the destiny of my parents or not, I developed an interest in exploring issues of violence during my graduate studies at NIU. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks caught me when I was preparing to teach an undergraduate course in the historical foundations of the U.S. education system. I still remember the day leaving me—and the entire country—paralyzed in disbelief and the horror of watching the two towers perishing in dust in front of our eyes ... The event shook my personal world, and I dug deep into the literature on violence. I wrote papers and presented them at professional conferences. Hannah Arendt's works (e.g., 1970, 1994) struck a particularly strong chord with me. Arendt proclaimed the twentieth century as one in which violence became its common denominator ...

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation declared its "special operation" to be launched in Ukraine. I wonder how contemporary philosophers of the caliber of Hannah Arendt will describe this "operation" in the history books? And I said to several people, I am glad my parents are no longer alive, for I cannot even imagine how they would react to what's going on in Ukraine these days ...

It Was the Worst of Times ...



The COVID-19 pandemic is, by far, a marker of our worst of times. To date, it has claimed more than a million American lives and over six million lives throughout the world. The consequences of the pandemic are unprecedented, and it seems we will be living with some of them for a while. We have survived major hits from the pandemic, and we are learning how to live with it because it does not seem to go away ...

The last 18 months have been *the season of despair*, marked by at least 10 major conflicts in the world that have claimed the lives of thousands of people and wreaked havoc on enormous proportions that will probably take years to reconstruct. Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Israel-Palestine, Myanmar, Ukraine, and Yemen are making an incomplete history of bloody conflicts raging in today's world ...

For me, personally, the unjust and unprovoked war of Russia against Ukraine amounts to a brutal invasion on a sovereign nation and a blatant genocide of Ukrainians, and it should be condemned by all people and all nations. I know I live in safety in my "lullaby" Naperville location; missiles are not flying over my head every single day. And yet I cannot not watch the news from Ukraine every day. I cannot not think about the war, I cannot not think about my relatives and friends who live in Ukraine. My heart breaks into pieces whenever I watch an innocent child—or an adult, for that matter—killed by a Russian bomb ...

Since February 24, I have stopped going out to social events, for no particular reason. I just don't feel like going out these days. I feel like I am mourning over the death of my mom all over again, even though she died several years ago. I cannot help grieving over the deaths of thousands of civilians—tortured, raped, and murdered by the Russian aggressors. I've forgotten how to "decompress." I cannot keep up with

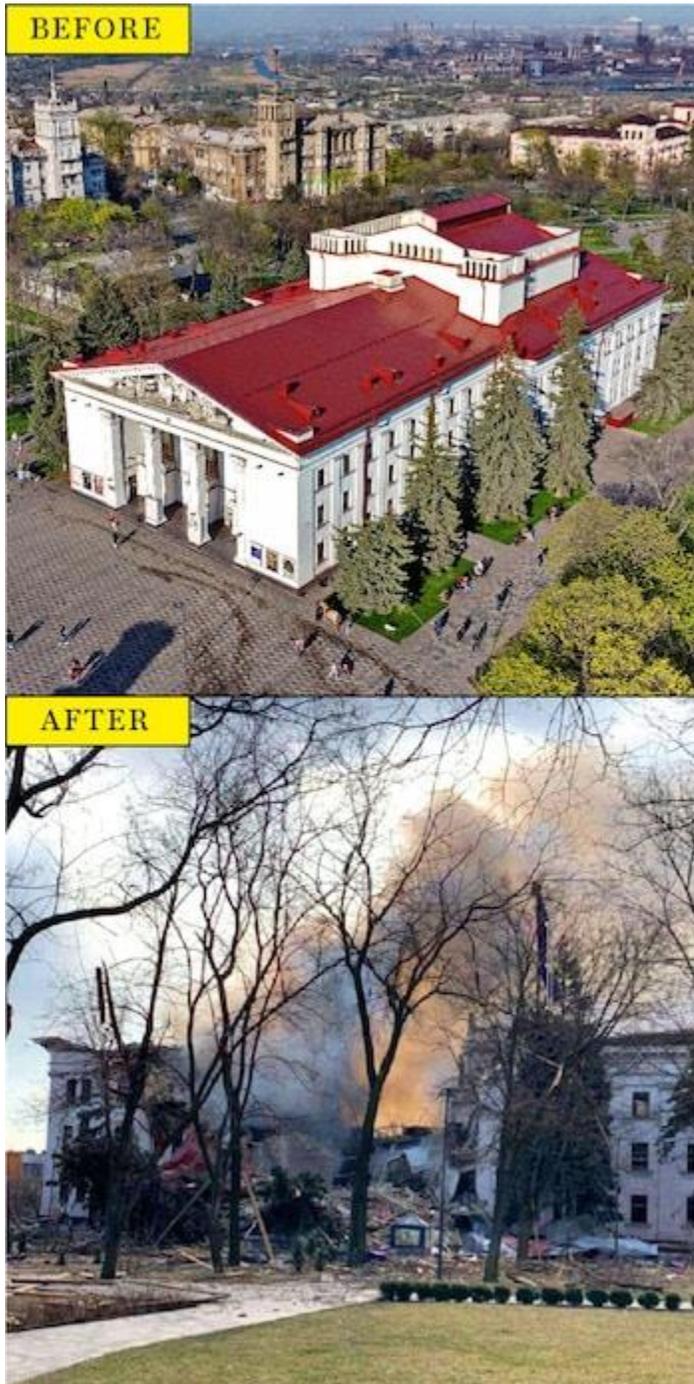
“small talk” when I find myself in the company of strangers. I don’t know how to respond to people politely when they ask me about how I am doing. I am ok and I am not. What can I say?

