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Profile of a comparative and international education leader: Erwin H. Epstein¹

By Stacy Patton-Taylor and W. James Jacob
University of Memphis, USA

Professor Erwin Epstein's profile is a biographical sketch of Erwin's upbringing, education, and contributions in comparative and international education. This profile also documents his distinguished career in which he rose to senior leadership positions in national, regional, and international academic professional organizations in the US and abroad, including serving as President of the Comparative and International Education Society (1981), President of the World Council of Education Societies (1980-1983), and Editor of the *Comparative Education Review* (1988-1998). The article is based on multiple data gathering techniques and oral interviews. Article highlights include a review of some of Erwin's key family and career milestones, an overview of the tremendous impact he has had on the field of comparative and international education, as well as his opinion on challenges facing comparative and international studies today.

Keywords: Erwin Epstein, Pioneer Leaders, Leadership, Mentorship, Historian

نبذة عن أحد رؤساء التعليم المقارن والدولي:

اروين اتش إبستين

هذه النبذة الشخصية للبروفيسور إروين إبستين تمثل رسماً بيو غرافياً عن نشأة إروين وتعليمه ومساهماته في التعليم المقارن والدولي. يوثق هذا الملف أيضاً مسيرته المتميزة التي ارتقى فيها إلى مناصب قيادية رفيعة في المنظمات المهنية الأكاديمية الوطنية والإقليمية والدولية في الولايات المتحدة والخارج، بما في ذلك العمل كرئيس لجمعية التعليم المقارن الدولية في (1981)، وتوليته رئاسة المجلس العالمي لجمعيات التعليم (1980-1983)، وكذلك محرر مراجعة التعليم المقارن (1998-1988). يستند هذا المقال على تقنيات جمع البيانات المتعددة والمقابلات الشفوية. كما يشمل مراجعة لبعض المعالم الرئيسية والأسرية لإروين، ونظرة عامة على التأثير الهائل الذي أحدثه في مجال التعليم المقارن والدولي، بالإضافة إلى رأيه حول التحديات التي تواجه الدراسات المقارنة والدولية اليوم.

国际比较教育先锋人物简介：欧文·H. 爱泼斯坦

欧文·爱泼斯坦教授的人物简介概述了欧文的成长、教育及其对世界比较教育的贡献。此简介也记录了他杰出的职业生涯，包括他在美国和世界各国家、地区和世界的学术专业组织中的领导经历。他曾任国际比较教育学会主席（1981），世界教育学会理事会主席（1988-1998），以及《比较教育研究》杂志的编辑。这篇文章的资料基于多种资料搜集方法，以及口述访谈法。本文重点整理了欧文的一些家庭和职业的里程碑事件，回顾了他对于国际比较教育领域的重大影响，以及他看待当代国际比较教育研究所面临挑战的一些观点。

¹ This draws heavily from multiple interviews conducted by the authors with Erwin H. Epstein on 20 November 2014 and 28 February 2018. All of the uncited direct quotes in this profile derive from these interviews.

Profil d'un leader de l'éducation comparée et internationale: Erwin H. Epstein

Le profil du professeur Erwin Epstein est une esquisse biographique de son éducation, sa formation et ses contributions à l'éducation comparée et internationale. Ce profil renseigne également sur sa brillante carrière dans laquelle il a accédé à des postes de direction dans des organisations professionnelles universitaires nationales, régionales et internationales aux États-Unis et à l'étranger, notamment en tant que président de *Comparative and International Education Society* (1981), président de *World Council of Education Societies* (1980-1983) et éditeur de *Comparative Education Review* (1988-1998). L'article est basé sur des techniques de collecte de données multiples et des entretiens oraux. Les points saillants de l'article comprennent un survol de certaines étapes clés de la famille et de la carrière d'Erwin, un aperçu de l'impact considérable qu'il a eu dans le domaine de l'éducation comparée et internationale, ainsi que son opinion sur les défis des études comparatives et internationales.

