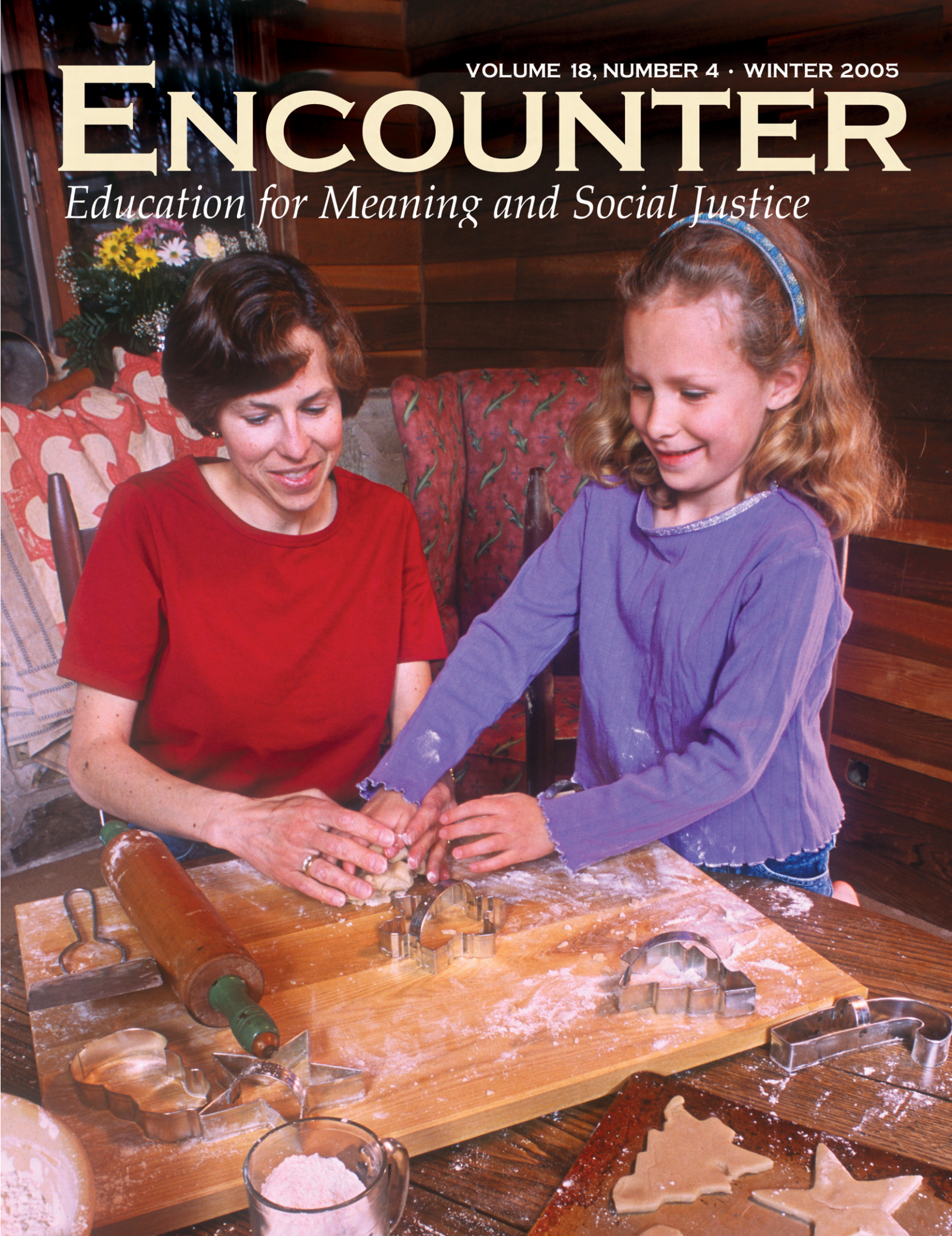
VOLUME 18, NUMBER 4 · WINTER 2005

ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice



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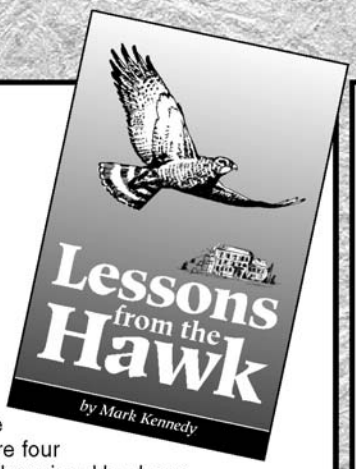

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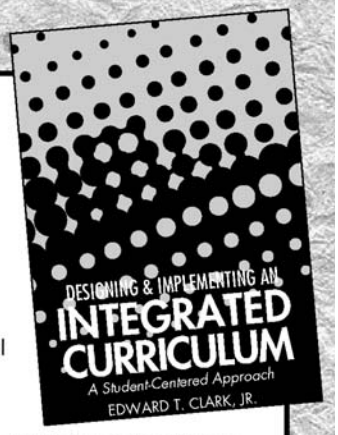

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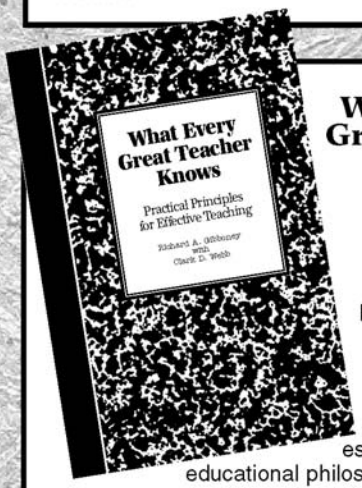

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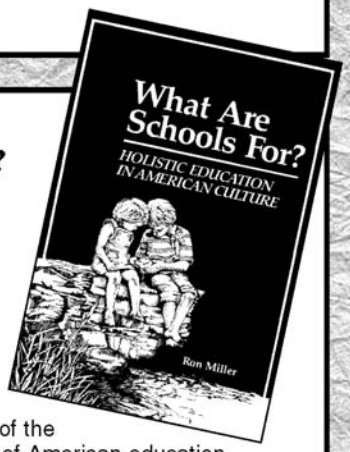

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ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Editorial

The True Self

In the mid-20th century, as psychotherapists expanded on Freud's work, many turned their attention to problems of the self. Erik Erikson (1950), Carl Rogers (1961), and others described how their patients lacked a clear sense of who they were. Many of Rogers's clients, for example, reported that they had little sense of themselves apart from social roles and expectations. As one of Rogers's clients said, "I haven't been honest with myself, or actually knowing what my real self is…. I've been just playing a sort of false role" (1961, 109).

Difficulties with the self have continued to impress mental health professionals. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (the DSM-III) added a new classification, "Narcissistic Personality Disorders," in which individuals have a very fragile sense of self-esteem and need constant attention and admiration from others. Another, even more prevalent disorder, the Borderline Personality, frequently includes a "markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self" (American Psychiatric Association 2000, 707). And clinical psychology graduate students and pychotherapists tell me that the topic of the finding one's true identity remains paramount today. For this reason, a very popular psychoanalyst is D. W. Winnicott (1965), who distinguished between the "true self," in which people experience their spontaneous and creative gestures as important, and the "false," or socially compliant self.

Why are these problems so pervasive, and how might educators promote a stronger sense of selfhood? In Western social thought, two perspectives strike me as particularly relevant. One perspective, initiated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, focuses on the independence — the capacity to trust one's own judgments. The second perspective, as formulated by Karl Marx and Erich Fromm, addresses the capacity for creativity work. Neither perspective, I should mention at the outset, views the true self as one's public image. The true self is not a list of observable traits such as "tall," "sociable," "attractive," or "reliable." Instead, it's an inner sense of one's capacities and powers.

Rousseau and Independence

When, in 1741, Rousseau traveled to Paris, he was struck by the extent to which the sophisticated urbanites worried about the opinions of others. They were so concerned about saying the "right" things that they didn't use their own minds. They were slaves to conventions (Rousseau 1974, 163; 1945).

Rousseau didn't fully understand the source of this conformity, but he thought it had to do with the division of labor. In the early periods of human existence, he speculated, individuals were largely self-sufficient. They obtained their own food, built their own huts, and made their own clothes. But as societies developed, work became more specialized and people became more dependent on one another for their goods and services. They became more immersed in the social whirl, particularly in the modern metropolis. In their business dealings, moreover, they saw that it was to their advantage to get people to think well of them. Soon they became so concerned with the approval of others that they forgot how to exercise their own judgment (Rousseau 1964).

Rousseau recognized that we must live in an increasingly modern world, but he still thought it would be possible to educate a child with far more independence (1974). This would mean reversing most customary practices. For one thing, adults routinely undermine the child's independence by over-teaching. Adults constantly give the child directions, orders, and explanations. Early on, they try to teach the child to walk and talk. Young children, Rousseau said, will naturally master such skills on their own, from their own inner promptings, and we should give them opportunities to do so.

But Rousseau's strongest criticism of conventional education is more subtle. The worst thing about our

instruction is that it is precocious. It undermines independence by attempting to teach concepts that are beyond the child's grasp. When, for example, we give a girl a math problem that is too difficult for her, she has no recourse but to turn to a parent, teacher, or some other "smarter" person for assistance. She has no choice but to ask, "Can you help me with this? Am I doing this right?" And because she doesn't fully understand the solution, she must accept on faith whatever the "smarter person" or the book says is true. She learns to rely on external authority rather than thinking for herself.

In Rousseau's view, the threat to the child's intellectual independence comes not only from lessons that are too abstract, but from those that are beyond the child's experience. Schools ask students to read geography, history, science, and other material that is so remote from their immediate experience that they have no way of judging the validity of what the books say. The child simply assumes that the book must be correct because it is written by some intelligent adult. Here, again, the child learns to rely on the authority of others as the source of truth. Rousseau urged educators to give children problems that are relevant to their own experience and allow them to solve them on their own. In this way children will learn to trust their own capacities of thought and judgment.

It seems to me that much education has traditionally been the kind that Rousseau attacked. It is either too difficult or too remote from the child's experience. This was certainly the case for me. As a public school student in the 1950s and early 1960s, I memorized many formulas and facts that I didn't understand. If my science book said that an equation was true or the earth rotated around the sun, I accepted the statements as correct without understanding the reasoning behind them. If my teachers had told me the earth was flat, I probably would have believed them. Since entire topics were beyond my comprehension, I simply believed what the grownups said.

However, the problem is becoming much worse today. Today's standards movement calls on schools to "stretch the child's mind" and to "raise the bar." The emphasis is on "higher expectations" and "high-level thinking skills." Thus, schools are presenting increasing amounts of material that that exceeds students' understanding and their capacity to critically evaluate it.

The tenor of the times is evidenced by the popularity of Vygotsky's educational theory. Vygotsky had little patience with educators who want to let children to make their own discoveries. Instead, he showed how adults could lead them forward, helping them solve problems they couldn't solve alone. That such instruction fosters intellectual dependency is rarely addressed.