Fortunately, most of my relatives and friends live in western Ukraine, and they are relatively safe, for now. Yet Putin’s bombs continue to drop—occasionally—in Lviv and other cities. ***Is there a safe space anywhere in this world?*** I wonder ... I stay in touch with my relatives and friends via “Viber” or “WhatsApp,” and our conversations are usually brief and to the point: “How are you?” “Well, still alive, you know.”

Last year, I befriended several faculty and students from Kharkiv who participated in our joint (with NCE) conference and some of my doctoral seminars, right before the war. Kharkiv is the second largest city in Ukraine. I have never been there, but I found videos of Kharkiv’s sightseeing destinations before the war. It is a magnificent and beautiful city, now half in ruins ...

The tide of the war seems to be changing in favor of Ukrainian armed forces due to their extraordinarily courageous fighting together with military and humanitarian aid from the United States and other countries, but the horror and devastation of this war will be haunting Ukrainians for centuries ...

Mariupol is the city that has attracted particular attention—in the most tragic sense of the word—these days because of the trapped-in Azovstal defenders of Ukraine. I have never been to Mariupol. Sightseeing videos shot before the war show a modern and vibrant city full of life. Here are pictures of it before the war and after:



It Was the Best of Times ...

Alas, we are learning how to live with the pandemic and not giving in to despair even in the worst of times ... We are back to a new normal! NLU students and faculty are returning to campus for in-person sessions on all campuses—and it feels really good ...



It Was the Spring of Hope

Since 2006, Ukrainians have been organizing annual Spring Flower Expo events in Kyiv and other cities as one of the leading trade shows for the entire eastern European horti- and floricultural sector. With some hesitation about holding an exhibit this year, Ukrainians decided that the event could be uplifting in the difficult time of the war. Spring 2022 brings a new hope ...



A Root of Life

The 1995 American movie "A Walk in the Clouds" inspires my vision for ***the best of our times***. This romantic drama directed by Alfonso Arau portrays the story of an American soldier, Paul Sutton (played by Keanu Reeves), who returns home after World War II and finds himself in the unexpected circumstance of working for a family-owned vineyard. His becomes a story of moral testing as the major post-war life events in the family of the vineyard owners lead to their questioning his very character, only for him to prove them wrong. In the end, it is Paul who saves the vineyard from devastation after a fire. He finds the only surviving root of a grapevine and plants it as his own, thus starting his new life in his newly discovered family, who finally embrace him as their own. The vineyard survives. Life goes on. Life takes root even in the most devastated and scorched land ... And this is and should be our hope even in the darkest of times.



As far as *Inquiry in Education*, or as we lovingly call it, *i.e.*, its fertile land continues to bear the fruit of the scholarly labor of a great variety of authors from the United States and beyond. Let me recount, in brief, the content of the articles published in this issue.

