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## SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE AND THE ETHICS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

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Policy can cause tragedy. A famous example is the tragedy described in Sophocles' play *Antigone*. In this play, Creon, the political leader of ancient Thebes, causes tragedy in his quest to educate his people about civic loyalty. The conflict engendered by his educational policy eventually brings death and suffering. While educational policy seldom results in such personal and bloody outcomes, it can clearly cause, or contribute to, heartbreaking results. Since tragedy is something to avoid in formulating policy, it may be useful for us to look at Sophocles' work and ask: Why did this educational policy result in tragedy? What can we learn from it?

*Antigone* is the last of Sophocles' three "Theban" plays. The action takes place in Thebes, after the events of the famous Oedipus story: Oedipus has long ago discovered he has killed his father and married his own mother, Jocasta. The play *Antigone* centers on two of Oedipus' adult sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, one of his daughters, Antigone, and Oedipus' brother-in-law, Creon, the ruler of Thebes. After Oedipus is exiled, blinded and disgraced, Thebes eventually erupts in civil war, with Eteocles leading one faction and Polyneices leading another. The brothers kill each other in battle and their bodies lie dead on the field. Creon commands that the dead body of Polyneices, a traitor to Thebes, be left to rot on the field of battle rather than receive the proper burial rites. Creon's decree famously confronts young Antigone with a tragic dilemma. Does she honor the ties of her family relationship and bury her brother, Polyneices, or does she remain true to the laws of the state? Spoiler alert: She chooses to bury her brother, which starts a chain of events that leaves several people dead and Antigone herself committing suicide. Creon's educational policy had tragic results.

Since I will be applying this analysis to educational policy, I should admit that I will of course be defining "policy" broadly. A policy is any sort of consciously chosen and purposeful guideline or plan governing current and future action, whether written or unwritten, official or unofficial, on the national level or in individual teacher-student dyads. More precisely, I have in mind Kerr's contention that we may call something a "policy" when "some agent (A) plans to do something in particular (X) whenever particular conditions (C) obtain, for some purpose (P)."<sup>1</sup> A policy becomes an "educational" policy when it intersects with the educational concerns of what is taught, how it is taught, and

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<sup>1</sup> Donna H. Kerr, *Educational Policy: Analysis, Structure, and Justification* (New York: David McKay Company, 1976), 10.

to whom it is taught. Kerr delineates these concerns into categories of curriculum, methodology, resources, and distribution. Using this framework, we would say that Creon (the political agent) refuses to let anyone bury Polyneices (the plan) as long as his body is rotting in the field (the particular condition) to teach his populace about loyalty (purpose). The plan includes educational content (education for loyalty) and methodology (showing by example what happens to the disloyal). Thus, it is reasonable to think of Creon's decree as an "educational policy." Some may complain that this definition is too broad and, for some purposes, they might be right. At the same time, it seems better to err on the side of broadness. Using an excessively narrow vision may exclude too much from our moral gaze, excluding resources (like *Antigone*) that might prove useful.

#### CREON'S POLICY: ITS PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Creon's educational policy is concerned with the security of the state. A strong state grants to its citizens security and gives them freedom from the dangers of the world beyond. Creon asserts, "I would not count / any enemy of my country as a friend— / because of what I know, that she it is / which gives us our security" (lines 205–205).<sup>2</sup> A strong state demands loyal citizens: "Anyone thinking / another man more a friend than his own country, / I rate him nowhere" (203–205). Stability of the state is essential because the state gives human beings their proper role and function; it allows them to realize a flourishing life. A person with divided institutional and political loyalties is a divided individual: a person existing, in Creon's words, "nowhere."

For Creon, loyalty to the state is best shown by obedience to its rulers. Without the people uniting around the common ruler, security is non-existent. "There is nothing worse / than disobedience to authority," Creon explains. "It destroys cities, it demolished homes; / it breaks and routs one's allies. Of successful lives / the most of them are saved by discipline" (726–730). Creon believes he knows the effects of disobedience to authority because he has seen it: his city has been ravaged by war and families have been torn apart. Indeed, as *Antigone* begins, the city is smoldering and the bodies are rotting in the field because, it seems, of Polyneices' disloyal actions.