Краткий биографический очерк лидера в сравнительном и международном образовании: Эрвин Х. Эпштейн

Краткий биографический очерк профессора Эрвина Эпштейна представляет собой описание воспитания, образования и вклада Эрвина в сравнительное и международное образование. Этот очерк также свидетельствует о его выдающейся карьере, в которой он поднялся на руководящие должности в национальных, региональных и международных академических профессиональных организациях в США и за рубежом, в том числе в качестве президента Общества сравнительного и международного образования (1981), президента Всемирного совета образовательных обществ (1980-1983) и редактора "Сравнительного обзора образования" (1988-1998). Статья основана на многочисленных методах сбора данных и устных интервью. Основные моменты статьи включают обзор некоторых ключевых семейных и карьерных вех Эрвина, обзор огромного влияния, которое он оказал на сферу сравнительного и международного образования, а также его мнение о проблемах, стоящих перед сравнительными и международными исследованиями сегодня.

Perfil de un Líder en Educación Internacional Comparada: Erwin H. Epstein

El perfil del Profesor Erwin Epstein es un esbozo biográfico de la crianza, la educación y las contribuciones de Erwin en la educación comparada y la educación internacional. Este perfil también documenta su distinguida carrera en la cuál ascendió a altas posiciones de liderazgo en organizaciones profesionales académicas nacionales, regionales e internacionales en Estados Unidos y en el extranjero, incluyendo su desempeño como presidente de la Sociedad de Educación Comparada Internacional (1981) Presidente del Consejo Mundial de Sociedades de Educación (1980-1983), y editor de *Comparative Education Review* (1988-1998). El artículo se basa en múltiples técnicas de recopilación de datos y entrevistas orales. Los puntos destacados del artículo incluyen una revisión de algunos de los hitos principales de la familia y la carrera de Erwin, una descripción del tremendo impacto que ha tenido en el campo de la educación internacional comparada, así como su opinión sobre los desafíos que enfrentan los estudios comparativos internacionales hoy.

Erwin H. Epstein is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies, Loyola University Chicago. Erwin's lifelong dedication and research in social stratification, comparative education theory, and educational policy places him as a leading expert in comparative and international education (CIE). Erwin's tireless enthusiasm continues to offer provocative and deep intuitive understanding in CIE.



Erwin H. Epstein at Chicago, 2018.
Photo courtesy of Erwin H. Epstein.

There is no doubt that Erwin continues to be an influential leader and mentor for many students, colleagues, and international educators worldwide. Comments from some of these individuals note how Erwin helped them to develop into the scholars they are now, and how he was passionate and committed, and challenged them to be better. Erwin was renowned for preparing the next generation of CIE scholars and leaders and for supporting their continuation and growth in the field. Lou Berends and Maria Trakas described his mentorship role as follows:

Our experience in the Comparative and International Education ... area of the Cultural and Educational Policy Studies program at LUC [Loyola University Chicago] was marked by the expertise and commitment of Dr. Epstein. Without Dr. E.'s guidance, critique, and continual dedication to his students, we would not have had the kind of experience we both anticipated and expected when applying to LUC. As ... Comparative and International Education ... at LUC moves forward, students and faculty alike would do well in adopting similar strategies of community building and scholarly discourse that Dr. E. brought to the Loyola community. (Berends and Trackas 2011, p. 4)

Erwin's CIE footprint has brought global attention and respect as well as significant understanding to the core of academic equity and achievement. The bonds he has established continue a legacy of importance in CIE.

Erwin Epstein's Family

Born to Louis N. Epstein and Charlotte Epstein (nee Kozin) on 2 January 1939, Erwin was raised in a Jewish family with his older sister (b. 1935) and younger brother (b. 1946) in Chicago, Illinois.

Erwin's father was born and raised in Chicago and was determined to become a lawyer; he paid for his law schooling by working a night job. Erwin's mother was born in Moldova as the Russian Revolution and persecutions were taking place. As a result of political unrest in Moldova, Charlotte's maternal uncle sent for Charlotte (who was then 9), her mother (Erwin's grandmother), and her four brothers to be brought to the United States. "Both my mother's family and father's family were very poor," Erwin reflected. Reminiscing on his childhood, Erwin said:

When I grew up in Chicago, we lived in a small apartment with three generations of people, including my grandmother, my parents, my siblings, and me. It was a bit crowded but we didn't think of ourselves as being poor. We just thought that this was the way life was and grew up that way. Later on, my father was able to amass a little bit of wealth and moved us to a suburb. In terms of my childhood, it was a kind of a lower middle class upbringing.

