VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3 · FALL 2002

ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice

Partnership Education
Nonviolent Communication

ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3 AUTUMN 2002

Executive Editor
Jeffrey Kane

Associate Editor
Dale Snauwaert

Book Review Editor
Judith Kaufman

Editor Designate
William Crain

Editorial Board
Sue Books
Riane Eisler
David Elkind
Diana M. Feige
Maxine Greene
Kathleen Kesson
Rob Koegel
Jonathan Kozol
Jack Miller
Ron Miller
Nel Noddings
Jack Petrash
Madhu Suri Prakash
David Purpel
Molly Quinn
Douglas Sloan
Huston Smith
David Sobel
Shirley Steinberg
Jesse A. Stoff
Paul Theobauld
Dilafruz R. Williams
Atsuhiko Yoshida

Graphic Design
Anything Graphic

Production Editor
Charles Jakiela

Copyright © 2002 by
Holistic Education Press

Table of Contents

Editorial. Partnership and Nonviolent Communication in Education. Rob Koegel . . . 2

Partnership Education

Partnership Education for the 21st Century. Riane Eisler . . . 5

Learning How to Partner With My Students. Rob Koegel . . . 13

Practicing Linking. Sarah Pirtle . . . 16

Performance Notes on a Swan Song. Steven Motenko . . . 21

Essay Review: *Tomorrow's Children* by Riane Eisler. Reviewed by Ron Miller . . . 24

Nonviolent Communication

Transforming Power Relations: The Invisible Revolution. Miki Kashtan . . . 28

Democratic Educators as Compassionate Communicators. Thomas E. Kelly . . . 36

Lessons from the Skarpnäcks Free School. Sura Hart and Marianne Göthlin . . . 38

I Had a Vision But No Roadmap: My Journey to Nonviolent Communication in the Classroom. Paulette Pierce . . . 43

An Experiment in Life-Serving Education: The No-Sweat Project and Other Feats. Michael Dreiling . . . 49

Essay Review: *Living the Ideals of Holistic Education* by Marshall Rosenberg. Reviewed by Katherine Simon . . . 57

Teaching Children to Express Their Inner World. Susan Bello . . . 60

ENCOUNTER is an independent journal that views education from a holistic perspective and focuses on its role in helping a student develop a sense of personal meaning and social justice. Manuscripts (an original and three copies) should be submitted to the Editor, Jeffrey Kane, Long Island University, 700 Northern Blvd., Brookville, NY 11548, typed double spaced throughout with ample margins. Since a double blind review process is used, no indications of the author's identity should be included within the text after the title page. All manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the author-date format as described in chapter 16 of the 14th edition (1993) of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

ENCOUNTER (ISSN 1094-3838) is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by Holistic Education Press, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328. 1-800-639-4122. E-mail: <encounter@great-ideas.org> Website: <http://www.great-ideas.org>. Annual subscription rates are $39.95 for individuals and $85 for libraries and other multi-user environments. (Foreign subscribers, please add $9 to above rates.) Back issues are available at $10 per copy. Periodicals postage is paid at Brandon, VT, and at additional offices. This issue of **ENCOUNTER** was produced with Corel Ventura software and printed by Sharp Offset Printing (www.SharpOffsetPrinting.com) in Rutland, Vermont. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **ENCOUNTER**, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328.

Editorial

Partnership Education and Nonviolent Communication

Rob Koegel, Guest Editor

> I am puzzled why so many traditionalists place the onus on progressive educators such as myself to "prove" that the ideas we advocate can work. I look at our society and I look at our world, and it's clear to me that traditionalists have had nearly two centuries and I don't believe we've seen their ideas work.
>
> —Steven Wolk, *A Democratic Classroom*

Alfie Kohn (1999, 150) has observed that "the story of American schools is—and always has been—the story of doing things *to* students rather than working *with* them." Yet there is another side of this "story": progressive, holistic, transformative education. The history of traditional education is about *authoritarian control* and *transmission*; the history of progressive, holistic education is about *democratic empowerment* and *transformation*. It is about empowering students to realize their potential *with* others, not *against* others; nourishing ways of being that sustain caring, democratic learning communities; generating the capacities needed to change the world we have into the world we long for. Ultimately, whether we call ourselves holistic, progressive, or liberating educators, our goal is to infuse more respect and partnership into a world based on dominance and submission.

Transformative educators strive to nourish the habits of mind and relational skills a democracy needs in order to flourish. Yet we are constantly challenged when academic achievement is discussed. Again and again, we are told, "There is no evidence that nontraditional education promotes the quality and level of academic success that traditional education does."

This widespread belief ignores what is perhaps the best-kept secret in the educational world: the documented evidence that, as the following story suggests, nontraditional education "*works*" even in the terms defined by traditional educators.

The Quincy Method

In the early '70s, the school board members in Quincy, MA, conducted the annual school exam in person. The results alarmed them: The students read well from textbooks but could not understand material from unfamiliar sources. They knew rules of grammar but could not write an ordinary letter; they knew mathematical equations but could not apply them. The students had learned their lessons but the result was rote knowledge they could barely use.

The board hired a new superintendent who immediately did away with textbooks and readers, spelling and grammar books. With his assistance, educators created new materials for students; they moved the arts from the margins to the center of school life.

As they revised *what* was taught, educators also began to change *how* they taught. Students spent more time observing and analyzing what they studied. They engaged in experiential learning that provided many ways of appreciating and expressing what they were learning. More and more, students were linking the topics studied to their feelings and thoughts, to their interests and to their lives.

An interdisciplinary curriculum helped students hone basic reading and writing skills while studying topics such as geography or nature. Collaborative learning encouraged students to learn with and from others. Independent learning enabled students to explore topics that sparked their interests. A democratic learning community invited students to have more input into what and how they learned.

Over the next four years, nearly 30,000 educators and reporters traveled from all over the world to

study the Quincy Method. Still, the superintendent insisted that the Quincy Method was not original. "I have introduced no new principles, methods, or detail," he said (quoted in Shannon 1990, 19-20).

So begins Francis Parker's report about the *1878-79 school year* in Quincy, Massachusetts. No, that's not a misprint: As the superintendent, Parker created the "New Education" well over a hundred years ago. Two years after Parker began the Quincy Method in 1876, the performance of nearly all the Quincy grammar school students tested was rated excellent or satisfactory. In 1880, a survey conducted by the Massachusetts State Board of Education showed that Quincy students excelled at reading, writing, and spelling, and were ranked fourth in their county in math. In less than four years, a failing school system had become a success when judged by conventional standards (Shannon 1990, 47).

Is Progressive Education Effective?

I can imagine someone saying, "As inspiring as this example may be, it is just that: an example. What about other studies? Do they demonstrate that nontraditional education raises academic performance as well as or better than traditional education?" The answer to all these questions is an unequivocal "Yes."

Recently, Alfie Kohn (1999) published a 35-page survey of the hard evidence about progressive and traditional education. Kohn's review of hundreds of studies provides compelling evidence that progressive education is at least *as* effective as traditional education in promoting academic achievement—and often is more so.

Kohn (1999, 212) acknowledges that these studies show that traditional education is able to promote its own notion of academic success. But, he adds, there is a catch:

> Success can be claimed only by those who don't care about three other goals: (a) *long-term retention* of these facts or skills, (b) *a real understanding of ideas*, along with critical thinking, creativity, the capacity to apply skills to different kinds of tasks, and other more sophisticated intellectual outcomes, or (c) *students' interest in what they're doing*, and the likelihood that they'll come away with a continuing motivation to learn. (emphasis in original)

Put this way, the results are not at all surprising. Rather, they confirm what progressive, holistic educators have long known: The best way to teach the "3 R's" is to weave the "4 C's" of care, connection, cooperation, and choice into the learning process and the classroom community.

It is worth noting why transformative educators strive to infuse the "4 C's" into all aspects of our learning communities. We do so not only because it enhances intellectual development, though we value this goal. Rather, we champion the "4 C's" primarily because we value the fullest development of human beings *for its own sake*.

Transformative Educators Embrace The Partnership Paradigm

Equally important, our efforts are inspired by our commitment to nourish compassion, respect, and mutuality—to cultivate what Riane Eisler and David Loye (1990) call the "partnership way." This is precisely what Parker Palmer (1983, 9) was urging when he asked, "How can the places where we learn to know become places where we also learn to love?" Though we may not use this term, transformative educators want the "places where we learn" to foster partnership—within individuals, among people, in our society, and between humans and nature.

Partnership is vital to strive for and hard to create. As Riane Eisler shows in her essay about partnership education (see page 5 in this issue), much of the process, content, and structure of our present schools was originally designed to support authoritarian, male-dominant, inequitable, violent social structures. As Eisler points out, this may make sense for autocratic societies, but it is not suitable for a democracy. And it is surely not conducive to creating partnership within our classrooms or with our colleagues.

Most K-12 educators work in schools that are committed to top-down control, despite the fact that such hierarchical structures make it needlessly hard to educate for partnership. Nevertheless, as Steve Motenko's discussion of his work in a public elementary school suggests (see page 21), it is possible,

within limits, to live out our deepest dreams within unsupportive school settings.

There is another obstacle that makes it hard to educate for partnership: Relationships based on mutual fulfillment, respect, and empowerment are the exception, not the rule, in our society (Eisler 2002). So are the ways of thinking and being that are needed to sustain mutually respectful, caring relationships (Koegel 1997). To be sure, human beings have an innate ability to tell others what they feel and need without judgment. For example, babies do not blame their parents for their pain; they just ask them to help—by crying.

But we are taught an alien tongue at a young age and soon become fluent in it. This is the language of right and wrong, better and worse, normal and abnormal, judgment and blame. It is the language of coercion and control, dominance and submission, manipulation and invalidation. It is the language of hierarchy and power-over.

As we grow up in this culture, we all are exposed to this alienating, adversarial way of thinking and speaking. In varying degrees, we internalize it. These habits of mind make it hard for transformative educators to educate in ways that further our values and meet our students' needs. It is even more difficult for us to "walk our talk" when nearly everything around us continues to support old habits and attitudes.

We became educators because we love learning and want to care for students. As we become aware again of what has shaped us, we strengthen our ability to foster partnership learning communities. As we do this, we often go through a painful process of unlearning deeply rooted ways of relating that do not serve us or nourish our students. Fortunately, as Sarah Pirtle shows in her essay (see page 16), we all have a potentially rich tool that can help further this process: an "inner tuning fork" that acts as our compass, telling us if we are on course or not.

Nonviolent Communication

One resource that can help us strengthen this "inner tuning fork" is the process of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg, psychologist, educator, and international peace negotiator. (For an overview of Rosenberg's work and how it applies to education, see Kathy Simon's essay review on page 57.) As Miki Kashtan (page 28) shows, Rosenberg's framework embodies the core assumptions and values of holistic education. It also provides a practical process by which educators can more consciously, effectively, and lovingly realize the beliefs that inform our vision and animate our work.

NVC can be very useful to educators who are trying to relate to their students and to each other in ways that are more aligned with how they want to live and teach (see Paulette Pierce's and Michael Dreiling's essays at pages 43 and 49, respectively). The process of NVC is not only useful to individual educators or parents; it can also provide the foundational principles upon which an entire life-serving school can be built, as Sura Hart's essay about an elementary school in Sweden (page 38) shows.

Francis Parker noted more than a century ago that these principles are not new. Indeed, they are part of a river whose source is located thousands of years in the past, in the earliest efforts of people to nourish our species' highest potentials. These human innovations, what Riane Eisler calls "technologies of actualization," serve a dual function: They draw forth our minds' largely untapped capacities and they help construct a society that cultivates our highest human potentials.

Creating more and more powerful technologies of actualization: This is what transformative educators have been doing for centuries. This is what Partnership Education and Nonviolent Communication are providing now. There is a river and we are part of it.

References

Eisler, R. 2002. *The power of partnership: Seven relationships that will change your life*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Eisler, R. and D. Loye. 1998. *The partnership way: New tools for living and learning*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.

Koegel, R. 1997. Partnership intelligence and dominator intelligence: Their social roots, patterns, and consequences. *World Futures* 49: 39-63.

Kohn, A. 1999. *The schools our children deserve: Moving beyond traditional classrooms and "tougher standards."* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Palmer, P. 1983. *To know as we are known: A spirituality of education*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Rosenberg, M. 1999. *Nonviolent communication: A language of compassion*. Del Mar, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

Shannon, P. 1990. *The struggle to continue: Progressive reading instruction in the United States*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Partnership Education For the 21st Century

Riane Eisler

An educational system that is appropriate for a modern democracy is one based on a partnership, not a dominator, model.

At the core of every child is an intact human. Children have an enormous capacity for love, joy, creativity, and caring. Children have a voracious curiosity, a hunger for understanding and meaning. Children also have an acute inborn sense of fairness. Above all, children yearn for love and validation and, given half a chance, are able to give them bountifully in return. In today's world of rapid technological, economic, and social flux, the development of these capacities is more crucial than ever before.

One of the greatest and most urgent challenges facing today's children is how they will nurture and educate tomorrow's children. Therein lies the hope for the world.

I believe that if we give enough of today's children the nurturance and education that help them live in the equitable, nonviolent, gender-fair, caring, and creative ways that characterize partnership relations, they will be able to make enough changes in beliefs and institutions to support this way of relating in all spheres of life. They will also be able to give *their* children the nurturance and education that make the difference between realizing, or stunting, our great human potentials.

For over two centuries, educational reformers such as Johann Pestalozzi (1976/1781), Maria Montessori (1964/1912), John Dewey (1966/1916), and Paolo Freire 1973) have called for an education that prepares young people for democracy rather than authoritarianism and fosters ethical and caring relations.[1] Building on the work of these and other germinal educational thinkers and on my research and teaching experiences over three decades, I have proposed an expanded approach to educational reform.

I call this approach *partnership education*. It is designed not only to help young people better navigate through our difficult times but also to help them cre-

Note: This article is adapted from *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century* (Westview Press, 2000).

RIANE EISLER is the President of the Center for Partnership Studies <www.partnershipway.org>. She is the author of the recently published *The Power of Partnership* and *Tomorrow's Children*. Her other books, also drawing from her research as a cultural historian and systems theorist, include the international bestseller *The Chalice and The Blade*, which has been translated into seventeen languages, as well as *Sacred Pleasure*, *The Partnership Way*, and *Women, Men, and the Global Quality of Life*.

ate a future oriented more towards what in my study of 30,000 years of cultural evolution I have identified as a *partnership* rather than *dominator* model.

Although we may not use these terms, we are all familiar with these two models from our own lives. We know the pain, fear, and tension of relationships based on domination and submission, on coercion and accommodation, on jockeying for control, on trying to manipulate and cajole when we are unable to express our real feelings and needs, on the miserable, awkward tug of war for that illusory moment of power rather than powerlessness, on our unfulfilled yearning for caring and mutuality, on all the misery, suffering, and lost lives and potentials that come from these kinds of relations. Most of us also have, at least intermittently, experienced another way of being, one where we feel safe and are seen for who we truly are, where our essential humanity and that of others shines through, perhaps only for a little while, lifting our hearts and spirits, enfolding us in a sense that the world can after all be right, that we are valued and valuable.

But the partnership and dominator models not only describe individual relationships. They describe systems of belief and social structures that either nurture and support, or inhibit and undermine, equitable, democratic, nonviolent, and caring relations. Once we understand the partnership and dominator cultural, social, and personal configurations, we can more effectively develop the educational methods, materials, and institutions that foster a less violent, more equitable, democratic, and sustainable future. We can also more effectively sort out what in existing educational approaches we want to retain and strengthen or what we want to leave behind.

Although we do not usually think of education in this way, what has been passed from generation to generation as knowledge and truth derives from earlier times. This is important, since otherwise we would, as the expression goes, constantly have to reinvent the wheel, and much that is valuable would be lost. But it also poses problems.

To begin with, during much of recorded history prior to the last several hundred years, most institutions, including schools, were designed to support authoritarian, inequitable, rigidly male-dominant, and chronically violent social structures. That is, they were designed to support the core configuration of the dominator model. This kind of education was appropriate, even necessary, for autocratic kingdoms, empires, and feudal fiefdoms that were constantly at war. But it is not appropriate, and certainly is not necessary, for a democratic and more peaceful society. Nonetheless, much in the present curricula still reflects this legacy.

Many of our teaching methods also stem from much more authoritarian, inequitable, male-dominated, violent times. Like childrearing methods based on mottos like "spare the rod and spoil the child," these teaching methods were designed to prepare people to accept their place in rigid hierarchies of domination and unquestioningly obey orders from above, whether from their teachers in school, supervisors at work, or rulers in government. These educational methods often model uncaring, even violent behaviors, teaching children that violence and abuse by those who hold power is normal and right. They rely heavily on negative motivations, such as fear, guilt, and shame. They force children to focus primarily on unempathic competition (as is still done by grading on the curve or by norm referenced standardized tests) rather than empathic cooperation (as in team projects). And in significant ways, they suppress inquisitiveness.

Again, all of this was appropriate for the autocratic monarchies, empires, and feudal fiefdoms that preceded more democratic societies. It was appropriate for industrial assembly lines structured to conform to the dominator model, where workers were forced to be mere cogs in the industrial machine and to strictly follow orders without question. But it is decidedly *not* appropriate for a democratic society.

Partnership Education

Partnership education integrates three core interconnected components. These are partnership *process*, partnership *structure*, and partnership *content*.

Partnership process is about *how* we learn and teach. It applies the guiding template of the partnership model to educational *methods* and *techniques*. Are young people treated with caring and respect? Do teachers act as primarily lesson-dispensers and controllers, or more as mentors and facilitators? Are young people learning to work together or must they

continuously compete with each other? Are they offered the opportunity for self-directed learning? In short, is education merely a matter of teachers inserting "information" into young people's minds, or are students and teachers partners in a meaningful adventure of exploration and learning?

Partnership structure is about *where* learning and teaching take place: what kind of *learning environment* we would construct if we follow the partnership model. Is the structure of a school, classroom, and/or homeschool one of top-down authoritarian rankings, or is it a more democratic one? Do students, teachers, and other staff participate in school decision making and rule setting? Diagramed on an organizational chart, would decisions flow only from the top down and accountability only from the bottom up, or would there be interactive feedback loops? In short, is the learning environment organized in terms of hierarchies of domination ultimately backed up by fear, or by a combination of horizontal linkings and hierarchies of actualization where power is not used to disempower others but rather to empower them?

Partnership content is *what* we learn and teach. It is the *educational curriculum.* Does the curriculum effectively teach students not only basic academic and vocational skills but also the life-skills they need to be competent and caring citizens, workers, parents, and community members? Are we telling young people to be responsible, kind, and nonviolent at the same time that the curriculum content still celebrates male violence and conveys environmentally unsustainable and socially irresponsible messages? Does it present science in holistic, relevant ways? Does what is taught as important knowledge and truth include—not just as an add-on, but as integral to what is learned—both the female and male halves of humanity as well as children of various races and ethnicities? Does it teach young people the difference between the partnership and dominator models as two basic human possibilities and the feasibility of creating a partnership way of life? Or, both overtly and covertly, is this presented as unrealistic in "the real world"? In short, what kind of view of ourselves, our world, and our roles and responsibilities in it are young people taking away from their schooling?

Human Possibilities

Young people are being given a false picture of what it means to be human. We tell them to be good and kind, nonviolent and giving. But on all sides they see and hear stories that portray us as bad, cruel, violent, and selfish. In the mass media, the focus of both action entertainment and news is on hurting and killing. Situation comedies make insensitivity, rudeness, and cruelty seem funny. Cartoons present violence as exciting, funny, and without real consequences.

This holds up a distorted mirror of themselves to our youth. And rather than correcting this false image of what it means to be human, some aspects of our education reinforce it. History curricula still emphasize battles and wars. Western classics such as Homer's *Iliad* and many of Shakespeare's works romanticize "heroic violence." Scientific stories tell children that we are the puppets of "selfish genes" ruthlessly competing on the evolutionary stage.

If we are inherently violent, bad, and selfish, we have to be strictly controlled. This is why stories that claim this is "human nature" are central to an education for a dominator or control system of relations. They are, however, inappropriate if young people are to learn to live in a democratic, peaceful, equitable, and Earth-honoring way: the partnership way urgently needed if today's and tomorrow's children are to have a better future—perhaps even *any* future at all.

Youth futures are impoverished when their vision of the future comes out of a dominator worldview. This worldview is our heritage from earlier societies structured around rankings of "superiors" over "inferiors." In these societies, violence and abuse were required to maintain rigid rankings of domination—whether man over woman, man over man, nation over nation, race over race, or religion over religion.

Over the last several centuries we have seen many organized challenges to traditions of domination. These challenges are part of the movement toward a more equitable and caring partnership social structure worldwide. But at the same time, much in our education still reinforces what I call dominator socialization: a way of viewing the world and living in it that constricts young people's perceptions of what is possible or even moral, which keeps many of them locked into a perennial rebellion against what is without a real sense of what can be.

Partnership Education and the Transformation of Society

We need an education that counters dominator socialization—and with this, the unconscious valuing of the kinds of undemocratic, abusive, and even violent relations that were considered normal and even moral in earlier, more authoritarian times.

Partnership education includes education for partnership rather than dominator childrearing. Children who are dependent on abusive adults tend to replicate these behaviors with their children, having been taught to associate love with coercion and abuse. And often they learn to use psychological defense mechanisms of denial and to deflect repressed pain and anger onto those perceived as weak, in other words, in scapegoating, bullying, and on a larger scale in pogroms and ethnic cleansings.

In schools, teachers can help students experience partnership relations as a viable alternative though partnership process. And partnership structure provides the learning environment that young people need to develop their unique capacities.[2] But partnership process and structure are not enough without partnership content: narratives that help young people better understand human possibilities.

For example, narratives still taught in many schools and universities tell us that Darwin's scientific theories show that "natural selection," "random variation," and later ideas such as "kinship selection" and "parental investment" are the only principles in evolution. As David Loye shows in *Darwin's Lost Theory of Love*, actually Darwin did *not* share this view, emphasizing that, particularly as we move to human evolution, other dynamics, including the evolution of what he called the "moral sense" come into play. Or, as Frans deWaal writes in *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*, the desire for a *modus vivendi* fair to everyone may be regarded as an evolutionary outgrowth of the need to get along and cooperate.

Partnership education offers scientific narratives that focus not only on competition but also, following the new evolutionary scholarship, on cooperation. For example, young people learn how, by the grace of evolution, biochemicals called neuropeptides reward our species with sensations of pleasure, not only when we are cared for, but also when we care for others.

Awareness of the interconnected web of life that is our environment, which has largely been ignored in the traditional curriculum, leads to valuing of activities and policies that promote environmental sustainability: the new partnership ethic for human and ecological relations needed in our time.

Because the social construction of the roles and relations of the female and male halves of humanity is central to either a partnership or dominator social configuration, unlike the traditional male-centered curricula, partnership education is gender-balanced. It integrates the history, needs, problems, and aspirations of *both* halves of humanity into what is taught as important knowledge and truth. Because difference is *not* automatically equated with inferiority or superiority in the partnership model, partnership education is multicultural. It offers a pluralistic perspective that includes peoples of all races and a variety of backgrounds, as well as the real-life drama of the animals and plants of the Earth we share. Since partnership education offers a systemic approach, environmental education is not an add-on but an integral part of the curriculum.