In Creon's mind, then, citizens must be taught about loyalty and disloyalty. Given these motivations, his educational policy seems to follow easily. As he states his educational decree, he first highlights the rewards that come from loyalty to the state:

I here proclaim  
to the citizens about Oedipus' sons.  
For Eteocles, who died this city's champion,  
showing his valor's supremacy everywhere,

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<sup>2</sup> Quotes from the text of *Antigone* are from David Grene and Richard Lattimore, *Greek Tragedies, Vol. I* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

he shall be buried in his grave with every rite  
of sanctity given to heroes under earth (211–216).

The rewards of disloyalty, on the other hand, are to be paraded before the people in vivid and grotesque fashion. He outlines the crime that has been committed and the punishment that is to follow:

However, his brother, Polyneices, a returned exile,  
who sought to burn with fire from top to bottom  
his native city, and the gods of his own people;  
who sought to taste the blood he shared with us,  
and lead the rest of us to slavery—  
I here proclaim to the city that this man  
shall no one honor with a grave and none shall mourn.  
You shall leave him without burial; you shall watch him  
chewed up by birds and dogs and violated.  
Such is my mind in the matter, never by me  
shall the wicked man have precedence in honor  
over the just. But he that is loyal to the state  
in death, in life alike, shall have my honor (216–229).

The populace, as they watch Polyneices' body being desecrated, will learn the importance of loyalty and of yielding to the will of the state. We learn from Antigone that Creon's policy also dictates that, to whoever impedes the educational method of the rotting corpse, “death in prescribed, / and death by stoning publicly” (41–42). Therefore, those showing further disloyalty, defying Creon's decree, will be held up for public condemnation and punishment. This punishment also has the pedagogical function of expressing civic disapproval.

Through this decree, Creon intends to instruct his people in the proper political framework; he is creating citizens, in his mind, citizens who would be loyal and knowledgeable. They will know the preferences of the ruler. They will know the importance of the state and of promoting state stability. The decree is ultimately responsible for the death of Creon's niece (Antigone), son (Haemon), and wife (Eurydice). Upon learning of Haemon's demise, the Chorus chides Creon saying, “I think you have learned justice—but too late” (1347). Creon's mournful response is unsurprising: “Yes, I have learned it to my bitterness. At this moment / God has sprung on my head a vast weight / and struck me down” (1348–1350). Thus, Creon himself recognizes the tragedy caused by his policy. Sophocles seems mindful that he is showing his audience the effects of a bad plan and suspect leadership. Accordingly, he reveals how the policy was formed and how it was implemented, and how it led to tragedy.

#### THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE POLICY WAS FORMED

To understand how Creon's policy was created, it is important to look at the surrounding social context implied by the narrative. The decree was made at the end of a long spiral of community suffering. The mythological history of

Thebes described in the Oedipus plays had seen only a few years of peace and prosperity. They had been troubled by the riddling Sphinx, to whom they had been forced to pay a heavy tribute. Oedipus, Antigone's father, had freed the city from the curse and was anointed king of Thebes. The citizens from Thebes then began to suffer from a pestilence, and King Oedipus, in an effort to save the city, sought out the wisdom of Delphi. Oedipus discovered that he had murdered his own father and had wedded his own mother. Upon learning of this, Jocasta (his wife/ mother) subsequently committed suicide and Oedipus gouged out his own eyes. He was then banished from the kingdom with his two daughters, Antigone and Ismene. Yet such gruesome displays among the ruling class did not end the woes of Thebes. After Oedipus' banishment from Thebes, the rule of Thebes shifted to the sons of Oedipus, Polyneices and Eteocles. Polyneices and Eteocles agreed to rule jointly, taking turns ruling on alternating years. Eteocles' turn came up first, but at the end of his year of power he renegeed on the agreement, seizing permanent control and banishing Polyneices from the kingdom. In response, Polyneices raised an army in nearby Argos and returned to restore himself to power. A civil war ensued as the armies of Polyneices attacked the armies of Eteocles at Thebes. In the battle, Polyneices and Eteocles killed each other, leaving Thebes decimated by war and dangling precariously on the brink of disaster. The populace, we learn, wanted more than anything "forgetfulness of these wars" (163). After years of suffering, intrigue, and instability, the citizens of Thebes were no doubt ready to be ruled by anyone promising peace and security. This was the promise of Creon in a time of perceived crisis. There is a feeling of frustration among the suffering populace and a feeling of crisis occasioned by disease, violence, and civil war. To proclaim crisis, whether justified or not, is to assert that desperate times are calling for desperate measures. The context is set for the bad policy.