Erwin's older sister, Sandra, was somewhat of a prodigy and considered very bright and entered the University of Chicago at age 15. Erwin recalled how his sister served as a role model to him and his brother. "I kind of emulated her in going into an education field. She became a part-time teacher." Erwin shared that his sister was a perpetual student, receiving her Ph.D. in Human Development at the same time that Erwin received his master's degree, graduating together at the University of Chicago. Erwin's younger brother Mark also attended the University of Chicago, where he received his B.A. before moving on to obtain a law degree from Northwestern University. Mark specializes in representing people with psychological disabilities. His wife is also an attorney. Erwin's brother and sister are both married and reside in the Chicago area.

Erwin grew up in the Austin area of Chicago, the far West side of the city, and went to Robert Emmet Elementary School, Austin High, and then on to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Erwin majored in Philosophy, and then asked himself, "What was I going to do with a philosophy degree from the University of Illinois?" However, he was also in a pre-law program and had been accepted at the University of Michigan Law School. "I was already accepted to the law school when I read in *Time* magazine that the Ford foundation was funding a new program at both Harvard University and the University of Chicago to attract what they called scholar-teachers—people in the Liberal Arts and Sciences to go into teaching." Erwin decided to forego law school in favor of the new Master of Arts in Teaching program at the University of Chicago and a full-tuition fellowship that accompanied the program. Despite his father's disappointment at Erwin's decision to decline law school, Erwin became a secondary history and social studies teacher. This was one of several turning points in Erwin's career.

Erwin's love interest with his bride, Barbara (nee Robbin), of 56 years started when they met through social clubs when Erwin was a junior and Barbara a sophomore in high school. Although they were in different schools, their high schools were not far apart. After high school, Erwin enrolled at the University of Illinois and, some months later, Barbara attended the University of Wisconsin majoring in French and education. Erwin and Barbara decided being apart was not working for them, and soon after Barbara graduated from college, and a year after Erwin began his master's program at the University of Chicago, they decided to marry. As explained later, after completing his master's degree Erwin entered a Ph.D. program in comparative education, and while pursuing that program, he and Barbara started their family and began to raise their three sons, Jack, Eric, and Maury Avram (nicknamed Avi). Barbara delivered their first child, Jack, soon after she and Erwin returned from Puerto Rico, where Erwin had done his Ph.D. field work. Upon moving back to Chicago, Barbara decided to enroll in a general studies humanities M.A. program, with a concentration in French literature, at the University of Chicago. Erwin and Barbara were finally attending school, this time graduate school, together, while they were attending to their newborn first child, Jack.



Erwin and Barbara Epstein Wedding Picture, September 1961. Photo courtesy of Erwin H. Epstein.

Erwin shared that all three of their sons became lawyers and married lawyers. "I have six lawyer children." They all chose different kinds of law specialties. Jack and his wife Dena, went to the University of Missouri as undergraduates and later received their law degrees from Washington University in St. Louis. They work primarily among the Hispanic community in Chicago. Jack's practice with his clientele is entirely in Spanish. Erwin and Barbara's second son Eric also attended undergraduate work at the University of Missouri, but his law degree is

from Northwestern University. Shoshana, Eric's wife, has her law degree from Loyola University Chicago. Shoshana practices law in the fraud division of the U.S. Postal Service. They live in the Washington, DC area, where Eric is senior policy counsel in the Firearms and Explosives Division of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "You can imagine how busy he must be now after what's been going on with regard to firearms in the US." Erwin shared that Eric is responsible for drafting many of the federal firearms and explosives laws. Unlike Jack and Dena, Eric and his wife Shoshana went to different law schools. Avi, the youngest son, met his wife, Eynav, while they were students at Harvard Law School. He is now the chief operating officer for Sterling Partners, a private equity firm in Chicago, while Eynav is co-owner of a legal recruiting firm in that city. Avi has his undergraduate degree from the Ohio State University, and Eynav has hers from the University of Michigan. Erwin and Barbara are blessed with nine grandchildren, four of whom are in college and the others are preparing for adulthood. They range in age from 4 to 22.