Partnership education offers empirical evidence that our human strivings for love, beauty, and justice are just as rooted in evolution as our capacity for violence and aggression. It does not leave young people with the sense that life is devoid of meaning or that humans are inherently violent and selfish; if this were indeed the case, why would anyone bother trying to change anything!

Moreover, as the young people we have worked with through the Center for Partnership Studies' Partnership Education Program will attest, partnership education is much more interesting and exciting than the old curriculum. It offers many new perspectives: from partnership games, multicultural math, and a wealth of information about women worldwide to a new perspective on our prehistory and history; from the opportunity to talk about issues that really engage young people to ideas, resources, and social actions that can accelerate the shift from domination to partnership worldwide.

A New View of Our Past—and Potential Future

Much of the hopelessness of young people today stems from the belief that the progressive modern

movements have failed and that the only possibility is to either dominate or be dominated. There are many factors contributing to this distorted and limiting view of possible futures. But a major reason is that our education does not show young people that, despite enormous resistance and periodic regressions, the movements toward a more just and peaceful world have in fact made great gains—and that these gains have been due to the persistence of small, unpopular, and often persecuted minorities.

Partnership education offers young people a clearer understanding of history—one that is essential if they are to more effectively participate in creating the more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future that cannot be constructed within the context of social arrangements based on domination and control. It shows that the struggle for our future is not between capitalism and communism, between right and left, or religion and secularism, but between a mounting movement toward partnership relations in all spheres of life and the resistence (with periodic regressions) of strong dominator systems.

By using the analytical lens of the partnership/dominator continuum, young people can see that along with the massive technological upheavals of the last 300years has come a growing questioning of entrenched traditions of domination. The 18th century rights of man movement challenged the supposedly divinely ordained right of kings to rule over their "subjects," ushering in a shift from authoritarian monarchies to more democratic republics. The 18th and 19th feminist movement challenged men's supposedly divinely ordained right to rule over women and children in the "castles" of their homes. The movement against slavery, culminating during both the 19th and 20th centuries in worldwide movements to shift from the colonization and exploitation of indigenous peoples to independence from foreign rule, as well as global movements challenging economic exploitation and injustice, the rise of organized labor, and a gradual shift from unregulated robber-baron capitalism to government regulations, (for example, anti-monopoly laws and economic safety nets such as Social Security and unemployment insurance) also challenged entrenched patterns of domination. The 20th century civil rights and the women's liberation and women's rights movements were part of this continuing challenge, as were the 19th century pacifist movement and the 20th century peace movement, expressing the first fully organized challenge to the violence of war as a means of resolving international conflicts. The 20th century family planning movement has been as a key to women's emancipation as well as to the alleviation of poverty and greater opportunities for children worldwide. And the 20th century environmental movement has frontally challenged the once hallowed "conquest of nature" that many young people today rightly recognize as a threat to their survival.

But history is not a linear forward movement. Precisely because of the strong thrust toward partnership, there has been massive dominator systems resistance. We also have over the last 300 years seen resurgences of authoritarianism, racism, and religious persecutions. In the United States we have seen the repeal of laws providing economic safety nets, renewed opposition to reproductive rights for women, and periodic violence against those seeking greater rights. In Africa and Asia, even after Western colonial regimes were overthrown, we have seen the rise of authoritarian dictatorships by local elites over their own people, resulting in renewed repression and exploitation. We have seen a recentralization of economic power worldwide under the guise of economic globalization.[3] Under pressure from major economic players, governments have cut social services and shredding economic safety nets—an "economic restructuring" that is particularly hurtful to women and children worldwide. The backlash against women's rights has been increasingly violent, as in the government supported violence against women in fundamentalist regimes such as those in Afghanistan and Iran. We have also seen ever more advanced technologies used to exploit, dominate, and kill—as well as to further "man's conquest of nature," wreaking ever more environmental damage.

These regressions raise the question of what lies behind them—and what we can do to prevent them. Once again, there are many factors, as there always are in complex systems. But a major factor that becomes apparent using the analytical lens of the partnership and dominator social configurations is the need to fully integrate challenges to domination and violence in the so-called public spheres of politics

and economics and in the so-called private spheres of parent-child and man-woman relations.

In Europe, for example, a rallying cry of the Nazis was the return of women to their "traditional" place. In Stalin's Soviet Union, earlier feeble efforts to equalize relations between women and men in the family were abandoned. When Khomeini came to power, one of his first acts was to repeal family laws granting women a modicum of rights. And the brutally authoritarian and violent Taliban made the total domination of women a centerpiece of their violence-based social policy.

This emphasis on gender relations based on domination and submission was not coincidental. Dominator systems will continue to rebuild themselves unless we change the base on which they rest: domination and violence in the foundational human relations between parents and children and men and women.

The reason, simply put, it that how we structure relations between parents and children and women and men is crucial to how we perceive what is normal in human relations. It is in these intimate relations that we first learn and continually practice either partnership or domination, either respect for human rights or acceptance of human rights violations as "just the way things are."

Young people need to understand these still generally ignored social dynamics. They need to understand the significance of today's increased violence against women and children and of a mass media that bombards us with stories and images presenting the infliction of pain as exciting and sexy. If they are to build a world where economic and political systems are more just and caring, they need an awareness that these images normalize, and even romanticize, intimate relations of domination and submission as the foundation for a system based on rankings of "superiors" over "inferiors." At the same time, they need to understand the significance of the fact that child abuse, rape, and wife beating are increasingly prosecuted in some world regions, that a global women's rights movement is frontally challenging the domination of half of humanity by the other half, and that the United Nations has finally adopted conventions to protect children's and women's human rights. With an understanding of the connections between partnership or domination in the so-called private and public spheres, young people will be better equipped to create the future they want and deserve.

I have seen how inspired young people become once they understand that partnership relations—be they intimate or international—are all of one cloth. I have seen how excited they become when they are shown evidence of ancient societies orienting to the partnership model in all world regions.[4] And I have seen how they move from apathy to action once they fully understand that there is a viable alternative to the inequitable, undemocratic, violent, and uncaring relations that have for so long distorted the human spirit and are today decimating our natural habitat.

Through partnership education—through partnership process, structure, and content—we can help young people understand and experience the possibility of partnership relations, structures, and worldviews. We can all use partnership education in our homes, schools, and communities to highlight the enormous human potential to learn, to grow, to create, and to relate to one another in mutually supporting and caring ways. I believe young people really care about their future, and that if their education offers them the vision and the tools to help them more effectively participate in its creation, they will readily do so.

The Partnership School of the Future

When I think of the school of the future, I see a place of adventure, magic, and excitement, a place that, generation after generation, adults will remember from their youth with pleasure, and continue to participate in to ensure that all children learn to live rich, caring, and fulfilling lives. An atmosphere of celebration will make coming to this school a privilege rather than a chore. It will be a safe place—physically and emotionally—a place to express and share feelings and ideas, to create and enjoy; a place where the human spirit will be nurtured and grow; where spiritual courage will be modeled and rewarded.

In this partnership school, children will learn about the wonder and mystery of evolution. When they look at the sky, they will know the amazing truth that our stars, which seem so tiny from afar, are not only immense but afire with enormous energy, and that the energy of one of these stars, our sun,

made possible the miracle of life here on Earth. They will be awed by how the inanimate became animate and enchanted by the many ways life has continued to reinvent itself. When they look at a stone, leaf, or raindrop, they will be aware that the tiniest subatomic particles share properties with the largest constellations of stars, that energy and matter are not really separate, and that all lifeforms on our planet share elements of the same genetic code and come from a common ancestor. They will understand that this interconnected web of life that we call Nature is both immensely resilient and terribly fragile, that we need to treat our natural habitat with caring and respect, not only because we depend on nature to survive, but also because nature is a thing of wonder and beauty—because, as our Native American and prehistoric European partnership traditions tell us, it is imbued with the Sacred.

In this partnership school, young people will hear many stories of the wonders of life on our Earth. They will learn that cooperation and caring play a major part in the life of many species with whom we share our planet, and that what marks our human emergence is not our capacity to inflict pain but our enormous capacity to give and feel pleasure. They will know about chemicals that, by the grace of evolution, course through our bodies, rewarding us with sensations of sometimes exquisite pleasure when we create and care. And they will understand that this pleasure is ours not only when we are loved but when we love another, not only when we are touched with caring but when we touch another with caring.

Tomorrow's children will know that all of us, no matter what our color or culture, come from a common mother, way back in Africa millions of years ago. They will appreciate diversity—beginning with the differences between the female and male halves of humanity. They will have mental maps that do not lead to the scapegoating and persecution of those who are not quite like them.

Both girls and boys will be aware of the enormous range of their human potentials. They will be equipped to cultivate the positives within themselves and others. They will understand what makes for real political and economic democracy, and be prepared to help create and maintain it. They will have learned to value women's contributions throughout human history, and to give particular value to the caring and caretaking work that was once devalued as "mere women's work." They will also understand that this work is the highest calling for both women and men, that nonviolence and caretaking do not make boys "sissies," and that when girls are assertive leaders they are not being "unfeminine" but expressing part of their human potential.

In this school of the future, children will learn to be just as proficient in using the tools of the partnership and dominator models as in using computer technology. Partnership literacy and competency will be cross-stitched into all aspects of the curriculum. Children will learn to regulate their own impulses, not out of fear of punishment and pain, but in anticipation of the pleasure of responsible and truly satisfying lives and relationships.

Stories will be told of heroic women and men who worked for a safer, more equitable world. There will be tales of inspirational leadership. There will be laboratories for developing partnership social and economic inventions: laboratories not only for learning about the natural sciences, but also about the social sciences and how we may use them to create a partnership world.

Partnership education will be part of everyone's consciousness, as the whole community will recognize that children are our most precious resource—to be nurtured, cultivated, and encouraged to flower in the unique ways each of us can. Partnership schools will be resources of and for the whole community, linked to other schools, communities, and nations through electronic communications fostering a world community.

In partnership schools, tomorrow's children will form visions of what can be and acquire the understandings and skills to make these visions come true. They will learn how to create partnership families and communities worldwide. And they will join together to construct a world where chronic violence, inequality, and insensitivity are no longer "just the way things are" but "the way things were."

Many of us are already fashioning some of the educational building blocks for constructing the partnership schools of the future. There are indeed many resources for us to use and develop. There is also, as we saw, a great deal that stands in our way. But

working together, we can build a new educational system based on the principles of the partnership school. As we do, we will lay the foundations not only for the new education that young people need for the 21st century but also for a more sustainable, equitable, and caring world.

Notes

1. These works foreshadow much that is still today considered progressive education. Pestalozzi, for example, already in the 18th century rejected the severe corporeal punishments and rote memorization methods prevalent in his time and instead used approaches geared to children's stages of development.

2. For a description of partnership process, structure, and content as the three interconnected elements of partnership education, see Riane Eisler (2000).

3. Some readings that contain materials that could be excerpted by teachers are Jerry Mander and Edwin Goldsmith (1996); Hazel Henderson (1991); David Korten (1995); The. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan (1993); Riane Eisler, David Loye, and Kari Norgaard (1995); United Nations Development Program (1995);United Nations (1995). For a short piece that has some good statistics and could serve as a handout, see also David Korten (June 1997). See also the Center for Partnership Studies' website <www.partnershipway.org> to download "Changing the Rules of the Game: Work, Values, and Our Future" by Riane Eisler, 1997; as well as David Korten's website <iisd1.iisd.ca/pcdf> for additional materials.

4. See Riane Eisler (1988; 1996). For a detailed multicultural perspective, see Riane Eisler (2000).

References

Dewey, John. 1996. *Democracy and education*. New York: Free Press. Originally published 1916.

Eisler, Riane. 2000. *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder: CO: Westview.

Eisler, Riane. 1988. *The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Eisler, Riane. 1996. *Sacred pleasure: Sex, myth, and the politics of the body*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Eisler, Riane. 2002. *The power of partnership: Seven relationships that will change your life*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Eisler, Riane and David Loye. 1998. *The partnership way: New tools for living and learning*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.

Eisler, Riane, David Loye, and Kari Norgaard. 1995. *Women, men, and the global quality of life*. Pacific Grove, CA: Center for Partnership Studies.

Freire, Paolo. 1973. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.

Henderson, Hazel. 1991. *Paradigms in progress: Life beyond economics*. Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems.

Korten, David. 1995. *When corporations rule the world*. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler.

Korten, David. 1997, June. A market-based approach to corporate responsibility. *Perspectives on Business and Social Change* 11(2): 45-55.

Mander, Jerry, and Edwin Goldsmith, eds. 1996. *The case against the global economy and for a turn toward the local*. San Francisco: Sierra Club.

Montessori, Maria. 1964. *The Montessori method*. New York: Schocken. Originally published 1912.

Pestalozzi, Johann. 1976. *Leonard and Gertrude*. New York: Gordon Press. Originally published 1781.

Peterson, The. Spike, and Anne Sisson Runyan. 1993. *Global gender issues*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

United Nations. 1995. *The world's women 1995: Trends and statistics*. New York: Author.

United Nations Development Program. 1995. *Human development report 1995*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Unfolding Bodymind ad from ENC 15(2), page 34

Learning How to Partner With My Students

Rob Koegel

"There was a huge gap between my political values and the inner politics of my classroom, between my midwife view of education and the controlling way I taught."

> Education is something we neither "give" nor "do" to students. Rather, it is a way we stand in relation to them.... If learning is about growth and growth requires trust, then teaching is about engendering trust, about nurturance—caring for growth. (Laurent Daloz 1986)

> Anyone who is involved in remaking his or her life has to rebuild on the open sea.... We can only rebuild the ship with the material we have on board or can ingeniously fetch out of the ocean. Plank by plank, our ship can be reconstructed until it looks different, sails differently, until no board or bolt remains where it used to be. However, if we rebuild too suddenly or ambitiously, if we try to rebuild the bottom of the boat without waterproofing it, we might sink ourselves. (Herb Kohl 1974)

Love of ideas and people drew me to teaching. Inspired by the Latin root of education, *educare*, I wanted to teach like a midwife: to guide students who are stuck, help them move forward when they are ready, *draw forth* the new life that is within them. More than anything else, I yearned to use my knowledge and power "for" and "with" students; I longed to create a "beloved community" in the classroom, a microcosm of the just society I hungered for. In a word, I wanted to *partner* with students, to touch the future.

My first weeks of teaching college undergraduates were very exciting; they were even more exhausting. My training to be a teacher taught me to deliver content. But it did not help me to learn many of the "abc's" of teaching: Advising, Befriending, Coaching, Disciplining, Empowering, Facilitating, Guiding, Healing, Inspiring, and so forth. As a new teacher, I sometimes felt inspired and inspiring. I of-

Rob Koegel is an Associate Professor at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. He is currently working on a book called *Teaching in an Unjust World: The Potential of Transformative Education.*

ten felt vulnerable and overwhelmed. All too often, I left class feeling like a fraud.

Towards the end of the semester, I began to take a long look at my teaching. Some of what I saw pleased me; much of it did not. I recognized how upset I became when students did not embrace my values and beliefs. I became aware of how often I converted our differences into right and wrong. I realized how invested I was in getting students to embrace my worldview—in molding and controlling them. I may have seen myself as a midwife helping students to give birth to new ideas, but the ideas I was working so hard to bring to life were *my* offspring, not my students'. It was hard for *their* thoughts, values, and beliefs to come alive in my classroom.

Despite receiving very favorable end of the semester student evaluations, my basic problem remained: There was a huge gap between my political values and the inner politics of my classroom, between my midwife view of education and the controlling way I taught. How could it be, I wondered, that I embodied top-down ways of relating that had more in common with a dictatorship than a democracy? How could I impose the same judgmental, hierarchical, and ultimately coercive dynamics in my classroom that I found so intolerable on the societal level?

My recognition of this contradiction distressed me greatly. My subsequent inability to eliminate these habitual responses after I became aware of them shook me to my core. I could not believe, let alone accept, that I was unable to partner with students.

Looking back, my difficulty in forging more respectful, empowering relationships with students is not surprising. Indeed, we can think of the society I grew up in, the United States, as a tree rooted in core principles of control, hierarchy, and dominance (Koegel 1995). The loving family I grew up in, the excellent schools I attended, the many jobs I had were branches connected to the trunk. I was a leaf that emerged from and was shaped by the tree as a whole.

My parents, who only wanted the best for me, unknowingly taught me to control and manipulate others by their example; the hidden curriculum of the schools I went to taught me that schooling is done *to* students, not *with* them; my experience in the workplace taught me that top-down control and the abuse of power are facts of life; and the television shows and movies I watched taught me to "do unto others before they do unto you."

Day after day, I was exposed to these "lessons" about control and power. By the time I began to teach, I internalized them into the core of my being. Yet there was much that I never learned at home or at work, much that was not part of the school curriculum or the *societal curriculum*. For example, I never learned how to care for students without controlling them or to assert myself without dominating. I never learned how to respond to differences without judging or ranking them. I never learned the habits of mind and relational skills needed to create a democratic learning community.

Shortly after entering the classroom, I made a lifetime commitment to myself: I will learn how to "walk my talk" as an educator, no matter what this entails or how long it takes. At first, I was flooded by powerful emotional currents. I often felt vulnerable and rudderless, out of control and without direction. At times, I felt excited that my journey was taking me to places I had heard of but never seen. I felt deeply exposed, as though I was trying to rebuild my life on the open sea.

Afraid of drowning or losing my way, I desperately searched for resources to support my journey. I worked with a therapist who provided a safe space, a sanctuary, for me to learn about the inner landscape of my life. I met weekly with a few colleagues to explore our teaching and support our process of change. I read everything I could about what I now think of as *the arts of partnership* (Eisler and Koegel 1996, 11-12) and partnership intelligence (Koegel 1997).[1]

I could write a book about the process by which I more fully realized what Riane Eisler calls "the power of partnership"; instead, I will highlight some of the key lessons that I learned on my journey.

First, I learned it is vital to relate to myself in the same spirit of partnership that I wish to relate to others; to understand there are powerful reasons that I behave as I do; to appreciate that I'm doing the best I can with the information and resources I possess. I now see that I have a lifetime to move in the direction that I want to go. I trust that time is my friend, that I will increasingly relate in the spirit of what Salzberg (1997) calls "lovingkindness."

Second, I learned that relating to students in a partnership way is not only one of the most challenging things I've ever done, it one of the most fulfilling. I have drawn inspiration from what Rainer Maria Rilke says about loving another individual and see how it applies to loving and partnering with students as well.

> For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult task of all…, the work for which all other work is but preparation. It is a high inducement to the individual to ripen … a great exacting claim upon us, something that chooses us out and calls us to vast things. (in Welwood 1990, xiii)

Third, I have learned the value of patience. As Rilke so eloquently says,

> Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms or books that are written in a foreign tongue. The point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live your way some distant day into the answers. (in Welwood 1990, 1)

Fourth, I learned that it is incredibly hard to "live the questions," let alone "answer" them. I am heartened to remember there are kindred spirits out there. To have one such person is great; more are a blessing. They provide much needed nourishment; they feed your soul.

Finally, I learned what is perhaps the most vital lesson of all: There is hope.

Note

1. The inspiration for this phrase came from Francis Moore Lappe and Paul Du Bois's (1994, chs. 10 and 11) discussion of what they call the "arts of democracy."

References

Daloz, L. 1986. *Effective teaching and mentoring: Realizing the transformative power of adult learning experiences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Eisler, R., and R. Koegel. 1996. The partnership model: A signpost of hope. *Holistic Education Review* 9(1): 5-12.

Koegel, R. 1995. Responding to the challenges of diversity: Domination, resistance, and education. *Holistic Education Review* 8(2): 5-17.

Koegel, R. 1997. Partnership intelligence and dominator intelligence: Their social roots, patterns, and consequences. *World Futures* 49: 39-63.

Kohl, H. 1974. *Half the house*. New York: Bantam.

Lappe, F., and P. DuBois. 1994. *The quickening of America: Rebuilding our nation, Remaking our lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Salzberg, S, and J. Kabat-Zinn. 1997. *Lovingkindness: The revolutionary art of happiness*. Boston: Shambhala.

Welwood, J. 1990. *Journey of the heart*. New York: HarperCollins.

High Mowing School ad from ENC 15(3), page 55

Practicing Linking

Sarah Pirtle

Partnership processes can help provide building blocks of healthy experiences of nurturing respectful human interactions. Each experience of partnership registers and provides young people with an important model that they can carry into the rest of their lives.

A truth about teachers that often gets lost in public debates is that most of us care deeply about our students and want to be the best teachers we can be. When we are greeting students, rethinking the day's lesson plans in the car on the way to work, or debriefing after school, we each look for that inner tuning fork, for that standard that can act as our compass. We try to build this standard from all the best teaching we have seen or read about, as well as memories of our own teaching and our intentions for students. During most of my three decades in education, this standard or tuning fork felt amorphous and unnameable to me. Important practices like bias awareness, teaching with a multicultural perspective, cooperative learning, and teaching toward multiple intelligences all resonated and helped me to develop a sense of whether I was staying on the mark. But I needed a way to hold them all together, a point of synthesis. The word "partnership" has become this synthesis for me, the touchstone I can use to decide whether I am on course or not.

In her seminal book, *The Chalice and The Blade*, Riane Eisler introduces what she calls the "partnership model." She explains that any social situation can be structured either to encourage "linking" and power *with* others, or structured to encourage "ranking" and power *over* others. When applied to education, linking can be described as our becoming increasingly conscious of the whole group and the way we affect each other and, in turn, helping students to be increasingly conscious of the whole community. In *Tomorrow's Children*, Eisler shows how Partnership Education helps children develop their unique individual potentials by creating a culture in which students are taught both parts of an essential dynamic: their individual integrity and their basic human interconnection. Partnership Education fosters excellence and achievement because it creates a culture based on the joy of learning rather than the fear of failure.

Note: Portions of this essay were excerpted from *Partnership Education in Action* (Tucson: Center for Partnership Studies <www.partnershipway.org>) and are reprinted with the Center's kind permission.

Sarah Pirtle is the co-editor and principal author of *Partnership Education in Action*. She also wrote three books: *An Outbreak of Peace*, *Discovery Time for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution*, and *Linking Up!* She draws inspiration from Genesis Farm in Blairstown, New Jersey, a learning center for Earth Literacy and the new cosmology. She is the director of The Tree of Life Discovery Center in Shelburne Falls, MA, whose focus is to bring the context of the caring Universe into education.

The three core elements of Partnership Education are partnership process, partnership content, and partnership structure. Partnership process consists of ways of learning and teaching based on mutual respect and caring. It pulls together what it is to be a respectful teacher of a whole person. For example, if I'm teaching a social studies lesson with partnership content, but unconsciously ignore the hands of some students who want to speak and favor others, or if I use only a lecture format during the whole unit, I am not modeling partnership. My process would not be compatible with my content.

Through partnership process, the growth of each person is enhanced. There is an explicit understanding that one's personal development is not at the expense of, but rather is dynamically related to, the whole group. As we locate the source force of linking inside us, we contact our own inner tuning fork to help us generate the best teaching that we can. Whether we are studying math, language arts, social studies, or science, as we help students develop their potential by interacting with others and valuing multiple ways of knowing, every type of learning increases. Partnership establishes a classroom community that flows as an open system. A hallmark of such a culture is that students are embedded within a caring community of cooperative learners.