Creon's decree, we learn, came only one day after the battle for Thebes. There was insufficient time for this new ruler to think things through. He, too, would be worthy of the bitter criticism that the goddess Artemis hurled at King Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus*: "You did not stay for oaths, nor voice of oracles, nor gave a thought to what time might have shown; only too quickly you hurled curses at your son and killed him" (1319–1323). King Creon, like King Theseus, made a decision quickly while the anger of perceived betrayal and battle still burned hot.

Indeed, one of the consequences of haste is a lack of dialogue and consultation. The list of people whom Creon could have consulted was long, and his own narrow vision and stubbornness kept him from consulting with those who could give him the best advice—those people who would give different perspectives. First, Creon refuses to listen to those who are younger than he is. Speaking of his son Haemon, he asks rhetorically: "Should we that are my age learn wisdom / from young men such as he?" (785–786). Second, he refuses to listen to the sentiments of the populace. "Should the city tell me how I am to rule them?" he asks himself (794). Third, he appears to even lack the foresight to consult with the Theban Elders (the chorus) who seem to learn of the decree only

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as it is publicly pronounced. Fourth, he refuses on principle to listen to half of his population, the women. He states bluntly, “When I am alive no woman shall rule” (579).

Sophocles’ list so far includes the following groups as being excluded: the young, the city, the Theban Elders, and women. For our purposes, this presents an interesting range of “consultation categories,” people to consult when formulating educational policy. The “young” we might think of as students—have we listened to student voices concerning the decisions that will affect them? The “city” points us toward the local community—have prominent community groups and leaders had input? The “Theban Elders” we might think of as those with experience and expertise—have we consulted researchers and scholars who have studied the situation? “Women,” we might think of as a group that didn’t traditionally have a political voice (women did not participate in Sophocles’ Athenian democracy)—have we reached out in particular to groups that have been silent or silenced?

More important for this particular tragedy, Creon refuses to listen to those who had differing religious beliefs. He states his own view firmly, “No, I am certain no human has the power to pollute the gods” (1103–1104). Creon appears to believe, then, that the world of human decisions is, at least in some areas, outside of the gods’ concern. It does not seem to cross his mind that some believers, like Antigone, would think quite the opposite, namely, that humans *could* pollute the gods by impious action. Antigone’s attitude toward the decree is clear:

Yes, it was not Zeus that made the proclamation;  
nor did Justice, which lives with those below,  
enact such laws as that, for mankind.  
I did not believe your proclamation had such power to enable  
one who will someday die  
to override God's ordinances, unwritten and secure.  
They are not of today and yesterday;  
they live forever; none knows when first they were.  
These are the laws whose penalties I would not  
incur from the gods, through fear of any man's temper (494–  
503).

Perhaps Creon simply did not know that people like Antigone possessed differing beliefs. Creon’s surprise upon learning that it is Antigone who has violated his decree is evident. “Do you know what you are saying?” he desperately asks the sentry. His shock is evident as he repeats, “Do you mean it?” (442). His surprise at being confronted with Antigone implies that he had never considered that Antigone would balk at his decree. The people over whom the decree was implemented, it seems, were abstract and distant. Creon’s policy was not devised with real individuals in mind. Creon misjudged human nature because he saw human beings in the abstract. Since Creon did not understand

that his policy would present problems for specific individuals, his moral imagination never took its first step.

As his policy is enforced and Antigone is apprehended, Creon closes his ears to those who would offer him sound advice. Creon's face, we are told, was "terrible to the simple citizen; it frightens him from words you dislike to hear" (744–745). Haemon, however, is not pushing away critics with his scowling countenance, and he is thus closer to sources of information. He tries to reason with Creon, saying, "but what I can hear, in the dark, are things like these: / the city mourns for this girl; they think she is dying / most wrongly and most undeservedly / of all womenkind, the most glorious acts" (746–749). He continues,

A man who thinks that he alone is right  
or what he says, or what he is himself,  
unique, such men, when opened up, are seen  
to be quite empty. For a man, though he be wise,  
it is no shame to learn—learn many things,  
and not maintain his views too rigidly (762–767).

