

# THE WAY WILL OPEN



A STUDY OF  
THE PRESIDENCY OF  
JACK NIEMEYER  
AT BANK STREET COLLEGE  
OF EDUCATION

JOHN S. BORDEN

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*by*

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ISBN-10: #97599406X

ISBN-13: #978-1975994068

## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to two remarkable women  
who have been my teachers and shaped my life*

To my mother,

***Edith Silberg Borden,***

who was a fourth-grade teacher in Baltimore city public schools, taught me to read and spell during truly chaotic kindergarten and first-grade experiences, and believed in education as the path to a good life

*And*

To my wife,

***Marian Edelman Borden,***

who has always been an understanding and encouraging life partner, an exceptional writer and editor, and a pillar of patience with a warm sense of humor and deep appreciation of irony

*With Marian's help, the way did open*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>PREFACE &amp; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 - THE NIEMEYER EXPERIMENT BEGINS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 - THE MAKING OF A PRAGMATIC PROGRESSIVE IDEALIST</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 - BANK STREET EVEN MORE SO – BANK STREET AT THE START OF THE NIEMEYER YEARS</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 - DYNAMIC STRENGTHENING: TRADITION, TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 - SPLITTING THE SOCIAL ATOM: NIEMEYER, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 - JACK'S LEGACY: THE CRUCIAL LINK</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>171</b>



## PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project in some ways represents my effort to discharge a moral obligation to a man whom I never had the pleasure of meeting. After Jack Niemeyer died in 2004, the College received a generous bequest from his estate. Gussie Kappner, the College's president, had known Jack and wanted to recognize his many contributions to Bank Street and education in an appropriate way. That was the beginning of the Niemeyer Series in Education Policy, and I was fortunate enough to be part of the College team that organized the lectures and panels that have been held since 2006. That was how I came to know about Jack, and to begin to appreciate what his leadership and love of Bank Street meant to the development and impact of the College.

The title that I selected – "the way will open" – comes from a Quaker saying that Jack liked and used as a personal mantra as he faced so many difficult problems over his career. Jack was an historian, and he very much wanted to write a history of Bank Street that would reflect his ideas and perspectives. That was his project in the period from 1995-1999, but unfortunately one that he was not able to complete. I cannot claim that my effort would come up to Jack's standards, but I hope that he would have been pleased to know that this effort has been made. A truly complete history of Bank Street remains to be written, of course. For a small institution, Bank Street is a fascinating and complicated place, and its life has involved (and continues to involve) many accomplished and interesting people and projects.

My project has been supported generously by Bank Street College under its sabbatical policy, for which I am very grateful. Interestingly, it was Jack Niemeyer who advocated for implementing a sabbatical policy.

I am grateful to Bank Street President Shael Polakow-Suransky for his encouragement and support, and to the Human Resources Office staff for their counsel and assistance. I owe many thanks to the outstanding staff of the Bank Street Library, especially to the College Librarian Kristin Freda and Archivist Lindsey Wyckoff who were essential and always gracious partners in my work. Jack would be thrilled to know the College's records are in such good hands.

I would also like to thank the many members of the Board of Trustees, and especially Chair Yolanda Ferrell-Brown, for their encouragement of this project, as well as their support over my twelve years as a member of the Bank Street staff. Life Trustees Lynn Straus, Kate Whitney, and George Scurria (and his wife Janet) deserve my special thanks for their help.

The alumni and faculty who were interviewed as part of my research appear in the Bibliography, and I am grateful for the time and care that they devoted to answering my questions.

Nancy and Alyn Rovin have been exceptionally kind with their time and attention. Speaking with them helped me to get a better understanding of Jack as a vibrant and enjoyable father, grandfather, and friend. Of course, those conversations made me feel even more dismayed that I never had the opportunity to talk to Jack myself. There are so many questions I would like to ask him! Jack's grandchildren, Kailah Rovin Matyas and Josh Rovin also gave the project welcome support and encouragement.

Two other people were of exceptional help because to some extent they plowed the field for me. The late Edith Gordon was a truly devoted Bank Street alumna. Without her extensive interviewing over more than ten years, this cupboard for this project would have been much less full. Her unpublished dissertation, *Educating the Whole Child*, also contained many treasures. Gordon's interviews and dissertation were helpful to Joan Cenedella in her excellent dissertation, *The Bureau of Educational Experiments*, which was a tremendous resource for both the early and later phases of Bank Street's development.

I also want to acknowledge two former Bank Street presidents and a former dean. Fran Roberts, Jack's successor, has given me much time, patience, and thoughtful encouragement. Fran, a sociologist, suggested looking at Burton Clark's institutional saga concept for framing the project. Gussie Kappner has been, as is always the case, a terrific source of information, ideas, and feedback. Her encouragement has meant a lot. Fern Khan was Dean of Continuing Education when I arrived at Bank Street in 2004 and has always been a kind and helpful colleague, including with this project.

Judy Barrett, who was Jack's neighbor and volunteer editor, was a wonderful source of information about Jack's later years and his thoughts and memories about the College. Judy kindly arranged for me to visit the place that Jack called home at 77 Seventh Avenue, a delightful sunny corner apartment on the 20th floor. She also told me how much Jack felt connected to Bank Street, even long after his retirement as President. That insight gave me the idea of framing Jack's devotion in terms of love – as in, Bank Street was the love of his life, at least as an educator.

Hamilton College Archivist Katherine Collett has been very kind in locating and supplying many photographs of Jack, from his days as a student to his 70<sup>th</sup> alumni reunion in 2000. I appreciate her assistance very much.

I want to acknowledge former Bank Street Board Chair John Shutkin, who has always been a constant source of wit and wisdom. He knew Jack a bit as a fellow Trustee, and in thinking over some of my questions about Jack's impact on the College, said that he had realized that Jack was the "crucial link" between the smaller Bank Street of Lucy Mitchell's time and the broader institution that it is today. Hence, the title of Chapter Six is dedicated to him.

Special and boundless thanks are due to Rhonda Dossett, who is my wife Marian's writing partner and who generously provided the skill and perseverance needed to turn my manuscript into this book. Any errors or oversights in the final book are entirely my responsibility.

This project has been intriguing, engaging, frustrating, and fun. I could not have completed it without the steadfast support, patience, and editing skills of Marian, who is also a much better writer than I am and to whom I have dedicated this book. I am pleased to report that Marian thinks that she would have liked to meet Jack, too.

John Borden  
June 30, 2017



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NIEMEYER EXPERIMENT BEGINS

In early June 1956 John H. "Jack" Niemeier sat in his make-shift "president's office," a "cubby-hole" carved out of space next to the auditorium and lacking a telephone.<sup>1</sup> He was now officially president of Bank Street College of Education, and the weight of not just expanding Bank Street's reach but sustaining its very existence was squarely on his shoulders. Although Bank Street had existed for four decades in various forms, it was approaching a critical inflection point, and Niemeier had spent a year as "president-elect" learning the scope and variety of challenges that he would have to handle. He had left a comfortable position as head of Oak Lane Country Day School, Temple University's progressive laboratory school, to move to New York's Greenwich Village and take on the formidable task of literally creating the position of president at an institution that never had such a leader and might not truly want one. In many respects, his job was far more complicated and professionally dangerous than that of Bank Street's founder, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, who had created and led the institution since 1916.

Beyond Bank Street's peculiar challenges, the world of preK-12 education was unsettled, especially for those like Jack who believed deeply in progressive education principles shaped by John Dewey. The progressive education movement appeared to be in rapid decline, blamed by political leaders and parents for multiple deficiencies in public schools. Progressives, an ambiguous label covering a wide range of educators, seemed unable to articulate compelling strategies for addressing the education priorities of post-WWII American society.<sup>2</sup> The 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, had created a tumultuous situation as school systems grappled with how to move ahead, or in some cases stonewall, on desegregation and work toward school integration. The reign of terror pursued by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his followers, who sought to root out Communist subversives whether real or not, had created caution and anxiety. As America's largest city, New York was at the center of the storm, trying to figure out how to address complex issues of increased urbanization, growing diversity among a rapidly expanding population, racial and ethnic tensions, and how to reform public education to meet new challenges. Continuing with life on a pleasant independent school campus in suburban Philadelphia, where Jack had been in charge for eleven years and was held in high esteem, would seemingly have been a far easier path for him. But when Bank Street's Board of Trustees offered him the presidency, he jumped at the opportunity.

Certainly Jack must have known what he was getting into. Bank Street was a deeply mission-driven institution dominated by a small group of strong women, with a Board of Trustees that acted more as a collection of expert advisors than as fiduciaries. It had virtually none of the organizational policies and procedures found routinely at most schools and colleges, and chronically weak finances. He would have been aware that a significant number of Bank Street faculty and staff were not sure they wanted a president, suspicious of "professional administrators" and worried about hierarchies undermining the collective control of the institution's focus and work. Indeed, the initial conception of the job was titled "coordinator," and elements of that non-executive approach were still reflected in some attitudes, even among Trustees.

Yet the clear and urgent need for an energetic, if flexible and diplomatic, chief executive was undeniable.

After more than three years of discussion about how to strengthen the College's administration – really how to make it function like the college it became legally in 1950 – the financial realities could no longer be ignored. Lucy Sprague Mitchell, together with her late husband Wesley, had for many years provided the funds that closed the annual budget deficits. Now, aging and widowed, she had told her colleagues that her resources were increasingly limited and new sources of support must be developed. Lucy's confidential report to the Board in April 1955 ended with the following statement: "I have never believed that money is the root of all evil. But I do believe it is the root of our present anxiety concerning Bank Street. Educationally, we are blooming - even booming. Financially, we are in the red. Foundation grants can never relieve us entirely from this anxiety. Nothing short of an endowment fund that will yield income to cover more of the appalling College operating costs will relieve this anxiety."

Bank Street's new president, who knew Philadelphia philanthropy fairly well but was a neophyte in New York, would have to quickly learn how to organize and lead a focused fund-raising effort on several fronts, ranging from annual operating costs to program expansion to permanent endowment. He would also have to help develop the Board to reflect the responsibilities and activities common to educational institutions, including promoting the public image of Bank Street and bringing new philanthropic sources to support the college's work. Simultaneously, Jack needed to organize virtually from scratch an administrative structure that could strengthen the College, which for example had no pension program or salary schedule, without weakening the informal yet enduring personal relationships that bound the Bank Street community together.

Jack's ties to Bank Street went back several years, and he had spent one day a week for the prior year on site as president-elect, meeting the staff and focusing on the problems he would need to handle. He must have realized that, while Lucy Mitchell was moving away from the College, she remained the ultimate source of authority. He knew that Lucy and he shared a vision of an expanding Bank Street, energetically pursuing innovative ways to bring child development-centered approaches to teaching and learning into America's public schools. He recognized that he should not assume that everyone understood and embraced such a conception of the College's mission and future. He was also aware of the personal and institutional trauma inflicted by the prolonged controversy that led to the departure of the staff and families of the Harriet Johnson Nursery School in 1954, and the importance of his support for the efforts to establish the new School for Children as the laboratory school for the Bank Street research and teacher preparation programs. The success in building the School for Children would be a key to the work of the College as well as to the financial stability of the institution.

The Niemeyer presidency spanned 1956-1973 although Jack was involved with Bank Street before 1955 and served as an active College Trustee for two decades after stepping down as president. Those seventeen years are arguably the most interesting period – educationally, politically, and socially – of 20th century American society.

Jack's presidency started with the end of McCarthyism and the efforts to begin implementing the *Brown* decision. Soon thereafter the USSR successfully launched the Sputnik satellite, creating anxiety about a further expansion of the Cold War. The rapid growth of American higher education was a partial but significant response to perceived challenges from the USSR and Chinese People's Republic. The conditions of urban life deteriorated as suburbs grew. The increased diversity of the country's population and tremendous push for civil rights impacted all aspects of political and educational life. The hope for change under a new generation began with the election of John Kennedy and continued despite his assassination through Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, which included Head Start. The escalation of the Vietnam War after 1965 led to student unrest in New York's universities among others, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. sparked devastating riots in many American societies. During the final five years of the Niemeyer presidency, with Richard Nixon in the White House, the wars in Southeast Asia expanded, the economy weakened, and the Great Society programs were under attack.

Bank Street was profoundly affected by the myriad developments, good and bad, that occurred during this

period. The "Red scare" fed by McCarthyism helped to briefly block Bank Street's involvement with New York City public schools in the early 1950's. The National Institutes of Mental Health awarded Bank Street a \$1 million grant in 1958 for a major schools and mental health study, which fundamentally changed the scope, size and ambition of the College's Research Division as well as affecting the culture of Bank Street community.

At the same time, a growing number of New York-based foundations saw Bank Street as an innovative source of ideas and research on ways to improve public education and address the needs of "alienated" children and "disadvantaged" communities. Through its Publications Division, the College pioneered the multi-ethnic *Bank Street Readers*, the first such school basal readers produced by a commercial publisher (Macmillan) and marketed throughout the U.S.

Bursting out of its antiquated home at 69 Bank Street, the College used new Federal funding sources and grants from a few key foundations to leave Greenwich Village for Morningside Heights and a brand-new building that could support further expansion of programs and staff. Even with the new facility, Bank Street added other locations to provide more community-focused services, including an innovative Early Childhood and Family Resource Center in mid-town and a daycare consultation service agency that eventually operated city-wide.

Toward the end of Jack's presidency, Bank Street worked with the school system in Stamford, Connecticut, to create a model integrated public elementary school. The project used many aspects of the Bank Street Approach as shaped by the College's leadership in the federal Follow Through Program in fourteen sites across the country. During the 1960's, Jack led an effort to develop school guidance and school leadership programs, expanding Bank Street's scope and reach while addressing urgent needs in public education.

This project is an attempt to explore the Niemeyer presidency from both a biographical perspective, focusing on Jack, and a framework for understanding how and why Bank Street evolved as a significant educational resource, for New York and the nation, under his leadership during those eventful years. This is intended neither as a traditional biography of Jack nor as an analytical study of Bank Street. Instead, it is an effort to do what Bank Street people always view as fundamental to learning: to investigate and understand relationships, in this case between the new president and the institution and community that he tried to lead and build out.

A key lens for exploring the relationship is the commitment to social justice, specifically to providing high quality public education to every child, with primary emphasis on serving poor children of color in urban communities with meager educational resources. Jack's passions included school integration, curricular innovation, and parent engagement, particularly in preK and elementary schools. His presidency was in large part the story of his efforts to build on the ideas and values of John Dewey and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, drawing on and extending the human and material resources of Bank Street for the benefit of children and their families, educators and schools, and the society in which they lived.

In this introductory chapter, I seek to provide a brief overview of Bank Street and Jack Niemeyer in the context of the time, and to suggest answers to two core questions: First, why did Bank Street want Jack? Next, why did Jack want Bank Street? I will also describe and provide my perspectives on a Bank Street crisis involving access to the New York public schools for research studies that Jack had to handle early in his presidency and which, in my view, solidified support for him and the position of president among Trustees, faculty and staff.

Chapter Two will be an exploration of Jack as a vibrant human being, committed progressive educator, and daring institution-builder.

In Chapter Three, I seek to lay out how Bank Street developed from an informal mix of small programs held together by a dynamic founder into an educational institution with some of the formal organizational

framework and practices found in other schools and colleges, in order to better understand the institutional environment in which Jack had to work and try to lead.

Chapter Four describes the goals and varied activities pursued by Jack and his team at Bank Street; he did a lot so it is the longest chapter, concluding with his decision to retire.

Chapter Five explores Jack's commitment to and focus on social justice and how it shaped his leadership and plans. This chapter also looks at the interplay among Jack's ideas and initiatives, and the goals and views of others at the College who interpreted Bank Street's mission and roles differently.

Chapter Six summarizes my efforts to answer the opening questions, and my reflection on Jack's legacy. How had he succeeded and where had he failed as Bank Street's first chief executive officer? What lasting impact did his efforts have on the College after he stepped down?

To begin this journey, let us turn back to our two key questions.

First, why did Lucy Sprague Mitchell and her closest colleagues want Jack Niemeyer, who was obviously a male, to lead a college run almost exclusively by strong women for 35 years, especially since he was the head of an upscale independent day school in suburban Philadelphia and not knowledgeable about New York?

Second, why did Jack want to leave a comfortable, stable career at a place where he was highly regarded for an unusual, disorganized, strife-torn and financially wobbly institution where the community was not even united in the desire for a president?

The preliminary answer to the first question is that Lucy, Barbara Biber, Elizabeth "Ibby" Gilkeson, Charlotte Winsor, and Irma Black recognized Jack as a truly dedicated progressive educator by choice, not training. Jack believed unequivocally that American education had to focus on serving the needs and developing the potential of all children, and on supporting the work and professional growth of excellent teachers.<sup>3</sup>

A pivotal moment occurred at the 1954 Bank Street Associates<sup>4</sup> annual conference, where the theme was "What do we expect from our Teachers?" Jack was on the program to speak during the afternoon session about what principals expected from teachers. At the morning session, with hundreds of teachers and educators in the ballroom, two speakers – historian Crane Brinton from Harvard and sociologist David Riesman from the University of Chicago – had not-so-politely denigrated public school teachers and questioned teaching below the university level as truly a profession. Brinton advised that "the teacher should try to be a moderate, a compromiser, a non-joiner" and "should reconcile himself to the fact that he is not going to work miracles." Riesman said that "teachers must see that schools can never reform society" and should try to "help a few exceptional children to go far beyond their narrow origins" by insisting on "high competence in subject matter" for all teachers. They also cast aspersions on schools of education, which Riesman said were not "centers of intellectual excitement," and on progressive educational ideas, which he seemed to suggest were the fantasies of socially-secure do-gooders. Furthermore, they seemed to question the capacity of most children to acquire advanced learning and to imply the futility of trying to raise their hopes. Jack decided to give these negative and elitist critiques a strong response and a clear reality-check by speaking as a teacher and member of a strong community of educators about what teachers expect of themselves and each other.<sup>5</sup>

He stressed that it was "extremely necessary that all of us get close to children" rather than deal in abstract thinking about education, including content and teaching practices. He said "we ought to expect in our professional work together a kind of constant spiritual transfusion...the inspiration that keeps our eyes open to the wonder and fascination of people and particularly children."

During her welcome to the conference to begin the morning session, Lucy had noted that "today, teachers

and education are having a tough time" and advised "don't be discouraged, it used to be worse." Jack picked up on that idea, with a positive twist, toward the end of his speech, saying "Perhaps what is need more than anything else is courage...the plain courage to face our own weaknesses, face our problems, arrive at the best conclusions we can and then, when we feel we have something worth clinging to because it means something in the development of the human spirit among children, to stand up for it and not be afraid."

In her summing-up later that day, Barbara Biber said "Mr. Niemeyer, speaking as a teacher to teachers, made one glad and proud to be a member of the profession. I feel certain that for every teacher in the audience it was a deeply gratifying experience to identify the kind of teaching he was talking about."<sup>6</sup>

Jack had announced himself as a thoughtful, passionate champion of teachers and an advocate for any educator committed to the "development of the human spirit among children."

Jack "got" Bank Street: although not a graduate of the College's School for Teachers, he understood the core principles and values that animated the approach to learning and teaching that made Bank Street a distinctive voice for the potential of every child and every teacher. And Bank Street got Jack – heart, mind and soul, for the rest of his life. Bank Street gave Jack the opportunity to develop what Lucy called "potentialities" as an educator and national policy expert and leader.

Jack had personal courage and conviction, even a deep and abiding faith that a community of educators can together create the "constant spiritual transfusion" through a joyful commitment to finding new and practical ways to help children achieve fulfillment through learning experiences. Bank Street offered a special kind of courage and deep-seated conviction in the correctness and value of its approach to child development and learning. In subsequent chapters, I hope to provide more insight into Jack the progressive educator and social reformer, as well as into the institution which he loved and led, and how they became partners in a dynamic relationship that changed both.

In the spring of 1956, Bank Street became the victim of an unexpected and, to the College faculty and staff, incomprehensible dispute when the NYC Board of Education and bureaucracy issued a letter that suspended, perhaps permanently, the College's research work in the public schools. Both the Trustees and faculty were unsure how to find out what the issues were and to try to resolve them.

The genesis of the 1956 crisis occurred in 1953. Bank Street researchers played a role in a complicated project that eventually fell apart due to misunderstandings, allegations of subversive activities, suspicions about anti-Catholic bias, and the absence of political leadership. Bank Street's role might not have been large, but some influential members of the Board of Education blamed the College for the disaster.

The Board of Examiners of the Board of Education was responsible for establishing standards for public school teachers and testing candidates for licensing as teachers. For several decades the Board of Examiners had been looking at efforts to use psychological instruments to evaluate the personality of a current or a potential teacher. In 1941, the Examiners set up a Committee on Personality Tests, but the work of the group was hindered by an absence of research, for which the Examiners could not pay and the Board of Education's Research Bureau did not have the resources to assign. Around the same time, the Citizens Committee on Children of New York City (CCC), a voluntary association of professional and lay community leaders, became interested in teacher personality. Barbara Biber knew Viola Bernard, a psychiatrist active in CCC work in education and mental health issues, because she had helped Bank Street develop its advisement process as a distinctive feature of its teacher preparation program. They co-chaired a new CCC subcommittee on Teacher Selection and began to work with the Examiners' Committee on Personality Tests to develop appropriate instruments for testing. With CCC funding from small foundation grants, the Teacher Personality Subcommittee began a pilot study, with Biber's Research Division designing tests and prepared to do the analysis of results.<sup>7</sup> In addition to tests, the plan included observations and interviews with test subjects who had become classroom teachers.

From Bank Street's perspective, the College was working with CCC on a project approved by the Board of Education and Superintendent William Jansen to further investigate and to develop an evaluation method for the Board of Examiners to consider using for legitimate teacher qualification purposes. Biber and her colleagues, as well as many educators and psychologists at that time believed that "teaching is a matter of person, as well as of knowledge." According to Edna Shapiro, the Bank Street research team knew of some potential potholes: "...we were aware of the system being very conservative and unresponsive to new ideas, and that we were treading carefully."<sup>8</sup> The plan was to develop a test to be used broadly to assess teacher candidates for public school jobs, in an effort to improve teacher quality. There were a large number of applicants, including many from teacher training institutions viewed as "inadequate." The goal was to develop and introduce selection criteria beyond coursework that focused on "what kinds of attitudes about children and teaching and what kinds of positive feelings toward kids the candidates had."<sup>9</sup>

After much negotiation with Jansen over financial and control issues, the experimental tests were added to the qualifying examinations for substitute teachers in February 1953. For legitimate research reasons, the candidates would not be informed about the experimental tests until after the exams. Before that happened, some candidates who were Catholic complained to their colleges in Brooklyn and Queens that there were unusual test questions focused on attitudes about sex and family life and seemed biased. Unexpectedly, favorable articles about the teacher personality work appeared in the mainstream press (e.g., the *New York Times*)<sup>10</sup> and then increasingly critical articles began to flow regularly from *The Tablet*, the weekly newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn.<sup>11</sup> The articles focused on the efforts of George Timone, a conservative lawyer and vocal anti-Communist who served as a Catholic member of the Board of Education, to get to the bottom of a secret, fraudulent, unethical project to exclude a group of qualified potential teachers on the basis of religious and moral beliefs.

The public uproar that resulted was fueled by the *de facto* religious composition of the Board of Education at that time, as well as the membership of the Board of Examiners, and the perception of the CCC and Bank Street as left-wing organizations. The Board of Education member slots were divided among Protestants, Catholics and Jews, who were expected to represent their particular religious constituencies. The Catholic representatives, such as Timone, had a direct connection to the Archbishop's office. Items of interest or concern to the Catholic leadership and community could be quickly passed along to Board of Education members for investigation.

Although by late 1956, the worst of the anti-Communist hysteria created by Senator Joseph McCarthy had passed, there was still a climate full of fears, myths, stereotypes, and conspiracy-mongering that could easily lead to over-reactions and impulsive conclusions where the facts were irrelevant. McCarthyism had destroyed careers, changed lives, and damaged institutions. Timone was a self-appointed watchdog on teacher patriotism and loyalty. *The Tablet* increased its allegations, implying a Jewish conspiracy existed because all the members of the Board of Examiners were Jewish, as were many of the Bank Street research team and leaders of the CCC. It seemed that the test questions from the F Scale instrument caused the most concern. The newspaper demanded a ban on personality tests for teacher selection.

Due to the pressure, Jansen stopped the project and impounded the test results. Edna Shapiro retained "a very clear visual image" of an awful meeting at the Department of Education when Bank Street staff attempted to recover the test booklets that had been impounded. She stated "we really did not know how to deal with these people."<sup>12</sup> The CCC withdrew its support of the project in January 1954.

Despite its good intentions, becoming involved in the project had exposed Bank Street to significant risk. In Biber's opinion, "a whole institution like ours could have been defamed and you could have lost everything" because "they could have smeared you beyond repair."<sup>13</sup> Soon it became apparent that Timone viewed Bank Street with deep suspicion, if not animus, and questioned any research involvement with the public schools.

In 1955, Bank Street had been participating in planning another research project investigating three

pedagogical approaches (traditional, modified traditional, progressive) for fourth grade instruction in three public schools and the independent progressive City and Country School. This project was funded by - National Institutes of Mental Health. In May 1956 Lucy Mitchell received a letter from the Board of Education ordering Bank Street to cease any research in the public schools. No reason was provided, and calls and letters to the Board of Education and Jansen were not returned. Fortunately, one of Bank Street's Trustees was Florence Beaumont, an Associate Superintendent who oversaw elementary schools at the Department of Education. She was able to find out that the Board acted at the request of Timone, who was chairman of the Law Committee, but not the details of his complaint against Bank Street.

Bank Street faculty and Trustees were baffled. At this point, Jack took on the task of resolving the crisis.<sup>14</sup> As Bank Street's new president, he had the right title, plus he was new, from out of town, diplomatic, and a man. This would be his first major test as president, and it was unquestionably a difficult one. For Trustees, and especially those who had reservations about Jack's capacity to be an effective leader in New York City, the future of the institution seemed to be in the balance. For Lucy, Barbara and their colleagues, the core principles of their approach to learning and teaching, nurtured so carefully for decades, were being tossed aside for ambiguous, malicious, and inaccurate "reasons" just as the opportunities for improving public education seemed to have blossomed.

Jack swung into action, first by consulting Beaumont to find out which members of the Board of Education might be willing to meet with him. She directed him to the Board chair, and Jack simply presented himself at the Board's office with a request to see him. Jack used the "new president" approach, seeking to find out if Bank Street had done something wrong so that he could fix it. The chairman provided the basic information about Bank Street's earlier involvement with what one Board member had claimed was a purported research project that had the purpose of discriminating against hiring Catholic teachers. At this point, Jack knew about the NIMH-funded school experience project but was not aware of the 1953 Teacher Personality study controversy. He returned to Bank Street to learn from Biber and others about that initiative, and began to see how it connected to the Board's decision to close the schools to Bank Street's researchers.

Jack knew from Lucy that George Schuster, president of Hunter College, was a Catholic who thought well of Bank Street. He asked to meet with Schuster, with whom he was already acquainted. Schuster arranged for Jack to meet with Father Lawrence McGinley, president of Fordham University. At that meeting, Jack again used his "new president" strategy, asking for help to clean up an inherited problem. McGinley asked if Bank Street would agree to an outside review of the materials and instruments Bank Street was proposing to use in the School Experience study. Jack agreed on the spot. McGinley called Mary Riley, a retired public school teacher whom Jack later found out functioned as a liaison between Catholic members of the Board of Education and the Catholic teachers colleges (Jack also came to believe that Riley was the person who received the initial complaints about the Personality test questions and conveyed them to Timone).<sup>15</sup>

Jack returned to Bank Street to report to his colleagues, especially Biber and Shapiro, who might have been upset that he decided to accept an outside review without consulting them. Everyone agreed with him that the primary goal was to restart the NIMH-funded project focused on school experience and to restore Bank Street's research access to public schools. Riley met with Jack at Bank Street, and left with materials to review. She returned a week later with a single objection over the use of the word "values," because values were defined by God. She suggested using "attitudes" instead, which was acceptable to Biber and Shapiro. Soon afterwards, the principals of the public schools involved in the climate study called Biber to inform her that the work could resume. That study was very important to Bank Street's future research funding on several levels, leading to the \$1 million grant from NIMH in 1958 that in many ways fundamentally changed the College's future.<sup>16</sup>

Father McGinley also arranged a meeting for Jack with Monsignor John J. Voigt, the secretary of education and senior official on educational policy for the Archdiocese of New York.<sup>17</sup> Jack met with him several times, gave him detailed information on the school experience study, and invited him to visit Bank Street. Jack later

concluded that Schuster and McGinley had decided to help him resolve the crisis, with McGinley managing the internal Church relationships to encourage a swift and fair outcome.

Jack also made efforts to develop his own relationship with Superintendent Jansen and his senior staff. In an August 1956 letter to Lucy, Jack recounted a conversation at a meeting with Jansen and others about the Bank Street controversy. Although he continued to seek meetings with key Catholic lay leaders, Jack expressed deep concern about whether Bank Street could continue to work in the public schools without provoking further attacks from Timone, who continued to be influential.

While he was building relationships within the Catholic community, Jack was also pursuing another strategy with members of the Bank Street Board who wanted to consider suing the Board of Education. Jack called this approach the "power structure way"<sup>18</sup> and his involvement was more in the background. Sally Kerlin recalled a visit from Jack to discuss what steps to take with her and her husband Gilbert, who was a partner at Sherman & Sterling, a prominent New York firm, and favored legal action. At the urging of Trustee Anne Case, Bank Street's Board retained Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts. The attorneys interviewed Jack and others at Bank Street, and then talked with Timone and others on the Board of Education. Jack recalled that, when the attorneys reviewed the letter sent by the Board of Education to Lucy Mitchell, they found it was addressed to a woman having a different first name.<sup>19</sup> Lucy had been confused in the past with another woman named Mitchell who ran an organization viewed as a Communist sympathizer. It seems likely that the argument was made that there had been a case of mistaken identity which led to a misunderstanding about Bank Street and false conclusions about the purposes of its research work. No doubt the involvement of a highly regarded law firm also increased pressure on the Board of Education, signaling that Bank Street was not simply folding its tent and disappearing.

Jack, always a pragmatist, did not trust fully his diplomatic powers to win the battle. In an October 1956 letter to Lucy, he stated that the threat of legal action was the only reason the Board of Education changed its decision. He expressed anxiety at the possibility of continued attacks by Timone, other Catholic Board members and *The Tablet*, as well as a determination to "build up our defenses" by adding "an important Catholic" as a Bank Street trustee, together with "at least one high ranking lawyer, and at least one powerful businessman or financier." He also planned to continue to cultivate Catholics with connections to the Archdiocese to support Bank Street's work.

In any event, the one-two combination of Jack's initiative with McGinley, Riley and Voigt, and the intervention of a leading New York law firm on Bank Street's behalf turned out to be effective in lifting the ban on the College's work in the public schools. Jack had succeeded with his first test and was acknowledged for leadership by Trustees and faculty. Biber sympathized with Jack, describing the situation as "like walking into a fire" and said that he "took on a terrific job when he came in, to really try not to have the whole thing go to pieces."<sup>20</sup> Sally Kerlin commented that "when Jack came things were very black" and that he had to spend his first summer at Bank Street getting the research project reinstated. She also said "it was an act of courage for him to take the job at all."<sup>21</sup>

The final word would have to have been Lucy's, whom Jack had kept informed about the situation although she had moved to California. In a lengthy handwritten letter on February 10, 1957, Lucy covered many items and ended with a comment Jack treasured: "I think you, Jack, have done, are doing and will continue to do your job with wisdom and imagination in a fresh pattern that is amazingly consistent with our old pattern. Yes, I am happy about Bank Street!"

Lucy knew that Jack had saved her from having to deal with another nasty, complicated, and draining battle for Bank Street's existence. She had endured more than three years of wrenching controversy over the Harriet Johnson Nursery School, which led to the exodus of virtually the entire Nursery School staff and most of the families in 1955. One of the key philosophical differences that caused the break was the strong position of the Research Division and the School for Teachers that the laboratory school needed to expand into the



elementary and middle school grades in order to support the mission of the College. That range of grades was essential to attracting teacher candidates who wanted careers in public schools, as well as to align with the research interests of Biber and her colleagues as they developed their distinctive work. Lucy's long-sought goal of influencing public education in order to promote a more democratic society was tantalizingly close, a satisfying end to forty years of dedicated effort. Bank Street was beginning to attract grants for its programs from the Ford Foundation and the NIMH, with the potential for additional recognition and support from the growing number of government and philanthropic organizations focusing on public education. With Bank Street developing its School for Children to meet its research mission and expanding its reach into public schools to strengthen teaching, suddenly everything had been put at risk. After the Board of Education controversy was laid to rest, Lucy had good reason to feel "happy about Bank Street" and the successor she had recommended so strongly.

In Bank Street's history and folklore, the two crises of Lucy's final years – the rupture over the Nursery School and the Board of Education's temporary expulsion of Bank Street researchers from the public schools – are rarely mentioned. Lucy's biographer, Joyce Antler, devotes a paragraph to the Nursery School situation, which she does describe as "a major crisis," and does not comment on the public school controversy, presumably because it occurred after Lucy stepped down as "acting President."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps because the College was able to continue the NIMH-funded school experience study, there seem to be no references to the crisis created by involvement in the cancelled Teacher Personality test, although that difficult situation went on for nearly a year in 1953, when Lucy was still a strong presence.

It is hard to imagine that Jack was not influenced in profound ways by these crises. While he was not at Bank Street during the worst times of the Nursery School controversy, he had to deal with the result: supporting the rebuilding of a laboratory school, including recruiting faculty and students, and dealing with the budget issues the departure of the Nursery School had created. He had no part in the public controversy around the Teacher Personality project (which turned out to be an advantage) that led to the temporary banishment of Bank Street from research work in the public schools, but he certainly took the key role in developing the strategies for resolving the problem.

In this analysis of the Niemeyer presidency, I will argue that these two early crises, and especially the "trial by fire" of the Board of Education controversy, shaped Jack's goals, strategies, leadership style, and major decisions for the rest of his tenure.

Jack was an idealistic pragmatist. As will be discussed in the next chapter, he never lost his idealism about human nature and potential, the power of education as a lever toward social justice and a better society, and the dignity of teaching as an essential profession. Unlike many of his new colleagues at Bank Street, Jack had a breadth of experience in other educational settings, and had handled situations where there were complex and differing points of view on what constituted the best outcomes. He had learned to size up a situation, to identify possible strategies and allies, and to remember that "the great is sometimes the enemy of the good."<sup>23</sup>

In his personal campaign to get the Board of Education to rescind its decision, Jack seems to have decided that it would be best to portray Bank Street researchers as "hired hands" brought in by the Citizens Committee on Children to analyze the data collected by the Board of Examiners for the contentious Teacher Personality project, rather than a group intimately involved in the design of the tests and study. It was not exactly the whole truth but necessary for the president of an institution trying to get out from under a cloud of suspicion about participating in a left-wing conspiracy to keep Catholic teachers from public school jobs. It was a deft move that fit well with Jack's approach as the "new guy in town" who had just taken over as Bank Street's president and was simply trying to unwind a confusing situation so the College could go on helping New York public schools meet their many challenges.<sup>24</sup>

From this experience, it appears Jack had learned the need to consult but also the necessity to take decisive action when appropriate. As president, he would have to decide when to move ahead strongly, to seize an

opportunity or launch a new program (such as the *Bank Street Readers*), trusting that he would be able to convince others in the College community about the wisdom of his decision or at least persuade them not to oppose it. The next chapter is devoted to the evolution of Jack Niemeyer from the boy from Scranton to the progressive educator and strong leader who became the crucial link between the aspirations Lucy and Wesley Mitchell held for their experimental enterprise and the vigorous college and "change agent" Bank Street was to become.

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<sup>1</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 34; interview on 11/11/1975, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> See Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, pp. 347-350. Cremin attributed the collapse of the Progressive Education Movement to seven factors, ranging from factionalism to the professionalization of teachers. The most important to him was the inability of progressive education to keep pace with the transformation of American society. He also noted the "central thrust of progressivism" had changed to "define more precisely the school's responsibilities, to delineate those things that the school needed to do because if the school did not do them, they would not get done." p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter on February 12, 1954, Ibbey asked Jack for help in identifying staff for the new Bank Street School for Children. She noted that she was writing to him "because we feel that you know the individual members of our staff and the philosophy of Bank Street, and so will understand the nature of the positions in our experimental laboratory school."

<sup>4</sup> The Bank Street Associates was a support group of Trustees, alumni, and friends of the College established by Lucy in 1952. Jack was a charter member of the Associates. Because one of the group's goals was to increase awareness of Bank Street's work and existence, the Associates organized an annual conference on an important educational issue that was broadly publicized and held at a mid-town New York location, such as the Biltmore Hotel. The Associates group is described in more detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> "Conference Speeches, 1954," published by the Associates of Bank Street College of Education (undated), on the topic of "What Do We Expect of our Teachers?" held 1/23/1954 at the Biltmore Hotel, NYC. Brinton's speech is on pp. 13-16; Riesman, pp. 17-27. Jack's speech is on pp., 35-41.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 59-60. In her February 12, 1954 letter to Jack, Ibbey concluded "I would like to tell you how very much I enjoyed your talk at our Conference, and how much I felt it meant to all the teachers and directors present. I thought you said just what needed to be said at the time..." Elizabeth Gilkeson letter to Jack, 2/12/1954.

<sup>7</sup> There were six experimental tests, including the Bank Street Cartoon Test which was used as part of the admissions process at the College to assess personality and attitudes in applicants. Other tests involved completing sentences, multiple choice questions, essay questions, and having the test-taker draw a teacher in school. One test on "personal opinion" used agreement/disagreement with thirty statements on attitudes thought to be relevant to teaching personality characteristics, including identifying authoritarian tendencies. This test was derived from an established but controversial instrument known as the F Scale, which had been developed after World War II by scientists concerned about authoritarian personalities. See Edith Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child: Progressive Education and Bank Street College of Education, 1916-1966*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Stony Brook University), 1988, pp. 301-303.

<sup>8</sup> Shapiro interview with Edith Gordon, 2/17/1982, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> See Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, for a detailed accounting of this controversy, pp. 290-318.

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<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, 4/2/1953; *New York World-Telegram*, 3/30/1953.

<sup>11</sup> Seven *Tablet* articles appeared, on 4/11, 4/25, 10/31, 11/21, 11/28, 12/5, and 12/12/1953.

<sup>12</sup> Shapiro interview, 2/17/1982, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Biber interview with Edith Gordon, 8/13/1975, pp. 39-40.

<sup>14</sup> Under the title of an interview transcript (called "Bank Street and Social Reform"), Jack penciled in a subtitle: "McCarthyism and My First Major Problem." Interview with Richard Greenspan, 6/1/1996

<sup>15</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 371-372

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 10-12

<sup>17</sup> Voigt was known to speak out against bigotry and especially racial prejudice. See his obituary, *New York Times*, 6/17/1982.

<sup>18</sup> Kerlin interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, pp. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Jack recalled that the letters were addressed to "Mrs. Broaddus Mitchell." Interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 5. Dr. Broaddus Mitchell, like Wesley Mitchell, was a professor of economics. Broaddus Mitchell had taught at NYU (1942-44) and was on the faculty at Rutgers from 1949 – 1958. He was politically active, and had run for Governor of Maryland in 1934 as the Socialist Party candidate. He resigned from his faculty position at Johns Hopkins in 1938 over its refusal to admit black graduate students, and led an anti-McCarthy protest at Rutgers. His wife's name was Louise.

<sup>20</sup> Biber interview with Edith Gordon, 8/13/1975, pp. 39-40. Biber stated that "a whole institution like ours could have been defamed and you could have lost everything." In an interview in 1977, Jack said: "I suspect if you were to ask Barbara Biber what, in all the years that Jack Niemeyer was here, was the single most important thing he did for Bank Street, she would cite that [resolving the Board of Education ban]...because it looked as if Bank Street was just about dead." Interview with Edith Gordon, 8/10/1977, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975, pp. 24-25. Sally also recalled that the "other Mrs. Mitchell" led The League of Women Shoppers, which was known to be a left-wing organization.

<sup>22</sup> Joyce Antler, *Lucy Sprague Mitchell: The Making of a Modern Woman*, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 343.

<sup>23</sup> At the 1967 memorial service for Lucy, Jack recalled that, when he was despairing over a task, she would remind him of one of her favorite quotes from Wesley: "Jack, just remember what Robin used to say – do your best and let perfection take care of its impossible self." Jack's remarks printed in *Lucy Sprague Mitchell: An Hour of Remembrance*, 12/1/1967, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Joyce McCray, the Head of Friends School, recalled in her remarks at the June 2004 memorial service that "Jack was a little bit sly and very, very wise."

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MAKING OF A PRAGMATIC PROGRESSIVE IDEALIST

Jack Niemeyer stood at a lectern on October 11, 1980. He was doing something that was very familiar – giving a speech – and in a place he cherished, the Hamilton College Chapel. He was 72, and celebrating with his fellow alumni of the Hamilton College Class of 1930 by giving the "Fifty-Year Class Annalist Address."<sup>25</sup> He had stood in this same place at their commencement as one of five seniors selected to compete in the Clark Prize oratorical contest that was a feature of Hamilton commencements. He was deeply devoted to Hamilton, having served on its Board of Trustees since 1964, and delighted to have been selected for this role. In truth, Jack was not just an "annalist," summarizing what had gone on during the four years that his class had spent at Hamilton. He did some of that, of course, with humor and obvious pleasure. More important, he offered some analysis about their college experience within the context of the late 1920's, their backgrounds, and how well Hamilton had prepared them for what turned out to be a future of dramatic and horrific challenges. Jack mused about their isolation, physically on a campus in a small town, and from the political and social events in the country and world. He also wondered about what they had learned through a classic liberal arts education that enabled them to meet "the problems and dilemmas of life."

Interestingly for a man who lived so much in the present during his career, Jack said that "we emerged from a peaceful, protected little 'mountain house' to enter a big, turbulent world of international financial collapse, fascism and war, and, at home, mounting business and farm failures, foreclosures, unemployment, breadlines – people literally starving...*For me, it was a time of anguish over man's inhumanity to man, and of disbelief and anger that our own society was so inadequately organized that so much misery should be forced upon so many innocent people.*" But he believed in the lasting benefit of an education based in the arts and sciences, because "college strengthened us for the future by introducing us to samples of 'the best of the past,' even if that meant spending less time on the contemporary scene." College offered a safe place to struggle with your beliefs, values and relationships to family and authority with a minimum amount of outside distractions.

Seven years after retiring from Bank Street's presidency, Jack still conveyed core Bank Street values: the importance of reflection and self-evaluation; the commitment to multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary education; the determination to find ways to organize society to better serve the innocent and needy; and of course, the power of education. He concluded his address with a characteristic statement of optimistic faith: "Hope for the future...rests upon the development of *ever more effective education.*"<sup>26</sup> Anyone who knew Jack understood that he was not speaking just about college but rather, as a dedicated follower of John Dewey, about the role of public education as the driver of a democratic society.

Hamilton served Jack well as a bridge between a narrow childhood in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and the complicated and changing world that he would face as an adult. In that 1980 address, he commented on student discussions about the 1928 presidential election, where he supported Democratic candidate Al Smith, New York's Governor and the first Catholic nominee for President. Herbert Hoover was favored by most students, and Jack suggested that the Smith fans were "primarily interested in the religious issue" because "we

were motivated...by our being in revolt against our own Republican, religious upbringings." Jack had come a long way from his "normal boyhood for a town in which there were fields to play in, railroad freights to hop and other gangs to rock-fight with."<sup>27</sup>

John Harry Niemeyer was born on May 23, 1908 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. His parents, Mary Belle and Harry, were of German ancestry. Jack had an older brother, Jason. The family appears to have been solid middle-class Protestants, with Harry working as a salesman representing a casket manufacturer. Jack provided some light-hearted but insightful reflections on his development. He wrote that he had no memories of school until 8th grade and focused on sports and reading, with frequent trips to the library. Jack's daughter Nancy Niemeyer Rovin recalled that her grandmother Mary Belle was "very strict with children."<sup>28</sup> His mother decided to send him to Staunton Military Academy in Virginia when he was 16, where he claimed to have excelled at academics and "systematic breaking of all the rules without getting caught."

At Hamilton, Jack became "intensely interested in learning" (graduating Phi Beta Kappa) while also following "an inevitable drift toward community responsibilities." It seems clear that Jack was a leader, becoming president of a fraternity and the senior class, and involved with the literary magazine, debating, dramatics, and music. He was also an athlete, serving as captain of the fencing team and making the finals in national inter-collegiate tournaments. Jack intended to pursue a graduate degree in English literature, with a special focus on Shakespeare, at Cornell under a fellowship,<sup>29</sup> but when he learned his father had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, he decided he needed to get a job.<sup>30</sup>

Abandoning graduate school and the possibility of earning an advanced degree seems to have been a frustration for Jack, who started and stopped graduate programs at Teachers College, Columbia (1931),<sup>31</sup> the University of Rochester (1934-37), the University of Michigan (1940-41), and the University of Pennsylvania (1945-48). In his interviews with Edith Gordon in 1975 and Richard Greenspan in 1996, Jack seemed to downplay the importance of an advanced degree but there are suggestions that he may have felt otherwise, at least on occasion. In December 1956, less than six months after becoming president of Bank Street, Jack and Irma Black exchanged comments on her draft of a biographical and philosophical statement for him that would be used for the 40th Anniversary Issue of "Children...Here and Now," the Bank Street Associates' *Notes from Bank Street* publication and his "formal" introduction to many in the larger College community as Lucy's successor.<sup>32</sup> The draft mentioned Jack's "rich background of teaching and administrative work" and stressed both "the education and the study of children" and "community activities" as key areas. Jack added that "[t]hrough his writings and speeches, he has done much to give sane interpretation to modern educational ideas" and that he would become president of the Middle States Council for the Social Studies in 1957-58.

The draft included a description of his various graduate studies and stated that Jack had a Master's degree in history from the University of Rochester and had completed coursework for a doctorate in education. Irma's notes of her conversation with Jack about the draft recorded that he felt that he had "always been caught in a conflict between his interests in scholarship and the excitement and responsibilities of active professional and community participation." His "strong feelings against the traditional pattern of academic degrees" meant his graduate studies had been "extensive but eclectic." In this kind of brief biography, he "preferred to record" that he had studied under some outstanding scholars: Goodwin Watson, professor of social psychology, and Henry Johnson, professor the history of education, at TC; Dexter Perkins, professor of history and chair of the department at the University of Rochester; Howard McCluskey, professor of community and adult education, and Raleigh Schorling, professor of education and head of math at the university high school, at the University of Michigan; and Theodore Reller and Thomas Woody, professors in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Irma also noted Jack's comment that he had "taken more semesters of graduate credit in the fields of history and education than are needed for a doctor's degree."

In his cover note to Irma, Jack wrote that he wanted to express "something of my point of view on graduate studies" without making him seem "bigger" than he wanted to appear. Bank Street had only started awarding

a master's degree a few years earlier, and it might have been that Jack was trying to be sensitive to the majority of alumni who did not have a master's.

On an undated hand-written Bank Street "individual prospect information card" that he must have completed when he became a Statutory Trustee, Jack lists a master's degree from TC in 1931. Comments from some of the people interviewed for this project also suggest that at times Jack regretted that he did not have a doctorate<sup>33</sup> although in a 1975 interview with Edith Gordon he stated that he made the choice not to pursue one after taking courses for four years at Penn's School of Education. He had two reasons for this decision. First, he became convinced that "Ph.D. or the Ed.D. training ...did not result in great competency on the part of people that had them." Second, Jack said he was always "a rebel" and this was another form of rebellion, one that he felt connected him to the "spirit of Bank Street."<sup>34</sup>

There is no question that Jack was a life-long learner, with varied interests and intellectual passions. An abiding passion became progressive education. Jack's first job was teaching adolescents at a rather unique boys boarding school, the Adirondack-Florida School, which moved between its two campuses depending on the season. The teaching style was traditional, however, and Jack gravitated to reading journals such as *Progressive Education* and trying out new ideas in his English and social studies classes. During the summer of 1931, he studied at TC, learning about and becoming devoted to John Dewey's philosophy of education and view of the role of education in building a democratic society.<sup>35</sup>

In 1934 he married Marjorie Albertson and took a teaching position at the Harley School, a progressive school in Rochester, New York. Eventually he became head of the social studies department and Harley's Assistant Director. During the same period, Jack became involved with the teachers union movement, serving as president of the Empire State Federation of Teachers and a trustee of the Central Trades and Labor Council, where he chaired the education committee. Jack also supported Norman Thomas and the Socialist Party but made it clear he was strongly anti-Communist. He did not serve in the military in World War II, continuing to teach at Harley and, with Marjorie, managing a cooperative summer farm-labor camp in the Finger Lakes. This camp, and a winter camp that Jack also ran with a Harley colleague, reflected his interest in making physical labor part of the high school program.<sup>36</sup>

Jack then became Director of Oak Lane Country Day School, which served as the laboratory school for Temple University's Teachers College, where he had the status of Lecturer. During his tenure at Oak Lane (1945-56), the school more than doubled in size, to 275 students and 25 faculty. Until this point, Jack's teaching experience had been on the secondary school level, but now he became a serious student of the education of younger children. Marjorie and he put down roots, buying a home in nearby Jenkintown, and Jack joined the Rotary and served on the board of a settlement house. He continued to be active in professional social studies organizations.

In 1952-53, Jack took a leave to work in France for the American Friends Service Committee. He was involved in evaluating the AFS programs in several French, English and German schools. Marjorie and their daughter Nancy accompanied Jack on this adventure. After this experience, Jack seemed to develop an interest in both international education and travel overseas. As president of Bank Street, he was a lecturer on education for the State Department in Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand (1961), a consultant on education to the government of Sikkim, and a trustee of Robert College in Turkey.<sup>37</sup>

While Jack's career and range of experiences are interesting and impressive, one might legitimately ask what made him a strong candidate for Bank Street's presidency. Although he was very interested in the education of young children, he was not an established early childhood educator, with a record of teaching and research work similar to Bank Street's staff. He had taught older children English and history in private schools, with some limited experience with Philadelphia's public schools. At Oak Lane he was not actually the chief executive officer because Temple provided one-third of the school's budget and the director reported to the dean of the university's Teachers College.

The key points of connection to Bank Street seem to be Jack's deep unswerving commitment to John Dewey and progressive education, and the connections he had developed with important Bank Street staff, such as Barbara Biber and Claudia Lewis, who came to Oak Lane as professional development consultants for faculty and as speakers for parents meetings.<sup>38</sup>

### *Pathways to Progressive Education*

As mentioned in the last chapter, Jack became a progressive educator by choice. He found progressive education eventually answered the questions that he developed as a teacher, starting in the 1930's when he joined the faculty at Harley School. He learned about that job, which was initially only part-time, by contacting schools that he found in issues of *Progressive Educator*, which he had begun reading. This job-hunting approach suggests that he had already decided on the kind of school in which he would want to teach. Harley was that kind of school, but it was only because Marjorie and he had some savings to rely on that Jack could agree to take a part-time teaching job with the hope it would develop into more. It was 1934, and the Depression was a reality.<sup>39</sup> Jack was a neophyte teacher, but perhaps this early gamble on a career path and a school that "fascinated" him reflected the kind of pragmatic idealism that he espoused for the rest of his life.

In 1931, Jack had spent a summer taking courses at TC, which might have helped him land the teaching job at the boarding school. Arriving at Harley in 1934, he took advantage of his part-time status to begin a master's program in history at the University of Rochester. Because he taught American History as well as English at Harley, this was a good move for someone who wanted to become full-time and also evidence of Jack's continuing hunger for learning and an academic community. Marjorie and Jack spent the summer of 1935 in New York City, renting an apartment only two blocks from what would be the location of Bank Street's Morningside Heights home 35 years later. He had come to the realization that he did not know how to teach as well as he wanted to. He spent several weeks in the Columbia Library, reading widely on education and finding John Dewey's work. Jack was familiar with Dewey from reading *Progressive Education*, but now as he hunted for "something practical" he found that he "was thrilled with Dewey." In later years, Jack said that Dewey's 1936 classic *Education and Experience*, so impressed him that he did an outline of the book "so that I would fix it in my mind."<sup>40</sup>

Jack became actively involved in the Progressive Education Association, through which he met Fritz Redl, who had fled Austria due to his growing concern about anti-Semitism after the Nazi Party came to power in Germany. Redl had a strong interest in education, mental health, psychology and children with emotional issues. Jack was intrigued with Redl's approach to designing curriculum and invited him to visit Harley. He and Redl became close friends, and Redl (who was older) became a mentor. Redl joined the faculty at the University of Michigan in 1938, and for the next three summers, Marjorie and Jack would stay with Fritz. Jack took summer graduate courses in education at Michigan, adding breadth and depth to his eclectic, self-directed progressive education studies.<sup>41</sup>

Jack could be critical of some progressive education approaches. He was always practical and did not believe there was a particular teaching style or method that always worked best. Whether in a traditional lecture or a seminar format with a great deal of student discussion, Jack preferred focusing on ideas or the work of teaching, and despaired over courses that amounted to students "sharing their ignorance." He could also be very critical of teachers who were not willing to change their modes of teaching or focus most upon what would be best for the children they taught.<sup>42</sup>

Believing that the bureaucratic structure of public education, where administrators had all the power, was the main obstacle to improving teaching, Jack became active in the teachers union movement in Rochester and other upstate New York regions, and later in the Philadelphia-Wilmington area. It seems unusual that a teacher at an independent school would seek a leading role in unionizing public schools, but this effort

reflected Jack's belief that, if teachers could be relieved of the fear of sudden dismissal, "they would become the kind of teachers that [he believed] schools had to have." Jack found out that, in many cases, his belief was unfounded: when teachers no longer had any reason to be afraid because they could not be fired, "they seemed to be no more interested in children than they had been, or any more questioning about curriculum or the way they acted." He never opposed organizing teachers and even felt that at some future time unions might have some positive impact on improving children's learning, but he no longer saw them as helpful in accomplishing urgently needed reforms of the public schools.<sup>43</sup>

Jack's Harley years deepened and widened his base of knowledge of progressive education in theory and practice, and helped him to develop skills as a school leader. Harley had been founded in Rochester in 1917 by a group of mothers of young children from diverse social backgrounds who wanted to provide an appropriate learning environment for their four-year olds. They focused on Maria Montessori's approach, and followed a cooperative model, with parents and a teacher running the new school. Its purpose was "to interpret and meet the needs of the individual child so that he may fit in with and serve his fellow beings to the height of his power." Initially called The Children's University School of Rochester, the name was changed to Harley in 1924, when the school was incorporated under New York State law. The change was intended to honor Harriet Bentley, a founder who had recently died, combining the first and last three letters of her name, a distinctive approach that reflected the school's character and culture. Also in 1924, the school at last acquired a property of its own as a small campus.

In September 1925 a new director was hired and began Harley's development into a progressive independent school that continues to the present. Louise Sumner came to Harley from Evanston, IL High School but knew the Rochester region from her years of running a girl's summer camp in the Adirondacks. A progressive educator, Sumner served as Harley's director until 1944, expanding the school to cover preK-12. The Harley history section on the school's website describes "The Sumner Years" as the period of "the real flowering of the little school" into the larger co-ed institution it is today, and Louise Sumner as "a woman of vision, courage, and infinite dedication." It seems reasonable to assume that Sumner hired Jack in 1934 as a part-time teacher, and then promoted him to full-time and later to Assistant Head. It also seems likely that Sumner was his mentor and a role model of progressive independent school leadership. The coincidence that Jack went to Oak Lane as director in 1945, right after Sumner retired from Harley at the end of 1944, is also suggestive. Either Jack, the Assistant Director, was not interested in being a candidate for Sumner's job, or Harley's board did not see him in that role. Perhaps after a decade at Harley, Jack felt it was time to find a different arena to build his skills, where he could try out his own ideas. In any event, it seems fair to conclude that Sumner had given his career a strong boost and positioned him for a school director's job, as well as encouraged his development as an educator and leader in the progressive education mold.

Although it is hard to generalize based on his senior paper from a summer course in 1941,<sup>44</sup> it seems that the history of American public education became a strong area of interest for Jack. The school was not identified, but it seems likely this paper was from a University of Michigan graduate education course taken while Marjorie and Jack were staying with Fritz Redl. The paper focused on the political, economic, and social forces influencing education in the U.S. since 1860, noting that "education is, in a sense, only a reflection of the society in which it is found, and the forces which affect it are all these multitude of forces operating in the social order." Jack's paper reflected his interest in social justice issues, from reaction to Reconstruction in the South (and the impact on "Negro education") to the effects of industrialization on schools, children, and the understanding of the expanding roles public education was expected to play in society. In discussing the origins of ideas about early learning, he mentioned John Dewey as an "outstanding educator" and acknowledged the "new psychology" of Hall, Thorndike and William James in developing practices that identified schools as "progressive." It was a short paper but provided a snapshot of Jack's evolving thinking about larger issues of public education.

It was clear that during his time at Harley, Jack was also thinking hard about the variety of challenges and lives that children faced, depending on where they lived and the economic status of their family. While staying



in Ann Arbor in July 1940, Jack wrote to a Harley colleague named George about the school's social studies curriculum. He was both practical and passionate. Being practical, he noted that "differing economic-social milieus produce different needs" and that Harley students "come from relatively privileged homes" so "do not need the usual experiences which bring color and richness into people's lives" through school. Harley students have a different need, Jack wrote, because they are so protected from and "unconsciously kept from understanding the meaning of hard work, of necessity, of the savage economic drive which is behind the activities of 99% of the people of the world." Jack felt social studies should bring this reality to the Harley students so that they would understand "the need to take some personal responsibility for society." This letter described ways to revise the 4th, 5th and 6th grade social studies curricula to introduce new ways of learning about how Rochester developed as a community and city, by focusing on questions about such fundamentals as food production, housing, and finding methods to resolve conflicts. Jack also wanted to engage the children in experiential learning, such as churning butter and smelting metal, rather than relying just on extensive reading. Harley children were "removed from the basic operations of life." He was especially excited about the idea of every 6th grader gaining exposure to "real life on a farm."<sup>45</sup>

In early 1942 Jack published an article in *The Bulletin of National Association of Secondary School Principals* entitled "Work Experience in the School – Now!" which reflects this approach, as well as providing a window into his development as a progressive educator and school leader.<sup>46</sup> Noting approvingly that work experience was becoming more discussed, Jack focused, as his title suggested, on taking immediate action and suggested a model that he helped to implement at Harley. In refuting the view that what succeeded at a small private school was not relevant more broadly, he expressed a personal conviction that such a program "could be developed in other schools, even though these schools may seem to differ radically" from Harley. Jack's perspective, perhaps particularly about innovations intended to build a child's sense of social responsibility and a school's capacity to promote "civic-mindedness," developed into a firm conviction later evidenced by his repeated assertions that what worked at Bank Street could bring similar results in any school if implemented correctly.

Jack's early idealism was also reflected by this article, which included a ringing challenge to public school teachers and administrators facing opposition on technical grounds: "Boards of education and administrators will have to decide whether they hold in sacred trust for society the future of buildings or the future of children." He also conveyed pragmatism, however, by describing the difficulties of moving teachers, students, administration, and parents from agreement in concept to acceptance of a work experience as part of the educational program. His emerging view of the role of the school leader was on display, identifying three functions – building awareness, supporting teacher initiatives, and "to act as the interpreter to other teachers, parents and community groups." The vital importance of convincing parents and community leaders of the educational value of innovations would continue to be part of Jack's approach to addressing urgent education needs for the rest of his career.