Ironically, the pressures to conform are especially strong during the teenage years — precisely when young people search for a personal identity.

Rousseau liked to make extreme statements. At one point he suggested we keep young children in ignorance to ensure they don't learn anything on the authority of others (1974, 57). Because his ideas sometimes sound too radical, many educators have rejected them altogether. Nevertheless his emphasis on independent thinking is also found in some major contemporary theories, including the theories of Piaget and Montessori. To illustrate, I would like to highlight the methods of the Piagetian educator Constance Kamii.

Kamii's Constructivism

Kamii starts with Piaget's premise that genuine cognitive growth only occurs when children solve problems themselves. They must construct their own knowledge. Hence, her work is called "constructivism," and it is the first and strongest version of this movement.

Kamii's main focus has been on arithmetic, and she encourages teachers to give children opportunities, singly or in small groups, to invent their own methods. To do so, teachers need to provide experiences that children will find so interesting and meaningful they will work on them for their own sake. For example, first graders will enthusiastically work on arithmetic problems as they come up during card games, keeping score during outdoor games, and

voting on class decisions. The teacher's role, Kamii says, is not to give assistance or tell children the answers, but to help by asking stimulating questions. If children are playing softball, the teacher might ask, "How many points do you need to reach 21?" If a kindergarten child wants to pour juice for the whole class, the teacher might ask, "Do you have just enough cups for everyone present?" The teacher asks questions that set the children's minds in motion, but the teacher always leaves the problem-solving to the children themselves (Kamii 1985).

Kamii recognizes that her method takes time. She mentions, for example, how elementary school children are usually surprised to see that a pin sinks in water, whereas a block of wood floats. They had thought that the wood, which is so much larger, should have been the object to sink! Teachers can then provide children with other objects and ask them to come up with an explanation for what floats and what doesn't. This usually takes them a good deal of time. Teachers are therefore tempted to intervene and tell the children the answer (specific gravity), especially if the teacher is mandated to cover a specified curriculum. But Kamii urges the teacher to hold off. It is far better, she says, for children to keep thinking and wondering about the problem than "to be told the answer and to learn incidentally that the answer always comes from the teacher's head" (1973, 225).

Although Kamii has focused on arithmetic, she believes her general approach works in many areas of education, including "discipline problems." If children get into an argument over a game, Kamii recommends that teachers check their impulse to intervene. Instead, the teacher might ask the children, "Can you think of a way that will be fair to everyone?" In this way, the teacher stimulates the children themselves to work on problems of justice (1985, 48).

Kamii has clear goals for such education, which are very different from those of today's standards movement. Her goals do not have to do with the skills and knowledge measured by standardized tests. Rather, she wants the child to be alert and curious, to have confidence in her own ability to figure things out, and to say what she honestly thinks (1980, 19-20). Relying on such inner convictions is what it means, in Carl Rogers's view, to "have a self." One doesn't act on the basis of external approval or authority, but trusts one's own inner sense of what is right (Rogers 1961, Ch. 6).

It can be very difficult to follow one's inner intuitions and convictions. The pressures to conform are often too great. The difficulty is evident in a poster by Maggie Kuhn, which says "Speak your mind even if your voice shakes!"

Ironically, the pressures to conform are especially strong during the teenage years — precisely when young people search for a personal identity. To get an idea of just how strong these pressures are, I recently asked my undergraduates about a hypothetical situation in which a high school student saw a group of popular peers cruelly teasing someone. Would the student, I asked, possess the courage to confront the popular group? My undergraduates all agreed this was too much to ask. The student might want to say something, but her fear of being rejected by her peers would stop her. But if the student's education had been based on Kamii's principles — if the student had consistently relied on her own thinking — perhaps she would speak her mind.

Creativity

A second perspective on the true self focuses on creativity. In an early essay, Karl Marx (1962) said we actualize our fullest potentials through handicrafts and other creative work. But the expanding factories of the 19th century removed all creativity from work. Workers sold their labor to employers and performed the same small tasks over and over. They no longer felt at home in their work, but engaged in it only for the money. Otherwise they avoided it like the plague. The "worker's labor," Marx wrote, "is no more his own spontaneous activity; but is something impersonal, inhuman and belonging to another" (1962, 98). The individual cannot develop his physical and mental powers through his work and only feels like himself outside it.

According to Erich Fromm (1965) and others (e.g., Mills 1951), similar problems have emerged in the modern white collar workplace. Although white collar work is not as physical as factory work, it is nearly as mechanized. The modern bureaucrat, salesperson, or mid-level manager is just a small cog in the huge corporate machine (Mills 1951, 226-227). More-

over, what really matters is not what one produces — for everyone's contribution is too small to be of significance — but how one presents oneself to others. To get ahead, one must make a good impression.

Fromm called the distinctly modern personality type the "marketing orientation." Success depends on whether a person comes across as likeable, confident, friendly, cheerful, and attractive. Fromm acknowledged that skill plays some role. A Park Avenue doctor must have some technical skills and knowledge of medicine, but the doctor's image of self-confidence and bedside manner matter more. Similarly, for the college professor, stock broker, school administrator, hotel manager — for every almost any occupation — the "personality factor" is decisive (Fromm 1965, 77). And in all these cases, the individual lives on the surface, adapting the self to what others desire. A strong inner sense of self is absent.

Fromm described the healthy personality type as the "productive orientation," which means using our powers and realizing our potentials. The creative artist is the most convincing representative of the productive type, but not all artists are productive. Some, for example, simply paint what conventions dictate, leaving their deeper powers untapped. Alternatively, many people may lack any "gift," artistic or otherwise, but can be productive in any number of arenas. They may use their powers to help others, to cook or garden, to fix things in the house, and so on. The productive person has an inner sense of strength — a sense of oneself as a person who can act and create.

Creative Projects in Childhood

Schools can help children develop a sense of their own personal powers by giving them opportunities to work on creative projects such as building things, drawing, singing, writing plays, and conducting experiments. Unfortunately, most public schools have failed to see the advantage of these projects. In studies of public elementary and secondary schools conducted in the late 1970s, John Goodlad (1984, 150) found that students rarely engaged in these active forms of learning. Instead, the students listened to teachers' lectures and worked on academic assignments in their seats, filling in blanks in their workbooks and worksheets. Since then, the situation has become even worse. Teachers must give so much attention to preparing students for standardized tests that even if they wanted to experiment with creative projects, there would be no time to do so. (Kohn 1999, 90-91).

Schools can help children develop a sense of their own personal powers by giving them opportunities to work on creative projects.

When one proposes more crafts and creative projects, one also runs the risk of sounding out-of-date. This, at least, was my experience when I served on the school board in Teaneck, NJ, in the 1990s. When I talked about the value of sewing, weaving, or woodwork, members of the school community said that these activities sounded fine, but they belonged to an earlier era, not the modern world students will enter. Indeed, at one school board meeting the central administration proposed the elimination of the middle school home economics courses, which featured cooking and sewing. I tried to describe the sense of creativity that students derived from these activities, but in the end the school district decided it was more important for students to learn to use credit cards and to develop efficient strategies as consumers. The old home economics course was replaced with a course titled "consumer science."

Nevertheless, in an era when developing a true inner self is so problematic, handiwork and crafts would be very helpful. Consider apparel. Most high school students spend many hours at shopping malls, purchasing clothes, jewelry, and accessories that they show off to their peers. In New York City high schools, the halls have become fashion runways on which students display their recent purchases. Expressions of admiration make students feel good, but their sense of self is completely on the surface; it is solely dependent on appearances and external reactions. There is no feeling of creative power that co-

mes from making something — a handbag, piece of jewelry, or article of clothing.

Ironically, because a handmade object is usually a bit imperfect, classmates can see there was a process behind the final product. The maker's knowledge of the process is, of course, much greater. This knowledge is private, contributing to the individual's inner, personal sense of her own creative powers.

A very popular commercial product today is the metal scooter. It's fast and mobile and can be folded for convenient storage. Children and teenagers become very skilled at riding it, even performing stunts. This skill does contribute to a sense of self, but it is skill performed on an apparatus manufactured by an outside, impersonal force.

I believe there was more to be gained in my childhood days when we built our own scooters. We began by taking apart old shoe skates and nailing the wheels to two-by-four-inch pieces of lumber. Through trial and error we learned where to position the skates, the size of the nails that worked best, and many other aspects of carpentry. None of our scooters, to be sure, ran as well as today's manufactured models, but we were developing an inner sense of ourselves as creative persons.

Conclusion

I have suggested two ways educators can help nurture a firm sense of self: by encouraging independent problem-solving and creative projects.

Unfortunately, both approaches run counter to contemporary values. If we want children to figure out problems on their own, we must give them time to do so, and this often means slowing down the pace of learning. But slowness is difficult to defend in a competitive society that prizes speed and assumes that the fast learner is always superior to the slower one. Creative projects, too, meet with cultural resistance. Many creative projects, such as sewing, woodwork, and beadwork, are quite traditional, and it is difficult to defend them within an educational culture that is obsessed with preparing students for a high-tech future.

Nevertheless, if we want to promote children's confidence in their personal powers, we need to question the values and assumptions that get in the way. We need to give children opportunities to develop their inner strengths.

— William Crain, *Editor*

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Publisher's Note

Long-time subscribers to ENCOUNTER will undoubtedly recognize that the binding of this issue has changed from square-back to stapled — a format that is becoming increasingly common among journals like ours. We have made this change because the pricing pressures introduced by offshore printers have badly decimated the number of small, but highly qualified, local printers that we prefer to use to print our publications. The choice between going offshore or remaining local was, quite frankly, an easy one for us to make.

Mr. Pokey
A Turtle Diary

Kate McReynolds

Caring for an animal and learning about their needs leads to further discoveries and even to genuine empathy.

An Asian Box Turtle lounges on my foot. With his chin lifted and his neck fully extended, he is gazing at me. I am convinced he loves me. Coming as I do from a long line of farmers, this is an unlikely claim. We are not sentimental about animals. The chicken scratching by the back porch today could be in the stew pot tomorrow. But I've changed, and I've been changed by a turtle.

The story begins 14 years ago when I walked into an exotic pet store and bought the turtle that my two children and I named Mr. Pokey. He was as big around as a dessert plate and had beautiful yellow stripes on the side of his head. The delicate skin under his chin was the color of apricots. I had always wanted a turtle. Now, with two young children, I had an excuse to buy one. The clerk told me to keep him warm. She said he ate lettuce. As I prepared Mr. Pokey's tank, I wondered if he was warm enough. Chuckling to myself, I imagined I was cultivating turtle empathy.