The chorus of Theban elders also offers advice to Creon as the policy is implemented, which likewise goes unheeded. Moreover, there began to be a climate of fear surrounding criticism. After hearing of Creon's decree, the Theben Chorus asks, "What else, then, do your commands entail?" Creon responds, "That you should not side with those who disagree." To which the Chorus replies, "There is none so foolish as to love his own death" (237–239). Creon is a man completely closed to criticism. Haemon sums up Creon's failure by saying, "You want to talk but never to hear and listen" (821). This attitude truncated his imagination, blinding him to the possible results of his policy.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Creon's educational policy was that it served as a weapon for hidden agendas. For Creon, enforcement of the decree became attached to his own insecurities as a new ruler. It also became attached to important ideas about his sense of self, specifically, to his concept of masculinity. When the policy had been violated, he took it personally on many levels. It stirs his masculine anger to see Antigone's defiance: "I swear I am no man and she the man / if she can win this and not pay for it" (528–529). At the same time, Antigone uses the violation of the educational policy to fulfill her personal agenda—in this case, her suicidal intentions.

I know that I will die—of course I do—  
even if you had not doomed me by proclamation.  
If I shall die before my time, I count that a profit.  
How can such as I, that live  
among such troubles, not find a profit in death? (504–508).

Defiance of the proclamation becomes tied to other issues for both Antigone and Creon. The policy becomes a vehicle, a tool, through which Creon and Antigone maneuver to achieve their personal desires. Since the policy was

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being used in this way, conflict surrounding the policy became rigid and irresolvable.

#### APPLICATIONS TO EDUCATIONAL POLICY

To sum up the problems that have been exhibited in *Antigone*, we find that Creon's decision was made in the midst of crisis and desperation and that Creon attempted to utilize the crisis to justify his extreme educational policy. Creon's policy was made quickly in a matter of hours or, at most, a day, after the death of Polyneices. The decision was made without input and criticisms from important outside groups, ignoring the “categories of consultation,” and it was made seemingly without a thought about to who might disagree with the policy—that is, it was made with only abstractions in mind. The policy was enforced with a continuing lack of outside consultation, and it became a cover for private agendas driving the conflict forward. In this last section, I apply what we learn to contemporary educational policy and look closely at three examples: *A Nation At Risk* (1983), the *Gun Free Schools Act* (1994), and the *Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act* (2018).

Thinking of *Antigone* as a cautionary tale about policy gives us several things to look out for in education. For example, just as Creon failed to consider the impact of his decree on specific people like Antigone, educational policy is often formed and justified on the basis of abstractions. These abstractions sometimes appear as vast piles of aggregate statistics, which do not tell us anything about any specific student or any existing school. Abstractions also appear in vast generalizations about public education. In fact, the rhetoric of the dismal failure of “America’s schools” has put in motion policy dynamics that have upended public education and continue to do so. The language of educational crisis, mixed with generalized abstractions of American schools, is a potent concoction, animating extreme educational reforms.

Note, first, the language of crisis in the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, which seems specifically calculated to provoke alarm and panic: “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. . . . We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.”<sup>3</sup> Ravitch describes how the fairly sensible ideas of the *A Nation at Risk* report were quickly forgotten, while the panicked tone and doomsday mindset persisted, leading eventually to the radical experiment in narrow standards and the harmful, unrelenting testing of NCLB.<sup>4</sup> *A Nation at Risk* deliberately provoked panic; this was its lasting legacy, paving the way for the failed educational policies that followed.

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<sup>3</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books, 2010), 22.

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Second, note the abstractions involved with discussing the public schools in this way. The immense variety within American schools was ignored, with everything grouped together and labeled American “mediocre educational performance.” The implications of this move are important. In one study, when people were asked to grade the abstraction that is the “nation’s public schools,” only 19 percent of adults gave the schools an A or B. When parents of school-aged children were asked to grade their local schools, however, an entity existing not in abstraction but in real experience, 72 percent gave the local school an A or B.<sup>5</sup> Now, if policy is implemented based on the abstraction of the “American public schools” rather than schools that one knows best, different sorts of policies will feel appropriate. The abstraction, easily vilified, justifies more extreme measures, such as the highly intrusive testing and accountability systems that were eventually put into place. This is not to say that radical reforms aren’t ever justified—sometimes they might be. And this is also not to say that working with some abstractions, such as statistical generalization, is always harmful; indeed, it cannot (and should not) be avoided. But what can be avoided is working *purely* with abstractions. A good dose of thoughtful, qualitative research can go a long way in avoiding this problem. Rather than prohibiting abstractions and radical reform, *Antigone* points at these as areas of caution, things to think carefully about in the process of policy formation.