Harley provided room for Jack's growth as an educator but it was also constraining. In a June 2004 remembrance of Jack, a student from the class of 1946 recalls him as a model teacher who treated secondary school students as adults, which was unusual for that era. More significant, this Harley alumnus wrote that the school "harbored no minorities, and no poor, but Jack leavened our reading, our attention and our lives to the otherwise familiar... [I]t was, at the time, the best that could have been done... [h]e showed us how to live vicariously."<sup>47</sup> But Jack, with a growing passion for social justice issues as illuminated by World War II, did not seem to want to continue to live vicariously. It was time to move on, to a different kind of place with different kinds of challenges and opportunities.

In 1945 Jack moved Marjorie and Nancy, who was then seven years old, to Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. He had left Pennsylvania for Hamilton College in Clinton, New York in 1926, but nineteen years later he was coming into a very different kind of community at Oak Lane Country Day School than he might remember from his hometown of Scranton. Like Bank Street, Oak Lane was founded in 1916 and took its name from its location on Oak Lane Road, in Cheltenham, a township just north of Philadelphia. Its

founders wanted to model progressive education approaches to create a school that was religiously, racially and economically diverse. Several early leaders were connected to the University of Pennsylvania, including Francis Garver, the first head of school, who went on to direct the elementary division of Penn's School of Education. His successor, Francis Froelicher, came in 1916 from the Park School in Baltimore, which had been founded by his father, Goucher College professor Hans Froelicher, a leader of the Progressive Education movement and an advisor to Oak Lane's founders when they were planning the school. Francis Froelicher became president of the Progressive Education Association of American during his tenure as Oak Lane head (1921-27). Oak Lane's Advisory Committee from that period included many prominent progressive education leaders, including John Dewey and Felix Adler.

We can get some sense of the educational approach and environment of Oak Lane in the 1930's from the memories of a famous alumnus, Noam Chomsky. He was a student for a decade, 1930-40, from age 2 to 12. Noam was the child of immigrants from Russia and Lithuania. His parents were Jewish educators, and his father William became a renowned Hebrew language expert. Perhaps what was described as a "Deweyite experimental institution" attracted an academically-oriented, politically socialist family. Chomsky regarded Oak Lane as the most important educational arena in his life: "what marked him as a child were his memories of free and unstructured exploration rather than imposed curriculum." In other words, as a young child Chomsky could "expand his creative faculties without being intimidated by a competitive evaluation system."<sup>48</sup> It seems particularly interesting that Oak Lane was able to sustain its distinctive educational environment throughout the challenging years of the Depression, when the school faced severe financial problems that led to its loss of independence.

The Depression impacted Oak Lane as it did many other schools. James Hilty reported in his 2010 history of Temple University, "[w]hen the economic downturn left the parents unable to sustain [Oak Lane], they turned to Temple" where the merger won Board approval in 1931. Hilty suggests this "acquisition" solved a problem for Temple, which operated a high school and, in 1930, considered converting it into a laboratory-demonstration school for its Teachers College (as the School of Education was named at that time). The Temple trustees might have had second thoughts about the wisdom of the merger. They seriously considered closing Oak Lane in 1937 and 1939 due to "management issues and recurring deficits," and only outside pressure and the decision to eliminate the high school grades saved the school.<sup>49</sup>

It seems that a key figure during this period was Millard E. Gladfelter who was originally brought to Temple to direct the proposed university laboratory-demonstration school but instead took a senior administrative job in the university. He became the Provost whom Jack had to deal with when Oak Lane's future was being considered in the early 1950's. After becoming Temple's president in 1959, Gladfelter closed Oak Lane a year later.

Jack's immediate predecessors served short stints as school director. It seems likely that Oak Lane continued to have some difficulties with "mission drift" and attracting enough students, perhaps admitting some children who presented challenges the school could not handle. In a May 1955 letter to Willard Zahn, the new Dean of Temple's College of Education, Jack commented "when I look back upon those first few years and the numbers of really disturbed kids which I inherited when I walked in so bravely in 1945, I wonder how all of us did the pretty wonderful job that we apparently did!" Financial pressures were likely the reason for taking children who might have been served better at another school but whose parents wanted Oak Lane. Jack might also have been willing to take more "normal" children whose parents were unfamiliar with the goals and benefits of the progressive approach and questioned its effectiveness, value and purposes, believing he could educate them about the value of Oak Lane's philosophy and methods.

As Director of Oak Lane School, Jack sought to offer a more balanced approach by promoting the principles of progressive education as including "the necessity for trying to give children those academic competencies which they will need to live in a complex society." In his "Principal Points" message in the quarterly parents' association magazine, Jack asserted the "fundamentals" of an Oak Lane education as follows: "We believe

that the primary task of education is to help each child to achieve a full life. We believe that the normal child, to do this, must feel that he is important, that he is worthy of the respect of others. We believe that he should develop as fully as possible his intellectual curiosity, his capacity for self-expression, his spontaneity, his initiative. We believe he needs to work out satisfying and sound relationships with his own sex and the opposite sex. We believe that honesty, consideration of others, and self-control are vastly more important for him than superficial politeness or manners or fear of authority. We believe that he should learn to work effectively with other people – knowing when to cooperate and when to be intransigent – and to solve social problems through group thinking and group action.”<sup>50</sup>

In this statement of "first things," Jack sought to both educate and challenge the adults in the Oak Lane community to accept and adopt his "credo" of progressive education and a whole-child approach to learning. It is interesting that the characteristics of the well-educated child he describes seem quite similar to those of the adult that Jack sought to be.

The same issue of *Affairs* contained a "condensation of the findings of the Evaluation Committee" of the Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools, noting that "a recent act" of the State Legislature had "made obligatory the licensing of private schools." Oak Lane was a charter member of this association, and the writer of this article was at pains to make it clear that the evaluation was not to give a grade but to help the school under review assess its strengths and weaknesses and "appraise their accomplishments." Jack must have been pleased with the Evaluation Committee's findings on several levels. The committee lauded the "spirit of cooperation existing throughout the school," including parents, students, teachers, and administration: "The report stated that the Headmaster's philosophy of shared responsibility between the administration and the teaching staff exemplified modern concepts of democratic school organization." There were positive comments on the academic quality of the teachers and their "enthusiasm for the school and its philosophy" as well as the school's classrooms and campus. Furthermore, the committee "praised the staff's approach to inter-racial problems and the school's use of professional and lay people in the community to increase knowledge and experience in this and other fields of study." Finally, Jack was likely not unhappy to have the Evaluation Committee emphasize the "relative low standard of salaries and the inadequacy of Oak Lane's retirement program" and the "excessive pressure" imposed by the list of duties for teachers. In other words, the school was understaffed and the teachers were underpaid. The article noted at the end that Temple had "stated its intention of allocating more money for teachers' salaries next year" (1949-50), but it is probable Jack appreciated having more ammunition to use in turning that intention into reality.

As mentioned earlier, Jack became much more deeply involved with early childhood education, and the education of young children from birth on, at Oak Lane. Because he was the director of the school, he was a lecturer at Temple's Teachers College and the point of contact for its administrators and faculty, including the leaders of programs that used the school for teacher education. Jack found that coursework at Penn's Graduate School of Education was helpful, but his direct experience with Esther Mason, chair of Temple's Elementary Education department, was even more important. Mason spent two days a week at Oak Lane, visiting and observing in the nursery school and kindergarten. Often Jack would accompany her. During his first two years at the school, Jack told the teachers for the younger grades that, if one of them needed to be away, he would cancel his appointments and take over the class. Although he called it "learning the hard way," Jack later said "those experiences, combined with my fifteen years of teaching junior and senior high classes, gave me a feel for the work of the classroom teacher that has guided all my thinking about curriculum, school organization, and leadership since." He concluded with a strong opinion that was the foundation for his remarks about teachers at the 1954 Bank Street Associates conference described earlier: "To be named a teacher is the highest of compliments."<sup>51</sup>

Jack became closely involved with the work of Mason and her colleagues in the early childhood education program, which fed his interest in public education for younger children. For four years he directed Temple's early childhood collaboration with Philadelphia public schools. Temple's early childhood faculty and Oak Lane's pre-school teachers also told Jack about a place in New York called Bank Street, its Harriet Johnson

Nursery School, and the pioneering work of Barbara Biber, Claudia Lewis, and Clara Coble.<sup>52</sup> Later, Jack brought Biber and Lewis to Oak Lane on several occasions for professional development meetings with his teachers and evening presentations to the parents.

Through his teaching and administrative work at two progressive schools and his educational experiences at Michigan and Penn, as well as his own extensive reading of Dewey and other leading philosophers of education, Jack had been exposed to the intellectual ferment and practical aspects of contemporary progressive education. One set of experiences, however, was missing. He had not had an exposure to educational systems in other countries. As noted earlier, this gap in his experience was addressed in 1952-53. Under Jack's leadership, Oak Lane became part of the School Affiliation program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

The Oak Lane program featured exchanges of faculty, pen pal letters and group projects with a school near Paris named La Maison d'Enfants de Sevres which served orphaned children. Jack took a leave from Oak Lane in order to work for the AFSC in Europe. Marjorie, their daughter Nancy, and Jack moved to France. Jack did evaluations of the AFSC international education programs in French, English and German schools. It was an exciting time for him, expanding his educational interests and whetting his appetite for working in a larger arena on major issues of learning, especially in early childhood education.

Oak Lane's problems with Temple's administration were growing more complicated. Jack's leave and overseas location did not entirely separate him from the issues, which at their core were about the relationship of the school to the university's educational programs, and the amount of money Temple paid to cover the school's operating expenses. Jack returned to Oak Lane to find disturbing developments. He became aware that among Temple leadership, "Oak Lane was not being discussed in terms of the ways in which its potential could be used more fully by the Teachers College, but in terms of whether or not it should be closed."<sup>53</sup> Jack became concerned about the level of commitment to the school's role on the part of Temple's provost, the same Millard Gladfelter who had expected to establish and direct a new university lab school in 1930 that the merger with Oak Lane halted. He began to seriously consider leaving Oak Lane; but after receiving reassurance from Gladfelter about the school's importance and future, he decided to stay.<sup>54</sup> It seems likely, however, that this startling experience made a strong impression, leaving Jack more open to an opportunity to take the step of applying for Bank Street's presidency.

The central problem was that the Dean's position at Teachers College had remained unfilled too long. J. Conrad Seegers had left Temple in 1953 to become president of Muhlenberg College. Seegers had served briefly as director of Oak Lane (1943-44) and then became Dean of Teachers College in 1949. During his tenure, Temple and Oak Lane seemed to enjoy a positive relationship. When Seegers' departure was announced in 1952, Temple President Robert L. Johnson requested appointment of a special committee to conduct an appraisal of how Oak Lane supported the teacher education programs and the school's potential for additional services.

The establishment of that committee was delayed until 1955 because there was no Dean to chair the study. In 1955, Temple named Willard Zahn as Dean of Teachers College. Zahn was an alumnus, with bachelor's (1922) and master's degrees (1930) in education from Temple. He had been a teacher, principal, district school superintendent, and came to the deanship from serving as Associate Superintendent of Philadelphia public schools. Jack seemed delighted with the appointment. Jack felt comfortable in a note of congratulations to offer advice about the qualities needed for the job, as well as explaining why he had accepted the Bank Street presidency. Jack opined that "we need someone who is a good organizer, who has ideals and vision, and who has a sense of devotion to the task of improving education through improved teacher training and the search for better programs and methods."<sup>55</sup>

Since Jack had told Gladfelter and Johnson about Bank Street's offer, it was very probable that Zahn also had been informed. Still, Jack seemed to feel that it was necessary to stress that Bank Street had pursued him

despite his initial negative replies. He presented his non-negotiable requirement about staying at Oak Lane until July 1956 as a way of ending his candidacy, and was surprised to be selected. Jack sought Zahn's support for coupling the news of his acceptance of Bank Street's offer with an announcement to the Oak Lane community that there was a firm plan to recruit new school head, in order to avoid upsetting teachers and parents.<sup>56</sup>

Jack took a bold approach by asserting that his departure might be to Zahn's benefit as it would make it easier if he wanted "to experiment with an organizational setup different from that which we have." Having already committed to Bank Street, Jack felt he could be more objective as a source of advice and his comments and ideas would not be seen as possibly self-serving. He wanted to have a hand in planning the future, probably to help gain security for his faculty but also to make sure what he felt were the key contributions and potential Oak Lane offered were recognized. Another strong and very unusual statement followed:

"One of the profound problems we shall face in trying to plan well for Oak Lane's maximum contribution is that no one at the University really knows too much about the complexities of the Oak Lane program and organizational functioning. It would be very easy, therefore, for someone to sit in an office at Broad and Montgomery and make plans for Oak Lane which would result only in our losing the great potential which we have gained. And it is a tremendous potential, because there is something spiritually unique in our little school which can be sensed even if it cannot be clearly defined. The devoted ministry of many people has created this quality – and if we do not utilize to the fullest in our work to educate better teachers we shall have thrown away a precious opportunity."<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps Jack used such unexpected terms as "spiritually unique" and "devoted ministry" because he thought they would appeal to Zahn as a person with strong religious convictions. According to his family, Jack was an agnostic, with only an academic interest in religion from historical and philosophical perspectives.<sup>58</sup> It might also be possible that, after many years of absorbing and promoting the ideals of progressive education, Jack had become almost evangelical about the best pathway to superb teaching and a just, democratic society.

Based on Jack's notes from a December 1955 meeting of Temple senior administrators in Zahn's office, perhaps his arguments had persuaded the new dean to move cautiously about Oak Lane's status. Jack's attendance suggested that, although just seven months from departing, he might have had some influence on the consideration of the school's future. According to Jack, only Zahn did not seem to seek reasons to close Oak Lane. One person noted that it was clear Oak Lane did not "feed the University," which seemed to Jack an odd comment to make then since Temple had been subsidizing the school since 1931. The same person reported a comment from a Temple trustee that it was upsetting to have only twelve students in an Oak Lane class when the neighborhood around the university was so poor. There was also a complaint that Oak Lane parents were only interested in giving to the school, and not to Temple. To Jack, the discussion demonstrated his point to Zahn that no one understood the purposes of a laboratory school and its value in supporting high quality teacher preparation.

Zahn absorbed some of Jack's arguments. He established a process of consultation although not a special review committee, and in February 1956 issued his report, with the title "Oak Lane: A Reappraisal."<sup>59</sup> Zahn concluded that, in the Temple elementary, kindergarten and nursery school teacher education programs, Oak Lane served "highly-valuable purposes" as a laboratory-demonstration school. In fact, the nursery-kindergarten areas were to be emphasized. On the other hand, Oak Lane would become a preK-grade 6 school, with grades 7-9 eliminated by June 1957. There were many positive findings: strong statements of support for Oak Lane's contributions to the elementary teacher education programs; specific ideas about ways to develop the school's potential as a lab school in such areas as reading; sustaining parent involvement in planning; supporting strong relationships among parents, students and teachers; and promotion of better relationships between Oak Lane and Teachers College faculty.

The search for Jack's successor had been delayed until the reappraisal was completed but now could move

ahead. The new emphasis on early childhood and elementary education meant that the best candidate would have "greater than average background and knowledge" in those areas, with "appreciation" of nursery and kindergarten particular valued. The new director would have "professorial status" in Temple's Teachers College, suggesting a tighter connection than the lecturer position Jack had held and perhaps an emphasis on the academic credentials required for appointment to professorial rank.

The section on the Temple-Oak Lane relationship makes clear Temple's authority and budgetary control. While giving the school head administrative authority, the overall administrative responsibility of this "integral part of Teachers College" resided with the Dean and the Early Childhood and Elementary Education department. The reappraisal was characterized by Zahn as a "charter" for Oak Lane which addressed the long-standing issues Temple administrators had for control, as well as Teachers College's need for a laboratory-demonstration school for a key department; and Oak Lane's desire for reassurance that it would not be closed.

Jack could leave Oak Lane with satisfaction that his most important goals for Oak Lane had been achieved and closure averted. Oak Lane would survive, although somewhat reduced due to the elimination of grades 7-9, with assured Temple financial support. The school's status as the laboratory-demonstration site for Temple's Teachers College was affirmed and clarified. He could not have anticipated that Zahn's new charter would last only four years. With a deficit of \$128,000 for Oak Lane in 1960, Temple concluded the laboratory-demonstration school was unsustainable, closed the school, and sold off the campus to a developer.<sup>60</sup>

Oak Lane would not end then, however, with its trustees, faculty, staff and parents incorporating under a new name – Oak Lane Day School – and finding a new home in a former public school building nearby. Jack Niemeyer was asked to become chair of the school's board of trustees. Although now busy in New York with Bank Street, Jack agreed and even served as school spokesperson. The new Oak Lane Day School continued for another fifty years.

### *Coming to Bank Street*

As a progressive educator and director of a progressive independent school, Jack was certainly aware of Bank Street. His Oak Lane faculty had visited 69 Bank Street, and he brought Barbara Biber and Claudia Lewis to his school for professional development and parent education programs. His introduction to Bank Street came earlier, in the mid-1930's, through his wife Marjorie, who was a part-time assistant in the Harley School's nursery program. The nursery teacher, Marjorie reported, had come from "69 Bank Street" in New York City and was taking her staff there for a few days. Marjorie called the place "some kind of Mecca" but did not have much more information about it. When she returned, Marjorie was delighted with the "wonderful nursery school, with exciting teachers" but was unclear about what the organization was, how the teacher preparation program and the other parts fit together, or even what its official name was.<sup>61</sup>

Jack was invited to a meeting at Bank Street in 1952 when he accepted charter membership in the Associates group that Lucy created to broaden support for the College as she moved toward retirement. Marjorie and he returned to attend Associates programs, such as a presentation by Dr. Benjamin Spock in 1955 and the annual Bank Street conferences that were held at the Biltmore Hotel and attracted large audiences. As noted in the last chapter, Jack was invited to be a speaker at the 1954 Associate conference and had a major role in responding to the criticisms of progressive education leveled by Brinton and Riesman, the academic "stars" who spoke during the morning session.

Whether Jack was aware of it or not, his name had been brought up in 1952 as a possible candidate should Bank Street decide to seek a president.<sup>62</sup> As will be described in the next chapter, Bank Street trustees and staff had wrestled with the idea of naming a chief executive officer – or more accurately, with creating an

administrative structure that would be more efficient and effective – since Lucy had begun to express her desire to step down from her responsibilities as chairman of the board and *de facto* head of the College. Jack's recollections tend to describe a more informal process where, as he wrote to Willard Zahn, the new Dean of Temple's Teachers College, Bank Street seemed intent on recruiting him. The Committee to Select a President was chaired by Nell Eurich, a powerful Trustee who had served as Acting President of Stephens College in Missouri in 1953-54 and would have known about how to conduct a high-level search in the college world. Her husband was Alvin Eurich, the first president of the State University of New York (1949-51) and vice president for education at the Ford Fund for the Advancement of Education, which had recently begun to award major grants to Bank Street. Her committee had been created in the spring of 1953, at the same time as Lucy Mitchell was named Acting President, after an extended period of consideration by College staff and Trustees about how best to strengthen administrative operations and, if that meant choosing to bring in a president, what duties and authority such a job would encompass.

Eurich's reports at the Board meetings in 1954-55 document a more traditional search process, although it seems clear that Jack was always at the top of Bank Street's list and, by February 1955, apparently the frontrunner. On February 15, 1955, Eurich reported at the Board meeting on her committee's progress.<sup>63</sup> Her report provides the clearest depiction of the search process and Jack's growing involvement. She started by noting that Jack had been mentioned three years earlier "as a suggestion from a staff member" who was not identified. It is speculative but it seems quite possible that the staff member might have been one of the Bank Street faculty who had come to Oak Lane for a professional development visit – Biber or Lewis – and whose recommendation would have carried weight within the College. Jack was invited to apply and did so.

At the February board meeting, the minutes record that Eurich "read the curriculum vitae which he had submitted" as well as excerpts from reference letters, including responses from the President and Provost of Temple.<sup>64</sup> The letters mentioned Jack's "attractive personality, his integrity, his success in working with different groups of people, [and] his experimental but not extreme point of view." Her discussions with Jack were advanced enough for him to raise financial questions about salary and pension.

There were some concerns. Eurich pointed out that Jack did not have an advanced degree. Two trustees who had attended a dinner meeting with Jack found him "familiar and comfortable" with "great dignity" but not "dynamic and exciting."<sup>65</sup> There also seemed to be some confusion about the extent of Temple's support for the operation of Oak Lane and whether Jack's experience with fundraising was only for special projects.

Eurich described the Oak Lane Country Day School, noting that the student body and faculty were diverse and 20% of the families received financial aid. She reported that the operating budget was divided in thirds between Temple, tuition income, and fundraising. She also mentioned that Jack seemed to have good ideas about finding sources of support for Bank Street, and that his "views seemed comprehensive and well organized." Eurich read a statement from the Staff Policy Committee regarding Jack, which was favorable, expressing satisfaction with his background, point of view, and "educational personality." The key paragraph, however, was less about Jack's qualifications and more about Bank Street's organizational culture and need for addressing the administrative and financial future as "a team problem," concluding that "Mr. Niemeyer's candidacy would have to be considered in combination with the structure and staffing of our internal administration, and the resources for leadership and fundraising in the Board of Trustees." The membership of the Staff Policy Committee included Barbara Biber, Charlotte Winsor, Iby Gilkeson, Irma Black, with Lucy as Acting President an *ex officio* member, and Sheila Sadler as the chairman. This statement seemed to be intended to counter any Board concerns about the need to bring in the kind of president who might force changes through executive fiat.

That purpose became clearer when Lucy asked to speak from the chair, and emphasized that "the Board should think of available personnel in terms of meeting the overall needs of the College" because no one person can be expected to meet them. She refreshed the concept of the president as coordinator and facilitator of a team, connecting the Board, staff, Associates, and to represent Bank Street to the outside

world. Jack was "the best candidate whom we have considered" and "would ably sustain, coordinate and contribute to our present educational program and extend it in new ways."

His fundraising burdens were challenging, but Sheila Sadler could be trained to be his fundraising assistant. By working together with a strong committee composed of Trustees, staff and Associates, Lucy believed that Jack and Sheila would prove to be a strong team able to meet "the total needs of the College."<sup>66</sup>

While Lucy's remarks seemed to have settled the matter for Bank Street, there was no vote. There were several items that needed to be resolved. Eurich had reported that there might be a timing issue because Jack was definite that he could not leave Oak Lane abruptly and might not be available until the summer of 1956, depending on how quickly Temple could appoint his successor. She mentioned, implying that the idea came from Jack, that he could give Bank Street one day a week in 1955-56 to become acquainted with the staff and program. There were also financial issues to address. The "sense of the meeting" was that Sadler should begin to learn about fundraising from Victor Weingarten, the consultant whom the Board had voted to retain to help with the Associates and public relations, and that Eurich and her committee should continue discussions with Jack, including arrangements to visit Oak Lane. The decision seemed to have been made, with due diligence required on educational and administrative matters and financial terms to be settled upon so that a formal resolution could be presented for Board approval. That resolution was made at the April 19th Board meeting.<sup>67</sup>

During the next eight weeks, there were many meetings. Iby Gilkeson and Charlotte Winsor visited Oak Lane, and were enthusiastic about working with Jack at Bank Street. He met with the rest of the Trustees, including an interview with Board Treasurer Leonard Kandell while he waited in Philadelphia for a train to New York. Lucy visited the Niemeyer home in Jenkintown for most of a day. Jack sat in on a meeting of the Working Council, the large staff group that had traditionally overseen the programs of the College. He had long conversations with Biber, Gilkeson, Winsor and Sadler, who were probing his way of thinking and attitudes, gauging his reactions to descriptions about how Bank Street functioned.

With one exception, everything must have moved ahead satisfactorily because, on April 19, 1955, Nell Eurich reported that the Committee to Search for a President unanimously recommended Jack's appointment.<sup>68</sup> The exception was that, in his Treasurer's report on the financial situation of the College, Kandell expressed his firm opinion that Bank Street needed "a president who can become our leader in raising funds," as well as a Board of Trustees with the personal connections required to obtain significant gifts and grants, and a strong public relations head.

During Jack's interview at the train station, he recalled that all Kandell wanted "was somebody to come in there and raise some money for Bank Street" and that he seemed to doubt that Jack was that person.<sup>69</sup> Jack and Kandell became friends later, and Kandell (who was a real estate developer) was very helpful in making the 112th Street building a reality.

The College By-laws also needed to be amended to clarify the president's power, as chief executive officer, to hire and discharge employees with Board approval. The prior language seemed to imply that the president needed prior Board consent before discharging an employee. With that and other necessary amendments approved, the revised By-laws were voted on and accepted unanimously, clearing the way for a formal resolution to approve an offer to Jack to become President of Bank Street no later than June 1, 1956, and empowering Eurich to negotiate the final arrangements.

It had been obvious that some Trustees were not happy with the long delay before Jack took over as president. At the April 19th meeting, there had been some unusual disagreement among the members over the issue of continuing to increase professional and clerical salaries on the scale agreed upon the prior year. Kandell was concerned about increasing the projected deficit for 1955-56; he wished to cut the amount in half with most going to the professional staff. Elizabeth Healy Ross urged that the full amount be given to all



staff, and, in rare departure from the routine unanimous Board approval, ultimately voted against the resolution to award the lower amount and to allow the Policy Committee to determine if clerical staff would be included.<sup>70</sup> The fact that the Board had to deal with this level of management detail, as well as the continuing financial problems, underscored the urgent for a president who could step in and provide administrative and fundraising leadership.

What happened between April 19th and the announcement of Jack's appointment is not obvious, but it seems likely there were some problems. Jack's version of events is that, in May 1955 he received a call from Eurich offering him the job, apparently with the requirement that he start as soon as possible. He declined, citing his obligations to the Oak Lane community, while expressing deep disappointment. Two weeks later, Jack said, Eurich called with an amended offer. If Jack would agree to come as of July 1956, Lucy would agree to remain as Acting President for another year and delay her move to California. Jack accepted, of course, and began his year as president-elect, taking the train to Bank Street one day a week. Yet we know from Eurich's February 15th report to the Board that the issue of timing had been discussed; that Jack's position about his need to stay in place until June 1956 or the arrival of a successor was known; and that the possibility of a transition year with him coming one day a week to learn the programs and meet the staff had been raised.

There seem to be two possible explanations – one financial, one administrative – for this bumpy negotiation. The Board resolution on April 19th specified that compensation would be paid only when Jack assumed "the duties of the office." That suggested no payment for the one-day-a-week arrangement would be provided by Bank Street. It is probable that Jack had spoken about such a special arrangement with Temple Provost Gladfelter (who was one of his references and, in the absence of a Teachers College dean, Jack's immediate supervisor) before raising it with Eurich and feeling comfortable with her sharing it with the Board in February. It would be a virtual certainty that Temple had no intention of paying Jack to spend 20% of his time at Bank Street; in fact, one of the probable selling points Jack had for Gladfelter was relieving the Oak Lane budget of part of his salary. Without Bank Street "buying out his time" for a day a week, neither Jack nor Temple could afford to agree to the arrangement.

From the administrative perspective, there would have been a large question about who would lead the College in 1955-1956, if Lucy had relocated to Palo Alto as she had long planned to do. The members of the Policy Committee were already more than fully engaged. Barbara Biber had several research studies underway. Charlotte Winsor was running the teacher preparation programs and the Public School Workshops, which had expanded. Ibbey Gilkeson was getting the new School for Children off the ground, a demanding task since the collapse of the Harriet Johnson Nursery School and recent exodus of its staff and families. Sheila Sadler was staffing the Board and carrying out a host of daily administrative duties, including helping Ibbey with recruiting families to the new children's school. Having at last made the decision that Bank Street needed a president, Trustees and staff might have been justifiably nervous about a year-long gap in this central administrative leadership role.

The key to finding a resolution seems to have been Lucy's agreement to stay on as Acting President. Once that was secured, presumably by Eurich, the way was clear to make the necessary financial arrangements. Although her resources were diminished, Lucy continued to be Bank Street's largest donor. Together with her still formidable authority as founder, she could insist that the money to cover Jack's part-time salary – probably \$2,000 including travel expenses – could be found. After all, she and her closest colleagues had determined that Jack was the best person and they could not afford to lose him. For Lucy, that prospect must have been chilling. To have to begin the search process again, to try to find another person who had Jack's combination of personality and skills, could take another two years, destroying her plans for retiring to a simpler life, which had already been delayed too long.<sup>71</sup>

While Lucy's understandable concern for her own plans and future would have been significant, it seems clear that she had decided that Jack was the right person to succeed her and take Bank Street forward. The opinion of the Policy Committee, and especially Barbara Biber, would have been critical for her, and all of them

endorsed Jack. The committee's February 15th statement to the Board concludes as follows: "The Policy Committee would like to reiterate the sense of the faculty meeting that we would all be delighted to have Mr. Niemeyer join our staff and would enjoy working with him." Jack was a progressive educator with the same Dewey-inspired views of education and social reform that guided Lucy's work and dreams. He could never be the kind of hard-charging executive who would be likely to upset the relationships and culture Lucy had nurtured for nearly forty years. He got Bank Street, so it was essential for Bank Street to get him.

Jack was ready to move on from Oak Lane in part because he was tired of the complexities of the relationship with Temple and probably wary of Willard Zahn's plan for making the school more tightly controlled by Teachers College faculty in early childhood education, regardless of his admiration for them. The narrowed focus for Oak Lane reflected a reasonable assessment of Temple's goals and needs, but was likely too confining for a 48-year-old progressive educator with innovative ideas and a personal commitment to increased social justice and Dewey's concepts of reform. Jack had only recently returned from a perspective-broadening experience in Europe and, as a member of the Bank Street Associates, was exposed increasingly to the ideas and programs of the College. In a 1975 interview, Jack said he had felt that "Bank Street was the one bright spot, no matter how small, in the whole education scene in this country."<sup>72</sup>

Despite its shaky financial foundations and recent internal turmoil over the Nursery School, Jack was impressed by Bank Street's resilience and level of innovation. He was deeply respectful of Lucy's capacity to adjust to changing conditions while remaining focused on and committed to the College's core mission. He shared her fundamental view that "the world could indeed be made a better place, and...that a new and enlightened approach to children and their education would be one of the important means to that end." He remembered Lucy's map showing Bank Street at the center and lines stretching East and West across the oceans to reflect her belief in how the College's influence should spread to schools and people around the globe. The building of "a more rational, humane world through a new approach to education" was Bank Street's mission, and one that Jack wholeheartedly embraced, writing years later that "it was the chief inducement to me to accept the presidency in 1955 and remained my basic goal in all my work in that role."<sup>73</sup>

On a more practical level, Jack saw that Lucy, her close colleagues, and the Board were taking steps to address the realities Bank Street had to face to survive, especially after its founder retired. Amending the charter to become a degree-granting institution in 1950 was a major change, necessary to continue to develop as a teacher preparation college during a period when professional qualifications and requirements for certification as teachers were being raised. The Bank Street Associates had been established in 1952 to expand the base of financial and public support, and to engage alumni. Efforts were being made to add breadth and expertise to the Board of Trustees, moving the board from a largely advisory body toward assuming the fiduciary responsibilities usually held by trustees.

The growth of the Public School Workshops also impressed Jack. Lucy's book, *Our Children and Our Schools*, had been published in 1950. The foreword was by William H. Bristow, director for curriculum research for the New York City Board of Education, and posed a question of deep interest to Jack: "How can modern methods in education be made to apply effectively in large city public schools?"<sup>74</sup> Lucy's book discussed the goals, methods, and experiences of Bank Street staff working with the Board of Education. Responsibility for this important work had been transferred from Lucy, who began the first workshop experiment in Harlem in 1943, to Charlotte Winsor in 1947. Winsor became a full-time Bank Street staff member in 1951 as chair of both the Workshops and the College's graduate teaching programs. The potential for partnerships with the New York public schools seemed very promising. Blending such new efforts with Bank Street's teacher preparation work would provide a growing number of superb educators for public schools.

At the same time, Bank Street seemed to have committed to another area of intense interest to Jack: the laboratory school as an arena for experimentation and innovation in curriculum and teaching practice. He had been very disappointed that Temple did not understand the potential of Oak Lane as a lab school, and must have realized that Zahn and the university's Teachers College faculty were not interested in investing the

resources needed to make the school more than a demonstration site for early childhood students. A clear benefit of the terrible fight over the Harriet Johnson Nursery School's purpose and scope was the College's opportunity to build a lab school to meet its goals and needs. Jack knew Ibby Gilkeson, and was impressed by her vision and drive. He had reason to be confident that she would be successful as head of the newly-created Division of Children's Programs. Planning for a day care center in a Bronx public housing building was advanced, providing another laboratory environment as well as connecting Bank Street to a high-need community similar to those in Philadelphia with which Jack had been involved.

The commitment to a laboratory school approach reflected another aspect of Bank Street that attracted Jack – a determination to maintain high standards for teacher preparation. He saw at Temple an over-riding focus on quickly producing generally competent teachers for public schools in response to a national shortage, which made sense given the orientation of and financial pressures on Zahn and Teachers College. Jack wrote to his friend Peggy Wolfe about Bank Street in September 1956, that "[w]hat is so thrilling to me...is that the people here, although they want to train more teachers, are not willing to let down their standards one iota and refuse to drop qualitative for mere quantitative standards."<sup>75</sup>

The research studies devised and carried out by Barbara Biber and her colleagues in the Research Division were also a magnet for Jack. He understood and supported the definition of Bank Street's purpose as "to conduct research and experimental programs to improve the educational life of children." He knew that the scope of the work might change, as it already had by expanding from nursery school-aged children to those in elementary school grades. He saw expansion as natural, desirable, and even necessary if Bank Street were to play the unique role that he believed it should in improving the quality of education in the country.

Jack's respect and appreciation for Barbara Biber was deep. The prospect of working with her was another attraction to come to Bank Street. In a 1978 letter to her, Jack wrote that she was "the person who most of all exemplified for me the ideal of Bank Street." He described her as "the warm human spirit, the person with head in the clouds but feet on the ground, the scientific educator for whom children and teachers are not abstractions but other real human beings, the worker who struggles in anguish to do always a better job, the fellow human who can reach out to help and to seek help."<sup>76</sup>

Twenty-three years earlier, when he was considering being a candidate for Bank Street's presidency, Jack might not have been able to articulate his sense of Barbara in these words, but it seems likely he had reached the same conclusions. Here he would find an exciting colleague who would teach him, push him, stretch him, and even challenge him. Here was someone who would help him to understand the unusual community that was Bank Street, to guide him and partner with him in planning a future that built on the foundation Lucy had created. Given what he knew of Bank Street's organizational and financial challenges, it seems doubtful that he would have felt it would be prudent to take on the job as the first chief executive officer without feeling confident that Barbara, Lucy's intellectual and spiritual heir, wanted him in that role and would support him.

One area of research inquiry that brought Barbara and Jack together, and very much excited Jack, was the expanding effort to understand the connections between mental health and education, both for children and for teachers and schools.<sup>77</sup> Jack's good friend Fritz Redl, had introduced him to the exciting ideas linking education and mental health years earlier. During the period when Jack was under consideration for the job of president, Barbara and her group were involved in several "teacher personality" projects, including validation of the Cartoon Test developed at Bank Street and, of course, the preparation for the complex teacher personality study involving a "battery of tests" and follow-up observations of newly-minted teachers that was so horribly derailed in 1953. Biber described the goal of this work as "to develop refined methods of characterizing teacher personality along important dimensions such as relationship to people, identification with children and adults, anger and hostility, attitudes toward control, motivation and conceptualization of the learning process."<sup>78</sup>

Also in the pipeline was a major project called the "school effects" study which attempted "to measure the effects of contrasting school experiences on children of the middle years" and was under consideration for funding by the National Institutes of Mental Health.<sup>79</sup>

Jack Niemeyer was in his own words "a dreamer" except that he believed he could find a way to make his dreams turn into reality. If you worked hard and seized the opportunities, whether they came your way or you sought them out, as the Quakers said, "the way will open."<sup>80</sup>

On Sunday, June 5, 1955, a small article on page 78 of the *New York Times* announced that "John H. Niemeyer of Temple University, Philadelphia, has been elected president of Bank Street College." While Jack had accepted Bank Street's offer and a contract had been worked out by Eurich, formal approval by the Trustees actually occurred at the June 7th Board meeting. Perhaps that example of the College staff's lack of coordination on an important news item served as an indication of the size of the administrative and organizational challenge he would face when he became president in July 1956.

Fortunately, he had his year as president-elect to discover his new institution and community through a very Bank Street-style combination of observation, recording, developing relationships, and reflection. He knew he had a lot to learn and a number of people to reassure and persuade that the decision to create the position of president and his appointment, were in the long term best interests of Bank Street and its people.

It was time for Jack the pragmatic progressive idealist to make his mark – indeed, the way had opened.

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<sup>25</sup> The word "annalist" means a chronicler of events. Given Jack's enjoyment of history, he was perfect for this job.

<sup>26</sup> All quotes are from "Fifty-Year Class Annalist Address" given on October 11, 1980, a printed copy of which is in the Niemeyer Archives at Bank Street.

<sup>27</sup> "John H. Niemeyer – Autobiographical Note," undated but probably from 1956 because the text includes a parenthetical note to "Irma" who must be Irma Black. She was working with Jack on a biographical statement to use for various printed pieces which would be helpful in introducing the new president to the larger Bank Street community.

<sup>28</sup> Nancy Rovin, interview with John Borden, 4/3/2017.

<sup>29</sup> Jack never spoke to his family about this opportunity at Cornell. Rovin interview with John Borden, 4/3/2017.

<sup>30</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Teachers College, Columbia University's name will be shortened to TC in this paper. That is the nickname commonly used, at least in New York.

<sup>32</sup> *Notes from Bank Street*, January 1957, p. 37.

<sup>33</sup> Bank Street awarded Jack an honorary doctoral degree in 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 9. Jack's son-in-law Alyn Rovin confirmed Jack's claim to be a life-long rebel, noting that he held passionate and consistent liberal views and his politics were always "left wing." Interview with John Borden, 4/3/2017.

<sup>35</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, pp. 1-4 and 20.

<sup>36</sup> Much of the biographical information about Jack during these years can be found in Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 350-352.

<sup>37</sup> Jack's connection to Robert College was likely through Bank Street Trustee Anne Case who was on the Roberts board.

<sup>38</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 5-8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 9-11.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 352-353.

<sup>44</sup> "Chief Forces Affecting Education in the United States Since 1860," 8/7/1941.

<sup>45</sup> Jack must have felt this letter was an important statement of his thinking. The copy in the Niemeyer archive is marked with a handwritten note "Please Save."

<sup>46</sup> The Niemeyer archive includes what appears to be Jack's final draft of the article.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Gordon Brewster Baldwin, 6/1/2004. Baldwin was a law school professor and a scholar of constitutional and international law.

<sup>48</sup> Robert F. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent*, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 11-16.

<sup>49</sup> James Hilty, *Temple University: 125 Years of Service to Philadelphia, the Nation, and the World*, 2010, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> *Affairs*, v. III, no. 3, March 1949.

<sup>51</sup> Niemeyer interview with Richard Greenspan, transcript titled "How Did I Get to Bank Street," undated but likely from 1995 or 1996, pp. 1-6.

<sup>52</sup> Jack recalled reading Harriet Johnson's book, *Nursery School Years*, as a young teacher, noting that "it influenced me a great deal." Interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 2. That comment suggests that, early in his career as an educator, Jack was interested in the education of young children even though his own teaching assignments were with middle school-aged children.

<sup>53</sup> Jack's letter to Gladfelter, 9/22/1955

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Letter to Willard Zahn, 5/16/1955. Jack's resignation to join Bank Street was not announced to Oak Lane staff until late May.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Nancy and Alyn Rovin interview with John Borden, 4/3/2017. They mentioned that neither Jack nor Marjorie, who was an atheist, were interested in organized religion. My impression is that they could be described as secular humanists.

<sup>59</sup> Copy in Niemeyer Archives at Bank Street. Dated 2/14/1956.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Bailey, head of the independent Oak Lane Day School from 1992-99, was a student at the school during the 1950's. In an interview, he recalled the arrival of Temple's president (Gladfelter) in a "limousine" to inform the director and staff that Temple was closing the school for financial reasons. Interview with John Borden, 4/16/2017.

<sup>61</sup> See "How Did I Get to Bank Street," interview with Greenspan, pp. 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> In 1952, there were several "All Bank Street" meetings called by Lucy that focused on potential changes in the College's administrative structure. The March 11, 1952 meeting was specifically about "the possibility of a President." Lucy's post-meeting notes mention Jack, although in regard to her idea of recruiting outside expert advisors to be part of a Trustee-led group.

<sup>63</sup> Report of Committee to Select a President. Board of Trustees meeting, 2/15/1955, pp. 8-10.

<sup>64</sup> The letters from Johnson and Gladfelter are evidence that they must have known in early 1955 that Jack was a serious candidate and would likely leave Oak Lane and Temple.

<sup>65</sup> The two Trustees were Arthur Rosenthal and Arthur Lamm. It is interesting to note that the male Trustees seem to have preference for a leader who would be more aggressive in approaching the College's problems and building broader understanding of and support for its work.

<sup>66</sup> Report of Committee to Select a President, Board minutes, 2/15/1955, pp. 9-10.

<sup>67</sup> An interesting coincidence was that at the same meeting it was announced that the Housing Authority had approved Bank Street's application for space for its new Child Care Center in Highbridge Houses in the Bronx. This was the beginning of what would become the Polly Miller Center. Given Jack's identification with Head Start and day care centers, it was a harbinger of things to come.

<sup>68</sup> Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 4/19/1955, pp. 5-6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-3. As Treasurer, Kandell was concerned about the chronic operating deficits. At the 4/15/1955 Board meeting, he had reported a current year deficit of \$45,000 when the entire budget was not much over \$200,000. Lucy had covered the deficits in the past, but he had legitimate concerns about what her successor would be able to do to cope with the financial pressures. See also Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>71</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/10/1977, pp. 8-9.

<sup>72</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 11.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Lucy Sprague Mitchell, *Our Children and Our Schools*, Simon & Shuster, New York, 1950, p. vii.

<sup>75</sup> Jack's letter to Wolfe, 9/11/1956.

<sup>76</sup> Jack's letter to Biber, 9/1978. Jack also spoke at Barbara's funeral and at the memorial service for her at Bank Street on April 21, 1994.

<sup>77</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, pp. 24-25.

<sup>78</sup> Barbara Biber, Report on Research Program, Board of Trustees minutes, 6/7/1955, pp. 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 46. While not a Quaker, Jack admired this concept and seemed to refer to it from time to time in explaining his approach to his responsibilities as President of Bank Street. See also p. 22 of his interview with Gordon on 8/10/1977.

PHOTO GALLERY



Jack as a toddler in Scranton (undated, perhaps 1910)





JACK HARRY NIEMEYER  
"Jack"

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA  
Born 1908

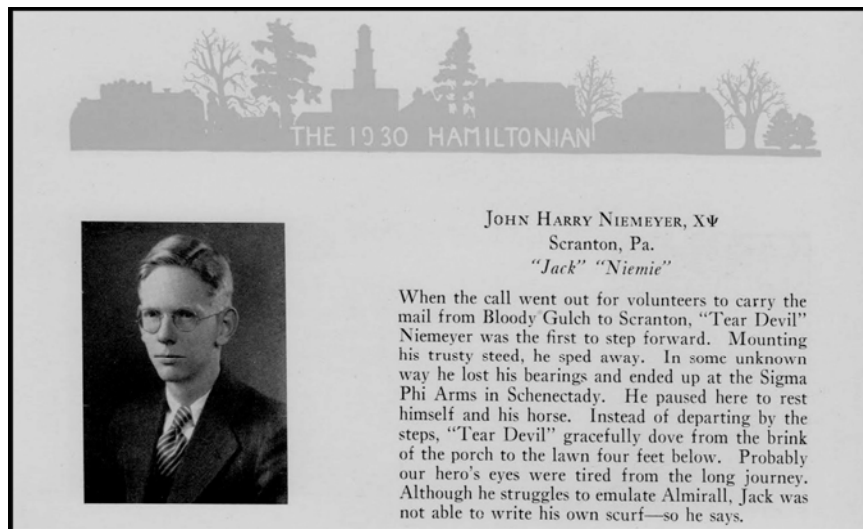
ENTERED SEPTEMBER, 1924; PRIVATE Co. "A" '24-'25; CORPORAL Co. "A" '25-'26  
LITERARY SOCIETY '24-'25; CO. FOOTBALL '24-'25, '25-'26; MEMBER OF STATE CHAMPIONSHIP DEBATING TEAM '24-'25; PRESIDENT LITERARY SOCIETY '25-'26;  
DEBATING TEAM '25-'26

Many years ago there was born in Scranton a boy who was destined to rise to honor and distinction within the portals of S. M. A. This boy was Jack Niemyer. Today this prophecy has become fulfilled, for John, during his stay of two years at the Academy, has participated in almost every branch of activities. He has distinguished himself especially in the scholastic and oratorical departments.

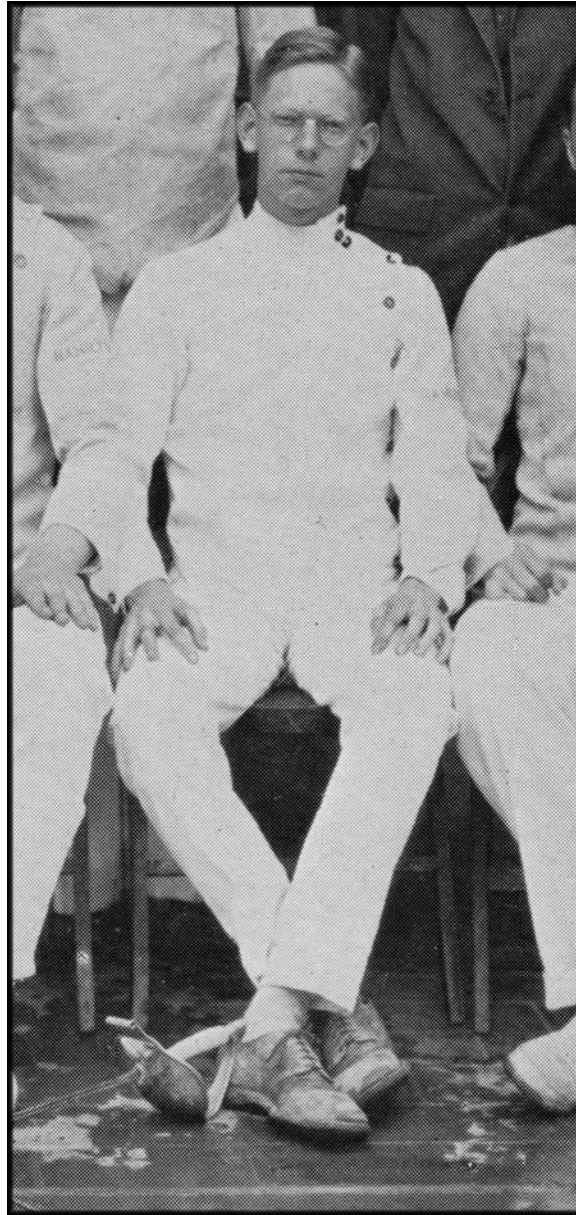
Quiet and unassuming, John should be welcomed to Harvard with open arms. Success to you, John.

The photographs of Jack as a toddler and a cadet at Staunton were provided by his grandson, Joshua Rovin. The Staunton yearbook editors seem to have made an error, suggesting Jack was headed to Harvard rather than Hamilton.

Jack Niemeyer's experiences at Hamilton College from 1926-30 were crucial to his intellectual and social development. His devotion to Hamilton was deep, as conveyed in his Fiftieth Reunion Annalist's Address, as well as his service as a College trustee. The photographs included in this section were kindly provided by the Hamilton College Archives.



**Niemeyer entry from The 1930 Hamiltonian yearbook  
(Hamilton College Archives Photograph Collection, 1930 Class files)**



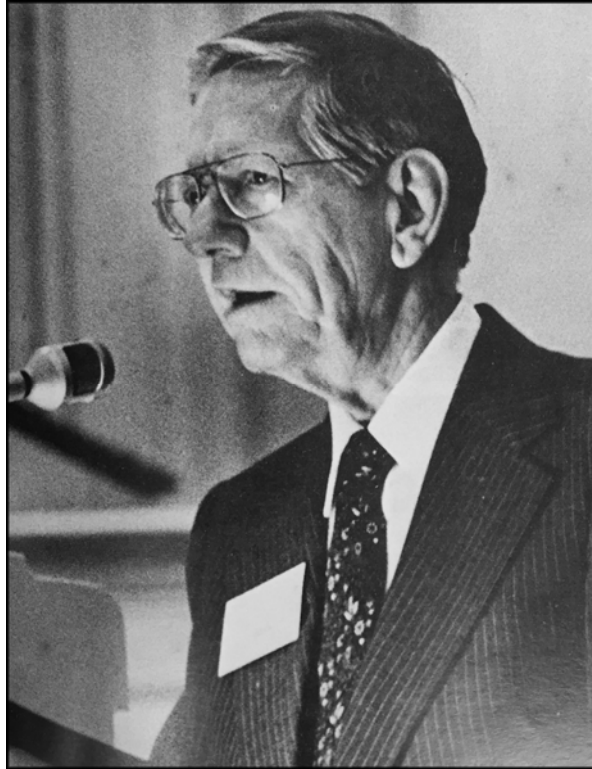
**Jack in his varsity fencing uniform  
(undated; Hamilton College Archives Photograph Collection)**



Jack with sheepdog, from 1930 Class photo  
(Hamilton College Archives Collection, Class of 1930 files)



**1930 Class photograph  
(Hamilton College Archives Photograph Collection,  
Class of 1930 files)**



**Jack giving 50th reunion Annalist Speech, 1980  
(Hamilton College Photograph Collection)**

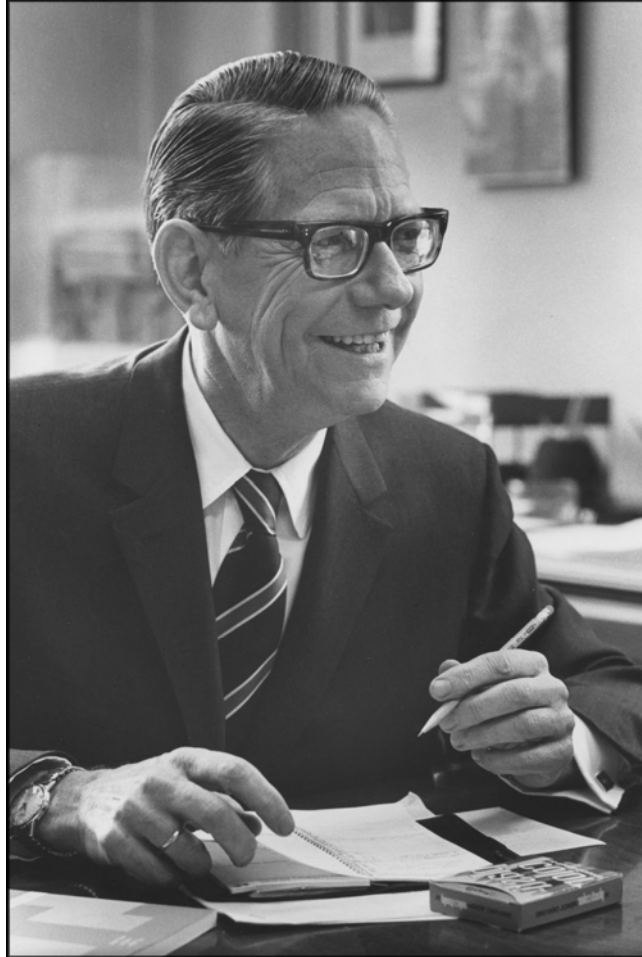


**Jack with 1930 classmates Aleric Bailey and Crosby Smelzer  
at their reunion in 2000  
(Hamilton College Photograph Collection, class of 1930s files.)**



**Formal portrait of Jack as Bank Street president  
(undated; estimated as mid-1950's)**





**Informal photograph of Jack at meeting  
(undated; estimated as early 1960's)**



**Jack presents the Education Resources Center plan  
(undated; estimated as 1963-64)**



**Jack at Bank Street meeting, presumably a Board of Trustees meeting in the mid-1960's because he is seated next to Millicent McIntosh who joined the Board in 1963**



**Marjorie, Jack and daughter Nancy Niemeyer at  
Bank Street's 40th Anniversary Dinner, February 2, 1957**



Marjorie and Jack on trip to New Zealand, summer 1961



**Niemeyer family gathering when Jack received Bank Street honorary doctorate degree in 1990  
(Joshua Rovin, Rose Bello Niemeyer, Jack, Alyn Rovin, Nancy Niemeyer Rovin, Kailah Niemeyer)**



**Jack at Alumni conference with Priscilla Pemberton  
(undated; estimated as late 1960's)**



**Jack receiving award for Bank Street from  
Western Electric representatives, November 9, 1965**



## CHAPTER THREE

### BANK STREET EVEN MORE SO – BANK STREET AT THE START OF THE NIEMEYER YEARS

On May 3, 1993, Bank Street hosted a dinner in Jack Niemeyer's honor. He was 85 and took the occasion as a good time to reflect on the College's past and future, and its enduring and distinctive mission. He minimized his own role and contributions, noting that "whatever strength I brought to Bank Street resulted first of all from one basic fact – and that is that I was inspired by, and totally committed to, the mission of Bank Street since its organization in 1916 as the Bureau of Educational Experiments." He went on to assert that "the only thing I intended to change at Bank Street was to extend the influence of incredibly skillful and wise educators like Lucy Mitchell, Barbara Biber, her sister Charlotte Winsor, Claudia Lewis, Elizabeth Gilkeson, and Clara Coble far beyond a small portion of metropolitan New York City."

Three dozen years earlier, in the Fortieth Anniversary issue of *Notes from 69 Bank Street – Children...Here and Now*, Jack had written in an article titled "Toward the Future" that he saw the goal for the College as "aiming toward being an increasingly important and comprehensive *center for advanced studies and research in the mental and emotional development of the normal child.*" To him, this "far-reaching goal" was completely within the College's mission. He recalled that Lucy liked to say that growing old is a matter of "growing more so" and suggested that Bank Street's goal should be the same – to grow more so, as quickly as possible. "Bank-Street-Only-More-So" included taking studies and experiments into "out of school" learning experiences; working on parent education across a broader socio-economic spectrum; partnering more extensively with the New York Board of Education on ways to raise the quality of teaching in an entire school district instead of just in individual schools; devising plans for "helping teachers handle more competently problems arising from so-called desegregation of schools;" and expanded application of Bank Street research in school curriculum. He acknowledged that his "More So" approach presented challenges, and focused on two urgent priorities. The first was people – developing existing staff and attracting "an increasing number of imaginative, dedicated professional workers" to the College. The second was money – especially for research, pilot projects, and "explorations which almost inevitably are non-income-producing." Interestingly, at that moment in 1957, Jack saw the first priority – the people – as "even more formidable" than raising money. He understood that, at Bank Street, people and their relationships were the key to success.

Clearly, Jack knew that it would not be simple or easy to plan and execute a substantial extension of the "new kind of education" that Lucy and her colleagues had championed. He must have had some sense of the resources, beyond mission, that he could call on to accomplish this lofty goal. Starting in 1955-56, when he was president-elect and at 69 Bank Street one day a week, Jack had ample opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the unique institution he had agreed to lead. It must have been obvious to him that, while Lucy's role had receded (to the extent that she wanted to and could extricate herself) over the past five years, the College's dependence on its founder, guiding spirit, and primary donor was still great. At any organization, the transition from founder to a new leader is always complicated, especially when the founder is still very much a presence, as Lucy would continue to be, even though she had already moved to Palo Alto and expressed her desire "not to meddle."

What was the state of Bank Street College at that time? How had it arrived at that condition? Most important, why did Jack feel confident that he – and Bank Street – could succeed?

It is important for us today to understand not just the steep hill that Jack would have to climb as the College's first chief executive, but also how that hill had been constructed, level by level, over nearly four decades. In some ways, Jack – who loved classical Greek texts like *the Odyssey* and *the Iliad* – was like an archaeologist excavating further at an active site. He knew there were more treasures to uncover but was not really sure about how to find them. His immediate task would be to identify the best techniques to employ to get the job done without bumping up against too many other diggers. In another sense, he needed to be a cultural anthropologist like Margaret Mead, observing, categorizing and understanding the customs and traditions of a distinctive community and its culture without disrupting or polluting it. All of this work had to be done quickly, given the College's chronic financial strains and the expectations that Trustees, faculty and staff had about the improvements a new administrative order would bring.

As a result, Jack repeatedly stressed his abiding admiration for Bank Street's roots, and his firm conviction that any new initiatives should tap into those roots. To understand Jack's presidency, we must – like Jack – take time to investigate and understand the early years of the Bureau of Educational Experiments. A review of what had occurred before Jack arrived is especially useful for those readers who are not familiar with the arc of Bank Street's development.

The late sociologist Burton Clark promoted the concept of the "organizational saga" which evolves from "a collective unique accomplishment in a formally established group" and reflects the organization's beliefs.<sup>81</sup> The saga, together with the organizational structure, creates a distinctive culture. In her 1996 doctoral dissertation, *The Bureau of Educational Experiments: A Study in Progressive Education*, Bank Street alumna and former head of Children's Programs and Vice President of the College Joan Cenedella provided an insightful study of the development of the Bureau into the College, concluding that "despite major changes and losses in the founding vision over time, the core principles have been adapted to changing historical contexts and have held strong." Was that because of Jack's efforts or in spite of them?

Cenedella also noted finding that, in terms of the institution's identity, "the ideals of organization were as important a part of the founding vision as the ideals of schooling and inquiry, giving them the status of a core ideal." Perhaps even more important for a new president to grasp quickly, "[d]espite the fact that its vision for children moved the institution for most of its history, organization created the context for work within which the vision was pursued."<sup>82</sup> Adapting to the reality that, for many at Bank Street, how they worked was of equal importance as the work itself, presented something of an existential challenge for the new president. To achieve his goals as a Dewey-style progressive educator, he had to update and expand Bank Street's mission, which would require new people and procedures to implement new projects and programs. Managing a process of organizational renewal where a large segment of the community tended to focus on "changes and losses" rather than gains and potential, made for a more difficult journey than the idealistic Jack Niemeyer might have anticipated. The next chapter of Bank Street's institutional saga reflected the consequences of the actions that Jack the pragmatist felt required to take.

### ***Stage 1: From Bureau to 69 Bank Street***

A "summary of the development of the Bureau of Educational Experiments" – written by "EH" who could be either Elizabeth Bowman Hogan or Elizabeth Healy – in 1931 provides a concise overview of the early years, with some details that later descriptions leave out.<sup>83</sup> For example, this summary states that the Bureau when established in 1916 did not plan to conduct experiments or pursue a research program: "the first form of organization was a Bureau of Information, which was later continued as one of the Bureau's most active departments until 1922, when it was discontinued." The members of the Working Council of the new Bureau included Evelyn Dewey (John's daughter), Elizabeth Irwin (who would become well-known for founding the

Little Red School House), Caroline Pratt (whose Play School had moved to the converted stable behind the Mitchell house in Greenwich Village), and the three founders – Lucy and Wesley Mitchell, and Harriet Johnson.