Epstein family photo at Bethesda, Maryland in January 2015. From left to right, Shoshana (Eric's wife), Eynav (Avi's wife), Erwin, Oren (Avi's son), Avi, Barbara, Alex (Eric's son), Dustin (Jack's son), Gefen (Avi's son), Gabriela (Eric's daughter), Naomi (Avi's daughter), Jered (Jack's son), Dena (Jack's wife), Kayla (Jack's daughter), Jack, Eric and Aaron (Eric's son). Photo courtesy of Erwin H. Epstein.

Career and Charting a Course in CIE

When Erwin was a master's student at the University of Chicago, he passed a sign in a hallway that aroused his curiosity, "Comparative Education Center." He went in to find out what that was all about, and, after looking at his academic record, C. Arnold Anderson, the Center director, offered him a fellowship. And so Erwin's pursuit of the field began.

Some years ago, Erwin co-authored a paper published in the *Comparative Education Review* that stated that only about a third of the members in the Comparative and International Education Society received a degree in Comparative Education (Cook, Hite, & Epstein 2004). "Most have gotten their degrees outside of the field—mostly in Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and other Social Science areas as well as in the Humanities and education—

and then came into the field afterwards. I came into the field at the very beginning as a PhD student. That's how I really got into the field." Erwin joined the Comparative and International Education Society in 1962 and has continued active membership ever since.

Erwin expressed how the growth and strengthening of CIE within the US came gradually, with relatively few entering the field before the 1970s. Early on practically all of the Americans that were in the field came from the Peace Corps. "Things are much different today. I think it's because of globalization," Erwin noted. He recognized that it is not uncommon for undergraduate students to go abroad, to spend a semester or a year or a few months studying abroad. This exposure to foreign cultures, languages and other people has become common. It's natural that people who are interested in education wish to connect their interest in education with their experiences abroad. He explained how he thinks that "more than anything else, that's what has created the stimulus for growth in the field. If you're interested in education and you're interested in international work and foreign cultures, it's a natural marriage between the two interests." It is a matter of being exposed to people and places abroad."

Erwin shared his interest in and knowledge of CIE when he taught for two years in Mexico at the Universidad de Monterrey. His research in that country as well as in Peru and St. Lucia exposed many to the field in those countries.

Erwin maintained that some great opportunities for work and study in CIE fall outside of academia, such as at UNESCO, the World Bank, and at many international organizations (private, public, and governmental). Indeed, opportunities are strong in academia generally, and CIE has grown within interdisciplinary fields outside of education (see Jacob 2015). Erwin believes that globalization has contributed to the growing interest in CIE, with the need to understand other people and other cultures becoming paramount. These are among the major factors Erwin recognizes as to why people continue to pursue CIE in their studies and careers.

Erwin recognizes the many challenges which exist within education, including in CIE: "I think the greatest challenge to CIE is financial. Actually, it's a challenge to all of education." Higher education is generally funded by the dominant areas of medicine, business, and law (see Jacob and Gokbel 2018). What happens is many wealthy people tend to have obtained degrees in non-education-professional fields and feel a sense of responsibility to give back. "What do they give back to? They give back to their own field. They feel they gained their advantage in the world by having pursued programs in medicine, law, or business." What Erwin expressed is they don't give back to the college overall but give back to the fields in which they emerged, in which they received their graduate education. "Education as a field of study does not generally lead to careers that offer a great deal of wealth. People will come out of education, they don't have the resources to be able to give back to their field, as people who have emerged from medicine, law, or business are able to do. I think that's the biggest challenge" Erwin laments.