Beyond crisis rhetoric and abstractions, there is also much to say about the *Nation at Risk* policy era serving a number of unstated agendas. News reports have documented how money and influence moves from private companies seeking greater markets to foundations and policy organizations, to politicians making decisions about legislative priorities. For-profit companies like K12 Inc., Connections Education (a subsidiary of Pearson), and Blackboard Connect funnel money to foundations such as Jeb Bush’s Foundation for Excellence in Education and to policy organizations like ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), that then wield influence in state legislatures. One well-documented example is how policies expanding virtual education in Maine were shaped by a foundation official who was simultaneously serving as a registered lobbyist for profit-seeking enterprises. In this case, it seems that the urgent calls to reform education, born mostly out of exaggerated fears, have served as a vehicle for private agendas.<sup>6</sup> Sophocles would not be surprised.

Next, consider the school security and “zero tolerance” policies that were passed by many states and school districts over the past 30 years. These

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<sup>5</sup> David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Colin Woodward, “Special Report: The Profit Motive Behind Virtual Schools in Maine,” *Portland Press Herald*, September 1, 2012, [https://www.pressherald.com/2012/09/01/virtual-schools-in-maine\\_2012-09-02/](https://www.pressherald.com/2012/09/01/virtual-schools-in-maine_2012-09-02/). See also Stephanie Simon, “Writing Bills, Finding Funds: Bush’s Foundation at Work,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 27, 2012, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-xpm-2012-11-27-sns-rt-us-usa-education-bushbre8aq07l-20121126-story.html>.

policies were initially a response to the prominent school shootings in the 1980s and 1990s. In introducing the federal *Gun Free School Zones Act* (1990), U.S. Representative William J. Hughes (D) introduced the bill to the Subcommittee on Crime saying:

This bill . . . addresses the increasing problems and tragedies which occur all too regularly when guns are brought onto school property. We are bombarded by news reports of yet another student or teacher killing at the hands of either an armed and deranged person, or by an angry and armed fellow student.<sup>7</sup>

Representative Hughes then mentions two high profile school shootings in the late 1980s: the Laurie Dann shooting of six children in Chicago (one of which was killed), and Patrick Purdy's shooting of 35 children in Stockton, California (five of which were killed). As with NCLB, the policy arguments for school security began with the scary and sensational; in this case, the accounts of murdered children. No mention was made of the relative safety of schools compared to other situations or the vast unlikelihood of a student being murdered at school. Further legislation was enacted in 1994, with the federal *Gun Free Schools Act*. Under this federal act, states were required to maintain zero tolerance policies regarding guns and explosives, but such policies were not required for drugs, alcohol, or other infractions. While some discretion was given to school administrators, little emphasis or provision was made for due process, a situation leading to bizarre consequences, such as students being expelled for bringing small knives accidentally left in pants pockets or expelled for bringing pairing knives accidentally included in lunches.<sup>8</sup> The policy was made in the abstract, blind to real-world situations.

Even more important than the lack of due process provisions, was how many states used whatever discretion they were given in the 1994 law to expand zero-tolerance policies beyond guns and explosives. The 1994 law established only a minimum bar of zero-tolerance, and state policy makers pushed for more. Alicia Insley, writing a few years after the Act, bemoaned, "Yet, administrators often fail to use this discretionary authority to limit mandatory expulsions and instead, have chosen to use this discretion to expand zero tolerance policies to require suspensions and expulsions of children for a myriad of infractions."<sup>9</sup> States began stipulating that subjective offenses, like "defiance to authority,"

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<sup>7</sup> *Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990: Hearings on H.R. 3757, Session 2, Before the Select Subcomm. on Crime*, 101st Cong. 144 (1990) (statement of William J. Hughes, Representative in Congress from the State of New Jersey).

<sup>8</sup> Kathleen M. Cerrone, "The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994: Zero Tolerance Takes Aim at Procedural Due Process," *Pace Law Review* 20, no. 1 (1999): 131–188.

<sup>9</sup> Alicia C. Insley, "Suspending and Expelling Children from Educational Opportunity: Time to Reevaluate Zero Tolerance Policies," *American University Law Review* 50, no. 4 (April 2001): 1039–1074.

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“disruptive or disorderly behavior,” or “disrespect,” were subject to zero-tolerance treatment. Unfortunately, few policy makers imagined how such categories might harm students and be used disproportionately against communities of color. The number of suspension rates for students has, in fact, doubled since the 1970s, with Black students being expelled or suspended at three times the rate of White students. And Black students are more often suspended for these subjective infractions, like showing disrespect.<sup>10</sup> This is alarming: suspension and expulsion have a demonstrably negative impact on students across a range of measures.<sup>11</sup> These safety policies, then, made in a climate of fear and paranoia, with limited moral imagination and contextual understanding, have wrought palpable damage to students of color, as suspension and expulsion have become a dominant means of school behavior management.