Jack admired Joyce Antler's *Lucy Sprague Mitchell: The Making of a Modern Woman* for its descriptions of Lucy and the institution which she founded, shaped, and led for four decades. Lucy's imprint on Bank Street was large and long. To comprehend the complexity of the institution, Jack believed it was important to learn about the founder, including why and how she established the Bureau and how and why it had developed into the Bank Street College of Education that he inherited in 1956. He urged others to read the 1987 Antler biography,<sup>84</sup> emphasizing especially Chapter 8 on Lucy's "apprenticeships" as a young woman who had moved to New York, Chapter 11 on "Getting Started" (especially page 207 to the end), Chapter 18 "A Scientist by Conviction" (especially page 284 to the end), and Chapter 20 "69 Bank Street" (especially pp. 307-319 and 322-326). Much of the historical information in this section came from Antler's book, particularly from the chapters that Jack identified as important to read.

It would be hard to overstate the depth of personal relationships that existed in this group. The Mitchells were long-time friends of the Deweys, dating back to when the young Lucy met John Dewey as a guest in her family's home in Chicago. Lucy met Elizabeth Irwin in late 1914, and Wesley and she became friendly with Irwin and her partner, Katherine Anthony, who lived in Greenwich Village. Lucy began her life-shaping experience with Harriet Johnson in 1913, as a volunteer teacher in the Public Education Association's (PEA) Visiting Teachers project which Johnson had helped to organize and then directed. It was Harriet who brought Lucy together with Caroline Pratt and her innovative ideas exemplified by her new Play School.

Lucy was in her mid-thirties and, in many respects, herself a work in progress. Married to Wesley in 1912, Lucy had come to New York in 1913 when Wesley joined Columbia's faculty in economics. While she knew she was interested in education, Lucy was not certain as to what path to follow. John Dewey was a professor at TC, and Lucy sought advice from him and his famous colleague Edward Thorndike. She attended classes by both men, who were leaders of the two major wings of progressive education. Dewey stressed social reform, viewing education as continually reconstructing or reorganizing experience, emphasizing continuity between subject matter and method instead of differences, and promoting the principle of education as a social function. Thorndike's three-volume work *Educational Psychology* appeared around that time and was revolutionary in demonstrating the application of science and statistics to education. Unlike Dewey, Thorndike thought heredity was a more significant influence on human behavior than environment, but he made major contributions to the understanding of the psychology of individual differences, arguing that it was necessary for educators to focus on and adjust to the different abilities of students.

Another source of advice was Lillian Wald<sup>85</sup> who suggested Lucy consider starting a school at her Henry Street Settlement House. Mitchell biographer Joyce Antler wrote that Lucy rejected the idea, for fear that she was unprepared to shoulder the responsibility and would be overwhelmed by the kind of "settlement life" that attracted many educated women of her time. Lucy had decided to focus on experimental education, seeking to replace traditional schooling with methods addressing the specialized needs of the individual child. It is speculation, of course, but one has to wonder if Wald's suggestion stuck in Lucy's mind and led just a few years later for her to incorporate a nursery school into the plan for the Bureau.

Serving as a volunteer in the PEA's Visiting Teachers project gave Lucy direct experiences with young children who were thought to be "normal" but were having substantial problems at school. Before being taken over by the PEA, the project had been set up in two settlement houses on the Lower East Side, which meant that the children were from poor families.

When Lucy joined in 1913, there were only ten "Home and School Visitors" in the public schools. The volunteer teacher's work followed the ideas of the late Julia Richman, who had been another resource for Lucy and who asked the PEA to take on the project. The visiting teacher was to view the child as an

individual, learn about the "whole" child and identify ways to adjust home and school to help to reduce problems. Antler concluded that, for Lucy, "the project was an ideal place to begin her educational work: as a connecting link between the public schools and the wider concerns of settlement life, it gave direct expression to her developing philosophy that, like settlement houses, schools could become neighborhood centers that instilled community ideals."

Through working with municipal agencies and volunteer groups to help "troubled" children, Lucy gained a stronger sense of the possibilities for shaping schools to promote social reforms and became more passionate about the need to find ways of accomplishing her goals.

Lucy joined the PEA and a host of other civic educational groups but felt she made little progress in defining her goals and focus until 1914, when Harriet Johnson and she were sent to Gary, Indiana, by the PEA to observe the innovative "platoon" school system used there. Created by School Superintendent William Wirt in 1907, the system involved dividing students into different groups (" platoons") which either went to classrooms for regular instruction or to out-of-classroom activities such as shop, laboratory, or music. The system allowed for more efficient use of school facilities, greater flexibility in scheduling, and a learning environment that more closely related to the adult world – all of which was of interest to progressive educators. New York City's new mayor, John Purroy Mitchell, wanted to reform the city's schools, which were tremendously overcrowded, and also visited Gary. He hired Wirt to help install the Gary Plan in New York City on an experimental basis, which led to a huge controversy and bitter divisions among constituencies including teachers, administrators, progressive educators, police, parents, and even children. Eventually, following violent riots by school children protesting implementation of the Gary Plan, the mayor was defeated for re-election in 1917. During the controversy, Harriet Johnson and Lucy "took up arms in defense of the Gary Plan" with Johnson writing a favorable report for the PEA widely used by pro-Gary forces and with Lucy speaking publicly in support of the Plan.

In later years, Lucy was strongly averse to political activity in seeking support for her public education goals. Did this experience with the bitter fight over the Gary Plan, which contributed to the defeat of a reform mayor, sour her on the rough-and-tumble world of politics? In the University of California, Berkeley interview with Irene Prescott,<sup>86</sup> Lucy was asked about her opinions of White House Conferences on Youth she had attended. She replied that she "felt that there was a political element that had no business to be in on an educational conference" and "you can sense when something is done for a political reason, or from an earnest desire to help children." When the good of the child is not the focus, Lucy said she got very mad.<sup>87</sup> While there was no doubt that Lucy was a shrewd person with a deep understanding of human motivations, her unwillingness to engage in public policy debates and political action unintentionally might have affected Bank Street in negative ways in the decades ahead.

The Bank Street community appeared to exhibit a naivety about the political environment in which it hoped to work, assuming that the purity and fairness of its motives and intentions were obvious and unassailable. The 1956 controversy over Bank Street's work in public schools was a residue of the political crisis over the teacher personality test for the Board of Examiners. Fences had never been mended, which left the College exposed to subsequent attack. Lucy's perspective on political engagement might also have been absorbed by some of her followers as a rationale for avoiding programs and projects which required too much compromising of the values and practices that Bank Street championed. If you can only get half-a-loaf, in this view, it would be better not to take the bread. This approach posed obstacles for Jack Niemeyer as he sought to expand the College's impact and influence in the city and beyond. It might have affected the College's intellectual capacity to consider opportunities and to come to grips with the political realities that could impact efforts to scale up those Bank Street innovations which worked so well in small experimental settings.

Around the same time as she was becoming involved with the Gary Plan for the PEA, Lucy volunteered for the Board of Education's Department of Mentally Retarded Children. She learned about the research work of Frederick Ellis, who was then director of New York's Neurological Institute and who would later become a

charter member of the Working Council of the Bureau of Educational Experiments. By May 1914, Lucy had developed a proposal for setting up a psychological clinic to test children in neighborhood schools. This work reflected the other key driver of Lucy's career as an educational innovator. The PEA had been interested in psychological testing for several years because it offered progressive educators ways to use scientific methods to individualize teaching, which could be shaped by the child's mental maturity rather than age. Soon Lucy met and started to work with Elizabeth Irwin, who encouraged her thinking about educational experimentation.

In early 1915, having convinced the New York City Board of Education to support her proposal, Lucy established her Psychological Clinic (which she called the Survey) with partial funding from the city. Her model was the project directed by Helen Woolley<sup>88</sup> in Cincinnati, and was focused on mental and motor tests for children between ages eight and thirteen. Woolley helped to get Lucy's clinic started. It operated under psychologist Joseph Hayes, with Lucy as a staff member working on testing children in four schools. Wesley Mitchell and John Dewey were so interested in the clinic that they decided to take the same tests given to the children. Evelyn Dewey, Harriet Johnson, Harriet Forbes, and Eleanor Johnson also worked with the project. All of them became members of the BEE's Working Council.

The clinic eventually needed more space and moved to the large attic in the Mitchells' Washington Square North townhouse. In time its work would become merged into the new BEE.

While Lucy had not settled on her precise career path, her experiences with the clinic and her actions in defining her role are suggestive of her approach to the BEE, its operating style, and its community culture. Her role was complex: researcher/observer, concept developer, initiator, engaged participant but not director, facilitator, and partial funder. Her fingerprints were everywhere yet the work was directed by an expert and the emphasis seemed to be on collective effort and responsibility. There was a high degree of personal connection, from the involvement of mentors and friends to providing housing for the clinic literally under her roof.<sup>89</sup>

The expression "chance favors the prepared mind" seems unfortunately appropriate for the events that led to the founding of the BEE. It was unfortunate because the opportunity came from the unexpected death of Lucy's beloved aunt Nan Sprague in early 1916. Nan's daughter Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge received a substantial inheritance and wanted to honor the memories of her parents. While Elizabeth's passion was music, she told Lucy that she wanted "to do something for education" and listened with interest to her cousin's idea for setting up a Bureau of School Information. Elizabeth responded by promising to give Lucy's new bureau \$10,000 a year for ten years. That level of support allowed Lucy to think bigger, and she revised her plan to envision a Bureau of Educational Experiments that would sponsor experiments as well as serve as a clearinghouse that collected and disseminated information on promising work. Lucy outlined four areas of activity, including a laboratory school for children with "mental peculiarities" but the potential to be "normal"; psychological analyses of normal children (the clinic/survey); sex education through nature studies; and an innovative Play School that Caroline Pratt had started recently. Lucy's idea was to go beyond providing funding; she wanted to try to bring the staffs of the projects together into a "joint faculty."

Cousin Elizabeth was enthusiastic about this audacious plan and increased her annual support to the dividend income from her holdings in Sprague Warner stock, up to a maximum of \$50,000. It is not clear exactly how much money was made available in 1916 and 1917. The US entry into World War I seemed to have impacted the income from the Sprague Warner stock. The Coolidge gift, although still substantial, was less than half the \$50,000 maximum. The 1931 summary document noted that, from 1918-26, Mrs. Coolidge "continued her contribution to the extent of \$22,000 annually." Even at its start, then, it seems that Bank Street had to confront the consequences of funding which did not reach the levels initially promised and expected. It began a pattern that Lucy, and later Jack, would have to handle again and again. Gussie Kappner recounted Jack's comment to her after she became the College's president in 1995: "There just was never enough money."<sup>90</sup>

While the BEE was later overtaken as a name by its address at 69 Bank Street, the organization moved twice before settling at that location. Its first home, for a brief time, was at 70 Fifth Avenue. In 1918 it moved to "the houses at 16-18 West Eighth Street," perhaps due to financial concerns. The 1931 summary noted "our finances were seriously affected by conditions following the war and we paused to take account of stock and to reconsider our program." In its first two years, the BEE had a variety of projects, including a travelling exhibit of toys and materials used for "mental tests" in Gary, Indiana public schools; a laboratory school for "maladjusted children" at a rural Missouri public school, in cooperation with staff from BEE and the Neurological Institute; the Animal Center, a children's museum for students at the City and Country School and nearby public schools (a plan connected to BEE Working Council member Laura Garrett); nutrition classes in public schools in Boston; and an experiment in "organic education" in a New York City public school. The survey work of the Psychological Clinic also continued with BEE support.

The combination of reduced financial resources and uneven experiences as a sponsor led to a decision to refocus the BEE. The 1931 summary described the change: "We found ourselves less satisfied with the donor relation to a variety of projects and more eager to unify our program and concentrate upon a narrower field which could be more intensively worked." Research became foremost, specifically "to gather data which would lead to a fuller knowledge of children's growth" and "to bring schools and specialists dealing with various aspects of child development" into close working relationships. It was a narrower focus but still challenging and rather undefined in terms of actual projects. It meant adding to the staff a physician, a psychologist experienced with testing, a statistician, a social worker, and clerical assistants. It also meant taking up Caroline Pratt's offer to use her City and Country School as a laboratory, an association which continued until 1930, when Lucy and Caroline ended their relationship over differences about educational practices. In 1919, the BEE opened its own nursery school, directed by Harriet Johnson, for children from sixteen months to three years of age. In 1920-21, Lucy purchased six properties, three houses on West 12th Street and three on West 13th Street which shared back yards. She rented five to the BEE and the City and Country School, keeping one for the Mitchell family to use as their home. The Mitchell house was an organic part of the complex, however, with connecting doors on every floor to the City and Country School, which the Mitchell children attended. The BEE also provided financial assistance when City and Country expanded to add a group for nine-year-olds.

The BEE further narrowed its research focus in 1923-24, "confining it this time to children of preschool ages in our own nursery school and in the City and Country School." Data was collected on the children's health, involving annual physical exams; x-rays of hands, forearms, and chests; "proportional measurements"; and annual psychological exams. Research Advisors were recruited, including anthropologist Franz Boas and psychologist Robert Worth Sessions from Columbia, and Buford Johnson, who had moved to Johns Hopkins after serving as BEE psychologist for several years.

Keeping true to its original conception as a bureau of school information, the BEE supported an active publications program, producing five bulletins during its first two years of existence and another seven by 1931. These BEE Bulletins included special studies on such topics as "The Creative Impulse in Industry" (written by staff member Helen Marot),<sup>91</sup> "The Child and his School" (by staff member Gertrude Hartman), "Mental Growth of School Children" (by staff psychologist Buford Johnson), and a "Bibliography of Psychological Tests" (compiled by staff member Helen Boardman). A book titled "Children in the Nursery School" was published in 1928.

In 1926, Elizabeth Coolidge's funding commitment ended, although she pledged to give \$2,000 annually for another three years. This dramatic change in financial stability led the BEE to devise a five-year plan which would assure completion of studies then underway. The BEE had attracted other gifts from time-to-time, and had the remainder (\$15,500) of a \$32,000 gift of securities from a Mrs. Hunt<sup>92</sup> in 1920 which was used as a kind of quasi-endowment, earning interest but also tapped as needed. The Laura Spellman Rockefeller memorial foundation made a one-time contribution of \$9,000 in 1925-26<sup>93</sup> to help to complete the work needed to publish the book on "Children in the Nursery School." There was also a small amount of revenue

from publications sales and nursery school tuitions. Clearly, for the five-year plan to be implemented, a more assured income stream was needed – and Lucy stepped in to underwrite the BEE budget through 1931.

The "EH" summary dates to the last months of the five year plan, and reported soberly "as is inevitable we have not brought through to completion and to the form of publication all the studies which were planned." Much had been accomplished but there was "considerable data which had not been thoroughly worked" and "materials in our files which has not lent itself to the treatment we hoped to give it."

Several important studies by BEE research staff were nearing completion, including Barbara Biber's<sup>94</sup> first work on "Drawings of Young Children," and there were books in the pipeline. Despite the record of substantial work over fifteen years since 1916, the summary reflected anxiety and confusion about the BEE's future: "it is almost impossible to put into a brief statement the present objects of the Bureau and its working program, beyond what is involved in developing the Nursery School, a plan of parent education and the necessary outside affiliations..." In other words, after a decade-and-a-half of productive activities and the expenditure of nearly \$250,000, the only certain program was the BEE's nursery school. (The affiliation with Pratt's school ended in 1930.) Under "Research" the comment was that there was "no comprehensive research program" although the BEE staff "shall never be content...to carry on any sort of educational work without some research provisions." Antler describes Lucy as having overall control of the BEE's research direction during the 1920's and that she felt the effort to establish norms of growth had failed. If that was the case, the comments in the EH summary become more understandable, reflecting both Lucy's commitment to research work and her recognition that the BEE needed to pursue new avenues.

The summary ended with an attachment of an excerpt from Harriet Johnson's address to the American Association of University Women in Boston on April 9, 1931 on "The Educational Planning for a Nursery School" which even now conveys the passion and conviction that the BEE's founders felt about what children needed and deserved: "If the children in a nursery school are not acquiring habits of work that are applicable to life situations outside its walls, if their activities lack the buoyancy and affective spontaneity and fire of purpose, the adults responsible for the school have to answer the grave charge of wasting children's time." The audacious concept of adults wasting little children's time must have seemed radical in 1931 but reflected the experience-based beliefs of the BEE staff, who were deeply committed to providing secure, encouraging learning environments attuned to the developmental needs of the child. Johnson's address challenged teachers: "The teacher's job is not prepare for a future of purposeful activities but to recognize the age levels in children's interests and to make sure at every level their powers are being used as fully as possible." Children are not just to be secure and industrious but constantly engaged in learning and growing.

Harriet Johnson's enduring role in the development of the work of the BEE and its successor, Bank Street College, deserves highlighting, even though she died in 1934. Antler describes Johnson as Lucy's greatest teacher and closest friend with an ability to think outside the box and to encourage imagination in others. Furthermore, "the skill of Harriet Johnson made possible the close integration of research and schooling at the nursery school." She was a pioneer in sustained observational studies of young children, writing down the spontaneous comments of children in a group and using her notes and observations to plan curriculum. Physiological and psychological tests and records were extensively used, as were social records and family histories for each child. Few other progressive schools took this approach, and Antler suggests that the BEE's work paralleled university-based child development research in the 1920's, more similar to the research of Arnold Gesell at Yale, who was a disciple of G. Stanley Hall.<sup>95</sup> The difference was that the BEE wanted to study children's growth scientifically and to use the data – including qualitative observation – to create the best learning environments. This difference was significant, for by the end of the 1920's Lucy had come to believe that the BEE should focus on qualitative analyses of behavior together with quantitative measurements, and that both could be approached scientifically in order to understand a child's growth as a series of progressive stages or maturity levels.

During these same years, Lucy's relationship with Caroline Pratt and her City and Country School became increasingly frayed. There were significant philosophical and educational differences, with Pratt dismissing Lucy's ideas about children's language and literature that had begun with her successful foray into children's books with *The Here and Now Story Book* in 1921. Pratt was also unenthusiastic about Lucy's geography program and studies of past cultures that linked them to contemporary concerns. Lucy was frustrated by Pratt's unwillingness to consider ideas that differed from her own,<sup>96</sup> and concluded that she could not continue to develop in a relationship where Caroline "clipped my wings." In addition, there was a growing financial problem since Lucy provided much of the support the school needed to exist. Lucy had long been distressed by Caroline's lack of interest in administrative and financial matters and inability to make or keep to a budget. The expenses of the school had grown, and with the arrival of the Depression, Lucy felt that, after supporting the school for fifteen years, she could insist that City and Country should be able to raise its own funds. She wanted to devote her resources to the BEE. Still, Lucy did not want to undermine City and Country. She sold the school the five buildings on West 12th and 13th Streets where it operated. She not only discounted the sale price to \$100,000 below market value, she provided a ten year mortgage for \$300,000 with a five-year interest free period. Eventually, the financial arrangements that Lucy felt were so generous led to an angry dispute about the amount of interest owed, with Pratt believing Lucy had been unfair in demanding that City and Country purchase the buildings.<sup>97</sup>

While it seems clear that Lucy dominated the shape and work of the BEE's eclectic assortment of activities, she did not want to be the director or to have a traditional organizational structure created. In 1916, the Working Council established By-laws which gave the council the authority to create and implement policy, with a chairman (Lucy) and a five-person Executive Committee headed by Evelyn Dewey. There would be no executive director. One consequence of the BEE's experimental mission and unusual structure was that its application for a charter from New York State was rejected, and it had to operate under a District of Columbia charter until 1931.<sup>98</sup>

For many years, the cooperative approach embodied in the Working Council was successful. Establishing consensus and shared working styles was Lucy's achievement, with key support from Wesley. Antler suggests that, in part, this was the result of Lucy's objectivity at that time. She "provided neither a systematic theory nor a concrete, defined plan of action" and the "guiding principles came not from her but from Dewey." In addition to providing operating money from her family's resources, Lucy's "role as chair of the Working Council was to guide the group's decision-making by drafting policy and acting as catalyst and spur." After her cousin Elizabeth's annual gift came to an end, Lucy had to increase her own level of financial support for the BEE, and her involvement increased in guiding its research work and its lab school programs. The basic organizational structure did not change, even as the demands on Mitchell resources grew and the overall economic scene became more difficult. Antler notes that, although "it was the Sprague family fortune which created and maintained the Bureau of Educational Experiments," Lucy was a "genuinely enabling collaborator" who never used the leverage she had as funder and thus avoided tensions.

The BEE and the Mitchell resources were not totally cushioned from the effects of the Great Depression, especially after Lucy's generosity during the break-up with City and Country drained, by her estimate, a third of her capital. She became upset that she could no longer support the organizations she cared about most, and in late 1934 she made the startling announcement that the BEE, now at 69 Bank Street, would have to close or reorganize. Fortunately, her sister Mary made a generous contribution. Money was raised through benefits, and staff took further pay reductions. Lucy was able to direct enough money from her own resources to keep open the nursery school and the Cooperating School for Student Teachers. The BEE was also able to draw down the funds remaining in the Hunt Fund, and thus to survive the Depression.

There is little wonder that the gloomy financial prospects weighed heavily upon Lucy during these years. In 1930, she had led a dramatic shift in the direction of the BEE by establishing a program to prepare teachers according to the practices and theories that she and her colleagues had developed during the 1920's. This was a bold step, especially given the end of the long relationship with Pratt's school which had been so central to



the creation and development of the BEE and which continued to occupy most of the real estate owned by the Mitchells. The 1931 "EH" summary of the BEE's development was likely part of a thorough review of what had been accomplished, and other lessons learned, as a new path focused on teaching was being opened. As Antler has pointed out, the Depression years led many social reformers to search for a "redefinition of the relationship between individuals and society" that "brought fresh support to progressive educators who believed that the classroom could become the model for a new collectivism, integrating self-expression with larger social goals." For the country and world these times were dismal, but for Lucy and the BEE, they proved to be tremendously successful. Her experiment with teacher preparation flourished, providing a fresh curriculum that showed teachers "how to live" as much as how they could teach. The new program brought together Lucy's passions and ideas about child development, learning environments, children's language and literature, and social reform into a coherent approach that became influential on experimental education and eventually on public schools.

Relocation to the building that had housed a Fleischman's yeast plant<sup>99</sup> at 69 Bank Street in West Greenwich Village symbolized the radical nature of the changed focus.<sup>100</sup> Lucy worked with a contractor to redesign the four-story building to accommodate Harriet Johnson's nursery school, now 60-70 children, and the new school for teachers and the research staff. While she felt teacher education was as much an arena for pioneering work as experimental schools had been in 1916, Lucy was prepared to take up the challenges. After she resigned from participation at City and Country, she began working with Elizabeth Irwin at the Little Red School House. Those experiences, combined with her realization about the limitations of the research projects pursued by the BEE, convinced Lucy that teaching, not data gathering, should become the BEE's top priority. Drawing on the network of progressive educators created by the work of the BEE, Lucy launched the Cooperative School for Student Teachers (CSST) with Little Red, the Woodward School (Brooklyn), the Livingston School (Staten Island), Rosemary Junior School (Old Greenwich, CT), the Spring Hill School (Litchfield, CT), Carson College<sup>101</sup> (Flourtown, PA), and Mount Kemble School (Morristown, NJ). It was an ambitious venture, offering CSST students placements in schools in urban, suburban, and rural locations and with variations in teaching styles, programs, and student body composition.

The CSST<sup>102</sup> was even bolder in terms of its conception of the teacher – truly, a "new kind of teacher." The first bulletin contained what became formalized later as Lucy's credo for the school and the teachers who studied there. CSST students should learn a "scientific attitude" not just toward their work but toward life, featuring an "eager, alert" attitude of observation, constant questioning of current practice as a result of new information, using the world as well as books as a resource for learning, "an experimental open-mindedness," and commitment to creating records to help "base the future upon actual knowledge of the experiences of the past." Interestingly, in this statement Lucy used the analogy of an artist: "Our aim is equally to help the student develop and express the attitude of the artist towards their work and towards life." To her that meant more than creativity, which of course she included, but rather an expansive "sense that joy and beauty are possessions of all human beings, young and old." Written during dismal times when the old world order had collapsed, this statement seemed to reflect Lucy's fundamental optimism about the human capacity to rise above current challenges, no matter how severe and frightening, to create new modes of thinking, living, and working together in a more just society. Her optimistic attitude may have been why she chose to vote for Norman Thomas in the 1932 Presidential election, even though he had little chance to win, because she saw in the Socialism he espoused a vision of the kind of democratic society she hoped would develop.<sup>103</sup>

John Dewey's ideas and principles guided the CSST, but it was his TC colleague and close disciple, William Heard Kilpatrick, who served as an advisor. Kilpatrick was renowned for his "project method" which tried to combine Dewey's view of education with Thorndike's psychological insights by focusing on "wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment." His major work had been published in 1925, and his fame and influence spanned the nation and beyond. Highly critical of the traditional styles of education confined to teaching skills and knowledge, Kilpatrick advocated a flexible, child-centered approach using a series of projects that taught a child how to think rather than what to think. It is easy to understand why Kilpatrick's principles and approach were attractive to Lucy and her BEE colleagues, and why Kilpatrick was

a major speaker at the official opening of the CSST on April 24, 1931. Still, as Antler points out, Lucy's brilliance was to adapt Kilpatrick's ideas about teaching children to teaching CSST students to think like children by "unlearning adult habits and adult patterns of response through creative workshops and through other firsthand experiences."

In establishing the CSST, Lucy created the core team of colleagues who helped refine, enrich and promote the coherent educational philosophy and practices that later became known as the Bank Street Approach. The key figure was Barbara Biber, who had joined the BEE in 1929 as one of three researchers who worked under Ellis on psychological relationships between age and behavior. Her study of children's drawings provided a foundation for Lucy and the BEE to move toward qualitative analyses of children's growth through stages or maturity levels. At CSST, Biber taught child development while Lucy taught courses on language and on environment (human geography), and Harriet Johnson gave a course on observation (as well as directing the nursery school). Elizabeth Healy's course on the development of teaching "personality" and courses taught by Jesse Stanton and Ellen Steele Reece<sup>104</sup> on curriculum for experimental schools filled out a CSST student plan of study. None of the courses on pedagogical methods found at traditional teacher training institutions were offered at CSST.

Another distinctive feature of the CSST was the inclusion of courses on the arts, from painting to creative movement, intended to draw out the students' creativity and encourage the sense of joy and beauty described in Lucy's statement in that first school bulletin (Lucy joined them for the dance class on Thursdays). There were also seminars given by visiting artists and experts on a variety of topics, from psychoanalyst Otto Rank on the relationships between psychology and politics to Pablo Casals on music. Lucy co-taught a course on the social and economic environment with Max Lerner from the New School. These offerings were complemented by field trips to such urban realities as slum tenements, detention centers, health clinics, and courts. In addition, to give CSST students more exposure to real life, there were field placements in social service organizations one morning each week for a semester.

During this time, Lucy continued to teach at Little Red as well as to give her courses at CSST and to visit as much as possible the other cooperating schools. The pace was demanding and exhilarating, especially since she had obligations at home with her own children. Antler notes that Lucy had a secretary but never could find the time to figure out how to use her help. There must have been very little time available to devote to administration of such an active enterprise as the BEE had become, especially when one considers that the CSST had nearly two hundred students during 1930-35. According to Antler, Lucy was aware of and depressed by the relentless financial pressures on students and staff, and on many of the cooperating schools. The BEE's own near-death experience of 1934 must have convinced Lucy that she needed to devote time to finding a way out of the financial quagmire.

The death of Harriet Johnson, one of the BEE's three founders and Lucy's mentor and dear friend, no doubt mightily contributed to Lucy's anxieties and despair in 1934. She regarded Harriet as the BEE's "foundation stone." Johnson articulated the vision of the "modern teacher" who treated children as equals which was a core concept of the CSST. Lucy considered Johnson to be one of the greatest women she had known, on the same level as Jane Addams. Johnson's death meant that the BEE leadership had to be reorganized since Harriet had been responsible for the Studies and Publications Division as well as the nursery school, which was later named in her memory. The combination of financial stress and leadership transition made for some difficult challenges for Lucy.

Since moving to 69 Bank Street, the BEE had become known by its address, most often rendered as simply "Bank Street." In 1931, the BEE had received a provisional charter from the Regents of the State of New York as an educational institution "for the purpose of maintaining and operating a progressive experiment in nursery and primary school, and to engage in experiments and research work." In 1935 the charter was amended to authorize the education of teachers for nursery, kindergarten and elementary schools. While Johnson could not be replaced, Lucy's close colleague Jesse Stanton stepped up to head the nursery school

and Barbara Biber took over the Studies and Publications department. Apart from its financial strains, Bank Street had weathered significant organizational changes and garnered growing recognition for its innovative work. Perhaps the greatest indication of that higher profile came when Lucy was invited to dine at the White House with Eleanor Roosevelt, a friend of Lucy's sister Mary. This occasion led to the First Lady's visit to Bank Street and, in 1935, her appointment of Lucy to the National Advisory Committee of an experimental school project in Arthurdale, West Virginia, in which Stanton was also deeply involved.

Bank Street's future in terms of its educational leadership and potential impact looked promising in 1935. Perhaps that was the reason Lucy's sister Mary was willing to make her life-saving gift to help keep the institution afloat. Lucy had to find ways to sustain the enterprise and joined with the leaders of five experimental schools to create the Associated Experimental Schools (AES), with Elizabeth Irwin serving as president. The AES hired a fundraising consultant. Eleanor Roosevelt agreed to be a sponsor, and presided at an exhibit of children's paintings from experimental schools at Rockefeller Center. The exhibit, which Lucy had helped to create, travelled nationally, enhancing the image of experimental education schools. More practically, Lucy used the AES as a buying cooperative for such basic goods as coal, soap, and paper goods. The financial benefits from joint fundraising and group purchasing were helpful but not significant enough to keep AES together after economic conditions improved a few years later. Still, Lucy had taken action, going beyond her family and personal money to seek new funding sources and more attention for the work that Bank Street and like-minded institutions carried out. Her role was limited, and continued to be focused more on educational philosophy and programs (she chaired the AES education committee) than on revenue-generating efforts, but the experience would remain in her mind when confronted fifteen years later with finding ways to secure Bank Street's existence and future.

As the 1930's came to an end, Bank Street had not simply survived but seemed to flourish. Lucy turned 60 in 1938 but, with her children off to college and having moved to an apartment around the corner from 69 Bank Street, she was ready to devote all her energies and attention to Bank Street's growth. While Bank Street had encountered some serious difficulties, there was no sense that the organizational structure needed to change. Individuals in key positions had to be replaced, as had been the case with Biber and Stanton after Johnson's death, but those changes had turned out well. The CSST had become the CST – the Cooperative School for Teachers, dropping the word "student" – and Lucy had added an exciting initiative called the Writers' Laboratory that reflected her ideas and passion for high-quality children's literature.

The experiences of survival and success reinforced Lucy's fundamental beliefs in collective governance as the best form of organization.<sup>105</sup> Although she was the founder, primary funder, programmatic leader, and public face of Bank Street, she refused to create an executive officer position, much less serve as "president." She rejected hierarchy in the structure of programs as well as the overall institution.<sup>106</sup> All decisions were to be made by the elected Working Council, a large group that met weekly to consider matters of policy and budget. Her resistance to a more centralized administrative structure might have been defensive, in that she was clearly the authoritative figure who would have been expected to direct all aspects of the institution. At this point in her life, however, Lucy seemed to have different ideas about what she should do. She had largely withdrawn from the life of the Nursery School, and begun to focus more on the work of the Research Division and the Writers' Lab. Her curiosity was undiminished, and she sought new experiences through such initiatives as the Long Trip, which came out of her visit to Arthurdale for Mrs. Roosevelt. Lucy also travelled in 1938 to the Dutch East Indies with the Society of Women Geographers, and continued on to Siam (now Thailand), French Indochina, Burma, and India. The exposure to Eastern culture apparently impacted her thinking about personal tranquility and promoting international understanding. Why would she want to take up the burdens of administration when such opportunities for exciting adventures and growth were appearing? Besides, her insistence on collective governance and collaborative work had been successful. If she considered at all the question of whether the structure could continue without her constant attention, she might well have thought that it had survived the trials of the 1930's with minor adjustments and could endure.

The decade of the 1930's was a cataclysmic time beyond the walls of 69 Bank Street, and no one inside could be truly insulated from the turbulence. Progressive education opposed traditional views of education and society, and those that promoted its ideas and practices tended to be political liberals and located in major cities and colleges, making them easy targets for the growing number of fellow citizens increasingly worried about the rise of international Communism and the goals of Stalin's Soviet Union. As the anti-communist crusade began to expand, schools and educators became a key concern because there was a fear that children could be indoctrinated with Communist ideas that would undermine the family, religious, and civic beliefs and values that defined being "an American."

With various forms of progressive educational theory and practice becoming more broadly accepted in the nation's public schools as the preferred way to teach children, it was not difficult for those inclined to skepticism of new ideas and approaches to jump to conclusions and find conspiracies even where none existed. Guilt by association, turning coincidence into causality, misinformation and ignorance of the facts, and simple opportunism combined to make for a turbulent, often irrational political climate. Some attacks were directed at leading members of the TC faculty, including even John Dewey and those like him who were anti-Communist. Many of the anti-Communist liberal progressive educators identified with socialism. The Depression had gutted the norms of the Old World Order, and there seemed to be an opportunity to build a just, egalitarian society based on humanistic principles. Within the liberal political world, there were tensions between those whose values and philosophies aligned with Marxian perspectives and those who sought to distance themselves from the USSR's totalitarian policies and practices while still maintaining a commitment to the ideals of a new socialist society.

Lucy embraced the humanist form of socialism, which reflected her values and personal style. Although she came from a family of wealth, Lucy was always egalitarian in her principles, programs, and relationships. Her distaste for hierarchy, and even her aversion for titles (like president or director) that suggested power relationships, shaped her views on the appropriate organizational structure, or lack of structure, for Bank Street. It seems likely her experiences with strong personalities such as Caroline Pratt added to her conclusion that hierarchy should be avoided. Based on the record, it also seems likely Lucy was not entirely comfortable with the exercise of power herself, preferring to have decisions made through group consideration leading to consensus and, if that were not possible, to find ways to delay a resolution or to paper over a problem. For Bank Street, that meant unity around mission, cooperation across programs and among staff, and dedication to Lucy's ideal of "parts-in-the-whole and whole-in-the-parts." Her continuing commitment to collectivist governance reflected a consistent view as to what was the best way to operate for the world, country, Bank Street, and her own life.<sup>107</sup>

### ***The 1940's: A Decade of Transitions Begins with Trouble***

In 1941, the collective governance ideal was harshly tested. The locus of the conflict was the Harriet Johnson Nursery School, where differences about mission commitment, teacher qualifications, leadership styles and needs, and finances foreshadowed the far more wrenching issues that divided the Bank Street community a little more than a decade later. While it is not clear how the conflict started, it seems likely that it emerged from the decision of Jesse Stanton to step down as director of the Nursery School. Stanton had assumed that role, presumably at Lucy's urging, when Harriet Johnson became so ill, and continued in the capacity after her death in 1934. Because administration was not something she was interested in or very good at, Stanton relied on her assistant, Eleanor Reich,<sup>108</sup> a parent who had begun working as an administrative aid in 1932. Reich had no experience as a teacher; she had worked as a laboratory technician. She had been attracted to the Nursery School after reading Harriet Johnson's book, *Children in the Nursery School*. She also lived nearby. By all accounts, Reich was deeply committed to Johnson's approach, sufficiently interested in education to take courses at the CSST, and an able administrator who coped well with the growing enrollments and the complex relationships with parents. At some point, Reich even taught, giving CSST classes on practical ways to work with parents.

Over the six years she had been in the role of director, Stanton had become more involved in work in other Bank Street programs (the CSST) and outside. The demands on her time and attention limited what she could do in terms of overseeing the Nursery School, leaving her reliant on Reich who had also become a friend. Since Stanton had no children herself, it also seems likely that Reich, with two children in the school, would naturally be more involved in the day-to-day concerns of teachers and parents.

At the same time, the success of the CSST and Biber's research projects might have stimulated Lucy to consider what adjustments might be needed in Bank Street's work. In 1941 Bank Street, or officially the BEE, had received its permanent charter. The CSST had been strengthened when Randolph "Rank" Smith succeeded Elizabeth Healy Ross, who moved to Washington, DC in 1936.<sup>109</sup> Smith had much more experience as an administrator than either Lucy or his predecessor. He had been head of two progressive independent schools, Park in Baltimore and Beaver Country Day near Boston. He was the former president of the Progressive Education Association (1923-25) and a leader in the new American Council on Education and the Educational Records Bureau. Like Lucy, he was very concerned with social and economic problems highlighted by the Depression, and taught a CSST course in the history and philosophy of education which stressed the connection between schooling and society. Before he left Bank Street in 1943 to become head of the new high school at Little Red School House, Smith completed all the documentation needed for state accreditation of the CSST.<sup>110</sup> The contrast between Smith's credentials and experiences and Reich's was likely quite striking, and Smith was called "executive secretary" rather than director, the title which for Reich seemed to be "hot button issue" in the Nursery School crisis.

Whatever the trigger, in April 1941 there seemed to be a point at which dissatisfaction with the relationship and comity between the Nursery School and the other divisions surfaced. Lucy must have been pained, and perhaps angered, by a conversation with Stanton, Reich and the Nursery School teachers, for on April 30th she sent them a memorandum that is unusual for its length (four pages, single-spaced), emotion, brutal candor to the point of harshness, and combination of strong conclusions and muddled messages about how to proceed. It seems likely that this memo was an example of Lucy's unique personal style, as described years later by colleagues such as Rank Smith and Sheila Sadler.

Lucy noted that she wrote on "the morning after" the meeting, claiming that she was sharing an attempt "to clarify my own *thinking* by writing down some of my *feelings*" which might reflect "an unrealistic clinging to the past." She was "utterly depressed" by the discussion, finding it "no real meeting of the minds" and with "an element of pretense." She chastised herself for not being more outspoken but castigated the Nursery School members for lack of candor, a defensive attitude, and a lack of "vital interest" in the other Bank Street programs.

Lucy seemed to place some blame on Stanton for giving Reich so much of the responsibility for the school, especially evaluation of the curriculum, and expressed clear doubt that "the staff with Eleanor Reich as director would be at all equipped to face the job of furthering Nursery School education outside the school." This assessment seemed to be the nub of the matter: Lucy stressed a point she had not made at the meeting, which was that Bank Street stood for "the inclusion of wider social problems within the sphere of the school" and the Nursery School staff did not seem to understand or accept that concept. She concluded with what must have seemed like a terrible indictment: "We can only hope that my frankness will help you to understand why a school devoted to developing a good life for its children, but putting slight emphasis upon a broadside, aggressive attack on Nursery Education, upon research (apart from its own school problems), upon participation in wider social areas than the school, does not seem to us any longer a Bureau school, and therefore one which inappropriately bears the name of Harriet Johnson." Having virtually read the Nursery School staff out of Bank Street as unworthy, Lucy pulled back from that severe action and suggested that more meetings, letting "the status quo stand for the present," and more sharing might resolve the problems.

Lucy concluded her memo by noting that, while it was "my own personal expression," she had read it to her colleagues, including Biber, Smith, and Irma Black. They agreed that "in a general way, it expresses the point

of view of that strange animal called the Bureau." In other words, while Lucy might have been harsh in her analyses and conclusions, they were largely shared by everyone who counted at Bank Street outside the Nursery School staff.

The option of becoming a "cooperating school" came up as a solution, perhaps as a response to the frankness and tone of Lucy's memo, but its source was not identified. It seems possible that it was part of a Nursery School staff reply to Lucy. Separation would have been difficult, as Reich made clear in a personal letter to Lucy on May 10th where she sought to distance herself from the staff response. Reich wanted her letter kept confidential, because she did not want "to do anything that might even remotely be construed as disloyal to the group." She knew that, beyond the loss of identity, the Nursery School would lose "the financial support on which our very existence may depend." She argued that Lucy's assessment of the Nursery School's commitment to mission and scope of activities was based on incomplete information, and expressed the opinion that Harriet Johnson would be justly proud of the school because "having a good school in the foreground of our efforts...was what she would have wanted." While admitting to being "careless with the rest of the group," Reich stressed that there was no real difference in educational philosophy or social perspective from the rest of Bank Street. Turning to her own interests and motivations, she downplayed her administrative role ("I do the administrative jobs because they need to be done and because I can do them, but my interest lies with the children") and questioned how well Lucy knew her. Reich concluded with a plea for unity and understanding, reminding Lucy of her founding role in the Nursery School and implying that its demise would be placed at her feet.

Lucy kept this letter confidential, but it seemed that it did little to assuage her concerns about Reich and the Nursery School. Lucy wrote up and shared on June 1st a discussion paper reviewing the ways the four Bank Street groups (CSST, Studies and Publications, Writers Laboratory, and Nursery School) carried out their "special jobs in education against a general cultural background." For the three groups other than the Nursery School, "the urge to understand and to evaluate general cultural patterns and to take part in forming these patterns is an inherent part of their jobs." Lucy seemed to dismiss the examples offered by the Nursery School in two May meetings that reflected involvement in broader social issues: "I think the Nursery School is weak on this awareness of the general scene, this attempt to evaluate it and take an active part in it." She noted that what was being suggested was "extension work" rather than "social thinking" and all Bank Street groups did extension work, by which she meant getting your findings to new and larger audiences. Perhaps the key point was at the end of the document, when Lucy stated that "we left C & C not because it wasn't a good school but because it functioned as a separate unit." In other words, under Caroline Pratt, City and Country did not continue to function as a laboratory school, working collegially with the other parts of the institution, and now the Nursery School was perhaps following the same path.

The Working Council decided to continue the "status quo" for a "trial year" (1941-42) with the Nursery School remaining part of Bank Street. There would be no director, with Jessie Stanton serving as "Advisory Director." The goal of the trial was to find out "whether deepest job interests warrant present close tie-up" and reach a decision about what to do in the future, as was summed up in a June 2nd "report of Bureau Committee with interpretations by LSM." Perhaps because this summary was shared, on June 3rd the Working Council received a letter from the Nursery School staff, including Stanton and Reich, stating that "as long as you do not feel that the present staff meets with the requirements for Bureau teachers" they were offering to resign as of June 1942. They doubted that in one year they would "come closer to meeting these requirements" and clearly felt insulted by being placed on trial by Lucy and the rest of the Council. Regardless of Lucy's focus on the broad social interests and backgrounds that she felt were essential for everyone working at Bank Street, it was obvious that these criticisms were taken very personally by the Nursery School staff. They felt judged as well as threatened, with their motivations, intellectual capacities, and worthiness scrutinized by people who were supposed to be colleagues who shared their commitment to children's growth and well-being.

When the Working Council refused to accept the June 1942 resignations and presumably changed its terms for continuing the status quo, the Nursery School staff, feeling more powerful, agreed to hold off until January 1942 – but did not withdraw the resignations. On June 11th, Jesse Stanton, feeling that she could now act on her own, submitted her resignation from the staff of the Nursery School "with reluctance but finality." While she was not explicit, Stanton seemed to be leaving Bank Street entirely. She attached a "statement of differences which I hold to be insoluble" which was both a defense of the Nursery School and a challenge to Lucy's approach to personal and professional social engagement: "I believe that a socially functioning school...makes an attack on social problems. I hold that a teacher's predominant responsibility is to the children, their parents, to the student teachers, and the total well-being of the school organization. I have serious doubt about the advisability of requiring activity in professional or non-professional organizations, activity in social reforms or protests, as evidence of a teacher's capacity as an educator."

Stanton's letter was followed six days later by Reich's resignation. She was blunt: "the situation you [the Working Council] have created has rendered my continuing next year too difficult" since "alternating hostility and friendliness have left me with no hope for my future at Bank Street." She noted that she had consulted with the Nursery School staff, who agreed that her position was made "untenable," and that her connection to Bank Street went back twelve years, which made her decision painful.

Apparently this display of brinkmanship worked. The Working Council blinked, and Lucy seemed stunned. In her June 19th letter to Jessie, Lucy acknowledged that she had not understood the depth of feeling that her April 30th memo had evoked. "Shocks can knock people out of their senses or further into them, and we think this latter is what your letter did: it made us much more strongly, clearly, and warmly aware of what we feel are the deep realities in the situation." Describing the feelings of separation from the Nursery School as "false" and expressing pride in the connection to "the best nursery school in the country," Lucy wrote that the Council essentially agreed with Stanton's statement of differences and, where there were disagreements, did not believe they were irreconcilable. The Working Council added a sweetener in the form of a part-time appointment to the staff of Studies and Publications for \$500 a year "to carry on extension work in nursery education."

The June 24th letter to Eleanor Reich was signed by the entire Working Council, asking her to withdraw her resignation and serve as Assistant Director of the Nursery School. Reich must have felt very satisfied with most of the letter, especially the recognition that her departure "would not mean just a temporary crisis in a school" but "a distinct loss to the Bureau as a whole, the crippling of an organization whose contributions to education we know to be both unique and important." The letter was likely written by someone other than Lucy. It did not have her unique flair, and it sounded much more like a plea than an offer to make peace. It was clear that Reich's point of dissatisfaction was the proposed title. Her June 25th reply was cordial but not definitive about her response. While she stated that "my title was never the paramount issue," she objected to the "Assistant" modifier as confusing to parents since there was no director and offered "Acting Director" as an alternative. Of course, title was important to Lucy, who replied the same day with an "official note" expressing happiness that Reich would return (although her letter left that ambiguous) and rejecting the idea of acting director, noting that the assistant director title had been suggested by Stanton. That must have settled the case because, in July, Reich wrote an acceptance letter, although she still expressed unhappiness with the title of assistant director but agreed to use it for one year.

Why do I believe this four month-long incident deserves several pages of detailed review in a work focused on Jack Niemeyer and his presidency?

In my view, this 1941 crisis – which was incited and inflamed largely by Lucy – was the first destructive internal conflict created by the organizational structure that was established and maintained by Lucy and her closest associates, despite obvious changes in the institution and the environment in which it operated. There is a direct line between the 1941 Nursery School crisis and the 1953-55 Nursery School civil war that ended with secession. There were less direct but still important effects of this crisis – lessons not learned – that

eroded the unity and cooperative relationships considered essential to Bank Street's distinctive culture and work. While it was true that Lucy and others made sincere if belated efforts to address organizational and governance issues in the late 1940's and early 1950's, Jack came into an unsettled environment where decision-making had become a more difficult endeavor than it might have been if the issues of authority, autonomy, shared governance, and financial responsibilities that surfaced in 1941 had been addressed.

These points are underscored by the insights of an extraordinary letter by Elizabeth Healy Ross to Rank Smith on June 9, 1941, written as a Trustee to a member of the Working Council. Ross assumed that Lucy had left for Vermont, which is why the letter was addressed to Smith, but that was probably a "fig leaf" (after all, telephones connected Philadelphia, where Ross worked, and New York so it would have been a simple matter to find out if Lucy was in town, which she was). As a long-time colleague of Lucy's, Ross probably wanted to express her "deep concern about things at the Bureau" in a less direct way, while assuming Smith would share her letter with others on the Working Council, including its chair. Ross was worried, "less sure of the basic power and strength and direction" of the organization as well as "awfully sad at what felt like evasion and superficial glossing over" in terms of what was shared with Trustees. At the Board's May 29th meeting, she was shocked that "there was no forthright statement of the administrative and educational problems raised during the spring." She seemed appalled that "complications so multiple and important as those precipitated between the Nursery School and the rest of the Bureau are subject to superficial smoothing over via a joint Research proposal." Because she was writing to her "best friends" and not advocating for the Nursery School, Ross framed her request as "a plea for a thorough re-examination of the administrative setup" after repeated experiences where there had been an aversion to "shattering our ideal – our Dream: Our Golden Age."

Ross meant the dream that the departments were equal parts of a whole, which hearkened back to a time when that might have been the reality but was no longer. The loss of Harriet Johnson loomed large to Ross, because Johnson was "creative and passionate about children, passionate about research, passionate about teacher education." Ross was obliquely critical of Lucy, who "alone, holds with undeviating devotion to the ideal of parts-working-as-a-whole-greater-than-themselves" but also was "the first to say that she has definitely and deliberately chosen her own areas of concentration and wants to avoid the deflection that would be involved in day-to-day attention to total administrative-executive-educational specifics."

It is interesting that Ross saw Barbara Biber as the one person with the potential to fill this leadership role, while doubting that she had either the interest or time. Ross also wondered if after so many years it would be possible to "introduce total Bureau-ness" – highlighting a deep-seated issue that a new chief executive would have to struggle with in the future. Her letter also reflected dissatisfaction with how Trustees were consulted and engaged with important operational and policy problems, another area where Jack Niemeyer had to spend considerable effort years later.

It seems likely that Smith received and shared Ross's letter before the Working Council had to address the resignations of Stanton and Reich on June 18th. Perhaps this candid letter from such a close and loyal friend of many on the Council added to the shock that Stanton's letter and statement caused. Apparently, Lucy did reply to Ross on June 29th, although it is not clear if this response was to the June 9th letter to Smith or to a different letter sent to Lucy. From the text of Lucy's letter, she was either ignoring much of Ross's plea for administrative change or replying to a letter seeking more information as to how the crisis was being resolved.

Lucy's letter revealed the undermining of trust in Barbara Biber, Eleanor Bowman and Rank Smith that had been created among the Nursery School staff. Lucy noted "Barbara spoke very feelingly, saying that she reserved the right to [be the] judge of her sincerity." Lucy implied by her approval of that sentiment that she felt it applied to her as well. Lucy's letter conveyed continuing doubts about Reich and wonderment at the "distracting ambivalence" that had been created within the Nursery School. Lucy mentioned that she agreed that "Barbara *could* do a swell Nursery but it would have to be practically with a new staff," which suggests that Lucy was in fact responding, in her own way, to Ross's June 9th letter. Using an odd turn of phrase, Lucy



opined that there was a "love me, love my dog" attitude on the part of the teachers and Stanton, seeming to cast Reich in the role of a beloved pet! More soberly, Lucy stated that in the year ahead they – presumably the Working Council but perhaps she meant the Board as well – would have to decide "what price Nursery." She concluded by asking for Ross to "help us on this next winter" and basically cutting off further discussion by stating the intention not to think about Bank Street for the summer.

### ***New Risks, Opportunities, and Changes during War and Post-war Eras***

One of the reasons that the Working Council was so determined to keep Jesse Stanton connected to Bank Street was her involvement with early childhood programs outside Bank Street, including the Works Progress Administration child care centers and nursery schools set up as part of the New Deal. Stanton became a district WPA nursery school supervisor and used Bank Street to train teachers for the program.<sup>111</sup> That experience led to her involvement with the nursery school in Arthurdale, WV and the connection to Eleanor Roosevelt. Stanton used her WPA work to place CSST graduates and build connections with Ruth Andrus,<sup>112</sup> who headed New York State early childhood programs. In 1936, with federal funding through New York City public schools, an All Day Nursery School (ADNS) demonstration program was tried at two sites, PS 33 in Chelsea and PS 194 in Harlem. Benjamin Greenberg, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools for the elementary division, oversaw the pilots, which were also funded by the Public Education Association and operated by City and Country School extension staff using the Bank Street model stressing education over custodial care. Greenberg would later support Bank Street's Public School Workshop proposal in 1943. Eventually, there were fourteen ADNS projects, and the program director, Adele Franklin, hired CSST graduates as teachers.

While federal funding for WPA child care disappeared in 1942, the need for such centers grew as more women entered the workforce after Pearl Harbor and the US entry into World War II. Congress responded by providing matching funds for state programs where appropriate, and many WPA nursery centers moved to a new funding source. However, because the funds did not flow through child and social welfare agencies, the quality of the nursery schools and staff were unregulated. Bank Street joined with others, including William Bristow of the NYC Department of Education, to create a Committee on Education of Young Children, in order to press Mayor La Guardia to support and expand the city-funded nursery schools.

This experience with public education and service was exciting but brief. The end of the war meant the end of federal funding for services to young children. Women who had been vital to the workforce were expected to return home and take care of the children. This was an unrealistic and unacceptable situation for Bank Street, especially as the demographic changes brought many more children into the public schools. Bank Street staff developed ambitious programs to improve the quality of teachers and teaching in the city's public schools. The foundation had been laid for the programs that Jack Niemeyer would later champion, from the Harlem Educational Resource Center to Head Start and Follow Through.<sup>113</sup>

### ***Bank Street in the Public Schools: Starting the Workshop***

The Bank Street Public School Workshop was the cornerstone of the expansion into serving the New York City public school system. Interestingly, the key decision that opened this opportunity for Bank Street was made in 1943 when the New York State Department approved the "progressive method of teaching" as the method of choice for the city's schools. This situation came about through the efforts of Superintendent of Schools Harold G. Campbell, who adopted the educational approaches that seemed most likely to get him funds from New Deal programs to hire staff and buy needed supplies. Campbell introduced an "activities curriculum" in seventy schools in 1936, using William Heard Kilpatrick's ideas. The implementation and impact of the new curriculum were uneven, with some parents, teachers, and principals unenthusiastic and questioning. Nevertheless, after six years of the experiment, the evaluation from the State Department of

Education was favorable. The new curriculum could be extended to all schools, which meant that expanded professional development programs for teachers would be required. TC might have been the expected source of assistance with a program for increasing use of a curriculum based on the work of one of its leading lights. TC, however, was in the midst of a variety of internal struggles between Dean James Russell and members of the faculty that diverted attention from new opportunities. In addition, some of the TC faculty, in particular Harold Rugg, had become targets of attack by anti-Communist groups which, however unfair, likely created concerns among public officials. There was an opportunity for Bank Street, and Lucy stepped forward to propose that Bank Street expand the workshop model to other public schools.<sup>114</sup>

Bank Street's public image had received a boost from a daily morning informational radio program called "The Baby Institute," which started in 1943 with Jesse Stanton as the host on the "Blue Network," the predecessor to ABC.<sup>115</sup> The show emphasized the physical and psychological well-being of young children, with scripts provided by the Writers Lab (especially Irma Black and Lucy) and child development advice from Barbara Biber. Guests included pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Dr. Milton Senn,<sup>116</sup> a pioneering child psychiatrist who was then Professor of Pediatrics at Cornell Medical School and director of the Institute for Child Development at New York Hospital. The show lasted only eighteen months but proved popular, drawing over 30,000 letters.<sup>117</sup>

Permission from the Board of Education did not assure participation by any public school principal or district superintendent. Lucy and Barbara Biber knew that they needed to find a school where they could demonstrate the value of their ideas and methods. The ideal would be a school with an enthusiastic principal and a student body that was economically, racially and culturally diverse. Another important requirement was a willing district superintendent. Ignoring the heat of July in New York, Lucy and Barbara hit the streets to find the school – which turned out to be PS 186 at 145th Street and Broadway on the western edge of Harlem.<sup>118</sup> The school's young principal, Edward Bernath, was a progressive educator and wanted Bank Street's help. The district superintendent was Benjamin Greenberg, who knew of Bank Street's work from the WPA nursery school program. The workshop was being offered at no charge from Bank Street, required no resources from the district, and teacher participation was voluntary, so Greenberg had no reason to object. Bank Street operated its workshop for three years, with a dozen or more teachers participating each year. It was a tremendous learning experience for Bank Street staff as well as the teachers.<sup>119</sup>

Success at PS 186 was leveraged in 1946 into Board of Education support for expansion of the Bank Street Workshop to other public schools, and authorization of released time for teachers selected to help with that effort. The expansion brought Bank Street staff into deeper involvement with a hierarchical bureaucracy far different than the independent schools in the cooperative networks they had created earlier. It was an environment with a range of pressures and anxieties that kept public schools skeptical and suspicious of Bank Street's intent and methods. The students and their families were also very different from those who paid tuition to attend independent schools, and Bank Street staff had to adapt their practice to address basic educational skills such as reading and arithmetic.<sup>120</sup>

Still, Lucy and her colleagues were thrilled and energized. Many of them had worked for many years with the goal of shaping public education to reflect the principles and methods developed by Bank Street. They had prepared "a new kind of teacher" in the CSST, and now had the opportunity to infuse those lessons in a new format for teachers working in the public schools. Bank Street had demonstrated not just that its educational methods and theories could apply to any child whether in a private or public school, but also that it had shown the sensitivity and flexibility to adapt its approach to teacher preparation to very different situations.

Jack Niemeyer was involved for four years with Temple's Teachers College early childhood educators who worked in Philadelphia public schools. He knew how hard it was to fashion and implement a successful teacher enrichment program, and must have been deeply impressed with the quality and scope of Bank Street's workshops. Lucy's *Our Children, Our Schools*, which appeared in 1950 and described the workshops, would certainly have attracted his attention and admiration.

### *Planning a New Pathway Leads to Internal Strife*

Perhaps the most compelling factor in the consideration over seeking a new path forward for Bank Street was the decision to identify some way to offer a master's degree, either through an affiliation with another institution or by seeking an amended charter from the Regents. When the arrangements with the eight cooperating schools ended during the late 1930's, the CST was renamed the School for Teachers. Students who completed the courses received a certificate, not an academic degree. As the teaching profession became more regulated and similar to other fields of higher education overseen by state agencies, Bank Street trustees and staff became concerned that the institution would become less attractive to students seeking professional credentials. A decline in enrollment would have undermined Bank Street's always shaky financial situation.

Starting in 1942, consideration of options began, including reaching out to institutions that shared progressive ideals, such as the New School or Sarah Lawrence College, or proximity, such as NYU, where a small-scale pilot was tried in 1943-44. The Board seemed to favor affiliation, perhaps because it could be achieved more quickly and easily, and lead to increased enrollments. Lucy argued strongly, however, for maintaining Bank Street's independence and freedom of action. It was not surprising that Lucy's view prevailed.

Starting in June 1948, Basil Bass, Bank Street Trustee and legal adviser, began discussions with the New York State Department of Education about obtaining an amended charter to authorize the granting of graduate degrees in education. Bank Street faced several challenges, but the two most difficult were its paltry assets and its name. There was an informal but unavoidable "requirement" that an institution seeking even provisional degree granting status have assets of at least \$500,000. After some reasonable adjustments of the appraised value of the building, equipment and furnishings, and library holdings, Bank Street assets were only about \$300,000. Lucy contributed the royalties on her books, and additional assets were pulled together to reach the minimum required. Regarding a new name, Bank Street had proposed "The Bank Street Schools" because that was the name under which it had been operating for some time. To meet the objection that "schools" was not sufficiently "dignified," the name "Bank Street College of Education" was offered and accepted.<sup>121</sup> The charter was amended to authorize operation of a graduate school of education and the awarding of the degree of Master of Science in Education. The operation of a laboratory school and educational research studies remained part of the amended charter.