A number of years passed. In the winter Pokey became completely inactive. Knowing that turtles hibernate, I left him alone. In the spring and summer, Mr. Pokey was awake but lethargic, rather like a living stone. He sometimes ate bits of banana and avocado, but I never saw him take a bite of lettuce. A chance conversation with my brother, a wild life rehabilitator, saved Mr. Pokey's life.

During a rare visit, I mentioned to my brother that our turtle never ate his lettuce. Alarmed, he said that some varieties of Asian Box Turtles are primarily meat eaters. I didn't believe him, but was soon convinced when he pulled up a website about turtles. I learned that Pokey's species favors earthworms, snails, and small fish. In captivity they will eat canned and dry cat food, supplemented with fruits

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and vegetables (Connor and Wheeler 1998). I will never forget the first time I saw Mr. Pokey eat a worm. He became enlivened in a way I had never seen. Quick as lightening, he bit off its head, devoured it, and then placidly washed his face. But, I was mortified to learn that the small depression in Pokey's head and the crack in his shell were the result of malnutrition. Though his health would improve, the structural damage was permanent.

With a proper diet, Mr. Pokey became very active. He marched around his tank until he bumped into the glass, but continued walking as if on a treadmill. I finally set him free. Roaming our large apartment, it wasn't long before our two house cats regularly made way as Pokey helped himself to their food. Hooking his front feet on the edge of the bowl, he tipped it, stretched his neck, and ate to his heart's content. Soon, we simply added a little extra to the cats' dishes.

More remarkable, Mr. Pokey liked company. He followed me from room to room. But even that is an understatement. He followed my every step. Visitors thought Pokey's devotion was unnatural. They invariably hypothesized that his attachment to me was a conditioned response, that he followed me because I fed him. But I had not fed Mr. Pokey for many years. That was a chore I had long ago delegated to my oldest child.

Pokey was surprisingly curious about visitors, too. Whenever I had company, he approached each guest, no matter how many were present. He examined their shoes and looked up at them with interest. He favored Capri pants and the color blue. It was not unusual for him to take a particular liking to one person or another and follow them for most of the evening. Eventually he would make his way back to me, but not before he had inspired exclamations of amazement and affection. No one who has met Mr. Pokey has failed to ask about him on subsequent visits. Most proclaimed that I have a very unusual turtle. But I wondered, did I? How well do we know turtles, after all?

One day, Mr. Pokey saw his reflection in a full-length mirror leaning against the wall. As he lunged at his image, biting and spitting, it took me a moment to realize that he was fighting what he thought was an intruder.

Pokey fights this phantom intruder whenever he encounters it, but one time he relinquished the fight. I was in a room just beyond the mirror. Pokey was following me, running to catch up. But, in order to get to me, he had to pass the mirror. Suddenly, Pokey caught sight of his reflection. He froze, looked at me, then back at the mirror. He looked at me again and back at his reflection. Pokey took two steps forward, and one back. I laughed out loud, wondering whether love or war would triumph. I was more than a bit surprised when my turtle hunkered down, as if facing a strong wind, and made his way to me. His indecision suggested a level of complexity I never imagined possible for a turtle. Moreover, his choice touched me. I felt a new and puzzling sense of obligation to this small reptile.

Occasionally we had to confine Mr. Pokey to his tank — for example, when he had a cold and had to be carefully watched, or when he was so persistently underfoot that I couldn't work. Once, when so confined, my daughter decided his tank needed decorating, and dropped a scallop shell into it. The shell was about half his size, but nicely domed. Pokey craned his neck and eyed it with interest. Suddenly, he lunged at it so aggressively that the shell flipped over. Pokey backed up a step, lowered his head, and began to sway his neck rhythmically back and forth. Then, with another surprising burst of speed he grabbed the shell with his mouth and shook it violently. I assumed that Pokey had a new rival, and thought so for quite some time, but I was wrong.

A colleague and defender of animals, who had heard about Mr. Pokey, asked me if I would bring him to one of his college classes and give a talk about him. In preparation I thought to do a little research about box turtles. It was then that I learned that the graceful, rhythmic neck motions Pokey made just before biting the scallop shell were part of the mating ritual of Asian Box Turtles (Connor and Wheeler 1998). Pokey was courting, not fighting a rival!

His behavior would have been pure entertainment had I not also discovered that Asian Box Turtles are highly social. In their natural habitat they live in large groups. Contrary to his nature, Mr. Pokey had lived alone for many years. To this day, he spends quite a bit of time interacting with his scallop shell mate. He loves to push it around the apartment with

his head, stopping every now and then to nip at it. But, his shell game is not so whimsical anymore. Rather it seems the lonely result of a disrupted life.

My research on Asian Box turtles led to the further discovery that in their natural subtropical habitat they do not hibernate (Bartlett and Bartlett 1996). Asian Box turtles can be forced into hibernation, as Pokey had been for many years, but it is hard on them. This artificial hibernation, known as *brumation*, slows the turtle's metabolism, but unlike in true hibernation, they continue to burn fat ("Tetrafauna Care and Feeding" 2005). Because they do not eat, starvation is not unusual. For 11 years I had starved my turtle two ways: first by depriving it of meat, then by forcing hibernation.

Building on children's natural curiosity and love for animals, it would be possible to engage them in an approach to animal studies that places the emphasis on evaluating current practices and fostering a deeper level of understanding, responsibility, and respect for all living creatures.

As it turned out, I had not known turtles well at all. Worse, I had acted as if there was nothing to know. As I continued to read, I found numerous testimonials written by owners of Asian Box Turtles describing the lively, curious, and social behavior of these gentle, friendly creatures. Contrary to my visitors' impressions, Pokey was not an unusual turtle after all.

Hoping to make amends, in whatever way possible, I decided to buy a real mate for Mr. Pokey, but learned that because of overharvesting for the pet, food, and medicinal trades, Asian Box Turtles are now threatened by extinction. To buy another turtle would support a practice that will lead to the destruction of the species. But even that does not capture the enormity of the issue. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of wild Asian Box Turtles are harvested each year for the pet trade (Halliday and Adler 2002). Fifty percent of these turtles die before they reach the market, through inhumane shipping practices, mistreatment, and starvation (Williams 1999). Those that do survive will live only a fraction of their life span. Captivity is considered the greatest threat to the overall life span of the species, but this is true not just for turtles. The wild Orca whale in captivity, for example, will live no more than 35 of her expected 90 years (Dor 2004).

The food and medicinal market, however, pose the largest threat to land turtles. Between 2½ and 12 million turtles a year are harvested and killed for this trade (Guynup 2004; Halliday and Adler 2002). According to John L. Behler (1997), Chairman of the Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, "there is no more serious turtle crisis than that which is taking place in Southeast Asia and Southern China." Some species are becoming extinct before they can be described (Behler 1997). Mr. Pokey, a member of a species that has survived for 200 million years, is now a very rare turtle in the pet trade. He would fetch a thousand dollars on the open market (Pritchard 2005).

Reflections

After 14 years, and mindful of the suffering of this peaceful, unique animal, I have developed in earnest what was originally a joke: turtle empathy. I cannot deny that I love a turtle. In loving this one, I have come to care about all turtles, and even to imagine that I am on the road to caring about all living creatures. Mr. Pokey has taught me that I viewed animals as commodities, as objects for my entertainment and use. I now question the exploitation of animals for any purpose. I wonder, for example, what we are communicating to our students when we bring animals into the classroom for instruction and pleasure. From my own experience, I know how misinformation and ignorance can cause torment to an animal, and even put its life at risk.

Classroom pets are often introduced to children without reference to the issues that I painstaking learned. I know that my own children, and I suspect most children and even teachers, do not know that

virtually all varieties of water turtles, a popular classroom pet, are caught in the wild (Flank 1997). Moreover, the United States' turtle trade, like Asia's, is shockingly inhumane; the harvesting and shipping practices cause injury or death to hundreds of thousands of turtles a year. Furthermore, harvesting practices operate with little or no regard for preserving the habitats of species, or for avoiding other species that are threatened or endangered (U.S. and International Humane Society 1994).

Similarly, in the wild, golden hamsters, another common schoolroom pet, live solitary, nocturnal lives in extensive underground burrows (Burnie and Wilson 2005). But as pets they are typically housed in small cages and must endure chronic disruptions to their sleep cycle. Captive hamsters spend endless hours running on exercise wheels — a poor substitute for the urge to dig, an instinct that 65 years of captive breeding has not eliminated. Even less known is that wild hamsters are a threatened species, and may already have become extinct in some areas (Nechay 2000).

I believe that if youngsters knew that their pets are suffering, that some are threatened with extinction, they would want to do something about it. In fact, building on children's natural curiosity and love for animals, it would be possible to engage them in an approach to animal studies that places the emphasis on evaluating current practices and fostering a deeper level of understanding, responsibility, and respect for all living creatures. For example, before bringing animals into the classroom, teachers might involve students in interdisciplinary investigations that examine the natural history, ecology, and social behavior of various species. In this context students could explore the implications, including the ethics, of social and cultural practices that affect animals, individually and collectively. Such an approach might readily lead to more caring choices, such as the decision to exclude as pets endangered and exotic species and those for whom humane living conditions cannot be provided.

Some students and teachers might decide to conduct all animal observation studies in the field, even if this limits fieldwork to urban parks. Such a choice would greatly reduce the cruel practice of confining wild animals to cramped, unnatural quarters and would provide the added and increasingly rare benefit of connecting children to the natural world. I can even imagine developing a curriculum that involves older children in public outreach and animal rescue work, thereby combining compassion with environmental activism and service. Such lessons would help children become aware of the intrinsic value of animals. Children would learn that caring for an animal means much more than cleaning out its cage.

I am no longer puzzled by the sense of obligation I feel toward Mr. Pokey. He has been a good teacher and I have learned what has always been true: Because of my ability to exploit animals, I am obligated to protect them. Mr. Pokey's suffering made real what I cannot ignore; he is one of countless others whose welfare depends upon the choices we make.

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Rose

A Remembrance

Jennifer Cipri

Creative and caring teachers can make an enormous difference in the lives of their students.

I could hardly breathe anymore, so I stopped going to school during my sophomore year. My anxiety came to a point where I simply wanted to die. Because I was failing most of my classes, the principal of Chester Hill High School advised my mother I needed special attention. The next year they sent me to an alternative high school down by the Mianus River.

It was called Saint Anne's, but not because it was Catholic or prestigious. Father Dillard just happened to be nice enough to offer his space above the preschool. The space was small and pathetic. It smelled of old carpeting, and the lights cast down a dim hovering yellow. School started at eleven and ended at one. On my first day my mother came in to introduce herself to the teachers. There were eleven in all, sitting around a rectangular table, all staring at me. Mrs. D, a dainty woman in her sixties, connected her greenish eyes to mine and said, "Jennifer, we hope you will find yourself happy here." I smiled at her, mildly enchanted by the rhythm and melody of her voice. There was a musical quake in it, as if she were about to break out in laughter or in tears.