Erwin explained how education is generally underfunded and CIE—as part of education—is also underfunded. It's more difficult to get government grants in that field than in many other fields. Erwin also mentioned the payoff from giving to education is very large in a general sense, but the payoff is not immediate. The payoff in medicine, law, and business, is much more immediate, and that influences the choices of governments and private foundations to support disproportionately those areas.

In Erwin's view, the 1950s and the 1960s were pivotal in the development of the field. That's when a fairly large number of comparative education societies across the world had been formed. The people who were pivotal and most influential in the United States included

William Brickman, who would be top of a list of prominent CIE figures and who was the co-founder of the Comparative [and International] Education Society (Epstein 2016). He co-founded the organization with Gerald Read and George Bereday. In Europe, Joseph Lauwerys, Brian Holmes, Edmund King, and Michel Debeauvais were key CIE pioneers. In Asia, Mark Bray, Masunori Hiratsuka, Tetsuya Kobayashi and Gu Mingyuan played significant pioneering roles. These individuals helped to develop CIE, and their legacies remain significant.

Impact on the CIE Field

Erwin has been an exceptional CIE contributor and inspired many to continue the legacy for improving education. He served as President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES: 1980-1983), President of the Comparative and International Education Society (1981), as well as Editor of the *Comparative Education Review* (1988-1998). Erwin states how “If you read my chapter (Epstein 2007) in the book, *Common Interests, Uncommon Goals* (Masemann, Bray & Manzon 2007) about the development of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, you would see that there was an incident when I became president of that organization that I think stands out.”

Erwin was troubled deeply when he learned that a scholar from Taiwan was disallowed from presenting his paper at the 1980 Fourth World Congress of the WCCES, held in Tokyo, when Erwin was elected WCCES President. The scholar informed Erwin that he was unable to present his paper because of a UNESCO protocol relating to the United Nations’ refusal to recognize Taiwan as a member country. The Congress organizers had interpreted partial UNESCO sponsorship of the Congress to mean that scholars from countries not recognized by the UN were to be disallowed from presenting their work. Once Erwin learned of this incident he took a stand, “I simply cannot be President of an organization that disallows bona fide scholars from giving papers, I simply won’t abide that.”

It created enormous attention because there was nobody else who was willing to take the leadership role of WCCES President at that time. Erwin met with the WCCES Executive Committee and a compromise was made that the UNESCO protocol would be honored at that time in the 1980 World Congress, but that the WCCES Constitution would be amended to ensure that no bona fide scholar would be prevented from participation for non-academic reasons at future World Congresses. This practice remains current within the WCCES Constitution to this day.

With that compromise, Erwin decided to assume the WCCES presidency, and the rest is history. That had an impact on the field and was prominent in Erwin’s career. As editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, he enacted very strict protocols about how a rigorous peer review process would be instituted, including double-blind reviews, and the whole system would be on an objective basis. There would be no favoritism whatsoever; only academic merit would determine acceptance of manuscripts for publication, except for the annual CIES presidential addresses, which by tradition were always to be included.

Erwin is well known for his scholarship on the history and theory in CIE. “I would say that my work as President of the World Council, President of the CIES, and Editor of the *Comparative Education Review* would be areas where I think I’ve had the most impact.” His writings on how the CIE field developed and its origins have had a good number of citations and impact on other scholars and practitioners.

Erwin’s most recent article, entitled “The Nazi Seizure of the *International Education Review*,” analyzes the 1930s rise of that pioneering journal and its post-war rebirth as the *International Review of Education*. “The article describes the fascinating history of that journal’s origins as

it was edited by Friedrich Schneider of Germany and co-edited by Paul Monroe of Columbia University in the US.” Erwin shares how the journal had a prominent start but within three or four years was seized by Alfred Baümler, a virulent anti-semitic dedicated to carrying out the Nazi plan (Epstein 2018).

Erwin has said that his “work on epistemology in comparative education has been the most impactful. My work on Latin America also has had some impact.” Erwin was recently invited to present his work on Latin America as a featured speaker in the Canary Islands of Spain.