Partnership and Cooperation

Cooperative learning structures in and of themselves don't guarantee that the process is building partnership, however. Cooperative learning trainers, Liana Forest and Ted Graves (1987), have said

> Our most difficult task has been to get across to teachers and school staff the complete shift in perspective and attitude required for creating an environment supportive of cooperative learning.

It is not just a matter of using a cooperative structure for one month or in one subject area. It requires looking at the mixture of messages throughout the whole school building. Nancy Schneidewind and Mara Sapon-Shevin (n.d.) raise questions that they feel teachers need to explore, such as:

- Do I see cooperative learning as a tool to better manage my class and retain my authority? Or is it a process through which my students can learn to take greater responsibility and in which power is increasingly shared with them?
- To what extent do I use cooperative learning without addressing the pervasive competition in schools and society? Do I help students connect their experience working collaboratively with heightened critical consciousness about effects of competition and cooperation on ourselves, others, and society?

Experiences in cooperative learning take on significance, then, not only because they have proven in research to be more productive and efficient ways to learn, but because they develop friendships among diverse types of students and help young people develop their consciousness about being part of a community, and promote the very skills most needed for a flourishing world society.

We have an opportunity to complicate our thinking about cooperation and competition. Building partnership doesn't suggest that we "always structure cooperation and never use competition." It is more a matter of being attuned to how they are employed. Partnership education asks: Where is the learning going? What kind of classroom, school, community, and world are we training students to build together?

It's not cooperation in and of itself that is crucial, it's cooperation in caring for the whole. Adults can cooperate together to fix prices in the business world without being mindful of its broader effects. Students can cooperate together to exclude one person in the arena of a classroom. On the other hand, people can compete to develop more cogent language for a conflict resolution procedure, or race shoulder-to-shoulder with exhilaration, mutually urging each other on to surpass their previous limits. This kind of competition says "Here's the best I can do; what can you do? What is possible? Can we go even further?"

What makes the difference is the context: caring for the whole, sharing responsibility for the further-

ENCOUNTER PREPRINTS

"Preprints" for the next issue of ENCOUNTER are now available for current subscribers. Visit us online at <www.great-ideas.org/preprint.htm> for details.

ance of pro-social group goals, and being partners in fostering the greatest good.

Attuning Ourselves to Partnership

Like a seed holding the pattern of an evolving plant, communities need people who hold the pattern of partnership in the way they live, think, and interact. The phrase, "holding environment," (D. W. Winnicott in Kegan 1982) provides an apt image. Kegan (1982, 16) says, "Your own sense of wholeness or lack of it, is in large part a function of how your own current embeddedness culture is holding you." The adults who set up the "holding environment" in a classroom can hold young people in partnership and embody a commitment to partnership.

Partnership Education helps children develop their unique individual potentials by creating a culture in which students are taught both parts of an essential dynamic: their individual integrity and their basic human interconnection.

Commitment is the key word here. None of us will be perfect. None of us will act in a partnership mode all the time. But we can all become more attuned to partnership and the capacity for partnership skills inherently located within us, which can be tapped and developed.

There are three practices that we can use to attune ourselves to partnership: independent thinking, taking up the challenge, and asking questions.

Encourage Your Own Independent Thinking About Partnership

Partnership is a force that we observe, describe, and participate in. It is not a new method that could later become dated. It's fundamental. If we approached partnership in a dominator mindset, we might get into arguments about the best words to use to describe it, or the best methods to teach it, or who is more of a partner than whom. To approach partnership within a partnership paradigm, we have to deal with dynamic knowledge.

We have different ways of describing this fundamental force of partnership and the lack of that force. What words and phrases best describe for you the concept of partnership? What words or phrases best describe domination? How do you glean what is meant by these concepts? Which of your intelligences help you experience what they mean—is it a kinesthetic sense? Is it linguistic? Is it pictoral? And, how do your senses inform you that what is going on around you feels like partnership or feels like domination?

All educators will not use the same words for these phenomenon. It is important to hear each other's way of expressing the partnership/dominator perspective and feel the dynamic interplay of this variety.

Take Up the Challenge of Partnership Growth

By inviting yourself to become more knowledgeable about partnership, you are inviting personal change. Thinking about partnership is like shining a spotlight that helps us better see old territory, as well as vistas we had not seen before.

The places where domination occurs become more visible—this might be in your school building, or in family relationships, or your own ways of teaching and interacting. You walk into the school library and notice that most of the covers of a well-respected social studies magazine for children feature wars, making it seem as if these are the most important and noteworthy events in history. You walk into the staff room and hear putdown's embedded in jokes. You remind your own children about chores and feel that your voice sounds like a drill sergeant's bark.

A minor earthquake can result when what was unseen becomes visible, but this awareness of imbalance is the seed for positive change. We are trying to walk our talk; we're trying to declare an outbreak of peace inside us and in our classrooms. Impediments and difficulties will surface as part of this commitment to growth. It doesn't mean we are hypocrites or insincere in our intentions. It's part of the process of increasing consciousness. It's helpful to find friends

or colleagues who can talk with you about your perceptions and efforts.

New vistas become visible. The encouraging words of a family member ring with greater resonance. We watch a friend skillfully assert boundaries and mentally file away her phrases and her attitude of "being yes while saying no." We find ourselves valuing the commitment of staff members in our building with deeper appreciation. In these and other ways we see the moments of dedication and caring more clearly as well.

Ask Questions

We can develop an inner tuning fork of what domination and partnership feel like, look like, sound like. Learning how to live inside partnership is a dynamic process. The crux of locating the inner tuning fork of partnership is through asking questions like the following:

- When am I dominating when I could instead be holding, developing, or guiding?
- How can I hold this group in partnership values?
- How can I structure this activity so that many voices can contribute?
- How can I provide examples and then move back and allow the child's unique creativity to come forward?
- How can I coordinate the rhythms of many people in a manner that is mutually enhancing?

It Takes A Universe to Raise a Child

Not too long ago a local elementary school asked me to work with students to celebrate their first year of focusing more deliberately on partnership skills and character traits. While visiting the classrooms I asked, "Why is it we are able to act in a caring way?" We discussed that we are able to care because that's what the Earth does. The Earth cares for all of life. One boy picked up a stone we were examining and expressed this in his own words: "A stone is solid. It's all connected. It's like a community pulling together."

As these students intuited, we are part of the Earth. We are able to nurture each other because we are the Earth doing that. Furthermore, the place we inhabit, our home, is rooted inside a caring Universe. The wonder of what scientists Brian Swimme, Elisabet Sahtouris, Sidney Liebes, and others have revealed is that we emerge from and live within a process that is neither random nor determined. We participate in a deep creative force of caring. We belong inside this surging, ever renewing energy. As we move inside it, we are nurtured and nourish others.

Geologian Thomas Berry, author of *The Great Work* (1999) and *The Dream of the Earth* (1988), points to a larger framework for that inner tuning fork, the largest and most fundamental context: the Universe. What happens when we look at partnership from the perspective that we are embedded in the entire community of the Universe? From this vantage point, everything we do comes from the Universe. Berry (1988, 219) writes, "Until the human is understood as a dimension of the Earth, we have no secure basis for understanding any aspect of the human."

As we step into this context, the Earth and the Universe are the source of mutual regard, responsibility, compassion—indeed, of all that we associate with caring. The reason we know how to create "holding environments" is the same reason that we can grow more readily inside them: because we are the Universe acting. In their book, *The Universe Story* (1992), geologian Thomas Berry and physicist Brian Swimme describe three fundamental principles at the foundation of the Universe:

- Mutuality and communion. Everything is connected.
- Diversity and differentiation. Everything is different.
- Interiority and self-manifestation. Everything has its own interior reality.

Communion, differentiation, self-manifestation. This is the language that the Universe speaks. I revel in the new thoughts this brings. The Universe is the activating force of our partnership ways of being, thinking, and relating. The Universe in us leads us to differentiate from other humans and to celebrate di-

versity while we unlearn bias and oppression. The Universe anchors us in an inner journey to take on more responsibility for our intentions and our behavior. The Universe guides us to be in communion with each member of our community.

As Thomas Berry describes it, we are the Earth earthing. We are the Universe universing. It is through direct contact with the deep mysteries of natural places, Berry says, that we attain human growth. Moreover, he invites us to try on the awareness that the primary teacher is the Earth and the Universe itself.

Recently, as a keynote speaker at a Vermont conference for early childhood educators, I framed our discussion of conflict resolution skills this way: We grow up learning two languages. The innate language inside us is the language of deep partnership; the cultural overlay of domination and power is a garbled, painfully imbalanced version of what we are trying to engage in with each other. It is what we and our students have been taught. It is what we see around us. It is what we bring with us as we reach towards our vision. It is what we and our students are unlearning. When I seek the inner tuning fork, I am seeking ways of thinking and being, talking and relating, learning and educating that spring from the partnership dynamics built into the core of the Universe. The Universe endows us with a creative love force. How do we use it? How can we enhance the way we educate? How can we reach into our depths, our interiority, and create loving "holding environments" that nourish the rich potential of every one of us?

Each of us has our own unique dimension that only we can access, that only we can create, that only we can discover. We fervently need to hear what each of us finds out—how do we contact our inner voice of the Universe, and express it, and steer by it?

The process by which we develop partnership has serious implications for the kind of future we are creating. Swimme and Berry (1992, 251) write,

> The immediate goal … is not simply to diminish the devastation of the planet that is taking place at present. It is rather to alter the mode of consciousness that is responsible for such deadly activities.

How do we nurture and develop such consciousness within the next generations? Swimme and Berry believe that it begins with initiating young people into the ways of the Universe. They write,

> Education might well be defined as knowing the story of the Universe, of the planet Earth, of life systems, and of consciousness, all as a single story, and recognizing the human role in the story. The primary purpose of education should be to enable individual humans to fulfill their proper role in this larger pattern of meaning. (Swimme and Berry 1992, 256).

Swimme (1996, 58) adds that

> We can start by showing them they are part of a Big Picture: They have a place and a role in this enveloping activity. In time, if they are fortunate, they will eventually learn to regard all the things of the world, even the briefest breath of the tiniest gnat, as woven into a single comprehensive, coherent whole.

Our role is not only to take part, but to take power. brin Swimme (1996) explains that literally each of us is the center of the Universe. By nature, because we are in a multiplicity of centers, all of us are points of originating energy of the cosmos. Here is a fundamental source of empowerment. Not only do we learn that we are inside the Universe but that the Universe is inside us. Each of us is the Universe flaring forth with our expression of caring. We are each creating the news of the Universe.

References

Berry, Thomas. 1988. *The dream of the earth*. Sierra Club Books.

Eisler, Riane. 1988. *The chalice and the blade. Our history, our future*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Eisler, Riane. 2000. *Tomorrow's children. A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*.Boulder CO: Westview.

Forest, Liana, and Ted Graves. 1987. *What is cooperative learning? Cooperative College of California.*

Kegan, Robert. 1982. *The evolving self*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sapon-Shevin, Mara, and Nancy Schniedewind. n.d. If cooperative learning's the answer, What are the questions? Unpublished article.

Swimme, Brian, and Thomas Berry. 1992. *The universe story: From the primordial flaring to the Ecozoic Era—A celebration of the unfolding of the universe*. Harper San Francisco.

Swimme, Brian. 1996. *The hidden heart of the cosmos: Humanity and the new story*. Orbis Books.

Performance Notes on a Swan Song

Steven Motenko

Partnership Education can make an impressive difference in any classroom.

STEVEN MOTENKO is the Education Coordinator for the Center for Partnership Studies, a certified personal coach and workshop facilitator, and a former music teacher.

I've just performed my swan song in the theater of public education.

I use "theater" metaphorically. The venue was an elementary school, so the stage was of course a gymnasium.

And, technically, *I* didn't perform it. I facilitated it. About 155 students in a neighborhood school where the creativity and energy run higher than the test scores—*they* performed it.

"It" was a 35-minute children's musical, *Assignment: Earth: What Kids Can Do To Save the Planet*. Eight-, nine-, and ten-year-olds acted in costume, sang in harmony, danced in rhythm, staffed the stage crew, ran lights and sound, wrote scenes, designed the tee-shirts the chorus wore—and learned environmental responsibility in the process.

The quality of the experience shone in my students' faces and danced in their interactions. They discovered talents, interests, and confidence they hadn't imagined. They rose to responsibility through *hierarchies of actualization*, as Riane Eisler would say, not *hierarchies of power*. Gender and cultural barriers dissolved in focused interdependence. Girls (*and* boys) ran tech; boys (*and* girls) sang high notes solo; everyone honored a Native American spiritual respect for the planet. It was, in short, the best single experience in partnership education I could provide. And it wasn't enough.

I have never taught in the world that I envision for education. Producing *Assignment: Earth*, for example, took roughly 200 hours of unpaid time, all from a few teachers and fewer parents. Unpaid because neither the public school day nor the public school budget has room for it. There are tests to be faced, scores to be raised.

In my ideal world, a partnership education world, *Assignment: Earth* is not extracurricular. It is, perhaps, the nexus of a community adventure—the en-

gine that drives a school's curriculum for a semester or a year.

In such a world, teachers have the time and the support to evolve that curriculum, *within* their contract hours, in creative dialogue with other teachers and with students. Students organically discover the richness of diversity—in nature and in each other. In age-appropriate ways, they peel back the layers of our culture's core values—domination, conquest, control—and they decry how it has subjugated the female half of humanity, enslaved innumerable indigenous cultures, and threatened every organism on the planet.

They learn another way, a partnership way that celebrates caring and community, that values linking over ranking. It's a way of being that for tens of thousands of years defined what it meant to be human—and will yet again, for the survival of the planet depends on it.

Viewing the world through this partnership/dominator lens, the students in my ideal world, in their own way and at their own pace, increasingly choose partnership. And because they love the process of learning, they not surprisingly develop skills across the curriculum that outstrip the expectations of their teachers, their parents—even of educational policymakers.

So the citizens of this hypothetical partnership education world, including the bureaucrats and legislators, rally around the production of *Assignment: Earth*. They debunk the mindset that trivializes the arts, that mandates instead doing 25 math problems alone in a room night after night to seek a reward (grade) and to avoid punishment (lost recess). For through the partnership/dominator lens, such a mindset reveals the anachronistic culture that produced it—a culture that schizophrenically defines success as obedience while defining purpose as conquest.

* * * *

The world I have taught in for 20 years is not that world. I won't validate it by calling it the *real* world, either. It is the public school world, where the play that the music teacher is putting together over there in the portable is another distraction, another of the myriad interruptions that keep kids from getting ready for the next standardized test.

In this arbitrary but familiar world, children in the classroom are taught the value of "feeding their minds." But the process more resembles "filling" than "feeding." The image I have is of a nest of baby chicks, force-fed constantly, indiscriminately. At first, they hungrily open their beaks to the sky, devouring any worm provided. But soon these chicks learn to catch their own worms, even develop their own tastes. Yet still they are told, "Keep those beaks open and swallow the worms we provide." Until the joy of savoring the flavor and the texture of each morsel is gone.

And the worms? They're the creations of a male-dominated, self-absorbed culture, one that by and large walks domination while talking partnership.

As this world fills (but seldom feeds) its children's minds, the need to feed their *hearts* is all but ignored; feeding their *souls*, scrupulously avoided. In this world that I have ambivalently called home for two decades, children find out it's more valuable to best your neighbor than to better yourself, more valuable to get the right answer than to honor the questions within you.

This world can't afford to trust children, to allow them to be themselves. With 30 kids and one adult in a cubicle (a peculiarly inorganic way to prepare youngsters for adulthood, by most cultures' standards), self-expression is simply intolerable. So they must be controlled. As it is their nature to imitate, children thus learn to *exercise* control, by whatever means necessary. And so gradually they internalize the hidden curriculum's twin objectives: the survival value of submissiveness, and the egregious dichotomy: be controlled or be *in* control.

So why have I stayed so long in a world I experience as schizophrenic and inorganic? If truth be told, I bought into it for half my career. I was conditioned, first as a student and then as a student-teacher, to exalt the dominator education directive: the transmission of prescribed content supercedes all.

About a decade ago, I began to awaken, to question the insidious assumptions of the educational culture I'd absorbed. At first, my answers were jigsaw pieces that didn't fit the puzzle. Then I read Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and The Blade*. For me, Eisler's "partnership" concept was an epiphany: the big picture that drew these jigsaw pieces into place.

Her broad synthesis of the cultural, the historical and the psychological—and her persuasive offer of the partnership way as a once and future reality—gave me the context in which to grow as a teacher and as a citizen of the Earth.

In this new context, I have felt an iconoclast in the culture of my school. While teachers with the best of intentions have offered me their rewards systems, while they've gazed askance at the chaos that often precedes and follows creativity in my classroom, while they've wondered why my curriculum does not focus on dead white male composers, I have remained silent and felt alone.

I have funneled my passion into transforming the environment of my own classroom from one in which students open their beaks to my worms under penalty of punishment, to one in which together we determine what works in the classroom and what constitutes quality. I invite my students to own our classroom. I ask all to see through each other's eyes and the eyes of each other's cultures; through the hearts of the downtrodden and disenfranchised; and through the souls of every living thing.

We have done great things together, these youngsters and I. I am often moved when I witness maturity, wisdom, creativity, and caring I never fathomed 20 years ago when I first dominated a class, as I was taught and expected to do. My respect for kids is now infinitely greater, as is theirs for me.

So even within the prevailing paradigm, there is infinite potential within the four walls of any teacher's classroom to make a partnership difference. It is easily enough potential to fill a career. It has filled and fulfilled mine.

And now for me, it is time to do something different. Not just because I'm physically and emotionally weary of holding a partnership vision in a dominator culture. I'm also ready, in respect of my own path, to move on—to work with adults, to perform in a larger venue, to fuel my considerable passion for personal growth, for educational transformation and for social change.

But before I go, this swan has one more song to facilitate. The fifth grade "graduation" is today, and I'm immensely excited to be working up a gospel-flavored number called "The Road to Freedom" with a small group of highly talented little singers leading the 75-voice fifth grade choir. I'll cry when they sing it.

The rehearsals are outside of my contract time, of course. They're worth it.

N A R O P A U N I V E R S I T Y

Master of Arts in
Contemplative Education

Now you can earn your MA degree in Contemplative Education through convenient, low-residency, on-line learning. In this unique, new program, you can learn to teach in ways that

- Combine critical intellect with intuitive insight
- Balance acquisition of knowledge with growth of wisdom
- Deepen emotional intelligence
- Foster an atmosphere of awareness, self-discipline and delight

www.naropa.edu
Naropa
UNIVERSITY

Naropa University / 2130 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder, CO 80302 / (303) 546-3572 / (800) 772-6951
www.naropa.edu / NCA accredited / BA, MA, MFA, MLA, MDiv degrees / credit & non-credit

Essay Review

Tomorrow's Children

Ron Miller

Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century by Riane Eisler. Published in 2000 by Westview Press.

Tomorrow's Children is an important book about education, because it addresses topics that normally concern teachers and administrators—curriculum, teaching/learning methods, and school culture—within a larger philosophical and historical context than educators normally consider. As its subtitle indicates, in *Tomorrow's Children* Riane Eisler proposes a new blueprint for education in the 21st century.

Much of modern educational practice still views children as impersonal components of an efficient social machine to be molded, tested, graded, and sorted like any other mechanical product or commodity. Eisler provides a stirring alternative vision for education. She argues that postindustrial society requires men and women who are flexible, creative, and independent thinkers, and that different educational practices are needed to cultivate these qualities. But the education Eisler proposes goes much further. Education, after all, does not simply involve a package of techniques practiced in school buildings; it is a cluster of beliefs, values, and assumptions representing a culture's explicit endeavor to define who we are as human beings and what our lives mean.

Tomorrow's Children builds on the research in archeology, biology, and psychology that Eisler presented in her earlier book, *The Chalice and the Blade,* published in 1987. After studying the evolution of numerous societies through history, Eisler developed a "cultural transformation theory" which identifies two basic structures that influence the character of any civilization, and in *Tomorrow's Children* she amply demonstrates how this way of understanding culture is extremely relevant to education.

These two structures represent opposite ends of a spectrum of cultural possibilities. At one end, societies can be rigid and authoritarian, where violence, abuse, and fear are used to maintain order and keep elites in power. Racial, linguistic, or religious divisions are used to rank diverse human possibilities, and invariably such societies are male-dominated and highly value "masculine" qualities such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and conquest of nature. Eisler calls this structure the *dominator model* of society. The opposite ideal structure is characterized by egalitarian and democratic values, gender equity, collaboration, caretaking, openness to diversity, environmental consciousness, and low levels of violence. Eisler terms this the "partnership model."

Eisler has demonstrated that some cultures, including early civilizations largely forgotten by the Western world, have successfully practiced partnership values on a large scale. This fact alone, she argues, refutes philosophical and scientific claims that human beings are "naturally" violent, aggressive, or selfish. These are biological possibilities of course, but so too are qualities of love, generosity, and compassion. The partnership model is a realizable moral ideal, so the perennial yet elusive dream of a truly humane, caring, nonviolent society can be achieved if we strive to develop social attitudes and practices that support partnership rather than dominator values. The primary argument of *Tomorrow's Children* is that education is an essential arena in which this must take place. "Partnership Education," then, is not merely a curriculum unit or instruction tech-

Ron Miller is the founding editor of *Encounter*. He is currently the President of the Foundation for Educational Renewal and the Executive Editor of *Paths of Learning* magazine. He is also helping to coordinate a masters' degree concentration in Partnership Education at Goddard College in Vermont. He may be contacted by e-mail at <milleron@together.net>.

This essay was originally written to provide an overview of *Tomorrow's Children* for readers of *Partnership Education in Action* (2001) and is rerinted with the kind permission of the Center for Partnership Studies in Tucson.

nique; it is an effort to nurture the full humanity of our young people for the purpose of creating a caring, peaceful, environmentally sustainable society.

A partnership approach addresses three major elements of education: Structure (the organization of decision-making and teaching roles), process (pedagogical relationships that invite the child to engage in learning in his or her wholeness), and content (a rich selection of thought-provoking experiences and narratives that enable young people to deeply understand their place in culture, history, and the natural world). *Tomorrow's Children* explains how an education for cultural transformation depends upon the integration of these elements, and Eisler uses the metaphor of a tapestry being woven on a loom with vertical and horizontal threads and cross-stitchings, to illustrate the complexity and interconnectedness of Partnership Education.

The particular techniques that Eisler recommends to give what she calls partnership process concrete form in classrooms are familiar to many educators: cooperative learning strategies, applications of multiple intelligence theory, integrated curriculum and experiential, project-based learning, to name a few. But Partnership Education goes much further. It grounds process, content, and structure in an integrated approach more than in any one specific method. It differs from many contemporary educational proposals in that it is not simply an add-on to the existing educational system.