After my mother left, Mrs. D brought me out to the main living room to introduce me to all the students. They were scattered about the room, some sitting on the sofas, some at the tables, writing in notebooks or reading from textbooks. Most didn't bother to look my way.

Mrs. D must have noticed the tepid reception I was receiving so she turned towards the sofa by the far window. "Rose," she said, "this is Jennifer. It's her first day here too." The air around us was pensive and waiting. Wendy, a heavyset freshman with severe asthma coughed out a hard, sloppy laugh. "Mrs. D. Why don't you let her introduce herself? We ain't gonna bite her."

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Rose didn't look up right away so my first impression of her was a deep green beret that was pointed towards the floor. I found myself looking at this odd hat. Unconsciously, I touched the side of my cheek. Something in the staunch green made me uncomfortably aware of myself. As if its purpose was to thwart any unwanted attention and confront observers with the unsettling vision of only themselves. I would soon discover that Rose wore the beret every day, and it ceased to function as an article of clothing, becoming more a part of her body than her arms or her legs. It protected her, perched at the highest point, like an eagle on a watch tower. It seemed to substitute, at times, for her. But above all it was supreme in its regard for the girl it sheltered.

Finally, though, the eagle rustled, and there was Rose, unadulterated. She looked up and gave me a quick hello. She didn't smile. I would soon learn smiling was something she hardly ever did. She was dark-skinned and slender, taking me in rather quickly before going back to the papers she was holding in her hands. Sullen and serious is what I mostly thought of her. Even her clothes were dull and without effort. But there was a keenness in her eyes. A sharp, cutting perceptiveness that shot out at me, making me nervous that she would call out some flaw in my face, or detect from my walk that I was a punk. I got the sense that Rose saw everything. I was leery of her but admired her from the very beginning.

The school had three rooms. The floors had a subtle slant that seemed to help the teachers hustle towards and away from work each day, and the students swayed and teetered between teacher and classroom. Mrs. D's room had a table, a lone computer, and two large bookshelves that lined the right wall. When not occupied by her, it felt nothing like a classroom at all. There was a dissatisfying and pitiful air that hung low like a rusted chandelier. But at the sound of Mrs. D's voice, the room glistened and became youthful. She would greet us and her eyes would open wide to reveal an almost too-good-to-be-true green. According to each class's mood, Mrs. D would spontaneously hand out assignments or sometimes read a chapter from a book she thought might be interesting. The books were mostly donated from area high schools. There was no particular order to how they were shelved, leaning helplessly against each other. They seemed to be, like me, a part of the school by chance.

One day Mrs. D told me about Rose. "Rose's mother died when she was very young," Mrs. D said. "Rose was about three or four when she died. So Rose is being raised by her grandmother now. But she came to this school, Jennifer, because of many different problems at home and at Chester Hill High, and that makes it very hard for her to get up every day and want to come and do work. I'm not quite sure, too, what that girl has brewing under that hat of hers or what she is *thinking!*"

Well, I can just see it in her *face*," Mrs. D continued, her words brimming with laughter, "that Rose is not too excited to be here and to know me. In fact, I don't think she likes me at all. *She is not a hap-py cam-per!*" And then seriousness took it's place in her again. "But that's okay. It's okay."

Nevertheless Mrs. D found *Gone With the Wind* on the bookshelf and assigned Rose to read it. "That book weighs more than she does!," Mrs. D laughed. It seemed like an experiment, but Rose didn't complain. She just took the book from Mrs. D, went in the corner without a word, and started to read.

"Now Jennifer," Mrs. D said, brushing her hands against her long denim skirt, "Let's see what book you might be interested in. Your mother told me that you love to read and write."

"Yeah, I do. When I have time."

"That's very good. Then I think I will have you read this book." It was a thin book, *A Separate Peace*. There was a boy on the cover, glancing over his shoulder at me, his hands in his pockets, looking as if he had a great idea brewing inside him.

"Jennifer?" Mrs. D asked. "How would you like to write in a journal? It could be part of your daily assignments."

"That would be nice," I answered

"Well, what do you think you would like to write about? What do you do at home?" Mrs. D sat beside me and tilted her head as she searched for an opening in my face.

"I like sitting on my stoop, most of the time. There's always a lot to see outside."

"Jennifer, I bet there is. And I bet there are many characters in your neighborhood, too. Do you like living there?"

"Oh, yeah. Most of the time, I love it."

"Well, you can write a series of stoop stories, if you'd like."

"Yeah, I can do that."

"Do you have a space at home, Jennifer, to write? Is your house peaceful?"

I looked down to the floor, but I could still feel Mrs. D's strong awareness of me. So I looked once again at her.

"Oh, yeah, my mom is really cool. She never yells at me. It's actually too quiet sometimes in my house."

"And you wish it wasn't."

"Sometimes I wish it wasn't."

"It feels…" We searched for the words in the faces of each other. Mrs. D was strained and waiting. I was feeling lost and upset over our conversation. And then finally the word fell, and I don't remember which of us said it. It swooped down, and zigzagged before us like a lost feather. "… hopeless."

We had many thoughtful conversations over time. Mrs. D made me feel open and I was able to tell her fears I had about living with a single mother. The anxiety that existed in not knowing what would happen if I were to lose her. The way it made it so I couldn't breathe, couldn't grow, and couldn't see through the tall buildings of my existence into a future. But there was something about Mrs. D herself that I fell in love with. She wore long sweet skirts and exotic rings. One ring in particular was oddly shaped and a varied shade of a brilliant green. "Jennifer," she told me one day. "This is a precious stone and it is very, very expensive. My husband gave it to me a few years ago and I absolutely love it. But I don't dare tell the kids here what it's worth." She laughed again. "They probably think it's a glob of green *goo*! And to tell you the truth, I'd like to keep it that way!" Her eyes were deep and warm, and it struck me how I could feel so close and so far from a person at the same time.

* * *

Maybe Rose recognized my fear, and that could be the reason why she never really liked me. Or maybe I just felt that way because she never extended herself in conversation with me. There was one day, however, when the bus dropped us off early at school and Rose suggested we take a walk to the mall, since she was not in the mood to go to school for the full day. Okay, I told her, and we were off. We cut through the cemetery, which spread back between the school and a one-way side street. It was a city cemetery, framed by a thick stone wall — a patch of earth sewn into a landscape of concrete. By day a few people used it as a shortcut into and out of downtown. By night it harbored the scurries of small animals, the dying footfalls of junkies, their beer and coke bottles abandoned and still. The tombstones, which jutted up and out — some tilted, some straight — were too weathered and long-gone to be visited. Those who used to mourn them had vanished, ghosts themselves. The ground was no longer fresh, and the bones that lived below were silent and dry. They little cared of our trespass, and so Rose and I walked without falter through the cemetery and crossed town to the mall.

We walked around the stores and at one point Rose pointed to a girl who was walking with a large group of friends. The girl was wearing a red sweater and was looking down to her shoes as she walked. "I fought that girl," Rose said decisively. It was the way she said it that registered an unfamiliar confusion inside me. Her tone was deadened and to the point, yet held a tinge of romanticism, as if she were really saying that there is a girl she used to love. I couldn't accept this, and I asked, "What do you mean?"

She glanced at me, questioning where I was coming from and said. "I mean, I fought her."

"You had an argument?"

"No. We fought — with our fists." She was annoyed with me by then, and I waited a while before I began speaking again. During the silence I mostly thought of the girl in the red sweater and wondered what she had done to Rose for a fight to break out. It seemed, for Rose, fighting was not violence at all. It was placing a stray object back in line, correcting an atmosphere of malaise and disorder. Soothing a burn. Fighting for Rose was mathematical. I knew, by the way she pointed that she did not hate that girl now and that she had not hated her the day they brought fists to one another.

One day, Mrs. D said. "Rose? Would you like to continue *Gone with the Wind* or would you girls like to do something new today?"

"Something new," Rose answered and I agreed.

Mrs. D got up and walked over to the bookshelf. "I have a book I thought I could read aloud to you girls." She pulled a bright yellow book from the shelves. "It's called *Rule of the Bone* and it's a very sad story about a young boy without a mother." She came back to the table with her thumb stuck in the page of the first chapter. Adjusting her skirt, she sat, opened the book, and pressed a crease into the binding. "Are you ready?"

"Sure," I answered

"While I read I want you girls to think about why this boy made the choices that he did and if you think there were any other ways for him to go."

There was a large chasm, a place of nothingness that lived between Mrs. D and her students. It was filled with all the sentences never formed, all the words that couldn't be placed together to somehow make lives and experiences connect. There was never a sense that we all belonged together, but still there was never a doubt in our minds that this meeting was pure destiny. We were in the thick of each other. And this is why we failed. There was nothing to breathe except one another. Nothing to eat, except discontent and fear. Where was the magic I so yearned for, growing up in that alternative school? Why did the very laces of my shoes seem to be too tight to bear?

* * *

Spring came again, and by the end of the school year Rose finished *Gone with the Wind*, just before she graduated. Mrs. D raved over her — I myself couldn't believe it. In the following summer she met a man named Darren. They had a baby together, and then Darren put a revolver to Rose's head and murdered her. Her grandmother was left with the child, just as she had been left with Rose when Rose's mother died.

Now that I am far away from that school and that time, I think about the actual death, with all of my senses, and I find myself ill and trembling. When it's someone you know and have grown to care for and admire, you don't just acknowledge their death. You imagine the bullet in slow motion, tearing through their skin, through their skull, into the brain that used to hold you in it, that used to send messages to their lips as they opened to speak to you, revealing their thoughts. You imagine their eyelashes at the moment of death, eyelashes that once blinked at you. You see the disrupted skin you used to smell. But most of all you remember their motion: the motion of body and mind and spirit. And the thought of a bullet ripping through all that motion, all that unique force of life. Seeing Rose fall to the floor is more than I will ever be able to bear.

I wanted to achieve so much in high school. But I never reached those goals. Along with the rest, I graduated a nobody, failing my SATs and spending a summer with pointlessly late nights and nowhere to go mornings. The only thing I can say I gained in Saint Anne's was a support system that loved me: Teachers and guidance counselors who maybe didn't know of a life that would bring me success but believed I had whatever it took to succeed.

Mrs. D encouraged me to write. She would mark my papers with comments like "This is excellent. Keep Writing!" and "You are ready for your novel!" She had a wealth of knowledge, commitment, and love, which she gave entirely to her students. But she was marked with the fear we all were marked with — she was a part of the downtrodden. I left Saint Anne's with the sense that if I didn't fail life, life would ultimately fail me.

Mrs. D and I kept in touch. I would visit and we would talk about Rose, and she would fill me in on all the new students. "Jen-ni-fer, it's getting worse!" One day I dropped off some writing I had done about my mother, who had just passed away. Mrs. D let a guidance counselor read it, and that guidance counselor in turn sent my writing to someone at Sarah Lawrence College.