Gonca Harman (“Preservice Science Teachers’ Favorite Scientists”) presents a survey study of preservice teacher candidates trained at one of the state universities in Turkey to teach science at various grade levels. The focus of the study is on ways in which preservice teacher candidates select instructional materials based on their preference for specific scientists. The author highlights preference for Western male scientists as one of the findings of his study. Further, the author concludes that teacher preparation programs should consider more than one subject area (e.g., physics, chemistry, or biology) to better prepare the candidates in terms of content knowledge for science curriculum development.

A quantitative study, “Examining the Interplay Between English Language Teachers’ Mindset and Researcher Self-Efficacy Beliefs in the Use of Action Research,” by **Ilknur Eginli and Kenan Dikilitas** advocates action research as an effective tool for preparing English language teachers during their graduate studies and professional careers. The authors employed the Teacher-Researcher Efficacy Beliefs Scale and the Dweck Mindset Instrument to identify the correlation between teachers’ mindset and their self-efficacy beliefs. One of the major findings of this study was a significant impact of action research on teachers’ researcher self-efficacy in their professional careers.

In "Preservice Teachers' E-Learning Styles and Attitudes Toward E-Learning," **Gül Özüdoğru** investigates the correlation between teachers' learning styles and their attitudes toward e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. The author used two instruments: the E-Learning Styles Scale that addresses several styles of learning (independent, social, audio-visual, active, verbal, logical, and intuitive) and The Attitude Scale that measures the tendency to use technology, satisfaction, motivation, and usability. Participants' gender, representative department, place of residence, and use of technology comprised the main demographic components. Participants scored highest on an independent learning style, as the major finding of this study affirms.

Nazlıcan Durukan, Oktay Kızıkan, and Oktay Bektaş explored metacognition in relation to the practice of teaching science in Turkey ("Metacognition-Enhancing Strategies in Science Classrooms: Science Teachers' Practices"). The authors employed a qualitative case study to determine whether metacognition plays a role in teachers' instructional practices overall, and specifically, in whether they take into account their students' voices and self-reflection. The results of their study underscore deliberate planning practices, motivating students to ask questions and evaluate their learning experiences, among other effective instructional strategies.

In "The Impact of Organizational Climate on Organizational Creativity in Educational Institutions," **Suzan Canlı and Yalçın Özdemir** invite readers to explore creativity in its application to organizational change in secondary education institutions in Turkey. The authors employed correlational analysis to determine the impact of organizational climate on organizational creativity based on the perceptions of teachers in secondary education institutions. The implications of this study are intended to contribute to the development of administrative planning and policies.

Chet Nath Panta and Bal Chandra Luitel ("Reconciling Critical Consciousness and Spirituality in Educational Leadership") draw readers' attention to questions fairly rarely addressed in the current context of educational research and scholarship. The authors bring forth a compelling scholarly discussion on the matters of critical spirituality and its potential for social transformation in general and particularly in educational leadership.

The qualitative case study by **İlhan İltir and Gökhan İzgar** ("Elementary School Teachers' Experiences of Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Turkey") adds to a growing body of recent studies dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for education in the United States and globally. In the case of this particular study, the authors investigated teachers' experiences of distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. The results of this study amplify the expediency with which teachers responded to the challenges of the pandemic in terms of mastering various distance learning platforms and delivery modalities, improving their ability to learning new technologies quickly, and dealing with a variety of issues while adjusting to the pandemic's realities.

Bilge Cerezci and Elizabeth Chase (“Developing Critical Reflection and Inquiry Among Teacher Candidates in an Elementary Mathematics Methods Course”) explored ways in which teacher candidates at a large university in the Northeast United States engage in critical inquiry and reflection embedded in a mathematics methods course preparing them for teaching math at an elementary grade level. Among the main findings of this study, in their own words, the authors state, “meaningful pedagogical opportunities for giving teacher candidates opportunities to revisit previous experience, construct new meaning, and challenge old assumptions about teaching and learning mathematics.”

Finally, on behalf of our editorial team, I would like to extend our gratitude to the **reviewers of this issue’s submissions** (see “Reviewer Acknowledgement”) for their dedicated work for our journal. Due to an ever-increasing volume of submissions to *i.e.*, we are looking for more reviewers who have expertise in research and scholarship pertaining to a variety of educational content areas and research methodologies. Come join the *i.e.* reviewer team!

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