As it turned out, the legal aspects of amending the charter were the easiest part of the process of change at Bank Street. According to Sheila Sadler, many Bank Street staff were proud to be "distinctly maverick" and Lucy herself was "conflicted" although she knew the change in status was necessary.<sup>122</sup> For Sadler, the charter amendment "made Bank Street look at itself and join the real world," which she described as a "painful" experience.<sup>123</sup>

The pain increased when institutional planning necessitated by the changed status led to tremendous friction between the Nursery School and the rest of the newly named Bank Street College of Education. After the 1941 crisis, nothing had fundamentally changed, except that Eleanor Reich became entrenched in her position as director of the school. She married again, becoming the wife of attorney George Brussel who proved to be a source of both support and legal advice during the Nursery School – College "civil war" that soon broke out. There were several core issues involving space, finances, and philosophy, but the overwhelming cause of the breakup seemed to be deep-seated personal conflicts. In terms of space, for the graduate education programs to grow, the Nursery School needed to give up some of its two floors of the four floor building. The Nursery School also had to change, shrinking its existing numbers of classes in order to add elementary grades to meet the terms of the amended charter and to serve as the laboratory school for graduate students in elementary education. Barbara Biber and her Studies and Publications Division colleagues also needed to have elementary school-aged children for their research work. For her part, despite being told that students wanted placements in elementary grades, Brussel complained that the School for

Teachers did not provide enough graduate students to cover the Nursery School's needs.

Financially, according to Sadler, there were endless arguments over how expenses were shared. Brussel viewed the school as self-supporting from a combination of tuition revenue and fundraising benefits. She excelled both in engaging parents and bringing in money. The shared expenses were seen as tipped to the disadvantage of the Nursery School. From the perspective of the other divisions, the Nursery School had the lion's share of the space (two floors plus the roof) and operating costs and was subsidized by the College.

Philosophically, Brussel and her staff followed the lead of the school psychologist, Edith Enteman, and the Nursery School took a much more Freudian approach than the rest of Bank Street. Freud's insights were studied and appreciated by faculty and research staff, but Lucy and others preferred to stay with principles and methods developed over the past decades and focus on education more than psychology, much less psychotherapy.

Reprising the strategy that had worked for them in 1941, Brussel and the Nursery School staff pushed back hard. Brussel ran the school as an autonomous unit; the College did not even have a list of the addresses of the families in the school. She did not hire her staff through the College nor seek to involve faculty from the other divisions in the interviewing process, continuing a practice that had been raised as a significant criticism of Nursery School teacher quality during the 1941 crisis. It seemed that although it bore the name of a co-founder of the BEE, the Nursery School was "at" rather than "of Bank Street."<sup>124</sup>

Lucy had largely withdrawn from active involvement with College operations following the death of her husband in 1948. Bank Street was still run by the Working Council which included the division heads, and was supposed to function by discussion and consensus. Brussel was at odds with the other division heads and could simply refuse to agree on anything that she felt was not in her school's interest. There was no administrative structure to deal with the situation so Lucy had to reengage to seek resolution. Perhaps because the emotions of 1941 came to surface again, the personal relationship quickly deteriorated. Lucy's letters to Brussel became more pointed and formal. For her part, while professing abiding admiration for Lucy and dedication to Bank Street, Brussel did not give an inch. The option was raised, in another echo of 1941, of the Nursery School becoming an affiliated or cooperating school. At this time, it seemed that Brussel felt confident that she could operate a school without underwriting from Lucy or Bank Street. As legal advisor and a Trustee, Bass pointed out that, under its amended charter, Bank Street had to maintain and operate a lab school that included the elementary grades. He also advised that it would be very difficult for Bank Street to divest itself of an asset, by which he meant both the Nursery School itself and the name "Harriet Johnson Nursery School." Finally, with Bass's support, an exasperated Lucy abruptly fired Brussel and announced the move by distributing a terse mimeographed notice to the staff on June 15th.<sup>125</sup> Unfortunately, the firing – without stated cause – started the "war" which, after much grief and anger,<sup>126</sup> led to rescinding Brussel's dismissal.

Part of the problem was that this crisis not only pulled Bank Street staff into different camps, it also divided the Trustees. Ideally, the Board should have been the group to help to calm the situation and to find a satisfactory resolution. As Elizabeth Healy Ross had tried to point out in her 1943 letter to Rank Smith, the Board was neither informed enough nor capable of taking control of the situation in support of Lucy, who continued to be the Board chair as well as the closest approximation of a chief executive officer.

Some Trustees, especially those whose children attended or had attended the Nursery School, felt sympathetic to Brussel and her staff, who were united in her defense. Others seemed confused and even bewildered by how the crisis had developed and spun out of control. Lucy herself seemed to become somewhat overwhelmed, but she did not waver from her conclusion that the future of Bank Street depended on continuing the research and teacher education programs that it had developed so carefully.<sup>127</sup>

The resolution came about through a negotiation with a team from the Nursery School community led by Robert Morgenthau, whose children were "alumni." The Nursery School would continue with Brussel serving as director<sup>128</sup> through June 1954, when she would resign and leave Bank Street to start a new nursery school. Bank Street would establish its own laboratory school. Neither Brussel nor Bank Street would use the "Harriet Johnson" school name, and there would be no relationship between the College and Brussel's school.<sup>129</sup> The 1953-54 year, according to Sadler, was like "major surgery on a battlefield without anesthesia." There were ongoing disputes over budgets, the rationale for shared expenses, and unpaid tuition balances that ultimately had to be written off. Nearly every member of the Nursery School staff and most of the families followed Brussel out the door to a new school that she had begun on the Upper East Side.<sup>130</sup> The brief civil war was over but had been costly in terms of time, energy, morale and money. Thinking back to 1941, it is hard not to wonder if Bank Street could have avoided this conflict if Lucy had acted upon Elizabeth Healy Ross's plea for an administrative review, and consideration of a Trustee's responsibilities.<sup>131</sup>

While Antler expressed the opinion that Lucy and her colleagues on the Board and staff handled the complicated crisis well, a review of the key actions and decisions might lead to a different conclusion. It was clear that, after trying to relieve herself of many Bank Street responsibilities over the previous five years, the now 75 year old founder had to reengage to sustain the institution and its mission. Perhaps the situation had already become too inflamed and positions too rigid to allow for a mutually-acceptable resolution, but the process of discussion, negotiation and decision-making seemed to make matters worse, creating increased tension and muddled communications.<sup>132</sup> It appeared that only the concerted action of the ad hoc Nursery School parents committee, under Robert Morgenthau's leadership, clarified the key issues and forced a resolution that, perhaps unintentionally, was best for all, and freed Bank Street from a relationship that threatened to undermine its future.<sup>133</sup>

One result of the war was that the position of chief executive officer suddenly came into existence. On May 15, 1953, a letter to Lucy from Bass & Harlow, Bank Street's counsel, about the legal implications of the resolutions adopted by the Board in April, concluded with the statement that "incidentally, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and as Vice-President of the corporation, you are the chief executive officer of the corporation."<sup>134</sup> Lucy had little enthusiasm and several conditions about serving in this role, including using the title of "Acting President."

In her 1962 conversation with Prescott, Lucy said "that title sounded tentative enough not to scare me" and suggested that the only reason she agreed was "because I thought I was the best person to be the goat." She and the majority of the Board had decided that Brussel had to leave, by resignation if possible and by dismissal if not. Since voluntary resignation seemed unlikely, dismissal was inevitable and would create reactions that only a chief executive could handle effectively and efficiently, especially at the end of the school year.

Lucy had to serve as Acting President for three years, much longer than anyone expected. Because she accepted that role in 1953, she was able to provide the way to resolve the timing problem that became the key obstacle to Jack Niemeyer's appointment to the presidency – serving as Bank Street's CEO during the 1955-6 year when Jack was president-elect and fulfilling his Oak Lane commitment.

### ***Did Bank Street Really Need a President?***

The civil war around the Nursery School vividly illustrated the urgent need for a chief executive that Bank Street had recognized but resisted for years. The question is why there had been such resistance. Perhaps it was partly out of deference to Lucy, whose clear preference for continued collective decision-making and responsibility was well-known. Lucy, however, had started pulling back from her earlier roles at Bank Street as early as 1946, when Wesley and she established their former weekend house in Stamford, CT as their primary home. Given her role as founder, funder, and guiding spirit, Lucy continued in a dominant position

but seemed amenable to a new configuration that could improve the functioning of the College while remaining true to its mission and values.

The decision to seek degree-granting authority made a review of the new college's educational and administrative structures necessary. Lucy chaired an All-College meeting "to discuss the possibility of a president" in March, 1952. A total of fourteen staff attended, including Biber, Winsor, Hogan and Sadler. The meeting was called "because of the feeling of some people that the present structure of Bank Street is not efficient to our needs," a likely reference to Biber's views. She had done a review of Working Committee minutes since 1947 and identified a number of issues of structure and organization that kept coming up but had never been decided. She also pointed out that while cooperation was always stressed, there were no joint fundraising or publicity efforts.<sup>135</sup> With Lucy reducing her role, it seemed to fall to Biber to try to hold the College together and encourage joint efforts to resolve long-standing problems amicably.

As described in the meeting notes Lucy wrote, there was agreement on what kind of president was not wanted. Although other colleges seemed to lean to businessmen and politicians (which seemed to include military leaders), that route was viewed as hurting education in the long run. Consideration was given to having a purely external person, to relieve the program leaders of fundraising and public relations duties but having no administrative role. Discussion of a more traditional role of president, an overall administrator, stressed the opportunity for fresh thinking about structure and policy, as well as planning and coordination of the work of the three divisions. A question was raised as to whether a small place like Bank Street could attract the interest of someone "strong enough to do the job." There was also discussion about the role of the Board, including whether Trustees could take on some of the responsibilities suggested for a president, especially in terms of coordination, and a question as to whether only the School for Teachers truly needed reorganization. There seemed to be both a recognition of the value of having an outsider with different perspectives and an abiding concern about what changes that person might introduce: "the feeling was that we need not only a spearhead for resources, promotion, funds – that we also need fresh thinking – nothing brand new – but a way of looking and considering...someone to spark everyone else...to help everyone see things in a new light." Still, there was some acceptance that "as the school expands it gets complicated so another need is for administration."<sup>136</sup>

The meeting concluded by identifying three College needs: fundraising and public relations; "administration of the Whole"; and "help toward re-evaluation – a fresh approach, educational leadership, move toward re-unitedness, evaluation of program development." In her "post-meeting thought or half-thought," Lucy recognized that the second and third needs overlapped. Their implications clearly bothered her. She raised the option of a trial or transition period where the first need (funds and PR) could be handled by a well-connected Trustee as chair of a new Financial Committee, and a group of "Educational Advisors" established to "meet with staff members at regular times to discuss both our administrative structure and how to improve it, and our work programs and how to make them more effective." (Lucy mentioned "Mr. Niemeyer" as a possible member of this new advisory group.) She also wondered about appointing a President pro tem during this trial period with no commitments but as a way to "notify the world that we *might* like a President." She ended by asking her colleagues to promptly respond to her idea of a trial period so that she could discuss it with the Board. It seemed clear that she was uncomfortable about moving too fast to a new administrative structure from concern that it would undercut the College's mission and culture.

The result of that Board meeting on April 21st was establishment of a Joint Trustee-Staff Committee whose charge was not to resolve the question of having a president but to hold two meetings to discuss the educational and research programs and how well the administrative structure supported them. Lucy and the Executive Committee chose the Trustee representatives; the staff would choose theirs. This course of action seemed to achieve Lucy's goals. It provoked a probing examination of the College's programs and how they had changed as well as how well they functioned. It also prevented a rush to find a president.

In her "progress report" to the Board a year later (April 1953), Lucy stated that Bank Street was in a transition

period and everyone was focused on a plan for the next five to ten years. Three key concerns had been identified: finding an administrative "coordinator"; finding space; and "finding funds to carry on and to grow." Lucy stated firmly that the "solution of all three of these practical problems depends upon educational decisions." She focused considerable attention on the issue of program integration and cooperation, noting that the both investigating committees found that, unlike the School for Teachers and Studies and Publications, the Nursery School's work was not integrated with the other College divisions. Therefore, Bank Street needed to determine whether a lab school was needed and, if so, what qualities it should have and how it should be organized.<sup>137</sup>

Lucy also reported that, at its February 1953 meeting, the Board had set up a committee of three Trustees and three staff to seek a "Coordinator" rather than a president. The first step was a committee proposal for Board consideration. For the moment it seemed that any consideration of creating the position of a chief executive officer had been put aside. This committee proposed an interim plan in late April because, at that time, it seemed that the Nursery School would spin off as a cooperating but separate school after the 1953-54 school year. Subsequent events likely derailed any consideration of this interim plan and the concept of a coordinator instead of a president disappeared. Lucy, however, seemed to continue to be uncomfortable with establishing the role of president and preferred to consider other options, such as hiring an "administrative officer" to handle fundraising and public relations.

Whether intentional or not, taking additional time to probe, analyze and consider had significant benefits for Bank Street and for the person who would eventually come aboard as president. Lucy had been thinking for several years about the future of the organization which she had established, sustained, and led for more than three decades. She could be sometimes emotional, irascible and impatient, but everyone agreed that she was exceptionally skilled in understanding people and relationships, as well as egalitarian and caring. It seems likely she was well aware of the Nursery School's strengths and weaknesses as it had evolved under Brussel's leadership, and considered whether it could fit with the directions in which Bank Street needed to continue to move.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps that is the reason Lucy seemed willing to have "Brussel's" school leave, so long as Harriet Johnson's name did not go with it. Lucy knew that Brussel, however capable at directing a top nursery school, had never truly embraced the Bank Street mission of experimentation and research, and could not reflect the deeply experimental attitude and way of thinking that was essential to the College's work.

Resolving the core conflict between the Nursery School and the other divisions was important to accomplish before Bank Street could embark on its next stage of development. Otherwise, however the College adjusted its organization and governance structures, it would find itself enmeshed in, and hobbled by, an ongoing feud within the Bank Street family.

### ***"A New Stage of Growth" – Lucy's Valedictory***

The completion of the institutional review process led to a published report, technically authored by the Acting President and Program and Policy Committee, but clearly written or at least shaped largely by Lucy. With the title of *A New Stage of Growth*, the report was dated 1954 but covered Bank Street's history since 1916. The report was Lucy's valedictory, her presentation of Bank Street's mission and goals, her analysis of how it had grown and changed, her assessment of its accomplishments, and her perspective on what was essential to sustain as the College moved on without her direct supervision. In particular, she wanted the reader to understand that Bank Street was defined by "our characteristic way of carrying out" its "broad social goal to improve education for children and their teachers." That "characteristic way" of doing its work included two elements: an "experimental approach" that functions in a "pioneer atmosphere" and "group thinking." A related goal, achieved through the investigations and research Bank Street pursued, was service, "particularly in the field of public education."

Together, Lucy asserted, these "traditions and criteria" shaped Bank Street's "patterns of work" and provided the framework for this report to present the Bank Street of 1954 and its potential for future development. That effort should be based on the "traditions," which were examined and "found to be good" so the plan for development included in the report "embodies our attempt to make a truly interacting and integrated College program."

To reinforce her points, Lucy explained that the "pattern of cores of intensive work" represented the heart and soul of Bank Street's mission. The College's "traditional patterns of work" involved "intensive pilot experiments approached with an experimental attitude, attention to high quality rather than to numbers, but with service programs to community and public as an integral part of our educational program." She insisted that the College has "to maintain the quality of our work at all costs" while acknowledging the increasing pressure of the times to do and produce more (especially more teachers to meet the national shortage). She wrote "no educational institution today escapes the temptation to reduce per capita cost by reducing the quality of the education it offers," especially because public support and funding respond more "to the splendid effulgence of quantity more readily than to the subtler gleam of quality."

In discussing conclusions on the need to update planning and administrative functions, Lucy advanced plans designed to preserve Bank Street's traditions. "Bank Street is small: we have no ambition to become a large college," she wrote, adding that the changes were largely a matter of better coordination and small additional administrative expenditures. While acknowledging that "the College for some years functioned under three nearly autonomous departments which did not make for integration of the college program of work," over the past year an experimental Policy and Program Committee had been created which linked the three program chairs with three "educational consultants" from the Board. This group also included the Acting President, and was chaired by the Executive Secretary (the Board's primary staff). Its duties were to plan the College program and budget and to formulate policies, which would then be presented to the Board for review and decision.

Her perspective on the evolving nature and duties of the administrative head of the College was ambiguous. She explained that the Acting President (her) and the Executive Secretary (Sadler) were sufficient, except in the area of fundraising, where recruitment of an additional "administrative officer" had been already been approved. There is no indication as to how the "Acting President" would be replaced, although in the spring of 1953, Lawrence Frank, a Trustee whom Lucy greatly respected, had pressed for creation of a job description for a president specifically to restructure the College's governance. Frank had been appointed by Lucy as a Trustee member of the special "Committee to look for a coordinator" and presumably had concluded that a more radical change was necessary.

Was Lucy concerned that the expenses of a new president might be too much for the College budget? Would the cost of a president preclude future salary increases for an already over-worked and under-paid staff? The report projected six program areas: the three current ones --Children's Programs, Graduate School, and Research -- plus the Evening Program in Teacher Education, Field Services (which included the Public School Workshops), and Publications. That suggested the need to reallocate staff to focus on specific program areas, especially as the expanded work outlined in the report was undertaken.

A new chair for Children's Programs (Gilkeson) was appointed for 1954-55, but a chair for Field Services needed to be added. Besides the staff salary increases already approved for 1954-55, the library needed more funding. Beyond the administrative officer for development, could the College devote funding needed for program strengthening to administrative expansion? These concerns were real for Lucy, especially since as Acting President she did not draw a salary or benefits.

This report was a valedictory in the sense that it was Lucy's farewell address as well as a comprehensive defense of the purposes and operation of the organization she had shaped and led. Because she was continuing as Acting President, a member of the Board, and a major donor, *A New Stage of Growth* was also a



challenge to those at Bank Street who saw appointing a president as a way to immediately solve all the problems. Lucy drew the proverbial line in the sand: a president had to understand and value Bank Street's traditions and patterns of work, its distinctive character as well as its mission. Nothing less would merit her support and encouragement. At the same time, the report conveyed how much effort Lucy had expended to prepare Bank Street for a new president and to provide a map to the future.

### *Preparing for New Leadership*

In preparing Bank Street for its future without her, Lucy had pursued several courses that, intentionally or not, would aid a new president in significant ways. Most obviously, several years earlier she had agreed to move ahead with the charter amendment and name change so that Bank Street could compete for students more effectively. Joining "the real world" of higher education had many potential downsides, especially the loss of identity and distinction that Lucy must have observed as universities grew larger, absorbing previously independent schools. The planning effort undertaken in 1953 was one way to stamp the new college with the mission and character of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, as was publication of the *A New Stage of Growth*. An incoming president would find Bank Street with deep roots and a proud, coherent mission.

Through the Public School Workshops, now ably directed by Charlotte Winsor, and with Barbara Biber's increasing portfolio of exciting research studies, the partnership with the NYC public schools seemed to be flourishing. While in 1953 the controversy over the teacher personality research study with the Board of Examiners created problems, it seems doubtful that Lucy felt at that time that the unfortunate episode would harm long-term relationships with the Board of Education and School Superintendent. Thus, Lucy's goal of making Bank Street into a force for promoting stronger public school teaching seemed to have been achieved and offered exciting opportunities for further expansion. Cenedella suggested that Lucy might have overestimated the true impact of Bank Street Workshops, which affected only the schools and teachers that agreed to participate rather than leading lasting change in the school system.<sup>139</sup> Still, for Lucy and her closest colleagues, a giant step had been taken in creating connections to the public schools that had not existed earlier.

To simplify administration, the Working Council was eliminated in 1951 and replaced with an Executive Committee composed of the chairs of the three programs: Barbara Biber (Research); Eleanor Brussel (Nursery School); and Eleanor Bowman Hogan (School for Teachers). When Hogan cut back her load, Charlotte Winsor took over as Chair of the School for Teachers and joined the Executive Committee. This structure did not work out as well as expected, even when assisted by three "educational experts" drawn from the Board. This experiment might have ended up exacerbating rather than easing the tensions that led to the 1953 Nursery School crisis.<sup>140</sup>

Finances were always difficult. After all, for many Board members, the primary justification for a president was the urgent need to raise money. Lucy was no doubt aware of the dependency that had been created by the generous support that she and her family had lavished on Bank Street. While the endowment was meager, Bank Street did own its building outright, in part through the provision of Wesley's will cancelling the mortgage he had held. In 1949, Lucy gave \$100,000 in securities to support the Studies and Publications Division, giving the Trustees the option of using the interest or some of the principal. Later, in the mid-1950's, she helped direct to Bank Street a \$300,000 bequest from her sister Mary Miller. Bank Street was also beginning to receive more and larger grants from private foundations to support its research and teacher preparation work although Lucy understood that such program support could not provide the core operating funding needed to sustain the college. *A New Stage of Growth* concluded with the statement that "no organization carrying on research and school experimentation can ever be self-supporting."

In September 1951, knowing of the estimated deficit in the 1951-52 budget, Lucy had offered her Executive Committee colleagues up to \$6,000 to help meet what she termed "an emergency." She identified two

different paths for using the money, and asked them to consider which was best. "Plan 1" would underwrite fundraising expenses, including staff costs for writing appeals to foundations and individuals, publicity, and organizing benefit events; the costs of a dinner meeting designed to help fundraise in some way; and printing and secretarial help with any fundraising campaign. "Plan 2" was simply to add the \$6,000 to the reserve fund to be drawn down as needed at the end of the fiscal year. Lucy's preference for Plan 1 was obvious, but it seemed clear that she wanted her closest colleagues to understand that they needed to support her efforts to move from simply giving her money to Bank Street to underwriting a sustainable fundraising operation that could replace her annual giving in the years to come. She also wanted to let them know that she thought it was important to support a single central fundraising effort for the College. The pattern had always been to do fundraising, which included grant-seeking, through the separate departments. There had been a continuing irritation that Nursery School parents focused their annual giving solely on the school, ignoring the needs of the larger institution. A centralized effort might be able to address this situation. By November, Lucy's strategy became clearer and more specific, with her idea for creating a separate group of friends to support Bank Street financially and in efforts to raise its public profile.

### ***Lucy's New Idea: The Bank Street Associates***

Lucy knew that her own resources would never be sufficient to assure Bank Street's viability. In 1951 she embarked on planning an initiative to create a College-wide group of supporters to provide more funds and greater public outreach by establishing the Bank Street Associates. Her memo to the Bank Street Executive Committee on November 27, 1951 sought suggestions and an endorsement in order to bring the plan to the Board on December 7th. Lucy wanted not simply approval from the Trustees; she wanted active engagement so that the initiative would be pursued enthusiastically and quickly. She conceived of this new group as a "two-way street between the College and the outside world," more like an affiliated support organization than a component of Bank Street. The College would help to start it, but the group needed to have its own structure and leadership. At the outset, Lucy suggested having a member of the Bank Street staff serve as chair but seemed open to having a Trustee in that role, with Irma Black (who helped prepare the plan) as chair of a committee. (Initially, Jesse Stanton was "president pro tem" until replaced by Trustee William Blitzer.) The link between the College and the Associates was to be personal, not structural, and after using up the seed money from Bank Street (i.e., Lucy), the group would be responsible for its own budget.

With the support of the Executive Committee, Lucy sent "their plan" to the Trustees and Staff on December 7, 1951. It was a *fait accompli* because the Executive Committee has already appointed a temporary Steering Committee to implement the plan. The purposes of the new group were stated to be "educational" – promoting the ideas and values of the College – and "financial." As usual, while the thrust of the argument for establishing the Associates was increasing financial support and attracting more donors, the ordering of purposes subordinated that goal to a vague educational mission to be accomplished by an array of publications, seminars and symposia, and a large annual conference. The proposed structure was also unclear because, while the Associates would be "an organization with elected officers and budget independent of the College," functionally it would be subject to the Executive Committee on "plans involving educational policy." Clearly, Lucy and her close colleagues were not looking to create a group that might get out of their control.<sup>141</sup>

The Associates concept represented a recognition that, beyond Mitchell family giving, fundraising for Bank Street was unpredictable, weak, and division-based. Nursery School parents gave to the school; foundation grants came to the School for Teachers or Studies & Publications division; revenues from the Writers Lab flowed to its account. Yet in most years most or all divisions needed financial assistance from the College to cover deficits. This venture also offered a way to expand the number of potential candidates for a Board that then could take on the responsibilities of fundraising for core operations.

In February 1952 the Bank Street Associates came into existence, albeit with many details left incomplete. A lunch meeting for Charter Members<sup>142</sup> was held at 69 Bank Street, with 50 guests, where the concept was introduced and input sought. William H. Kilpatrick was an Honorary Charter Associate; Lucy was Honorary President. The audience that day included Marjorie and Jack Niemeyer. The event was reported on the next day in the *New York Times*, which mentioned that "the luncheon inaugurated a program to gain wide support from parents, teachers, social scientists and others concerned with progressive education."<sup>143</sup>

This was the first time the Associates garnered favorable publicity for the College, a success repeated for a number of years through coverage of the annual Associates conferences.

While it does not appear that the Associates support group ever fulfilled the fundraising aspirations of Lucy and her colleagues, its existence, size of membership, and outreach activities were significant. The Associates, even as a new organization, would likely impress and give reassurance to a new president about potential help that could be tapped in the quest for larger financial support and public recognition for Bank Street's work.

The annual Bank Street conferences organized by the Associates were impressive events. Held at the Biltmore Hotel, the conferences attracted hundreds of educators, including some from beyond the New York metropolitan area. The quality of the speakers was evident from the 1954 conference mentioned in Chapter One, when Jack responded to the harsh criticisms of teachers and teaching by Crane Brinton and David Riesman.

The conferences continued through 1960, when volunteer leadership waned and the expanded work load of Bank Street staff with new programs and projects made it impossible to devote the time and energy required by such large-scale events. For an incoming president in the mid-1950's, the Associates conferences were evidence of Bank Street's vitality and ambitions, providing excitement and encouragement.

### ***Forty Years: Marking an Ending, a Beginning, and Continuity***

In June 1956, Lucy sent to the Board her last annual report, announcing the end of her responsibilities as Acting President and noting that "like the best endings, it marks a happy beginning – the coming of John Niemeyer as President of the College." The tone was different from *A New Stage of Growth* although the message remained the same and upbeat: keep the faith, the best will come. Lucy had never called Bank Street unique but she did so now: "we have achieved a kind of social maturity in solidarity of aim and in attitudes toward our work which, among colleges, I do not hesitate to characterize by that much-abused word 'unique.'" What had begun as "a bold experiment" forty years earlier had "achieved professional maturity." Now Lucy aligned herself with the joint thinking that the College needed a president, but she reprised her perception that the job was "to act as coordinator of work inside the college and to develop our relationships outside," relieving staff of those duties. She also acknowledged that it was increasingly important for Bank Street to work on "national problems affecting children." She added the caution that expanded efforts should follow the traditional pattern of "intensive experimental work" with the hope that it would lead to large service programs. In research areas, "in education of children and their teachers, we are on the way to becoming a laboratory for study of national and social problems that affect all our country's children." To Lucy, with evident satisfaction, "this broadening of the scope of our work...really embodies the dreams that for many years we have been working to turn into realities."

Bank Street at the beginning of the Niemeyer years was an odd combination of weaknesses and strengths, offering Jack what could be an exciting journey but on a long road with many turns, ruts, and potholes. He knew about most of those obstacles: in 1977 he told Edith Gordon that he "saw Bank Street was organizationally extremely weak; organizationally quite undisciplined...financially poverty-stricken." He recognized that his mission as president was "to get an organizational structure and get the resources that

were needed so that this talented group of committed educators could be more effective than I thought they had been."<sup>144</sup>

Jack was a pragmatist. After his experience with Oak Lane and Temple, he could hardly ignore the administrative and financial requirements of leadership or the reality of Bank Street's organizational and financial fragility. He was also an idealist. He was inspired by what Bank Street had accomplished and the potential it offered. He must have believed that he had enough in place to work with. Candidly, Jack was a "rookie." He had not been a chief executive officer before. At Oak Lane, he had operated with autonomy but did not have complete control of the school budget and policies because of the legal and financial relationship with Temple. Taking on a nearly 40 year-old organization as its first chief executive would be a challenge for anyone, even were the finances and governance stronger.

Given the institutional quirkiness of Bank Street, Jack needed the many personal qualities that had made him an attractive candidate for president. He had been described as personable, diplomatic, a good observer and listener, collaborative, courteous and kind.

Jack would also need to fulfill the role of a strong leader, because he knew that there was "so much to be done and there were so few of us to do anything" and some decisions would have to be made quickly.<sup>145</sup>

If Bank Street were thought of as a garden, Lucy had done the design and original plantings. Now the garden needed a lot of work – and fertilizer – if it was to flourish and reach full potential. It would not be easy, but Jack was ready to get to work—to make it "even more so."

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<sup>81</sup> Burton R. Clark, *The Distinctive College*, Transaction Publishers, 1992. This was a new edition. The original book was published in 1970 by Aldine.

<sup>82</sup> Cenedella, p. 277.

<sup>83</sup> Hogan was a close associate and student of Lucy's, and served as the chair of the Cooperative School for Student Teachers under its changing names for many years. Jack Niemeyer seemed convinced, however, that the summary document was written by another "EH" – Elizabeth Healy (later Ross) – for reasons he described in an interview by Edith Gordon, 11/11/1981.

<sup>84</sup> See Jack's 8/24/1988 letter to "Rosemarie" who was the staff member who had asked him to revise a "short history of Bank Street" that had been written in 1987 which Jack had criticized.

<sup>85</sup> Antler pointed out that the Henry Street Settlement was Lucy's "first stop" because Wald, like Lucy's hero Jane Addams, was well-known for devoting her life to, and building a serious career in, working to improve the lives of the poor. Antler noted that, although Lucy did not pursue social work or settlement houses as a setting for her own career, Wald was an important role model.

<sup>86</sup> "Lucy Sprague Mitchell: Pioneering in Education," transcript of an interview with Lucy as part of the University of California's Regional Cultural History Project, by Irene M. Prescott of UC-Berkeley, 1962.

<sup>87</sup> Prescott, p. 126. It is possible that Lucy is referring to the 1950 White House Conference which focused for the first time on the emotional well-being of children. See p. 16 of "Renewing Childhood's Promise," a 2015 report published by the American Enterprise Institute written by Katherine B. Stevens. In a footnote, Stevens mentioned that some of the conference proceedings were referenced in the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision.

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<sup>88</sup> Woolley was another role model for Lucy. Highly educated, with a PhD from the University of Chicago, in Cincinnati she had become director of the Bureau for the Investigation of Working Children, which was formed after the enactment of the Ohio child labor law in 1910. The child labor law gave the state legal control over children until the age of 17 and enabled the investigation of working children's development. Under Woolley's leadership, the bureau conducted a five-year follow-up study, investigating the mental and physical differences between 750 children in school and 750 children who had left school to go to work at the age of fourteen. See Woolley biographical page at <http://faculty.webster.edu/woolfm/wooley.html>

<sup>89</sup> In the introduction to her biography of Lucy, Antler noted that "Bank Street exemplified the extension of a family model to a public organization, offering personal nurturance and support for its initiates in a way reminiscent of the Hull House settlement under Jane Addams." See Antler, pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>90</sup> Gussie Kappner interview with John Borden, 6/7/2016.

<sup>91</sup> Marot was a leader in the Women's Trade Union League, a writer and editor, a friend of Lucy's, and Caroline Pratt's companion. See Antler, pp. 237-238.

<sup>92</sup> It is reasonable to assume this donor was Jean Lee Hunt, a member of the first BEE Working Council and Secretary of its Department of Information.

<sup>93</sup> Cenedella, p. 171.

<sup>94</sup> Biber had been hired by Lucy in 1929. See Antler, p. 292.

<sup>95</sup> Antler, p. 288.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. pp. 244-246.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 301.

<sup>98</sup> *New York Times*, 11/3/1961. This article, on p. 38 of the Family Section, focused on Lucy's work over 45 years since the BEE was founded.

<sup>99</sup> The building has always been described as a former yeast plant. In the Spring 1970 issue of *Bank Street Reporting* (v. VI, no. 3, p. 4), there was a brief humorous article which stated that, based on information from a former Fleischman employee, 69 Bank Street was a distillery. Perhaps after the start of Prohibition in 1920, it was used to manufacture yeast.

<sup>100</sup> The financial reliance on the Mitchells, however, did not change. To buy 69 Bank Street, Lucy lent the BEE \$100,000 and Wesley lent \$65,000. In his will, Wesley cancelled the mortgage he held. Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 3/31/1949.

<sup>101</sup> Carson College for Orphaned Girls was not a "college" but rather a school for girls based on the settlement house model. Its head, Elsa Euland, had worked at settlement houses in New York and at Columbia's department of Economics. She was also on the Executive Committee of the Progressive Education Association. Euland and Lucy knew each other (Antler called Euland one of Lucy's friends, p.230), which could explain why Carson was included in this consortium despite its more distant location. Euland became a Charter member of the Bank Street Associates in 1952, suggesting the relationship continued.

<sup>102</sup> The name of the school later changed, first to Cooperative School for Teachers (CST) and then to simply the School for Teachers. CSST is used for most of this section to avoid confusion. Lucy told Prescott that "cooperative" had to be deleted from the name due to objections from two federal departments that the word #

meant profit-sharing and was inappropriate. Prescott, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Jack also supported Thomas in 1932. This parallel indicates the similarity of views that Lucy and Jack would later find reassuring as she prepared to pass responsibility for her creation into his hands.

<sup>104</sup> Reece was identified by Antler as a "colleague" of Lucy's but also someone who knew the Mitchells well enough to comment on the extent of Wesley's influence on Lucy and the work of the BEE. Antler, p.230.

<sup>105</sup> Cenedella, p. 211.

<sup>106</sup> Lucy preferred the title "chairman" which she used herself and applied to the program units, where the title "director" only appeared in the 1940's and only for the Nursery School.

<sup>107</sup> Cenedella, p. 290.

<sup>108</sup> Years later, after her divorce, she married George Brussel. During the conflicts over the Nursery School in the 1950's, she is referred to as Eleanor Brussel. At this point, however, it seems both more accurate and clearer to identify her as Eleanor Reich.

<sup>109</sup> Ross continued to be involved with Bank Street, serving later as Board chair at Lucy's request when she stepped down in 1955 and helping Jack Niemeyer's transition into the presidency. Lucy clearly admired Ross, even asking her to consider becoming a candidate for Bank Street president in a 7/16/1953 letter.

<sup>110</sup> Cenedella, p. 215; also Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 232-236.

<sup>111</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>112</sup> Her formal title was Chief of the Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education of the New York State Education Department. Andrus later became Director of the Cold Spring Institute (Walt Foundation) and a Bank Street Trustee.

<sup>113</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 175-187.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. pp. 251-255.

<sup>115</sup> Antler, p. 233.

<sup>116</sup> Senn later moved to Yale where he served as first director of the Child Study Center and was a member of the Bank Street board for several years in the early 1950's.

<sup>117</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 257-58.

<sup>118</sup> The summer of 1943 proved to be a tension-filled time in Harlem. There was a riot lasting three days in August when a white policeman shot a black soldier who tried to intervene in an arrest.

<sup>119</sup> Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 265-271.

<sup>120</sup> See Jaime Grinberg's chapter on "The Conceptual Basis of Teacher Education," in which he points out that Bank Street was serving the needs of a small and specialized market for teachers. CSST students were being prepared to teach in private progressive schools that "shared the ideas, culture, and perspectives of experimentalism and progressivism..." *Teaching Like That*, pp. 67-79.

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<sup>121</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of the Bank Street Trustees, 3/21/1949, concerning "various plans for getting an M.A. Degree."

<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Lamb, who was the administrative support for the School for Teachers from 1933-43, recalled the sentiment guiding admission as "we didn't want just a degree walking in the door, we wanted a committed, loving human being to work with children." Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/29/1975.

<sup>123</sup> Sadler interview with Edith Gordon, 8/4/1975.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> A single-page statement to all College staff read: "The Trustees feel that at this time they should announce that Eleanor Brussel's connection with the Harriet Johnson Nursery School of the Bank Street College of Education has been terminated." It was signed by Lucy as Chairman of the Board and Acting President. It is possible that this statement might be the first time Lucy used the title of Acting President with the staff.

<sup>126</sup> Sadler told Gordon that Brussel threatened to "blacken Bank Street's name" and oppose continued funding from foundations where Nursery School parents had influence. Interview, 8/4/1975.

<sup>127</sup> Jack recalled visiting the new SFC under Ibby Gilkeson's leadership and remarking at "the wonderful feeling of openness" that was quite different from his recollection of the HJNS under Brussel. When he told Barbara Biber of his observation, she brought over Ibby, Charlotte and a few others and asked Jack to repeat his comments. This was how Jack learned of the "long bitter dispute that split Bank Street apart in so many ways." Jack's handwritten note to Gussie Kappner on announcement of Ibby's death, October 8, 1998; see also Jack's remarks in "Reflections on Elizabeth Gilkeson's Work in Progress – A celebration in honor of her 90th year, May 1993" where he also commented that he had visited the HJNS some years earlier and found it "uninspiring."

<sup>128</sup> Technically, Brussel was co-director with Elizabeth Doak, who actually ran the school while Brussel worked on setting up her new school. Brussel continued, however, to use the title of Director of HJNS until the end.

<sup>129</sup> Brussel did not want to talk about the breakup, expressed high regard for Lucy, and claimed that she was never told why Bank Street wanted to "discontinue the school." She downplayed her role in exacerbating the crisis, which was "an extremely emotional period on both sides" when "possibly things that were done and decided were under the influence of severe emotion." Interview with Gordon, 7/22/1975.

<sup>130</sup> The name of her new nursery school was the School for Nursery Years at 9 East 90th Street. The choice of name suggested Brussel's bitter rejection of the pressure to change HJNS to accommodate the needs of the Research and Teacher Education divisions. That point was driven home in Brussel's letter to the editor of "East of Fifth," a community newsletter, in the Fall of 1954, where she sought to clarify the difference between her school and the new Bank Street School for Children. She wrote "The Harriet Johnson Nursery School was discontinued last Spring by the Bank Street College of Education. A new school, The Bank Street School for Children, was started there this Fall with an entirely new staff and a philosophy quite different from that of the former Harriet Johnson Nursery School." Brussel's School for the Nursery Years was sponsored by the New York School for Social Work and was described in an article in the *New York Times*, 10/6/1954. Its board included Robert Morgenthau, William H. Kilpatrick, and the president of Mills College, a local teacher training institution which would place students in the new school.

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<sup>131</sup> Several trustees left the Board as a result of this trauma, including Rank Smith who was then the director of LREI and a member of the Executive Committee. He left the Board in mid-June 1953, before the negotiated resolution. See his letter to Lucy of June 6, 1953.

<sup>132</sup> The minutes of the May 27, 1953 Executive Committee meeting reflect a key division within the Trustees over allowing the use of the Harriet Johnson name with a new nursery school. Lucy and her closest colleagues who knew Johnson were strongly opposed, even if the gesture would calm the situation. To be fair, Bass was also adamantly opposed for legal reasons.

<sup>133</sup> Letter of June 11, 1953 to Lucy as Board chair and Acting President from Robert Morgenthau and other parents. Also, see the agreement of July 1, 1953 among a special negotiating committee composed of Nursery School parents and staff, and College representatives, as well as Lucy's memo to the Trustee Executive Committee of July 2nd. The "divorce" allowed Bank Street to start fresh to design a lab school that supported its mission and needs, and would be integrated with the other divisions.

<sup>134</sup> Bank Street had been established as a non-profit corporation with a small group of officers and directors, and later added a board of trustees. In practice, the lines between the corporation and board were blurred. Later the corporate entity was eliminated when the Bank Street By-laws were updated.

<sup>135</sup> Cenedella, p. 274 referencing the Working Council minutes, 4/2/1950.

<sup>136</sup> Notes on March 11, 1952 All Bank Street meeting, by Lucy and dated 3/15/1952.

<sup>137</sup> It seems likely that this process of self-assessment precipitated the Nursery School's defensive reactions that escalated to the "civil war" during the next few months.

<sup>138</sup> Bea Lamm suggested that Lucy wanted to "get rid of" Brussel well before the 1953 crisis. Gordon interview, 7/29/1975.

<sup>139</sup> Cenedella, p. 277, referencing comments from Bank Street faculty member Virginia Schoenberg who worked in the Public School Workshops program, as recorded in an interview with Edith Gordon, 6/11/1976.

<sup>140</sup> A group of three where two are sisters (Biber and Winsor) meant Brussel was already likely to feel isolated. The Executive Committee structure seemed unlikely to be an effective way to address the lack of Nursery School integration and participation which was already known to be a persistent problem.

<sup>141</sup> Plan document addressed to the Trustees and Staff, 12/7/1951.

<sup>142</sup> There were approximately 100 Charter Associates. Besides Jack, the list included his Temple colleague Esther Mason, who supervised the early education teaching programs and had told him about Bank Street. The Honorary Charter Associates included New York School Superintendent William Jansen.

<sup>143</sup> *New York Times*, 2/17/1952.

<sup>144</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/10/1977, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### "DYNAMIC STRENGTHENING": TRADITION, TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION

The photograph accompanying Jack Niemeyer's article "Looking to the Future" in the 1957 *Bank Street Profile* showed a somber man. His gaze was intense; there was no trace of the broad smile that appeared in photos from later years. A formal "head shot" was customary for that era, and it was important for a new head of an institution to convey seriousness, determination, and the sober demeanor appropriate for the role. Bank Street, however, was so often the exception to convention that Jack could have selected a different kind of photograph to use in a publication that would be distributed widely and to all alumni and friends of the college that he now led. His article, after all, was an early and important statement of his aspirations for Bank Street and his plans for achieving them, and an opportunity to make a strong impression on readers who had known only Lucy as the face of the College.<sup>146</sup>

Perhaps the key to his choice was found in the second paragraph of his article, where he acknowledged that alumni and friends of the College would be asking questions about possible new directions, including what the "character" of the new developments might be. Calling Bank Street a "complex and wonderful place," Jack wanted to make two points immediately clear: he respected and wanted to build on "the solid foundation of the old," and he believed the College existed to "explore new fields and set up pilot projects which can eventually affect the broad field of education."

He framed the challenge not in terms of the institution but of the larger society --"the needs of society are pressing us to enlarge our program" – and laid out an ambitious set of plans to pursue "as quickly as finances and personnel permit." Although his list was robust, he claimed it represented "only a small number of the challenges to which we would like to address our professional energies."

Jack's ambitious list reflected his mindset about tradition and transformation. The first item was developing ways to help psychiatrists, nurses, physicians, and social workers learn from direct experiences with groups of children in school, clearly building on the multi-disciplinary approach that guided the College's work from the days of the Bureau. Similarly, he advocated using Bank Street's experience with New York City schools to help other school systems improve teacher quality. He also added some new ideas, including "establish new techniques for working effectively with parents of various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds," helping schools "deal intelligently" with the problems of school integration, and "train school guidance workers and school personnel other than classroom teachers."

An intriguing idea was to "develop a program, more effective than traditional doctoral studies, for preparing distinguished teachers for colleges of education." Including such an audacious idea, when Bank Street was only a few years into its status as a graduate degree-granting institution, marked Jack as a serious innovator, not simply someone who would be content to sustain traditional approaches and focus on fundraising and public relations. Jack made it clear that he did not conceive of his job primarily as a coordinator and administrator.

As president, he would be responsible for developing, articulating, and implementing a refreshed vision of Bank Street, rooted in its rich legacy and distinctive character but encompassing new programs and projects and a broader conception of its role in the larger society. Jack claimed inheritance of "the Bank Street spirit – the exciting dreaming done by a group of professional workers who somehow always manage to have many of their dreams come true!"<sup>147</sup>

In Chapter One, it was noted that Jack used his "new guy in town" strategy to help to create support for resolving the College's 1956 exclusion from working in New York public schools. To some extent, he seemed to use the same strategy within the Bank Street community. There was a core truth to his approach: he was new in the sense that he did not have the years of working together shared by many of the staff, from Biber to Sadler, nor as the experience of being a student of Lucy's, like several key trustees. He did have a depth of knowledge of Bank Street's work, distinctive structure and way of operating, and people, based on several years as a charter member of the Bank Street Associates and his connections with Biber and other senior staff. After all, his understanding of Bank Street and his philosophical congruence with its mission were the keys to staff support for his appointment as President, despite some reservations from important Board members.

The early development of his approach to his new job was on display in his speech to graduating students at Bank Street's June 1955 commencement, soon after he was named President-elect. His handwritten notes for the speech reflected his understanding that some people had concerns about how a president might try to exercise power. He asked for patience and understanding, even a bit of compassion and forbearance, urging everyone to refrain from seeking to immediately shift responsibilities to the new leader. Tellingly, he noted that any administration had two problems: the need for "self-discipline and self-abnegation in facing the general problem of authority" and "loneliness." He was "the new guy" and needed time to build relationships and find his footing. Jack focused the rest of the speech on teachers and what the new graduates might expect to find, especially the occasions when teachers question how important their work was. He asserted that "perhaps the major moral problem of our age is the fact that it is difficult for the individual to feel that he, as small as he is, can do something important." He connected this problem with the teacher feeling "lost in our profession" and counselled against apathy, rebellion, or transferring responsibility to school leaders. Teachers need always "to know that what you do and are is really shaping the future of the world."

Besides reflecting his own beliefs in the power of the teacher, Jack's remarks indicated at that early point his blend of pragmatism and optimism about his emerging role at Bank Street. He certainly was not Don Quixote; he knew the difference between a windmill and a dragon, but he was confident in his role and its importance to society and unafraid to take on challenges. The talk must have been well-received. Retired Bank Street faculty member Nancy Balaban was a member of the graduating class that day, and recalled Jack's speech and the sense that he "officiated" at the commencement even though he was not yet the President. She felt that he was admired and liked, and that having a president "made Bank Street a real institution."<sup>148</sup>

During his year as President-elect, Jack had the opportunity to observe, learn, build relationships, and dream. In a handwritten document dated March 25, 1956, he laid out a mixture of nine short and long-term ideas to launch in his first year as President.

1. Establish a "National Professional Advisory Board," including Larry Frank, Lawrence Kubie, and Fritz Redl, which Jack labelled "Associates Super"<sup>149</sup>
2. A conference on "supporting development of the healthy personality"
3. "Inaugural" dinner parties hosted by Board members and some Associates to introduce Jack to a circle of friends, during the spring and fall of 1956, involving Lucy and Program Directors (Biber, Winsor, Black, Gilkeson)

4. Visits to other colleges "to explore what is being done in research"
5. Obtain names of New Yorkers from Jack's friends in Philadelphia and Rochester, as well as use Lucy as a "missionary" to set up Associates chapters in those cities
6. Explore what Bank Street might do to make upcoming ASCD (Association for Supervisions and Curriculum Development) meeting more racially integrated
7. For "the big dinner honoring Lucy," get someone "educationally creative" to summarize forty years of achievements<sup>150</sup>
8. Consider offering in-service consultation to public schools, building off the Workshops, assuming there are distinct services to provide and more staff can be found
9. Consult Florence Beaumont about greatest needs of public schools<sup>151</sup>
10. As after-thoughts, Jack added three more ideas. Two involved revenue-generating ideas to bring up with the Finance Committee: consultation services to industry, and the bookstore (presumably, to expand it). He also noted the need for a "promotion-minded person to push writings."

It would not be unusual for a "president in waiting" to have an internal "blue sky" conversation about initiatives, and to create something of a grab-bag of ideas. Jack noted that he "must not lose sight of one of my main ideas: put educational research on a higher, more truly scientific (in spirit) level" and added "interesting—this [was the] original purpose of Bank Street." This comment seemed to underscore Jack's early focus on Bank Street as a national center for experimental research and advanced studies in all aspects of children's education and development, rather than concentrating on teacher education programs. His "blue sky list" reflected his priorities. The first two items were aimed at increasing Bank Street's national footprint, and the last two dealt with teacher education and service to the schools.

While at Bank Street the cooperation and collaboration among divisions was emphasized, the inherent tensions between research studies and teacher education programs would become more evident and difficult to manage during the Niemeyer years. Jack valued the College's approach to preparing excellent classroom teachers but always seemed more personally engaged with the research studies and developing programs to improve public education. Lia Gelb, who joined the Bank Street teaching staff in 1955, commented that Jack had seemed less interested in the professional development of teachers, the process of moving from graduate student to teacher, than in the research studies on child development and learning.<sup>152</sup>

Because Jack often described himself as a teacher, what were his views on the profession? He had said that being called a teacher was the highest compliment, of course, but he had already begun to think about schools as a system and simply producing more excellent teachers did not seem to be the most effective way to improve public education overall. He understood that the classroom, where children and teacher came together as members of a learning community, had been the core of Bank Street's approach and distinction. Was that to change because the College's president saw the need to pursue reform of public schools?

Jack was fully supportive of the classroom, but he looked at teachers and their work through a different lens. We can glean his views from his 1966 article on the "Importance of the Inner-City Teacher" where he stated that "the critical point in the enactment of an educational program is the point of direct contact with the pupil, namely, the classroom teacher." His concern was that the teacher often felt powerless because "the idea that the teacher operates freely within a learning sanctuary called the classroom is in reality a myth." As a result, "schools seeking to educate the poor and the segregated children and youth effectively require changes much more drastic than most educators think of as desirable or even possible."

Jack listed seven principles of sound pedagogy which largely reflected the Bank Street philosophy: (1) the teacher must always start where the child is; (2) learning works "only if knowing has brought gratification"; (3) use multi-sensory approaches; (4) develop skills to encourage life-long learning by every child; (5) "children learn what they live" so stress problem-solving; (6) the teacher is the model for learning; and (7) because "things are seldom what they seem, the wise teacher wonders why and searches for the real reasons."<sup>153</sup> Jack always thought of himself as "a practical school man" as well as a teacher. He placed high value on the work of the classroom teacher and always sought to find ways to allow a teacher to function more autonomously and effectively.

Much of Jack's "blue sky" wish list did not come to fruition. It might be looked at as an early indication of his enthusiasm for big ideas exceeding a more realistic assessment of Bank Street's capabilities. That reality became immediately obvious when, once he took over as Bank Street President in July, he had to focus on how to resolve the crisis with the New York City Board of Education and salvage the school partnerships so essential to key research studies. The 40th Anniversary Dinner, honoring Lucy and announcing a fundraising drive, also required significant time and attention. Another urgent task was to work with the Board and the leadership of the Associates on redefining the structural relationship of the volunteer group to the college. That task was complex in part because there was no organizational relationship in place since the Associates were established as an autonomous support group for Bank Street. It was further complicated by a change in Board leadership in February 1956, when Elizabeth Healy Ross decided to step down and Sally Kerlin became Acting Chair (until formally elected as Chair in June).

### ***An Early Experience with Organizational Change and Challenges***

The reorganization of the Bank Street Associates underscored for the President-elect the steep administrative hill that he would have to climb. This group should have been a major source of support for the new president's most obvious tasks: bringing in more money and promoting greater outreach to improve public recognition. The Associates had begun in 1952 with a clear mission—a "two-way street between the College and the outside world"—but with an ambiguous relationship to Bank Street. The links were at first only through a president of the Associates who was a Bank Street trustee and a shared secretary. In 1956 there was a part-time paid staff member who used College space as needed. Funds were kept separately, which had led to confusion among donors as to whether they were supporting the Associates or the College. Because the College had changed its structure, adding "a full-time administrative President" and a Board Development Committee that included Associates leaders, an Ad Hoc Committee was convened to review the situation and make recommendations for improvements. It determined that it was time to revise an Associates organizational and financial structure that was "unrealistic, awkward, and arbitrarily separates what is functionally integrated." In other words, it was time to make *de jure* what was *de facto*, and to merge the Associates into the College.

One issue raised by the Ad Hoc Committee would have been familiar to Jack from his Oak Lane experiences, and was undoubtedly a vivid memory for Bank Street staff and Trustees. The Associates included members who were parents of children in the new School for Children. The president of the Associates was William Blitzer, whose children were in the School and who became a long-time member of the Board of Trustees and Jack's friend and advisor. Membership in the Associates was viewed as a way of connecting parents to the College from the start while still permitting the kind of school-focused parent volunteer organization that could cooperate with and receive help from the larger group. Parents were seen as an important resource for volunteer work for the whole College, as well as providing financial support for the entire institution. Two of the great frustrations with the Harriet Johnson Nursery School had been, first, the lack of awareness of parents about the larger institution's work, and, second, the parents' focus on working for and giving to only the Nursery School. It was hoped that the Associates would provide a way to avoid that situation from developing again.

This administrative reorganization had the approval of Lucy and Jack, both of whom served on the Ad Hoc Committee. To some extent, it was an element of Lucy's efforts to leave the College in good shape for her successor, and to affirm the wisdom of creating the Associates. For Jack, it would have been an informative experience in governance and administrative change that affected the entire institution.

Lucy continued to be a formidable presence, even though she was no longer coming to the College since she had moved to Palo Alto. She had an active correspondence with Jack, offering advice and support. She remained a trustee, had the title "President Emeritus," and was "Honorary President" of the Bank Street Associates. Jack visited her several times a year. Lucy led an effort to create a West Coast Associates group, which Jack supported, at least initially.<sup>154</sup> He spoke at the inaugural meeting of the new group in 1958 during a visit to Palo Alto. While Lucy tried to avoid "meddling," and succeeded by and large, Bank Street continued to be her passionate interest. That was understandable given how much of her energy, time and personal resources she had invested in the creation and development of the institution. Many Bank Street people also felt a deep need to connect with her, and to know that she approved of the ways in which the College was evolving. Lucy also continued to provide important financial support by working to assure that Bank Street received a substantial (approximately \$300,000) bequest from her sister Mary Sprague Miller.<sup>155</sup> Lucy's encouragement and counsel were important assets for Jack, but her long shadow also could have constrained the new president's range of action in making changes. Together with financial limitations and a staff who might be uncertain about the role of a president, the complexities of the situation suggested moving cautiously and consulting widely.

Before Jack assumed the presidency in July 1956, Bank Street's administrative responsibilities were handled by a committee of division heads called the College Committee. The members were Barbara Biber (Research), Charlotte Winsor (Teacher Education), Iby Gilkeson (Children's Programs), Clara Coble<sup>156</sup> (Evening Program), and Irma Black (Publications), with Lucy as Acting President available as needed and Sheila Sadler providing staff support. In practice, Sadler functioned as the administrative coordinator, following up on the decisions made by the group. With Jack as President, the group transitioned to an advisory role, adding three members of the faculty who were elected annually.<sup>157</sup> During his first year as president, and for several years thereafter, Jack made strong efforts to consult with the division directors, who continued to dominate the work and operations of the units they headed. The installation of a president did not seem to have an immediate impact on the core operations of the College. This situation reflected the preferences of Lucy and the senior staff who wanted most to have an administrative coordinator and public face for the institution, and Jack's understanding of the College culture and the absolute need for support from Biber and the other division heads.

Having spent the first six months of his presidency focused on external relations (resolving the Board of Education school access issues), Jack needed to bear down on internal issues in order to prepare for requesting accreditation of the College from Middle States Commission and NCATE (the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). Accreditation would be the next crucial step to take toward claiming official status as an institution of higher education.<sup>158</sup> The process began with the preparation of an institutional self-study during 1957, which was coordinated by Sadler and submitted in December, followed by a site visit in February 1958 by a joint team of Middle States and NCATE evaluators.

Jack had some familiarity with the review process and the Middle States Commission leadership (Temple Provost Millard Gladfelter was Vice-Chairman, and Fordham President Father Ralph McGinley was Secretary). No doubt Jack knew that the demands of the accreditation review were more substantial than anything Bank Street staff had experienced, and that it would be very important to have his key colleagues fully committed to completing the additional work that the process would require.

In January 1957, Jack held personal conversations with Barbara Biber, Charlotte Winsor, Irma Black, Iby Gilkeson, and Sheila Sadler, making extensive personal notes of each meeting.<sup>159</sup> His core question was about how to reorganize Bank Street so that the potential of senior staff could be best tapped. Biber was his first

interview, and probably his most important one, since he saw Bank Street as a center for experimentation and research. Not surprisingly, she identified "further research" as "the most important job for the rest of my professional life." Jack recorded that Biber felt the most important contribution Bank Street could make would be to give to "the professional world a clear definition of the concept of how to prepare a teacher" based on the College's years of work. To do that, and to complete current projects as she wished, Biber needed help, specifically relief from responsibilities with advisement and the teacher education programs. Jack estimated that bringing on a high-quality person to work with her would require \$10,000 a year for at least five years. This was a clear example of the staff overload issue that had been raised repeatedly over the years, and led directly to the question of how the new president would go about quickly expanding the financial resources of the College.

The conversation the next day with Charlotte Winsor began with her assertion that "the worst thief of time is the administration of the program." It seemed that Charlotte wanted more time to consider how to make Bank Street's teacher education programs more influential and effective, rather than focusing on daily operational needs such as admissions and class schedules. She expressed the view that the Public School Workshops and similar projects should be organized as a Division of Field Services under its own leader.

Irma Black argued that Publications should be considered a department, and a "service arm" with expanded College support. The Publications Department should be able to offer to pay for release time for staff in other programs so that more manuscripts would be generated, as well as to provide stenographic help. Jack's notes end with a reminder to arrange a meeting with the College Council to discuss publications.

Jack developed the concept of *Bank Street Readers* in 1957, discussing the idea with Irma and eventually tasking her and the Writers Laboratory with preparing prototypes. It seems likely that this conversation with Irma about raising the profile of Publications might have led Jack to consider how Bank Street could expand this area of potential growth to address a social justice need while also creating revenue-generating products.

The conversation with Iby provided an opportunity for Jack to learn more about the problems surrounding the demise of the Harriet Johnson Nursery School as well as her plans for the new School for Children. She noted that Trustee Larry Frank was involved in discussing a "family centered school" but that nothing had been done "on an organized basis." Iby was also working on plans for a counseling program but was not comfortable doing more until she understood the overall plan for the College.

Sheila Sadler was forthright about the amount of administrative tasks that she had to juggle and her feeling that she was overwhelmed. She noted that the question of roles needed to be defined because Lucy's conception had been that Jack as president would initiate and Sadler would implement. That did not seem likely to work given all that needed to be done, especially with the additional fundraising responsibilities being considered. Sadler was also pregnant and wanted to discuss how to keep programs moving in her absence.

These conversations with his direct reports gave Jack a clear indication of the staff work overload problems that had existed for years and seemed to be getting worse. Bank Street's opportunity for a large federal grant, and its success in competing for that award, would soon make the staffing difficulties even more acute.

### ***The Consequences of Early Research Grant Success***

In 1957, an opportunity arose to dramatically expand Bank Street's research studies in the role of the school in promoting mental health. Barbara Biber's work on teacher personality (the Cartoon Test research) had attracted funding from the National Institute for Mental Health in 1949. A larger NIMH-funded research project on school environment (the school effects study) was the focus of Jack's successful efforts to reopen access to New York public schools for Bank Street researchers in 1956. Sadler said that Biber and Jack had good relationships with key NIMH program leaders.<sup>160</sup> Biber's primary contact was Philip Sapir, the Chief of

the Research Grants and Fellowships Branch, who was married to a Bank Street graduate. Jack also knew the Sapirs, and his good friend Fritz Redl now served as Chief of the Child Research Branch. Jack also knew Ralph Tyler at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study of Behavioral Sciences, who was a member of the NIMH committee of experts that reviewed grant applications.

In a senior staff discussion of new possibilities for seeking outside funding hosted by Jack, Biber remembered being approached at a conference by Joseph Bobbitt, Associate Director of NIMH, who expressed interest in her work. Jack called Bobbitt, and arranged for a meeting where he was joined by Biber and Winsor in presenting ideas for Bank Street research studies involving schools and mental health. Bobbitt and his deputy, Leonard Duhl, visited Bank Street, and suggested submitting a proposal for \$1 million over five years for a major study. Such an award would have been, at the time, the largest NIMH grant of its type. For Bank Street, it would represent a major leap in terms of funding, scope of activity, and national recognition.