I stepped into Sarah Lawrence motherless, alone, and broken. Education had proven, thus far, to be an able horse with a disabled spirit, but I still possessed the desire to read and write. In the spring of 2005 I decided to take two courses, "Education Wars" with Edward Miller and "Arts Resources Lab" with Shirley Kaplan.

Ed's class instantly brought me back to my days at Saint Anne's. We were learning about the No Child Left Behind Act. We raised questions like, What makes a good teacher? What makes a good school? What is the value in education? And secretly in the back of my mind I added my own question: Can an educational experience save a life? I mentioned this

to Ed in one of our conferences. I was thinking of Rose and wondered if things had been different in school would she possibly have taken a different path in life and still be here today. Ed paused at the question and looked down to the floor. He told me it was a difficult question to ask, and that I would have a hard time proving that Rose's death could have been avoided. I agreed, and that part of the conversation was over. But Ed took my question very seriously and this encouraged me to think hard about what happened at Saint Anne's. It wasn't over yet.

I started Arts Resources Lab on a Monday, not knowing what to think. But even before Shirley Kaplan appeared there was something about the theater space of our classroom that was fortifying. It was dark, yet lit in certain places with the brightest possibilities. Corners I wanted to nook into. An ambiguity that resurrected images of hidden passages and doors — places I wanted to explore — experiences I wished to find.

And then, finally, there was Shirley. She entered the room curiously, with generous eyes and a smile just outside of sin. Having us sit in a circle, Shirley told us she was very interested in our mistakes and encouraged us to find a little window into our head, a place where we could discover the paths leading us to creativity.

"Why did you come back to school?" she asked us. "There has to be something you're looking to do, some change in your life you need to make." Then her body came forward in her chair and she leaned her elbows on her knees. Right then I could see this woman knew something, had been somewhere that was authentic and real. She was mysteriously caring and unlawful. From the start I wished to hear her.

"Look around at everyone in the classroom," Shirley said. "Look at how each person is sitting. No two are alike. Everyone has their own story." Then Shirley told us we were all to keep journals. "This course is about making things up — developing your own material. I want you to try to connect with what makes you, you. And it's very important that things don't work — that whole feeling — that whole idea — the excitement of being off balance."

One of the main aspects of Shirley's class was play. We were encouraged to use our bodies, and Shirley tapped into our connection with the rest of the universe. One day she sent us outside for ten minutes so we could observe someone on campus. "Go out," she said. "Go to the pub, or wherever you see people, and study someone else for ten minutes." Then, when we came back, she had us present the person we observed through our own physical movement. Her class was straight up fun, and when I went home at night I found myself writing stories and using pieces of an imagination I had long forgotten. Shirley's class reminded me of being young.

One evening Ed brought William Crain to our class to speak about children and their crucial relationship with nature, and all the pieces of the puzzle started to come together. I started to think of my youth — the almighty outdoors I had. And my body began to conjure memories of being very young, in the same neighborhood that as a teenager brought me so much fear. Only these memories were of when I was three and four and five, and with them came the vision of my backyard and how summer made the honeysuckle press itself into the air and reach my swirling nostrils, filling them with a pulse, a drive, a desire, like the way thunder drives the sky to open and release rain and light.

When I was growing up with my two sisters, our backyard was a safe space, and in it we explored this landscape of certitude. Play taught us how to take stock in each other and in the earth. Our desires were above all. And forgiveness was the essential element that made it ride. We experienced the thing. The connection. The openness to nature, the forgetting of our bodies as bodies, the love of the idea that we were one, sleeping in a universal bed of joy. So when we started digging a hole that would lead us to the sun, we believed that that sun would eventually be there. The excitement of being so close to an enormous discovery gave us great energy. The feeling was immeasurable. There were no reasons to fear. We picked a spot close to the pear tree from which the two swings hung. Close by was a blossom tree that showered down wingless white butterflies. There was a honeysuckle bush that lined the alley, and there was a cherry tree we climbed to pick from and fill our cups, baskets, or jars.

And when we didn't find the sun, that was okay, because we still believed that it was there, only it was too deep within the dirt and too grand of a secret to

discover. The earth's floor was enough, and our feet padded it for the longest afternoons of our lives. Later, after coming inside, our feet would not ache even though we had done all that standing, running, jumping, pounding, kicking, and dancing. All that following, leading, prancing, sidling, and escaping. All that sneaking, shifting, shuffling, and climbing. We didn't need an old basin full of hot water or a pumice to rub down our soles. Youth was not a physical state and therefore could not be a physical condition or ailment. It was living in wonder. Singing praise to the circle we spun in. Giving everything and anything up to the experience of awe.

Sometimes we played with our cousin Anne, who lived in the back apartment. Her older brothers built us a two-story tree house without walls, a creation that was the bones of something — the skeleton of a body that we renewed and recreated every day. Its lack of detail fostered our mind's eye to travel and grab up ideas and far off stories. We became people in that wall-less home. We put on plays that the neighborhood came to see. They would line up their chairs, and we would display ourselves, without fear, in front of them. We performed *The Wizard of Oz*. I was Toto and I remember feeling very afraid that this humongous world of humans didn't understand me. My sister Angela came spinning through the curtains as the Good Witch. The audience laughed at Angela's twirling and she gleamed in her ability to excite them. Imagination gave us power. We held the secret to the spell. The world was ours.

I felt these feelings again, not only in Shirley's class, but outside of it as well. I started to see my surroundings differently. I wanted to go places I had never taken interest in before. I wanted to meet people I would usually never want to meet. And above all, I let go of many people in my life who I finally realized were holding me down. I heard Shirley's voice: "You need to get rid of the negative people in your life. And all it takes is just one person; they can infect an entire room. Negativity is like a disease and it's very hard to create when you are in that type of environment. Let those negative people go, and you'll see things change for the better." Somehow I started to believe again. Not in anything in particular — nothing with a name or a certain quality or color. I just believed, without anything to believe in at all. And it felt good.

In one of the last classes a student named Jean asked a question about her own insecurities about being an artist. Shirley, without pause, asked her to stand up and told the rest of the class just to look at her. "What do you see?" she asked us. "Look at her. Look at how she's standing. Look at her hips. I mean really look at all of her." Jean was shy and not sure what to do with her own body. Then, pointing directly at Jean, Shirley said, "What I'm getting at is that *you* are enough. You're enough is what this is all about. If you feel unsure about where you are going in life or you come up against a wall, you *must* see doors out. Keep the choices going. Keep alive and keep it moving. Change and play with your habits. Don't isolate your creativity." And in her words there were horses galloping.

Shirley's resiliency clicked and jingled around her like tiny hanging jewels. As a teacher she was a charm and the unimaginable light she caught was a gift to each waiting and apprehensive student. *How,* I asked myself, *does someone find a way to shine after a certain amount of years? How does one stop from crumbling, from dulling at the surface? Where does courage like that live?* Shirley was like a mother who knew us and understood our individuality. She encouraged us to think and follow our dreams, no matter how absurd they seemed to the rest of the world. She told us not to feel guilty about our own needs. "Guilt is for murderers. Have you killed anyone?" What Shirley brought into the classroom was hope. And so, again, I think of Rose.

* * *

On the last day of school at St. Anne's, Mrs. D came up behind me as I sat typing on the computer. "Jen-ni-fer," she said. Her voice was lush and silvery. It was chaotic and fragile, scrambled and perfect all at once. I turned with a large smile and saw the back of her as she reached over and heaved up the window. "It's beautiful outside. Let's get some of that fresh air." Spring had pushed its way down the Mianus River, and the air that came in, brushing against the shoulders of Mrs. D who now stood facing me, was charged and seemed to be speaking. The cemetery, too, yielded the chatter of tiny living

things. And a bee serenaded cautiously outside the window, finally resting on the sill.

"Do you have a dress, Jennifer, to wear to graduation?"

"My mom bought me something in Macy's."

"Oh wonderful. And will your family be there?"

"Yeah, my grandmother's coming, too, from Pittsburgh."

"Well then, you have nothing to *worry* about! The tempo fell suddenly again, back to being low and serious. "Jennifer, are you excited to be graduating?"

"I guess … I mean I'll be sad to leave here."

"Jennifer. Make sure you visit with the community college this summer. It will be different, college. And I think you'll be nervous at first … because it's not like here" Her eyes grew so as to tell me she was worried I was not listening or perhaps I didn't understand. "But you will adjust. Just remember to breathe."

"Will Rose be graduating too?"

"Well, Rose is going to have to take a class in the summer, in order for her to get her diploma. But she'll catch up, Jennifer. She'll catch up to you. Don't you worry. I never doubted that girl, not once."

At this she turned to the window. A strong wind blew in, causing papers to rustle. The bee on the sill stirred and struck back into the trees that shaded the cemetery. Then abruptly, she rose and her chair fell to the floor. Picking it up she patted me hard on my shoulder. "We'll talk more tonight at the ceremony. Don't be late."

"Okay, Mrs. D." She leaned down and we hugged each other. And then she turned and left. I went back to the computer, and Wendy came in quietly. She sat in a far corner and brought her knees to her chest, staring towards the floor. I turned to the open window and looked to the cemetery, listening to the absence created by the missing bee, and Wendy's wheezing, and the muffled voices of my classmates through the walls.

* * *

There is a force outside of ourselves that drives the birds in certain directions and tells the seeds when it's time to send up their blooms. All we have to do is open a door or crank open a window and we will be faced with it, a constant being that does not falter, a reality that does not forget to breathe. We can never change this force, but we can own it partly, timidly, through the darkest of glass, by movement and by memory. I am alive today, and what is more I am in motion. I was blessed to meet teachers who have literally changed my life. I want to be a writer in the future and after this semester, I now believe that I can. I will always think of Rose, every day that I am in school — learning, growing, and creating. I know I am blessed to be here. And so, instead of losing breath, I take great gulps of air and remember everything I am receiving here at Sarah Lawrence. Now it is not only the memories of my past but also the education of my present that rule me.

Race and Choice

Chris Mercogliano

I had a disturbing exchange the other day with a middle school guidance counselor. She'd telephoned to get more information about a girl who attended the seventh grade in my school last year.

It shouldn't have been so surprising, really. At the start of every school year I usually receive at least one similar call, when my former students show up at their new schools without the requisite transcript — grades, test scores, boilerplate teacher comments, etc. Instead they arrive with a letter detailing their strengths and weaknesses, and their accomplishments here, and their beleaguered guidance counselors don't know what to do with them.

But this time I almost lost my cool.

It probably didn't help that I had just finished reading a long excerpt in *Harpers* from Jonathan Kozol's *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* (2005). Because the student in question happens to be African American. Tanisha is an articulate, highly intelligent young woman who is eager to learn and succeed. At issue was the math level she should be placed in: remedial, school level, or honors. Yes, Virginia, the tracking system is alive and well in the twenty-first century.