Although *Tomorrow's Children* offers materials that can be immediately used by educators and students, it offers an approach that fully integrates gender-balance, multiculturalism, and environmental consciousness, as well as nonviolent conflict resolution, ethics, and caring into the entire educational fabric. Eisler states this orientation unequivocally, and expresses a clear preference for partnership over dominator values, yet she is careful not to present Partnership Education as a self-righteous moralistic approach; indeed, it would be self-defeating to promote partnership content by using conventional authoritarian, dominator-style processes. Instead, Eisler emphasizes the need for critical, reflective intelligence joined with the cultivation of empathy.

To this end, she proposes "the *partnership-dominator continuum* as an analytical lens to look at our present and our past." Students would be exposed to diverse cultural narratives—not only those that glorify conflict and conquest—and they would be encouraged to consider the wide range of cultural choices available to humanity, along with the consequences of these choices for human welfare and ecological sustainability.

> A curriculum informed by the partnership model makes it possible to see that dominator relations are not inevitable, that there are viable partnership alternatives. It offers young people a larger perspective on both their day-to-day lives and on the world at large—showing that the tension between the partnership and dominator models as two basic human possibilities has punctuated all of human history.

Partnership Education essentially aims to empower young people to make thoughtful choices by offering them alternative experiences (partnership process), environments (partnership structure), and narratives (partnership content), rather than to forcibly inculcate certain forms of knowledge and values. It is also designed to cultivate what Eisler calls self-regulation (a term she prefers to self-discipline) so that young people learn to be ethical and caring primarily out of intrinsic positive motivations rather than extrinsic negative motivations, such as fear of punishment. One recurring theme in *Tomorrow's Children* is the belief that education in a democratic society must exhibit a deep sense of respect for human diversity and personal autonomy rather than seek to mold young people according to arbitrary standards: "We need to pay more attention to how children can develop their unique individual potentials rather than merely focusing on standardized test scores." Schools are seen as nurturing communities of learning.

There is a tendency in our society to assume that nurturing communities or schools based on caring are somehow contradictory to a focus on excellence in learning. *Tomorrow's Children* shows that this is a false assumption. Nurturing communities of learning also strive for student achievement and in reality create environments that support and enhance the quality of learning. Eisler recognizes that excellence in learning is more than the scores on standardized

tests, which do not measure all that a student knows, but only sort students according to small portions of their understanding. True excellence in education can be established only when we use a variety of tools to assess and multiple formats to report what students really know. Doing so within a nurturing environment allows educators to better help students realize their individual potentials.

Partnership Education attempts not only to inform young people, but to inspire them. One stirring chapter of *Tomorrow's Children,* "Beginnings: From the Stars to Us," discusses humanity's place in the vast evolution of life in the cosmos. "What is the meaning of our journey on this Earth?" asks Eisler. "What about us connects us with, and distinguishes us from, the rest of nature?" Where conventional schooling often gives young people a fragmented batch of facts and curriculum "units," Partnership Education "offers young people a panoramic view of the creative sweep of evolution [that] reveals the general evolutionary movement toward ever greater variability, complexity of structure, integration of function, and flexibility of behavior." Evolution, and therefore human life, is creative, purposeful, and capable of unfathomable possibilities. Eisler provides an updated meta-narrative of evolution (from cosmic to cultural and personal) focusing on human possibilities rather than limitations. She explains that the uncritical application to human evolution of neo-Darwinian biology with its emphasis on the purely selfish competitive struggle for survival, does not represent a neutral scientific finding, but is rather grounded in a theoretical position conditioned by the worldview of a dominator culture. In this chapter as well as another called "From Counting to Current Events: Making the Three R's Meaningful," *Tomorrow's Children* shows a different approach to science education, one that embraces a more balanced, holistic understanding of the world. Eisler describes extensive scientific literature that documents the importance of love, caring, and cooperation in the evolution of life, and she charges that most of the education young people receive about the natural world and biology neglects these significant and uncontestable findings. In these and other ways, Partnership Education integrates environmental education into the core curriculum.

Another provocative chapter, "Our Human Adventure," recaps Eisler's extensive research in archeology and mythology, explaining how dominator-oriented cultures have conquered or suppressed other forms of civilization. She argues that the earliest human societies were primarily partnership oriented, and that popular images of "primitive club-carrying Stone Age cavemen have no basis." Early human art expressed appreciation for "the life-giving and sustaining aspect of nature," and many ancient cultures appear to have been egalitarian and communal. But most modern narratives treat human history as the march of progress from "barbarian" to "civilized" humanity; they celebrate the conquerors who brought "civilization" (meaning, in U.S. textbooks, white, male-focused, Eurocentric culture), while they neglect other vital expressions of human experience. For example, most of our narratives either leave untold, misrepresent, or under-represent the stories of the lives of women in most cultures (to whom nonviolence and nurturance are relegated in dominator traditions.) A history of the experiences of both men and women in many supposedly "primitive" cultures, which have often been more partnership oriented, have also been either absent, distorted, or incomplete in our dominant narratives.

Eisler repeatedly shows that harmful messages are often embedded in the school curriculum. For example, even though children are told that nonviolence is good and violence is bad, they are at the same time required to memorize the dates of wars and battles as the historically significant events, with little attention given to nonviolently achieved social reforms. So again, children are taught what an established, dominator-oriented culture wants them to believe, and fail to receive a holistic understanding of human possibilities. *Tomorrow's Children* shows how this vital understanding can be cultivated through various academic disciplines, from mathematics to history to literature and art.

Another important topic in this book is critical media literacy. Young people in the modern world are educated by television, film, music, journalism, and other popular media, at least as much as they are by parents and schools, and Eisler shows how many of the images and narratives promoted through mass

media convey dominator rather than partnership values:

> Children will learn that men are considered more important than women … [and] that white people are more important than other people…. By the end of elementary school, the average child will have witnessed 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of violence on the TV screen

and will have been repeatedly exposed to violence being celebrated in movies and video games. The media also send strong messages—both overt and subliminal—about ideal body image, sexuality, and intimate relationships that in many ways can be psychologically damaging as well as harmful to positive, healthy relationships. An education for partnership values must help young people become conscious of harmful beliefs and behavior patterns that are taught mindlessly and insidiously by the mass media. Again, Eisler emphasizes that the point is not to moralize or censor but to "open channels of communication" and help young people think through the consequences of the behaviors and ideas that surround them.

Eisler passionately argues for a new educational system that can help young people face the unprecedented challenges of our time. She believes that modern civilization is at a crucial turning point, with two possible scenarios for future development. If recent trends continue unchallenged, we may well face societal and ecological *breakdown* a future of warfare, terrorism, ethnic violence, pollution and habitat destruction, and various forms of fundamentalism. The alternative is *breakthrough* or cultural transformation, the evolution of a partnership-oriented society "governed by standards of human rights and responsibilities..., a world where our human adventure unfolds in creative and caring ways, where the human spirit can flourish." *Tomorrow's Children* argues that substantive change in education is vital to achieving such a breakthrough, as young people who acquire a more holistic (multicultural, gender-balanced, environmentally sensitive, critically aware, and flexible) understanding of human possibilities, and who have opportunities to practice participating in democratic communities, will be much better prepared to join in building a more humane, caring, and environmentally sustainable society than those merely drilled in what are today considered academic basics and graded competitively. Eisler best sums up the goal of partnership education when she uses the phrase *Caring for Life.* That is exactly what we need to do, on a

The partnership model is a realizable moral ideal, so the perennial yet elusive dream of a truly humane, caring, nonviolent society can be achieved if we strive to develop social attitudes and practices that support partnership rather than dominator values.

personal as well as cultural and ecological scale, if we are to avoid a violent disintegration of modern civilization.

In closing, Eisler challenges the reader of *Tomorrow's Children* to join an emerging cultural movement that is concerned with social equity participatory democracy, environmental sustainability, and personal self-realization. While recognizing that the dominator culture strongly resists partnership values in education and other institutions, Eisler offers a positive vision, declaring that "fundamental change *is* possible" when people join together to work for values that truly serve human welfare. Eisler envisions a time in the near future when tomorrow's children

> will be aware of the enormous range of their human potentials. They will be equipped to cultivate the positives within themselves and others. They will understand what makes for real political and economic democracy and be equipped to help create and maintain it.

Reference

Bucciarelli, Dierdre, and Sarah Pirtle. 2000. *Partnership education in action*. Tucson: Center for Partnership Studies.

Transforming Power Relations

The Invisible Revolution

Miki Kashtan

Nonviolent Communication provides specific tools to empower ourselves and others to live more in line with our values and deeper needs. When we do that, we become more effective in relating to ourselves, other faculty, and staff, and we can contribute more to students' ability to feel connected and energized.

Miki Kashtan teaches Nonviolent Communication in the Bay Area, New York, and Boston. She conducts both public and onsite workshops, and has worked with teachers and in schools. She coordinates the Social Change Project for the Center for Nonviolent Communication <www.cnvc.org>. For specific information about trainings Miki conducts, visit <www.baynvc.org> or contact her directly by e-mail at <miki@baynvc.org> or phone 510-655-0657.

"NVC is wonderful and I can see how much it can enhance my personal life," said Cynthia,[1] during an introductory workshop. "But there's no way you can possibly apply this in school." Cynthia, a bilingual schoolteacher, is very committed to the success of her 2nd grade students. Many of Cynthia's students don't speak fluent English and struggle with the requirements of the school system. "My students need structure and discipline," she added. "Without it, they'll never make it in a culture they don't know. If I let go of rules and negotiate with them about every little thing, they won't be able to function."

"Trying to develop mutual relationships will open up a can of worms for me," said Steve. "The high school students I teach have been told what to do and how to do it for years. If I invite them to talk about their feelings and to engage in learning because they want to, not because they have to, they won't learn anything at all."

"That's right," said Joan, a middle-school teacher, "and my principal will never go for it. He's very formal and can't stand any talk of feelings. He has his own ideas about how things should run in the school. There's no way that he'd be open to hearing anything from me."

These kinds of expressions are common when educators first learn about NVC. Their language may differ, but their conclusions are the same: They think that NVC can only be applied in the context of equal power.

Cynthia, Steve, and Joan are intuiting something deep and true. What they recognize, even if they find it hard to articulate, is that the NVC consciousness shift is at odds with the assumptions on which most of our schools and social institutions are built.

Beyond a certain limited application, the use of NVC requires a radical shift in consciousness. NVC

is a *dialogue process* aimed at a particular form of consensus: solutions to meet both parties' needs. Using this form of dialogue as the primary mode of interaction requires a deep trust that people enjoy giving freely. It also requires an abiding commitment to attend to the needs of other people. When we are equally concerned about others' needs as we are about our own, we make it possible for them to give joyfully. What makes it possible to say YES from the heart is the knowledge that we are free to say NO without suffering consequences. Entering into NVC dialogue means choosing to model this quality of care and connection whether or not others do.

Staying in dialogue is no small feat. It is hard to remember, as NVC suggests, that other people's actions, no matter how painful to us, are simply attempts to meet their needs. It requires reminding ourselves, again and again, of a crucial point: People will prefer to meet their needs in ways that don't harm others.

On the deepest level, we are called to believe in an article of faith that has been central to progressive and holistic educators: that there are ample means to meet everyone's basic needs. Through meaningful dialogue that creates trust and connection, we can meet more people's needs more peacefully and more fully.

Our culture continually bombards us with endless versions of a very different message: that what motivates people are extrinsic rewards and fear of negative consequences. The collective belief that human beings must be controlled and punished leads us to create institutions that constrain, control, and manipulate people. It predisposes us to create educational systems like the ones we have at present, where control, discipline, reward, and punishment are the norm, and where choice, spontaneity, curiosity, and inquiry are frowned upon (Tyson 1999; Simon 2001).

The tragedy of the conventional approach to education lies in its effectiveness. Conventional socialization creates human beings who behave in ways that appear to lend evidence to the very beliefs about people that give rise to these institutions in the first place. Moreover, the prevalence of such beliefs and practices renders invisible the alternatives. Finally, rewards and punishment, blame and criticism, and the lack of meaningful choice common in the school system create apathy, despair, and cynicism. It is a small miracle that anyone emerges from such "education" with a vision of an alternative world and with trust in the possibility of creating it.

Needs, Power, and Domination

As Audre Lorde (1984) noted, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change." Transcending the pitfall of recreating the very thing we are trying to change depends on understanding how domination-based consciousness persists in and around us despite our commitment to a progressive, holistic vision.

NVC suggests two key elements essential to creating change even within systems of domination. One is a re-examination of our deepest assumptions about human needs and motivation; the other, and related, element is an understanding of power and our ways of using it. Our goal, with NVC, is use of power that enables all to meet their needs without creating harm.

A key premise of NVC is that human beings share the same basic set of needs. Aside from the obvious ones, such as air, food, and shelter, other common human needs are autonomy, respect, expression, fulfillment, empathy, closeness, mutual recognition, inspiration, and meaningful contribution.[2] NVC distinguishes between needs and strategies. Needs are timeless, abstract, and common to all people. Strategies, on the other hand, are the almost infinite array of actions, thoughts, objects, resources, and plans we use to try to meet needs.

NVC is based on the recognition that human *needs* are not in conflict with each other; only *strategies* can be in conflict. Through ensuring that both parties hear and connect fully with each other's needs, we look together for strategies that would meet as many of those needs as possible for all parties involved.

In this spirit, consider Cynthia's statement that her students "need discipline and structure." As I see it, she is actually describing *her* strategies to meet *her* needs which, though unnamed, most likely include her need to contribute, to connect to others in ways that make a difference. When her students move around in class, make faces, or joke with each other, these are their strategies to try to meet *their* needs,

perhaps for finding more meaning and satisfaction in their experience of school, or for greater autonomy in making choices about their time. Through NVC dialogue, Cynthia and her students can discover, together, what all of their needs are, and find strategies to meet them.

Nonviolent Communication is based on the recognition that human needs are not in conflict with each other; only strategies can be in conflict.

Power can be defined as having the capacity to take effective action to meet needs. Effective action entails having both material and emotional access to strategies to meet needs. Traditional views include as a core aspect of power the capacity to coerce others to give us what we want even if it doesn't meet their needs (Weber 1946). Within the NVC framework we call this power-*over*. But we also recognize and cultivate another form of power we call power-with: the capacity to meet our needs in a way that allows and invites others to meet their needs, thereby enabling us to meet more of our needs in the long run. The practice of NVC—like other practices adopted by holistic educators—seeks to build a basis on which we can increase our power-*with* others.

Thus, for example, the more Cynthia can hear, understand, and empathize with her students' *needs* behind their actions, the more power she has *with* them. Her understanding and empathy conveys to them that their needs are seen, and that they also matter. When students are heard in this way, they tend to be more open to working together to find strategies to address their needs *and* others' needs—in this instance, Cynthia's. Time and again, educators are surprised to find the wealth of wisdom and creativity that children can exhibit in solving problems when they understand everyone's needs.

In a world based on domination, the options for strategies to meet needs are drastically narrowed. When we are separated from each other, we cannot work together to find strategies that work for both of us. When conflict arises, even with people we ordinarily trust, we lose our capacity to imagine creative strategies to meet needs. When we have been trained to believe that our needs are at odds with others' needs, we can easily resort to the use of power-*over* regardless of our general spiritual and political beliefs.

Power-over is born of the combination of two key assumptions of domination systems. One is the assumption of scarcity of means. The other is the belief that the primary motivation of human beings is to try to satisfy their every impulse, no matter the consequences to self or others.

On a personal level, scarcity means having to fight with each other to get our needs met. On a societal level, scarcity means we must create some mechanism for distributing resources, and we have every incentive to justify any resulting inequality.

In the resulting domination systems we are either dominators who can meet our needs at the expense of others' needs, or we are subordinates who lack the power to meet our needs effectively except through the grace of those who dominate us. We cannot see each other as fully human in either case, and thus cannot enjoy or give each other the key human experience of mutual recognition. Growing up, mostly, without this experience (Benjamin 1988, chaps. 1 and 2), we are primed to obey or control, and can switch and adapt to both sets of roles with uncanny ease.[3]

Consider again Cynthia's situation. Out of her great desire to contribute to her students' ability to function in society, she may employ strategies that are at odds with her students' needs for meaning, satisfaction, and autonomy. Ironically, Cynthia's actions may not support her own commitment to empower her students. This is not because Cynthia doesn't care about their needs, or even because of any particular belief about the virtue of punishment and reward. Rather, it is because she may not trust that children can productively participate in deciding what and how they will study, or doesn't see a way to tap into their natural wonder and interest, or because of the tremendous pressures attendant on existing classroom structure. As Thomas Kelly (1992) suggests, "In hierarchical and repressive structures supported by a culture of competitive individualism, the availability and apparent necessity of punitive power is ever-present."

Joan, on the other hand, is in a position of subordination to her principal. She is very excited about innovative approaches to education to engage her students meaningfully. But when she tried to broach the topic with her principal, he adamantly opposed her suggestions on the grounds that children wouldn't really learn what they need to learn if their interest guides the curriculum in any way. Joan backed off without seeing what his needs are, or that she shares those needs despite the difference in strategies. Like Joan, the principal most likely wants to contribute to children's learning. Like Joan, he probably cares about order and manageability, and is concerned about the success of programs. Understanding both his needs and hers she can then see him again as human and work with him to address his concerns and still create innovation.

How do we learn the art of dialogue when we are primed to respond to relationships by imposing our needs or giving up on them as soon as conflict exists or seems to be brewing? The challenge is enormous: in each moment of conflict we are called upon to undo and transform the core assumptions we were taught, and take a leap of faith into trusting the possibility of attending to all parties' needs. How do we acquire the capacity to hold everyone's needs as equally important? How do we learn to connect deeply enough with each other's needs that we find a strategy that meets both?

Lisa, a school principal, learned about NVC through a friend, and came to a workshop with the desire to improve her own personal life. She quickly realized the potential of NVC and decided to bring the training into her school. While preparing for this transition, I worked with Lisa to coach her on her own communication with staff at the school.

Lisa, like many of us, was deeply conditioned to seek harmony and avoid conflict. For the first several months, most of what we worked on was how easily she could forget to hear the other person and/or to express what she wanted. Paradoxically, we discovered that at times it was easier for her to make and enforce decisions than to express openly what was important to her. Imposing our wishes using power-over when we *can* do so may be less scary than revealing what we want openly and risking the ensuing conflict if we equalize power.

Now, a year later, Lisa is much more confident in her ability to express herself and hear others in times of conflict. She is more and more willing to ask for what she wants at times when she used to give up without trying. She is surprised at how much more often her needs *are* met, in ways that are more satisfying to her than coercing or manipulating others. She now sees her role as guiding the decision-making process rather than making the decisions.

Making a full choice in the face of fear of consequences requires great emotional strength, sometimes even a willingness to suffer consequences wholeheartedly.

Even when her needs are not met, Lisa is more alive and hopeful than ever. She recognizes the tremendous value of holding on to her needs, and seeing the beauty in them, even when she doesn't immediately see a way to meet them.

Lisa regularly brings up issues with staff and mediates conflicts between teachers. She has successfully navigated complicated interactions with her own supervisor at the school district. Prior to learning NVC, she would have been terrified to express herself in those situations for fear of losing her job or of being ridiculed.

When we try to bring the use of NVC to the context of power-over relations, the challenge is even bigger than in the personal encounter. The social processes and social structures around us continually reinforce the premises of domination. The task of using and modeling NVC in such systems is to imagine power-with relationships into being regardless of what the systemic conditions are.

As Kreisberg (1992, 9) has noted, teachers occupy a particularly painful dual role. In their relationships with students, "they are central figures of authority and control." But when dealing with school administration and school districts, "they are remarkably isolated and often strikingly powerless."

Few roles in society require a person to constantly engage others from both ends of the dominance/ submission polarity.

As we become more aware of the painful costs of the use of power-over tactics, we become more willing to experiment with foregoing punishments and rewards. And as we become more aware of how difficult this process of unlearning and relearning is, we also, hopefully, move more closely towards what Sharon Salzburg calls "loving kindness"—with others and with ourselves.

Empowering Others to Make Their Own Choices

Trying to get students to do what we want out of fear, guilt, shame, or the desire for reward is harmful to everyone. Students will either submit to us or rebel. But they will most likely not enjoy doing what we want, and we will not enjoy our interactions with them. Human connection does not thrive in schools where such conditions exist. When we resort to power-over, our own experience is one of frustration and exhaustion at trying to maintain connection, be treated with respect, and feel a sense of efficacy in our choices.

Learning to have power-*with* our students means empowering them to say NO to us. Only then can we experience the magical beauty of hearing a YES that comes from true choice instead of a "should." Paradoxically, if we let go of the outcome, and are open to dialogue with the "NO" that we may receive, the results will often surprise us.

Linda, a first grade teacher in a California school, experienced this recently. Children in her school were engaging in a game that delighted them no end: pulling their elbows back through their sleeves and down to their sides so that only their wrists extend from the sleeves. This silly look appeared to be contagious despite the danger of not being able to break a fall with their hands (indeed one child suffered a concussion from doing this). No amount of reciting safety rules, threats of punishment, or other coercive measures resulted in any change. As soon as adults were out of sight, the children resumed their game.

One day Linda decided to try something different. After she approached one leader of this activity and invited him to talk to her privately, the following dialogue ensued:

Linda: "When I saw you pull your arms into your sleeves, I felt really alarmed because I was afraid you might fall and hurt yourself. Your safety really matters to me. Would you be willing to stop this game?"

Student: "I was only being silly."

Linda: "Are you scared right now, and want to make sure I understand you didn't mean any harm?"

Student: "Yeah."

Linda: "You really just want to have fun and enjoy yourself?"

Student: "Yeah. I'm being careful."

Linda: "Are you wanting me to understand that you are also concerned about safety, and want to be trusted about it?"

(Student nods without speaking).

Linda (after a pause): "I am still really worried about this game, and I'm not comfortable with you guys continuing to play it because I don't trust that everyone will be safe. I really care about you. I'm wondering if we can find some other ways of having fun that are not as scary to me?"

There was no demand, no threat of punishment, and no coercion. Linda was clearly open to listen to why he might want to continue to play this game. When he received this understanding in the form of Linda's attempts to guess what was alive in him, he was able to connect with her feelings and needs, and willingly agreed to stop. Knowing that his safety mattered to Linda, and seeing that she was open to hearing "NO" in response to her request, he was moved to agree from a different place.

Following this one conversation with Linda, this student has not resumed this behavior at home or in school. Indeed, no one else has been doing it, either. Such is the effect of power-with: The shift he experienced during this interaction was profound enough to have lasting results.

What would have happened had the boy not shifted easily? How do we interact with others, especially children, when we believe that their actions are not meeting our needs, or theirs, without trying to coerce or punish them? How can we remember to hold theirs needs *as they experience them* as dear as our own needs and *beliefs* about their needs? How can we integrate the knowledge that any solution that doesn't meet their needs will backfire sooner or later?

As we experiment with using NVC in the school, we will develop our own answers to these difficult questions at our own time and pace. We will need to cultivate our capacity to express our own feelings, needs, and requests. We will need to empathize with children, even when we disagree with what they're doing. This will help us to remember their needs and

communicate to them that we are seeking to meet our needs in ways that work for them as well.

This process is at the same time rewarding and challenging. The reward is not just that we get what we want more of the time with less cost. Rather, it's the experience of the process itself. We learn about ourselves and others while trying to connect, and we connect at a heart level that's rarely available otherwise. There is unimaginable beauty in the unexpected intimacy and the aliveness that come about as we practice this. When we begin, often the challenge seems bigger than the reward. The process of learning requires considerable patience for ourselves and others as we engage in the process. Over time, we reach connection more easily and fully, and our success itself provides enough motivation to keep going.