Completing the application took a strenuous late summer effort by Biber, Winsor, Ibbey, and Jack, whose roles blended taskmaster, coach, and cheerleader.<sup>161</sup> The result was the \$1 million grant, which immediately changed the trajectory of Bank Street's future in several key ways.

Research had always garnered more attention, in part because of Lucy's support and Biber's brilliance; now it took center stage. The need to quickly expand staff for the new project placed space demands on the 69 Bank Street building that were virtually impossible to support, bringing immediate attention to resolving the question of renovation and expansion or finding a new building. The hiring of a large number of new staff posed challenges in maintaining the sense of community that was deeply valued at Bank Street. The NIMH grant framed the questions for Bank Street's Board and staff about program focus, facilities and equipment, and cultural continuity that had existed for years but no longer could be endlessly discussed and never decided. The person at the center of this existential storm was the new president, and his urgent priority was completing the accreditation self-study report in which these issues had to be addressed clearly and deftly. That effort gave him the opportunity to begin sketching out, and encouraging support for, his expanded vision of Bank Street's work.

### *The "Niemeyer Approach" Starts to Emerge*

In earlier pages, Jack's efforts to share his initial ideas and thoughts with alumni and friends of Bank Street were described. At the end of May 1957, concluding his first academic year as president, Jack had submitted a report to his "bosses" on the Board. He was still "the new guy" and asked for indulgence. His report was an "informal summary of certain developments and problems – a kind of "Bank Street As I See It in June 1957" statement." He had not been able to extract more than "partial reports" on the work of the programs, which apparently disappointed him but was glossed over by references to the pressure of work on members of the College Committee. His 18-page informal summary did provide considerable information on current activities and ended with a promise to deliver complete program division reports over the summer. Still, a reader is left with the sense that Jack was making the best of the situation and would have preferred that his first President's Report to the Board had been something more formal and complete.

He began by noting that, for him, the year had been mainly "a period of learning – learning about structure and content, about personalities and relationships, about the background and tradition of Bank Street, and about the larger New York community." His immediate focus was on public relations and fundraising, commenting that the "irreducible fact remains...that the College, if it is to meet the grave responsibilities which its own development and the needs of society place upon it, must have more money." He estimated a minimum of \$100,000 annually was needed in additional support for operations, a substantial target for an institution with a current budget of about \$250,000. Jack was clearly attempting to underscore that point that the new president could not be expected to be the "Lone Ranger" who could handle this difficult challenge by himself, noting "at this moment my full time seems to be demanded for giving coordination and leadership to

the educational program..., for trying to establish a more effective administrative structure, and for performing essential work in public relations." Trustees and faculty would have to help find the solution.

Jack also made it clear that he was an advocate for the staff, both in terms of hiring more people and better compensation. "The obstacle to the College's moving ahead to a position of greater strength is not a lack of imagination, ideas, skills, or devoted work, but only the fact that too many responsibilities must fall upon too few people." he wrote, and invoked Lucy by referring to her description of the effect of this leadership overload as Bank Street's "vicious circus." Jack's line of argument became clear in his recommendations, which began with an appeal for "a wise but bold policy of dynamic strengthening of every portion of the College as quickly as possible." He acknowledged that doing so would mean to agree to "act largely upon belief, upon faith" because this policy required "taking money from reserves until new sources of income can be found." The impending arrival of the funds from the Miller bequest provided capital which could be drawn upon as needed.

Immediate needs were urgent but hardly bold. Building expenditures of \$45,000 had not been enough and at least \$15,000 more would be needed for what seemed to be largely deferred maintenance. The heating system was inadequate; windows should be replaced; classrooms needed to be equipped properly. The library collection should be "appreciably strengthened" before the Middle States team visit. A senior staff position should be added to the Research Department, and a fringe benefits program should be launched as soon as possible. In other words, Jack challenged the Board to put up the money required to address long-standing needs and to provide seed funds for the core research work on which Bank Street's future depended.

The 1957 report continued with a more upbeat view of progress in the coming year, emphasizing enrollment growth and better use of existing facilities. In particular, public school teachers were identified as a constituency for expanded Evening Program courses. Jack described the positive results of a recent dinner meeting he had hosted with New York public school leaders and Bank Street teacher education staff, also noting the possibility of the College offering a summer program for elementary school teacher leaders in science, which would have to be funded. The proposed course would be in addition to three summer courses for teachers being offered as "an experiment to test the waters." Jack also described the overture to, and warm response from, Bobbitt and NIMH about support for a major initiative in education and mental health, although he was circumspect about possible funding. He used the NIMH opportunity to float a preliminary idea about future reorganization of the College into two divisions, one focused on "the training of school personnel," and the other on "studies, experiments and field projects."

In his first report, then, Jack maintained a somber tone, like his demeanor in his official photograph. Hiring a president did not solve Bank Street's problems, but rather opened the way to identification, understanding, and resolution of long-standing issues. Jack intended to push forward, but he would need considerable help and freedom of action, especially around dipping into reserves to pay for what he considered necessities. The Board had become used to annual deficits, which would be covered by additional gifts from Lucy or the reserve fund. The idea of using capital resources for new ventures, such as an additional senior researcher to work for Biber or for expanded book purchases, was new. This was a clear indication that Jack felt that, while more discussion should occur, it was time for action to secure Bank Street's future. A committed and energetic Board of Trustees would be an important factor in securing accreditation from Middle States and NCATE in 1958.

### ***Middle States and NCATE Joint Accreditation, 1957-1958***

Completing the accreditation review process has always been an arduous, complex, time-consuming endeavor for a large college or university, even when there is a depth of experience with such evaluations. For Bank Street, it was a major challenge, especially because the institution had only begun to think of itself as a college recently and had limited exposure to traditional university-level style of teacher education that served as the



frame of reference for accreditation. To an extent, the Bank Street self-study document submitted in December 1957 reflected that limited experience and exposure. It included details which were thoughtful efforts to honestly respond to the usual questions found in these review guides, but which would be likely to invite an outsider to put the College's philosophy of education, organization, and administrative style under further scrutiny. For example, Bank Street's response to "what is your policy with respect to freedom of teaching" was to describe a process of discussion involving faculty and Trustees during 1953-54, which resulted in a final draft document that was never officially approved or accepted by either Board or faculty. The next sentence was even more unusual: "the exchange of opinion on the subject seemed to bring about sufficient mutual confidence (not necessarily agreement on every point) to eliminate the sense of need for further official action."<sup>162</sup> A copy of the draft document that was never officially approved was attached, but the obvious answer to the question was plainly "no." Bank Street did not have an official policy on academic freedom. To an outsider, the institution might have appeared incapable of creating such a basic policy even though clearly it had both a strong commitment to the concept and real consensus around supporting it.<sup>163</sup>

Jack had expected that the library would be considered inadequate, despite recent efforts to improve it, such as by hiring a professional librarian.<sup>164</sup> One of Lucy's ways of preparing Bank Street for its future as a college was to bring in a consultant from Columbia's School of Library Service in 1953 to create a plan to upgrade the library. The plan was implemented, and involved "ruthless weeding" as well as recataloguing, reorganization of library procedures, and expansion of reference materials. One of the NCATE evaluators was the librarian of a New Jersey teachers college. She was impressed by the College's initiative in hiring a well-qualified professional librarian and carrying out the consultant's recommendations, but still found the book collection "very meager" with "some rather startling lacks."<sup>165</sup>

Years later Jack tried to put the best spin on the evaluation committee's report, asserting that the members were "enchanted" by Bank Street.<sup>166</sup> In fact, the evaluation report was encouraging in tone, but still candid and critical about gaps and flaws other than the library. The committee accepted Bank Street's unique combination of divisions and distinctive mission, understanding that "teacher education is acknowledged to be a major, but not the sole purpose of the College." However, the committee believed that if teacher education was to be "a major function," other divisions should contribute to its operation, and concluded "it is not completely apparent at the present time the divisions are being sufficiently coordinated to contribute as well as they might to the College program for the education of teachers."<sup>167</sup> The committee also cautioned about expansion because "new programs, especially for a Master's degree, should not be started until the College has faculty, library, and equipment commensurate with the requirements of the new field." The comments in the Accounting section were almost harsh: the "system of reporting and classifying is quite inadequate" and "the statements submitted for the Evaluation were almost useless for many of the purposes of the Committee." The summary statements section contained seven commendations, mainly about positive attitudes and commitment to the work, and eight recommendations, ranging from "more careful definition of administrative duties, and a study of faculty load" to "a thorough study of the requirements of the programs leading to the Master's degree in order that the amount required may be more in line with ordinary graduate school standards" and, of course, improvements to the library and accounting procedures.

Based on the committee report, the Middle States Commission deferred a decision on accreditation for up to two years, to allow Bank Street to address the findings that were of serious concern. In October, NCATE made a pro forma denial of accreditation because approval by Middle States was a requirement.<sup>168</sup> The NCATE letter also specified four "major weaknesses" that would have to be considered:

1. "The faculty, while regarded as fully dedicated to its work, is very heavily loaded and not well prepared for its responsibilities."
2. "Students, especially in some curricula, are carrying too many courses while doing practically full-time student teaching."

3. "The program is regarded as too comprehensive for the faculty available."
4. "The building and library facilities, especially the library, are below standard."

Because Lucy had written to him inquiring about the Evaluation Committee's assessment, Jack's March 1958 letter in response carefully navigated the report's comments and findings. While describing the report as generally favorable, he noted that a denial seemed possible due to the small library collection and the number of credit hours required for a master's degree. He expressed frustration because Bank Street found itself "dealing, for the most part, with small minds that approve only those things which were exactly like the things which are done in the typical teachers colleges." He was disappointed that the "committee never came even close to understanding Bank Street in any depth." Jack managed to be a bit upbeat, as usual. He noted that there were people on the Middle States Commission "who know something about Bank Street" and the results might be more favorable, although it was likely he knew then that a deferral was the best outcome the College could hope for.<sup>169</sup> Perhaps his perspective was correct. Bank Street did achieve accreditation two years later but only after much effort on Jack's part to shape the presentations given to the Middle States follow-up visiting committee in March 1960.

Jack's experience with the Middle States/NCATE joint committee must have confirmed his sense that Bank Street's recognition as an innovator and leader in the education of young children was limited. More to the point, those who did not know Bank Street well had difficulty understanding its mission and philosophy, and its distinctive approach to preparing teachers. As his letter to Lucy reflected, he felt frustrated that even experts in teacher education did not grasp the essential qualities that made Bank Street unique and special. The accreditation evaluation committee had read a lengthy self-study document that provided many details about the origin, development, and innovative programs of the College, and had met with the leading faculty and Board members. Yet, while offering commendations, the committee had focused on teacher education and identified such weaknesses as clarity of purpose, faculty expertise and breadth, and administrative systems. In effect, the report underscored the immediate critical issues the president had to address as promptly as possible.

At this point, it is perhaps helpful to return to the insights offered by Burton Clark's concept of the "institutional saga" mentioned earlier. At the time of the Middle States/NCATE review and action to defer accreditation, Jack had been president of Bank Street for more than two years. He had spent time learning about the people, problems, and traumas of the recent past, yet his best efforts had not been sufficient to generate a self-evaluation that would satisfy a team of outside educators. Clark helps us to understand what a new leader of a "distinctive" institution must contend with and respond to when trying to move ahead.

As explained in his 1970 book, Clark found colleges, like other organizations, developed "particular personalities that holistically express what they value most deeply" especially during "critical periods of character determination."<sup>170</sup> He concluded that "we attend to values in a serious and useful way when we seek to find out how they are realized in the ongoing behaviors of individuals and organizations."<sup>171</sup> He also noted that, at the three distinctive colleges he described, he met "true believers" – people who would never choose to leave because the institution "had become the center of meaning in their lives."<sup>172</sup> In his introduction to the 1992 edition, Clark felt the need to define his work explicitly as "a study of academic culture."<sup>173</sup> In some sense, the saga is the dynamic relationship between the institutional culture and mission, so that at any given point in time, the saga "tells what the organization has been and what it is today – and what it will be tomorrow."<sup>174</sup> If the saga is "the successful willed creation" as Clark suggested, who created and has sustained it? His answer: "The most important characteristic and consequence of an organizational saga is the capturing of allegiance, the committing of staff to the institution." The saga turns an organization into a community, of which "the most telling symptom is an intense sense of the unique."<sup>175</sup> Community is essential, and "integration is promoted when all are headed in the same direction."<sup>176</sup> Small size, Clark asserted, is another condition for community so that personal experiences are "convergent rather than divergent."<sup>177</sup> He saw a relationship between distinction and curriculum, pointing to "latent ways in which the regular program of

teaching may express and support an organizational legend" that made the program "a set of symbols and rituals."<sup>178</sup>

Jack saw himself at the start as a strong leader who "took a lot of just plain positive action."<sup>179</sup> Clark recognized the influence of strong leaders: "When a vivid organization saga exists, the odds are high that one or more strong presidents played a significant role in its initiation."<sup>180</sup> He downplayed charisma which he described as "a function of the social situation and the perspectives of the rank and file" as much as the leader's personal qualities.<sup>181</sup> While the "personal commitment required of many actors in the situation can be set in motion" by a charismatic leader, the "idea and the organization" must come together for the leader's addition to become part of the saga.<sup>182</sup>

Distinctiveness brings risks and tensions. In fact, Clark found that the "ultimate risk of distinctive character is that of success in one era breeding rigidity and stagnation in a later one."<sup>183</sup> He also noted that "tensions force small crises in organizational viability," and that these crises "are commonly generated by problems of finance." Continuing small crises could be indicators of deeper problems: "Such events can be taken as signs of a gathering storm, for if repeated because the college has become out of joint with the times, then the institution, beloved character and all, will decline."<sup>184</sup>

For Jack, 1958 was the time when the College's educational program, financial, facilities, and administrative problems came together with the Middle States/NCATE evaluation process to signal that a "gathering storm" was approaching fast. It was an opportunity to try to accomplish the kind of leadership challenge that Clark described – to bring the faculty and staff, and perhaps especially the "true believers," together with the Trustees to write the next pages of the Bank Street saga.

The Middle States deferral, while disappointing, provided time – and a deadline--for Jack to work with Bank Street faculty and staff, especially in Teacher Education, to address some of the criticisms from the evaluation report<sup>185</sup> and to figure out how to counter or minimize others. Jack enlisted the help of F. Taylor Jones, Executive Secretary of the Commission, and responded cordially but forcefully to Earl Armstrong at NCATE. In that letter, Jack rejects the comments about offering a program that is too comprehensive as invalid; similarly, he pushed back on the faculty qualifications criticism, making a passionate case for Bank Street's standard for faculty appointment that values direct field experience and expertise over an academic credential.<sup>186</sup> On a more practical level, Jack was able to persuade Jones to send more than a single evaluator. The four person team was led by Albert Meder, Vice President and Dean of Rutgers, who was also the chairman of the Middle States Commission. The committee's report reflected the success of Bank Street's efforts, stating that "Bank Street cannot be understood if it is viewed either as a teachers college or as a graduate school; it is both and it is neither." The report included an interesting comment that Jack used later: "A more correct analogy is the typical agricultural program of a land-grant university, embodying resident instruction, organized research, and extension services, the last being a two-way street on which problems from the field flow to the research station and solutions, advanced knowledge and new techniques flow to the farmer." Still, Meder's April 25, 1960 letter informing Bank Street of its approval for accreditation did require submission of a progress report in 1962 specifically addressing "the graduate preparation of the faculty, the library and facilities."<sup>187</sup> The new president had achieved another key success but, as seemed to be often the case, not without exceptional effort and some lingering issues to resolve as soon as possible. The question remained, however, whether he had made much progress in moving forward, in terms suggested by Clark, in shaping the College's future institutional saga.

### ***Bank Street's Man About Town***

Before ever thinking about joining Bank Street, Jack knew that only a few people, and primarily educators of young children, had any idea of what the College was or what it did. He felt "it was part of the integrity of Bank Street that they were not interested in public relations or the politics of education at all."<sup>188</sup> In fact, that

generalization was not entirely valid. Lucy had been concerned for years about public relations, as had several members of the Board. They saw more and better public relations as a way to increase interest in and financial support for the College, as well as to promote its mission to raise awareness of the best practices for teaching children.

Lucy had encouraged, and probably underwritten, hiring a public relations consultant in 1951, around the same time as she pushed the College forward on establishing the Associates. One difficulty was the absence of a leader willing to engage in an intensive public relations campaign. Bank Street was most clearly identified with Lucy, but she had no interest in or aptitude for that kind of work. Bank Street tended to describe its work in thoughtful language that could be ambiguous or opaque to a general audience. The absence of a president with some skill in outreach had left the College without a messenger or a clear message. Filling that void was one of the reasons for bringing a president on board, and Jack knew that he had to move aggressively.

He began a one-man crusade to change the public awareness and perception of Bank Street. Using a variation of his "new guy in town" approach, Jack talked up Bank Street and its work wherever he could. He had been a Rotary Club leader in suburban Philadelphia so it was natural that he should arrange to be invited to join the New York Rotary. While president-elect, he began attending the meetings of the New York State Association of Colleges and Universities. Later, as he worked with NYU President Carroll Newsom to found a group that represented New York City higher education institutions.<sup>189</sup> In 1958 Jack was named president of the National Kindergarten Association,<sup>190</sup> which likely burnished his reputation as an early childhood education expert despite his limited professional background. The same year he was invited to serve on the Children's Bureau planning committee for the 1960 White House Conference on Children.<sup>191</sup>

Although this crusade seemed to be a key part of the president's job description, not everyone at Bank Street seemed thrilled by Jack's efforts. Sadler commented that Jack was "determined to put [Bank Street] on the map" and kept "golf clubs behind the door" as he reached out to be "in touch with the social, educational, and financial scene." He was focused on meeting "influential people" and "going where the money was."<sup>192</sup> Sadler was a savvy administrator who had worked long and well at Bank Street, and knew its strengths and weaknesses. It was possible that her criticisms, made several years after she left the College, were colored by her conclusion that Jack had pushed Bank Street too hard, too fast, and in too many directions, which weakened the sense of community and cohesion that she and others so valued. Still, her comments were similar to other criticism of Jack's efforts to build a larger circle of friends for Bank Street. These comments appear to reflect an unrealistic concept that, with the right kind of spokesman, the College could easily create a circle of admirers who, having learned what outstanding and important work Bank Street was doing, would be content to give generous amounts of money without question. "True believers" found hope in expecting newer versions of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, however unlikely that prospect might be.

In his "blue sky" notes in March 1955, Jack had included talking to the Trustees about setting up some sort of consultation service for industry. He continued to seek ways to build connections with business leaders and to find grant and contract money for programs that could benefit companies as well as the College. He worked to add corporate leaders, or people with access to corporations, to the Board, trying to fill in an obvious gap in board demography. Among the Trustees from the world of business whom he helped to recruit were two key Board chairs: James Wise (1963-1969) who was central to the negotiations with Columbia over the possibility of moving to Morningside Heights and early fundraising for the new building; and Corrin Peter Strong, who helped raise the funds and was chair during the period the College relocated to 112th Street.

Jack saw corporations as potentially significant sources of new funds for new programs rather than basic support of Bank Street. He obtained a grant from Exxon to launch the science education initiative that the 1958 Middle States report questioned. As Jack became more convinced about the need for improving management of public schools, he sought ways to bring corporate expertise together with school systems

administrators to encourage implementing a "systems approach" in schools. Bank Street's expanding efforts to improve day care were promoted to corporations for investment in workforce development and good public relations.<sup>193</sup>

### *To Move or Not to Move: Time to Call the Question*

The Middle States/NCATE evaluation had framed the question well. Bank Street's facilities were marginal at best, and could not accommodate any expansion in program or research studies. The choices were also clear: renovate and expand (by adding floors to) the current building, obtain more space by renting or purchasing nearby buildings, or relocate to a new building that would be large enough for current and anticipated needs. The NIMH grant resulted in an influx of new staff who needed to be housed for five years, which meant that the space question had to be addressed immediately. A Trustee-staff committee on the future was created in 1958 because, although the focus had to be on space, there were issues about program size and direction that needed to be considered and planned out. In the short run, the new research staff was shoe-horned into small cubicles in what had been the building superintendent's apartment in the basement of 69 Bank Street.

Bank Street staff and trustees had been struggling with the question of facilities for years. Beyond the frequent discussions about what to do about a specific problem (e.g., repairing or replacing the furnace),<sup>194</sup> a core issue in the Harriet Johnson Nursery School crisis was the best use of limited space as well as how shared expenses were charged. There had been investigations about the cost of adding one or more floors, until it was learned that zoning regulations would prohibit building up. In any event, that option was too expensive to consider. There were efforts to seek expansion space to rent or to locate a building nearby to buy, but nothing appropriate could be found. Despite the shortcomings of 69 Bank Street, many staff members and trustees were loath to seriously consider moving anywhere else.

Ultimately, Lucy did support the decision to move, with both explicit approval and a generous gift.<sup>195</sup> In her comments to Prescott during the Berkeley oral history interviews, however, Lucy summed up the reasons for the deep-seated sentiment to remain on Bank Street: "We don't want to move because we are established, and because we have already changed our name twice. We've got a silly name because it confines us to Bank Street, which no one ever heard of until we used it. We hesitate to move because it is a tremendous expense." She added that "the staff doesn't want to move and the Board of Trustees of Bank Street don't want to move. We're a community member there. Many of our parents moved down there just to place their children with us."<sup>196</sup>

It seems likely that Jack had concluded that a move to larger quarters would be necessary once the NIMH grant was awarded. His 1957 President's Report had reflected his dreams for expansion, which would require at some point significant additional space. It was also clear that the School for Children would grow by adding grades. His 1958 President's Report was a very different kind of document. Jack attempted to connect his thoughts about the College's future with work of the Ad Hoc Committee of Trustees and faculty studying the need for space to support programs. Jack was trying to frame the possible options so that the process would result eventually in a decision, rather than just continuing the discussions that had been dragging on for several years. He was not trying to dictate a particular result or to push his blueprint for the College. He had made it clear that he was not the kind of "ambitious president who wished to see his institution grow into a large and powerful college or university," a concern that he knew some staff might still harbor about him. He stressed that, "if the growth of the institution is to be healthy, certain continuity in its development must be maintained." He wrote that "vigorous growth requires strong roots" – a reassuring statement but one that also suggested vigorous growth was already a generally accepted goal.

Jack reasserted that Bank Street's future should reflect the purpose for which it was established: "to conduct research and experimental programs to improve the educational life of children." For him, the rationale for operating schools and training programs for educators was to provide "reality situations" for research studies. If the shared goal was to improve the quality of education in the country, he believed Bank Street had "a unique role to play" that deserved "substantial financial support on a national basis." Having claimed he was firmly planted in Bank Street tradition and purpose, Jack described an ambitious list of items for the Board and staff to consider, leading off with establishing a "central planning board" to meet a full day every week to plan, coordinate and evaluate the College's research and experimental programs. The new planning group would replace the current advisory committee and "would be shielded from spending more than a minimal amount of its time on administrative questions."

Jack also proposed a reorganization study, even offering as a starting point his hand-drawn organization chart. Although he did not mention it, his plan appeared to suggest ways that would strengthen the president's role in educational programs.<sup>197</sup>

The primary space issue revolved around expanding the School for Children, which covered nursery through grade 2, to the full six grades of elementary school in order to serve as a laboratory school.<sup>198</sup> This expansion would fulfill the goals of the Research Division and School for Teachers. He laid out four options: (1) using 60% of the current building for the SFC and housing parts of other divisions elsewhere; (2) relocate and create a new laboratory school as a part of a new facility; (3) establish "a cooperative plan with a relatively nearby private school" to replace the SFC as Bank Street's lab school; and (4) expand the SFC by one or two grades and make cooperative arrangements with other schools for the remaining grades. These ideas drew on Bank Street history, from Lucy's purchase of contiguous buildings to house the BEE and Pratt's City and Country School to the cooperative relationships that were created in the 1930's when the CSST teacher preparation program began.

Jack also seemed to suggest consideration of changing the relationship with the Polly Miller Child Care Center in the Bronx, in large part because it was too distant from Bank Street to be used effectively as a lab school. A new center closer to Bank Street should be developed. Perhaps because his proposal came around the same time as the College was benefiting from the \$300,000 bequest from Polly Miller's mother, Lucy's late sister Mary, Jack stated again the principle that Bank Street existed to pursue "practical knowledge and understandings" and not "to run children's schools or day care centers or teachers colleges" unless those activities advanced its "professional thinking" or provided "appropriate locations for research studies and experimental projects."

Teacher education programs should expand, perhaps doubling in size. The growth of the pre-service full-time program could support larger-scale research studies as well as justify more full-time faculty. Jack believed increasing the proportion of full-time faculty would strengthen Bank Street. The evening program for part-time students offered an additional attraction: "it is also the one program which can operate at a financial profit." Jack also encouraged promptly recruiting more diverse students, including international students.<sup>199</sup>

Connected to the expansion of full-time faculty and sustaining the increased number of Research Division staff was a bold idea to establish a Ph.D. program, starting in "child development and guidance." His plan would be to train doctoral and perhaps master's candidates for jobs at colleges and universities as "one of the most effective methods by which Bank Street could disseminate its philosophy and style of work." The most likely way to accomplish this goal would be to work an agreement with a "larger college or university."

This idea seemed to build on the agreement with NYU in the 1940's under which Bank Street teaching candidates could obtain academic credit although clearly it would have represented a much more ambitious and complicated partnership.<sup>200</sup>

Jack's final proposal concerned reorganizing the Publications and Reports Division by essentially splitting it into a unit focused on children's literature and one on educational publications and media, including films, audio recordings, and other non-print technologies. It seemed that he saw these products as a source of new revenues, stating with surprising candor that in his opinion "Bank Street has an excellent product to sell but we have not yet fully enough organized our sales department."

No matter how often he repeated that his ideas were intended "to serve as stimulation for study of the future," Jack was offering a grand plan for rapid growth that required new thinking and organizational changes. Perhaps he was responding to the accreditation evaluations, which had pointed to substantial needs for faculty strengthening and cautioned against moving into new programs without laying a solid foundation. Those concerns needed to be addressed. He acknowledged only in passing another major problem with his list: he did not have estimates of what the various proposals might cost, nor how to fund them. His goals seemed to be to generate excitement and hope, and to push ahead quickly on his proposal for a planning board.

After more than three years as head of the College, Jack must have understood that he needed to allow ample time for consultation and process if he hoped to approach a consensus on such major institutional changes. It is doubtful, however, that he thought he was beginning a twelve year long journey to relocate the College. He was ultimately successful in moving the College physically and programmatically, but his success was incomplete. Despite the extensive time spent on consultation and consideration options, he would experience the pushback that Clark's analysis of the institutional saga suggested, including complaints about lack of faculty/staff engagement in decision-making, and attacks for undermining the essential character of the Bank Street community. Strong and consistent support from the Board of Trustees could have made a difference. Much of this bumpy journey could have been predicted because, as Sally Kerlin commented, when Jack arrived, "there was no real organized Bank Street."<sup>201</sup>

Institutional inertia is always difficult to overcome. For forty years, Bank Street operated under a highly personal and informal style of governance and leadership. Jack continued to wrestle with an understandable institutional skepticism about the benefits of expansion, an anxiety over the consequences of proposed changes no matter how needed and exciting, and a community where unanimity of opinion was seen as vitally important but was rarely achieved.

To be fair, the Bank Street community had absorbed many traumas and changes during the 1950's, both within the College and as part of the larger society. In 1952, John Dewey died, leaving an irreplaceable void in the philosophical foundation of Bank Street's life. At home, the community had weathered the painful Harriet Johnson Nursery School crisis, but suffered the loss of the ability to continue to use the name of a loved and revered co-founder as well as the exodus of valued colleagues and friends (and Trustees) to establish a new school. Then they had lost Lucy, whose presence, even only occasionally, had provided inspiration, continuity, and some sense of financial security. The Research staff had endured the kind of political attacks that temporarily closed access to the public schools and vilified Bank Street's character and motivations in ways that were unexpected and frightening. The School for Teachers staff had born the burden of an accreditation review which, however appreciative of Bank Street's distinction, identified and criticized problem areas in faculty qualifications, workloads for students and faculty, and facilities. The success of the research initiatives in mental health and education had been a source of both elation and consternation because of the demands on personnel and space that it created.

As part of American society, they had lived through the McCarthy era, a time of ugliness, stress and suspicion that shook their confidence in post-war progress toward a more humane and just society. The start of the Cold War, the fighting in Korea, the national polio epidemic, and the threat of nuclear war contributed to worries about social stability and created feelings of insecurity. Criticisms of American public education, especially after the Soviet Union's success with Sputnik, seemed to focus on the failures of progressive education, which was viewed as the dominant approach in U.S. school systems. There seemed to be an

overall sense in the country that the public education system had lost its way, and could not provide the basic education that every child needed, and the nation required, to succeed in an increasingly hostile and competitive world. The values that Bank Street had always championed – freedom of expression and inquiry, child-centered learning methods, social justice and democratic norms – seemed to be valued less, if discussed at all, in public discourse.

The Supreme Court's 1954 decision ending school segregation was applauded at Bank Street, but it also created urgent demands for creative approaches to achieving integrated public schools. What role should Bank Street play, if any? Jack had been clear about his commitment to an active role, especially because New York City had committed itself to rapid school integration. Soon after Jack's appointment, Bank Street became involved in a research study on integration in a school on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Jack was pushing ahead with Irma Black and others on a new kind of basal reading series for public schools that reflected multi-racial and multi-ethnic life in contemporary America. Although Bank Street staff might support the concept and value of such an effort, basal readers were not aligned with the College's approach to learning and teaching. To what extent should core educational values be compromised in attempts to address larger social and educational needs?

Despite these other important matters, the issue of resolving Bank Street's chronic lack of space took top priority. Following on the work of the 1958 ad hoc Trustee-staff committee, an ad hoc faculty committee was formed in 1959 for the same purpose – studying future space needs in relation to current and future educational programs. There was also a small but active Trustee Building Committee, chaired by Virginia Fuller (who was also the new Secretary of the Board).

At the May 1959 Board meeting, the Committee presented a report prepared by William Blitzer entitled "Building and Facilities Improvement Plan" which laid out the findings of studies completed by Albert Mayer, an architect hired by Jack at the Board's request. Mayer's work reflected the Building Committee's assumptions that the College would remain at 69 Bank Street for at least five years; that fire code violations needed to be addressed; that library space needed to be increased to achieve accreditation; and ten new research staff must be accommodated.

The first and least expensive option identified by the consultant was renting space for research staff, but it was rejected by the Committee due to Biber's objections to dividing her staff. The second option, termed the "squeeze or make do program," was not recommended because, although the ten new researchers would be housed and library expanded, it would be "at the cost of crowding and eliminating privacy." The third option involved a more extensive and expensive reorganization of space, and the costly fourth option proposed adding a fifth floor and other significant improvements. While the Committee recommended, and the Board approved, the third option (projected to cost \$150,000), subsequently Bank Street had to resort to a combination of options one and two, remodeling the building superintendent's apartment to house researchers and modestly expanding the library, plus renting space on 14th Street for administrative offices and eventually for the entire research staff.<sup>202</sup> Regardless of the options selected, the studies and the discussion of the report indicated an awareness that, "if Bank Street is to maintain and develop its vanguard position in the field of education and to continue to attract the interest of people and groups concerned with the problems of education, ...the Board should meet this challenge." At best, remaining at 69 Bank Street was a short-term solution, and it was time to become serious about moving to a new and much larger facility.

Simultaneously, a wide search for appropriate sites was carried out, focused on loft buildings requiring limited remodeling (presumably in the hope of recreating 69 Bank Street on a larger scale) as well as facilities that might accommodate commercial and residential needs.<sup>203</sup> There was an unsuccessful investigation of a possible merger of the College with a Greenwich Village school as a way of using the school's property as collateral for construction loans. In other words, there was a concerted effort to find a solution so that Bank Street could remain, if not on Bank Street itself, within the Village.



In 1960 a Standing Faculty Committee on the New Building was established, although the location of a new building was left open. Jack and the Board hired an architectural firm to scope out the specifications for a Bank Street building on Morningside Heights.<sup>204</sup> Estimating costs was a key part of the relocation puzzle. Bank Street continued to run large annual operating deficits. For 1959-60, the budget projected a \$52,000 deficit on operating expenditures of \$598,000. Since \$276,000 of that budget came from two NIMH grants, which covered direct and indirect costs, that meant there was only \$224,000 in revenue from tuitions, endowment earnings, small grants, and other income. The deficit was nearly 20% of non-federal grant income, the largest deficit in College history, and not sustainable.

The financial reality led to two decisions: growth in educational programs was essential to increase revenues, and the new facility needed to support that growth had to be paid for primarily through loans. The difficulty with borrowing was that the College did not have the assets required for bonds issued through the New York State Dormitory Authority, nor the kind of balance sheet that would satisfy other lenders.

### ***An Opportunity on Morningside Heights***

Morningside Heights, Inc. (MHI) made the initial approach to Bank Street about relocating. Millicent McIntosh, the retired President of Barnard College, was an officer of MHI and close to several Bank Street Trustees, including Sally Kerlin. (McIntosh joined the Board in 1963.)

In addition to the historic connection of Wesley Clair Mitchell's long service as a distinguished Columbia economics professor, James De Camp Wise, a new Trustee who became chair of Bank Street Board in 1963, was a Columbia Law School alumnus. Frederica Barach (later Barbour after remarriage) was another new Trustee and a member of the Barnard faculty. Bank Street's Research Division had been working since 1957 on a pilot project in Morningside Heights on helping several local schools with integration implementation strategies.

MHI was established in 1947 by fourteen area institutions, led by Columbia, to organize and collaborate on the development, redevelopment, and expansion of their facilities. The president of the Executive Committee was David Rockefeller, who wanted to encourage the stabilization of the Morningside Heights area with its enclave of academic and religious institutions, including the Riverside Church that his father had helped to build. In 1948 MHI decided to focus on improving public schools as well as developing public housing. It would also serve as a "clearing house" for all real estate purchases and created a corporation, Remedco, in 1949 as its real estate arm.

Later Remedco became known for its efforts to buy single room occupancy (SRO) buildings (many of which were blighted), move out the tenants (who were usually poor blacks and Latinos), either renovate the buildings or replace them, and sell them to MHI institutions.

In 1952, MHI created the Morningside Housing Corporation to design and construct the Morningside Gardens cooperative apartment complex, which was completed in 1958. When New York City sought federal support for redevelopment and renewal projects through a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP), MHI became involved, especially with the Morningside Renewal Council, an advisory group created by the city which included community and institutional representatives.

While the city agencies, MRI, and the Renewal Council worked together, there was growing friction as efforts were made to limit institutional expansion, especially by Columbia.<sup>205</sup>

In addition to efforts to expand the number of public schools, MHI sought to bring an independent elementary school to its neighborhood to serve the families with young children working for Columbia and other institutions. Bank Street seemed to be an attractive answer, and an exploratory meeting was arranged. Bank Street laid out its financial dilemma: construction and associated costs were estimated to be at least \$3 million; the College's fundraising potential was very limited; the College would not be able to go to the New York State Dormitory Authority; and the potential loss of substantial income from School for Children tuitions if the school left Greenwich Village could be financially ruinous. MHI could not provide financing but suggested that Columbia University could.

On May 3, 1960, the Trustee Educational Programs Committee met with the College Committee (primarily the Division heads) to agree on the key requirements for establishing Bank Street on Morningside Heights. These included full control of the children's school, especially over admissions and curriculum, and locating all divisions in the same building. The group discussed a number of questions that reflected broader concerns, such as whether operating a large elementary school aligned with the direction the College as a whole wished to take, and whether having proximity to and close relationships with Morningside Heights institutions would help or harm Bank Street. The group was not concerned that other colleges and universities had closed their lab schools, noting that those decisions came from financial reasons rather than "ideological ones." An attraction of the MHI proposal was the expected subsidy of the Bank Street school by neighboring institutions, eliminating the "financial hazards of laboratory schools." The sense of the meeting, however, as summarized in the report made to the Board on May 10th, was that everyone "seemed to endorse the contemplated move...with great enthusiasm." Some of the enthusiasm might have come from Jack's report on a survey carried out by MHI that indicated that, had the Bank Street school been available, Columbia and other institutions would have paid tuition for 232 children. It seems likely Jack played a major role in obtaining enthusiastic support from this key group because the committee gave him a vote of thanks for his "contribution toward preparing the College for accreditation and for making the institution ready for a large development such as a move to Morningside Heights."

At the May 10, 1960 meeting, the Board was informed that a \$2 million project budget had been shared with MHI. Of the total, \$1.5 million was expected to come from loans from Morningside Heights institutions, basically tied to the cost of building a children's school, leaving Bank Street responsible for \$500,000. The Board Finance Committee was positive about the relocation but urged caution, citing concerns about fundraising capacity for a \$500,000 commitment. Jack reported that, "based upon what seemed a clear consensus" of the Board and College Committee, he had informed MHI that Bank Street was willing to proceed "provided that the financial ways and means could be worked out." MHI had responded positively, and serious negotiations could begin if the Board gave its approval, which it did.

The minutes of the November 30, 1960 Board meeting included a lengthy report from "the Morningside Heights Committee" chair, Frederica Barach. She asked James Wise to describe his cordial meetings with Columbia President Grayson Kirk and William Bloor, the University's treasurer. Kirk had stressed that Columbia and Barnard specifically wanted Bank Street to operate an independent elementary and junior high school in the neighborhood. Teachers College could not expand its small program, and a new public school would not "provide sufficient schooling for the children of the Columbia and Barnard staffs." Columbia would help with acquiring a site, perhaps even one of the properties it owned. Another Trustee reported on a conversation with Teachers College President Hollis Caswell, where he expressed support for Bank Street to move to Morningside Heights and felt there would not be competition.<sup>206</sup>

Negotiations with MHI led to an offer from Columbia in 1961 to guarantee \$1.5 million of Dormitory Authority bonds and to provide up to one hundred scholarships for Bank Street to use to enroll children from the university faculty and staff. On the basis of those assurances, which required completion of a building by 1967, the Bank Street Trustees voted in 1962 to relocate to Morningside Heights. That same year, Bank Street undertook to purchase buildings on the southwest corner of Broadway and 112<sup>th</sup> Street and at 604 112<sup>th</sup> Street. Unsuccessful in negotiations for the corner lot, the College bought 604 and 612 in 1963.

There is some indication that Lucy provided the money needed for the deposit. She had already expressed her support for the move so long as Bank Street kept to its core values, character and "pattern of work,"<sup>207</sup> which she seemed confident would be the case. Lucy had remained well informed on Jack's initiatives, and her moral and financial support must have been influential factors with Board and staff.

A news article on November 15, 1963 described the College's plan to move, complete with an artist's rendering of the new building. Columbia was prominently featured in the story as encouraging the move and, while nothing was reported about the promise of a loan, the lab school was highlighted as a benefit for university faculty and staff. There must have been some concerns about the Columbia "whale" swallowing the Bank Street "minnow" because it was stated that the College would "retain its name and autonomy." Jack was quoted as estimating that less than half the 400-450 children in the school would be affiliated with Columbia, with other students coming from "many parts of the city." He stressed that he expected the school to be "thoroughly integrated." He also stated, perhaps anticipating community criticism, that "Bank Street exists primarily to help the public schools bring about integration."<sup>208</sup>

By February 1964, Bank Street had spent \$600,000 to purchase two six-story apartment houses.<sup>209</sup> They would be demolished and replaced by an eight-story building designed by Harry Weese Associates, a Chicago architectural firm, which had been selected by an ad hoc Trustee committee, and completed drawings in late 1964 after consultation with several faculty committees. Wood and Tower, a New York engineering consulting firm, had worked for the College in evaluating eight different Morningside Heights sites and was retained for the planning and building phases. Efforts continued to purchase the corner buildings at 112th and Broadway but were abandoned in 1965. The intention had been to assemble a parcel that could include residential units, commercial space, and a branch of the New York Public Library. The City's Board of Estimates approved the Morningside Heights Urban Renewal Plan in April 1965, including Bank Street's new building, with the stipulation that there would be no expansion of the plan for ten years.

The Ford Foundation awarded Bank Street a grant of \$1 million in June 1965, half of which was for construction. With the \$1.5 million loan from Columbia and early gifts from other sources, Bank Street seemed to be getting closer to the estimated \$3 million needed for its new home. Jack and the Board had worked hard to pull everything together, in addition to continuing the regular work of the College at 69 Bank Street and moving ahead with some of the expanded programs and newly funded projects proposed in the 1958 President's Report. The estimate for the new building project budget, however, turned out to be far too optimistic. It was revised upward, eventually reaching in 1967 a total of \$5.8 million.

A program for federal support for college and university construction, the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, had been authorized and funded, but it was not immediately clear that Bank Street would be eligible. Once its eligibility was established, the College expected that the most it could receive would be \$250,000 because only \$7.5 million was allocated for New York State institutions. However, in 1966 Bank Street was able to apply to the U.S. Office of Education for \$983,000 in Title II grant funds. Additional funding was sought as a federal loan. The rationale for the new building was not based on establishing an elementary school but rather for "housing a graduate school for the training of teachers and other school personnel." This line of argument also appeared in the application to the Ford Foundation, where enhancement and expansion of graduate programs would support Bank Street's "responsibility for strengthening the vast and critical public educational system."<sup>210</sup> To be fair, while the School for Children had been the focus for Columbia and the MHI, Jack had been consistent in presenting the laboratory school as a key part of an integrated program of educational research studies, experimentation, and teacher preparation. For him and other Bank Street leaders, it was never an "either/or" situation. In late 1966, Bank Street was informed that it would receive a loan of \$2.5 million at an interest rate of 3% for forty years in addition to its Title II grant, providing federal support of \$3.5 million toward the building. That meant that the College no longer needed Columbia's guarantees for loans or tuition scholarships.

Jack had become aware of the potential problems in the Morningside Heights community if Bank Street appeared to be too close to Columbia.<sup>211</sup> That was one reason he had characterized the number of Columbia-affiliated children to be admitted to the new elementary school as less than half of the SFC student population. The pastors of the College's neighbor in the Village, the First Presbyterian Church, reacted to the November 1963 *New York Times* article with a letter to the editor decrying a plan to create "an academic ghetto" and suggested Bank Street's actions implied it had lost its convictions about improving public education.<sup>212</sup> Then, in late 1966, the Morningside Heights Renewal Council reversed its position and voted to oppose the Bank Street building. The Renewal Council's opposition could not stop construction but did create greater tension with Morningside Heights residents and community leaders and required efforts to convince them that Bank Street would be a good neighbor offering benefits to a broad spectrum of the population, not just Columbia faculty.

Discussions with community leaders pointed to a chronic need for better day care options. That was an area which Jack believed could well fit with Bank Street's expertise and resources. In the fall of 1968, as demolition was underway at the 112th Street site, Bank Street opened a day care consultation service in a storefront a few blocks south on Broadway. Jack, who was involved with efforts to improve education in Harlem, also recruited James Farmer as a Trustee. The former co-founder and national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Farmer was a program director for the NAACP. His children were School for Children students.

Despite its efforts to distinguish itself from Columbia, Bank Street struggled to escape identification with the University's expansion plans and actions. The fact that Bank Street tore down SROs in order to build a new facility was a problem that no amount of explanation could easily overcome. There were deep community concerns about the reduction of affordable housing for low-income people who had lived in the neighborhood for years.<sup>213</sup>

Opposition to Columbia's expansion was not limited to the neighborhood. In 1966, in an article in the *New York Times*, Ada Louise Huxtable wrote a devastating critique of Columbia's work as "the maker and shaker of a considerable chunk of the urban environment" and concluded that a lack of vision and professional expertise threatened Morningside Heights with "planning disaster."<sup>214</sup>

In 1967, community opposition coalesced around the issue of the new gym Columbia proposed to build on public land in Morningside Park. Then in late April 1968, a combination of factors led to student takeovers of several administrative buildings. The gym was a key issue, together with Columbia involvement with military research, and a general sense of student unrest stemming from events taking place across the country, including the April 4th assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. The Columbia administration and board were in a difficult position and seemed unable to figure out a strategy to resolve the situation. The faculty voted to suspend construction of the gym. Police were asked to come on campus to maintain order. National Black Power figures H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael spoke at a rally on campus on April 27, threatening community action.

On April 30, Columbia asked the police to clear the buildings, and university administrators seemed surprised that hundreds were arrested and scores wounded by police tactics. Inviting police on campus and the impact of the arrests led to student and faculty boycotts that closed the university down. Eventually, a faculty committee was able to negotiate a resolution, but the damage to Columbia in terms of reputation, morale, and administrative stability was substantial. Bank Street was largely a bystander during the Columbia crisis but did feel some ripples. The Professional Staff Council (the faculty and staff) asked the Trustees to reconsider the move before approving any construction contracts. A joint meeting of Trustees and staff was held, where it was stressed that if the College did not go to contract on the building by mid-July, the grant and loan from the federal government would be lost. The decision was made to go forward. Contracts were let in early July, and demolition began on July 22nd.

Jack was approached by two students who expressed some deep concerns because "if Bank Street moved up to the Columbia area, it would have to deal directly with a national crisis: many people realize that institutions are not responsive to them and will no longer be politely and impersonally manipulated in return for vague, indirect social benefits."<sup>215</sup>

On August 9, 1968, a group called Community Action Committee (CAC) held a demonstration at the corner of Broadway and 112th to attack Bank Street's move to the neighborhood, which they alleged had led to harassing and evicting tenants as well as destroying housing units. While led by Columbia graduate students, CAC seemed to be composed of mainly members of tenant organizations who were working on the assumption that Bank Street was affiliated with the University. Jack had left for Asia on July 31 so Board Vice-Chairman William Delano and College Provost Gordon Klopff led the Bank Street team responding to the picketing and a "sit-in" on August 19th when demonstrators occupied the upper floors of the buildings which were being demolished.

After negotiation, Bank Street leadership asked the demonstrators to depart or face arrest by police who were ready to act when asked. The demonstrators left without incident. It appeared that this protest was largely intended by the CAC as a media event. Bank Street staff and students were on hand to present the College's case and answer questions from residents and reporters.<sup>216</sup>

The incident was handled well by the Bank Street Board and administrative leaders, but discussion at the joint staff and student meeting called by Klopff the next day brought out some significant issues. There was unhappiness at Bank Street calling on police "to enforce our rights to demolition against demonstrators claiming to represent the community at our new site."<sup>217</sup> Delano spoke at the meeting, and left with the impression that "most of our personnel...had incomplete knowledge of the steps leading to the acquisition of the property as well as the plans...for our operations in the new building." He also felt that more needed to be done to gain community support, implying that previous outreach efforts had been insufficient. Jack returned to Bank Street having missed the demonstration but with intensified challenges to calm College staff and student concerns and improve community relationships and connections on Morningside Heights.

Tensions and anxieties continued within both the Bank Street and Morningside Heights communities while the College's new home was under construction. The top priority was to have the building sufficiently completed so that the School for Children could begin operations in September 1970.<sup>218</sup> As always, money was tight, and expenses grew beyond projections. The SFC tuition income was essential to sustain operations. The balance of the staff moved up to 112th Street in early 1971.

The formal celebration of the new Bank Street building occurred on April 1, 1971. After a dinner in the "indoor garden," guests went to the auditorium for remarks by three people "close to Bank Street" – the Board chair, Corrin Peter Strong; Morris Abram, civil rights lawyer and SFC parent; and James Farmer, former Trustee who had resigned recently as Assistant Secretary for Administration of HEW under President Nixon. It seems reasonable to assume that Jack had a hand in selecting Abram and Farmer. Given their histories, they were interesting choices. One wonders if their selection reflected some of Jack's thinking at the time about Bank Street's role in a tumultuous period in American life, including the civil rights issues in which the College became involved by moving to Morningside Heights.

Morris Abram had been a noted civil rights attorney in his native Georgia, the general counsel to the Peace Corps, U.S. Representative to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and a member of the committee on the Office of Economic Opportunity. In 1968, he became president of Brandeis University, but resigned in 1970 after two difficult years when he refused student and faculty demands to oppose the Vietnam War, and to use institutional resources to create housing for the poor. He sought unsuccessfully to punish Black students who had taken over an administrative building, leading to calls for his resignation. His remarks at the Bank Street celebration were positive about the College – "To me, Bank Street means a message of hope amidst despair" – and negative about public education – "So many of our public schools are...guilty of a

wastage of time, wastage of talent, wastage of public money and, worst of all, wastage of life."

James Farmer also spoke of the idealism and hope that the new building represented to him. His focus was on Bank Street's role in saving cities and diverse urban communities, calling for building upon "the new dignity and self-esteem" that people of color had found "to prove that a pluralistic culture can indeed work in American society." One wonders if Jack thought Farmer was in fact in touch with the "grass-roots people" he championed since in 1968 he had chosen to run unsuccessfully against Shirley Chisolm for a House seat, and then accepted an appointment in the Nixon administration from which he had soon resigned.

Both speakers expressed a view of Bank Street that was bold and impressive, which no doubt aligned with Jack's vision for the College in its new quarters. Abrams advised that "those who invest in Bank Street, invest...in the best for the future and the hope of tomorrow." Farmer referred to Bank Street as a beacon. Both men were known for their work opposing segregation through non-violent methods, again reflecting Bank Street's views and values. Both speakers had academic roles but were primarily public figures, engaged in vital issues of equity and public policy. Board Chair Peter Strong stressed in his remarks that Bank Street would never be "an ivory tower" because "education is an attitude, an approach to a problem, a creative act, a question mark, not the entrenchment of authority behind the moats of academia."<sup>219</sup>

Jack had devoted more than a dozen years to finding and building a new home for Bank Street, years marked by constant challenges to both making a new facility a reality and to keeping the programs of the College growing and moving forward. The new building was important but only as the place where the College community could again come together to carry out, as expansively as possible, the mission that Lucy had set forth 65 years earlier: public education as the means to create a more democratic society.

### ***Expanding the College's Engagement with Reshaping Public Education***

In her tribute to Jack at the 2004 memorial service for him, then Bank Street President Gussie Kappner said that Jack "moved the College from being a small institution with growing influence in the New York City schools to being a resource for schools, educators, and policy makers all across the nation."<sup>220</sup> His accomplishment reflected both Jack's commitment to build out Lucy's vision and his own deeply-held convictions about Bank Street's mission and the opportunity it had to serve the larger society.

From the start, Jack "sensed that Bank Street was the model that I was going to be interested in for trying to reform American public education."<sup>221</sup> How was he going to lead Bank Street toward that ambitious role? He knew that "while Bank Street was this wonderful seminal place of great strength, it also had lived pretty much in its own world."<sup>222</sup> The key strategy seemed to be leveraging the \$1 million NIMH schools and mental grant to expand into a series of related directions, building on Bank Street's research success to position the College as a national resource on child development, learning, teaching, curriculum, and innovation. The framework for this expanded role would be the urgent national priority of addressing the educational needs of children who were termed "disadvantaged" or "alienated" and their families.

In practical terms, that meant engaging with the various school desegregation policies and methods as proposed and implemented in schools across the nation. For Bank Street, it meant its research work in promoting the psychological strength of children "could not be aloof to the needs of disadvantaged children"<sup>223</sup> and its Public Schools Workshops needed to transition to a more inclusive model of educational services.

In pursuing his vision of Bank Street's role, Jack saw himself as firmly planted in the tradition of experimentation and research developed by Lucy Mitchell and Barbara Biber. He had always been impressed by what he called Bank Street's "scholarliness" which he defined as "the systematic search for knowledge through rigorous clinical observation and analysis combined with the work of others."<sup>224</sup> For Jack, this opportunity to serve the larger society was what Bank Street had been preparing itself to do for decades. As

he wrote in Fall 1965, "Bank Street has persistently developed the triangle of interlocking programs of teaching, research, and practical application which now makes possible our positive response to the sudden demand that we play an active role in the mammoth national effort to reshape American education."<sup>225</sup>

Actually, the "sudden demand" for Bank Street's involvement had largely come from Jack's efforts to make the College an important player in educational initiatives as the local and federal levels. His colleagues knew that. While many admired and even shared his ideals and hopes, there was also a deep concern about trying to do too much too fast, stretching the College's resources too thin, over-promising, and, most important, changing the character of Bank Street as a community. Whatever they might have thought about the fairness of the comments of the Middle States evaluation committee, they knew the recommendations cautioned about expansion of programs and scope. The discussions about the need for more space had brought out the direct connection between doing more and having to leave 69 Bank Street for larger, more flexible quarters. Two years after he retired as president, Jack was unrepentant and commented that "I suspect in the eyes of various...colleagues, I probably looked rash...but maybe it's a good thing I was."<sup>226</sup>

To a very large extent, Jack believed passionately that reforming public education meant integrating schools completely. He did not limit his conception of the goal to racial desegregation, although that was a key component. He wanted schools to end segregation of children and youth by race, class, gender, and special needs: "we shall integrate our schools when we rid ourselves of segregation, learn to a reasonable degree to teach all children so that they can achieve up to their true capacity, and develop a school life which provides a positive social model for all children."<sup>227</sup> His approach to accomplishing this goal drew heavily on the Bank Street approach, placing the child and the teacher at the center of a focused attack on underachievement. Jack believed firmly that "many of the children who are considered as not having the ability to learn do indeed have such ability" but too often "school...is an experience in pervasive failure." He remained a champion of the teacher, arguing that schools needed to "appeal to the idealism and sense of worth of teachers" so that they believe "the difficult job they are trying to do is appreciated, that they are recognized, and that the whole school system exists to serve them."

Actually, Jack was advocating for a revolutionary change upending the traditional school system model, which he asserted was a pyramid with teachers at the base and the superintendent at the pinnacle and the children left out of the structure. He wanted the children and the classroom teacher to be at the top so that "the instructional program for children is the purpose of the school and no other purpose must the school serve but that."<sup>228</sup> Jack knew that accomplishing such dramatic changes required more than idealism and lofty words. His action plan focused on two broad objectives: an aggressive personal effort to become – as Bank Street's president and representative – a prominent player in policy discussions on civil rights and school desegregation, and creating and finding funding for expanding Bank Street's educational demonstration and service programs and projects. The latter meant building upon the work of the Public School Workshops to develop what became known later as the Field Services Division. The growth of that new division impacted Bank Street in many ways, some of which created the problems of administrative strain, eroding morale, and financial stress that Jack had to contend with until his retirement as president.

### ***The Impact of Field Services: A Mixed Bag***

While Bank Street did not formally establish the Division of Field Services and Leadership Development until 1967, the template for the new division began to emerge years earlier. Jack commented in 1975 that the Public Schools Workshops blended into Field Services in 1959, as "we began to do more than work in the pattern of the original workshops."<sup>229</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, Charlotte Winsor had suggested in a 1957 meeting with Jack that a separate Field Services division could easily be pulled out of her Teacher Education Programs and relieve her overloaded plate of supervisory duties.

Jack had also come around to thinking that Bank Street had to reach school leaders if it was to have significant impact: "By 1957-58, I had become convinced that the key person in every elementary school was the principal, and that working with a few teachers in a school, unless we brought the principal around to full understanding and commitment, was not going to get us very far."<sup>230</sup> His solution was to obtain a grant and hire Helen Trager<sup>231</sup> to serve as head of a new unit supporting field services, which included projects and programs to improve curriculum, instruction and student motivation within and outside of the public school system.

A major step forward was the establishment of the Educational Resources Center (ERC) in 1964 with grants from the Field Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York. Located on East 125th Street in Harlem, the ERC functioned primarily as a consulting service to promote constructive change in local elementary schools through teacher professional development, new curriculum and materials (including a curriculum laboratory and demonstration classroom), and working with superintendents and principals from two Harlem districts to disseminate innovations designed to address learning needs for children in their under-resourced schools.

The ERC was an ambitious venture, central to Jack's commitment to involve Bank Street educators in attacking the needs of the "disadvantaged one-third" of the nation's children. Intended to eventually move into Bank Street's new building, the first ERC location was supposed to be the first field office of a city-wide program, and ultimately to provide services to other urban school systems. It was also hoped that the ERC would be a model for university-public school system cooperation.<sup>232</sup> While the ERC did not achieve its aims, and later became one part of the Bank Street at Harlem operation at the same location, its establishment moved the College along the path of a more diverse and robust school service program well beyond what had been offered.

The other major program in Field Services was the Day Care Consultation Service (DCCS), which was begun in 1969 as an expansion of day care assistance provided at the "Bank Street at Morningside" storefront a few blocks south of the new building. As noted earlier, consultation with neighborhood groups had pointed out day care as the top community need for which Bank Street could offer expertise. Under the leadership of Peter Sauer, formerly assistant director of Bank Street's SFC, staff helped plan and establish three independent day care centers in the West Harlem/Manhattan Valley area.

The plan called for a much broader scope of operations, however, based on rolling out a city-wide consultation service for new day care centers. A series of "how to" handbooks were produced. Proposals were developed to have DCCS provide architectural services for new centers, and extend consultation to industry to assist companies seeking to establish day care centers for employees and residents of their communities. On the DCCS menu were workshops and staff training sessions, educational offerings which went beyond consultation and might be seen as more appropriately connected to teacher education programs and staff. In 1970, DCCS moved into the new College building.<sup>233</sup>

Jack had become more engaged with day care policies and advocacy during the 1960's, as he learned more about the needs of poor families and the value of serving them in order to improve educational environments for disadvantaged children. He became a board member and later president of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America, an advocacy organization urging federal, state and local support for expanded day care. The Council argued that such services were essential to giving children and their parents the chance for full human development in a modern society. His experience with Head Start and Follow Through programs, nationally and with Bank Street's funded centers, influenced his view of the range of work that Bank Street might undertake without straying from its mission and values.

The Bank Street Field Services also provided training services in 1969-71 for staff from fourteen New Jersey day care centers as an experimental pre-service model, as well as taking on contracts from Consolidated Edison and American Telephone & Telegraph to train selected employees with particular educational



needs.<sup>234</sup> The Con Edison project involved helping to develop a high school equivalency program for "hard core" unemployed people who were being hired as trainees. Another Field Service project involved bringing together new urban school superintendents with business executives experienced with reorganizations in order to identify systems approaches that might be applicable to school systems.

Bank Street's capacity and appropriateness for such work was questioned by Trustees at the February 4, 1970 Board meeting, and was controversial topic with faculty.<sup>235</sup> Senior faculty leader Dorothy Cohen was particularly incensed when Peter Sauer dared to publicly challenge Barbara Biber about how the College's mission should be interpreted.<sup>236</sup>

This expanding menu of educational services led to concerns within the Bank Street community about clarity of mission, changes in focus and activity driven by what funding might be available rather than institutional purpose, and strain on limited human and financial resources. While Bank Street supported the goal of quality day care services for young children, some in the College community questioned directly providing a full range of educational services for day care center staff, including developing films, videos, architectural displays, and planning manuals in addition to training workshops and seminars.