Tanisha's counselor was hesitant to put her in an honors class without hard evidence that she could do the work.

"I need numbers!" the counselor pleaded with me.

"As I explained to you in my letter, we don't operate with numbers. And as I also explained, Tanisha is competent and up to grade level in math."

Chris Mercogliano has been a teacher at theAlbany Free School for 32 years and an administrator for the past 20. His most recent book is *Teaching the Restless : One School's Remarkable No-Ritalin Approach to Helping Children Learn and Succeed* (Beacon Press, 2004).

"So you're telling me she's ready to do advanced work?"

I changed course for a moment and this is where the trouble began. "Have you asked Tanisha? Does she *want* to be challenged?"

"Ask the student what *she* wants? Why would I do that?" Her brain seemed on the verge of a brown out.

"Because a child's attitude toward learning means everything," I replied, trying very hard not to shout into the mouthpiece. "If Tanisha chooses to tackle honors math, then I can assure you she will study hard and be able to keep up with the rest of the class."

It felt pointless to continue. We were speaking different languages and both of us were getting mad. I decided to back off so that the counselor wouldn't take reprisals against Tanisha.

"Listen, I'm sorry to be so abrupt with you," I said in a gentler tone. "It's our last day here to prepare for the arrival of the students and I'm feeling pretty frazzled."

This opened up the space for her to do the same.

"Yeah, I am too. I have 200 kids to place before Tuesday."

She told me that she would, in fact, check with Tanisha about the math class and thanked me for my time. I was relieved to end on a cordial note.

However, the exchange raised two fundamental issues in education: race and choice. As Kozol so graphically demonstrates in his new book, schooling in America has once again become an entirely apartheid institution. Integrated urban schools are a thing of the past, and the horrid conditions under which African American children are forced to learn are reminiscent of the Deep South prior to the civil rights movement. Moreover, it isn't just the ruined physical state of the buildings that is so shocking, but also the dumbed down, robotic quality of

the curriculum and the teaching methods employed in them. Kozol is right. Shame on us all.

The school Tanisha is now attending still happens to be racially diverse, but a separate but "equal" clause remains in effect regardless. Overwhelmingly it is the white kids who get funneled into the honors classes, while the others are dumped out at the bottom of the ladder. Very few ever make it above the first rung. It is a not so subtle prelude to the scene at Albany's single, centralized high school, where there is an almost total absence of children of color in the Advanced Placement classes and where the minority dropout rate is at one and the same time an embarrassment and a closely kept secret.

And then there is the matter of choice. The guidance counselor with whom I spoke seemed to overlook the importance of what students themselves choose to learn. Considerable research suggests that that when a child makes an internal, intentional choice to learn something, the depth and breadth of the learning will be far greater than when the motivation comes from the outside. This is the crux of the Self-Determination theory of psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985). This theory, which the authors have been developing for the past 30 years, holds that children are born with an innate propensity to explore their internal and external surroundings in an attempt to understand and master them. It's not something we teach them; rather it is their nature.

Deci and Ryan call this inner drive to learn intrinsic motivation, meaning that the impetus to do it comes from within and is not separate from the activity itself. It is the spontaneous inclination towards seeking out novelty and challenge, toward honing and extending one's capacities. Allowing children the free choice to pursue their interests without interference is essential to intrinsic motivation, or to use Deci and Ryan's terminology, we can only exercise our intrinsic motivation when we experience our actions as self-determined. Extrinsic rewards undermine it. So do threats, bribes, deadlines, directives, and imposed goals.

Perhaps if I had been in a better frame of mind when she called, I could have helped that guidance counselor understand that this is why it is so important to ask her students what and how much they want to learn. Maybe next time.

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Taking Risks
by Pat Lillis

When children don't get
Scratched by a cat,
Bitten by a dog,
Thrown by a horse,
Spilled from a bike,
Kicked by a cow,
Stung by a bee,
All the scars are on the inside.

Pat Lillis is the founder and director of Elsa's Ark, an animal rescue organization on Long Island (P.O. Box 2900, East Hampton, NY 11937).

Viewpoint

Targeting "Deficiencies"

Susan Nelson

As a mentor/teacher for the state of California's K–12 credential program, I attend several local training lectures each year. In one of these, the presenter was asked by one of the participating teachers, "What do we do about those students who are so far behind that they just can't seem to catch up?"

His reply was: "What we need to do for those students is to target their deficiencies." Those were his exact words, and I wrote them down because they struck me as a bit unnerving. After mulling them over, I still find them perplexing. I have tried to imagine why any of us would want *our* deficiencies "targeted." According to that logic, I would have to spend my time playing sports, doing automobile maintenance, and practicing the oboe. Those are all areas of deficiency for me, but the only thing I have done about them is to avoid them like the plague.

If "targeting deficiencies" sounds like a questionable strategy when applied to an adult's life, why is this upside down logic so often applied to the education of children? I suppose an explanation is that the skills we teach to children are more general than those we teach to adults. In other words, all children must learn to read and write and do math — but not necessarily to play the oboe — and if they cannot perform the more general skills, something must be done to rectify this situation.

Still, since all learning is connected, we could allow children to begin their education in an area in which they have substantial interest. If an individual begins with an interest in art, for instance, this can lead to reading about art, biographies of artists, and the mathematics of design. Curiosity, if allowed to grow unimpeded, can take the learner into every corner of human accomplishment, which is really what basic curriculum is all about.

In a single activity there may be something to see, something to hear, something to touch, something to do, and maybe even something to smell or taste. Howard Gardner (1993) calls learning through many senses "multiple points of entry"; it is a situation that increases the chances that the related facts will be remembered. The multiple points of entry assist the learner because each of us possesses different pathways to developing the same skill, according to Gardner.

It should not matter whether children learn reading by books having to do with sports or art. Or whether they learn math by building things, sewing, or designing a motocross racing track. Long ago, Dewey (1966) described how children can learn many academic skills through practical life projects that are of particular interest to them. A child who is supported in her interests will gradually expand those interests to become a mature, thoughtful human being with a multitude of overlapping areas of expertise. Furthermore, he or she stands a good chance of understanding the important relationships between and among those various disciplines and subjects.

To allow children to build on their interests and strengths requires a certain faith and patience on the part of adults. This is difficult for adults. When they see something wrong, they immediately wish to address it. Very few parents or educators are content to wait for opportunities to assist the learner. It is practically heresy to acknowledge that one child might learn to read at four years of age and another might learn to read at ten, and that *they are both perfectly normal and intelligent individuals.* In a nanosecond culture, it is not comfortable to wait for developmental signals from a child.

Susan Nelson is a middle school teacher at the Ramona Community School in Southern California, a small alternative school created by a grass-roots community effort. She is the author of *Partners in Practice* (Fearon 1989), which focuses on peer teaching, as well as several articles on homeschooling.

This "deficiency" mentality has permeated our culture to such an extent that parents often come to me with an apologetic, sometimes panicky, and all too often desperate tale of their child's perceived academic shortcomings. The distress is not necessarily proportional to the stated difficulties. Most parents are aware that their child possesses talents of one kind or another, but many times they have concluded that the particular talents shown by their child don't "count" somehow, that those talents are less valuable than the ones that show up on standardized tests.

Adults need to question this assumption. There is nothing inherently superior about the ability to answer comprehension questions on a test over the ability to do something like design a website or build a birdhouse. What's more, when it comes to practical tasks, we often take a healthier approach to children's "errors." When it comes to learning a new skill such as ice skating or carpentry, for instance, we assume that there will be difficulties, mistakes, and imperfections.

The difference in the way we respond to the challenges inherent in learning to read or perform mathematical operations, as opposed to those in learning to do something we call a hobby, is remarkable. It would be very unusual to hear a parent say to a teacher, "I'm very worried about my son; he tried to build a bench, but the wood splintered, and then the paint wouldn't dry. He wanted to enter his carpentry project in the fair, but now I'm afraid we'll have to have him tested for a woodworking disability." Likewise, the image of a parent teaching a child to ride a bicycle is often a very different picture than one of a parent helping a child with his homework. The first picture is mostly encouragement and support while the second — the homework picture — is often characterized by tears and frustration. The teaching of academic subjects might be greatly improved through the employment of the strategies that are commonly used to foster recreation and hobbies.

An academic curriculum or course of study *could* be based on a student's areas of interest. Nurturing talent may be as simple as getting to know our youngsters better and helping them begin to turn their talents into skills and projects that pave the road to reading, writing, and mathematics.

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Standardized Solutions?

A Dialogue with Deborah Meier

Adam Howard

Curricular uniformity and standardized testing will not result in educational equality. To make progress, schools must treat low-income students with the same respect that wealthy students enjoy.

Educational researchers generally agree that there is a high correlation between social class and academic achievement. On average, low-income students perform less well (e.g., Brantlinger 2003; Coleman 1988; Jencks 1972; McMurrer and Sawhill 1998; Natriello, McDill, and Pallas 1990; Rist 1973). Disagreements arise over the explanations for the disparities, and the steps needed to remove them.

Even though numerous studies (e.g., Ballantine 1983; Metz 1998; Oakes 1985; Persell 1997) have documented the various organizational and economic variables that make it difficult for poor students to succeed, the entrenched belief in meritocracy continues. That is, educators and researchers continue to assume that American schools are places where all students meet on an equal footing and achievement is a matter of individual effort. The predominant attitude is to blame individuals alone for poor performances — mostly to blame educators for not doing their jobs and to blame students for not taking advantages offered to them.

Guided by these attitudes towards school failure of the poor, the standards-based reform movement has gained broad acceptance across the political spectrum and widespread public support. Sparked by the 1983 federal report, *A Nation at Risk*, the standards movement holds schools responsible for the nation's economic difficulties, singling out unqualified teachers, social promotion, and general academic permissiveness that tolerates shoddy work.

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Deborah Meier is the founder of the Central Park East schools in East Harlem, New York, and the founding principal of the new Mission Hill Elementary School in Boston. Her work and writings as a progressive educator have brought her numerous awards and honors.

One of the basic assumptions of the standards-based approach is that expert-designed standards, imposed through tests, are the best way to achieve educational equity and, therefore, address the economic "crisis." Regardless of disparities in resources, this approach promises that equity can be achieved by making all schools accountable to "rigorous" and uniform standards and tests. Other proposals, such as a fairer distribution of resources (Kozol 1991) and smaller schools, have taken a back seat to standards-based efforts.

The standards-based movement is not simply based on particular assumptions about how to work towards educational equity. As Meier (2000, 5) points out, "It rests on deep assumptions about the goals of education and the proper exercise of authority in the making of decision — assumptions we ought to reject in favor of a different vision of a healthy democratic society." The current efforts leave little room for school communities to build the habits of mind and heart necessary for responsible, engaged, and active participation in a democratic society. With absence of democratic habits, we have little opportunity to work towards educational equity.