Practicing the tools of NVC entails letting go of coercion and the use of force except when life is endangered. Even then, NVC suggests using force only to *protect*, not to *punish*, and resuming dialogue as soon as danger is not imminent. At the same time, staying in dialogue does not imply agreeing to what children want to do. Rather, our dialogic stance invites others, including children, to consider everyone's needs. As we model our capacity to care for children's needs, and our willingness to express our own needs and ask for what we want, we teach children an important lesson: that their needs matter no more and no less than anyone else's around them. It is through being treated with respect, consideration, and empathy that they will learn to treat others similarly.

Beyond Submission and Rebellion

Although many children and teachers find ways to stay human with each other within, and despite, conventional school systems, this is far from the norm. It takes great emotional fortitude for children to recognize that there is tremendous care and thought behind consequences, rewards, and punishments. Some children are able to find or retain their intrinsic motivations and passions within the most difficult conditions; but for the most part, systems of reward and punishment result in few options other than submission or rebellion.

We submit, when we do, out of fear of the consequences, not because we particularly care about the person in authority, or are aware of their needs. In the context of power relations, we are rarely able to hear what another asks of us as anything other than a demand.

We rebel, when we do, because of our need for autonomy, for being able to make our own choices regardless of what others tell us we must do. Rebellion may be the only way we can experience a sense of power. However, regardless of how sweet it may feel in the moment, rebellion is not ordinarily an expression of true choice. We are still giving the other person the power to define our choices. True choice is dramatically different from acting either out of fear or out of scorn of consequences. When we are connected to our own needs—not a "should" in either direction—we will respond to what we are asked to do with choice in the moment.

Trying to get students to do what we want out of fear, guilt, shame, or the desire for reward is harmful to everyone.

Making a full choice in the face of fear of consequences requires great emotional strength, sometimes even a willingness to suffer consequences wholeheartedly. This spiritual fortitude is at the core of nonviolence as practiced by Gandhi and King. Sometimes this stance would mean agreeing with what we are asked to do, because of recognizing that it would meet our own needs (be it for generosity, contribution, peace, or any other need). At other times it would mean standing our ground while maintaining dialogue with the person in authority, offering empathy and expression of our own feelings and needs with the goal of meeting both sets of needs as much as possible.

Just as much as the freedom to say "YES" depends on having the option to say "NO," we cannot truly choose "NO" from the heart if we are unable to experience the possibility of choosing "YES" to meet our own needs, separately from those of the person in authority.

As difficult as it is for us to stand up to *and* connect with those in authority, it is even more difficult for our students to do so with us. When we begin to

practice NVC, then, we can see our own position in a new way, as a window into the possibility of seeing the humanity of everyone. Our struggles with our students can increase our compassion for our supervisors. Our challenges with those in authority over us can add to our understanding of our students. When we are able to see everyone's humanity, we step outside the familiar set of relationships, and get a glimpse of what truly life-serving institutions could look like, when everyone's needs matter and are taken into account.

Lessons of Hope

Change is not necessarily forthcoming when we begin to bring new consciousness and practices into our school experience: Those around us may still often respond to us based on assumptions of domination, as Sura Hart's essay in this issue about the Skarpnacks Free School suggests.

Similarly, when Lisa first wanted to introduce NVC to her school, I cautioned her about the importance of making sure people took the training because they wanted to, not because they had to. Lisa completely agreed with me. Both of us, however, underestimated the power of institutions to shape consciousness. Lisa, unaware of how easy it would be to hear her invitation as a demand, was thrilled to see the level of response, as it contributed to her sense of hope and possibility. I was worried because I didn't trust the authenticity of the choice.

On the day of the training, almost the entire staff was present. They had heard Lisa say that this training was voluntary. But they had few if any experiences in life, including with Lisa, to prepare them for being able to *experience* the option of saying NO. Ironically, the net result was similar to what teachers experience in a typical classroom: those who didn't want to learn made it very hard for those who did to learn anything. This day was so painful for everyone that I assumed this would be the last time NVC would be used by the staff in this school.

But I also underestimated the power of vision to inspire others. After the training, a much smaller group of teachers and counselors approached Lisa and asked if it would be possible to have further training. This group has been coming to ongoing practice sessions for a year. Bit by bit, they are practicing how they can bring NVC to bear on their classroom and faculty relationships.

The dean of students, for example, is fully committed to connection based on empathy with the students' experience, and expression of her feelings and needs. Her current challenge is how to respond to teachers who insist on getting students punished. She is struggling to recognize that their insistence on punishment is an expression of some of their needs—perhaps for reliable order in their classroom, for living in harmony with their own values, or for contributing to the children's ability to live productive lives in this society.

Some teachers are experimenting with involving students in decision making about classroom behavior. They are also trying to find, with increasing success, ways other than punishment and reward to respond to difficult situations. Several are starting to teach their students about NVC.

Some "problem students" have magically come to acquire friends and become integrated into the group after hearing the entire class describe the effect of their actions on others, while also being given voice to express their own experience and concerns.

Ripple effects are starting, too. More and more, faculty and staff who have not participated in NVC training are approaching Lisa and others and asking them to help with conflicts.

Lisa regularly participates in the NVC practice sessions and shares her own vulnerability with the teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals present, thereby contributing to a sense of trust and community. This small group, in a large, regular public school, is living proof that even in difficult circumstances, a commitment to dialogue is possible. Equally important, this experiment shows that, over time, trust increases, and with it a sense that alternatives exist that may be more productive, life-serving, and enjoyable than the existing systems are.

I want to stress again that using NVC is not a panacea that magically transforms how we will relate to students, other educators, administrators, and ourselves. Nor does it always enable us to fulfill our goals. But it does give us tools for participating in fulfilling the vision of holistic education, an education in which the needs of each child are cherished and in which children are nurtured to act in joy, com-

passion, and mutuality. We live this vision by creating communities in which all of our needs are seen as beautiful expressions of our humanity—and in which we work toward meeting all of our needs peacefully. As we do so, we create, in a microcosm, the world we dream of bequeathing to our children.

References

Benjamin, Jessica. 1988. *The bonds of love: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and the problem of domination*, New York: Pantheon.

Kashtan, Miki. 2000. *Beyond reason: Reconciling emotion with social theory*. Unpublished dissertation. UC Berkeley.

Kelly, Thomas. 1992, Summer. Democratic educators as compassionate communicators. *Democracy and Education.*

Kreisberg, Seth. 1992. *Transforming power: Domination, power, and empowerment*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister outsider*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. 1999. *Nonviolent communication: A language of compassion.* Del Mar, CA: Puddle Dancer Press.

Simon, Kathy. 2001. *Moral questions in the classroom: How to get kids to think deeply about real life and their schoolwork*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Tyson, Karolyn. 1999 *Social influence and the process of schooling: The creation and perpetuation of social inequality at the primary level*. Unpublished dissertation, UC Berkeley.

Weber, Max. 1946. Politics as a vocation. In *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*, edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press. Originally published 1921.

Zimbardo, Phillip G., Haney Craig, W. Curtis Banks, and David Jaffe. 1975. The psychology of imprisonment: privation, power and pathology. In David Rosenhan and Perry London, eds., *Theory and Research in Abnormal Psychology*, 2nd edition, edited by David Rosenhan and Perry London. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Endnotes

1. All names used in this article are fictitious.

2. This is not a complete list of needs, and only serves as illustration. For a fuller discussion of the theory of needs which underlies this approach, see Chapter 9 in Kashtan (2000). See also Marshall Rosenberg (1999).

3. As an example, consider a study conducted in Stanford in the 1970s (Zimbardo et al. 1975) in which individuals were randomly assigned to being guards or inmates in a simulation which lasted six days. The study was intended to last two weeks, but was stopped because both guards and inmates assumed their roles so deeply that the researchers were concerned about their well-being. "Guards" were being mean and abusive to the "inmates," and the latter took on behaviors characteristic of real-life prisoners, such as passivity and deviousness.

Steiner College Ad
from ENC 15(3), page 72

Democratic Educators as Compassionate Communicators

Thomas E. Kelly

A commitment to democratic empowerment requires compassionate interactions between teachers and students.

Educators committed to democratic empowerment are persistently called upon to transcend narrow conceptions of teachers as classroom disciplinarians and instructional technicians. In light of conflicting, often toxic, influences on students' lives, democratic educators tend to embrace multiple roles, including co-investigators of civic issues, co-creators of caring classrooms, and public advocates for societal justice.

Sensitive to these roles, Marshall Rosenberg, a psychologist, teacher and international peace negotiator, focuses, in particular, on the quality of relationship teachers establish with their students. While there are many dimensions of students' (and their own) lives over which teachers may have little direct influence, Rosenberg notes that teachers do have maximal responsibility for determining how they will interact with students. To maximize mutual fulfillment, that interaction might be based on what Rosenberg calls compassionate or nonviolent communication. This mode of communication is based on the following assumptions and central principles:

- Most students want what teachers themselves want. These importantly include wanting to express themselves honestly and to feel safe doing so, to be understood in their own terms, to be trusted to exercise their autonomy, and to be provided opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others.
- The more students experience satisfaction of these wants, the more they will display them willingly, with response-ability.
- For complex cultural, structural, interpersonal and psychological reasons, the messages that many students' experience contradict these basic needs and wants. That

This essay originally appeared in *Democracy & Education* and is reprinted, with modification, with the permission from the Institute for Democracy in Education.

Thomas J. Kelly is a member of the Department of Education at John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio.

is, students often feel intimidated, misunderstood, mistrusted, and manipulated. They then act in ways that can obscure or skew these needs and wants (i.e., they lie, remain silent, become submissive or rebellious, appear selfish).

- Teachers might be wise to anticipate the presence of these negative dynamics in students, and to take concrete positive action to counteract them, because interactions that contradict or fail to be responsive to the students' needs/wants discussed above will tend to reinforce the negative dynamics.

Equipped with these assumptions about common need, getting what you give, and the backdrop of a toxic and mystifying environment, compassionate and practical teachers might consider interacting with students in honest, empathetic, invitational, and collaborative ways. If they do, they will forthrightly share their own feelings, needs, and precious values; and they will seek to understand those dimensions in students. In words and actions, they will communicate in a language of request, not demand; power with, not power over. As much as possible, and especially in cases of student-teacher disagreement, teachers will be "heavy listeners," successfully conveying this essential message to students:

> As much as I believe strongly about this matter, I am fundamentally open to your influence. I know I do not know it all. I am as committed to respecting and meeting your needs as I am to my own. As you consider my request, one based on my needs and values, I want you to know that as important to me as the request itself is a *genuine willingness* to honor it because *you* appreciate its value. Empathetically, I do not want you to comply out of fear, guilt, shame, or other similar motive, because I strongly suspect that doing so will rob you of your sense of autonomy, leave you preoccupied in potentially destructive ways with this loss, and, overall, decrease your desire to contribute to the welfare of others.

There is another vital part of this message that needs to be sent. It speaks to the false dichotomy between authoritarianism and permissiveness, or, put differently, between "you must do what I say/demand" and "you may do anything you please." The essence of the message is as follows:

> I also need to make something very clear. I do not want you to confuse my desire for a respectful, warm, feeling relationship with my unwillingness to be a victim or to let others be victims. If, for example, your behavior is physically or verbally abusive, I may need to use force to stop your continued abuse. I need for you to understand that any such force is protective, not punitive. It will be exercised with the greatest care and restraint, and accompanied by my sincere attempt to understand from you the needs and feelings involved in your behavior. I never intend to punish or harm you, because I realize it does you a profound disservice, pollutes our relationship and is generally counterproductive; that is, you will be less, not more, likely to act willingly in compassionate ways.

Being optimally compassionate in the spirit suggested here involves considerable vulnerability and trust, strength and restraint. In hierarchical and repressive structures supported by a culture of competitive individualism, the availability and apparent necessity of punitive power is ever-present. Living in these conditions is hardly ideal for being honest, empathic, invitational, and collaborative.

If the set of assumptions described here reflects reality, then being compassionate can be, simultaneously, the most practical and best way to be in relationship with students and others. As it reflects and responds to fundamental human needs, compassionate interaction may be highly conducive to transforming the hostility and docility characteristic of punitive systems into an empowering synergy, an energy force deeply respectful of individual autonomy *and* one channeled toward contributing to the welfare of others. Compassionate interpersonal relationships, by themselves, are certainly no panacea for the profound structural and cultural barriers confronting democratic transformation. Compassionate interactions with students do, though, seem to reflect the kind of spirit and response-ability that educators interested in democratic empowerment would want to embody and promote.

Lessons from the Skarpnäcks Free School

Sura Hart and Marianne Göthlin

Nonviolent Communication in the classroom starts with living it, not teaching it.

> Educational innovation is not easy, I see it as a powerful way to achieve peace on this planet. If future generations can be educated in schools structured so that everyone's needs are valued, I believe they will be better able to create life-serving families, workplaces, and governments.
> (Marshall Rosenberg, *Life-Serving Education*)

Introduction

I first met Marianne Göthlin in December, 1999, at a Conference for Nonviolent Communication (NVC) practitioners interested in education. Marianne had started an elementary school in Stockholm based on NVC, which was then in its second year. Having worked in the field of education for twenty years and practicing and teaching NVC for ten years, I was very interested to hear how her school was set up and how the teachers taught NVC to the students. When Marianne spoke to the group, I found myself on the edge of my seat, both surprised and excited by her first sentence, "We don't teach Nonviolent Communication to the students; We try to live it in our relationships with them."

I was surprised because I had found that young people learned NVC much more quickly than most of the adults I taught—largely, I believe, because they have so much less to "unlearn." I had assumed that in a school based on the principles of NVC, teachers would naturally teach the process to students. Marianne's statement quickly exposed this assumption and struck a chord of truth in me, resonating with my deepest understanding of how we humans learn—from the inside out, and through relationships that are life-serving.

I had been fascinated by how people learn since the birth of my first child. I learned, first from my children and later from children in schools where I taught, that learning flowers where there is no fear, no threat of punishment or reward (Kohn 1999). The most learning takes place where learners are free to explore, experiment, make mistakes, and follow their own interests, moving from the inside out. Teachers who support learning from the inside out

Sura Hart teaches Nonviolent Communication and for the past two years has served as coordinator for the Center for Nonviolent Communication's Education Project. Sura is co-author with Victoria Kindle-Hodson of a book for elementary school teachers and other adults who want to share NVC with young people, *The Giving Game: Sharing Nonviolent Communication with Kids* (Forthcoming).

Marianne Göthlin teaches and learns at Skarpnäcks Free School in Stockholm, Sweden. She also teaches Nonviolent Communication (NVC) to individuals and groups and to teachers in schools throughout Europe.

create relationships with students that Riane Eisler refers to as "partnership relationships" (Eisler 1987). In partnership relationships, teachers show students "that their voices will be heard, their ideas respected, and their emotional needs understood" (Eisler 2000, 14). "Empathy, caring and equality" are touchstones of partnership relationships and of what Eisler calls Partnership Education. These qualities are also essential to what Marshall Rosenberg calls "Life-Serving Education" (Rosenberg, Forthcoming).

Life-serving education empowers young people with the consciousness and the skills necessary to create life-serving relationships, communities, and governments where the needs of all people and all living systems can be met peacefully. This kind of education requires an awareness of our interconnectedness and a language that expresses this consciousness and the life in each of us, moment to moment. Dr. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication process does this by keeping people's attention on their shared human needs. It shows how to keep communication flowing and connection between people growing. It is a natural language for creating partnership relationships and a foundation for life-serving education, where trust, mutual respect, understanding, and learning can flower.

The intention that initially inspired the Skarpnäcks teachers was to connect with and care for the needs of everyone in their school, using the language of Nonviolent Communication. They believed that through their relationships they would seed a culture of trust, mutual respect, and compassion. The story of the Skarpnäcks Free School is one of vision, commitment, and patience. It has relied on the willingness of teachers to learn new skills and unlearn old habits of thinking and acting.

The following essay came to life in the course of conversations between Marianne and myself over several months. I wrote this essay about Skarpnäcks Free School for the many teachers who have asked what schools based on NVC look like and how long it takes to create a school culture of compassion. To the extent possible, I wrote this story in Marianne's voice, hoping to connect the reader more directly with her experience which she has so generously shared with me.

Marianne's Story

The Skarpnäcks Free School started with a conversation between some parents who were unhappy with the authoritarian structure of the schools their children attended. Their seven-year-olds were expected to sit quietly at their desks most of the day, listening to teachers lecture to them and assign work. Teachers in Sweden are often evaluated on how quiet their classroom is and how well they keep the students occupied at their desks. This encourages teachers to focus on rote learning, memorization, and independent desk exercises.

These parents wanted a different kind of school for their children—one based on democratic principles and respectful compassionate interactions, a place where their children could be more active in their learning and free to express themselves. I had taught Nonviolent Communication to some of these parents and I was working as an elementary classroom teacher when they asked me if I would help them start a school founded on the principles of NVC. From the moment I said "Yes" up to the present, I have been fascinated and encouraged by our journey.

Skarpnäcks began in the fall of 1998 with 24 children, ages 6-9, and four teachers. Four years later, we have 63 students, ages 6-13, and nine teachers. We have grown not only in size, but also, more importantly, in compassion, respect, and trust.

We did not set out to formally teach children NVC, nor did we set out to teach children compassion, because how can you do that? We teachers agreed that what was important was to live the consciousness of NVC: to listen to the children and care equally about children's needs and adults' needs at the school—to focus on meeting needs, and create a school environment where we are all giving and receiving in ways we enjoy.

Our teachers believe that this way of being together, this giving and receiving, is natural to human beings. Marshall Rosenberg often talks about NVC as our natural language and quotes Gandhi as saying, "Don't confuse the natural with the habitual." Since what is habitual in children's upbringing and schooling is adults telling them what to do and expecting obedience, we knew it would take some time for them to trust that we wanted to live a different way with them. We wanted to be sure that this climate of trust was established in our school, that we were living the consciousness of NVC before we taught the steps and technique.

From the first days of our school, we teachers did our best to model NVC with the children. It was very important to us to listen deeply to one another, and also to make requests and not demands. We all valued active learning, choosing to be outside in nature a lot and also out in our community. We had many

enjoyable projects to offer the children, but we never wanted to make demands or force them to do anything. We only wanted them to do what they could agree to and what they saw as life-serving. We told them this from the start and we expected they would be very happy with our requests. We were surprised with the variety of responses we received, which gave us a lot of practice, especially that first year.

That first year, we teachers found that the children responded to our requests in three different ways, expressed in three groups of approximately the same size. The first group of about eight students were primarily the youngest children who had been raised at home with parents who shared our values of mutuality and respect. They seemed most comfortable making choices. They were the most cooperative and the most creative students that first year. There were also a few older students in that group who appreciated the difference between our requests and caring for their needs and the way it was in their former schools where teachers told them what they had to do.

A second group of students expressed more confusion in response to our requests. We could see them furrow their brows when we asked if they were "willing" to do an activity rather than just tell them they "had" to do it. For example, we have never assigned homework, but sometimes we offer it as an option. Some students who were used to having homework assignments would say to us, "Tell me I have to do homework." We teachers were not comfortable doing this, and would tell them why this was: We wanted so much for them to learn to make choices—about what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. For us, it was even more important that the students learn to make choices that serve their lives than that they learn certain facts or concepts. We also had confidence that the two were not in opposition. In fact, we believed that the more choices they had, the more they would learn.

There was a third group of students that first year that offered the most challenge for the teachers. These students, when we would make a request of them, would say, "Do I have to?" This would be their reply to most of our requests, whether we were asking them to solve a a math problem or asking them to go play outside for exercise and fun. We were so surprised by this response, at first. Each time we heard it, we explained to them that we didn't want to make them do anything and only wanted them to meet our requests if they could do it with willingness. We also empathized with their fears that if they said "No" to what we asked, we would make them do things. Since this was most often how adults had treated them in the past, we understood how little trust they might have of us. We saw that their questioning "Do I have to?" was their way of testing us, that we would have to earn their trust, and this would take time. Even with this understanding, we were often very frustrated and even discouraged when, month after month, they continued to test us in this way. We wondered what it would take for them to really trust our intentions.

Their questioning and our confusion continued throughout that first year, and we approached the beginning of our second school year with apprehension, along with strong hope that they would now trust us. As we soon discovered, something had changed in them, but we were, once again, surprised. Now, whenever we made a request of students, this group responded with, "No," or "I won't do it," or "You can't make me." It seemed their questioning had turned into strong resistance. But why? We wondered what we had done to have them resist so strongly. It seemed that instead of trusting us more, they were trusting us less.

We did our best to listen to the needs behind their "No," and, as we did this, we came to hear their resistance as a graduation and a big step forward in their unlearning process. The previous year they saw themselves as having no power. They questioned us, wanting to know if we would really make them do things, as teachers had done in the past. This year they were testing their own power as well as our intent by saying, "No, you can't make me." We teachers started to celebrate that they were moving into their own power: They were exercising their power of choice and wanting to see if they would be respected for it. We knew that only if they are free to say "No" can they truly say "Yes."

Even with this understanding, it wasn't easy to always respect their "No" and listen to what they were wanting. At our school, we do a lot of our learning out in nature and in our community. When we are preparing to take a group of 22 students out into the

woods and two students say they won't go, what can we do? This happened to me often and I tried most often to listen to what they wanted and empathize with their need to make their own choices in life. I also would share with them my feelings and needs: "I feel torn when I hear you say you want to stay at school and not go to the woods with the rest of the group. I want you to do what's most wonderful for you, and I would really like to have us altogether. I also want to get going to the woods soon with the rest of the children. I can't leave you alone and I'm not sure what to do to meet all our needs. Do you have an idea of what could work?" With this much dialogue, sometimes the child would decide to join us, because they saw how doing so would contribute to the ease of the school day for everyone.

If the student was still not willing to come, I tried to find another group he could stay with at school. At times, I tried calling the parent to come pick him up, if he really didn't want to go. If I could find no other way, I said, "I'm very sad to not find a way to meet your need for making your own choices right now, and also meet my need to be with all the children in this activity outdoors. I am now insisting you come with us." I only remember a few times that first year when we physically moved a child against their will. This was not done for punishment but because we could see no other way to protect the children in our care.

The NVC dialogues we have with our students are not easy to describe. They have a form but don't follow a simple formula with the promise of simple solutions. They are sometimes messy with stops and starts. But our willingness to stay in these dialogues grows stronger as over and over we enjoy the results of this process. Whenever we keep the dialogue going and stay connected to both our needs and the student's needs, instead of giving in to the old way of exerting power over them, inevitably we find a way to meet both our needs.

Our growing motivation has served us well, as it took another full school year for this group of students to test out our resolve to only make requests and to feel confident that we would listen for the "Yes" behind their "No." This was great training for us teachers, giving us a lot of practice in walking our talk. The result is that by the end of our third year, our school community was full of trust of one another. We understand now that trust is not a one time thing, but something that requires continual care and attention.