Who made the decisions at Bank Street about priorities, resource allocation, and areas of experimentation?<sup>237</sup> There was worry that the mission of Bank Street "would be diluted by external programs, thus threatening the identity, and distinction, of the College. The growth of Field Services and other programs and projects outside of the traditional educational divisions highlighted the problems of administrative ambiguity and institutional governance that had been often identified but never adequately addressed."<sup>238</sup>

### ***Administrative and Financial Challenges – "the Gordian Knots" of Bank Street***

One of the reasons for creating the office of President was the recognition that the existing organization did not work well and, in any event, could not long survive Lucy's departure. Jack was well aware of the problems and set about tackling them with care. His May 1957 President's Report vaguely linked his ideas about dealing with the opportunities for expanded influence and the problems of under-staffing and overload, as well as to past efforts by Lucy and her colleagues to begin to create a new organizational structure.<sup>239</sup>

The minutes of the October 8, 1957 College Committee meeting reflected a discussion focused solely on "the whole organization of the College, distinguishing between *de jure* and *de facto* situations" and probing why there seemed to be no explicit role for faculty. Jack noted that "we have developed an almost Quaker concept of 'consensus of the meeting' and operated in a very democratic way, even though it is not spelled out." The role of the College Committee as representing faculty perspectives was brought out, with a comment that the current system of a committee composed of division heads could become an "inner circle" on policy-making, which Jack knew it already was. It was also pointed out that the "President's job...cannot be defined as solely administrative, since educational administration inevitably affects educational policy and vice versa."

Other areas of discussion concerned how central costs would be allocated among the units, and how decisions within a unit could impact the College as a whole. While there was dissatisfaction with the present way of selecting members of the College Committee, there was no agreement on a new approach, especially as any division head had to be in any policy decision affecting her programs. There was a similarly inconclusive discussion about "the line of authority," primarily about the extent and availability of the Trustees' involvement in formulating educational policies. Jack had succeeded in raising the key questions but not in pushing forward to any decisions on needed changes.<sup>240</sup>

The 1958 Middle States/NCATE Visiting Team report was complimentary about the College's governance and administration but expressed a concern about the absence of a dean and "little administrative design to the structure of responsibilities." The team questioned whether the President could coordinate the work of

the several divisions so that they supported each other.<sup>241</sup> As mentioned earlier, Jack's May 1958 President's Report included the suggestion of a study of administrative reorganization, together with a handwritten sketch of his suggestion as a starting point for discussion. The February 1, 1960 Progress Report to Middle States touched lightly on administrative structure, noting that because of its unique history and character, "in certain important respects the policies and organization of the institution have not been typical of those ordinarily found in the field of higher education." The multiple roles played by senior staff cut across department and faculty committee boundaries, but that was held out as a strength that served to unify the College.<sup>242</sup>

In preparation for a major fundraising effort, it is common to retain a consultant to conduct a study that will help to determine the readiness of an institution for such an endeavor. In 1961, the College hired Arthur Frantzgreb, a senior fundraising consultant, to evaluate and report on Bank Street's potential to raise up to \$2.5 million for a new building on Morningside Heights. Because studies of this sort involve interviews with a number of Trustees, faculty, staff, and alumni, it is not unusual for reports to identify administrative issues to the extent that they might impact fundraising.

In Frantzgreb's June 20, 1961 report, he was complimentary about Bank Street's unique structure and noted "yet each functional division has its own separate identity." Of more concern, he found "a sense of apathy exists within the family with reference to administration and discussion as to a possible relocation of the College" and suggested that in addition to "human reluctance to geographical change," this sentiment might be result from "lack of clear definition of need for a new location and statement of new opportunities."<sup>243</sup> In many ways this finding is confounding because Frantzgreb spoke primarily to Trustees and senior staff during the late spring of 1961, well after the Board and faculty had voted for relocation to Morningside Heights after much discussion within "the family." Jack had worked hard, and had even been recognized for his efforts to consult with faculty and staff over more than two years of consideration of space needs for program expansion and the inadequacy of 69 Bank Street.

During the 1960's, Jack did make concerted efforts to address administrative needs but without dictating changes which he knew could never be imposed from the top. He had encouraged thinking about reorganization in his 1958 President's Report, responding in part to the criticisms of the Middle States/NCATE evaluation.

In 1962 Jack recruited Gordon Klopff, an associate professor at Teachers College, Columbia, to join Bank Street to assist with development of a program for school guidance staff. Klopff, who had a doctorate in education, was appointed in 1966 to the newly-created position of Dean of Faculties (to which the title of Provost was added later, apparently at his urging) and served as the College's chief academic officer until 1986. That significant structural change was made possible by the 1965 grant of \$1 million from the Ford Foundation, of which half was to be used for "strengthening the College."

Bank Street had applied for support of the new building program in October 1964. An evaluation by Ford staff led to questions about the College's capacity to carry out the programs that a new facility would make possible. The foundation required a revised proposal that addressed those organizational and administrative issues.

The April 1965 revised Bank Street proposal listed five urgent needs, the first three of which focused on additional resources for the Graduate School, Children's Programs, and Research Division. The fourth need was for enhanced communications; the fifth, for "supportive faculty and administrative structure." Funding for seven new positions was requested: two in the Graduate School, two in the lab schools, one in Research, an "education editor-writer," and an Academic Dean. Although it was listed last, the Dean was identified in the eyes of faculty and Trustees as "most essential to strengthening the College." The new Dean would "free the President of an overburden of pressing duties" and "provide direction and coordination of interdivisional programs" as well as "safeguarding the pattern of interaction among faculties that has long been characteristic of Bank Street."<sup>244</sup> The foundation awarded \$500,000 to be spent over five years.<sup>245</sup> This portion of Ford

support did not have any matching requirement; the \$500,000 building grant had to be matched 2:1 by June 30, 1967.

Despite the Ford Foundation's building grant, Bank Street entered 1969 short of the total amount it needed to raise. In June 1969, faced with a \$1 million shortfall, the College hired Henry Goldstein of Oram Associates, a highly-regarded New York firm, to do a quick fundraising study. The College could not borrow more money so the options were either to raise it in one year or deplete the endowment (which at that point was about \$2 million). The decision was to undertake the emergency "close the gap" campaign, which was largely successful. What is more interesting is the snapshot the Oram report provided that highlighted changes since the 1961 study by Frantzgeb.

While Goldstein was focused on a fundraising effort, he was an experienced outside observer of educational institutions and understood well how fundraising realities often reflected culture and organizational challenges. His analysis, similar to Frantzgeb's, targeted the Board since 35% of the goal had to come from Trustees. He concluded that Board giving was "the problem" and found "some Trustee discontent, ranging from mild annoyance to expressed critical attitudes." The "disaffections" came in part from "administrative bottlenecks at the top" which meant "things were not run as smoothly or efficiently as they should be." More disquieting, however, was that several Trustees thought the educational program was "weak in various respects," primarily around diversity in the School for Children student body, concerns that community-focused programs were "spreading the College too thin," and not enough "real research" was being done. While Goldstein thought many of these criticisms would be found among many boards, he was concerned that six of the twelve Trustees interviewed felt the administration was not "sufficiently sensitive" to the complaints. He also noted that several Trustees seemed to agree with one member's comment that Bank Street "is low on participatory interest; very high in ethical interest."

From an organizational and cultural angle, Goldstein pointed out that there was confusion among the small pool of donors and prospective donors about Bank Street's priorities, in part because they were solicited for multiple needs. The College did not set clear priorities for its fundraising objectives and needed to make choices, even if difficult. Subordinating the annual fund to the capital need for completing the building might be "a Hobson's choice...but choice should be made." Bank Street did not have the resources to continue to fundraise in two directions at the same time.<sup>246</sup>

### ***Middle State Reaccreditation – Serious Problems, Hard Questions***

Because of the educational policy initiatives included in President Lyndon Johnson's civil rights and anti-poverty programs, 1965 is sometimes referred to as the Year of Education. At Bank Street, 1965 might be seen as ushering in a period of rapid expansion in growth of programs and services, and in consequence, size and complexity. The move to a new building and neighborhood was symbolic of the fundamental shifts in how Bank Street's mission was being redefined, by whom, and what the implications of that emerging definition might be for the structure and work of the College. The Ford Foundation grant illustrated the reality of the moment: an institution of unusual composition, with real and potential accomplishments in pursuing the transformation of American public education, contending with significant internal issues of organization, administration, and financial stability. Under Jack's leadership, Bank Street was expanding its reach and complexity, but the question remained about whether the College could manage such growth while maintaining its coherence.

The 1971 Middle States evaluation report provided an answer of sorts, which seemed to be "perhaps" – but only if Bank Street addressed the hard questions, some of which had been raised by the Ford Foundation in 1965. The Middle States report was in some regards an exercise in "tough love," pointing directly at questions of lack of clarity in institutional priorities, non-existent strategic planning, and uneven alignment of programs with core College objectives. The introduction included recognition of Bank Street's uniqueness and

acknowledged that its work had "affected the course of the education of child significantly," giving credit to its founder and her associates. The text continued that "more recently, the College has continued to grow and develop and to increase its educational influence under the excellent and inspiring leadership of its current President and his associates." There are complimentary comments about faculty and staff, and the "unusual" Board of Trustees, but the tone of evaluation had been set by the implicit distinction between the two stages of Bank Street's development. The concluding sentence framed the issue: "In order to meet the challenges of tomorrow, the administrative officers, the faculty and staff, and the trustees must involve themselves in a partnership effort dedicated to a continuing concern for the goal of improving the educational process."<sup>247</sup>

The first section of the report, "Institutional Objectives and Organizational Implications," reflected an understanding of Bank Street's core purpose, described as "the improvement of education for children," and its role as the "common intellectual bond that enables relatively autonomous divisions to share an identity with the College." Although lauding the College's nimble response to "speedy action when social needs demanded immediacy," the report noted that "the pioneering role is not an easy one" and "expectations, and sometimes even promises, are often greater than can be delivered." More pointedly, the "difficulties are compounded when an institution's expertise (e.g., child development and education) is acquired by a largely white middle class faculty with children of the same background, and is directed toward the problems of a very different community." The committee concluded that Bank Street had reached a "point of crucial decision-making" as a result of its achievements. Whatever it decided, or chose not to decide, about institutional objectives and "the organizational scheme most appropriate to realizing them," would determine the College's future.<sup>248</sup>

The first decision point identified by the Visiting Team came out of the very general character of the College's unifying objective or core purpose. The major question was "whether the College will continue to strive for the highest degree of excellence in its major field of expertise...that is, whether it will be one of the nation's top institutions by expertise in depth, or it will move on a more horizontal plane, turning to the education of other specialists and dealing with various important school issues in order to grapple with central educational problems..."

The evaluators felt that "no institution – not even the greatest and wealthiest – can be all things to all people" and that the College could not direct its limited resources in both directions, "and hence must choose."

The second decision point focused on further growth after years of expansion of some divisions through new projects. Recent growth had been carefully planned "by and large," but there were concerns about "strains on the faculty and on the quality that has always been an important aspect of the College." The team made it clear that it did not criticize past decisions but felt the need to caution about future expansion.

A third decision point came out of an interesting conclusion by the committee: Bank Street was in fact a federation of divisions. There was a lack of clarity about the purposes of each division in relation to the needs and resources of the College. A reassessment was required, but the team wondered whether the College would undertake it and, if so, how and by whom.

The fourth decision point concerned governance, and specifically faculty and staff participation in the decision-making process. The team noted that, in prior decades when the staff was "family-size," communication and consultation was informal but effective. More recently, the shared "benefits of growth" and moving to the new building mitigated issues of accountability and allocation of limited resources. Now that there was a "national recession in higher education" and a time of increased pressure for broader participation by all members of the community (i.e., faculty, staff and students) in an institution's most important decisions, Bank Street must respond in a careful, thoughtful way using long-range planning to determine how structural changes and new approaches would be implemented to increase the College's ability to achieve its major goals. That planning process should be open and comprehensive, with wide participation, and the College should move promptly.

Related to this point, the team remarked that the President's role had served the same purpose organizationally as the College's purpose had intellectually – a force for unifying the College's different divisions. The evaluators seemed to imply that Jack's personality and the way staff responded to him as "the boss" had been essential to holding together an increasingly complicated federation of autonomous units. Noting that it seemed to be time for "major management changes," the team asserted that, while "freedom from complexities of management in the past" had been "credited for much opportunity for creativity," that time was over.

The section on the Division of Field Services and Leadership Development was particularly critical about the relationship of its programs, no matter how worthy, to the College's major goals. The evaluators felt it was "difficult to rationalize some of the projects of the Division when tested against the goal of the College and program objectives." The contract with Consolidated Edison was held up as an example, questioning how a project for the educational training of unemployed adults aligned with "improvement of the education of children."<sup>249</sup> The team found little evidence of planning or assessing which areas of work would be most beneficial for improving educational conditions for children. The reader of this evaluation is left with the impression that the evaluators viewed this part of the College more as an administrative container for a jumble of projects rather than a division with a coherent set of objectives and clear procedures for determining what it should pursue.

Much of the blame seemed to be placed on the relentless need to seek funding, letting the availability of money set the agenda rather than following a clear procedure for determining how funding opportunities might fit College objectives and priorities. One unfortunate result of this situation was that Field Services had at best informal relationships with other divisions which might have benefited from the learning generated by some of the projects. In some cases, Field Services could have tapped staff from other divisions, whose expertise would be not only helpful but also provide a way to bring knowledge and ideas into their work.<sup>250</sup>

Evaluators found Special Projects even more problematic. Although viewing the projects as significant and ably managed, the committee wondered why individual projects were not housed in appropriate divisions, especially after pilot phases were completed. The absence of "a consistent and rational administrative structure" was noted again.<sup>251</sup>

Because the work of the Research Division had always been so central to Jack's vision of Bank Street's special role in educational reform, the criticisms of the evaluators were particularly worrisome. The team found that, "for an institution devoted to bringing about change in education, there was no apparent evidence of attention being paid to models of change or theories of change to undergird the direction of...research efforts." Research staff acceptance of the need to find funding as the priority had led them "away from research grounded on institutional desires and needs despite their interest in serving other divisions to a greater degree" and "toward programs only tangentially related to their research goals." There was also "a growing sense of polarization between the Research Division and field-based programs."<sup>252</sup>

Interestingly, the committee included among its suggested questions for further consideration "a move to a Doctoral Program as a means of developing a more viable position as a research facility consonant with research needs and interests of participants."<sup>253</sup>

The "Personnel" section in many ways made it clear that the evaluators saw changes in the people of Bank Street and their attitudes about the College as the keys to the future: "Bank Street ...is at a turning point in its history so far as personnel is concerned as well as with almost everything else." While recognizing the dedication and *esprit de corps* of the faculty, the evaluators found it almost quaint that faculty worked without the usual employment safeguards and benefits that had existed for many years at nearly every educational institution. The implication was that, rather than being a strength, this historical artifact had created problems in governance, workload, diversity of faculty composition, sustaining quality, and morale. The report commented that "the institution the old-timers here knew and rightfully gloried in is something different

today – not necessarily better or worse, but unquestionably different" and noted that the "professional staff of today and the future may be expected to be very different from the professional staff of the old days." The evaluators approved of the work of the Professional Staff Council, which had been established at Jack's initiative in 1964, but noted that it had never received official recognition by the Board of Trustees so that its authority would be affirmed.<sup>254</sup> The failure of the 1969 Trustee-Staff plan of organization on a "purely technical parliamentary point" was viewed as unfortunate and its resubmission urged.<sup>255</sup>

There was an intriguing commentary on faculty workload. After acknowledging that "Bank Street does not operate along conventional lines" which made workload comparisons to other institutions difficult, the evaluators agreed that committee responsibilities and other non-classroom duties meant some faculty had to work "at a pace that is not optimum." However, the committee also concluded that there was "no question but that a great deal of the heaviness of the faculty work load is self-imposed by the individual faculty member in his enthusiasm for this work and in his desire to participate in as much of the functioning of Bank Street as possible." Somewhat drily, the evaluators noted that "it should be remembered that the law of diminishing returns sets in at a particular point."<sup>256</sup>

In the final section on "Finance and Facilities," the report was very positive, reflecting a major turn-around from the criticisms of the 1958 Middle States evaluation. The team remarked that "the new Bank Street is a tribute to the excellent and untiring leadership of the President, to the excellent supporting efforts of his immediate administrative associates and the faculty and staff, and to complete and significant participation of trustees dedicated to the goals of Bank Street and with a vision of the increased opportunities to realize those goals through improved physical facilities."<sup>257</sup>

In other words, the evaluators strongly approved of the decision to build a new facility. A reader of the report might even be left with the impression that a failure to have addressed space needs might have jeopardized Middle States reaccreditation. Similarly, operational deficiencies in business areas had been corrected. Now the immediate task was to begin serious planning, and the evaluators endorsed the initial work of the new Trustee Long-Range Planning Committee, leaving the impression that the establishment of this committee was significant in the evaluators' overall positive review of Bank Street.

Jack seemed quite satisfied with the Middle States evaluation, although he questioned the team's conclusions after seeing the final report. Jack seemed pleased with the work of the visiting team's chair, Dean Paul Masoner<sup>258</sup> of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, who prepared the report. The team was impressive: the Dean of Rutgers Graduate School of Education; senior faculty in psychology, English, education, child development, and social science education; the vice president for business at RPI; and, of course, a university librarian. In addition, a representative of the New York State Education Department accompanied the Middle States team under a special arrangement. NYSED was undertaking its own evaluation of Master's degree programs in the State, and it seemed efficient to fold this review into the Middle States process.

The Bank Street Board seemed to share Jack's positive reaction to the evaluation report, perhaps in part because the team fully endorsed the strategy of a board-driven long-range planning effort. A review of Board minutes from the fall of 1970, just before the Middle States visit in May 1971, indicates that there were continuing financial pressures that threatened the College's stability, and perhaps even sustainability. There were discussions about the fundamental changes in how the divisions and entire institution worked together now that the College had moved into its new home and was "under one roof."

In his October 6, 1971 letter accepting the Middle States report, Jack described the Board's satisfaction and its authorization to "set up the machinery to involve all elements of the Bank Street Community in long-range planning." He noted that a Steering Committee had already begun work, and that there would be a five-to-ten year plan for the College by April 1972. Jack concluded by stating "our very positive reaction to the visiting team's report is clearly a response to the positive approach of the splendid group that Dr. Masoner led."<sup>259</sup>

Bank Street's accreditation was reaffirmed on December 6, 1971, with a request for submission of the "first phase master plan" in April 1972.<sup>260</sup> The Middle States evaluation report simply confirmed the harsh reality that Bank Street's current financial vulnerability posed a danger to its future. That sobering realization had become abundantly clear to the College leadership at the December 9, 1970 Board of Trustees meeting. That meeting was 18 months after the Oram report, which was a sufficient amount of time for the College leadership to make progress in addressing Goldstein's urgent issues that impacted fundraising. The meeting had come before the submission of the College's self-study for the 1971 Middle States reaccreditation, but it was likely work was underway on that review.

The new building was open although only the SFC had fully moved to 112th Street, and plans were underway for the formal dedication in April, 1971. It should have been a time for celebration and anticipation of the opportunities ahead now that, at last, Bank Street was housed again in one building. The news was much more sobering. The Finance Committee reported that there would not be sufficient funds to meet expenses during the final quarter of the 1970-71 fiscal year. The deficit was projected at over \$200,000, and the College had barely \$300,000 in liquid assets. Tuition revenue did not cover the costs of education, with every graduate student requiring a \$1500 subsidy and each SFC student, \$200. Increasing enrollment was not providing a surplus but worsening the situation.

Jack reported that the 1970-71 budget was being pared back to the essentials and staff were being made aware of the need for "a program of economy," but the operating budget would still have a deficit. The Early Childhood Center on 42nd Street could not continue as part of Bank Street because Head Start guidelines had been changed. Conforming to those guidelines would eliminate the features Bank Street believed to be essential, and the College could not take on the expenses of operating the Center without Head Start funding. A site visit from the Office of Civil Rights had revealed that the College needed to improve minority group representation in several categories, including faculty and staff.

In sum, after a decade of program expansion, intense fundraising for its new home and endowment, and achievement of a greatly enhanced institutional profile in the New York City region and on the national level, Bank Street was in no better financial condition and, given the gloomy economic forecast for the country, the prospects for future improvements were not encouraging.<sup>261</sup>

### ***Jack Niemeyer and Long-Range Planning***

The Middle States evaluation team had understood the College's financial situation. The self-study had reflected the realities: "Although traditional sources of income such as tuition and gifts have increased in the past few years, the additional funds have not been sufficient to match the increased cost of operation."<sup>262</sup> It seems quite likely that the visiting team asked many questions at the relationship between program expansion and revenues, and that some members of the College community felt emboldened to share their concerns about mission drift, confusion about priorities, diffusion of effort across too large a horizon, and inadequate shared decision-making. When the pointed remarks in the evaluation report, including its recommendation about the need to make hard choices on institutional priorities and focus, were combined with the stark financial analysis, the crucial importance of serious long-range planning could not be ignored.

As the Board moved ahead with efforts to prepare the kind of five-to-ten year plan recommended by Middle States, Jack shared his "preliminary thoughts on long-range planning" in a June 15, 1971 document. His overall thoughts were consistent with his longstanding view of the College's role: "Bank Street for the next ten years should continue to be an agent for change in education." In important ways, however, he had moved away from his earlier emphasis on Bank Street as primarily a center of research and experimentation. Now he sought to maintain both "enough autonomy to get things done" in each division with recognition by all of a "symbiotic relationship" that should be fostered by central leadership and each division.

Jack did not retreat from his often-stated large-scale framing of Bank Street's work which, while focused on education in the early childhood and elementary years, should reflect the fact that the earliest years of children's lives were "so deeply affected by employment-unemployment, good housing-bad housing, health-sickness and such factors." To deal with concerns about how this work fit into the College, he floated the concept of an affiliated institute to handle these kinds of extension and consultation projects. He also asserted the increasing importance of professional training programs at Bank Street for school leaders, and for focusing on the educational problems of the cities.

He wrote that his thoughts on these issues preceded his reading of the final Middle States evaluation. Despite his earlier positive comments about the team, he quarreled with the key findings. He asserted that the "essence of what I see as the proper and most important approach for Bank Street is what troubles the Team." That approach troubled them because "they – and, I imagine, various of my colleagues – see a conflict between 'depth,' which would come from restricting our work to 'development and the education of children,' and (I suppose) lack of depth, which results from our being involved in a wide spectrum of problem-solving activities in the field of education." Jack saw the College as confronted with a dilemma rather than a choice. He asked seriously "how can we, in conscience, continue to focus exclusively upon work with teachers and other personnel who work with children, as well as upon matters of curriculum for these children, when we see increasingly that much of this work is dissipated as the result of the ways in which schools and school systems operate?" He acknowledged that large funded projects took Bank Street into non-educational realms, e.g., the Early Childhood and Family Resource Center in Hell's Kitchen "grew into a comprehensive services agency more like a settlement house than a school." He argued that "depth" had been gained over the past decade "from stretching ourselves out to explore and strive to find solutions to problems which were new to us." Furthermore, while there was the danger of diffusion, "if the institution does not reach out in serious problem-solving efforts which go beyond its established expertise, there will be no deepening of that expertise."<sup>263</sup>

Jack believed there was another option, combining the "common sense and theoretical wisdom in Bank Street" to prevent efforts to "run all over the lot" with an awareness of the need for integrating the new knowledge into the life and thought of the institution." It was the approach that he had advocated for many years but never found the support to implement. Now he offered no specifics about how to operationalize this option, other than referring to a foundation proposal which sought funding "to provide the personnel necessary for the integrating process to begin." He also acknowledged in his last line that the College's financial condition was shaky and its future uncertain.

### *Jack's Administrative Misstep*

During 1970-71, Jack's plate was overflowing with problems to handle. At long last, moving into the building was at the top of the list, largely so that the School for Children could begin operating on time in September. A successful transition to a new building, and a new student body and their parents, takes time and attention to details. Apparently, Larry Grose, who had become director of the SFC in 1968, was viewed as ineffective. Grose had been a classroom teacher but for the previous decade had been principal of a suburban intermediate school in Connecticut. His wife, Jo Macklin, was an SFC teacher. There might not have been any sensitivity at that time of having spouses in a reporting relationship, but just on the basis of relevant experience, Grose seemed to be an unusual choice as head of an independent Manhattan preK-8 school during a time of significant disruption and change. SFC staff and parents returned from Spring break to the news that Grose had been terminated and Trustee Betty Straus<sup>264</sup> was the interim director. No reasons for this unusual action were given.

Members of the Bank Street community were upset for different reasons. For long-standing staff, the lack of process and consideration of the employee's rights went against community values and simple fairness. Grose might not have been seen as effective, but SFC teachers and parents were angered that there was no



explanation for his removal and that they were not part of the process to select a new school head. The President looked like a tyrant, exactly the kind of authoritarian corporate executive that Bank Street had never wanted.

During his years as President, Jack had not been very involved in the School for Children, in part because he supported Ibbey's work in shaping and developing the school. As a former laboratory school head, he could have been especially sensitive to having someone "looking over your shoulder" like he had sometimes experienced at Temple. Another reason could have been his wariness about confusing parents about decision-making authority, which should not involve the President unless there were an emergency. Jack was also located elsewhere, in the rented space on 14th Street, until the move to the new building. Perhaps by coming back into close daily encounters with the SFC, Jack became more aware of the problems occurring in the operation of the school.

We can only speculate on Jack's reasons for firing Grose the way he did. We do know that Jack was under a lot of stress, especially in coping with both the deficit in the operating budget and problems with moving everyone into the new building. Trustee Millicent McIntosh recalled that "the head of the school obviously needed to be fired" because "the parents were up in arms" and threatening to withdraw their children, and teachers were likely to resign. She thought Jack had gotten strong pressure from some Board members to act. The fact that a Trustee, Betty Straus, stepped in as Interim Director might suggest Board involvement in the decision. McIntosh did state that Jack's quick action almost destroyed the school and called it "the only really major mistake that he made."<sup>265</sup>

It seemed that, while the decision to fire Grose was right, the way Jack did it created tremendous problems within the Bank Street community. Part of the reaction might have come from the fact that his wife was a popular colleague and teacher in the SFC. Lia Gelb recalled that her only difficult meeting with Jack was over the lack of process and violation of Bank Street norms in his termination of Grose. Gelb viewed the incident as the catalyst to faculty and staff demands for establishment of a grievance policy.<sup>266</sup>

Earlier in the academic year, Jack and the College had experienced another labor problem. Without first obtaining approval from the Board, he had agreed to allow the secretarial/support staff to form a union. The support staff demanded a contract and threatened not to go ahead with the move to 112th Street without one. Jack recalled both his hurt feelings (because he felt he had always tried to deal fairly with the support staff) and his frustration over the pace of negotiation. He intervened, much to the chagrin of Victor Siegel, his Vice President for Business, and forced a settlement so the move would not be disrupted.<sup>267</sup>

While not so damaging as the Grose firing, the decision to allow a union to form in the first place looked like a bad and expensive mistake at a time when the College was in difficult financial shape.

### ***Reasons to Consider Stepping Down***

When Jack wrote his reflection on long-range planning in June 1971, he was 63 and had been president for fifteen years. Despite his best efforts to put a positive spin on the Middle States evaluation, and his personal appreciation for the team members, the findings and recommendations suggested that a decade of consolidation and retraction loomed. The College's financial outlook was dismal. The Oram report called into question both Trustee satisfaction and fundraising strength, despite Jack's efforts to add Board members who could give and get substantial amounts to sustain College operations, provide capital support, and make investments in new programs.

The process of relocating the College had ended successfully but had been a long, difficult, expensive, and exhaustive experience over a dozen years, and had created new demands and problems. His closest colleagues from the early days of his Bank Street involvement – Barbara Biber, Ibbey Gilkeson, and Charlotte Winsor –

were no longer in the same roles although still part of the College. Perhaps it was time for him to consider something similar, especially as he had developed and implemented a policy requiring retirement at age 66. That meant he would have to retire by June, 1974.

One person interviewed, who preferred anonymity, offered the opinion that Jack was so devoted to Bank Street that he would have continued as president as long as he could. While there is no question about Jack's deep love for the College, a sitting president at any institution would not enjoy taking responsibility for implementing a long-range plan that did not reflect his deeply-held views of the appropriate purpose, role and priorities. The College budget was stuck in a volatile pattern of excessive reliance on soft money; each year, about half of the budget came from grants and contracts. Funding would likely be more difficult to obtain in the future, and would require a level of presidential energy and enthusiasm that might be harder to muster if he felt that the College that he led might be static or even diminished.

Board leadership had also changed. While Jack had helped to recruit Corrin Peter Strong as a Trustee, it did not appear that they had the same sort of relationship that Jack had enjoyed with Sally Kerlin and Jim Wise. Strong had been Treasurer before election as Chair, and was well aware of the financial and administrative issues that had to be resolved.

Jack never spoke about how he made his decision to retire, other than referring to the policy that he helped to create and his wish to give the Board sufficient notice to search for a successor. He was well aware, of course, of how long Bank Street had needed to decide it wanted a president and to pursue the search that led to his appointment. It seems likely that he knew that removing himself from responsibility for implementing whatever long-range plan emerged would make the planning process work more smoothly. Given his dedication to Bank Street, he could support a plan that evolved out of a reasonable process of consultation and discussion consistent with College traditions, but he would not have to be responsible for it.

On February 2, 1972, Jack informed the Board of his decision to retire on June 30, 1974. The countdown to the end of the Niemeyer presidency had begun. The search for his successor was interesting on several levels. First, other than presenting a memo with his thoughts about the qualities the next president should have, Jack was not involved in the process. His successor, Francis Roberts, recalled that he met Jack only after becoming President-elect. Second, the documents in the archives about the search committee's work suggest that Barbara Biber had a strong role, which is not surprising.<sup>268</sup> The committee was large, in order to represent the different Bank Street constituencies as much as possible. Board members were a minority, and the composition of the committee underscored the accuracy of the Middle States evaluation team's finding that the College was more of a federation unified by a common philosophy and set of attitudes.

Finally, although not involved in the search, Jack had the responsibility for planning and organizing the inauguration of his successor.<sup>269</sup> In all ways, he seemed to project a graciousness that reflected his abiding dedication to Bank Street and concern for its future. Perhaps that is one reason the Board later elected him as a Statutory Trustee.

The selection of his successor moved more quickly than Jack anticipated. At the June 3, 1973 Board meeting, Fran Roberts was elected president, starting in August. Jack was named President Emeritus and also, for 1973-74, Advisor to the College. To recognize Jack's impact on the College, the Board started a fundraising drive to endow the John H. Niemeyer Chair in Innovative Leadership in Education. The scroll that Jack was given later stated that the chair was established to honor his "wisdom, creative ability and devotion to childhood education" which had "kept Bank Street in the forefront of enlightened education in America."<sup>270</sup>

As might have been anticipated, after an initial surge of gifts, progress toward the goal was slow. The Niemeyer Chair was established in 1976, with an endowment intended to support from time to time the appointment of an "outstanding and creative educator" as the Niemeyer Fellow who could help with "the achievement of a balanced multidisciplinary approach to educational problems."

The Niemeyer Chair was part of a \$12 million "Evergreen Program" announced on April 25, 1974 at a dinner honoring Jack. Former U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel was the principal speaker. Harold Howe II and Sidney Marland, Jr., who were also former Commissioners, attended, underscoring Jack's role in federal education policy during the 1960's and early 1970's. Former Bank Street Trustee Charles DeCarlo, who became president of Sarah Lawrence College in 1969, was the first person to make a toast, praising Jack as "a great friend, sensitive teacher, and inspirational leader." DeCarlo pointed out that, in 1956, Bank Street had an antiquated building, fewer than 300 graduate students, 96 pupils in the SFC, a teaching faculty of 40, and an operating budget of \$245,000. After eighteen years of Jack's leadership, the College had a modern building, over 1100 graduate students, 400 SFC pupils, a faculty and staff numbering 260, an operating budget of \$5.6 million, and an educational reach that spanned the nation. Actor and Bank Street parent Patrick O'Neal read *The Beautiful Black Princess* story from the *Bank Street Readers*.

Other speakers included Joseph Bobbit, formerly of NIMH, who said: "To work with Jack Niemeyer and Bank Street has been a pleasure, a revelation, and an education." Jack was identified as an Honorary Co-chair of the Evergreen Program campaign, intended to be a three year effort, suggesting that he would continue to have some fundraising tasks.<sup>271</sup> No record of the Evergreen effort could be found, leading to the conclusion that it was abandoned, perhaps due to the national economic problems that hit New York especially hard.

Jack's last Annual Report covered 1971-72. His photograph was very different from the one used in 1956-57. He was smiling broadly, relaxed and looking comfortable. His message was familiar: Bank Street's influence on the national education scene had continued to grow since the last biennial annual report for 1969-70. The first program that he described was Follow Through, with 29,000 children enrolled in Bank Street model schools from Vermont to Hawaii. Toward the end (page 24) of the publication, there was a section headline that read "College Close to Its Goal." Jack was not referring to a fundraising goal. Instead he wrote:

"Even a brief summary of Bank Street's program indicated clearly that the College is today a vital force in the forging of a more effective system of public education throughout the country. Bank Street's founders in 1916 saw its goal as exerting influence for those changes in the educational system which would allow America a move toward its dream of a just and humane society. I believe in the past two years we have made great strides toward that goal."<sup>272</sup>

The years of the Niemeyer presidency were coming to a close, but that would not be true about Jack's years at Bank Street. In his transition year, 1973-74, as President Emeritus and Advisor to the College, he would oversee the Stamford School project and the work of the Clark Intervention Project. He would organize the inauguration of his successor and work as part of the development team on the Evergreen campaign. Unlike Lucy, Jack stayed nearby but, like her, he did not "meddle" even when he became a Trustee. He maintained his vision of Bank Street's appropriate role in American education, sharing the founders' goals of achieving a more just and humane society through quality education for every child. Their goals and his goals aligned twenty years earlier and would never come apart. Jack's vision of and for Bank Street came from his strong commitment to social justice, and to creating a society that embraced equality, equal opportunity, and democracy for all.

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<sup>146</sup> The Profile was called "An Informal Report; 1916-1956" and edited and published by the Alumni in early 1957. There did not appear to be a formal alumni organization at that time. The College was shown as holding the copyright. Alumni were members of the Board, faculty and staff, and the Bank Street Associates. The publication was the work of a special group, including Marjorie Niemeyer as well as Jack, and intended as both a tribute to Lucy as she retired and an opportunity to introduce Jack as her successor. Lucy was identified as "President Emeritus." Marjorie Niemeyer's involvement indicated her emerging role in supporting alumni relations work at Bank Street. The College archives do not hold much information about #

Marjorie and her activities related to the College, but comments from those interviewed for this project suggest that she focused on alumni outreach in addition to supporting her husband with College events.

<sup>147</sup> John H. Niemeyer, "Looking to the Future," *Bank Street Profile*, Bank Street College, 1957, pp. 59-61.

<sup>148</sup> Nancy Balaban interview with John Borden, 10/31/2016.

<sup>149</sup> Frank was a Bank Street trustee as well as a noted expert on public health; Kubie was a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst with the NY Psychiatric Institute interested in children's mental health; Redl was a close friend and mentor already mentioned in Chapter Two.

<sup>150</sup> The "big dinner" was the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration held on February 2, 1957 in conjunction with the annual Bank Street conference hosted by the Associates. See *New York Times* 2/3/1957.

<sup>151</sup> As noted earlier, Beaumont was Associate Superintendent for elementary schools, NYC Department of Education, and a Bank Street Trustee.

<sup>152</sup> Gelb interview with John Borden, 9/28/2016.

<sup>153</sup> Strom, Robert D. *The Inner City Classroom*, Charles E. Merrill Books, 1966, pp. 1-20.

<sup>154</sup> Later, Jack had to gently inform Lucy that the kind of robust West Coast program she and her Palo Alto alumni group were suggesting was too great a strain on Bank Street resources. This news reflected faculty concerns about work overload as well as questions about the value to the college of this sort of investment. It appeared that Charlotte Winsor had the most questions, which might have led to the irritation Lucy expressed later with her.

<sup>155</sup> Lucy's last major gift to Bank Street before retiring came in 1954, when she gave securities worth \$135,047 to the General Endowment Fund. This gift constituted most of the College's endowment until the funds from the Miller bequest were paid in 1958. At the start of Jack's presidency, then, the endowment had come from Sprague family resources which could not be expected to continue to be available for new major gifts. Later Lucy would make a \$50,000 lead gift to help start the building fund for the new home on 112<sup>th</sup> Street.

<sup>156</sup> While there were only four official divisions, Coble served a key role in overseeing programs that fell into two divisions: the Polly Miller childcare center in the Bronx, and two parent nursery cooperative projects, which were under Children's Programs; and the in-service teacher education program which was part of Teacher Education.

<sup>157</sup> In 1957 the director of development (Carol Truax) was added to the group.

<sup>158</sup> Jack claimed that he had brought up the idea of seeking accreditation which "had never been apparently thought of at Bank Street." JHN interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 21. If Jack's claim was accurate, which seems likely, the lack of awareness of usual academic organizational and operational requirements underscores how unprepared the College community was for functioning like an institution of higher education and the steep slope the new president faced.

<sup>159</sup> Jack's notes can be found in the Bank Street archives. The meetings were held from January 7-11, 1957.

<sup>160</sup> Sadler interview with Gordon, 8/4/1975.

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<sup>161</sup> Niemeyer interview with Gordon, 11/10/1975. Jack did some of the proposal writing, and helped to make sure the application was delivered by hand by the deadline. In this interview, he recalls the humorous experience of convincing the airline staff to hold a plane at LaGuardia until Jack's assistant, Minna Elkin, could get on board for the flight to Washington, DC.

<sup>162</sup> Bank Street Institutional Self-Evaluation for Middle States–NCATE joint evaluation, 12/20/1957, p. 14.

<sup>163</sup> In subsequent years, the College was commended for its policy on academic freedom. See 1971 Middle States evaluation report , p. 27.

<sup>164</sup> "I knew it was impossible to be accredited as a teachers college without a library," Jack told Edith Gordon in his November 11, 1975 interview. He hired Claire Clemmons as Bank Street's librarian.

<sup>165</sup> Report of the Evaluating Committee, February 16-19, 1958, p. 22.

<sup>166</sup> Niemeyer interview with Gordon, November 11, 1975.

<sup>167</sup> Report of the Evaluating Committee, p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> Letter from W. Earl Armstrong, NCATE Director, dated 10/9/1958.

<sup>169</sup> Niemeyer letter to Lucy Sprague Mitchell, 3/21/1958.

<sup>170</sup> Clark, p. vii.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. ix.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. p. x.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p. viii.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 235.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 256.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 257.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. pp. 248-250.

<sup>179</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 55. Jack also stated that "I deliberately erred, when I erred, on the side of getting something done, rather than worrying about whether I would make an error."

<sup>180</sup> Clark, p. ix.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 241.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. p. 262.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 259.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 261.

<sup>185</sup> For example, Apfel & Englander (CPA firm) attested that Bank Street's accounting system and procedures had been aligned with the manual of colleges and universities. Letter to JHN from Louis Englander, November 24, 1959.

<sup>186</sup> Pearl Zeitz, who joined the SFC faculty in the early 1960's recalled Jack defending her when she was criticized for not having a Master's degree. Interview with John Borden, 11/10/2016.

<sup>187</sup> Letter from Albert E. Meder, Jr., 4/25/ 1960.

<sup>188</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/10/1977.

<sup>189</sup> The Council of Higher Education Institutions in New York City was established in 1958.

<sup>190</sup> *New York Times*, 10/2/1958.

<sup>191</sup> Letter from Katherine Oettinger, Chief of the Children's Bureau, HEW, 2/10/1958.

<sup>192</sup> Sadler interview with Gordon, 8/4/1975. Sadler was one of the Bank Street people who did not want to leave the West Village. She stayed there and founded Village Community School to sustain a Bank Street-like nursery/elementary school which continues to this day. It is possible she held Jack primarily responsible for the move to Morningside Heights.

<sup>193</sup> Jack claimed that Charles DeCarlo, a Bank Street Trustee who worked in a senior research position at IBM, told him in 1962 that Bank Street was on a corporate "black list" for grants and contracts. DeCarlo had learned that information when approaching IBM about support for the College. Jack seemed to believe this blacklisting had some connection to the 1953 public controversy over the Teacher Personality test.

<sup>194</sup> Sally Kerlin recalled that Jack had to come in the building on weekends from time to time to restart the furnace so "the whole building would not freeze." Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975. Minutes of Trustee meetings during the 1950's also include frequent discussions about the heating system, reflecting the "family" quality of Board involvement in Bank Street operations. Frederica Barach Barbour recalled Jack having to leave a Board meeting to shovel coal into the furnace when the superintendent was ill.

<sup>195</sup> Sally Kerlin stated that Lucy gave her a check for \$50,000, which was the first gift for the building. Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975.

<sup>196</sup> Prescott interview, UC-Berkeley, 1962, pp. 109-110. Lucy's comment about parents deciding to relocate is supported by Florence Kendell's remarks in her interview with Edith Gordon, 9/15/1975. Florence became a staff member, and coordinated the Bank Street Associates conferences. Her husband, Leonard, became a Trustee and later advised Jack on the new building since he had experience in real estate development.

<sup>197</sup> None of Jack's proposals for administrative change were implemented. More than a decade later, one of the major criticisms of the 1970 Middle States reaccreditation team focused on the lack of long-range planning.

<sup>198</sup> Later it was decided to include grades 7 and 8. Discussions with Columbia always focused on the desire of the Morningside Heights institutions for an independent school covering pre-K to 8th grade.

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<sup>199</sup> Jack seemed to be well aware that the College ran a group of education programs that did not break even financially, much less provide any surpluses. Teacher education, especially the part-time programs, offered immediate expansion opportunities that could generate new revenues.

<sup>200</sup> This kind of affiliated doctoral program might also have provided a way to increase the number of faculty holding doctorates and address another major criticism – faculty quality – of the Middle States evaluation.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/75. Kerlin said she had joined the Board as part of an effort, presumably by Lucy, to "in a sense, institutionalize Bank Street in a conventional way so that it would have a responsible Board and people [to] raise money for it."

<sup>202</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, May 27, 1959.

<sup>203</sup> Jack knew that Bank Street was "city-centered" and would never consider a suburban location. Interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 29.

<sup>204</sup> The firm was Mayer Whittlesey and Glass. Board of Trustees meeting minutes, May 10, 1960. The study focused on the operation of an elementary school which also could house other College units. The new school was projected to operate on a break-even basis.

<sup>205</sup> Columbia and other area institutions eventually questioned the constitutionality of a City-approved renewal plan that required a 10-year moratorium on further expansion. *New York Times* 4/23/1965.

<sup>206</sup> Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 11/30/1960, pp. 5-7.

<sup>207</sup> See Antler, p.344. She quotes from a November 4, 1961 letter to Sally Kerlin from Lucy, who wrote "Bank Street began like a fairy tale[and] the move to Morningside Heights with an elementary school carries on the fairy tale – and all in my lifetime."

<sup>208</sup> *New York Times*, 11/ 15/1963. Jack is also quoted making what seems to be an odd comment that Columbia's invitation to Bank Street should not be considered a "slight" to Teachers College. He hoped for a close relationship with TC but one had not existed in the past and did not develop after the College moved to 112<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1960 a Bank Street Trustee had reported that then-TC President Hollis Caswell supported Bank Street relocating to Morningside Heights but his views might not have been shared by most of the TC community. In her notes on a November 21, 1978 interview with Lawrence Cremin about possible participation in her Bank Street Oral History project, Edith Gordon found him highly critical of the College and its leadership. He described Bank Street as "a local, small institution of doubtful quality" and "cast aspersions" on Biber's scholarship. He dismissed Jack as "a good fundraiser." Cremin was a widely-respected historian of American education whose views can be understood as reflecting academic standards for research and scholarly publications. However, one is left to wonder if Columbia's decision to invite Bank Street to come to serve its faculty and staff families was not seen as a negative comment on TC. If so, Cremin, who joined the TC faculty in 1949 and served as its president for a decade (1974-84), might have been irritated by Bank Street's arrival. Also, in some programs, Bank Street and TC are competitors for graduate students.

<sup>209</sup> *New York Times*, 2/20/1964; land acquisition costs as shown in Exhibit 1 of the October 6, 1966 revised application for a Federal construction grant and loan through the Graduate Facilities Branch, Bureau of Higher Education.

<sup>210</sup> Proposal to the Ford Foundation, 10/4/ 1964.

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<sup>211</sup> Bailey, Jane M. *An Exception to the Rule: Bank Street College of Education as an Independent Professional School (1916–1990)*, unpublished dissertation, The College of William and Mary School of Education, May 1991, pp. 177-178.

<sup>212</sup> *New York Times*, 11/ 23/1963. Letters to the Editor from John O. Mellin and John B. Macnap.

<sup>213</sup> In her interview with Edith Gordon, Frederica Barach Barbour said: "They were all protesting another institution driving happy, rent-controlled people out of buildings, and building schools instead of residences." 12/9/1986, p. 9.

<sup>214</sup> *New York Times*, 11/5/1966.

<sup>215</sup> Memo from William Delano to Board of Trustees, 8/17/1968. Delano had joined the Board only that year but was well-known to Bank Street. He had been on the legal team that helped to resolve the 1956 controversy with the Board of Education that had blocked Bank Street's access to NYC public schools for its research studies.

<sup>216</sup> Memo from Delano to the Board of Trustees, 8/26/1968.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>218</sup> There were delays in completing the required inspections but a temporary Certificate of Occupancy for the three floors was obtained in September 1970, just in time for the SFC to open its doors.

<sup>219</sup> *Bank Street Reporting*, v. vii, no. 1, Spring 1971. The issue is largely devoted to "Celebrating Our New Building" and the speeches are on p. 2.

<sup>220</sup> President's remarks, Memorial Service for Jack Niemeyer, Bank Street College, 6/24/2004.

<sup>221</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 20.

<sup>222</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 12.

<sup>223</sup> Herbert Zimiles, interview with John Borden, 11/28/2016.

<sup>224</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 23.

<sup>225</sup> "Bank Street and the Perkins Triangle," *Bank Street Reporting*, v.II, no. 2 (Fall 1965) p. 3.

<sup>226</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 49.

<sup>227</sup> Jack Niemeyer's speech on "School Integration: The School's Responsibility," 5/2/ 1963, at the Conference on School Integration, New York City Public Schools.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 44.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>231</sup> Helen G. Trager was known for her 1952 book, co-authored with Marian Radke-Yarrow, *They Learn What*  
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*They Live: Prejudice in Young Children*, based on their research study of 5-8 year old students in Philadelphia public schools. They examined the roots of prejudice in children. The study was included as evidence in the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation decision in 1954. Jack might have known Trager because she did her study while he was supervising Temple's early childhood program in Philadelphia public schools. Her husband was a professor at NYU. Trager must have worked only for a short time because Charles Long was hired to run Field Services in 1962.

<sup>232</sup> *Bank Street Reporting*, v.1, no.3, Winter 1964, pp. 3-4.

<sup>233</sup> Moving into the building must have been something of a mixed blessing for it brought DCCS staff and Graduate School faculty into more frequent contact, which led to friction and fueled controversy about day care staff sacrificing quality for political expediency. DCCS staff placed the goal of providing more safe centers for poor kids as most important. See Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, p. 188. That approach would be similar to the strategy and objectives of Head Start, where the Johnson administration decided it was most important to serve a large number of children as quickly as possible, and then focus on improving quality. Jack had objected to that view with Head Start, but might have concluded that it was the most effective way to expand sorely-needed day care services and support poor families. Graduate Faculty member Dorothy Cohen expressed the view that DCCS was "an adult-oriented program in which children seem to be quite incidental." The alleged absence of a core concern with children seemed to be at the heart of the tension. Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/21/1975, p. 87.

<sup>234</sup> AT&T contracted for training of adult tutors. The Con Edison project was somewhat harshly criticized by the Middle States Visiting Committee in its evaluation; see Middle States report, May 5, 1971, p. 12.

<sup>235</sup> See Bailey, *An Exception to the Rule*, p. 175.

<sup>236</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/21/1975, p. 87. Cohen did not identify Sauer by name, just as DCCS head. She said he "confronted Barbara Biber at a city-wide meeting on early childhood and argued with her as to who knew best what Bank Street was about." Cohen also noted that because Sauer had received a large grant, he had "a lot more power today in this College than a good many other people." Cohen was more outspoken but felt many faculty and staff agreed with her that "Field Services and Day Care didn't come out of the center of the College" but were now considered more important.

<sup>237</sup> Bailey wrote that "of the five College Divisions, perhaps the most controversial was Field Services...[which] represented a variety of new ways that Bank Street was performing its mission of outreach to the community; ways that were external to the College." p. 188.

<sup>238</sup> Cenedella, pp.280-281; also see Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, pp. 415-418.

<sup>239</sup> Jack Niemeyer, President's Report, 5/31/1957, p. 7.

<sup>240</sup> Niemeyer notes, including handwritten additions, from 10/18/1957 meeting with Biber, Winsor, Lewis, Gilkeson, Black, Sadler, Coble and Truax.

<sup>241</sup> Report of the Evaluating Committee, Middle States/NCATE, 2/ 16-18/1958, pp. 5-6.

<sup>242</sup> Progress Report to the Middle States Commission, 2/1/1960, pp. 8-9.

<sup>243</sup> Arthur C. Frantzgreb and Associates, "Fund-raising Study," presented to Development Committee of the Board of Trustees, 6/21/1961.

<sup>244</sup> "Proposals for Strengthening Bank Street College" prepared for the Ford Foundation, April 1965, p.9.

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<sup>245</sup>While Ford's grant might seem unusual, it came in the middle of a major foundation commitment from 1960-1970 called the Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP) designed as "a sweeping effort to change education" by "implementing in concert all the new practices of the previous decade" and focusing on changing the "educational structure through a process of teacher development." See "A Foundation Goes to School" report by Paul Nachtigal (1972), p.40. Bank Street's leadership in educational innovation made it of particular interest to Ford as a way to support the CSIP. In addition, Ford supported the Morningside Heights redevelopment plan.

<sup>246</sup> "An assessment of the prospects for success of a \$1,000,000 capital funds campaign for the Bank Street College of Education," by Henry Goldstein, Oram Associates, Inc., 6/24/1969. All quotes are taken from this report. Goldstein felt so strongly about making a decision that, if Oram Associates was asked to serve as campaign consultant, it would do so only "on the condition that the building fund take priority over all other fund-raising activities."

<sup>247</sup> Middle States evaluation report, 5/ 2-5/ 1971, Introduction.

<sup>248</sup> In a later section on Graduate Programs, the evaluators make a general recommendation that applied to the whole College: "Bank Street might well attempt the formulation of a new integrating conceptual framework for the functional relationships of its major divisions." (p. 7). Jack bracketed that recommendation in his copy of the report.

<sup>249</sup> Middle States report, May 1971, p. 12.

<sup>250</sup> The evaluators saw a "real need for a systematic procedure in which personnel from all appropriate units can be brought together during the proposal stage of a project in order to bring together the elements of a complete package which might comprise training of field personnel, research, intervention teacher training, and dissemination." p. 14.

<sup>251</sup> Middle States report, May 1971, p. 15.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>255</sup> The 1969 proposal was developed over two years through a College-wide process chaired by Trustees Sally Kerlin and Millicent McIntosh, who chaired the Trustees Program Committee. Approval required a super-majority of all eligible voters. The proposal passed by a wide margin but did not meet the threshold. Voter turnout was not high enough. There is no record that the proposal was resubmitted. McIntosh believed the "old guard" had persuaded new faculty and staff to vote "no" or not vote at all. Interview with Edith Gordon, 4/14/1987, pp. 10-11. Another view might be that staff thought the detailed plan was too complicated and the proposed structure too bureaucratic, and thus not appropriate for Bank Street.

<sup>256</sup> Middle States report, May 1971, p. 27.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>258</sup> Masoner was nearing the end of his deanship, which began in 1955. He was credited with dramatically developing his school's graduate programs and changing it from a homogeneous regional school to a much #

larger and much more diverse institution with an international reach. It seems likely that Jack and Masoner would have had a lot in common, and that Masoner would understand the challenges Jack had to face in shaping Bank Street for a larger role.

<sup>259</sup> Jack Niemeyer letter to Robert Kirkwood, Executive Director, Middle States, 10/6/1971.

<sup>260</sup> Letter from Middle States Commission on Higher Education Chairman Elizabeth McCormack to Niemeyer, 12/6/ 1971. On June 26, 1972, McCormack accepted the "progress report" with commendation. Letter to Niemeyer from McCormack, 6/26/72.

<sup>261</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting,, 12/9/1970, pp. 3-9.

<sup>262</sup> Institutional Self-Study, April 1, 1971, p. 105.

<sup>263</sup> Document entitled "Some Preliminary Thoughts on Long-Range Planning" by JHN dated June 15, 1971.

<sup>264</sup> Strauss was an experienced teacher and administrator at another New York City independent school as well as a Trustee who understood Bank Street's culture and approach to children and learning. She proved to be an effective school head, quickly improving the operation of the SFC. She remained as director for many years.

<sup>265</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 4/14/87, pp. 17-18.

<sup>266</sup> Gelb interview with John Borden, 9/28/16.

<sup>267</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/10/1977, pp. 29-31.

<sup>268</sup> Biber had known all three Bank Street founders and was the strongest link to the philosophy and values that they shared. Besides her closeness to Lucy, Barbara had shaped the research agenda and experimental programs that helped to define the College's work and the Bank Street Approach. She had tremendous influence.

<sup>269</sup> Jack recruited his fellow Hamilton College alumnus Sol Linowitz, who had helped to create the Xerox Corporation and later served as an American diplomat, to be the keynote speaker. Jack tried to get Chief Justice Earl Warren, who declined.

<sup>270</sup> *Report from Bank Street*, v. X, no. 1 (spring 1974), p. 2.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1-4.

<sup>272</sup> Bank Street College of Education, *Report for 1971 and 1972*, p. 24.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SPLITTING THE SOCIAL ATOM: NIEMEYER, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

At the heart of Jack Niemeyer's bone-deep passion for a democratic society characterized by social justice and equal opportunity to succeed, was his intense, consistent rejection of stereotyping. He especially opposed the stereotyping of children as "unteachable" and their parents as uninterested in their education and welfare. Jack fought against the insidious effect of such views on the educational policies and practices proposed and implemented by well-intentioned people, including educators, who claimed to be trying to help these children and families. He believed that, if policy makers and educators could be informed about how all children could be taught and all parents assisted to become partners in their children's learning, tremendous energies would be tapped that would transform lives and strengthen American society.<sup>273</sup> To him, Bank Street's role in this broader education of society was obvious. Bank Street was leading the way in understanding how to bring out the potential of all children, how to prepare teachers who could teach any child, how to develop curricula and methods to unlock the curiosity and creativity that existed in every child, and how to organize a school and a system to promote parent engagement to support and reinforce every child. The challenge was to bring this core knowledge into the public arena and to make Bank Street the sort of "change agent" that Jack thought it could and should be.

Early in his presidency,<sup>274</sup> between 1957 and 1959, Jack's core principles and ideas for purposeful action were displayed in two ways. His commitment to taking his arguments and solutions to the public was conveyed through an article entitled "Splitting the Social Atom" in the annual education issue of the *Saturday Review*,<sup>275</sup> in September 1959. In this issue, the editors wrote, they wanted to focus on the "elements of an action program." Jack's article followed a contribution by George L. Fersh, a professor of social studies at a New York State teachers college and associate director of the Joint Council on Economic Education. In "The Untapped Reservoir," Fersh stressed investing in school teachers and administrators, strengthening research and development in education, and improving the personnel (including local school boards) and procedures involved in setting educational policy. Jack probably agreed with many of Fersh's points, such as paying educators more, spending more on research in education, and developing more informed and responsible legislators and school board members. The primary point of disagreement would be with Fersh's statement that it was "an illusion to hope that American education, responsible and receptive as it is to the diverse backgrounds and values of our people, could ever move forward on all fronts with the unanimous support of all."<sup>276</sup> Jack thought the objective needed to be winning unanimous, or nearly unanimous, support for broad and urgent action. Where Fersh wanted to open the faucets a few more turns, Jack argued for blowing a hole in the dam.

In his article, Jack wanted to engage the audience by mining the post-Sputnik anxiety of Americans but knew his approach might be criticized as exploiting fears of nuclear catastrophe. Exploding the "social atom" had only benefits, he argued, and was apt "if it can awaken the public imagination to the vast unreleased power which is imprisoned within the millions of children who grow up in American families belonging to those

groups whom I shall call the alienated." He asserted that "our schools, particularly our elementary and secondary schools, are the instrument most capable of doing this social atom-splitting." Implicit in this conception was the role of educators as active agents, leading the way to excellence instead of simply asking for more resources and attention.

Jack was hardly the only person to use the word "alienated" to describe the population whom he wanted to serve. For him, alienation was as much a function of class and social standing as of race and ethnicity. He identified the "alienated ones" as Chicago's so-called "hillbillies," St. Louis's "Arkies," migrant farm workers, tenement dwellers, families living (in 1958) on less than \$3,000 a year, families where neither parent had an elementary school education, and families of minority groups who are "doubly alien in their native or adopted land." Jack's definition drew on his political and social beliefs as a progressive, influenced by Socialist leaders such as Norman Thomas as well as philosophers such as John Dewey. Alienation was as much, and perhaps more, a matter of social class as minority group status.<sup>277</sup>

Educators and schools bore a large part of the responsibility for leaving the potential of these alienated children untapped. Jack pointed out that schools were "staffed generally with teachers whose eyes are focused on an Anglo-Saxon middle-class way of life and who utilize educational procedures geared to that way of life." He described a "circle of attitudes" – his version of a self-fulfilling prophecy – that condemn such children to low expectations which lead to a student's low performance and a pervasive sense of failure and rejection. Jack argued that, just as advances in mathematics and the physical sciences had made it possible to identify the power that lay in an atom, new knowledge in sociology, cultural anthropology, and psychology confirmed the "unreleased learning power" that he described. Without naming the institution involved (which of course was Bank Street), he drew on results of several New York City educational projects as evidence of his claims. His first example focused on dispelling stereotypes about lower-class parents lacking interest in their children's education.

Jack did not seek to point a finger of blame at anyone; he wanted to change perspectives to unlock a bad situation that seemed to operate on inertia and poor information rather than bad intentions. He minced no words about the impact on alienated children: "What a frightening conspiracy our society organizes against these children, no less evil because it is unintentional."<sup>278</sup> Because "the school is the only agent of society that reaches nearly 100 per cent of the children and their families," educators must learn to think differently. Jack asserted a moral imperative because "the school in its very nature exists to discover and foster the highest creative and moral capacities in each human being." Beyond coming to understand "the dynamic of the alienation process" and how low expectations exacerbate it, schools and educators must take action. Jack suggested redefining the role of a principal as well as adding staff in order to find ways to engage hostile parents who had suspicions and fears about schools. Teachers should focus on "a community life for children in which desirable values are actually lived." Jack remained committed to Lucy Mitchell's concept of a "good life" for children and teachers: "If, however, fairness, honesty, respect for human worth, courage, social concern, and responsible problem-solving are enacted in the school under the guidance of loving and loved teachers, the school will give to all children the sense of the satisfactions inherent in what we consider a good life."<sup>279</sup>

Another key requirement was that educators must strive to learn about the homes and neighborhoods where their students lived. Jack used the term "slum child" which he intended only as descriptive of the neighborhood, not personal qualities. His point was that methods and curricula that worked well for the "middle-class child" might be useless with children whose life experiences gave them very different perspectives. His example was the different ways a middle-class child and a slum child might view police. Connected to this approach would be the development of materials to replace textbooks that "augment feelings of alienation" by presenting "a white, middle-class, suburban, idyllic model of family life" that seemed false and irrelevant for these slum children. Jack noted that, led by "an experimental teaching-training institution," teachers in New York City had formed a workshop to "create stories for use in school which are meaningful in terms of the life experience of children in a large and culturally complex urban center."<sup>280</sup> He

meant, of course, the effort just starting at Bank Street by Irma Black and her Writers Workshop to develop the *Bank Street Readers*, which would be published in 1965.