In the following dialogue, Deborah Meier and I explore some of the misguided assumptions imbedded in the current standards-based reform efforts. We also explore the importance of trust in building the types of school communities where students learn best and find more opportunities to be successful. Throughout our dialogue, we explore the pervasive nature of social class in American schooling and the complicated relationships among social class, trust, and standardization.

Adam: In your book *In Schools We Trust* (2002), you talk about the importance of trust in creating school communities where students learn best. In my research of schools with affluent students, I discovered there is a good amount of trust in affluent students. One of the schools where I conducted research is a public school in an affluent community in the Midwest. This school, like other public schools in the state, is held accountable for a certain percentage of students passing state-mandated tests. If they do not meet the state's expectations then they are sanctioned in ways that affect funding, local control, and the employment of school officials. Because almost all of their students pass these tests and have for several years, there is a tremendous sense of trust in the community. The teachers and other school officials trust students and give them a lot of freedom. The students and their families trust that the school is providing them with a solid, good education. This trust in the school community overshadows the pressures of state mandates.

Schools that have predominantly rich students can treat testing as a game and continue doing their own thing.

This is a very different response to high-stakes mandates than what I've observed at schools with less affluent students who traditionally have not met standards. The work teachers and students do in these schools are dictated by a laundry list of "things to master," which severely limits students' daily learning experiences and displaces more meaningful and creative curricula. The ever-present pressure of reform mandates, and the sanctions and rewards that come with these mandates, doesn't allow opportunities for trust.

Deborah: Schools that have predominantly rich students can treat testing as a game and continue doing their own thing. They're going to do well on those tests and the schools know that, and their families know that. They can direct their attention elsewhere. It is the schools that have poor kids that feel the pressure of high-stakes standards. The learning that occurs typically in these schools is even more characterized by mindless drills and exercises in order to better prepare them for these tests.

I've been reading and hearing a lot more lately about social class and schooling. A guy named David Rusk was on NPR, I think a Chautauqua Lecture, on the increasing isolation of the poor; even as race has improved a little, class divisions have grown, and with it the indisputable connection between class isolation and doing poorly in school. Going more deeply in the connection I ran across stuff about a group called The Fourth World Movement. It's been

around a while and is focused on the essentials of why people of poverty suffer so badly from schooling. It looks worldwide at the issue and examines the different cultural assumptions that make the poor literally invisible to themselves and their teachers.

Adam: I'm somewhat familiar with some of the international projects of The Fourth World Movement. They have published some really good case studies exploring solidarity (or what they call "partnerships") with the poor in ending the human suffering that results from poverty. What I like about this group, the little I know of it, is that they approach solutions to poverty in a radical way. They don't just do charity, but try to identify and then change the causes of poverty.

Deborah: Most reform work in education assumes that the task is to fit the student for more or less the existing system of schooling. The Fourth World Movement, like many of us in the forefront of school reform 30-40 years ago, poses the issue differently.

Trust assumes that at heart we accept each other, for whom and what we are. Someone is not trustworthy in my eyes if I know they see me as serving their, not my own, purposes, and that the person I am they see as fundamentally needing to be changed. Of course, trust has many different meanings — including just being "reliable" — I can trust that if I say "x" you will hit me! Or if I buy "y," it will work the way you said it would. Or, in school terms, that I (the parent) can trust that what you say is happening at school really is happening and that your data are accurate. But trustful relationships, which are at the root of education, require something beyond this (or perhaps it's an altogether different sense of the word), and that is that I trust that you are looking out for me, you're my ally, and that you do so with respect for who I truly am. The trust we need to build in school allows for taking risks, not always being "sure," trying out new things that may not work at all, and feeling safe trying on different roles and personas.

We're not a very trusting nation, toward rich or poor. We've gone from healthy skepticism to distrust in a short time. But to add to that, most teachers have not had the background to knowledgeably make sense of and respect poor people. They may feel genuine compassion, but rarely genuine empathy. If we know poor people, it's those who have found a way out of it, not those who are still in it. The strategies that worked for those who made it out of poverty, who are the exceptions in this county, are, by their very nature, exceptional — not useful for the group as a whole. For the "class" as a whole, we need ways of thinking about schooling that provide continuity and visibility between the home community and the school community, between what it means to be well-educated and what it means to be poor. I think we are living in a time which is less and less able or willing to tackle this issue. The slogan, for example, that "all children can learn" is in many subtle ways insulting. Of course they can, and they did it to a remarkable degree before they ever entered the schoolhouse. What is at stake is whether all children can learn in schools the way they currently exist.

The trust we need to build in school allows for taking risks, not always being "sure," trying out new things that may not work at all, and feeling safe trying on different roles and personas.

Adam: I agree with you that we haven't usefully tackled the correlation between class and schooling. bell hooks in one of her books, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (2000), talks about the absence of dialogue about class. She argues that the notion that everyone has equal chances to get ahead in life reinforces the idea of the United States as a classless society. Although there is a general recognition that people occupy different class positions, the prevailing belief is that these class positions are not fixed. Anyone who works hard enough can realize the American Dream.

This is the same sentiment we hear in the current educational reform efforts, and especially with slogans like "leave no child behind." If all students are held to the same standards, then they have equal opportunity to get ahead in life. This mystified rhetoric about equal opportunity steers us away from the

root causes of educational inequity between the affluent and poor, such as funding. The same folks who support standardization fight vigorously to maintain a system of school funding where schools with affluent students spend two to three times the amount per student than schools with poor students. "They need to be accountable for the same standards as my child, but I'll be damned if I'm going to take the money I pay in taxes for school funding and share it with them so they can reach those standards."

I think this one-size-fits-all approach also misses the point of what it means to be educated in a democracy by respecting the cultural differences of local communities. I think back to my own experiences growing up in poverty. I entered seventh grade unable to read or write beyond the standard first grade ability. Does this mean that my school didn't offer a similar curriculum as schools with affluent students? No. The problem for me was that they did approach education the same way. I found no relevance in school because it was a place so drastically different than my life outside school. Fortunately, this changed with a teacher who became a mentor for me and helped bridge the cultural gap between school and my life. It wasn't higher standards that provided me more opportunities and enabled me to catch up, but the guidance and support of a teacher. That's why I find your understandings about trust so important in thinking about how we go about reforming schooling for all students. Trust recognizes the important contributions of individuals.

About a year ago, I visited an inner-city school in Cleveland. I was in the hallway between classes talking with an administrator. Over the PA system, I hear the command "lock down." The administrator pulled me in her office and explained lock down is when all the doors to classrooms and offices are closed and locked. The security guards go through the entire school and gather the students who are in the hallway. My immediate response to this was that this is what they do in prisons. The school had police officers scattered throughout the building and almost at every entrance. The students had no freedom to wander about and were closely monitored. They were sending some pretty powerful messages about what they were preparing their students for. I just couldn't believe it. Then at the rich schools where I conducted my research I observed students being treated very differently. They were not being closely monitored nor restricted. The school trusted the students with freedom, flexibility, and respect. The conditions of schooling for the poor and affluent are so drastically different. I think a sound proposal for education reform makes an effort to change these conditions. But, in a nation where folks don't trust each other very easily, how do we implement such a proposal?

Deborah: In some ways it isn't simply that "the schooling" is so different — although it usually is — but the way it is experienced, perceived, rewarded is so different. There's a book I'm reading at the moment called *School Kids/Street Kids* (2002) by Nilda Flores-Gonzalez. It's about urban Latino adolescents in Chicago, but her thoughts about what it is that makes so many of them disidentify with school cut across urban/rural and race/class. Of course, the question of whether there can be such a thing as one model of a school — a standard for all — needs exploration. In subtle ways the kind of relationships that develop between kids, families, and teacher makes the same school literally a different place.

Adam: You make an important distinction between how students are schooled and how students experience and understand this schooling. The difference in education between the affluent and poor doesn't primarily lie in the way they are schooled, but instead how drastically different the poor and affluent experience education. The prominent educational reform efforts haven't addressed either issue in a critical way. For one, how we in our nation organize, structure, and provide schooling for students goes unchallenged. It's taken for granted that the only way to provide quality education to all is improve the *current* system of schooling — not to look seriously at alternatives. The belief is that this improvement will lead to better educational experiences for all students.

Deborah: They're looking for quick fixes that take the resources and attention away from where they need to be for the types of reforms that are necessary for most students. Quick fixes don't bring about significant changes.

Adam: Absolutely, the standards-based efforts don't really propose a change in America's schools; rather, they demand that those who have tradition-

ally failed in this system become more like those who have academically achieved. And we know from the mounds of research on the correlation between social class and academic achievement that affluent students do better in school than poor students. Affluent students' records of academic success have led many educational researchers and writers to conclude that their schools have better teachers, provide the necessary conditions for students to learn, and provide an overall better education. The current reform efforts are guided by the belief that if poor students were educated more like the affluent than they would academically achieve. The notion of a "standard school" corresponds culturally and socially with the affluent.

Deborah: On that last point, we imagine that schooling is schooling — for better or worse. But the word *schooling* covers very different institutions, experiences that barely have any connection to each other. I was visiting at a progressive private boarding school, Buxton, and realized what a different meaning "school" had for these kids.

No, I don't actually think the current effort is to educate the poor like we do the affluent. That would in itself not work, as I've already suggested, but it would work a lot better than what we now do. No school for poor kids — especially no school for all poor kids — bears any resemblance to the schools for the affluent, including the big shopping mall high schools for the rich. The affluent are treated differently, have different course content, are expected to have opinions, are assumed to be the social equals of the staff (if not above them), are not assumed to need socializing and civilizing, nor filling with rote facts; although that too plays a part in their education, it is far, far from the whole thing. No one worries in suburban schools about boys wearing hats! And since the well-off shine at so many academic tasks from the moment they arrive at school, they are responded to entirely differently. The very affluent, who send their kids to private schools, are generally in settings that — when we find them in public schools — we call progressive: Seminars in which kids sit around a table with their teacher, labs that last an hour or more, libraries that are well used for research, frequent conferences with teachers and mentors, art rooms and music and all kinds of clubs. Math classes are also more like math labs, with teachers working with small numbers and coaching them through their work.

I first decided that at the very least I would create a school like the private school I had attended in New York City. But I then realized that even in my private school, the school kicked out lower achievers by high school since it was more traditional as it reached higher grades, although never in the sense that we mean it in public schools. We never sat in rows; we never were expected to be quiet for long; we had to write a lot and our work was gone over one-by-one by our teachers; and our relationship with our teachers assumed, as I noted above, an equality that is rarely present in schools for lower income kids (white or black), a kind of easy camaraderie. This camaraderie is probably also exists in more middle class and affluent public schools — especially if they are small — and between the adults and students in the honors and AP classes. But even in those private schools I knew as a child, we never broke with the tradition that some students were failures and some were successes, and thus a format for teaching and learning developed around rank order.