Looking forward, we might also worry about the aftermath of the 2018 Parkland School Shooting in which 17 people were killed. A month after the shooting, the Florida legislature rushed to pass the 2018 *Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act* (Florida Senate bill 7026). This was a complex bill, a hodgepodge of different positions. Some the elements were quite sensible, including raising the minimum age for buying rifles, establishing background checks and waiting periods, banning “bump stocks,” and providing money for school mental health services. Other elements were troubling, including increasing the use of school resource officers (a strategy often regarded as perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline<sup>12</sup>), increasing physical security measures (like metal detectors, which seem to have a negative effect on school climate),<sup>13</sup> and, most controversially, creating programs to arm school personnel. In Creon-esque fashion, the provision allowing for armed educators ignored the “categories of consultation,” passing over the objections of many Parkland

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<sup>10</sup> Russell J. Skiba, Robert S. Michael, Abra Carroll Nardo, and Reece L. Peterson, “The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment,” *The Urban Review* 34 (2002): 317–342.

<sup>11</sup> Council on School Health, “Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion,” *Pediatrics* 131, no. 3 (2013): e1001–e1002.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Peter Price, “When Is a Police Officer an Officer of the Law?: The Status of Police Officers in Schools,” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 99, no. 2 (2009): 541–570. But see also Christina Pigott, Amy E. Stearns, David N. Khey, “School Resource Officers and the School to Prison Pipeline: Discovering Trends of Expulsions in Public Schools,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 43 (2018): 120–138.

<sup>13</sup> Billie Gastic, “Metal Detectors and Feeling Safe at School,” *Education and Urban Society* 43, no. 4 (2011): 486–498; Suzanne E. Perumean-Chaney and Lindsay M. Sutton, “Students and Perceived School Safety: The Impact of School Security Measures,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 38 (2013): 570–588.

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surviving students and families,<sup>14</sup> educators,<sup>15</sup> and community members.<sup>16</sup> In particular, the fears of Black lawmakers, that Black students would be falsely targeted as perpetrators and therefore subject to more danger,<sup>17</sup> were dismissed. Calls to ban assault weapons by survivors were also quickly dismissed.<sup>18</sup> This massive legislation, with so many controversial and contested provisions, was rushed through only a few weeks after the Parkland shootings.

#### CONCLUSION

In these examples, we can see educational policy makers following the same patterns that Sophocles warns us about. We see policy made in haste, under a crisis mentality that is used to justify extreme measures. We see that the “categories of consultation” are ignored. We see a failure of moral imagination—specifically about how a policy might impact different groups in different ways, with some groups being harmed more than others. In all of these examples, the larger consequences of such policy formation will take years to manifest themselves. One suspects there will be unexpected consequences. One hopes they will not be tragic; one worries that they will be. Somewhere, Antigone whispers, softly, a warning to us from behind the walls of her tomb.

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<sup>14</sup> Sean Coughlan, “Florida Shooting: Survivors Reject the Arming of Teachers,” *BBC News*, March 17, 2008, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-43441226>. Survivors have continued to press this point. See, Patricia Mazzei, “Florida Moves Toward Arming Teachers, Despite Opposition from Parkland Students,” *New York Times*, April 23, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/23/us/florida-teacher-armed.html>.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the provision arming educators was opposed by the Florida Education Association, the American Association of School Librarians, and the Florida PTA.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Man, “Florida Voters Oppose Arming Teachers and Support Police Working with Immigration Authorities,” *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, March 13, 2019, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/florida/fl-ne-cb-quinnipiac-poll-immigration-guns-climate-20190313-story.html>. The provision was also opposed by Mom’s Demand Action and the League of Women Voters.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Bousquet, Mary Ellen Klas, and Emily L. Mahoney, “Black lawmakers: Armed teachers will increase gun dangers for minority students,” *Miami Herald*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article202964449.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Monivette Cordeiro, “In Front of Parkland Students, Florida Lawmakers Decline to Take up Assault Weapons Ban,” *Orlando Weekly*, Feb 20, 2018, <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/Blogs/archives/2018/02/20/in-front-of-parkland-students-florida-lawmakers-decline-to-take-up-assault-weapons-ban>.

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