In this article, Jack was challenging all teacher, principals, and schools, but clearly he was focused on urban districts. That was where the alienated children were largely found. While rural communities might have intense poverty and poor educational services, "slum children" lived in urban neighborhoods. Shaped by his experiences in Philadelphia and New York City, Jack had become absorbed with the problems of urban schools and educators. He was always concerned about unlocking the learning potential of all children, but he was committed to making sure that whenever the "social atom" would be split, the beneficiaries were the children of the cities.

While it remains unclear why Jack did not identify Bank Street more specifically in this article, his provocative "Splitting the Social Atom" did garner attention for the College, achieving one of his priorities as its president. For example, Frederica Barach Barbour referred to the article as one of her motivations to accept nomination to the Bank Street Board.<sup>281</sup> It also created a framework of Jack's views and goals for public consumption that he used many times in the years ahead, including speeches, testimonies to governmental agencies and legislative committees, and funding proposals. Sally Kerlin said the article was "the credo of Jack's action for a long time, for that was his thinking."<sup>282</sup>

### ***The School Integration Project: Bank Street and the Upper West Side Community***

The second way Jack's core principals appeared in a public context was during the work of the project that he alluded to in the *Saturday Review* article. From September 1957 through April 1959, Bank Street led a pilot project in school integration called "Helping Schools Develop Their Own Resources" in cooperation with the New York City Board of Education. Funding was provided by the New York Foundation and the New York Fund for Children. Directed by Charlotte Winsor, the project's goal was "to show that in three elementary schools with mixed racial and ethnic student populations the process of integration could be advanced by giving a more productive and satisfying learning experience to the children of all groups."<sup>283</sup> The three schools were on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, thus involving Bank Street in the educational needs of the community of which it would become a part more than a decade later. One school was brand-new, opened to serve the children and families of the Frederick Douglass Houses (a low-income public housing complex) and the newly-built middle-income Park West Village, both located around Amsterdam Avenue and 100th Street. The expectation had been that the largely middle-income white families moving into Park West would send their children to the local schools, especially the new one. In fact, this did not happen, and the increased capacity meant that the proportion of white students decreased. The result was "de facto segregated schools," or the reverse of what the project had expected to encounter.

The School Integration Project adjusted to these realities in order to continue to work on its two key tasks: supporting teachers and administrators in efforts to promote integration, and engaging with parents to better support their children in school. The project's early findings and experiences likely influenced Jack's *Saturday Review* article and shaped his thinking about what needed to be done. Overall, the final report stated, the major obstacles were "the discrepancies between the school culture and the culture of lower-class Negroes and Puerto Ricans, and their sense of alienation from the superordinate institutions of the white world."<sup>284</sup> The project team included staff from Bank Street's Mental Health and Education project, with Writers Lab staff joining for a special experiment to "develop stories meaningful to minority group children" using photos taken by the students to help them "get a picture of themselves as participants in school and neighborhood life."<sup>285</sup> This experiment was the effort to which Jack referred in his article, and no doubt fed the development of the first versions of the *Bank Street Readers*.

Parents were a major focus of the School Integration Project. In general, Bank Street staff found that "many minority-group parents...are unable to fulfill their expected role in relation to the school, because of language

difficulties, inadequate personal experience with education, or attitudes of hostility and suspicion" which served to confirm the school's view that parents could not be expected to be able to support the children's education.<sup>286</sup> In opposition to that view, project staff concluded that their experiences indicated that the existence of a "significant potential ...among minority-group parents for a constructive role in school life when the appropriate organizational forums and activities are provided."<sup>287</sup>

A parent coordinator position was funded through the grant to actively reach out to and engage parents, reviving PTA groups and encouraging communication about family needs at school and beyond. One of the successes of the project was to help attract a local office of a settlement house in order to expand health and social services to residents of the Douglass Houses.

### *The Community Committee: Expanding the Conversation on Integration and Change*

In addition to carrying out the work of the project, Bank Street invited a number of representatives of agencies in education, social work, intergroup relations, and religion to join a Community Committee for the School Integration Project. The original 28-member committee included several NYC Board of Education senior staff, such as Florence Beaumont,<sup>288</sup> Associate Superintendent; Morris Finkel, Assistant Superintendent for Districts 6 and 8, and a representative of the Director of All-Day Neighborhood Schools; and later Marion Clark, Associate Superintendent for Districts 10 and 11, and Charles Shapp, Assistant Superintendent for Districts 12, 13 and 14. The NYC Housing Authority was represented by the manager of the Frederick Douglass Houses. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico sent an education staff member from the Migration Division of its Department of Labor.

There were several representatives of the New York City Commission on Intergroup Relations, which Mayor Robert Wagner had established as a city agency in 1955 to address problems of discrimination and bias.<sup>289</sup> One commission member was also considered to be a "religious representative" – Mary Riley. She was also identified as Advisor to the Superintendent of Schools. Riley was the visiting evaluator sent by the Archdiocese to meet with Jack in 1956 to review the questions to be used by Bank Street researchers in the School Experience study funded by NIMH for possible "anti-Catholic" bias. Jack had used the opportunity to educate her about Bank Street and win some support for the College among the Catholic leadership. Apparently, his diplomatic efforts were successful since, based on her annotated copy of the first meeting's minutes as well as her recorded comments; she was an active and engaged member.

Besides Riley, a professor of sociology from Fordham joined the committee. Other religious representatives included Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum of the Synagogue Council of America; Robert Johnson, the research director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; Paul Rishell, executive secretary of the Protestant Council of the City of New York; and Lester Waldman from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith. The Citizens' Committee for Children of New York City, the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, and the United Parents Association of New York City were also represented. Later representatives joined from the Public Education Association, Grosvenor Settlement House, the Federation of Hispanic Societies, Goddard-Riverside Community Center, and the Urban Renewal Citizens Committee.

It seems likely that Jack had thrown a big net for several reasons. First, he had learned from the 1956 controversy that Bank Street needed to explain its work and seek feedback from a broad array of constituencies, including the Catholic education office of the Archdiocese. Second, the College needed to make friends among organizations and individuals that had political and community influence that could provide advice, protection and leverage if difficult issues arose, which a study of school integration could be expected to generate. Third, the interest in the topic gave Bank Street an opportunity to introduce its distinctive approach and its potential for improving public education to important organizations in the City. Fourth, the committee offered a way to strengthen the College's relationship with the Board of Education and provide more opportunities for pursuing projects dependent on access to public schools. Finally, the

committee burnished Bank Street's profile within the foundation community that was becoming more concerned with school integration and reform programs, offering more funding opportunities.

Hosted at 69 Bank Street, the five meetings of the Community Committee between December 1958 and February 1960 provided Jack and his key staff opportunities to present Bank Street as a place that was concerned most with finding practical solutions that could be implemented and would in fact help children and educators. Charlotte Winsor, who headed the School Integration Project, insisted on focusing on the "hard realities of New York City community life" – poor housing, limited opportunities for lower-class families, middle-class flight (especially among white New Yorkers) to the suburbs, and the "deeper social problems that social scientists describe as characteristic of all large cities."<sup>290</sup>

Since defining school integration was difficult, she suggested talking of "concrete problems and experiences" and trying to "inhabit this room with real children and real teachers and real schools." This perspective reflected Bank Street's commitment to focusing on what occurs in a classroom and finding the best ways to support teachers and children by dealing with the actual conditions of their lives rather than theoretical or ideological concepts. Jack's unswerving dedication to that perspective guided his work for the rest of his presidency and beyond.

The Community Committee's March 18, 1959 meeting grappled with "major theoretical principles" reflected in the project staff's summary of a document produced by the Board of Education's Commission on Integration. There was general agreement that *de facto* segregation had the same psychological impact on the minority group child and produced "the same harmful effects for both majority and minority groups" as *de jure* segregation. The committee distinguished between desegregation (changing the racial and ethnic composition of the student body) and integration, which was defined as "not a state of affairs so much as a process." Therefore, they concluded that "integration must include within its definition the preparation of children for adult life in a more highly integrated society."

It was noted that New York and other large cities outside the South were not subject to the *Brown* decision abolishing legal segregation of schools but had chosen to follow the ruling. Committee members questioned how much impact teachers could have in the integration process, stressing community climate and "in-group motivation and peer-group influence" as more significant. Schools, however, were seen as capable of doing more "to support and guide a community toward a discovery of its strengths, [and] its capacities for positive social and educational action." Some members wanted to better understand "the inner life of the minority group parent and child" and "the pressures on majority group parents who have to decide between staying and fleeing." They argued that both sets of parents seemed to be concerned about maintaining educational quality, but minority group parents were skeptical about fair access to educational opportunities in schools run by middle-class, largely white educators. The committee also concluded it would be unwise to assume broad support for school integration, with resistance evident for different reasons in both majority and minority groups in the city.<sup>291</sup>

While Winsor was director of the project, Herbert Goldsmith (field director) and Donald Horton (Research Associate) were the key staff. In a memo to Jack, Goldsmith asserted that the fourth Community Council meeting on November 10, 1959 would be crucial to mining the potential of the group for Bank Street's project and had even larger implications about the College's work. He wrote that "the almost automatic participation of members of this committee reflects their hunger for ways of realizing liberal values in American life" because "we are living in the center of a crisis with regard to appropriate methodology for achieving social change."<sup>292</sup> Goldsmith was not moving away from Winsor's emphasis on realities but recommending building on what the project staff had learned to pose as "the hard questions" that needed to be discussed in such a forum. The minutes of the November 10th meeting made clear that Jack had adopted Goldsmith's approach. He opened the meeting by suggesting that, "although our context is the problem of school integration our discussion has many times ranged beyond the limits of questions directly linked" to that issue. Jack expressed the hope that now the committee could focus on "a consideration of methodology



and institutional adaptations for schools and communities consistent with the realities of parent and school life" in the city.

Don Horton presented his analysis of what had been learned, introducing the concepts of "upgrading" (raising the levels of motivation and achievement among the children) and the "segregation cycle" (where a child unprepared for school cannot meet usual standards, leading to a reduction in expectations, a sense of failure, and low achievement). Interestingly, Horton reported that the "reduction of bias and prejudice, even the harmony of intergroup relations between parents or children, has little impact on the problems of upgrading." He did not suggest that such harmony was unimportant but rather that the purpose for pursuing it was to change the "faulty system of social relationships" which supported the "segregation cycle." In other words, schools were a significant component of the effort to improve social relationships in the communities but could succeed only when capable of providing appropriate high quality education. Horton referred to Jack's article on "Splitting the Social Atom" to emphasize his broader point about "upgrading the schools" to give alienated children "the kind of education which will enable them to take advantage of new opportunities which in turn lead to new patterns of relationship and interaction between majority and minority groups in our society."<sup>293</sup>

Goldsmith followed the plan that Jack had approved and posed the "hard questions." After describing the progress made during the project, he asked "Will these changes or adaptations continue when the schools are separated from the services and the context of the Project?" He followed up by presenting the "Reality Situation" to provoke criticism and discussion. He reported that "school people" feel that the school was "the dumping ground for every complicated social problem" and many yearned for "the good old days" when their function was to educate.

Those negative feelings, however, did not affect either attitudes about work or prejudice about "the minority child," and teachers and principals were open to creative possibilities urged by project staff. Also, staff found that there was "less difference in expectations than supposed between the parents of middle class and lower class children" although the reasons for the common concerns might be different. Furthermore, for teachers "the nature of the problems these children present requires a consistency and linkage of individual efforts that is relatively uncommon in public schools anywhere." Thus, schools needed to become "engaged in a process of inquiry and experimentation leading to adaptations that are congruent with reality and the school's values and objectives."<sup>294</sup> Goldsmith's conclusions, which likely reflected Jack's input and approval, demanded that schools and educators take action within the schools and in the community to initiate and guide necessary changes. There was no room for negativism or passivity.

Bank Street followed through on this pro-active model. For example, in September 1961, after Jack secured a grant from the J. M. Kaplan Fund,<sup>295</sup> staff from the Public School Workshops and Field Services Program (psychologists, sociologists, researchers and educators) began a three-year project at PS 1, a "special service" school on the Lower East Side. The goal was to identify the barriers to learning faced by minority group children in the lowest achieving classes, with particular focus on English as a second language. Most of the children were black or Puerto Rican.

The project staff helped teachers implement new approaches to increase the child's acquisition of and ability to use English, including turning classrooms into "language laboratories" where students were encouraged to talk. Story-telling and the use of phonograph records and tapes were introduced. To "repair their battered egos," students were given materials that stressed the richness of their cultural heritage, and reflected the neighborhood environment in which they and their families lived.<sup>296</sup>

By examining Jack's "Splitting the Social Atom" article and the minutes and reports of the School Integration Project and Community Committee, the principles, beliefs, and convictions that guided his life and work become vivid. He was principled and visionary, always looking for bold steps toward the kind of education that would lead to achieving Dewey's conception of a truly democratic society. He was also practical and

politically sophisticated, recognizing that different people saw the problems differently and usually for reasons that seemed well-founded.

Bureaucracies were hard to change, as were social stereotypes, so a "change agent" such as the Bank Street he believed in, needed to both create and seize opportunities to push appropriate innovations in public education. Sally Kerlin commented that "Jack's insights into the problems, [and] of what the pressing problems in education were going to be, was really extraordinary."<sup>297</sup>

Bank Street's participation in the School Integration Project also introduced the College to the Upper West Side neighborhoods. The inclusion of representatives from Morningside Heights institutions, such as Barnard and Goddard-Riverside, began to establish relationships as well. When Morningside Heights Inc. made its initial approach about Bank Street relocating, Jack and others at the College knew the neighborhood and were aware of the opportunities that area public schools offered for the kind of research studies and demonstration projects that could advance educational reforms for all children.

### ***Sharing Bank Street's Experience and Experiments with Congress***

On March 1, 1962, in testimony to the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Integration of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Jack described Bank Street's work with New York City public schools to support integration. He took the opportunity first to talk about the College which he described as "essentially a center for research and pilot educational projects." Bank Street's cooperative program with New York public schools had been working for nearly twenty years but school integration had been a focus only during the previous five years. He stated that Bank Street "does have a definite point of view about school segregation, desegregation, and integration...[because] all that we know about children and learning and schools confirms our belief that school segregation, whether stemming from community policy or from unplanned residential concentrations, is an important cause of educational deprivation affecting majority-group children as well as minority-group children." Furthermore, "such deprivation is morally wrong and, in terms of society's need for a well-educated citizenry, inexcusably wasteful and dangerous." Desegregation was an essential first step in a much larger effort to eliminate educational disabilities of non-white children due to social and psychological effects, and to use shared, positive school experiences to "foster democratic values" for all children.

Jack wanted to be sure the committee members recognized the significance of the elementary school which "reached substantially all Americans during a most important period in their lives." Missing the opportunities for learning offered by elementary education would contribute to enormous waste of human talent and add to "the development of such violent ills of society as delinquency, crime, and mental illness." He urged a second approach, building on efforts to compensate for "cultural deprivation" by recognizing that such children "have a deep foundation for educational growth in their day-to-day social experience in urban life." He specifically noted that schools used text books that "hold up as an exclusive model the cultural pattern of the white middle-class suburban family," thereby excluding and diminishing the urban child's image of life.

Jack underscored Bank Street's conclusions about the difficulties in parent-teacher communication, which resulted from language barriers, suspicions, fears, and most important, stereotypes of the lack of parental interest in educational success held by middle-class teachers and of the schools as unconcerned with "slum children" held by lower-class parents.

Schools might tend to blame family background for lack of learning success, but Jack argued the real problem was that "too many teachers and principals really believe that these children are educable only to a certain extent." Rather than holding lower expectations, "we who believe in the public schools must be relentlessly optimistic in our expectations for them."

In his testimony, he highlighted the risk of re-segregation of a school largely caused by white flight. Bank Street concluded that the only possible solution would be upgrading the segregated schools as quickly as possible. Upgrading efforts should include provision of special services to strengthen teachers and administrators similar to those provided by Bank Street in several New York City schools. A stronger educational program seemed to help keep middle-class families from leaving the neighborhood. Jack's written testimony included excerpts from the School Integration Project report prepared by Donald Horton that provided definitions of key terms and a description of the "segregation cycle."<sup>298</sup>

While it would be difficult to assess the impact of Jack's testimony on the Members of Congress, he did mention that printed versions of his statement were circulated. A Ford Foundation program director contacted him for more information about Bank Street's work with New York Public Schools, which might have given the opening for engaging Ford with supporting the College as a change agent. Three years later, Ford awarded \$1 million to Bank Street, half toward the new building on 112th Street and half to strengthen program support.

### ***"No Other Road to Walk" – Integration, Suburbs and School Boards***

Jack felt strongly about the responsibility that school boards should take for understanding the need for change and supporting innovations to achieve school integration as a means to assure good education for all children. On October 26, 1962, he addressed members of New Jersey's twenty largest school districts at the State Federation of District Boards of Education conference. He had decided to speak truth to power, telling those who lived in suburbs that they should not feel secure that current "protective rings" would keep out minority groups. Housing covenants and "gentlemen's agreements" would crumble under legal attack. Revenue demands would lead some suburban towns to seek to attract industry, which would lead to an influx of workers, some of whom would be minorities. Aging suburbs would become home to more middle-income minorities. Beyond the locality, national trends to expand political equality would combine with demographic increases to put pressures on many suburban communities.

What did this mean for school systems? Jack pointed to hard choices to end *de facto* segregation in schools, requiring changing "many concepts and beliefs which have been held inviolate." These included the neighborhood school and busing. He noted that no one seemed to think that independent schools needed to be neighborhood schools, or that their students were harmed by having to ride a bus some miles to reach school. Jack challenged school boards to determine that *de facto* segregation would not be permitted and to work with community groups to plan for desegregation.

Although desegregation was important, Jack told them that it was not the most urgent problem. The core issue to confront was that "all of us in education have not yet learned how to utilize the true learning capabilities of the children of lower social class families and particularly the severely alienated families of minority groups."

This failure was the consequence of the fact that schools in large cities and smaller towns were geared to educating the middle-class, employing middle-class educators reflecting middle-class values and expectations. Jack asserted his belief that "each school board's fundamental concern should be to see that adequate learning by all children is taking place in the schools under its jurisdiction." He understood the administrative and financial responsibilities of a board but all of that effort would be "meaningless unless the schools help all of the children of the community achieve something like the learning level of which each child is capable." He argued that this difficult objective could be accomplished, noting that Bank Street staff were working with a New Jersey district<sup>299</sup> to raise the level of learning in its elementary schools. While the school board could not "meddle in professional work," it could and should set the goals and demand accountability. The board could also support the superintendent and teachers "to study the problem courageously" and pursue creative ways to address it.

He urged board members to be skeptical of quick, easy solutions. Instead, boards should educate their communities about "the need for experimentation" and provide money for professional development for their educators, including graduate study but also stressing continuing self-study within schools and districts.

Jack knew he was describing a difficult journey but he knew of "no other road to walk if we are to make progress toward the goal of effective education for all America's children."<sup>300</sup>

### ***Bank Street and the Difficult 30%: The 1963 Dedham Conference***

Jack's horizons extended far beyond New York City or New Jersey schools. The large NIMH education and mental health grant in 1958 increased Bank Street's profile in Washington, DC. The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 as President also offered opportunities for access to new funding, especially through juvenile delinquency prevention programs. Bank Street and Jack were very much in the mix of discussions about how to address problems of what became known as "the difficult 30%," which was shorthand for the estimated number of children and youth from urban and rural slums who were most at risk for school failure.

In a June 19, 1963 speech to Congress outlining his Civil Rights bill, President Kennedy identified three key pieces of legislation, one of which was school desegregation. His bill provided funding for technical and financial assistance for schools because he was concerned about "the slowness of progress toward primary and secondary school desegregation." He sought new ideas and energy, believing that "those who appeal to you to hold on to the past do so at the cost of denying you your future." Kennedy also said that "I want to be the President who educated young children to the wonders of the world."<sup>301</sup>

In Jack's opinion, Bank Street was poised to help JFK achieve that goal. Kennedy's words must have excited Jack about the opportunity to obtain support for his vision of Bank Street leading the way on new educational programs to address the needs of "alienated" children and their families. Jack secured funding from NIMH, the Office of Education, and the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development for a major conference on this issue in 1963.<sup>302</sup> The "Seminar on Education for Culturally Different Youth" was hosted by Bank Street and involved a partnership with Jerrold Zacharias, a physics professor from MIT who chaired the White House's Panel of Educational Advisors.<sup>303</sup> His participation reflected a particular focus on math and science education for these "difficult" students, which connected the objectives of the seminar to expanding American education resources in the fields where the U.S. was thought to be falling behind other countries. The seminar was held at a conference center in Dedham, Massachusetts over two weeks, and became known informally as the Dedham Conference. Bank Street published a report on the seminar proceedings, findings and recommendations in 1965 under the title "Education of the Deprived and Segregated."

Jack and Zacharias were co-directors, and the seminar included sixty experts from a range of fields, all focused on "considering what things education might do for those children and youth who, because of deprivation and segregation, are not getting the kind of education that will prepare them to become effective adults in our changing world."<sup>304</sup> David Street, a sociologist from the University of Chicago, laid out the assumptions on which the seminar was based, starting with the urgency of "the problem of national educational failure – whether measured through dropouts, grade retardation, evaluations of levels of literacy, unemployment of youth, or any one of a number of other indices." He linked the problem to future workforce issues, and noted that "educational failure is interlaced with other social problems, such as poverty, racial discrimination, and political inequality." While found in "pockets of poverty" in rural areas, the problem of the "difficult 30%" was most apparent in big city slums, among "those urban groups least far along the road to adaptation to urban life."

Like Jack, Street made the assumption that "something can be done" because various experimental projects had demonstrated success. The seminar had to identify the best of them for scaling up to have substantial national impact.

The seminar concluded that "literacy is the key to educational success" and educational policy makers needed to understand that "facts about illiteracy and its consequences in personal tragedy and economic waste." Furthermore, the participants agreed that it was "a high crime against the nation's youth and the nation itself that we have not seen ourselves as able to afford to educate our underprivileged youth up to presently feasible levels of success."<sup>305</sup>

Jack was acknowledged as an early childhood education expert at the conference. It was hardly surprising, given his strong views, that the early childhood years – preK through grade 2 –were identified as the "disaster period" which determined educational success or failure for the "difficult 30%." In addition to more funding, early childhood educators needed support for investment in experiments, both research and demonstration projects like the initiatives Bank Street was leading, in order to improve failing schools. These experimental "laboratories of excellence" should be concentrated in communities where the problems of the difficult 30% are most intense.<sup>306</sup>

Other strategic options included fostering partnerships between school systems and institutions of higher education, such as Bank Street's collaboration with the NYC Public Schools, with colleges and universities operating model and experimental schools as well as providing teacher training and internships in schools serving the "difficult 30%." More and better teacher preparation programs were needed for educators planning to work in schools serving these students, and targeted professional development opportunities through a national program of summer institutes, were essential. Similarly, more resources were needed for improving school-community relations, ranging from hiring staff dedicated to working with parents and community leaders, to more cooperation among the school and other neighborhood agencies, such as police, public libraries, and social welfare offices. The last strategic recommendation was "revolutionizing education for work," which should feature new programs offering work to youth.

Among the conference leadership, Jack represented the public school educator while Zacharias brought in the academic research and teaching perspectives. Even before the conference, there were some differences on the "products" of the effort. Seminar participants were in agreement on most points. There was a key breakdown that mirrored the continuing debate about the relative importance of content and school culture, largely between physical scientists and social scientists. The former stressed the need for radical changes to improve curricular materials; the latter, the urgency of changing school environments and bureaucracies to address social inequities and community realities. Street noted that the Dedham seminar was held soon after the March on Washington, which made participants understandably concerned with emphasizing a moral obligation to promote programs specifically aimed at helping black children and communities. This sense of moral obligation might also have been developed by the talk given by writer Ralph Ellison on "What These Children Are Like."

Ellison was an interesting choice as a speaker for this group, but it seems likely Jack wanted someone of color with the stature to challenge the academic experts and force them to look at the realities, and especially the children, from a different perspective. In 1952, Ellison's *Invisible Man* novel was published and garnered immediate praise, winning the 1953 National Book Award over Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*. In the prologue, Ellison wrote "I am invisible, understand, because people refuse to see me." That seemed to be the way Jack believed many middle-class educators looked at "slum children" whose stories, culture, family and environment were assumed to have no value.

In his talk, Ellison immediately challenged the implicit assumption of the group that there was a monolithic American culture that was perfect rather than the reality of very diverse cultures. He argued that "there is no such thing as a culturally deprived kid" and "there is no absolutely segregated part of this country." The

poorest child in rural Alabama has some idea of American society: "Let's don't play these kids cheap; let's find out what they have." Find the child's strengths and use that to build a bridge because, to Ellison, "education is all about building bridges." For such children, the best teacher is "the teacher who can give them, can convey to them, an awareness that they come from somewhere, some place of human value, and what they've learned there does count in the larger society." Ellison mentioned that he had taught for several years in a progressive school and found that children from other social strata had problems dealing with society. He pointed out that the child can get a competing education in the street, "a counter scheme for living," which might make more sense to him than the white middle-class values and institutions that he cannot access.

As a writer, Ellison was especially sensitive to words and who determined what slang words and phrases were acceptable and how they became part of the "larger speech" of American society. He ended by suggesting that there are different kinds of intelligence, some of which the people in the room might not want to acknowledge. The reality was that to call such forms of intelligence something else or to ignore them entirely would harm the humanity of everyone in the society.<sup>307</sup>

Jack must have been thrilled with Ellison's remarks. His words, though complex and sometimes hard to grasp, gave elegance and testimony to Jack's own conclusions and beliefs about the nature of the vexing educational problem the seminar was discussing. Jack wanted action. His speaking role focused on "Next Steps" where he said that the "true report of a conference is written in the ensuing actions of the men and women who participated in it." Since the formal report was published two years after the Dedham meetings, Jack could describe several concrete results. Howard Branson of Howard University (and later a Bank Street Trustee) had brought together a group including Washington, DC public school leaders, community leaders, Howard, and members of the Dedham seminar, to work on the idea of a model school subsystem for creating and implementing new programs for schools serving the "difficult 30%." Branson was also involved with following through on a concern raised at Dedham about the quality of education offered at colleges with "predominantly" black enrollment, whose graduates became school teachers. Through the American Council on Education and with funding from the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, five summer institutes were offered to faculty of those colleges to improve undergraduate teaching in mathematics, biology, physics, English, and history.<sup>308</sup>

Jack was particularly proud to report on Bank Street's Educational Resources Center (ERC) in Harlem as an outgrowth of the work of the Dedham seminar. He described the ERC as aimed, in its first three years of operation, at improving some of New York City's lowest achieving elementary and junior high schools, affecting 1200 teachers and 28,000 disadvantaged children.<sup>309</sup> The ERC would guide "a reorganization of the use of school personnel to give impetus and ongoing support to curriculum innovation and the professional development of teachers." The center included a demonstration classroom, seminar rooms, and a curriculum materials laboratory. The ERC was "an experiment in exploring ways to introduce change in a significantly large administrative unit of a school and to institutionalize the machinery for sustaining a continuing process of change and development."<sup>310</sup>

The ERC was a significant step for Bank Street on many levels, reflecting Jack's determination to have the College more expansively fulfill its role as a research and demonstration institution engaged in experimentation and implementation of innovative programs in public schools.<sup>311</sup> Funding came from the Field Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, with grants totaling \$600,000 for three years. As described in the *New York Times* article on its establishment, the ERC would be located at 103 East 125th Street, and would work in cooperation with the Board of Education to "experiment with what and how to teach deprived children who do not learn in the traditional school program."<sup>312</sup> The fact that the article used the term "educational disaster areas" indicated that some of the Dedham seminar vocabulary, as well as other ideas, had come into Bank Street's way of describing the challenges that it sought to address. Jack's vision was that the ERC would move to Bank Street's new building on 112th Street and become physically as well as programmatically a core part of the College. It would be the cornerstone of a national research and demonstration operation that would serve schools and districts across the country. Through the ERC, Bank

Street would follow through on many of the goals recommended by the Dedham seminar. Funded separately but affiliated with the ERC was Bank Street's Curriculum Consultation Service (CCS). Reflecting Jack's experience when serving as U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel's adviser on helping with desegregation plans in Southern schools, the CCS provided assistance to any school in the country seeking help with desegregation. The scope of services included providing consultants, materials, workshops on methods and curriculum aids, and a "help line."<sup>313</sup>

### *Advocating for Early Childhood Education*

The first half of the 1960's must have been exciting and energizing times for Jack. Complementing his increasing prominence as a leader on school desegregation/integration planning, he had become recognized as an expert on the education of young children. This was especially interesting because he had no formal academic training in early childhood education or classroom experience as a teacher of young children. During his years at Oak Lane, he had worked closely with Temple's early childhood educators and learned about urban elementary schools from directing outreach programs to Philadelphia's public schools. Still, while no one could question Jack's enthusiastic advocacy of expanded high-quality programs for nursery and early childhood education, there were others at Bank Street with far greater depth of experience and academic preparation who might have been considered more logical choices to take on this national role. The reality was perhaps that such a public role was seen internally both as most appropriate for Bank Street's president, who was expected to represent the College to the world, as well as unattractive to the researchers and faculty who preferred to focus on their work.

Jack embraced the role with conviction and his usual gusto. He became president of the National Kindergarten Association in 1958, adding further weight to the perception of his expertise and influence. He became an advocate for greater concern about, and investment in, nursery and elementary education, seeking to balance the public focus after the U.S.S.R.'s surprise Sputnik success on higher education and high school programs.

In a 1963 speech to the National Association for Nursery Education (NANE), Jack called for establishment of a national goal of nursery and kindergarten education for all children. He had not taken that position earlier, he said, because of "the enormity of the problem." In fact, he believed that children and their families should be given educational services starting at birth; but he concluded that it was more sensible to attack the problem by focusing on children starting at age 3. He had been influenced by his 1961 visits to Australia and New Zealand, where he found both countries "ahead of us in pre-school education."

He drew inspiration from the national organizational structure for pre-school education in those countries, which combined voluntary citizen leadership with partial support from government. Jack proposed setting up a National Council for Nursery and Kindergarten Education composed of lay leaders, educators, and representatives of concerned state and national organizations. He felt especially strongly about involvement of lay citizens, as distinct from educators, because "unless we can mobilize something of the total power structure nationally and on a state and local basis behind this movement, we are not going to be very successful." Jack pointed to the recent success of the new National Committee for Day Care in promoting federal support for establishing day care centers.<sup>314</sup> He also noted that, of the 21 members of the board of his National Kindergarten Association, only four were educators. To achieve such a large national goal, Jack believed that a citizen-led movement, not a new organization of experts, was needed.<sup>315</sup>

Jack also addressed the lack of trained teachers for pre-school that would result from a rapid expansion of nursery schools. He understood the concern about quality: "The truth is that we are caught in a dilemma between establishing desirable standards and the strictures placed upon us by our very efforts to obtain those standards." He advised flexibility and imaginative approaches to training staff, including involving parents as teaching assistants, while always moving toward higher standards as quickly as practical. He reminded the

audience that they would be building on decades of work on child development and clinical experience, commenting that "in a kind of spiritual preparation for this meeting" he had re-read Harriet Johnson's *Children in the Nursery School* and *School Begins at Two*, books which still influenced his thinking about nursery school education.<sup>316</sup>

When he proposed new ideas for action or greater flexibility in balancing workforce expansion and quality standards, Jack consistently couched his arguments in terms of Bank Street's work and mission. If the College was to live up to its potential as a change agent, its people had to be willing to entertain broader roles for the institution, its programs, and themselves. Taking on leadership of a national movement, such as he was urging at the NANE conference, was a huge step, intellectually and emotionally, for many members of the Bank Street faculty and staff. Jack's challenge led to stresses and resistance as he moved ahead with ambitious projects, such as the *Bank Street Readers*, that took the College into new ways of working and thinking.

### ***The Bank Street Readers: Children's Literature for Urban Education***

To accomplish his goals for Bank Street, Jack wanted another big idea to complement the Education and Mental Health research study that was being funded by the NIMH and directed by Barbara Biber. He knew that the textbooks used in public schools never showed a black child or family, and reflected life in an idealized middle-class suburb. These books not only gave an incomplete view of American society, they implied that racial segregation was the norm. Starting with Lucy's *Here and Now Story Book* in 1921, Bank Street had championed the role of quality children's literature as an important educational resource.

Jack believed that the College "had an obligation to do something about this damned stereotypic type of readers that all the little kids of America were using to learn to read."<sup>317</sup> He thought it was way past the time for Dick and Jane to at least have some competition.

Starting in 1957, Jack began working with Irma Black and her Writers Lab colleagues to develop stories and eventually mock-up a first grade reader that reflected Bank Street's values about social justice and learning. He had decided against taking the most comfortable route of securing foundation funding and to tackle the more difficult task of persuading a textbook publisher to try the idea. He believed that "if we were really going to make an impact on the school systems and publishers of the country, we would have to get a publisher to do the job because publishers have all the power." Simply put, publishers had sales and distribution networks that took them into every school district and a profit-motive to sell books. Jack did not want just to demonstrate a good idea and hope someone else would adopt it. He wanted a textbook publisher pushing sales of this new kind of reader to get it into schools as broadly and quickly as possible. This approach was very different than anything Bank Street had ever considered. Rather than developing research and practice methods as models to inspire others, thus serving primarily as a "lighthouse" or beacon, Bank Street would partner with commercial firms to scale up the impact of its ideas.<sup>318</sup>

Jack had a beautifully illustrated sample reader<sup>319</sup> to show off and met with several major textbook publishers but found no success. He realized that no publisher with a successful "Dick and Jane" reader series needed a new approach. Macmillan was the minnow in the market for school readers. Its editor, Macmillan vice president Leigh Deighton, appreciated good literature and understood the concept of a more diverse and contemporary reader that would make Macmillan stand out.<sup>320</sup> His interest led eventually to the offer of a contract, which was an act of courage because his salesmen were very pessimistic about the idea. To help counter that negativity, Jack contacted the superintendent of New York City Schools to get a commitment to buy the new readers if published. Charles Long, whom Jack had recruited to the College to head the new Field Services Division, secured similar letters of intent from the Los Angeles and Chicago school superintendents. With clear evidence of potential sales in hand, Macmillan and Bank Street worked out a contract for the first, second and third grades, with a significant advance and royalty as well as guarantees covering editorial control and recognition for the College. Between 1962 and 1965, when the first Readers



were published, Macmillan invested nearly \$1 million in the project. Deighton felt that "joining with the College to produce the Readers seemed to us a good business risk," which proved correct.<sup>321</sup>

The quality of the Readers was the concern of Irma Black, Joan Bloss, and members of the Writers Lab. In her article "Meeting the Reading Needs of the Culturally Deprived Child: The Bank Street Readers," Bloss stressed that the series was different "because it was prompted by social and psychological considerations and these, as much as theories of reading instruction, have determined its development." The staff were concerned that "children, from the start, find meaning and esthetic quality in their books" and guided by "the conviction that, unless this is so, children may well learn to read without learning what reading is for." The Readers were designed for all children, with an insistence on "literary and artistic integrity." Bloss concluded that these new books were seen "as one step, in one area, toward better materials, better schooling, better school experience for the children of this nation."<sup>322</sup>

The financial arrangement was essential because Bank Street had been willing to support the start-up costs at a time of continuing operating deficits. Some faculty and staff wondered what Jack was thinking by allocating scarce College funds to such an unusual project when there were chronic staff shortages in educational programs. Jack recalled in particular that the School for Children faculty were strongly opposed to the new readers because, no matter how innovative they might be, Bank Street fundamentally rejected the idea of basal readers. Jack agreed with them, but he "had an even more compelling belief that the Readers offered an answer to the nation's problem of building an integrated society."<sup>323</sup> The fact was that public schools used textbooks to teach reading to children, and those readers helped sustain "an autocratic, undemocratic society." To Jack, "the good of society had to take precedence" so he made a decision to move ahead with the project. Some in the community no doubt felt that he was being autocratic and undemocratic. He felt it was the job of the president to decide "between the greater good and the lesser good, the greater evil and the lesser evil," and the Board of Trustees and Irma and the publications staff agreed with his judgement.<sup>324</sup>

The *Bank Street Readers* project marked the first occasion where Jack exercised the authority of the president to shape and direct a program that did not have the support, or at least the acceptance, of faculty and staff. The pattern of consensus for decision-making had often meant that opposition from a small number of faculty and staff sidelined an initiative, delayed a decision for lengthy periods (or forever) or tried to modify the original conception to accommodate objections, which only led to a confusing and unpalatable result acceptable to no one. Lucy had been able to push through her priorities, of course, but she was the founder and funder, as well as a formidable and inspiring presence that few could resist. Jack was acting as the College's first chief executive officer, and not just the kind of amiable coordinator and public face for Bank Street that some staff had wanted. He succeeded, and the revenue and public recognition the College received through the Readers provided encouragement for more bold steps, even if potentially divisive.

When the *Bank Street Readers* appeared in 1965, Fred Hechinger, the education editor of the *New York Times* wrote a rave review. "In the City," the first primer to be published, was "of extraordinary appeal...brightly colored...it contains city people, not only black and white but there is a hint of different complexions and features." He quoted Jack that it was "our premise that children learn to read sooner and better if they begin with literature worthy of the name" and "at last, the urban child will meet himself."<sup>325</sup>

### ***Jack in Washington: Title IV, Head Start, and Follow Through***

While creating the Readers was one way of having a major impact on U.S. education, active participation in shaping policy and regulations would have a more immediate effect in promoting Bank Street values and methods. With the approval of the Board of Trustees, in July 1963 Jack became a Special Consultant to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Francis Keppel. Under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, Congress had provided funding for consultation services to schools to design and implement desegregation plans, as well as for school systems, colleges, and universities to train teachers and other staff to meet special needs.

Jack commuted to Washington but essentially spent much of his time away from Bank Street for six months. He worked with staff of the new Equal Educational Opportunities Division to help school districts in 17 southern and border states and the District of Columbia. Jack described his goals as keeping newly desegregated schools from "rapid re-segregation" by improving the overall quality of education to prevent white flight by creating better schools and using what Bank Street staff had learned about new methods, new materials, and professional development to strengthen teachers to handle challenges in multi-racial, multi-cultural schools.

One of Jack's key strategies was to engage colleges and universities to team with public schools. He encouraged setting up institutes for school personnel operated by higher "education institutions, as well as involvement of university faculty in working with teachers on specific educational needs, such as developing language skills for students who were substantially below grade in reading. He saw this approach as following the efforts Bank Street staff were making with New York City elementary and junior high schools through its new Educational Resources Center in Harlem. The ideal was to bring predominantly black colleges together with white ones to host institutes so that school teachers could study with a multi-racial faculty.

Jack was encouraged by two cooperative models: in Nashville, where Vanderbilt's George Peabody College of Education partnered with Fisk University and Tennessee A&I University; and in New Orleans, Dillard and Tulane worked together.<sup>326</sup>

### ***Bank Street and Head Start***

Jack Niemeyer is usually recognized, at least in Bank Street media and lore, as a "founding father" of Project Head Start. That is not quite accurate. He was asked to serve as one of eleven experts on the Head Start Planning Committee established by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in January 1965 and chaired by Robert Cooke, MD. Dr. Cooke was chair of pediatrics at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, a member of President Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation, and the family pediatrician for Eunice and Sargent Shriver, who had become head of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) under Lyndon Johnson. Jack Niemeyer gave credit to Robert Kennedy for the concept that evolved into Head Start, but Sargent Shriver was clearly the driving force.<sup>327</sup>

President Johnson had proposed his Great Society concept at a campaign speech in May 1964. He set up thirteen advisory groups, including an Education Task Force headed by John Gardiner, then the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Working from July through early November, the Education Task Force assembled 31 papers, including one from Barbara Biber reviewing studies of nursery schools and stressing their differences from usual primary schools. Biber recommended federal support to establish demonstration centers for preschools in communities selected on the basis of diversity and need.<sup>328</sup>

In late 1964, when he was exploring OEO initiatives for the coming legislative term, Shriver and his staff started to consider a multiservice health and nutrition summer program for children entering kindergarten or first grade. Later pre-school programs for disadvantaged children were added to the list of priorities that Shriver had developed for a proposed War on Poverty. OEO had extensive help from the Office of Education (OE) in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) which had a new unit focused on programs for the disadvantaged.

In December 1964, OEO staff met with Office of Education staff for assistance with planning a large-scale eight-week summer pre-school program. One of Shriver's assistants had already been directed to contact Cooke for advice. The result was a memo recommending that children in the proposed early childhood education program receive medical screenings and nutrition help, and that a quarter of the staff to be hired should be paraprofessionals recruited mainly from the parents of participating children. It was also decided to call the initiative Project Head Start.

Another of Shriver's deputies, Jule Sugarman, took over the project at that point. Sugarman met with Cooke to discuss candidates for a possible planning committee. While it is not clear how Jack's name came up, it seems likely that he and Bank Street were known by NIMH and Office of Education staff, both for the Mental Health and Education grant Barbara Biber was directing and for the various school integration projects that Jack had promoted during the Kennedy administration.

Before the Planning Committee met, Johnson announced Project Head Start to Congress in January, placing it in OEO and committing to launching the program in the summer of 1965. The Planning Committee met eight times in Washington and New York over the next two months, with Sugarman as the executive director. He noted that the committee included only three educators: George Bain, former Baltimore school superintendent; James L. Hymes, Jr., a professor of education at the University of Maryland and a prolific writer about young children and parenting; and Jack. Hymes and Jack were the early childhood experts, and they faced panel members who were psychologists and physicians with deep skepticism about public schools and current education programs.<sup>329</sup> As a result, little attention was given to the lack of high-quality teachers to staff Head Start centers that were supposed to handle a large number of disadvantaged children during the upcoming summer.<sup>330</sup>

Jack recalled the anxiety he felt when it became clear that Johnson would not agree to the committee's recommendation that no more than 75,000 children should be enrolled for the first summer in order to have a solid, successful start to avoid criticism of the new program. Johnson "saw Head Start as a panacea" and insisted on a target of 600,000. As a result, Jack believed, "many of the worst problems which Head Start had to face emanated, in my opinion, from the weaknesses which inevitably were in that first summer's hastily built set-up."<sup>331</sup>

It was a lesson Jack would remember and speak out about whenever someone thought "the answer" to public school improvement has been found and could be quickly and easily implemented.

Jack did all he could to support an investment in quality education – or what he would call a "good situation" for the children. He volunteered Bank Street expertise to help to produce a manual for the new Head Start centers, describing how to set up, manage and operate an eight-week educational summer program. With only a few months before launch, the brochure was needed quickly. While it seemed that James Hymes provided a first draft, Clara Coble (who directed the Polly Miller day care center in the Bronx), Ibbey Gilkeson, and Priscilla Pemberton worked with Jack to revise and strengthen the text to reflect Bank Street experience and methods.<sup>332</sup>

Eventually, Head Start was expanded to serve nearly 600,000 children through a ten month-long program. Few on the Planning Committee believed a summer program would have lasting effect on disadvantaged children but chose not to object. In part, they bowed to the political wisdom of Johnson and Shriver who wanted to take advantage of the momentum to establish a program that would operate in many parts of the country and have widespread political support. For some, probably including Jack, it was important that the federal government begin to make substantial investments in programs for the poor, and especially poor children.

For many years, Congress had been unwilling to consider such programs because of a philosophical concern over federal involvement in schools, which were traditionally under local control, and disagreements over whether funding should include private and parochial schools. Personally, Jack was not opposed to health and social services operating with an early childhood educational program because he knew that poor children and their families were often ill and did not receive good medical care. Also, he believed in efforts to involve parents in educational programs for their children, as a means to encourage partnership in helping the child. Continuing concerns about program and staff quality helped to lead the Johnson administration to propose the Follow Through Program in 1967.

To get the summer Head Start underway, the application process for new centers was rushed and ragged, but over 80% of applications were approved. As expected, there were problems, especially with community organizations that had never operated such a program. There were also political problems. A major one led to the Planning Committee, now in an advisory role, being put on the shelf. The largest Head Start program in the country was in Mississippi, where one community organization managed 85 centers serving 6,000 children. Both Mississippi Senator John Stennis, who continued to advocate maintaining segregation, and Governor Paul Johnson, Jr. opposed Head Start, mainly because black community leaders were in control of the federal funding.

Because Head Start was under OEO, it operated as a Community Action Program (CAP), rather than a school-based program. An advantage of that arrangement was that, in the South, funding would not flow through white-controlled school boards that might divert the money intended for services to poor black children.

The Mississippi controversy came to a head quickly, with Shriver initially accepting the complaints about poor management and misuse of funds, and disqualifying the community organization. There was a strong and broad-based response opposing his decision, including from the members of the Planning Committee who were meeting with Sugarman in Detroit. As Jack later wrote, "with that meeting, the Committee's usefulness, in the eyes of OEO decision-makers – and perhaps others above them – was ended."<sup>333</sup> While individual members were contacted for advice (including Jack, who became close to Sugarman), the committee was never asked to meet again.

The end of Jack's Planning Committee task did nothing to diminish Bank Street's involvement with Head Start. To the contrary, Jack's prominent role and connections with OEO and the Office of Education opened the way for the College to become much more active. He secured funding from Head Start and New York City to open the innovative Bank Street Early Childhood and Family Resource Center on West 42nd Street in "Hell's Kitchen," which was then an area whose residents were poor and largely non-white. Bank Street was also designated in 1966 as one of thirteen Head Start Evaluation and Research Centers. Ibbey Gilkeson, who chaired Children's Programs, directed the Head Start Early Childhood Center. Priscilla Pemberton was assistant director and handled the key role of managing parent relations. Herbert Similes, who had succeeded Biber as chair of the Research Division, directed the Head Start Research Program.

Jack was deeply involved in the 42nd Street operation, even exerting his influence with Mayor Lindsay to overcome bureaucratic hurdles to obtaining approval for the building chosen for the new center. Jack was "a presence" at the Early Childhood Center and made the staff feel supported and appreciated.<sup>334</sup> Like the ERC, the new center was Jack's baby, and perhaps even the one he enjoyed most.

The Early Childhood and Family Resource Center on 42nd Street illustrated the way Jack's thinking had evolved about urban education. He sought a comprehensive way to respond to the distinctive needs of children in poverty, which included supporting the varied needs of poor families, where Bank Street's role in innovation and leadership could be boldly demonstrated. He believed that all children could be successful as learners and productive citizens if properly educated and was appalled at the waste of talent and lost opportunity in contemporary approaches to public schools for "slum children" in densely-inhabited urban neighborhoods. He reacted forcefully to the analyses of academic experts such as sociologist David Riesman and former Harvard University president James Bryant Conant, whose 1961 book *Slum and Suburbs* provided an accurate if unfeeling description of the depressing conditions of life in poor areas.<sup>335</sup> Conant saw little hope for improvement and seemed to leave it up to individuals to lift themselves out of their bad situation.

Jack fiercely opposed Conant's general views and conclusions but used them to frame an argument for a different approach based on Bank Street's mission and experience. In essence, Conant found that the country had two public school systems, an unfortunate reality that could not be changed. He acknowledged that the system for poor and non-white students received fewer resources and functioned under more difficult

circumstances, but at best saw a few ways to mitigate rather than eliminate disparities. Jack agreed that there were two systems, and promoted the concept of solving the problems by using Bank Street-inspired methods and educators (and targeted additional resources) to fundamentally change how children learn. His other requirement was to focus efforts on young children, beginning well before kindergarten and continuing into the early elementary grades. For Jack, the Head Start Family Center and participation in the federal Follow Through program provided the opportunity to achieve his goal of making the Bank Street approach the engine for lasting change.

### ***Bank Street and Follow Through***

Although Follow Through has not been mentioned often in recent years, it was an innovative and controversial program for much of its life (1967-1995). Originally proposed by President Johnson as part of the Economic Opportunity Act, Follow Through was to address concerns that Head Start benefits would erode as children moved through early elementary school. Like Head Start, the program would be funded through OEO and would provide a range of services for children and their families through third grade. As initially conceived, this would have been a community-based program offering health, educational, and parent-school partnerships aimed at alleviating poverty. OEO quickly gave administrative authority to the Office of Education (OE) in HEW. As an educational agency, OE was used to working with schools so eventually it shifted the emphasis of Follow Through to instruction rather than community services.

Funded by one agency but operated by another, the new program was almost an orphan and received a small allocation (\$14 million) during the first year (1967-68) during a time of government budget cutbacks. Follow Through had been approved by Congress as a large scale comprehensive social service and education program, and the legislation did not refer to either research or experimentation. Continued funding constraints led OE to transform the program into an experimental research and development effort, designed to document the effectiveness of different educational approaches in different environments. In effect, Follow Through became a national learning laboratory, or collections of laboratories.<sup>336</sup> In some respects, this approach followed what Barbara Biber had suggested in her 1964 paper to the Education Task Force chaired by John Gardiner and the recommendations of the 1963 Bank Street Dedham Conference.

OE quickly set up a National Follow Through Advisory Committee. While there is no archival evidence that Jack was involved in determining the composition of the committee, his relationship with Francis Keppel and senior OE staff likely were used to promote Bank Street Dean of Faculty Gordon Klopf to chair the group.<sup>337</sup> The committee provided general recommendations that "an educational program for the disadvantaged should include early intervention and should be comprehensive in nature." The recommendations reflected the consensus of education and child development experts, but did not have specific suggestions about content or evaluation.

The committee "promoted a free for all with no regulation of instruction" and "contended that the resulting random variation would be preferable."<sup>338</sup> Eventually, there were 22 different educational models implemented, including Bank Street's, at 162 sites, of which 14 chose Bank Street as the sponsor. The 22 models fall into three categories: product-oriented; process-oriented; and parent-oriented. Bank Street was in the second category, with other process-oriented models that were focused on problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and academic motivation and concerned about life-long changes in learning. This approach contrasted most strongly with product-oriented models which stressed immediate gains in knowledge and relied on programmed instruction and used behavior modification methods. Parent-oriented models believed that changes in family circumstances were more important to improve a child's future so focused on parent-school relationships, and providing access to education for parents and other services for adults.

From the perspective of evaluation of children's progress after four years in Follow Through, only the product-oriented seemed likely to have measurable results. When evaluation studies were completed years

later, this was found to be the case although there were many serious complaints about the design and quality of the instruments used and legitimacy of the results reported. The Bank Street model's results were mid-pack; all but two product-oriented models were found to have little impact on children's achievement compared to traditional classrooms.<sup>339</sup>

Bank Street's experience with Follow Through was a major step in the College's (and Jack's) goal of expanding its reach and influence nation-wide. Among the 14 sites selecting the Bank Street model were schools in Colorado, Alabama, Vermont, and Hawaii. In 1976, the College published *The Focus is on Children: The Bank Street Approach to Early Childhood Education as Enacted in Follow Through*, written by Ibbey Gilkeson and Elizabeth Bowman. It represented the clearest description of adaptation of Bank Street's developmental-interaction approach to public schools that had ever been attempted. Jack credited Ibbey with much of the success of the Early Childhood and Family Center. She developed a bold concept for the center that went beyond the concepts devised by the Head Start Planning Committee on which Jack had served. Ibbey added parents to the Bank Street Head Start model, offering services and supports that would allow poverty-stricken adults to become effective parents and educational partners. She helped to write the proposal, do the presentations to qualify Bank Street for funding, locate a site, hire staff – in short, she made the new center come to life. As a result, when Follow Through was announced, Bank Street was ready to propose and implement a model program, again under Ibbey's leadership and supervision. Jack noted that Ibbey's concept "was not simplistic, as most of the competing models were" and "offered no easy correction of education's ills." He also acknowledged "the fact that a school system [had] voted to adopt the Bank Street model did not mean that, once changes began to occur, the people in power would like and support them." Ibbey used her deep "people skills" to hold together the programs at the various sites and push ahead with Bank Street's efforts to bring about broad social change.<sup>340</sup>

Over the years, Jack had developed a strong working relationship and deep respect for Ibbey, who had great skill in assembling and guiding effective teams and the patience, diplomacy and tenacity to take a project from concept to completion. Jack looked to Ibbey for leadership in Bank Street practice, just as he looked to Barbara Biber for leadership in Bank Street research.<sup>341</sup> It was characteristic of Jack's style of leadership to recognize the significant accomplishments of colleagues and to acknowledge how their expertise and creativity awed and inspired him.

### ***The Quagmire: Community Control and New York School Decentralization***

Soon after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision, New York took the ambitious step of committing to implementing school desegregation as quickly as possible. Jack endorsed the initiative, as demonstrated most immediately by Bank Street's leadership in 1957 of the foundation-funded School Integration Project and the establishment of the Educational Resources Center in Harlem in 1964. Desegregation plans were far easier to write than to implement. There was broad pushback from many sides, especially from white parents who advocated for neighborhood schools and opposed busing for racial balance. As was identified in the School Integration Project report, public school educators were skeptical about new ideas and demands, particularly when no additional resources were provided. The Board of Education was hobbled by a variety of problems, including a scandal over school construction contracts, and was viewed as in need of major administrative reorganization. The New York State Commissioner of Education, James Allen, Jr., succeeded in getting legislative approval for reviving local school boards, which he believed would decentralize the school system and lead to more integrated schools. A new Board of Education took over in 1961 with the purpose of enacting reforms, including decentralization. That same year, the United Federation of Teachers won an election to become the bargaining agent for the city's teachers.

In 1962, a report ordered by Allen and conducted by the retired superintendent of Cleveland schools came out. It was very critical and recommended major reforms, including substantial funding increases, abolishing the Board of Examiners, administrative decentralization, and greater authority for district superintendents. In

addition to the pressures created by such a harsh appraisal, the local civil rights movement was insisting on immediate steps to achieve school desegregation, and demanded that the Board of Education provide a timetable for integration by September 1963. This demand was really an attack on the concept of the neighborhood school because meeting the racial balance standards set by Commissioner Allen required massive involuntary transfers of students. The new Superintendent of Schools, Calvin Gross, tried to head off a threatened boycott by offering open transfers so any student could leave a racially imbalanced school, assuming places were available, but his proposal was rejected. In 1964 there was a school boycott which only inflamed the situation on all sides.

The demands were complicated by two realities. First, there was no practical way to assure that every school would be "balanced" if that meant it had to have more than 50% of the students classified as white. Second, there were differences of opinion among civil rights and community leaders, especially between newer activists and the older political and educational establishment. Dr. Kenneth Clark, whose academic studies of black children had been used as evidence by Thurgood Marshall in the *Brown* case, spoke out against forced transfers of students. Clark believed that integration was the right goal but busing was the wrong approach for both black and white children and families. No parent would agree to a child being bused to what was viewed as a clearly inferior school. Clark's view was similar to Jack's: the core problem was low teacher expectations about the capacity of black and Puerto Rican children to learn because of their low social status and slum neighborhood.<sup>342</sup>

In 1966 and 1967, several key events occurred. John Lindsay became mayor in 1966 and, having no prior involvement in the school integration controversy, did not try to solve it in his first year in office, leaving the Board of Education to find its own resolution. Black Power was a growing national movement, and black and Puerto Rican students became the majority in the schools. In Harlem, a new intermediate school, IS 201, was opened at 127th Street and Madison Avenue, only a few blocks from Bank Street's ERC. The new school quickly became the center of a complex struggle for control of the schools that eventually involved Jack and the College.<sup>343</sup>

An Ad Hoc Parents Council sponsored a petition to the Board to keep IS 201 closed until the community was satisfied that the education offered there would meet the needs of their children. An East Harlem social worker named Preston Wilcox proposed making IS 201 an experimental school where the community would take responsibility for educational and administrative policy decisions through an elected school-community committee that would have the power to hire the principal and top administrators. The Parents Council adopted the Wilcox plan and presented it to School Superintendent Bernard Donovan, who had replaced Gross. He rejected it as unlawful. The parents pressed harder, with Wilcox arguing that since the Board of Education could not do more for the children, the community must take control of schooling.

In October 1966, Kenneth Clark gained the support of the parents group for a plan to put IS 201 and its elementary feeder schools under a board jointly operated by parent and university representatives. The Clark plan was endorsed by the Mayor, Commissioner Allen, Donovan, the NAACP, CORE, SNCC and the New York Urban League but strongly opposed by the UFT, inflaming an already strained relationship between the community leaders and the union. The Board of Education rejected the Clark plan on legal grounds and offered to create an advisory committee of parents, teachers, and community representatives, which was refused.

The Board then tried to recruit McGeorge Bundy, the new president of the Ford Foundation, to head a city-wide task force on educational reforms for disadvantaged students. After investigating community sentiment, Bundy declined. The IS 201 parent group joined with other community activists to disrupt and ultimately take over the Hall of the Board of Education, establishing a "People's Board of Education." When police finally intervened, arresting some members of the People's Board, the takeover was ended.

On March 7, 1967, Jack testified before the Board of Education to present "observations" on a proposal for

improving decentralization. His comments were based on Bank Street's working relationship with the public schools since 1943. He saw the goals of any decentralization experiment as achieving "a higher degree of accountability" and "a closer and more meaningful relationship" between the schools and the community, including parents. He was not impressed with the Board's draft proposal which was short on details, especially about the authority and autonomy of a principal. He suggested the parent-community relationship was also too vague although he sympathized with the challenges the Board faced: "As a practical school man, I am the first to acknowledge that a workable partnership between professionals and lay people is at best a difficult relationship to achieve." Given the deep distrust of the schools that existed among parents, Jack urged taking the time to answer hard questions carefully and realistically before moving forward. He closed by suggesting that the Board consider creating a consulting group with special skills in inter-group relations for superintendents or principals to call on for guidance, day or night, and noted "without parent faith, there can be no good schools."<sup>344</sup>

IS 201 was one of three "demonstration districts" that had been approved by the Board of Education under its decentralization plan as an attempt to meet in some way parent demands for greater community input in the schools their children attended. The other districts were Ocean Hill-Brownsville in Brooklyn and Two Bridges on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In June 1967, the Board asked Jack to chair a small advisory and evaluation committee to examine decentralization as it moved ahead throughout the city and especially in the demonstration districts.<sup>345</sup>

Quickly, the "Niemeyer Committee" found itself in the midst of a pitched battle between the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board, chosen in an "unorthodox" but apparently valid election in early August, and the UFT. The Niemeyer Committee was supposed to evaluate implementation of a plan and its work ended with submission of its report in March 1968. Nonetheless, it continued to be identified by the press as "a study team looking into the voting" and Jack was quoted more than a year after the election about the committee's conclusion that "the election was legitimate."<sup>346</sup>

The core issues involved personnel – the selection of school principals and the demand for removal or transfer of 19 current teachers – but represented more broadly the three-way struggle for power between the Board of Education, community control advocates, and the union. When the Governing Board would not back down, the UFT called a strike that closed the city's schools in September 1968. The Governing Board kept the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools open with volunteers; police were sent in "to prevent vandalism."<sup>347</sup> Jack noted that there was "an awful lot of distrust between the UFT and the Governing Boards of the three demonstration districts" which meant that any report that did not wholly support one group's position would be criticized as biased. When the Niemeyer Committee report was submitted to the Board in March 1968, it was critical of the decentralization plan as too cautious and lacking urgency and scope, noting that the committee had not been given an opportunity to comment on the final version of the plan before it was announced.<sup>348</sup>

The report expressed strong support for "the efforts of parents to have a powerful voice in the education of their children" and recommended giving local boards the right to allocate funds, approve the appointment of professional staff, and have authority over the curriculum. The committee could not change the union contract so did not support the Governing Board's demand for control of all hiring and firing. Personally, Jack believed that "local boards must have the right to hire and fire teachers" because "without that right, they can't really exercise control over their schools."