Erwin talked much about the great benefits of CIE scholarship, but also pointed out weaknesses that exist in the field. Erwin gave as an example his review many years ago of a book, *The Children of the Revolution*, by the renowned author, Jonathan Kozol. In that review, Erwin showed that Kozol gave an egregiously misinformed analysis of Cuban education, reflecting a clear ignorance of proper scholarly procedures of which all well-prepared comparativists are aware.



Erwin and Barbara Epstein with several Loyola University Chicago CIE students (and a few family members) at his retirement party, May 2012. Photo courtesy of Erwin H. Epstein.

In contemplating what he has done and continues to do in retirement, Erwin shared the following:

I recently saw an interview in the *Wall Street Journal* of Sasha Cole, who had been a silver medalist in a previous Olympics. She talked about how difficult retirement was from the Olympics and from being a featured ice skater—from no longer being in the spotlight as a nationally- and internationally-known skater—and to adjust to living a kind of different life. My experience is completely the opposite. I retired six years ago and I don’t think I’ve ever been more productive. I miss teaching to be sure. In terms of scholarly work and the work that I’ve done with the people in the field in so many different places, that has continued. I just had articles published in a couple of prominent journals. I recently edited a book in the field, and I’m editing another book, this time on 20th century notable figures in Comparative Education. Retirement has been very good to me. I’ll leave it at that.

Erwin has been a Fulbright Professor in Mexico and has also lectured on CIE at universities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Germany, Nicaragua, Peru, Russia, South Africa, Spain, and Taiwan. His research focuses on a sense of nationality among schoolchildren in socioeconomically marginalized communities, school choice, education and democratization, and comparative theory. Professor Epstein has served the CIES in many capacities, including most recently as its Historian from 2008-2015. As Editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, he issued more editions of that journal than any other Editor in the journal’s history before him. Erwin originated the “Filter-Effect Theory of Education” to explain the impact of schools on school children in marginalized communities. Although primarily a Latin Americanist and epistemologist, he has also published works that range from the impact of parasitic diseases on schoolchildren’s achievement to higher education in Mainland China and Taiwan. He directed the Comparative and International Education Course Archive Project (CIECAP) and founded and co-directed the Joint Centers for Comparative Law and Education,

which focuses on the legal right of children to an education, at Loyola University Chicago. Throughout most of his illustrious university career, he taught the introductory course to comparative education, comparative theory, comparative perspectives on education and democratization, but also sociology.

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Ms. Stacy Taylor is a former 20-year US History Teacher in West Tennessee. She has written social studies curriculums for Tennessee, as well as, served on the Advisory Board for Social Studies Standards, West Tennessee Historic Commission, Germantown Historic Commission, and the Collierville Education Society. Currently, Stacy is working on her Ed.D. in Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Memphis with a particular focus on neuro-education; and, but not limited to, advisor in Southern History in the South. When not researching new historical documents and policies she does some part-time acting. She has been in five major motion pictures and helped serve as a historian for several. Additionally, in her free time, she enjoys photography and visual arts oil painting. Stacy is very involved with her family and enjoys the everyday pleasures of her grandchildren. She is a new resident in Boulder, Colorado and a member of the Colorado Mountain Climbers Club. Stacy is a graduate of University of Memphis and received her M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from Union University with honors.

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Appendix: Letter of Erwin H. Epstein to Mary Jean Bowman, 14 December 1990



Comparative Education Review

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December 14, 1990

Dr. Mary Jean Bowman
5650 S. Dorchester
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Dear Jean:

So you thought the brief resume I sent you was too formal. To be sure, we academicians are a notoriously vain lot, but some of us cringe at the thought of writing a personal autobiographical sketch. A resume, at least, is impersonal — its character conveys a distance, a shield, between the subject and her/his life story.

But you insist on my setting pen to paper to say what I've done and, really, who I am. This is something I've never done before! Put me in front of a computer and let my fingers do a familiar jig on the keyboard to turn out a full-scale research report or to write a painful letter to a would-be *Review* author — those would come easier than satisfying your request. You want me to recall half-forgotten, deeply personal memories: Only to honor my mentor, C. Arnold, would I do that!