For example, at the end of our third year, we saw this pattern of unlearning repeated in our class of six-year-olds. In just one year, the whole class went from questioning, "Do I have to?" to saying "No" to, at the end of the year, responding to teachers' requests without fear, with trust that we care about their needs. This appears to be a predictable pattern of unlearning habits of relationship where demands are common and learning, instead, to hear the sincere motivation behind our requests.

Challenges and Learnings

Ten new students and two new teachers will join us for the 2002-2003 school year. As our school continues to grow, we are challenged to keep our core philosophy strong. The parents who started Skarpnäcks were passionate about NVC and the vision of a life-serving school. Since then, more families have joined us because they hear how children blossom at our school, but now many families don't know a lot about NVC and our educational philosophy. Each year we offer NVC training for parents and in the coming year, we will offer it throughout the year in hopes of everyone being able to come. We are very challenged with this since our parents, like most parents, lead busy and often stressful lives, and not as many of them as we would like carry and support the vision for the school. It seems very important for teachers to hold the vision and find more ways to share it and stay in communication with our school families.

Our biggest challenge is the time it takes to learn new ways of teaching and learning and to nurture relationships. As well as wanting to connect more with parents, we also want to make more time for meeting as teachers, about our philosophy and personal challenges in letting go of old patterns of teaching. We want to find more ways to support each other. And we also want to include students more and more in the running of the school. How will we do this and where will it take us? I can't say for sure, but I'm hopeful and encouraged by what we have learned and accomplished so far.

We are "unlearning" to be the authority in the classroom. This is much more difficult than we thought it

would be. To really partner with the students means that our voice is just one voice in the classroom, not the only or the most important one. We are learning to take our place in the classroom, not push our point of view. We're learning to spend more time listening and less time talking.

Because our vision is so large and the changes takes time, we are finding that *celebrating our small successes with each other is very important*. We do this now regularly in staff meetings. We also celebrate with the children. And when we go out of the school, to conferences with teachers from other schools, we are reminded of what we have here and we come back and celebrate that awareness.

Those of us who stay on as teachers have learned to be patient. As we have seen how this patience pays off time and again, we grow more trustful of the NVC process. Two of the four original teachers left after the second year. There were personal reasons for each of them, but a common reason was that they didn't see things progress as quickly as they liked. In hiring new teachers, we now look for their commitment to our vision, their desire to practice NVC, their willingness to have patience with the process, and their comfort with creative chaos.

Harvests

It has taken strong intention, a lot of effort, patience, and some time to lay the foundation for our school, and now, after four years, we celebrate that we are living more and more in a life-serving way with each other. Confirmation of this comes from the following observations:

- Most of the children arrive at school early and stay late and express their happiness to be at school; they play easily with all ages, boys and girls together.
- The number of conflicts between students has decreased dramatically since we opened, and teachers now spend very little time dealing with conflicts. Most conflicts that occur are handled by the children. I believe this is because of the trust and safety we feel with each other, and also the way teachers have modelled conflict resolution using NVC.
- Students increasingly talk directly to each other when they don't like what the other is doing, with growing confidence that they will be heard in a way that they can both enjoy and will lead to mutually satisfying outcomes.
- We rarely experience resistance from the children, because they know that we will listen to their "No" and will want to hear their needs. They now trust that we will not exert power over them and make them do things. This was not always the case.
- Recent standardized testing for 9- and 11-year-olds in reading, math, and English show that our students are all performing at or beyond the expectations for their age. This is not a surprise to the teachers but it is a big relief to parents, who have wondered if their children could be learning skills when they're enjoying themselves so much.
- The students have recently been asking to learn NVC and we teachers are now happy to teach it, trusting that it will not be learned as a formula or technique but as a truly life-serving process, further enriching our community.

Growing a life-serving school is hard work but it is also very rewarding. When I see what has blossomed from our persisting intention to meet needs and from the seeds of trust we have so carefully nurtured, and from all that we are learning together along the way, I'm joyful as so many needs and dreams are met for me: for protecting the vibrant minds and loving hearts of children, for caring community, for mutual learning, and for hope that we can create a compassionate and peaceful world.

References

Eisler, Riane. 1987. *The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Eisler, Riane. 2000. *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Kohn, Alfie. 1999. *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. 2000. *Nonviolent communication: A language of compassion*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. Forthcoming. *Life-serving education*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

I Had a Vision But No Roadmap

My Journey to Nonviolent Communication In the Classroom

Paulette Pierce

"Before, I taught my students how to be passionate intellectual gladiators within a classroom structured to facilitate fierce debate and total victory. Now I show them how to open their hearts and share in the construction of a community designed to support the creativity of every member."

Paulette Pierce has a Ph.D in sociology and is an Associate Professor at The Ohio State University where she teaches in the Department of African-American and African Studies. She is currently working on a book about black power.

As a member of the Black Power generation, embracing partnership and nonviolence has not come easily. Ironically, it was research on the Black Power Movement that led me, thirty years later, in this direction. When I examined the history of the Black Power Movement through feminist lenses (which I did not have before), the violent rhetoric and activities of the period looked very different. Before, declarations of the need for armed struggle and the willingness to kill and die sounded revolutionary and felt empowering. Now, they struck me as suicidal and reactionary. Gradually, I came to believe that we, the Black Power advocates, had bought into one of the most foundational precepts of the U.S.: that violence equals power and that the power to rule belongs to the strongest men or nation!

My new feminist insights about the Black Power Movement scared me. I was afraid I would be labeled a traitor, a dupe of White feminists. And, although I now questioned violence, both morally and practically, I still doubted that nonviolence could work in a world where dominance prevailed, where brute force seemed to triumph over love and compassion again and again.

My hope that nonviolence could be more than a utopian dream was strengthened when I discovered the work of Riane Eisler. Eisler argues that most human societies were peaceful and egalitarian before the violent imposition of patriarchy began to spread well over five thousand years ago. In stark contrast to what Eisler calls "dominator societies" which rely on fear and the threat of pain to enforce control, earlier "partnership-oriented" societies relied upon the pleasure inherent in caring for, connecting to, and developing power with others.

These prehistoric (mostly preliterate) societies were not, she notes, utopias. Conflicts did occur. However, the archeological evidence clearly indicates that warfare was rare for at least 15,000 years in most parts of the world (other than harsh, inhabitable environments). Most importantly, the valorization of violence that is typically reflected in the art and religion of patriarchal societies was completely absence. Nor did peace, egalitarianism, and partnership between the sexes come at the cost of advanced cultural achievement. According to Eisler, many of these civilizations reached amazing levels of technological and artistic development. This powerful new interpretation of the long prehistory of the human race, of the thousands of years of peace, plenty, and partnership, helped revive my battered faith in Dr. Martin Luther King's dream of a beloved community, of a nonviolent future for humanity.

It was at this point in my journey that I encountered the work of Marshall Rosenberg on nonviolent communication (NVC). Looking for practical tools to enact my growing commitment to nonviolence and partnership, I immersed myself in the videos and written materials which explain Rosenberg's unique method. I was impressed by his call for human empathy, connection, and mutuality. I immediately saw that the basic assumptions that support NVC are very similar to those of the the Partnership Way and the Beloved Community. I found most appealing Rosenberg's insistence that all people share the same life-serving needs; that mutuality is possible; that the most satisfying form of receiving is giving from the heart.

I eagerly discussed how nonviolent communication might work in the classroom with Rob Koegel, the friend who introduced me to it. Rob was beginning to use NVC in his teaching and I was moved and encouraged by his experience. At the same time, I found it hard to imagine how I could use NVC when I teach Black Studies to primarily African American students. I teach about extraordinarily painful, charged subjects—for example, the horror of the middle passage, centuries of slavery, rape, and lynching, the enduring legacy of Jim Crow, the vigilante and institutionalized violence used against the Civil Rights Movement.

Most students feel incredible rage as they learn about such things. Over the years, many have spoken of their desire to kill White people—or, at the very least, to hurt and punish them. How would the Black majority of my students respond to me, I confided to my friend, if in the face of their outrage and pain, I counseled nonviolence? Worse yet, how would my students respond if I suggested they not blame Whites—not just for the pain they caused in the past, but for the injustices they were inflicting in the present? I simply could not imagine teaching this material without deliberately invoking and fueling powerful moral outrage.

Again and again, I kept on asking a question I could not answer: How could progressives mobilize people if, as Rosenberg insists, we don't pass moral judgment, if we don't characterize actions as right or wrong, good or evil? I was deeply invested in two related assumptions: first, that guilt, though not sufficient, was necessary to force Whites to take responsibility for the legacy of slavery and the effects of ongoing discrimination; second, that anger and blame were necessary for Blacks to mobilize our energies to fight against racial injustice and to overpower the violent resistance we would surely encounter.

I felt vulnerable. I was afraid that NVC required that I unilaterally disarm while my enemy remained armed to the teeth! Then a friend reminded me that this is precisely what the civil rights movement asked and trained people to do.

My conscience would not let me ignore the radical transformative potential of Rosenberg's model in the classroom. Both the theory and practice of NVC represents a revolutionary paradigm shift within our patriarchal culture. It requires a decisive break with any form of coercion, unilateral control, or competitive structure that pits us against one another. It invites us to connect with our true feelings and to speak from the heart, to get in touch with what is alive in us and to express it. It assumes that we have life-affirming needs and that we cannot safely or fully satisfy our needs at the expense of others. Finally, it assumes that we only want others to meet our needs if they do so from the heart—a genuine desire to give—in which case we all gain.

These simple precepts contradict the fundamental assumptions of our culture in several respects. First,

that it is better to use our heads (rely on reason) than follow our hearts (trust our feelings). Second, that individual and social well-being are best served by individual competition. Third, that social life is marked by a scarcity of that which people want and need, that there is simply not enough to satisfy everyone. Fourth, that social life inevitably produces winners and losers. Fifth, that the "winners" are more able, smarter, and moral than the "losers"—hence, they are not only better but more deserving.

NVC deliberately subverts this dominator-orientation to social interaction. It substitutes a radically democratic approach to sociability premised on the universality of human feelings and needs. According to Rosenberg, there is no need that a person can experience that we as human beings are incapable of understanding, though we may not approve the strategy used to satisfy it. Hence, empathy is always possible—not only when others are speaking from the heart, but even when they are not. Of course, we must be willing to listen with what Rosenberg calls "giraffe ears" for the feelings and needs behind their statements. He chose this metaphor because giraffes have the largest heart of any mammal. When we go straight to the head, we bypass possible empathy and instead play the lethal game of "punitive god." We self-righteously judge other people and seek to punish. If we have the power to inflict punishment and/or exact revenge we feel justified; if not, we see ourselves as victims. Rosenberg's stunning conclusion is that, in either case, the satisfaction of our real needs (i.e., love, respect, empathy, community, safety) remain unmet or, at best, in jeopardy. Why? Because, as Rosenberg observes, any time people feel physically or emotionally coerced to do anything, they will seek to get even at the earliest possible opportunity.

Deep in my heart, I felt that Rosenberg was correct. My generation, the rebellious youth of the Black Power era, had given up on nonviolence which we had regarded merely as a tactic, not as a way of life as Dr. King ultimately came to see it. The rage for violence soon consumed the movement. Today the spirit and symbols of "Black Power" have captured the imagination of many within the hip hop generation. True to the postmodern moment, they sample the music, fashions, ideologies, and rhetoric of a previous time to express their own frustrations and desires. It is their unfocused anger and profound cynicism about politics and the possibility of progressive change that most worries me—not just as a political activist, but as a teacher.

Nonviolent Communication offers a radically democratic approach to sociability premised on the universality of human feelings and needs.

More and more, I began to wonder what would happen if I taught my students how to connect with the real needs which underlie the hurt and pain they seek to express through outrageous, in-your-face styles which are the hallmark of hip hop. This was one reason that I started to toy with the idea of trying to use NVC in the classroom.

There was also a more personal reason: I was uncomfortable with the disconnection I saw between my commitment to partnership and nonviolence and my own style of teaching.

Teaching has been the greatest joy of my life for more than twenty years. My passion in the classroom has earned me two university-wide teaching awards. Last summer, as I studied NVC, I wondered if it could help me become an even better teacher. Students have always favorably remarked about my extraordinary enthusiasm for my subject and my ability to connect with them as unique individuals.

Still, I suspected that my traditional style of teaching was in conflict with the progressive message I have always sought to convey: As the teacher I dominated class discussion and passed judgment about what things, events, and persons were "right" and "wrong." I was the intellectual gladiator of oppressed peoples in the White academy. Primed by what Deborah Tannen calls our "culture of argument" and our "words of warfare," my students were thrilled by my passionate commitment to justice and combative stance. I was their champion, an eloquent defender of the dignity of Black people and all those who have been marginalized in our society.

I encouraged them to follow my example, to become intellectual warriors.

Although I was ready for change, I cannot say that I consciously chose to use nonviolent communication in the classroom this academic year. Instead, I stumbled into it. I had a vision of where I'd like to go with NVC but no road map. The obstacles were obvious. First, I lacked formal training in NVC which is available through Rosenberg's organization. Second, I was very uncomfortable with the formulaic language used by NVC practitioners. Third, I still had my doubts that NVC could handle the explosive feelings which race brings up in this society. Fourth, I also doubted if *I* could handle these explosive feelings.

Nonetheless, at the start of the term, I began my slow embrace of NVC. I spoke about how it would be possible to communicate so as to make everyone feel safe and comfortable while speaking in the classroom. We would, of course, have different opinions. But, I predicted, if we listened with our hearts, imagined what motivated the speaker, and always showed respect to each other the class would be more lively and interesting for everyone. My goal, I confided, is to foster as much safety and connection, creativity and enthusiasm, in this classroom as I can.

Students looked surprised and delighted when I said that I would try hard never to respond to them in class or write comments on their papers that would hurt or belittle them. I asked that they "please" tell me if I did so by mistake. Then I shared that although I was uncomfortable with the university's requirement that I evaluate them, I would assign grades because I wanted to keep my job! I would try, however, to do this in a way that would support their growth and, hopefully, not feed into insecurities they might have. I also invited students to come up with individual or group projects which reflected their unique passion and strengths which I would use as alternatives to exams and papers to grade them. I would be thrilled, for instance, if they wrote poetry, composed a song, or created a dance relevant to the subject matter of the course.

As looks of surprise, disbelief, and relief showed on their faces, I concluded by saying I hoped we would always respect each other and use our emotions to enhance the learning process. An awkward silence followed. I reassured them that I recognized how unfamiliar and perhaps difficult it might be to embrace a new non-competitive, mutually empowering way of interacting in the classroom. "We will fall into old patterns," I stressed, "but instead of focusing on each other's mistakes we can offer concrete suggestions for improvement or even wait to later role-model how a similar situation might be handled in a more compassionate manner." A new sense of freedom and scary possibilities enfolded me. My heart sang "YES!"

Given the large class size, I asked them to wear name tags to facilitate a feeling of intimacy. I also regularly broke them into smaller groups for discussions. I explained that most people find small group settings less threatening but it might still be necessary to gently encourage shy individuals to speak up. The goal is not, I emphasized, to decide whose position is right but to try to understand the experiences that have led individuals to see things as they do. And regardless of personal reactions to any view, every speaker is entitled to respect.

Three weeks into the course I asked for written feedback on the teaching technique which, I explained, I was still new to and experimenting with. The assignment was completely voluntary and could be submitted anonymously if they preferred. They happily complied. Some of their comments follow:

> I really like this class because there is no right or wrong answer and we all can share our experiences. Dr. Pierce has taught us how to listen to what people are saying before we jump to respond. We in turn get to teach her how things are in our generation. Sometimes it feels like a friend talking to a friend, but we all respect her, her style of teaching, and herself as a person and educator.

> Even though I don't really talk in this class, I always feel like I can and that my voice will be welcome. When I walk in here I feel like 50 friends are welcoming me. This class has created a community of love.

> Words cannot truly express the experience of joy that I receive from this class. We have people from all walks of life who feel comfortable sharing their ideas and experiences. The conversa-

> tions we have evoke the spirit within us and bring out the best in us. It truly is a blessed experience to have a professor who invites us to teach and learn from one another.
>
> Most classes end up pitting ideas and students against each other; the class ends up feeling like a struggle to be the one who is right the most. In this class, students are respectful. I feel safe and accepted, like I'm in the company of friends. It makes me willing to share ideas and welcome constructive criticism.
>
> I've never been in a class where teachers feel what the students have to say is as important as their own knowledge and opinions. Not being of African American descent, I've learned things I could have never learned otherwise either through history classes or reading books…. The topics we discuss are so powerful and extraordinarily meaningful.

I was surprised by how much more conscious of my language and gestures I became. If I said or did anything that I thought might hurt or offend, I immediately shared my concern and sought correction. I was even more amazed and delighted by how readily my students followed my example, as the following story suggests.

Krisha is a large Black woman with a commanding voice, a passionate commitment to racial justice, and a penchant for blunt expression. Angie, a White student who previously took another class with Krisha, told me that she used to feel threatened by Krisha who appeared angry all the time. Now, Angie is no longer intimidated because, in her view, Krisha had "softened." We both laughed appreciatively as we discussed how Krisha was obviously wrestling with being more respectful and sensitive to other people's feelings—especially White folks!

For example, several Blacks students recently came to class furious about a racist article in the student newspaper which misrepresented the African American Heritage Festival. In fact, they swamped me in the hallway and told me, "We just know we are going to discuss this in class!" Their anger was so intense that I worried how the White students would feel. After I agreed, I started thinking: "This is what happens when you empower students. They take over your class!" Patrice read key portions of the opinion piece out loud. Reactions came fast and furious from the Black students. Krisha sat silently boiling with rage. Finally, she blurted out, "I want to kill White folks!" However, no sooner than the words were out her mouth, she turned to the White students and explained she did not mean them and asked that they not take offense. Fighting back tears, she said, "I'm so tired of my people always being portrayed as wild animals or criminals! The s—t just never stops." The silent empathy that enfolded her flowed from the Whites and Blacks alike.

More tangible evidence of the strong connection between the Black and White students came when it was agreed that this racist insult demanded a response. Three White students—Karen, Libby and Pamela—volunteered to work with the Black students (including Krisha). Elicia, a dynamic young Black woman, volunteered to facilitate the organizing process. Pamela, whose boyfriend is a newspaper editor, offered valuable insider information about how to get an opposing piece published. Just one week later, this activist core led a highly successful silent protest march around the campus which attracted up to 100 students! My students were thrilled. Several wrote about how empowering it felt to plan and execute such a demonstration.

I was delighted that their organizing methods embodied many of the tenets of NVC I sought to promote: honest discussion of feelings, identification of their needs (in this case to be heard and respected), shared leadership, direct but non-confrontational style of protest, and interracial cooperation. Their stunning success built upon an evolving foundation of mutual trust and respect.

All has not been smooth sailing, however. As the academic year draws to an end, I can clearly see some areas where I still feel quite uncomfortable using NVC in the classroom. Ironically, a student's expression of anger or the desire to cause physical harm to other people frightens me because I do not yet trust that NVC is powerful enough to handle intense hostility. Nor do I feel skilled or experienced in its use to ensure de-escalation of conflict and a mutually satisfactory resolution of differences. Underlying my fear of the process is my lingering deep suspicion that in certain circumstances all human needs

may not, as Rosenberg insists, be reconcilable. I still fear that sometimes there has to be winners and losers! And my personal fear is somewhat related. I am terrified that I will be overwhelmed by the needs of my students if they genuinely connect with what's in their hearts!

On some deep level this may be my greatest fear of using NVC. I have always been passionate about teaching and very involved with my students both in and outside of the classroom. Yet I must confess that there have been many times when I have felt overwhelmed by the incredible problems my students constantly share with me. Hearing their stories and feeling their pain, I have felt obligated to help even when such actions clearly go beyond my official responsibility and expertise as a teacher. How can I turn away, I ask myself, when I know what they're going through?

I worry about what will happen if they learn to use NVC to discover and share their many layers of pain and unmet needs. Even before I introduced the spirit of NVC into my classroom, so many of my students got in touch with such powerful emotional issues that I had to solicit help from the Office of Student Counseling Services. Even as I affirm the feminist principle that "the personal is political," I still ask myself if the classroom is the proper place for this kind of exploration. How, I wonder, will I balance my students' obvious needs for academic skills and knowledge about the world with their personal needs, i.e., for nurture, psychological counseling, financial assistance, or safety from an abusive relationship? In sum, how can I encourage more and more honest self-disclosure in the classroom and not drown in the intense feelings and needs that may be released?

Forming bonds of trust and caring among people who suffer the pain of many forms of oppression in our society is incredibly demanding. And, I fear, risky business. Who knows what will happen when the oppressed who have been schooled in silence with little access to valued societal resources respond to NVC's invitation to speak from the heart? I want to believe that it will help Blacks, women, and all those who are marginalized to more effectively express and fulfill their humanity. Yet I worry that in the absence of adequate supportive facilities on campus to help meet the real needs of my students I will be left with an impossible task or feeling guilty for not trying. I wrestle with what is my responsibility if I helped connect them to feelings and needs that they formerly kept buried? The question is not abstract. I just read a paper wherein the student shares the trauma of being a victim of incest for the first time.

To date, my exploration of NVC and partnership in the classroom has been scary, exciting and, most of all, liberating. I am learning how to move through my fears and anger to a place where the energy of these intense emotions can find constructive and creative expression. For me, this place of ideal learning is the classroom. I have always felt most alive and free as a teacher. Equally important, I find that the lessons I seek to teach my students have always been those I most need to learn.

So it is now. Before, I taught my students how to be passionate intellectual gladiators within a classroom structured to facilitate fierce debate and total victory. Now I show them how to open their hearts and share in the construction of a community designed to support the creativity of every member. There are no losers in this new classroom which I see taking shape. I no longer have to carry the warrior's heavy armor or hide my weaknesses. What a relief it was to say to my class one day, "Look, the side conversations are getting out of hand and I don't know what to do. I'm feeling frustrated and I want your help. How can we handle this problem which can undermine our group process?" The students figured out that the cause of inattention was their inability to see or clearly hear when the speaker was on the opposite side of the classroom. Then someone suggested we rearrange the seats into a big semi-circle. This done the problem never reappeared. I didn't have to penalize or call out anyone. I shared my true feeling and made a simple request. They empathized with me and met my need for order from their hearts.

I feel quite sad as this quarter ends. I will miss the beloved community we built together over the past ten weeks. I will carry the respect we shared and the life-serving energies we unleashed deep within me wherever I go. As my connection to NVC grows and my experience of partnership unfolds, I feel truly blessed. In the words of an old Negro spiritual, "I wdn't take nothin' for my journey."

An Experiment in Life-Serving Education

The No-Sweat Project and Other Feats

Michael Dreiling

Nonviolent Communication offers an way to co-create the vision of education embraced by both critical and humanistic pedagogies: espousing values for social justice, interpersonal respect, inclusion, compassion, and personal and social transformation.

In the spring term of 2001, I showed my class some disturbing photos of a twelve-year-old Sri Lankan girl. Her feet were flattened and hands disfigured from working 14 hours a day on her feet, 6 days a week in a tee-shirt factory. Puzzled and upset by the sight of this human trauma, over half of the class of 43 students began an earnest discussion about what they could do. We were in the second week of a course on "Workers, Consumers and the Global Economy," making our first observations about the human realities behind the term "sweatshop" and the human significance of fashion labels and apparel production. Yet, in this course, which I labeled "experimental" at the time, our observations of sweatshop facilities, their histories, and the struggles over them were not the only points of focus. Indeed, I made a conscious effort to ask what students were *observing in themselves*—their feelings *and* the needs from which these feelings 'spoke'—when presented with this material. The pedagogy behind this experiment, the process animating it, and the outcome of a creative yearning unleashed by these students is the subject of this article.