The committee could not recommend violating the law but did recommend seeking to change the law to authorize local control of the schools. Jack knew the UFT would not like that approach so he also advocated requiring local boards to propose "reasonable protection to teachers against possible political pressures or the pressures of special cliques within any community." Regardless, the committee as a whole and Jack personally were attacked by some community leaders for helping to frustrate their efforts to exercise control over their schools.



Why did Jack undertake such a perilous assignment where success looked so unlikely? His commitment to improving public education, especially for underserved children, would be one reason. His work on school desegregation on both the local and national level would be another. His eternal optimism would be a third – perhaps "the way would open" if he was there to push on the door. A fourth reason may have had to do with Jack's connections to the young Lindsay administration and a desire to develop ties to the Mayor and his senior staff that might benefit Bank Street. David Seeley had been appointed by Lindsay as head of the Mayor's Office of Education Liaison in 1967 after serving as Assistant Commissioner for Equal Educational Opportunities in the U.S. Office of Education and working for Francis Keppel on enforcement of school desegregation guidelines. Jack knew Seeley from his brief stint as Keppel's adviser in 1963.<sup>349</sup>

While mayors traditionally kept the Board of Education at arm's length to avoid criticism over political interference, it seemed likely that Lindsay would be interested in seeing this decentralization evaluation committee led by a seasoned professional educator like Jack, who could be trusted to take a rational, thoughtful approach to a contentious issue. Jack's access to the Mayor was helpful in resolving building permit issues with Bank Street's 42nd Street Early Childhood Center.

Yet it was a risky undertaking for the president of a small, financially vulnerable institution like Bank Street, already coping with internal strains over leaving the familiar environment of Greenwich Village, the urgent need to raise a large amount of money for its new building on Morningside Heights, and the demands of all the new projects and programs that Jack had launched. Were some Trustees concerned about involving the College in the dysfunctional world of a Board of Education that clearly was unable to get out of its own way? Perhaps choosing DeCarlo as a committee member had as much to do with Bank Street Board relations as with his expertise as IBM's director of automation research. Still, having two of six committee members from Bank Street made an institutional link to the work of the group even stronger. Bank Street had never taken institutional positions on public issues, although individual staff members would become involved in political activities and advocacy as individuals.

In the school decentralization controversy, with the advisory group called the "Niemeyer Committee" and Jack's role as Bank Street president noted routinely, the endorsement of a form of community control of the schools might have been understood to be a College policy position, not simply Jack's. The simplest answer seems to be that Jack felt this assignment was what he and Bank Street should be doing because it demonstrated "the College's deep concern for responsible community involvement in the improvement of the city school system."<sup>350</sup> For Jack, it seemed that on matters of equity and social justice, there was no separation between his goals and values and the College's.

### ***Bank Street and Educational Technology: Jack, Captain Kangaroo, and Media Services***

Jack's interest in developing educational technologies – films, filmstrips, video cassettes, and television segments – came from several sources. As a progressive educator, he was intrigued by the potential for creative instruction and individual growth that these new tools might offer. As a social reformer who saw education as the lever for achieving equity, he was drawn by the scale that the technologies, especially TV, brought to efforts to "give children a greater awareness of their individual selves and the world around them." As a pragmatic leader of a small institution, he saw involvement with technology ventures as a way to garner more national recognition for the College, and to generate new revenue streams to support its operation.

The model in many ways was the *Bank Street Readers*. That initiative might have been somewhat controversial internally for faculty and staff concerned about diluting Bank Street's values, but ultimately was a huge success in terms of increased recognition and financial benefits. A Bank Street-business partnership had worked well for both sides, at least for a while, and provided a template for similar ventures through the College's Publications Division. Jack had made a major effort since he arrived at the College to reach out to the business community for support, including constantly recruiting business leaders to the Board of

Trustees. He was encouraged by a recommendation from the Oram<sup>351</sup> fundraising study in 1969, to give priority to increasing corporate engagement in Bank Street's work. The College's efforts to use new technologies demonstrated to business leaders that Bank Street wanted to blaze new paths, sought the capacity to reach millions of children, and was open to opportunities for mutually profitable partnerships that were socially responsible.

In 1968, Robert Keeshan, who created and played the character of "Captain Kangaroo," needed to revise his TV show to be more competitive with "Sesame Street." Bank Street agreed to create short educational segments – a "sequential curriculum" – for the show. For Jack, the primary benefit would be the opportunity to bring Bank Street's educational approach to millions of young children; the title of the article in *Bank Street Reporting* was "Target: Nine Million Preschoolers." Jack was involved in working with the Captain on judging whether the joint venture was succeeding, including using a very Bank Street approach – letters from mothers reporting observations of their children's reactions to the programs.<sup>352</sup>

The Publications Division leveraged this experience to expand work with commercial children's TV. In 1971, Bank Street began acting as consultants to NBC's New York television station on children's specials; in 1972-3, the same service was provided to the ABC network. The ABC contract included consulting on the development of "Multiplication Rock," which used songs, books and TV animations to promote mathematical interest and thinking.<sup>353</sup>

While Bank Street's media initiatives drew on its roots in children's literature, an educational multi-media unit had been part of the Educational Resources Center in Harlem since early 1965. The ERC was a particular passion for Jack, who saw it as another way to extend Bank Street's experimental spirit and curricular innovations nationwide. The Multi-Media office survived the end of external funding for the ERC, becoming a stand-alone center, in part because in 1967 it received a New York State grant to establish a "comprehensive library of books and audio-visual equipment with special appeal for Harlem children." The Center became a community resource of books, films, and records for teachers and parents as well as children. It also worked on more complicated projects, such as a 1969 effort with Lewisburg, PA schools on integrating Black Studies into the curriculum for a community becoming increasingly diverse.<sup>354</sup>

### ***A Leap into Leadership Development – A New Path for Bank Street***

As noted earlier, by 1958 Jack had concluded that an effort to bring real change into a public school required an active partnership with the principal. That realization was his primary motivation for creating Field Services as a separate unit in 1960 and expanding its scope to include Leadership Development a few years later. Once again, he believed his conclusions were based on Bank Street ideas and experience, especially the project with PS 1 on the Lower East Side which included working with the principal and parents as well as classroom teachers.

Jack would eventually describe this engagement of leadership staff as a key feature of the systems approach that he advocated, where improving school management was essential to lasting reform. While some of his colleagues questioned a focus on school leaders, Jack argued that "very deeply embedded in the Bank Street approach well before I arrived on the scene was this groping toward the concept that the school is a social system...and if the teacher or any other person...is to do his or her job effectively, then the whole system has to support in various ways what the person's job is."<sup>355</sup> This view reflected Jack's concern about teacher's feelings of powerlessness, as well as his own experiences at Harley and Oak Lane in the classroom and as an administrator.

Besides the systems-based projects pursued under Field Services' supervision, Graduate Programs launched an innovative leadership development pilot in 1968 with funding for five years from the Mary Flagler Cary Trust. Each year a cohort of six master teachers was admitted as Cary Leadership Fellows to a two-year

leadership training program. Preference went to applicants from minority groups who were committed to working with urban schools and minority children. The characteristics reflected Jack's goals, as did the purpose of the program. The Cary Leadership Fellows was to be "a model for training leaders fully committed to improving educational systems...[which] tried to instill in its participants the concept that all adults connected with a school – teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents – must continually be concerned with their own growth and development."

After funding ended in 1973, Graduate Division faculty designed a new leadership program for students without teaching experience, providing both teacher training and leadership development at the same time.

### *The Bank Street Approach comes to Stamford*

One of Jack's last major initiatives as Bank Street president combined the challenges that he found most exciting: school desegregation, engaged parents, and "proving" the efficacy and excellence of the College's distinctive design and methods in a public school. He was personally involved in the project from the start, eventually drawing 20% of his compensation from the contract with the Stamford Board of Education from 1971-74. The Stamford Board was under a court order to desegregate its schools and initially determined to close Ryle, a K-4 elementary school where the student body was largely black. Parent protests led to a reversal of that decision. Jack's recollection was that the chair of the Stamford Board knew some Bank Street graduates and decided to visit the School for Children. That visit prompted an inquiry about Bank Street's interest in helping to turn Ryle into a similar kind of school.

The Board chair's theory was that, if the school were converted into a high-quality magnet school offering city-wide enrollment, it would attract white students and become integrated. This concept echoed Jack's long-held conviction that upgrading "slum schools" would be the best way to achieve desegregation in public schools. He quickly produced a proposal that guaranteed Ryle's desegregation in five years, but only if the Board and Superintendent agreed to Bank Street's requirements for quality control and supervision.

While Bank Street's SFC provided the example, the plan for Stamford drew more from the Follow Through model developed by Ibbey and her staff. Jack's specifications for the contract reflected what he had learned about public schools over the previous decade. The Board of Education had to take a formal vote to support the project and to instruct the superintendent to do the same. Jack knew that the Stamford School Superintendent Reigh Carpenter opposed the project. That was not unusual because many superintendents would find it "insulting to have people from the outside coming in and telling him how to run his school system."<sup>356</sup>

Other requirements were having a school principal who was eager to be involved, permitting any Ryle teacher not interested in the project to transfer, filling any teaching vacancies on a voluntary basis with staff who understood the extra work demanded by the project, monthly half-day visits to the School for Children for professional development, and provision of classroom assistants for kindergarten and first grade. In addition, Bank Street would have complete control of the curriculum and classroom organization and would provide a full-time resident staff developer to work with the principal and teachers.<sup>357</sup> Because Ryle was a demonstration site, the College also committed to providing consultation and training services to other Stamford schools interested in the Bank Street Approach.<sup>358</sup>

Ryle was a small school – 200 students – which gave Jack confidence that adapting the SFC "model" could succeed. After summer training by the Bank Street team, Ryle opened in September 1972 as a preK-3 school, with eight classrooms for 185 students and ten pre-school groups serving 152. The racial breakdown was 70% black, 20% white, and 10% "Spanish-speaking."<sup>359</sup> The increase in white children might have reflected local family interest in a school experimenting with the Bank Street Approach as well as getting additional resources. The classrooms were renovated, and first and second grade rooms featured what Jack called "an inside tree house."<sup>360</sup> Jack became the mentor for the principal, Frank Jerabek, spending virtually a day a week

with him during the project's first year. He urged Jerabek to change his traditional style, developing personal relationships with his teachers and jointly problem-solving and planning rather than using top-down directives. Fortunately, Jerabek had been a good choice. He was open to change and enthusiastic about the project, even in the face of regular reminders of Superintendent Carpenter's strong opposition. It had helped that the Board chair had taken him to visit the School for Children, and he was very impressed and excited by what he observed.<sup>361</sup>

While investment in parent programs was not included in his list of requirements, Jack's 1973 progress report described a focused effort to engage parents through encouraging new PTA leadership, opening a parents room, starting a newsletter, intentionally recruiting black and white parents as grade co-chairs, and reaching out to minority group parents who were not involved.

In a 1977 report on school desegregation in Stamford,<sup>362</sup> it was noted that Ryle had several active parent groups "including a parent-teaching group with black as well as white participation" and a 35-person parent volunteer program. The former president of the Ryle PTA reported that, through a door-to-door recruiting campaign, he had increased black parent participation from 10% to 90%.<sup>363</sup> Bank Street project staff stressed the importance of promoting such parent engagement and had recommended hiring a paid parent coordinator for each school.<sup>364</sup>

Parent comments in this report also indicated that the combination of Bank Street-style education with a multi-racial student body did draw new children from largely white neighborhoods to Ryle.<sup>365</sup> While Ryle might not have reached the 50/50 white/black balance Jack had promised, by 1975-76 its student body of 342 children were reported to be 48% black, 30% white, and 22% Spanish-speaking, with 42% of black and white students coming from outside the school's zone. The percentage of white students had doubled, and there was a short waiting list of white students interested in enrolling.<sup>366</sup>

Although Jack has described the Stamford project as covering three years, that was when the project was at the highest levels of activity in terms of Bank Street's and his personal involvement. The project continued into 1975-76 at a reduced level, with Bank Street staff providing regular consulting services to train teachers in other schools.<sup>367</sup> In 1973-74, Jack was no longer president of Bank Street and was listed as "consultant to the project." Jack recalled the Stamford project as his "primary job" that year, and that he spent three days a week there.<sup>368</sup> He remembered it as a successful demonstration of the strength and effectiveness of the Bank Street Approach in a diverse public school. Early in his presidency Jack became involved in school desegregation issues with the School Integration Project on Manhattan's Upper West Side. It seemed fitting that as his tenure as president came to an end, he was part of a similar project in a city in the suburbs.

### ***Public School Intervention: A New Bank Street Model for Change Agents***

In the Stamford project, Bank Street did much more than provide consultation and training. The College operated as a "change agent" substantially intervening in all aspects of the Ryle school, from how the principal functioned to curriculum to the physical appearance and features of the classroom. The effort drew on experience with many other Bank Street projects, especially on Follow Through which was a school-based effort. Jack believed that the Bank Street Follow Through model was working; he was confident the Stamford project would be even more successful. One of the reasons for that sentiment might have been the direct involvement of the School for Children as a demonstration site that Ryle educators visited every month. A visit to SFC inspired the Stamford Board of Education chair to ask for Bank Street's help. This experience seemed to suggest to Jack that Bank Street could use the SFC more effectively as a demonstration site, which reflected its original purpose, if resources could be found to plan and organize the initiative.

At the same time, Jack sought a way to develop a more detailed and defined plan for effective school interventions based on Bank Street's approach to learning and teaching as well as its work over the years in a

variety of public schools. In 1972, he had the opportunity to submit a request for support to a new potential funder, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, which was just beginning to get interested in education. The foundation staff seemed to prefer funding efforts from which they could learn about issues and trends in education. After a foundation "get to know you" visit to Bank Street, Jack made a two-part request, seeking funding for "strengthening of our laboratory school...as a training base for personnel of public school systems interested in school improvement," and an initiative by Bank Street faculty and staff to develop "a conceptual model of change in educational systems" which would be disseminated widely to encourage school reform.<sup>369</sup> The foundation responded promptly, approving a grant of \$134,650 for the combined proposal. Jack would serve as project director even though the grant period ended several months after his retirement.

One explanation for that arrangement might be that the concept for the project, especially the exploration and development of a model of change, came from him, and expecting a new president to take on the project mid-stream seemed to be both inefficient and unfair. Another might be that, like the Stamford project, the Clark grant offered Jack a way to continue work that he felt was important to both the College and himself.

Over a number of years at Bank Street, Jack had become convinced that there needed to be a systems approach to support lasting change in public education. That conclusion was at the heart of his decision to launch the Field Services Division in 1960. The Ford Foundation had issued an evaluation of its Comprehensive School Improvement Program, through which it had spent more than \$30 million over ten years (1960-70) "to make school systems adaptable, flexible and open to change so that they could make good use of innovative schemes which had already been developed."<sup>370</sup> One conclusion was that it was essential that "more systematic methods be developed for drawing the line between impossible change on groups that might have cooperated had they participated in the creation of the proposals for change, and delaying needed changes in naïve anticipation of good communication and democratic harmony."<sup>371</sup>

In other words, any hope for achieving real change in a school system had to be pursued through a process of engagement, consultation, and consensus rather than being imposed from the top. The Ford study also found that the "the idea of a monolithic American education system" was a myth: foundation-supported "innovations developed in 'lighthouse' school systems could not have solved the educational problems faced by the urban, poorer suburban, and rural segments of American education."<sup>372</sup>

The report identified ten "lessons to be learned" to guide future efforts to promote school change, including narrowing the number and focus of objectives, stable leadership, clear commitments from all parties, and avoidance of situations where controversy and confrontation existed over school change.

Jack argued to the Clark Foundation that the Ford report underscored the need for a matrix or guidelines or model which could be used by public and private funders to assess the reality of proposed changes. Bank Street's expertise and experience could lead to development of such a matrix. He reached beyond Bank Street, visiting senior leaders in federal agencies (OE and the National Institute for Education) and public schools in Berkeley CA and Portland OR, John Goodlad and his colleagues at UCLA's Project IDEA, and even UFT president Al Shanker.

Jack and his colleagues did present what he termed "tentative guidelines" and Merrell Clark, the Clark Foundation program officer, referred to as "your intervention model" to a small group of important foundation leaders in December 1973. Clark was generally positive about the model and the discussion but later wrote that "many elements of the theoretical model were picked up in the course of case study narratives, but I lacked a sense of resolution and focus at the conclusion."<sup>373</sup>

There were other vehicles that Jack used as he concluded his time as the College's president which continued to engage him in work that he felt was vital to the issues of equity and opportunity in education and society. He remained engaged with improving the quality of child care and increasing access for families living in

poverty. An area that consumed his interest during this time was advocating for more and better day care centers and services, especially for poor families. He had become involved in day care policy concerns in the late 1960's, through the work of the Bank Street on Morningside operation. It had been set up to demonstrate the College's intention to be a good neighbor (and to distinguish Bank Street's community relations approach from Columbia's) but had morphed quickly into a much larger service agency as the Day Care Consultation Service under Peter Sauer.

Jack became a board member of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America in 1968 and its president in 1971, in an attempt to stabilize the organization as it refined its mission. In addition, during his last years as Bank Street's president, he had developed a strong interest in the connections between education and workforce development, believing that the College could assist in efforts to help disadvantaged youths and parents gain the educational skills required to obtain decent jobs that would give them better lives.

Jack never stopped try to split the social atom and release the power of potential in every human being. The passion for social justice was in his DNA.

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<sup>273</sup> In a 1988 video interview with Bank Street faculty member Lonetta Gaines, Jack mentioned that his views on the potential for learning among culturally impoverished children were shaped in part by his experiences with summer institutes in 1963 and 1964. Funded by the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development, the Bank Street institutes worked with a multi-cultural group of educators from four cities, almost all of whom came from de facto segregated schools. The focus was on how to help hardcore non-learning students, and stressed changing the attitudes of both the child and the educator – leading to the shorthand label of how to "teach the unteachables." See *Bank Street Reporting*, v.1, no. 2 (Summer 1964), pp1-3. Also, "Northern Teachers Confer on Ways to Integrate Schools," *The New York Times*, 6/30/1963.

<sup>274</sup> Sally Kerlin noted that "He hadn't been at Bank Street very long before he began talking about the problems of integrated schools." Interview with Edith Gordon 7/15/1975, p. 27.

<sup>275</sup> *The Saturday Review* published in 1962 a short story about a young teacher's life in a fictional New York City high school, told through a collection of notes and memos, titled "From a Teacher's Wastebasket." The story was the basis of the best-selling 1965 novel *Up the Down Staircase* by Bel Kaufman, who drew on her experiences as a NYC teacher during the 1950's to highlight in humorous ways the serious issues of a dysfunctional school bureaucracy and deep social problems of the adolescents in her classrooms.

<sup>276</sup> George L. Ferish, "The Untapped Reservoir," *Saturday Review*, September 12, 1959, p. 16.

<sup>277</sup> "Splitting the Social Atom," *Saturday Review*, September 12, 1959, p. 18.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>281</sup> Barbour interview with Edith Gordon, 12/9/1986, p. 4.

<sup>282</sup> Kerlin interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975, p. 28.

<sup>283</sup> "Helping Schools Develop Their Own Resources," Abstract of Report to The New York Foundation and #

The New York Fund for Children, April 15, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>288</sup> As noted, Beaumont had served as a Bank Street Trustee and had proven to be a valuable ally for Jack.

<sup>289</sup> Following the Harlem race riots of 1943, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia set up the Mayor's Committee on Unity to encourage harmony among citizens of all races and religion. That group had no enforcement powers but did help to pass legislation, including the Fair Educational Practices Act. Wagner and the City Council determined that a more powerful organization was needed so replaced the Unity Committee with the Commission on Intergroup Relations. It could investigate complaints and initiate its own investigations into religious, racial and ethnic group issues, as well as study problems of intergroup tensions and make recommendations to the Mayor. In 1958 it was given the power to investigate and hold hearings on allegations of discrimination in housing, the first example in the U.S. of extending protection from discrimination to private housing. In 1962, the commission was renamed the Commission on Human Rights and has continued to function under that name. See New York City Commission on Human Rights history page on NYC website ([nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov)).

<sup>290</sup> Minutes of the Community Committee, Bank Street College, 1/ 13/1959.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Memorandum to Jack and others, 11/2/1959. Goldsmith laid out an annotated agenda, where "the heart of the meeting" would be a discussion of "the role of the school as the prime agent in our society's efforts to achieve effective equality between children and parents representing divergent values and significant differences with respect to economic level, educational background, family life, concept of learning, etc."

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-8.

<sup>295</sup> The grant allowed Jack to hire first Helen Trager and then Charles Long to supervise the Field Services projects, which included the Public School Workshops which had been under Graduate Education Programs, headed by Charlotte Winsor. This was an important step toward achieving Jack's vision of Bank Street's expanded role in public education. He wrote the proposal himself. See his interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 60.

<sup>296</sup> *Bank Street Reporting*, v. 1, no. 2, Summer 1964, p. 4.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975, p. 27.

<sup>298</sup> All quotations are taken from Jack's prepared statement.

<sup>299</sup> The district was Fairlawn, NJ, in Bergen County, about ten miles outside of New York City.

<sup>300</sup> "Problems of the Big Cities Move to the Suburbs," address by Jack Niemeyer at the Tenth Annual #

Workshop of the New Jersey State Federation of District Boards of Education, Atlantic City, NJ, October 26, 1962. pp. 25-27.

<sup>301</sup> "Report to Congress Outlining a Civil Rights Bill" in *The Civil Rights Reader: Basic Documents of the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Leon Friedman (Syracuse University Press, 1968), pp. 245-267.

<sup>302</sup> Bank Street had also received a grant for \$32,446 from the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency to organize a four week summer institute in 1963 on school integration for 58 teachers from Boston, Cleveland, Washington, DC and New York. See *New York Times*, 6/30/1963.

<sup>303</sup> The seminar was officially identified as a "cooperative research project."

<sup>304</sup> David Street, "Summary Report of the Seminar," in *Education of the Deprived and Segregated*, Bank Street College of Education, p. 7. Street's summary went on to list the diagnoses of the problem, which were familiar: the quality of family and community life; social class, racial and ethnic patterns (noting that "poverty begets poverty"); the "technological-economic factor" (i.e., increased skill requirements reduced employment opportunities for poorly-educated youth and vocational education was inadequate); and the lack of capacity for "creative change" in schools, whether due to structural operational inflexibilities, curricular inadequacies, outdated teaching styles, pervasive cultural insensitivity, or poor parent-school communications, or combinations of these deficiencies. What was different was the conclusion that concerted government action and investment was needed, especially on the federal level. If educational failure was "a problem of social policy of grave national proportions," the federal government should focus on "educational disaster areas" and provide funding beyond what could be offered by state and local sources.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. pp. 8-11.

<sup>306</sup> The seminar recommended making Washington, DC public schools a "showcase" for such experimental initiatives.

<sup>307</sup> Ralph Ellison, "What These Children Are Like," Seminar report— *Education of the Deprived and Segregated*, Appendix I, pp. 44-51. In his 2008 biography of Ellison, Arnold Rampersad wrote: "Clinging fearlessly and stubbornly to the ideal of harmonious racial integration in America, he found it hard to negotiate the treacherous currents of American life in the volatile 1960s' and 1970's." *Ralph Ellison*, Vintage Books, 2008, p. 4.

<sup>308</sup> Niemeyer, "Next Steps," Seminar report – *Education of the Deprived and Segregated*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>309</sup> The 23 schools were located in Harlem, East Harlem, and Lower Washington Heights.

<sup>310</sup> Niemeyer, "Next Steps," p. 22.

<sup>311</sup> Sally Kerlin said the ERC was "Jack's baby." Interview with Edith Gordon, 7/15/1975, p. 27.

<sup>312</sup> *New York Times*, 12/3/1964.

<sup>313</sup> *Bank Street Reporting*, v. III, no. 1, Summer 1966, p. 2. On the same page was a brief article about PROJECT AWARE, a study requested and funded by OEO and the Office of Education on teacher education for working with disadvantaged children. The report, *Teacher Education in a Social Context*, was edited by Gordon Klopff and Garda Bowman. The report offered "guidelines" that stressed racial and ethnic #



integration, as well as using experimentation and innovation to design and improve teacher education programs.

<sup>314</sup> This was an early indication of Jack's growing interest in day care which later came out at Bank Street through establishment of the Day Care Consultation Service. Jack later became a board member and then president of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America.

<sup>315</sup> "Nursery Education: A National Goal," printed in *The Journal of Nursery Education*, Vol. 18, No. 3, April 1963.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> The Bank Street Readers in "*Rights and Responsibilities: My Years at Bank Street*," a booklet published by Bank Street College, May 1998, to celebrate Jack's 90th birthday, pp. 3- 4.

<sup>318</sup> Jack described the Readers project as "a beautiful example of how you can bring about change." Interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 50.

<sup>319</sup> Irma Black recruited her friend Leonard Weisgard, a well-regarded illustrator, to contribute his efforts to the project.

<sup>320</sup> Deighton said that "one of the main things that sold us on the Readers was President Niemeyer's hypothesis, based on the College's experience in Harlem and other underprivileged areas, that alienated children couldn't identify with the characters in conventional textbooks...so they rejected both the textbooks and the reading itself." He felt "this was worth testing..." See "Macmillan Backs Pioneering Effort," *Bank Street Reporting*, v. 2, no. 1 (Spring 1965), p. 5.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. Deighton also appreciated the quality of the writing, which he called "vigorous, rich in imagination...the books have scope – there is humor, drama, exposition."

<sup>322</sup> Bank Street College of Education Publications No. 64 (undated). This was a reprint of *Reading and Child Development*, v.4 (June 1964), published by the Reading and Study Clinic, Department of Education, Lehigh University. Bloss is Charlotte Winsor's daughter. The same point was made in *Bank Street Reporting's* lead article in the Spring 1965 issue noted earlier. In "City Child Sees Real World in Bank Street Readers," it was stressed that the "emphasis on literary and artistic values" was not found in elementary school readers but were "integral to the Bank Street philosophy underlying the reading program." See p. 1.

<sup>323</sup> Jack's perspectives and goals were clearly laid out in an article on the Readers in *The Reading Teacher* (April, 1965), pp. 542-545. The title stated his objective-- "The Bank Street Readers: Support for Movement Toward an Integrated Society." He emphasized equality in the treatment of family life, stressing that "no one type of family, no one economic status is singled out for particular attention ... none is presented as the standard for comparison." (p. 545). Jack seemed particularly proud of one book called "The Beautiful Black Princess" who lived in a black glass castle.

<sup>324</sup> *Rights and Responsibilities*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>325</sup> "The Week in Education – Better Primers," *The New York Times*, 1/24/1965.

<sup>326</sup> "Bank Street President Helps Meet U.S. School Desegregation Problems," *Bank Street Reporting*, v. 1, no. 3 (Winter 1964), pp. 1-2.

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<sup>327</sup> Jack's 2/19/1975 handwritten response to Carolyn Martin's letter of inquiry about school readiness as a priority of the Head Start Planning Committee, dated 1/31/1975. Jack wrote that Cooke was "one of the small group that in meetings on Robert Kennedy's farm, conceptualized Head Start." We assume that he was referring to RFK's Hickory Hill estate and that Shriver was one of the group at the meeting.

<sup>328</sup> Vinovskis, Maris A, *The Birth of Head Start: Preschool Education Policies in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 55. Also, Edith Gordon described Biber involvement with a 1963 NIMH meeting related to Head Start planning. Gordon, *Educating the Whole Child*, p. 410.

<sup>329</sup> Yale psychiatrist Edward Zigler, a committee member who later became director of Head Start, wrote that Jack and Hymes "spoke out strongly on behalf of quality educational programs" but that they were simply outnumbered. Zigler, Edward, and Muenchow, Susan, *Head Start – The Inside Story of America's Most Successful Educational Experience*, Basic Books, 1992, p. 42.

<sup>330</sup> Vinovskis, pp. 73-77. Hymes was quoted as stating that "we never did face up to the disadvantaged young child's need for skilled and trained teachers; we never did face up to the need for top-flight educational leadership in what was to be a massive educational program." p. 77.

<sup>331</sup> Jack Niemeyer in his welcoming remarks as President of Day Care and Child Development Council of America, at National Infant Care Conference, Atlanta, GA, 11/20–11/23/1975.

<sup>332</sup> Niemeyer memo, 3/16/1965.

<sup>333</sup> Zigler and Muenchow, p. 105.

<sup>334</sup> Robie Harris, Interview with John Borden, 6/2/2016. Bank Street Graduate and noted children's book author Robie Harris worked for Ibbotson Books at the Head Start Family Center doing home visits, developing relationships with young mothers (many in their teens), creating a pre-school curriculum, and making a film called "Child's Eye View," for which Jack obtained two grants. Robie also mentioned that she collaborated with staff from the media services unit that was part of the ERC to make the film.

<sup>335</sup> Jack respected Conant's work and honesty. For him, "Conant's book simply captured what a lot of us at Bank Street and other places were doing a great deal of thinking about ...what a beautiful rationale this man had written for what Bank Street ought to do and was trying to do." Interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 40. Jack had another indirect connection to Conant through Francis Keppel, whom Conant had appointed Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

<sup>336</sup> See Mary. M. Kennedy, "The Follow Through Program" in *Curriculum Inquiry*, v. 7, no. 3 (1977), pp. 183-207. Kennedy was a senior staff member of the U. S. Office of Education. A different view is offered by Cathy Watkins in "Project Follow Through," Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies (1997) whose report was an effort to understand how the "educational industry" handled efforts to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate interventions aimed at educational change. Watkins also suggested that, because of the political controversies surrounding OEO's Community Action Program in 1966, Follow Through offered a way for OEO to shift attention to an extension of Head Start, which had stronger popular support (p.4).

<sup>337</sup> Retired Graduate faculty member Richard Feldman stated that Jack "networked" to have Klopff offered this role. Interview with John Borden, 9/26/2016. Feldman worked in OE on Follow Through from 1969-73.

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<sup>338</sup> Watkins, pp. 4-5.

<sup>339</sup> Kennedy, pp. 186-190, 199-203. Kennedy does not describe the Bank Street model as an example of the process-oriented approach. Her only mention (p.191) was to quote an unnamed "Bank Street sponsor" who said "I think a lot of people chose Bank Street because they thought it wouldn't make them do anything." Perhaps that comment was made – there is no citation—but it seems an unlikely observation from anyone who knew the College and its labor-intensive approach.

<sup>340</sup> Jack's remarks in *Reflections on Elizabeth C. Gilkeson's Work in Progress, a journal in celebration of her 90th year*, May 1993.

<sup>341</sup> Comment by Richard Feldman during interview with John Borden, 9/16/2016. Feldman worked with Ibby and Jack on Follow Through and the Head Start Center.

<sup>342</sup> According to Richard Feldman, Jack and Bank Street had good connections to Kenneth Clark. His organization, HARYOU-ACT, had links to Bank Street's special education program. Clark spoke at Bank Street, and his Northside Center at 110th Street and Lenox Avenue was used for student placements. Interview with John Borden, 3/15/2017.

<sup>343</sup> For a detailed presentation and analysis of the Board of Education's dismal record in planning and implementing school desegregation, see Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, Basic Books, 1974. Information in this section comes largely from her chapters on "The Discovery of Segregation and Scandals" and "IS 201: An End and a Beginning."

<sup>344</sup> Niemeyer testimony before the Board of Education in relation to the Proposal on Decentralization, Public Hearing, March 7, 1967.

<sup>345</sup> The other members of the committee were Lillian Ashe (former president, United Parents Association); Charles DeCarlo (IBM and Bank Street Trustee); James Marshall (former president, Board of Education); Frederick O'Neill (Actors Equity president); and Celia Vice (chair, Local School Board 14 in Brooklyn). The committee was based at Bank Street's ERC in Harlem. The staff director was Bert Swanson, head of Sarah Lawrence's Institute for Community Studies. See Bank Street Reporting, v. 4, no, 2 (winter 1967), p. 3.

<sup>346</sup> *New York Times*, 9/16/1968.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Mayor Lindsay was an advocate for a school system that would satisfy the preferences of black and Puerto Rican communities. When directed by the state legislature to submit a decentralization plan, the Mayor proposed creating a "federation of somewhat autonomous districts, subject to certain city and state controls." See *New York Times*, 3/28/1968.

<sup>349</sup> David Seeley had both a law degree from Yale and an EDD from Harvard. He had been an attorney at HEW in 1955-59. He left the Lindsay administration in 1969 due to what was called "getting caught in bureaucratic crossfire" apparently connected to the UFT-community controversy (see Obituary, *New York Times*, 11/4/2016). He joined Kenneth Clark at the Metropolitan Applied Research Center for a brief stint, and then became executive director of the Public Education Association until 1980. He taught at the College of Staten Island (CUNY) from 1980–2003, becoming a full professor and coordinator of the Education Leadership Program. Seeley and Jack worked together with Richard Greenspan on "The Principals Speak" #

project which used in-depth interviews with a group of 35 inner-city school principals on key issues. Four reports were published on school restructuring and leadership, parent involvement, the need for social and mental health support services, and teachers and teaching. Seeley spoke at Jack's memorial service in June 2004.

<sup>350</sup> "Bank Street President Heads School Board Advisory Committee on Decentralization," *Bank Street Reporting*, v. IV, no. 2 (Winter 1967), p. 3.

<sup>351</sup> Oram Report, p. 25. Henry Goldstein judged that there was not enough corporate representation on the Board, but believed Bank Street could attract "businessmen of sophistication and social commitment" despite the College's progressive reputation. He urged recruitment of "a few top management executives of major companies" as Trustees.

<sup>352</sup> The shows began airing in October 1968. The "affiliation" was described in *Bank Street Reporting*, v. IV, no. 4, Fall 1968, pp. 3-4, and parent responses in "Praise for Bank Street-Captain Kangaroo" in Spring 1969 issue (v. V, no. 1, p. 3). Bank Street alumna Robie Harris was one of the writers hired to create the brief segments and recalled Keeshan's writers had been lured away to *Sesame Street*. Interview with John Borden, 6/2/2016. See also, Gordon, pp. 420-421.

<sup>353</sup> 1971-72 Bank Street Annual Report, p. 9. Bank Street was the educational consultant to McCafery & McCall, Inc. for this ABC project.

<sup>354</sup> "For Harlem Public Schools: Resources, Consultation from Bank Street on 125th Street," *Bank Street Reporting*, v. VI, no. 1, Spring 1970, pp. 1, 5-8. Most of the issue was devoted to the Multi-Media Center. The other major article was about the publication of the first two volumes (of a projected five volumes) resulting from the major mental health and schools project funded by NIMH starting in 1958. The article was written by Barbara Biber (pp. 2 and 8). The impression given the reader in view of the placement and length of these two articles might be that community resources and services had higher priority than scholarly research on child development and learning environments. Perhaps there was another major announcement about the books' publication, but it is curious that Jack, as Bank Street President, was not quoted about the significance of the project and the results for the College and the nation's public schools.

<sup>355</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, p. 61.

<sup>356</sup> Niemeyer interview with Richard Greenspan, 3/29/1986, from edited version by Judith Barrett, 4/15/1998, p. 2.

<sup>357</sup> The chief staff developer was Elaine Wickens, a former SFC teacher who had worked as a staff developer for Bank Street's Follow Through program.

<sup>358</sup> Jack's memo to Stamford School Superintendent Carpenter, 1/17/1973. The memo was a progress report and was shared with the Board of Education and Ryle School principal.

<sup>359</sup> "Bank Street Commutes to Stamford," *Bank Street Reporting*, v. IX, no. 1, Fall 1972, p. 3. A 1977 report with figures from the Stamford Board of Education cited different percentages for 1971: 76% black, 15% white, 9% Spanish-speaking. The Stamford Hispanic community was diverse and included Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other groups. The difference in the figures reported does not change the fact that Ryle had the largest percentage of black children in its student body in comparison to any other elementary school in the district.

<sup>360</sup> Niemeyer interview, 3/29/1996 as edited 4/15/1998, p. 7.

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>362</sup> "School Desegregation in Stamford, Connecticut," Connecticut Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, July 1977, p. 23.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid. Comment by Jeanne Carpenter, p. 54.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid. pp. 22-23.

<sup>368</sup> Niemeyer interview, 3/29/1996, as edited 4/15/1998, p. 9.

<sup>369</sup> Proposal to Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 9/11/1972.

<sup>370</sup> A Foundation Goes to School, p. 3.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>373</sup> Merrill Clark letter to Jack, 12/10/1973.

## CHAPTER SIX

### JACK 'S LEGACY: THE CRUCIAL LINK

In the opening chapter, I posed two questions as central to this exploration of Jack Niemeyer's tenure as Bank Street's first chief executive officer: Why did Bank Street want him? And why did he want Bank Street? I hope the preceding pages have suggested some answers and will take a few paragraphs to summarize my own conclusions. Then I want to reflect on Jack's lasting impact on the College. Jack's vision and leadership challenged and changed the College in many ways, but what difference did Jack make? What has endured as the legacy of his presidency? In other words, how was Bank Street changed by Jack's vision and actions?

Returning to the question of why Bank Street wanted Jack, we need to expand upon the earlier statement that he shared the values and educational framework that animated Lucy Mitchell, Barbara Biber, Charlotte Winsor, and Ibbey Gilkeson. He did, but his vision of Bank Street's appropriate role became even more comprehensive than Lucy's.

In the early 1950's the new College was at a crossroads, desperate for a new leader who could honor the Bank Street traditions and educational approach while dealing creatively with a host of problems that no one had figured out how to resolve. Most of the staff thought they wanted – and only needed – an administrator, someone who understood and accepted Bank Street's particular "pattern of work" and could make sure the place operated smoothly, a larger version of Eleanor Hogan, or Sheila Sadler, or Rank Smith. The Board of Trustees, which was just beginning to function as real fiduciaries, wanted someone who could manage the day-to-day operation of the institution, bring in money, handle problems adroitly before they blew up into crises (like the Nursery School), deal with the usual college issues of personnel policies and plant, relate to them in a less intimidating way than Lucy did, and resolve fundamental questions about the College's future. Most important, Lucy wanted someone in whom she could trust to find a way to keep Bank Street whole and alive after she left. By and large, Jack found the way to fulfill those needs – and to do much more.

It was clear that Jack needed to leave Oak Lane. His academic studies and recent European adventure had introduced him to thinking more broadly about the role of public education systems in a democratic society. If he was going to make a difference in education in post-World War II America, he had to find the right place and job. In 1975, he recalled that "the problem of children who didn't learn, the problem of deprived children had been on my mind for many years before I came to Bank Street." With its location in New York City and its progressive education profile, Bank Street checked off all the boxes on his list. Jack did not move to New York and Bank Street to take a job, however. In a very personal sense, he was "answering a call" – an obligation that he felt deeply – to use public education in some way to build a more egalitarian, literate and open society, inspired by John Dewey's philosophy. Jack brought that vision to Bank Street, and over the next seventeen years he used the College to experiment with, refine and implement his ideas about how to make that vision into reality for children, educators, families and school systems.

### *Creating Bank Street's Institutional Saga*

Clark's institutional saga concept appears to be helpful in answering the question about how Bank Street faculty, staff and trustees responded to Jack's leadership and ideas, and what impact he had, i.e., what new entries did he write in the narrative of the College's life? It is important to recall that a significant number of Bank Streeters were unhappy with the idea of a president at all, even if favorably inclined toward Jack. Whether based on a tradition of collectivist control (in appearance if not always in fact) or the very human anxiety of finally losing Lucy, feelings of resistance to a president who would do more than "coordinate" and raise money was a reality throughout Jack's tenure.<sup>374</sup> Sometimes it was more obvious, such as the pushback against the idea of the Readers, but it was always part of the environment, especially for the "true believers."

Jack always made efforts, based on his own commitments to Bank Street's mission and roots, to reassure, explain, and accommodate these philosophical and emotional sentiments.<sup>375</sup> He recounted an early incident when Elizabeth Healy Ross, the chair of the Board and a former faculty member, upbraided him for sending her a thank-you note for her gift that began "on behalf of the Board and faculty." She was outraged that he dared to "speak" for the Trustees and faculty. Jack was surprised by her strong reaction but calmly explained that he was trying to do what is customary for a president when thanking a donor, and noted that it was important for the recipient to know that Bank Street had a Board of Trustees who appreciated such gifts. It was a "teachable moment" for Ross, who was a friend and supporter, as well as for Jack, who learned how even his small changes could inflame emotions at a place where so many things were felt personally.<sup>376</sup>

Ross's reaction underscored another reality – the urgent need to build a Board of Trustees that would function more like the fiduciaries they were expected to be. Fortunately, Jack had a terrific partner in Board Chair Sally Kerlin, who had been Lucy's choice and was a devoted alumna. A close and candid working relationship between a president and a board chair is always vital to success, but in this case, it was the essential ingredient. While deeply imbued with and committed to the Bank Street mission and values, Sally had a nuanced and realistic understanding of the College's challenges. She recruited women experienced with academic institutions to the Board, including Frederica Barach Barbour (Vassar) and Millicent McIntosh (retired president of Barnard), who had useful connections to local organizations such as the Public Education Association and Morningside Heights, Inc., that could help the College. Jack recruited new members from the business world, including Charles DeCarlo from IBM, James deCamp Wise (an attorney who succeeded Sally as board chair and played a key role in relocating the College), and William Delano (whose calm presence helped to keep the lid on the 1968 protest over the SRO demolitions required for the new Bank Street building).

There were a host of major institutional decisions for which Jack sought to use the consultative process so revered by faculty and staff. The consultations usually dealt with some aspects of the expansion of the College's work and the pressure that was placed on staff and space. In any institution, it would be difficult to find solutions to space and workload issues which are satisfactory to most community members. At Bank Street, it was even more complicated. The institution had never bought or built a building. Lucy had selected and paid for the homes for the BEE and Bank Street. No doubt she had sought input from others, but ultimately the decision was hers because it was her money. Taking responsibility for being part of such a major decision would have been a new and possibly frightening decision for many people, especially for those who wanted to stay where they were.

There were similar sentiments about program. While it was certainly true that Bank Street programs had changed over the decades, especially when it became a teacher preparation institution in 1930 and added the Writers Laboratory in 1938, its core work had remained focused on child development and teaching. The Public School Workshops had been launched in 1943 and had grown significantly, but Bank Street was still operating in a consultative, staff development role with teachers. The Research Division had expanded its

work in public schools and mental health but was still focused primarily on teaching and learning issues; in any case, the explosion of new staff created by the NIMH grant in 1958 might have led some Bank Streeters to wonder if the grant was a mixed blessing because it added to the chronic space problems.

Jack understood the anxiety and the dilemma. He knew that "while Bank Street was this wonderful seminal place of great strength, it had also lived pretty much in its own world."<sup>377</sup> Taking Bank Street into the real world, fulfilling Lucy's dreams and his own vision, meant pushing the College into far greater engagement with public education, and especially with finding ways to meet the educational needs of young disadvantaged children. He challenged the College community to live up to its ideals, to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. In Clark's terms, Jack worked hard to create the conditions, and to motivate people to make the commitment, in order to add new pages to the Bank Street narrative and to expand the institutional saga to incorporate a stronger and more activist social justice theme. For Jack, creating the *Bank Street Readers* and relocating to a new building that could house everyone under one roof were the key steps to expanding and enriching the College's saga without fundamentally changing it.

### ***Different Perspectives on Mission and Change: Risks and Opportunities***

Not everyone at Bank Street agreed with Jack's perspective, even though they respected his sincerity, appreciated his energy and enthusiasm, and shared his liberal social and political views.<sup>378</sup> It is hardly unusual in a college that, during times of growth, traditional departments lose priority for new resources, leading to legitimate faculty and staff worries about both mission drift and personal status. The reality that Jack faced was complicated. Bank Street valued certain administrative habits that were neither accurate depictions of how the place worked nor sustainable under the changing circumstances put into motion by Lucy herself. Collective decision-making, whether by the Working Council or the executive committee, was more myth than fact. As Biber had documented, many decisions on important matters were not made. Key issues were not addressed, either ignored as too uncomfortable to debate or discussed repeatedly and often ambiguously until a crisis exploded, as happened with the Harriet Johnson Nursery School.

An argument can be made that those crises, and the weaknesses of such an informal administrative regime, did far more harm to the College's vitality and distinctiveness than the infusion of new programs, staff, and ideas. Certainly that seemed to be Jack's view. If Bank Street in 1956 was "the little engine that could," he intended to make sure it became "the little engine that would" in terms of its impact on the national educational scene.

### ***Jack's Rare Combination of Qualities and Skills***

Jack was a person of integrity, personal warmth, sensitivity, and compassion. He had an inquiring mind, was intellectually engaged across a broad range of fields, loved music and art, and always worked hard. He blended a "pastoral quality" with the characteristics of a catalyst, a mover and shaker, and a wise advisor. He gained acceptance at Bank Street by being "fair, honest, and clear-headed," and by combining "generosity of feeling and sense of direction" as the College tried to adapt to new times.<sup>379</sup> Jack was one of those people who was "genuinely interested and present with each person he met" and "always good-tempered."<sup>380</sup> He could also be persistent to the point of stubbornness; McIntosh recalled that "when he decided on something, it was impossible to get him to change his mind." Lia Gelb remembered him as a "risk taker to further his vision,"<sup>381</sup> and Jack himself regretted that sometimes he neglected to consult sufficiently before charging ahead with what he felt was an important new project for the College.<sup>382</sup> His confidence in Bank Street's capacities and his conviction that "the way would open" could lead to problems.

In my view, Jack's vision of Bank Street was not embraced and supported by a significant group within the faculty and staff because any new leader, however well grounded, brings changes. Bank Street fervently



wanted all children to succeed in life. Jack wanted to take that aspiration and refine it to recognize that all children in America do not have the same chance for growth and success due to societal factors that require innovative responses to fix. He believed that the College's work could and should reflect the reality of poor children and families in urban public schools. That is not meant to suggest that there was a difference over the importance of social justice as an element of the College's mission. In Clark's terms, there was convergence around the ideal and divergence around some of the new actions and the expanded scope of work.

The College had provided professional development for teachers, curriculum support, and other services to the schools, but had never put itself forward as a front-line change agent for a school system, especially one as vast and complex as New York City's. The classroom, and the children and teacher as members of a learning community, had been the core of Bank Street's approach and distinction. Should that change because the College's president asserted the need to pursue a radical reform of public schools in which the school leader was the cornerstone? Jack was fully supportive of the classroom but, just as he had when presenting the Readers concept, he looked at teachers and their work through a different lens.

Bank Street's real mission – that was the key question. Jack came to Bank Street to propel it onto the national scene, and the larger role required a more expansive mission. As the external funding that he used to fuel these initiatives declined, and institutional resources continued to be insufficient for basic operations much less expanded ones, the divergence widened between Jack's path and the one that a growing segment of the College community wanted to follow in the 1970's. In later years, he never lost hope that his aspirations for Bank Street would be achieved although he always respected the boundaries of the roles he carried out as a Trustee and advisor.

### *A Legacy of Innovation for Urban Education and Social Justice*

At the 2004 memorial service for Jack, Gussie Kappner summed up the Niemeyer legacy. Jack, she said, "took us many places besides 112th Street – into the realm of major federally funded programs, into children's television, into working closely with poor children and their parents – ***places we take for granted today, but that we had never been before.***(emphasis added)"

Jack took Bank Street where it had to go to accomplish what Lucy had started and wanted to see develop. Bank Street had begun as an experimental venture intended to help improve the lives of New York's children in the first half of the 20th century. The institution needed to refresh itself, to update its mission while maintaining its values, in the second half of the century, to keep pace with the different needs of the children. Jack took the College into the struggle for social justice and the drive to improve urban schools – and despite resources that have never been really adequate to achieve its goals, Bank Street has never looked back.

On October 20, 1990, Jack spoke at an Alumni Convocation on "Education and Social Change: Bank Street at 75." He was reflective, even a bit disappointed about what he had observed transpiring in American society, but he was confident. He said "I am both sad – at times, to the point of despair – and at the same time, alive with hope." His sadness was with the slow pace of needed social change, and his feeling that "education – our best hope that a truly humane world can be built – also changes with depressing slowness." He described the 1963 Dedham conference and his conclusion that, despite some progress, overall "the social conditions that create the most serious of the problems for the schools have worsened." He regretted that, by and large, schools had not changed to meet these needs. He asked then the question everyone was thinking: why was he alive with hope? He said: "The fundamental reason that hope does not die within me is that I can confidently say: We Do Know What A Good School Is. We Know How To Make A Good School. I know many people would say that this is arrogant. It is, indeed, confident, but it is not arrogant. **Because we have done it.**"

Jack's reason for hope was, of course, Bank Street at 75. He spoke about Lucy's vision and how she had never lost her faith in Bank Street's mission and the power of the educational approach it had developed. Jack believed the College's mission in 1990 – to build that more rational and humane world through education – remained as powerful and important.

The Niemeier years began with Jack's idea of using Bank Street's insights and creativity to find ways to "split the social atom." Under his guidance, the College took leadership roles in a number of significant educational experiments that made an impact on society and changed its own trajectory. We see that in what the College is pursuing today. If Bank Street had not taken leadership with Head Start, would a Head Start center be an important College program today? If Bank Street had not been a pioneer with Follow Through, would it have taken up the challenge of Newark's public schools for more than a dozen years in the 1990's? Would there have been *The Voyage of the Mimi* if Bank Street had not become involved with educational content for *Captain Kangaroo*? The list could continue but the answer is obvious. Jack found ways to "split the Bank Street atom" and release the potential energy that Lucy and her colleagues had created. He saw opportunities to make the lives of poor and disadvantaged children and families qualitatively better through Bank Street's interventions. Bank Street could attempt whatever it wanted to try, taking risks, sometimes succeeding and sometimes not, but in all cases, learning from the experiences.

Today his spirit remains alive, most prominently in the yearly Niemeier Series in Educational Policy, but in other ways as well. I believe that he would exult in the breadth and quality of the Pre-K program for New York City's teachers and youngest students; the renewal of fieldwork with urban school districts in other cities through the Bank Street Education Center; the BronxWorks program in the Graduate School; the Sustainable Funding Project in the Division of Innovation, Policy and Research; and the rich social justice curriculum in the SFC. He would be thrilled that the Straus Center for Young Children and Families has been established to advance exactly the kind of educational innovations that he championed. He would be encouraged, perhaps even feel vindicated, by efforts to involve Bank Street in supporting and advocating for immigrants and the "have nots" and the always difficult march toward a society that John Dewey would have applauded.

Perhaps the final word on Jack's contributions and legacy should come from the person who started it all and knew best what it meant to lead and care for the unusual small institution named Bank Street – Lucy Sprague Mitchell. In May 1963, Lucy sent Jack "just a letter of thanks" that she felt like writing to him. Lucy expressed her admiration for what Jack had done for Bank Street: "You have not only been a leader in practical jobs – you have enriched the program without losing the 'personality' of Bank Street..." She felt that the "kind of person you are, is the kind of person that Bank Street needed at the strategic moment when you came to us – another evidence of 'magic' in our career."

Jack was the crucial link between the experimental organization that Lucy founded, shaped and nurtured for four decades and the larger world that she wanted her creation to serve. He took up the challenge and responsibility. He interpreted and shaped an expanded vision of what might be possible. He made some of the magic, and together Bank Street and Jack grew in stature and spirit.

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<sup>374</sup> It was clear that Jack saw his role as chief executive officer and recognized the "psychological trauma" caused by Lucy's departure. Niemeier interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p.7.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, p. 9. Jack was "quite aware of the need for certain behaviors on my part."

<sup>376</sup> Niemeier interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975, pp. 51-52.

<sup>377</sup> Niemeyer interview with Edith Gordon, 11/11/1975, p. 12.

<sup>378</sup> Cenedella noted (p. 286) that "Working on a larger canvas held the danger of diluting the founding ideals, and the older staff, jealously guarding those core ideals, were not all supportive of Niemeyer's agenda."

<sup>379</sup> Herbert Zimiles, remarks at memorial service, 6/24/2004.

<sup>380</sup> McIntosh, interview with Edith Gordon, 4/18/1987.

<sup>381</sup> Gelb remarks at memorial service, 6/24/2004.

<sup>382</sup> Interview with Edith Gordon, 8/11/1975. Jack recalled that in the late 1950's he "went out without checking with Charlotte Winsor who headed the Graduate Programs Division and got a grant to start the first science courses. Ten years later I would have fired myself for doing something like that..." It seems likely that Jack knew from earlier conversations that Winsor would not be supportive of the idea because Bank Street had no in-house expertise in science education and her Division was already straining under the demands of the Public School Workshops.

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### **Bank Street College Archives**

Many of the resources used for this project came from the extensive and professionally-organized archival collections housed in the College Library. Archival documents consulted came from the following series; RG1 (Board of Trustees, mainly SG2); RG2 (Office of the President, specifically the Mitchell, Niemeier, and Roberts subgroups); RG10 (specifically SG3 holding Barbara Biber's correspondence); and RG11 (specifically SG1 holding general information). The Niemeier collection of approximately 55 archival boxes was the primary resource.

### **Oral Histories**

Bank Street alumna Edith Gordon began working on an oral history project in 1975, encouraged by President Francis Roberts and senior members of the faculty. She gathered a large number of oral histories between 1975 and 1987; the bulk of interviewing was done in 1975-1977. Her oral history project was transformed into a doctoral dissertation research project. Gordon was a student in the Stony Brook University Ph.D. program and submitted *Educating the Whole Child* in partial fulfillment of the program's degree requirements. She was granted a Ph.D. in History in 1988.

The transcripts of selected interviews were used for this project. In some cases, the transcripts are drafts, with changes and corrections hand-written; in others, the transcripts were edited and approved by the person interviewed.

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Kandell, Florence (9/15/1975)

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Roberts, Francis (7/6/1977)

Sadler, Sheila Emerson (12/30/1975)

Shapiro, Edna (2/14/1983)

Winsor, Charlotte (2/24/1975)

### **Jack Niemeyer Oral Histories**

In 1995 and 1996, Jack was interviewed by his colleague Richard Greenspan, who had worked with him on the Principals Speak project. The transcripts of these interviews are unedited. In 1998, Jack asked his neighbor and friend, Judith Barret (a retired teacher) to edit and update several of the Greenspan transcripts to help Bank Street prepare a booklet as part of the College's celebration of his 90th birthday on May 13, 1998.

In addition, Graduate faculty member Lonetta Gaines interviewed Jack on November 11, 1988 with Bill Hooks (Bank Street Publications) participating. The interview was part of a series of video oral histories funded by the W. Alton Jones Foundation. The video is available on iTunes.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/john-niemeyer-interview-bill/id634507741?i=1000164208321&mt=2>

### **Interviews**

I interviewed the following individuals during the course of this project, taking notes rather than using a recorder. In some cases, the individuals did not recall any significant interactions with Jack Niemeyer but were helpful in providing a sense of Bank Street during his presidency and useful comments about the impact of his leadership on the institution. Each person is identified by their status or the period in Jack's life where the interview was focused.

Leona Arnold (Bank Street alumna – Cary Fellow)

Nancy Balaban (retired Bank Street Graduate faculty)

Peter Bailey (Oak Lane Country Day School)

Judith Barrett (friend and neighbor of Jack's, and editor of 1996 transcripts)

Suzanne Carothers (Bank Street alumna; SFC faculty)

Stan Chu (Bank Street alumnus, Graduate faculty)

Joan Cenedella (Bank Street alumna and senior administration)

Richard Feldman (retired Bank Street Graduate faculty)

Lia Gelb (retired Bank Street faculty)

Susan Ginsberg (former Bank Street staff; Day Care)

Robert Granger (former Bank Street vice president; educational research leader)

Ellen Galinsky (Bank Street alumna, SFC teacher, Family Center co-founder)

Robie Harris (Bank Street alumna, Early Childhood Center, media projects)

Alice Kandell (former student in children's school at 69 Bank Street)

Augusta Souza Kappner (former Bank Street President)

Fern Khan (former Dean and Board member)

Ellen C. Lagemann (historian of American education)

Leonard Marcus (children's literature expert)

Anne Mitchell (former Bank Street staff; early childhood education leader)

Barbara Norica-Broms (former Bank Street staff)

Katherine O'Donnell (retired Graduate School faculty)

Nancy and Alyn Rovin (Jack's daughter and son-in-law)

Francis Roberts (Jack's successor as Bank Street President)

Janet and George Scurria (friends of Jack's; George is former Trustee; SFC parents)

John Shutkin (former Board chair)

Susan Wilson (Bank Street alumna; former Trustee)

Pearl Zeitz (former SFC faculty)

Herbert Zimiles (former director, Research Division)



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Borden has been a member of the Bank Street College community since 2004. He was the chief advancement officer (fundraising, alumni relations, and communications) until 2015, and retired from Bank Street in 2016. Previously, he held similar roles at several universities (Adelphi, Columbia, and Yale) as well as at Columbia Teachers College, St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. He began his working life as a program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Born and bred in Baltimore, where he met his wife Marian, John has lived in Washington, DC, New Haven, and since 1981 in Larchmont and New Rochelle, NY. Marian and he have been blessed with four adult children and five exceptional grandchildren.

John has a bachelor's degree from Franklin & Marshall College and a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins University. He sees his work in development as an important component of institution building and felt an immediate connection to the challenges that Jack Niemeyer faced and his approach to building Bank Street into a significant player in public education in the U.S.

John enjoys reading history, especially biographies by Scott Berg, Robert Caro, Ron Chernow, Joseph Ellis, and David McCullough. Their impressive work encouraged him to pursue this project on Jack Niemeyer.

# THE WAY WILL OPEN

## A STUDY OF THE PRESIDENCY OF JACK NIEMEYER AT BANK STREET COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

John H. "Jack" Niemeyer was Bank Street College's first "official" president. From 1956-73, during one of the most turbulent political and social eras in America, he led the transformation of a small teacher preparation institution into a thriving center of innovation that influenced American educational policies. McCarthyism was fading but still pungent. Cities were grappling with the impact of the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown* school desegregation decision. Cold War shadows darkened when the USSR launched the Sputnik satellite. Rapid expansion of American education converged with growing diversity within the nation's population and the crusade for civil rights. John F. Kennedy's election brought new hope for change, and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs attempted to fulfill lofty goals. Niemeyer's tenure included the Vietnam War, the Black Power movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and many other upheavals. Richard Nixon's election in 1968 created new challenges during Jack's final years of leadership.

Niemeyer expanded Bank Street's engagement with public schools and introduced new educational ventures, such as the *Bank Street Readers*. He helped to create the national preschool program Head Start. He was an ardent champion of progressive education, school integration, equal access to educational opportunities, and anti-poverty programs. Idealistic and pragmatic, Niemeyer always believed that with perseverance and ingenuity, as the Quaker quotation said, "The way will open."