Well, where do I begin? Would a modified chronology do? I could say that however much I have lived, worked and traveled outside Chicago, that city and the University of have been at the center of my personal universe. Consider that I was born, raised, schooled (except for my undergraduate stint at the U. of Illinois at Urbana), met my wife, married, and saw the birth of my first son there. And now my eldest two sons (one a lawyer, the other in law school at Northwestern — the youngest is a senior in high school and still in our house) are living there — as are virtually my entire extended family (brother, sister, aunts, uncles, nephews, niece). Those ties keep me ever in close social touch, while the *Review's* publisher, the University of Chicago Press, makes sure that I am never distant professionally from the city and the university.

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Chicago made me both provincial and worldly. So much of my childhood and early adulthood is wrapped up in that city and its state that before I entered graduate school at Chicago I had never spent more than a month outside Illinois and had never been on an airplane! Consider what a contrast that is to others trained in the Comparative Education Center, most of whom were either veterans of the Peace Corps or for other reasons had lived abroad. Having barely been outside the borders of Illinois, I came to the Center with neither foreign area nor foreign language experience (beyond a couple of desultory high school years of Latin and another couple of undergraduate years of basic Spanish); yet I daringly set out to become a Latin Americanist. I think back to that experience with amusement and a little pain whenever people ask me about the courses I taught in Spanish at the Universidad de Monterrey and the Universidad LaSalle in Mexico, or the research and speeches I presented in that language in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Puerto Rico, or the workshop in Portuguese that I gave at the Universidade Federal do Pará in Brazil.

The University of Chicago was a large part of my life even before I entered. My sister, the eldest of three siblings, had gone to the university on full scholarship as a prodigy at age 15 (and then gained the first of our aggregate six academic degrees there), and I was in awe of the institution. I remember the late winter day in 1956 when five of the best students and I from Austin High, a tough west-side school, drove all the way to Hyde Park to take the Chicago admissions exam, after which we were to be entertained and shown around at the university. Our instructions said to "take pen and ink" to the exam, which I thought odd, since even at that antediluvian time everyone used a ball point pen. Ever obedient, I followed the instructions, put ink and fountain pen in a paper bag, and dressed up in my best shirt and light-colored pants. My high school associates, being less awed than I, ignored the instructions and made fun of my naïveté.

This is a story in which they who laughed first also laughed last. As I sat cramped with two others in the back of an old car, the black ink leaked through the bag and on to my light-colored pants, whereupon mortification set in. It was too late to go back and there was no way out. Fortunately (perhaps), the tallest fellow in the group (I was the shortest) wore a hefty trenchcoat and offered, out of pity and amusement, to loan it to me as a cover. I had no choice but to accept his kind(?) offer. The coat was so large that I had to hold up my arms to keep the sleeves from draping over my fingertips, and to take broad, slow steps to prevent walking on the coat bottom.

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As we arrived at the test site, an overheated hangar, a proctor, upon passing out the test pencils (of course!), urged me to remove my coat, to which I replied, hardly convincingly, that I was cold. I spent my first official three hours at the University of Chicago writing through sweat, tears, and draping sleeves, and the next three hours looking like a Madison Street bag man in the institution's most hallowed halls and in the company of its most esteemed leaders. Where was Arnold when I needed him then? Miraculously I did well enough on the exam to qualify for admission, but the trauma of the experience and the cost of the tuition made me favor the University of Illinois.

After Illinois I was set to go to law school at the University of Michigan when I read about a revolutionary new program to convert a select group of about 60 high-quality liberal arts and sciences majors into high-school "scholar teachers," and give them full-tuition fellowships at the University of Chicago. This was to be the first class of Chicago's two-year pioneering M.A.T. program. By then the memory of the earlier experience had faded, and I decided to apply and take the graduate admissions exam. This time I ignored all written instructions about exam-taking tools and was awarded a fellowship. Near the completion of the program (only three of us finished on schedule), I became interested in the Comparative Education Center and was offered a Ford Fellowship to pursue a Ph.D. program. However parochial my corpus of experiences, I had an excellent liberal studies background and was excited about the prospect of international study.