During the Fall term of 2000, I received a research grant to teach a thematic course on the global economy and labor issues. Two events converged in my life at this time as well: one was my exposure to Nonviolent Communication (NVC) at a workshop by Marshall Rosenberg, and the other was hearing how much some of my students wanted more freedom in the learning process. NVC directed my attention to a radical, indeed, deeply life-affirming connection and awareness of what stirs within my heart; the students' comments reminded me of my growing desire to teach from my heart as well as my head—to prac-

Note: All student quotes in this article are taken from anonymous end-of-term evaluations.

Michael Dreiling is an Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Oregon and father of two children. He wrote *Solidarity and Contention: the Politics of Class and Sustainability in the NAFTA Conflict*, as well as numerous articles on corporate, labor, and environmental movements. He co-founded the Oregon Network for Compassionate Communication (ORNCC), an affiliate of the Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC).

tice what I preach. Over the course of a few years, I felt increasingly uncomfortable teaching critical sociology from either a "purely" analytical or ideological standpoint: Neither approach met my needs for compassion, understanding, and mutual growth. I wanted to help create in the classroom the world promised by the political ideology of critical pedagogy. I longed for a connection to the heart and NVC offered concrete methods for moving in that direction in the classroom and beyond.

Toward a Critical-Affective Pedagogy: NVC and Life-Serving Education

Nonviolent Communication offers a simple, reflexive tool that helps focus our attention on what is "alive" in the moment. This is accomplished by bringing a mindful awareness to feelings and needs, followed by present and doable requests. Marshall Rosenberg's (2001) model of NVC is not to be interpreted as mechanical listening and speaking. Rather, it is a template from which a more egalitarian, holistic consciousness—about oneself and others—may be constructed. It is the holistic consciousness that we are after, captured in the notion of "life-serving"—as opposed to "life-alienating"—communication. From this standpoint, natural, compassionate giving guides people toward ideas, decisions and actions that contribute to enriching the quality of life for ourselves and others. This, Rosenberg and others believe, can enhance the quality of connection between teacher and students, while boosting values consistent with critical pedagogy's concern for inclusion, emancipation, and self-awareness. Together, NVC and the critical pedagogy I employed previously offered an opportunity to experiment with Marshall Rosenberg's notion of "life-serving education."

Critical pedagogy, at least for the last 30 years, has developed values that are consistent with those of life-serving education. Social movements around student empowerment, race, gender, sexual identity, and the environment inspired critical pedagogy to acknowledge invisible histories, to embrace the inclusion of oppressed minorities, and deepen respect for difference (Freire 1970; Giroux 1981; hooks 1994). bell hooks (1995, 265) summarizes this sentiment:

> What those of us … now know, that the generations before us did not grasp, was that *beloved community* is formed not by the eradication of differences but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world. (emphasis in the original)

Including diverse voices in history as well as in the classroom, critical pedagogy stimulated efforts to democratize learning and challenge the model of school-as-factory. This dimension of critical pedagogy encourages teachers to empower students by including voices otherwise silenced in both the substance of education and in the actual workings of the learning environment. Paulo Freire's (1970) work has been particularly influential in this area.

While I greatly value the intellectual skills and multicultural understandings that critical pedagogy offers me, I find the framework of critical pedagogy less helpful in connecting to students' needs for inclusion and freedom as they arise in the classroom. I longed to connect with those needs in myself and in my students. This, I found, is not merely a rationalistic or cognitive affair. For years I was dissatisfied with intellectualizing social critique; indeed, I worried about criticizing the domination structures of modern society while simultaneously requiring fixed learning strategies via a disembodied, rationalistic pedagogy.

Sure, I could perform the role of professor; I could startle students with statistics and stories of oppression and exploitation. Yet I knew that many students left feeling despair, frustration, hurt, and anger—in other words, with unmet needs. I longed for a heartful connection, a quality of connection that could reveal our collective yearnings for learning and growth, yearnings that might otherwise be smothered in a rationality derived from either a traditional or a critical pedagogy. I found that the heart, the love of life, is the soil on which free human beings might grow. It was my encounter with NVC that pointed to an alternative to critical pedagogy from my head.

As I explore alternative pedagogies, I discover that yearnings for connection, compassion, and freedom are not unique to my experience. Humanistic and affective pedagogy value the role of heart, feelings, and visceral experiences not only as ends in themselves, but as channels that, when tapped, en-

rich the fullness of the human self and nurture human connection in the classroom—and beyond. In these frameworks, attention is centered on the human heart, shaping a compassionate and democratic classroom with *caring* capacity, transforming dissent and conflict into compassion and understanding rather than coercion and domination. This compassion is extended to everyone in the classroom, not only those the teacher happens to identify with.

Humanistic and affective pedagogies assume a shared vulnerability and risk between students and teachers. Yet there is gold with the risk. Students and teachers who share their feelings and celebrate their needs—that is, their vulnerabilities—create the possibility not only for the maturation of trust and understanding, but also for a new language. I don't know where I heard this, if from anyone, but feelings are "words of the heart." In the language of Nonviolent Communication, feelings convey what needs are met and what needs are unmet. This language, I believe, remains largely unheard, unrecognized, indeed foreign to most learning environments in modern societies.

Marshall Rosenberg's framework for life-serving education is based on the philosophy underlying Nonviolent Communication. Snippits of this philosophy are found throughout various humanistic and affective pedagogies; such as bell hooks' engaged pedagogy, which entails "care for the souls of our students" by engaging them as "whole human beings" (1994, 13-15). Life-serving education, as I understand and practice it, also embraces aspects of Rianne Eisler's (2000) "partnership" paradigm; that is, moving from a dominator to a partnership culture.

Life-serving education, in my view, holds the promise of critical pedagogy's call for freedom and inclusion as well as humanistic/affective pedagogy's call for connection with the inner life of the students and the classroom community. NVC and life-serving education achieves this not by an expanded intellectual argument, but rather by beginning with a connection to human needs. It doesn't take long, I discovered, for students to recognize their met and unmet needs in the classroom. Moreover, it doesn't take long to notice that feelings of boredom or frustration signal unmet needs and excitement is likely a cue that needs are being met in the classroom. Realizing this has been very exciting for me! NVC indeed offers a tool to connect with the inner life of the classroom, i.e., what is alive in students and teachers.

Yet NVC also invites a perspective on social power that is found in critical pedagogy. A central tenet behind NVC is that humans have been taught systematically to look outside of themselves for their sense of self (e.g., for rewards, avoiding punishments, seeking approval over disapproval). The consequence is a society ripe with domination and manipulation, punishment and reward, and an impoverishment of the inner life of humanity. In the modern schooling process, this appears as strict goals of compliance and conformity to curricular standards.

I often use a transparent example of unmet human needs to explain why a critique of power in social systems may be helpful for humanity and why, using NVC, a needs-based critique is more likely to be heard than a judgmental diagnoses of wrong or right. For instance, pause and think about the scope of human hunger on the planet. This clearly defines the failure of a political-economic system not on ideological terms but from the pains of unmet human needs—something to which all humans can relate. I find that students, once connected at the needs level are not spending as much energy disagreeing at the ideological level. Rather, a fresh inquiry,motivated by a hunger to understand, into what social strategies would best meet those human needs may proceed. Thus, a social justice perspective evolves not by presenting the facts, or a particular ideology with the facts, but by drawing connections between students' own needs and human needs in general. Indeed, human needs are both the subject and object of a collective, ongoing inquiry into learning and growth.

The "No Sweat Project" and Other Feats

Much of the substance of my experimental course would fit squarely within traditional critical pedagogy: a curriculum including silenced social subjects (e.g., mostly young, ethnically marginalized women in sweatshops), and an effort to actively involve students' own voices in the learning process. What was different about this class however, was the quality of connection stemming from active reflection on both

the information presented about sweatshops and how it *felt* receiving this information; how it *felt* to wear "sweat-made" clothing; to see it, and to yearn from a place of vulnerability for another way. Rather than lecturing, I facilitated engagement with the course material. Before this could happen though, we discovered a need for trust on both sides: a trust for students that my intention was not to punish "bad" learners and reward "good" learners; and trust for me that I wouldn't lose any sense of fairness and accountability in the classroom.

Rosenberg's model of NVC is a template from which a more egalitarian, holistic consciousness—about oneself and others—may be constructed.

My fear of losing control motivated a search for my own needs in the classroom. At times, feeling exhausted and confused, I wondered if this experiment, and the extra work and time I committed to it, would contribute to a different way of learning. During those moments, I needed support and empathy (and thankfully found it in support networks outside of the class). Still I asked, why am I here? What needs did I hope to meet by relinquishing control over the standard, predictable methods for evaluating what students learned?

I found the template of NVC quite helpful in designing a strategy for evaluating students not based on how they performed relative to others (e.g., exams or papers) but based simply on my needs for clarity and trust; that is, how clear it was to me that they engaged the course material. With NVC at my hip, I choose to explore an alternative strategy to meet my needs for trust and clarity and in the process, risk the quasi-safety and trust that came with more predictable student testing and evaluation instruments. In this class, rather than telling students what to do to get a grade, I asked them to show me that they engaged the course material in a way that they imagined would be most life enriching. As Marshall Rosenberg remarked in a workshop, "Why would we do anything that would not bring as much joy into the world as a child feeding hungry ducks?"

I encouraged students to imagine learning in this way, and not only learn with this principle in mind, but to show me and others that they were engaging the course material from a place of personal depth. Perhaps to the surprise of some, it was not the case that students with this flexibility and autonomy choose to disengage from the class. Quite the opposite, they worked harder than any other group of students in any comparable class I've taught using standard pedagogy. One student commented at the end of the term that "the 'blank slate' approach to assignments opened quite a few doors—so many that I had to narrow the focus and push other projects into the summer. But how many classes engage students to work on something beyond final exams?"

At first students seemed rather confused and needed more clarification around my request. We spent the first 90 minutes of class time simply listening to what we "like to do in life." From beading to hiking, reading, and gardening, we discovered that the range of "likes" was nearly enough to build a community where everyone's needs would get met by doing things we liked to do! While the first day was a hit in many respects, a great deal of frustration, anxiety and confusion persisted for about two weeks and was repeatedly expressed for at least the first half hour of each class. During that time students expressed not only the excitement but also the vulnerabilities arising with this new terrain.

I found myself responding to a whole array of questions that surface when routine is replaced with the unknown in a college classroom: "How will grades be determined," or "What if I do more in a group than others?" or "What if I can't come up with something creative?" or "Do I have to?" Using NVC, I often responded with statements like, "Are you wanting some affirmation about how hard it can be to create a project that will work for me?" or "Are you worried because you want some concrete direction with this project?" and proceeded from there. On several occasions, students openly acknowledged their fears about moving into the unknown. Responding to these concerns involved considerable emotional energy on my part, a clear indication of the amount of passion I brought to the project, and a

reminder of how much support *I* need to have if I am to sustain, let alone expand, this type of teaching.

By the end of the second week of the term I felt confident, trusting that students in the class understood my intentions with regard to engaging the material. Soon I was receiving proposals from students, including various group proposals. Still, doubt and fear arose, indicating needs for trust and direction. Some students choose to meet their needs by sticking with a more conventional grading strategy to show me they engaged the course material while others embraced the opportunity to step out of the box.

With the initial proposals in hand I began a lengthy feedback process using Nonviolent Communication. I requested meetings outside of class time with each student (or group) and began a dialogue. Some choose not to meet with me and emailed a plan. I would first summarize the proposal to check if I understood the plan. Then I would express my feelings and needs about the proposal, saying something like, "I can see how this part of your project will show me that you engaged this part of the class. Is that right? Now, when I read this part of your proposal, I feel worried and confused because I need some clarity and trust. Would you tell me how you plan to make evident your engagement with the rest of the course material?" Many variants of this dialogue occurred, carefully reading and rehashing proposals until some agreement was reached that the proposal, if completed, would in all likelihood indicate engagement with the course material.

One group proposed developing and presenting to a local high school a curriculum on the global economy, the role of sweatshops in apparel production, and avenues consumers might follow to act in harmony with fairness and justice. Five students, each pulling together an aspect of the topic that they most enjoyed learning about, integrated the project in a series of meetings through the term. Two multimedia presentations were delivered to local high school classes; students and teachers at the high school met the group with enthusiasm and appreciation. Our class was quite thrilled with their summary presentation as well.

Other projects included readings summaries, an audio documentary, a video film project on sweatshops, research papers, a website, a documentary on fashion and the meaning of consumption (they were kicked out of a local mall too!), a public rally and music fest against sweat, a substantial poetry project, and more. I even had eight students request that I write a final exam, which they took at the end of the class to show me how they engaged the material. This was a powerful statement by these students and I am glad this was an option that these students felt comfortable enough to request.

The challenge of human emancipation is to arouse the life-serving quality of the human heart within our own being, between us, and in all of our relations.

I hold no illusion that all of the students in the class felt gleeful about designing a project on their own. Some were very explicit about this, saying how much they liked the idea, but given their work and class schedules, the alternative route was too risky. From the perspective of life-serving education, these choices are not judged as lacking or as inferior to others; rather, they are acknowledged as strategies that met the needs of these students.

While the sheer breadth and depth of the various projects continues to amaze me, the "No Sweat" project stands out in scope, involvement, and creativity. The "no-sweat zone experiment" evolved very quickly from a group of students wanting to make a statement to the university community about university-licensed apparel produced in sweatshops to a full-scale campaign to create a "sweat-free," union-friendly choice for consumers wanting apparel with a University of Oregon logo on it. Twenty-nine students signed up, created small task forces, and developed a loosely knit leadership structure. As with all of the other projects, students tailored their course proposal to reflect the level and kind of commitment that they desired to make for various parts of the class material. Some students, for example, committed over half their grade to the project (with other components, for example, involving classroom at-

tendance) while others wanted a smaller role and proposed a 15% involvement (usually coupled with attendance and some kind of personal project). Each group member, at the end of the term graded each other member based (roughly) on the degree to which their actions aligned with their agreed-upon commitment to the project. I made considerable effort to frame this in terms of needs for clarity and trust. I remain in awe with this strategy, which I have seen it work in several classes now.

In six weeks these students created an organization with democratic decision-making procedures, an e-mail listserve, and a basic agreement with campus and community allies; collected nearly 1000 signatures in support of the effort; developed consultations with bookstore management; sought out union apparel manufacturers in North America; arranged business meetings; created a web page and a promotional video documentary; developed and published newspaper commentaries; appeared in the city newspaper, on a local news channel, and numerous times in the campus newspaper; conducted a rally with live music and a mock sweatshop; and, in the end, developed the labels that appear on the "sweat-free" shirts sold in a separate section at the University of Oregon bookstore. To the extent that these students learned NVC (which I did not teach to them), I believe that sensitivity to the needs of class participants, as well as various interested constituencies in the community, shaped the outcome of this project. More specifically, the students involved in the project actively sought, with my facilitation at times, strategies that best met everyone's needs about how to contribute to a more just world.

Consumers now have a choice they did not before: to purchase from a limited stock of shirts made by workers paid a living wage ($12/hour), with healthcare benefits, a retirement plan, and vacation time or a shirt most likely made by workers in sweatshops, paid about 55¢ per hour, working long days, with no union representation or no health care benefits. We know about the conditions of production for the first shirt because the workers making the shirt have an organized voice in the workplace. For the second shirt, we, as consumers, know very little about where it was made, who made it, and under what conditions. For the first shirt, the consumer is asked (on the label) to consider the social implications of consumption; the second does not. The latter is merely fashion without any reflection on the social costs of consumption and production.

Enough shirts were sold at the end of the term to convince the manager to restock. A group is meeting over the summer and into next term to build on this project and expand their mission on the campus. Summarizing the whole experiment, one student remarked at the end of the term that "Dreiling encouraged students to take part in their learning … and students took it upon themselves to promote the class material to the University itself…."

Life-Serving Education in the College Classroom

Based on my experiences, especially with the "no-sweat zone experiment," I suggest an initial outline for a life-serving model of education. In this approach, the motivation to learn is derived from a needs-based connection between students and teacher, not the structure of authority in the society and classroom.

It all begins with the teacher, with what needs animate my desire to find a social niche in the classroom. Staying in touch with my needs (and whether those needs are getting met or not) as they relate to teaching, I find most critical. What needs (met or unmet) do I bring into the classroom? A desire to contribute to the world, a sense of meaning, a longing to learn, autonomy, power, a desire to connect with other human beings that also long to learn, I could go on. What happens if these needs are not getting met? And what needs show up in the classroom? Safety, trust, support, clarity, and….? My experience with NVC in the classroom, thus far, reminds me just how vulnerable I am in the classroom and how much my needs shape the learning environment. If my needs for emotional support are not being met, for instance, then NVC will appear as nothing more than a mechanistic effort. While there is gold in the risk of vulnerability, there is also a full engagement of the heart, the mind, and the body. This can drain my inner resources quickly. Without emotional and organizational support, my ability to sustain a life-serving education will markedly decrease. Equally important, the number of classes I teach and the number of students in each class are obvious constraints. I

cannot imagine managing much more than 40 proposals, much less maintain an active connection with more than 40 students in a ten-week term and still attend to my personal needs in my professional and family life.

Because I discovered that some deep needs of mine are not likely to be met in a schooling context based on conformity and compliance, I nurtured my desire to innovate. Most of my learning in recent years has consisted of unlearning—unlearning the Cartesian axiom that "I think, therefore I am"; that my body and heart are obstructions to truth; that what is rational is right; that power over others is the way to ensure that my own interests are served. What I am discovering is that life-serving education begins with a teacher connected to her/his needs, their inner life in the classroom and beyond. From this standpoint, the teacher facilitates learning rather than dispenses information.

As a facilitator, I encourage two faces to observation. First, I encourage students to notice the material, the substance, the arguments, and the "facts" as presented in the various course material. This is a standard approach to critical thinking, as well as for leading a classroom discussion. Second, I share, as well as request others to notice and share their feelings (and listen what others say is going on for them) in response to the course material, discussions, and films. I take great care to model this, using Nonviolent Communication as a template, not only for what's alive in me, but to inquire what might be stirring within them. For example, I often ask something like the following: "When you hear about XYZ, is anyone hear feeling afraid and wanting more safety in the world?" Or, "After reading those 48 pages, were you feeling tired and longing for a slower pace with the material?" Sometimes I begin by sharing what is alive in me: "When I read about this, I felt sad because I have some deep yearnings for fairness and justice in the world…. Would you be willing to let me know what's up for you?" The model can be applied to all sorts of situations.

Writing about this cannot fully convey the value of compassion and the mutual acknowledgment of feelings in the classroom. The best way I can describe it is that somehow a shift happened as soon as students really believed, really trusted that they didn't *have to* do something, some exam or some term paper to prove their worth. I really wanted to see them show me that they engaged the material in a way that was most enjoyable for them. For that level of understanding to occur, a deep human connection was needed. For students and myself, this took some serious unlearning. And a great deal of work.

I'm reminded of a placard with a quote from Maria Montessori, "Allow children the dignity of walking by themselves." To empower students' own inner wisdom, passion, and ultimately creative yearnings to stand and create in the world, I believe, is the first gift of life-serving education. As a student commented in a three-page prelude to a creative project for my course on American Society, "…the color and hodgepodge of images reflect the creative side of me that yearns to come into the limelight from time to time, but never really has the chance to do so." My experience thus far indicates that a wave of profound excitement and creativity is likely to be unleashed with this kind of empowerment. As one student commented at the end of the term:

> Wow! What a class! Not only was it thorough, provocative and academically challenging, but we also worked towards accomplishing things in the real world. Student projects were thoughtful and productive, and directly engaged the community. I felt both challenged by the workload and fulfilled by its completion. This was the most interesting, engaging, and productive class that I have ever had the privilege of participating in.

One of the most enjoyable realizations for me in the last few years occurred when I saw students take the opportunity of a compassionate classroom to voice their needs for inclusion and participation. As I've used NVC in the classroom, the quality of connection and trust seems to create an opening to share what might otherwise be stifled by fear or shame. For example, I find myself to be comfortable to use a pause followed by a deep breath to signal my own needs for connection. From that space, I may choose to simply share my longings for inclusion and safety and ask if anyone who has not shared for a while would like to now. Of course, I could also choose to use NVC to ex-

press any frustration I might be experiencing as a result of my needs for inclusion not being met.

What shocks me the most is that it is not necessary to use shame or blame or criticism of students (of either the talkers or the nontalkers) in order to shift the level of involvement. In fact, I have found that those who are most vocal are often relieved when other students get involved in the class discussion. Life-serving education thus offers the gift of compassionate connection in the classroom in a way that facilitates safety and inclusion, participation and creativity.

Perhaps most surprising, however, is the power of compassion to awaken a thirst for liberation and social justice. I do not believe that the "no sweat project" would have happened if it were not for the trust, understanding, and personal empowerment that occurred because of the human connection—via NVC—in the classroom. Moreover, these students had a taste of something that, in all likelihood, was mostly unfamiliar in their lives: freedom. Freedom to engage from the heart, to create for the joy of serving, is something that is relatively foreign in a culture—and schooling process—that explicitly and implicitly links the value of our actions to the rewards or punishments that follow.

We live amid domination structures that are designed to elicit obedience and conformity. Living from our heart can help us to step outside these structures, to tap into the energy rooted in our life force, in our felt needs. Equally important, we find that we can do so in ways that don't reproduce the traditional response of either submitting to or rebelling against institutional constraints. Life-serving education is just that, life-serving, life-affirming education. No great act of social justice is achieved without elevating the vitality of the human soul.

Conclusion

I find the practice of Nonviolent Communication in the classroom a source of deep inspiration and personal renewal. As Rosenberg (2001) points out, "when we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt and needed rather than diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion…" (2001, 4). Applied in the classroom as life-serving education, NVC offers an avenue to co-create the vision of education embraced by both critical and humanistic pedagogies: espousing values for social justice, interpersonal respect, inclusion, compassion, and personal and social transformation.

At the core, I find an awareness of the inner life of the classroom to be extremely helpful in my efforts to create a democratic, inclusive, and self-aware learning process. Without the connection via NVC to my inner life, as well as with students in the classroom, I have often found myself frustrated, angry, or despairing about the value of my contribution (or the possibility of students making a contribution). Using the tools of NVC to build a form of life serving education inspired me to learn and grow in ways I could not imagine only a few years before. I am confidant a similar effect occurs for many of the students in my classes. Moreover, I appreciate entering the classroom with a greater sense of personal comfort and presence while at the same time trusting that my actions are in greater harmony with my radical—compassionate—social values.

Far from compromising goals for scholarship and learning, I believe a life-serving approach animates the intellect in far greater ways than standard pedagogy. This happens, I believe, because life-serving education creates a space to nourish life. This space is both deeply personal and social—it resides simultaneously within us and between us; it is the inner life of the classroom. The challenge of human emancipation is to arouse the life-serving quality of the human heart within our own being, between us, and in all of our relations. A life-serving education is, as Paulo Freire (1994) noted, "a pedagogy of the heart." It is a pedagogy of hope.