Finishing the Ph.D. and leaving Chicago turned out to be a major break with the past. Until that time — with the exception of a half-year of doctoral field work in Puerto Rico — my life was lived almost exclusively in Illinois, and I went off to take the first of several positions outside the area and become an international expert and traveler.

Of course, I have not spent all of the time as an internationalist. For the past 20 years I have been a professor of sociology. For eight of those years I did administrative work, having been chair of a sociology department and chair of a social sciences division. But mostly my profession has brought me to the far reaches of the world. I have taught in Wisconsin, Nebraska, Texas and Missouri; have worked in Puerto Rico, Peru, St. Lucia, Mexico, Panama, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Taiwan and South Africa; and have conducted documentary research on Cuba (for which I was awarded the Lourdes Casal Prize).

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It has, for the most part, been a very good ride for this inner-city product. On some excursions I have even been accorded the status of dignitary, as during my first visit, when I was President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, to Taiwan. On that occasion I was furnished a chauffeur-driven limousine (the kind with little flags on the front fenders) for travel in Taipei, and was taken by the Secretary of Education for Taipei and the President of National Taiwan Normal University and their families for a trip around the island that included spending a night in Chiang Kai-shek's private lodge (where I was given his room and bed). On another occasion, when I was advisor to Chile's Minister of Education, the ministry gave a luncheon in my honor in the minister's private banquet hall, to which the country's leading university presidents were invited, and those presidents in turn gave luncheons in my behalf at their universities. In Argentina, the Academy of Education, consisting of the Minister of Education and the nation's leading University Presidents, invited me to give a private lecture on university accreditation, and the country's most prominent newspaper interviewed me about my views on the nation's educational future. Recently, the Comparative Education Society of Europe shortened its biennial congress in Spain a half day to accommodate my Sabbath preference, thus allowing me to close the week-long program with the Joseph Lauwerys Memorial Address.

Not all of my experiences have been so sublime. I can remember taking a 23-hour ride through the world's driest desert in a Peruvian bus so cramped that people sat on tiny stools in the aisle, and with so little air that we had periodically to put our 18-month old's head out the window to breathe. I remember the time in Puerto Rico when my survey took me to a school in a housing project area where the kids flooded the street to conceal an uncovered manhole, whereupon my car fell in, breaking the differential and almost my back. And, I remember days of collecting stool samples in sweltering heat from schoolchildren in St. Lucia for transport in my little Volkswagon bug as part of my study on parasitic diseases and academic achievement.

I give much credit in all of this to my family, and especially to my wife, Barbara, for having the fortitude to put up with what I've dragged her and the boys through. Barbara has had to suffer two "M" sicknesses — mountain sickness ("soroche") when living 13,000 feet in the Peruvian altiplano — and morning sickness in Puerto Rico, Peru and Mexico — and was almost mortally stricken with food poisoning in the latter country. Each boy has had his share of experiences. Jack, the eldest, was, as a toddler, almost carried off by an Andean condor; Eric, as an infant, woke up one morning in St. Lucia with dozens of mysterious red marks on his tiny face that turned out to be bites from mosquitos which had bred in a drain near his bed; and Avi was thrown into first grade as the only non-Spanish-speaking child in an all-Spanish-language Mexican school (and yet achieved the highest grades in his class!).

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You've asked me to write this at a difficult time — difficult because I'm having to conjure up memories at the end of the second most painful year of my life. It happens to be the final week of a year-long period of mourning for my father's passing, and there was also the loss of Arnold, my mentor. (The most painful year was two decades ago when my mother died and I was concurrently having a nasty career conflict.) Yet I find the exercise somewhat of a cathartic, and I'm grateful to you for pressing me to do it.

I'll finish up by saying that professionally my most satisfying experiences have been to serve as President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, President of the Comparative and International Education Society, and now as Editor of the *Comparative Education Review*. I have in the latter position been especially privileged to work with the best people in our field. Consistent with that thought, Jean, I'll conclude by asking you to give me your evaluation of the enclosed manuscript, which was submitted for consideration to the *Review*.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Erwin', with a stylized flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Erwin H. Epstein

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