References

Eisler, Riane. 2000. *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder: Westview.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Freire, Paulo. 1994. *Pedagogy of the heart*. New York: Continuum.

Giroux, Henry. 1981. *Ideology, culture, and the process of schooling*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York/London: Routledge.

Hook, bell. 1995. *Killing rage: Ending racism*. New York: Holt.

Kohn, Alfie. 1996. *Beyond discipline: From compliance to community*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Rosenberg, Marshall. 2001. *Nonviolent communication: A language of compassion*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

Essay Review

Living the Ideals of Holistic Education

Katherine Simon

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion by Marshall Rosenberg. Published in 1999 by PuddleDancer Press.

Like so many others, I became a teacher to share the joy of learning and growing, to help nurture in young people humanity, creativity, and thoughtfulness. But in my high school classroom, I found myself compromising in many of the ways that Theodore Sizer (1984) has written about—trying, but not fully succeeding in keeping my heart open to the 160 kids I saw each day; trying, but not fully succeeding in creating an atmosphere of trust and risk-taking and laughter; trying, but not fully succeeding in finding ways to share the powerful essence of the literature we read, rather than quizzing kids about who said what to whom in scene three.

Like so many others, I left teaching after five years, tired, frustrated, but eager to find a different platform from which to try to contribute, eager to think about how the system might be changed so that school would be a glorious adventure of heart and mind for students and teachers. I have since learned much more than I knew as a teacher about progressive and holistic education. I have taught and observed classrooms in many settings—primarily working with student teachers and practicing teachers—seeking to share some of the approaches that have the potential to make teaching and learning more about joy and discovery than about drudgery and obligation. And many times, like so many other former schoolteachers, I have thought, "Shall I go back? Perhaps now I could make it work?" No single idea has made that idea as intriguing for me as Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

NVC holds the promise of fundamentally changing our experience as teachers, the experience of our students, and the norms of education more broadly. Highly compatible with the key values of progressive and holistic education, the ideas of NVC are much more specific than others I've seen about how we can interact in the moment with groups and individuals in ways that are in harmony with our deepest values.

I know that I want to meet every person I encounter with the genuine presence that Nel Noddings (1992) calls "caring." I know that as a teacher and a parent, I want to see the beauty in each child even when he is yelling, refusing, or fighting. And I know, as a teacher, that it is crucial to connect the subjects I teach to the interests of my students. But I have often not known *how* to do these things in a given moment. How do I stay present and open when I am sad, hurt, or frustrated? How do I stay connected when the other person isn't listening or doesn't seem to care about what I'm talking about? What do I do when the topic I want to teach is the last thing on my students' minds? For those of us who believe that trusting relationships and enthusiastic engagement are at the core of a powerful education, these questions demand answers.

Nonviolent Communication offers powerful, practical guidance for answering these questions. As others describe in this issue of *Encounter*, the process of NVC rests on the notion that if we can truly open ourselves to the feelings and needs of others and express our own, we can find our way to compassionate connection and to action that meets everyone's needs. On one level, NVC is a language, a process of communication. Learning to speak this language revolves around mastering key distinctions between

KATHERINE SIMON is Director of Research at the Coalition of Essential Schools and author of *Moral Questions in the Classroom: How to Get Kids to Think Deeply about Real Life and Their School Work*, Yale University Press (2001). She can be reached by e-mail at <ksimon@essentialschools.org>.

kinds of speech, including the differences between observations and judgments, feelings and thoughts, needs and strategies, and requests and demands. On a much deeper level, NVC is a spiritual practice, characterized by the belief that neither children nor adults need to be coerced—praised, rewarded, threatened, or shamed—into doing that which will enrich life for themselves or for others. This belief resonates with the core assumptions of holistic education.

Our traditional educational system, on the contrary, operates on the belief that education is bad-tasting medicine, which children need to be forced to ingest. Hence the huge industry around "motivating" students and the endless array of carrots and sticks in the form of grades, awards, academic probations, and the like. Like other holistic educators, Rosenberg sees learning as an intrinsic human need, one which children will strive to fulfill—if learning does not conflict with other of their basic needs, such as autonomy, respect, choice, and play.

But Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* goes beyond providing a vision of children as naturally curious and compassionate. It provides much needed tools, ways of thinking and relating that can help us more fully walk our talk—keeping focused on connection, even in moments of alienation, and exploring the hidden possibilities that arise when we manage to stay fully present with one another. It provides a clear process through which students and teachers can discover together how to teach and learn in ways that honor our whole selves—and bring out the best in ourselves and each other.

So what has all of this to do with the practice of teaching? While most of us deeply desire to preserve connection, we are not used to empathizing with others' feelings and needs or with expressing our own without attack or blame. It's not the language that we speak; it's not the habit of heart that we've learned. If a student has a complaint, we're used to explaining it away or rushing to fix it. If a student looks bored, we're used to ignoring it, blaming television, or explaining to her why she should be interested. If a student gets angry, we blame the student or his parents or the system or ourselves. It's not our cultural norm to stay open and listen and feel and to allow the connection between us—and our shared human needs—to inspire creative responses to the discomfort.

Nonviolent Communication presents several moving accounts of how the process has helped bring reconciliation among people in extreme conflict and pain, including teachers and students, parents and children, spouses, and warring gang members. Most of these accounts—transcripts of conversations—are too lengthy to reprint here, but this brief summary of a longer conversation will give a sense of the sorts of transformations Rosenberg describes.

> In Jerusalem, during a workshop attended by Israelis of varying political persuasions, participants used NVC to express themselves regarding the highly contested issue of the West Bank. Many of the Israeli settlers who have established themselves on the West Bank believe that they are fulfilling a religious mandate by doing so, and they are locked in conflict not only with Palestinians but with other Israelis who recognize the Palestinian hope for national sovereignty in this region. During a session, one of my trainers and I modeled empathic hearing through NVC, and then invited participants to take turns role-playing each other's position. After twenty minutes, a settler announced her willingness to consider relinquishing her land claims and moving out of the West Bank into internationally recognized Israeli territory if her political opponents were able to listen to her in the way she had just been listened to them (p. 11).

This example suggests a particularly powerful aspect of Rosenberg's theory: Human beings, he argues, need understanding much more than we need to get our own way about a particular strategy. The sense of being understood, in turn, creates a flexibility which previously seemed unimaginable. At the same time, the process of striving to understand rather than to persuade or blame has an important impact on the listener, too, in that it opens one's heart to the other. When parties in conflict seek human connection first, then creative, productive action will follow. NVC provides a process for seeking that connection. For this reason alone, being skilled at Nonviolent Communication would be a tremendous asset to educators in the midst of the contentious life of schools.

Beyond its value in conflict situations, NVC also has great potential to contribute to school design and

classroom practice more generally. While *Nonviolent Communication* does not spell out these implications for schools, one can imagine teachers using NVC as a lens for the study the actions of both historical and literary characters. This lens would help to reveal the humanity in these figures—even the "bad" guys—increasing the depth of students' understanding of human actions and their motivations. At the same time, it could help us draw implications for our own lives by revealing ways in which history (or literary texts) might have unfolded differently—if the players had had the consciousness of alternatives which NVC helps to provide. And NVC could provide an angle for examining pressing social issues, from questions about placing limits on scientific explorations to those about responding to terrorism and other forms of violence.

Rosenberg's discussion of needs versus strategies makes what I believe is the most crucial contribution to the project of redesigning schooling. For Rosenberg, needs for such things as learning, autonomy, connection, play, and physical safety are at the core of our common humanity. In our normal way of thinking, we often perceive others as standing in the way of getting our needs met. Teachers may see unruly students as blocking the teachers' needs for care and contribution. Some groups of parents may see other groups of parents as blocking their children's access to resources. Students and teachers may see policymakers as blocking students' needs for authentic learning. We set up opposing sides, seeking to exert our power over our opponents, rather than finding strategies that would allow all of us to exercise what Rosenberg calls "power with." Rosenberg argues that on the level of our human needs, we differ very little; apparently opposing sides in fact have hugely overlapping needs and so need not work in opposition to one another. Understanding the needs motivating others' actions reveals to us our shared humanity, helping us transcend judgment and blame and work together to devise strategies that address the needs of all sides. (Rosenberg explores these themes more fully in *Life-Serving Education*, which is written specifically for educators and scheduled for publication next year by Puddledancer Press.)

NVC provides a language and a sensibility that have great potential to help us create a different way of relating to one another, to move from what Eisler (2000) and others have called a domination system of education to what Rosenberg calls a "life-serving" system. I am hopeful that Rosenberg's book will inspire diverse communities of educators to learn and practice NVC—to see whether, if we adopted the consciousness and practice of nonviolent communication, we would be more able to design schools that nurture both teachers and students in their wholeness.

References

Eisler, Riane. 2000. *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview.

Noddings, Nel. 1992. *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sizer, Theodore. 1984. *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Growing Healthy Selves, Families & Communities

An Experiential Conference at EnCompass

October 11-13, 2002 • Nevada City, California

- Understand the nature of ecological consciousness
- Discuss important educational issues with prominent scholars, professionals and educators from around the world
- Discover the forested beauty of our 122 acres
- Create networks and strengthen the community of scholar-practitioners, educators and environmentalists
- Experience EnCompass Conference Center's unique Earth architecture and environmentally-sensitive construction

11011 Tyler Foote Road • Nevada City, CA 95959-9309
Phone: 1-800-200-1107 -or- (530) 292-1000 • Fax: (530) 292-1209
E-mail: host@EnCompass–NLR.org • Web: www.EnCompass–NLR.org

For more info go to
www.EnCompass–NLR.org

Teaching Children to Express Their Inner World

Susan Bello

Spontaneous painting helps reconnect a child to his/her authentic Self.

> Education can be transformed only by transforming the educator. Throughout the world, it is becoming more and more evident that the educator needs educating. It is not a question of educating the child, but rather the educator. (Krishnamurti 2000)

Educators need to learn how to work with the Whole person—their body, mind and spirit. If we want to develop qualities of the creative personality as well as introduce emotional education, we need to train educators how to implement this new model into the existing system. Educators influence the thoughts of thousands of children during their careers. After families, they can be one of the most powerful influences in our society for impacting the minds of our youth. There is a vast difference between educating for necessary skills one must acquire in order to gain productive employment and educating to help a person grow as a human being. Great civilizations have been founded by those who integrate educating the whole person—their body, mind and spirit; and help students connect to something that gives life deeper meaning, in addition to imparting techniques and intellectual knowledge.

The expressions of violence we are witnessing today in the schools represent a reaction to the absence of a basic human need to connect to something which gives life deeper meaning. A prevalent disorder affecting our society stems from a loss of contact with our authentic Self. Symptoms are boredom, dysfunctional relationships, abuse of self and others, addictions, and a feeling that life has no purpose. Teachers can be a nurturing connection and, if they are receptive to their inner world and develop their creative, imaginative, intuitive, emotional, and symbolic forms of intelligence they can impart these ways of knowing onto their students.

Note: Four paintings by art educator Danielle Aronow's can be found online at <www.susanbello.com>. Click on the Spontaneous Painting link.

Susan Bello, Ph.D. in the psychology of art and expressive therapy and a registered art therapist, leads groups in Spontaneous Painting and Biodanza internationally and in the New York area. She trains professionals in this method and can be reached at <susanbello@hotmailcom> or by phone at 631-421-0179. Dr. Bello has lived in many countries studying techniques to develop human potential and the creative personality.

Teaching educators to work with their inner world and the creative personality expands the role of academic learning to include other ways of knowing in addition to the rational mind. I believe it is vitally important to foster creative personality characteristics in people of all ages. Jungian psychologist Marie von Franz once said that a culture that does not encourage the creative potential of its members does not evolve and will stagnate and vanish. Encouraging more creative personalities will ignite more creative ideas and innovative approaches toward doing things differently. Developing creativity is not only about taking children to the theatre, museums or making pinto bean collages; it involves encouraging characteristics of the creative personality. Creative potential exists not only in artists, but in all of us. I have witnessed that creative personality characteristics can be taught. If you are a creative personality, you will be inquisitive, courageous, committed to your project, self-motivated, and innovative. You will think differently than other people. You will bring your creativity to whatever work you choose to do. Some characteristics of the creative personality are:

- the ability to live with uncertainty
- the ability to access deeper regions of the unconscious
- the ability to feel emotions intensely
- nonconformity, independent thinking
- receptivity to different ideas
- self-motivated
- persistent
- curious
- adventurous
- innovative, ingenious
- impulsive, spontaneous
- can be extremely sensitive
- global thinking: the ability to perceive interconnections between apparently separate subjects
- the ability to perceive something from multiple perspectives
- values internal rather than external approval
- the ability to think symbolically (abstractly)
- has a variety of interests
- appreciates solitude

Art educators have a vital role to play in introducing a new set of values to children—our future generations. We all know how deeply one teacher can touch a child's worldview and influence their life in a meaningful way.

> Children thrive if they believe that "whatever I think, might work." The teacher is someone who does not criticize. She opens the doors of perception to explore infinite possibilities through our multiple intelligences. A classroom environment where students are encouraged to engage in many ways to see something, incorporating their emotions, thoughts and experiences as well as the subject matter/data is NOT what we are doing today. (Naomi Verdirame, kindergarten teacher)

The time is ripe to introduce emotional education, supporting the unfolding of each student's authentic Self. Most of us have learned very well to be people pleasers, to repress our authentic Self and not speak our truth if we sense it will be disapproved of or is different from what other people think. The development of the authentic Self is directly linked to expressing oneself creatively. In our overscheduled agendas, some time is needed for both teachers and students alike to be quiet, still the mind, and allow the creative mind to emerge.

> As the amount of information to be absorbed is increased, the students are overwhelmed and have fewer opportunities to think. In general, children today have less spare time for finding themselves and less quiet time to create from within. No time is set aside for the encouragement of thinking skills or the development of ideas. We have to encourage questioning, reflection and exploration of ideas to facilitate learning without controlling the total learning situation; time is necessary for creative and imaginative interconnections to develop, gel and emerge in the students. (Naomi Verdirame, kindergarten teacher)

It appears that many school districts consider Art Education to be frivolous or unnecessary, although art is one of the few subjects where soul expression can occur.

> For the past two years I have worked for the NYC Board of Education as an art cluster teacher. I don't have a room to teach out of, that's why they call me the art on a cart lady! It's challenging to say the least, but I accept this

challenge daily for one reason. I know how imperative and necessary meaningful artistic experiences are to the development of children. That is why when I was asked to try a Spontaneous Painting lesson with one of my classes, I jumped at the opportunity. And if I can pull it off anyone can. As with any lesson, the first attempt is as much a learning experience for the teacher as it is for the children. All I know is that we all walked away having gained so much from this spontaneous painting lesson and the ever annoying practical limitations of insufficient time and physical space appeared trivial when I realized how much we all got out of this experience. When a student turned to me and said, "I will remember this for the rest of my life," I knew then the potential that Spontaneous Painting has in the classroom and in life. (Danielle Aronow, 4th grade teacher)

Emotional Education and the Creative Personality Can Be Taught Through Spontaneous Painting

Spontaneous Painting is a self-discovery process and unique approach in Art Education that develops the creative personality and aligns the participant with their authentic Self. When our consciousness is not dominated by rational thinking, we can develop other ways of knowing. I am referring to our essential aptitudes, innate talents, intuition, emotional life, imagination, creative intelligence, symbolic intelligence, inspiration, and so on.

Spontaneous Painting offers students an opportunity to get in touch with their emotions, and express them in a creative manner. Little attention has been given to the emotional aspects of individuals except when obvious problems have already become apparent. In the education of normally healthy children in today's world, offering them a means to express these inner ways of knowing, in addition to rational linear thought, promotes preventative mental health and equilibrium.

Each individual is unique. This method of painting allows our essential nature, living in the unconscious of the individual to come forth. As students are able to express these unknown aspects of themselves, their dormant potentials are born in the art class through the creative process. The symbolic images expressed in the paintings represent dynamic forces within the human psyche that are vehicles directing each individual's unique Self along the path of self-actualization.

The commitment of the emotional educator should be to awaken the individual to explore what they love to do and then step back and allow their creative process to unfold. Providing students with tools to discover their passion and how to develop it, according to Joseph Campbell, should be an important role of the emotional educator. The teacher who works with emotional education needs to be trained in how to be an empathic listener to the needs and inner voice of each student's authentic Self, and guide them in supportive, compassionate ways without imposing their will or judging them. We need to create a safe, stable environment in order for the authentic Self to unfold. The key words are: listen, accept, empathize and allow for spontaneity. John Miller (Kane 1999) writes that two qualities the soulful teacher can bring to the classroom are presence and caring. By presence, Miller means that the teacher is able to listen deeply. The caring teacher relates the subject to the needs and interests of the students. A Spontaneous Painting facilitator practices both by creating an atmosphere of intimacy and safety where risks can be ventured in a nonjudgmental environment.

Spontaneously painting one's internal symbols encourages the individuation process to occur. Individuation, according to the psychiatrist C. G. Jung, is a process of developing the individual personality and establishing one's true identity. We can say that one's true identity expresses itself through symbolic imagery in Spontaneous Painting. I have observed that the inherent human ability to paint images, motivated by deep emotion, is capable of awakening a self-directing principle in the psyche. It is this self-directing principle, unleashed by the symbol, that guides the individual through their creative process toward individuation.

In the art room, we ask students to spontaneously paint whatever emotion they are feeling. Warm-ups are presented before each painting session, facilitating participants to relax the constant chatter of the rational mind and contact the intuitive, emotional, or imaginal mind. Some of these exercises include meditation for centering, movements to music, and

guided imagery. The warm-ups generally involve auditory and kinesthetic exercises connecting people to their corporeal unconscious. We are working from a holistic model addressing the Whole Human—the body, mind and spirit. There are no good or bad emotions and no correct emotional response is expected as a result of the warm-up. We create a safe space for students to express their anger, sadness, loneliness, confusion, fears, or whatever emotion is evoked as a result of the warm-up exercise. We emphasize not to copy external images or preconceived ideas and to paint with no concern for aesthetic considerations. In Spontaneous Painting the educator does not give student's a predetermined topic to paint. She/he leaves it open-ended. Emotions are expressed onto a blank canvas or paper and usually the painter goes into an alpha or flow state (when there is enough painting time). In these mental states one loses a sense of time and is so immersed in what they are doing that they are not bothered by outside distractions. There is so much more to us than the "reality" perceived by the conscious mind.

Most people do not understand the meaning of the symbolic images they have painted. Something very powerful has been expressed and oftentimes the rational mind is unaware of this part living just a hair's breath below the conscious level. They see it for the first time, expressed in a painting. We treat the symbolic image as a guide from the unconscious (McNiff 1989) and ask it, "Who are you? Why have I painted you? What would you like to tell me?" Participants write and give the painting a voice. Art teacher, Evelyn Kandel, wrote the following:

> I was starving
> and did not know.
> Music tendrils seep into dried crevices
> of my soul.
> Touch me now
> For I am weeping
> Hold me, for I despair
> Wisps of death—smoke
> Encircle my feet as I walk
> Friends' warm hands
> Slip from my grasp
> And I am weeping…come, dance and sing and hold me
> And I'll be consoled.

Two weeks later, she wrote:

> There is ecstasy and delight in stepping into this painting; touching the beauty of paint that has caught this wondrous moment; the happiness of the brush in my hand. I breathe deeply aware of the exquisiteness of life and surrender to the beauty of the universe that is here in this one moment. I want to dance; I need to move in space. I want to connect to the painting….

Children, too, respond to their own work:

> I am a boy that is dancing on a really loud drum beet.
> I am a drum, I am playing for the boy.
> I am the heart that brings love into the boy.
> I am the yellow circle that is bringing the boy and the drum together.
> (Michael, 4th Grade)

> I think that this is a good picture that I made.
> It reminds me of when I first saw the first caterpiller.
> It was so fun watching the caterpiller turn into a butterfly.
> I was four years old til I saw it. That's why I made that picture.
> (Derek, 4th Grade)

After a writing session everyone comes together and engages in interactive group process exercises to understand the meanings of each other's paintings. Participants can share how they feel when they identify with someone else's painting. For example: Tommy says: "Andy, if your painting were mine, I would be feeling…very confused and…." We create safety when people can share their feelings and no one is being criticized or judged. When children are asked to evaluate other children's work it often makes them feel exposed. The emotional educator can bridge to other group members and ask, "Does anyone else feel confused like Tommy did about Andy's painting" (Ormont 1992)? Andy, the painter, understands that people are talking about themselves, their feelings, and it is not directly about him. He can gain a greater understanding about the meaning of his painting after hearing the collective voice and decide which comments he can relate to.

Having their emotional world be affirmed and understood by others is very nurturing. First, a foundation must be established where people respect individual differences of thought and feelings and the

class provides safety, protection and trust. The Spontaneous Painting process is deceptively complex and should not be taught without proper orientation because many intense feelings can arise and teachers need to be trained in emotional education.

One art educator, who has taken this course, responds,

> I want to integrate all the positive learning from this class in Spontaneous Painting so that I may pass them on to others by example. I see for the first time that this type of teaching could bridge the gaps of hatred, prejudice in the classroom by learning that we can work together in harmony and express our feelings in a constructive way.

If we never address the emotional world in our daily lessons and interactions, not as a specific activity but interwoven as a natural part of life and daily communication, we disassociate from a rich part of our mind. Educators are faced with the challenge of creating a balance between these two very important, yet opposite ways of knowing: emotions, creative self-expression and logical, intellectual evaluation. In order to do this, isn't it time we start preparing teachers about how to work with emotional education? Art is essential. Human beings have always and will always need to create. Children especially need to have opportunities to express in spontaneous ways.

Children have multitude forms of intelligence. In a classroom curriculum shaped by tests there is less opportunity for children to call upon intelligence other than those strictly academic ones. This results in children leaving our schools as unbalanced human beings. Real life is not a multiple-choice test but a series of often confusing problems to solve. We are sending our children into the world without necessary life skills if we do not provide time in every child's day for nonverbal, spontaneous creative expression.

> As art teachers we feel that art should be scheduled as often as gym. Art scheduled once or twice weekly for forty minutes is insufficient. We feel that children need an open block of time to create without interruptions and develop a concept from inception to completion." (Pam Costello and Barbara Brennan)

My goal is to train art educators to facilitate emotional education and develop characteristics of the creative personality within themselves; so that they can be models equipped with understanding and insight about the creative process because they have experienced it firsthand. How can educators influence their students—to walk in the world persevering to realize their dreams, establish an inner locus of control, explore the unknown and function freely, according to their intrinsic nature—if they have not undergone personal transformation and understood the dynamics of the creative process for themselves? And, doesn't this help us "move toward the deeper realms of the art and the soul of teaching?" (Kane 1999, 175).

References

Jeffrey Kane, Jeffrey, ed. 1999. *Information and transformation: Essays on learning and thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Krishnamurti. 2000, Fall. Educating the educator. *Parabola.*

McNiff, Shaun. 1989. *Depth psychology of art.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Ormont, Louis. 1992. *The group therapy experience*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Lessons from the Hawk ad
Pick up from ENC 15(3), page 72