So I'm suggesting that when our nation organized schools for the "masses," we built them on the basis of a different model. The affluent retained much of the earlier elite academy model. The poor need the latter, but they need curricula and pedagogies that carry this style even further, that allow *everyone* to succeed, to be "in."

Such schools would do well for the affluent as well: more exposure to authentic experiences, more apprentice-like relationships with interesting adults, more respect for their own ideas and ways of expressing themselves. The Met in Rhode Island (Dennis Littkey and others) takes this to the extreme (See Levine, Peters, and Sizer 2001), which is why I think it works so well for poor kids. But it also works for rich kids and academically able kids.

Rich or poor also suffer in big public schools from the "peer-pack" impact. For kids from poverty the impact is more anti-academic, but for both it is largely socially questionable, resulting as it does on an estrangement from adults and real world issues and concerns.

Adam: I agree that the actual point of the standardization movement isn't to educate poor students the same as the affluent. But the argument I was making is that this is what they say is the point and what makes people support standardization. Their response to the well-known and broadly accepted correlation between social class and academic achievement is to make schools with students who traditionally have failed (the poor and students of color) more like schools with students who have achieved (the affluent and mostly white).

Creating schools where poor students can academically thrive isn't achieved in this way, especially when it means structuring the educational process around standards that local school communities don't have a say in developing. Without the input of local communities, how can we provide learning experiences that support the talents, strengths, weaknesses, and voices of students? As you have maintained over the years, I don't think we can. We work towards educational equity not in an attempt to make schooling the same for all children, but by creating schools that make sense to local communities. We need progressive approaches to education like the ones you mentioned.

Deborah: The current effort is not to make the schools more alike for rich and poor, but the curriculum and the assessments. There's a big difference. The argument is that by standardizing what is taught and how it is measured we are providing equity of input and can thus compare equity of outcomes. They have not looked at such variables as funding, class size, relationships between people, style of teaching, and said "so that's how the rich do it, let's do it that way for the poor." Even with our own biological kids, we don't get equal results by treating them all as though they were alike. We do right by them only when we take into account their differences.

Adam: I understand what you're saying about what standardization promises; it promises to fill the gap and make sure the poor are better educated. But at the same time, it doesn't promise that poor students will have all the resources — in the broadest sense — that are available to affluent students. I think it's important for us to pay attention to what the current efforts are *not* proposing to change in their claim to work towards educational equity. We have to really find out what this likeness to wealthy schools really means, and what it addresses and doesn't address.

I also agree that we need to create the necessary educational conditions where, as Eleanor Duckworth put it, we allow children to have wonderful ideas. The "bunch o' facts" model of the current reform efforts severely limits students' daily learning experiences and displaces more meaningful and creative curricula. To improve the education for all students, we need a reform proposal that reflects what we know about learning and teaching. We know more about how students learn best than what's reflected in standards-based efforts.

We work towards educational equity not in an attempt to make schooling the same for all children, but by creating schools that make sense to local communities.

On the issue of school size, what significantly contributed to the trust at the affluent schools that were a part of my research was their small size. They knew each other well enough that they were able to trust each other. Although I think other things contributed to their trust in each other, the smallness of the school community made it possible for them to develop the types of relationships necessary for trust. To return to your point about the privileged educational experiences of the affluent, small class sizes and school communities are often only for the affluent. All four affluent schools I studied are small and give students individualized attention only possible in a small school. Your work with Central Park East and Mission Hill School demonstrates disadvantaged students also can have the educational benefits that come with smallness; schools just need to be organized in a way that makes smallness possible.

Deborah: I suspect there is a pretty close connection between class size and social class, except for the fact that rural communities — a lot of them poor — have a disproportionate number of small

schools. Of course, even in large schools the more privileged kids belong to small schools within the school, as I noted in *In Schools We Trust* (2002); they belong to a sub-school known well by the school's staff, and particularly cherished by the faculty of AP and honors classes, extra-curricular clubs, student government, and so on.

Adam: We need to organize schools in ways that provide all students these opportunities to form essential relationships with their teachers and other students. These opportunities shouldn't remain available, more often than not, only to the most advantaged. We can imagine others ways that schools can be organized; we just have to make it a priority.

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Character Education in a Consuming Society

The Insights of Albert Schweitzer

Suzanne S. Hudd

As schools develop character education programs, they should heed Schweitzer's insight that materialism must be replaced by inward reflection and idealistic action.

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In the U.S. we seem to have reached a cultural consensus that some kind of moral education must be taught in our schools (McClellan 1999, 104). Over the last few years, schools in 48 states have introduced programs in character education (Howard et al. 2004). Public support for school-based character education is at its highest level since the 1950s (McClellan 1999). The federal government authorized nearly $25 million for character education in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Character education is taught using both direct and indirect methods (Benninga 1991). Direct character education occurs when students receive classroom instruction in a specific set of values or virtues that are conveyed through readings and other academic exercises. A well-known example of this approach is Character Counts (2005), which offers curricular materials, posters, and various types of educational aids that can be purchased through the website to facilitate instruction related to "six pillars" of character: respect, caring, responsibility, trustworthiness, citizenship, and fairness.

Indirect methods of character education are not focused on specific values. Instead, the discussion is open-ended and general, often through the resolution of moral dilemmas. Likewise, values are transmitted indirectly through service learning and volunteerism (McClellan 1999; Damon 2002) in which community experience is coupled with classroom instruction and, in some cases, civic education. Across all these direct and indirect approaches, character education is intended to support moral development that occurs primarily at home, rather than to supplant it. Character educators stress the impor-

tance of engaging parents and community leaders as partners to ensure successful character development (Berkowitz and Bier 2004).

Why are schools increasingly becoming involved in character education? An often-cited survey of 12,000 high school students conducted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (2002) suggests that children are more likely to steal, cheat, shoplift, and lie to their teacher and parents than they were only a decade ago. While more recent survey data indicates that there has been a decline in such behaviors, the percentage of students who engage in these activities is still seen as a cause for concern (Josephson Institute for Ethics 2004). Character educators contend that we are experiencing a national "crisis of character" that necessitates the inclusion of formalized curricula in character in public schools. Among the trends they identify are rising youth violence, growing disrespect for parents, teachers and authority figures, the deterioration of language and increased levels of "self-destructive" behavior such as premature sexual activity, substance abuse and suicide (Likona 1996; Josephson Institute for Ethics 2002).

In a previous article (Hudd 2005), I expressed concern that our tendency to move toward formal, rational systems of character education may bring us to an era of McMorals: character education that is guided by the principles of efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. While character educators consistently emphasize the complexity of character development, we are a culture that favors simple solutions for even our most difficult problems. As character education emerges from the hidden curriculum to become a federally funded agenda item, I fear we may become increasingly concerned with creating character through rational processes with demonstrable results.

More recently, however, I have come to realize that the phenomenon of *consumerism* presents perhaps an even greater deterrent to developing character than our tendency to strive for efficient ways to instill it. Efforts to nurture true character, which implies inner strength and the capacity for commitment, are contrary to our culture's consumer orientation, where advertising, visible trappings, and popular trends take precedence. In *Man for Himself,* Erich Fromm (1947) differentiates productive character, which has potential for creativity and relatedness, from nonproductive, marketing orientations of character in which the self is neglected and relationships necessarily become superficial. What we think and feel is determined by the marketplace rather than the self. We are "alone, afraid to fail, eager to please (1947, 75)." Consumerism has brought us to a place where true character is harder to evoke because our responses are increasingly guided by external, rather than internal cues.

In this essay, I will consider whether the philosophical work of Albert Schweitzer offers unique insights that may guide educators in these difficult circumstances. My interest in applying Schweitzer's work to the field of character education has evolved primarily from my personal experience with the Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University. Last year, I spent a week with a group of eleven Quinnipiac University undergraduates in Nicaragua on an alternative spring break trip sponsored by the Schweitzer Institute. Our goal for the week-long visit was to construct an additional classroom at a small, impoverished elementary school in a rural area. During the course of the week, I had the opportunity to observe many of Schweitzer's ideals in action in the behavior of the Quinnipiac students I accompanied, and I found myself wondering how each of these talented young people had come to realize the value of personal sacrifice much like Schweitzer himself. In all honesty, my reflections began primarily as a parent — that is, I wondered how I might inspire my own children (who accompanied me on this trip) to practice the same volunteerism and selflessness exemplified by the Quinnipiac students. Can the work of Schweitzer offer educators and parents sound advice for instilling these virtues? Can we make humanitarianism normative in a society that espouses materialism?

Speaking about his decision to go to Africa in *Out of My Life and Thought* (1933, 89), Schweitzer observed that "only a person who, thanks to his own efforts or the devotion of friends is free from material needs can nowadays take the risk of undertaking such a personal task." He wrote these words in 1933, when material "needs" were no doubt defined quite differently than they are today. My guess is that the students who I accompanied to Nicaragua did not

see themselves "free from material need," however they chose to define it. I understand this, having made a similar decision when I was about twenty, to spend a year teaching school in Central America. Seeing beyond one's immediate needs is never easy. It becomes even more difficult in a society where self-interest and materialism predominate.

Children today spend much of their time in a world where achievement and self-fulfillment are emphasized. Consumerism — having what you want, when you want it — is pervasive and it contributes substantially to the idea that personal concerns are paramount. Our reward systems, particularly within education, are oriented primarily to individual accomplishment, not humanitarianism. Thus, it seems contemporary character education programs that emphasize consideration of peer and community needs defy our cultural norms. Can we offer character education in such a way that it responsive to this contradiction? To answer this question, I will begin by providing an overview of the phenomenon of consumerism in our culture and its effect on children. I will then use the work of Albert Schweitzer to identify a series of possible strategies for creating character in an era of consumption.

The Consumer Culture

We live in a materialistic society in which many of us judge our worth, and the worth of others by visible traits, such as the labels we display. On average, Americans spend about $21,000 per year on consumer goods. While annual savings have essentially disappeared, consumer debt has tripled during the 1990s (Simon et al. 2002). In essence, consumption itself has become its own form of entertainment (Ritzer 2005). An advertisement in my local newspaper this past summer included a nearby mall among a list of cultural and historical "must see" attractions for tourists.

Contemporary consumerism is distinguished by the extent to which children and youth have been swept up in the movement. The pervasiveness of consumerism has affected both the behavior and beliefs of our young people. It has been estimated that children control as much as 80% of food purchase decisions and that by the age of 10 a child will typically visit stores nearly 270 times a year (Sutherland and Thompson 2003). What were defined as luxuries only a couple of decades ago are now perceived as expectations. In 1975, 38% of adults who were asked to identify the essential elements that comprise "the good life" indicated that having a lot of money was essential. By 1994, nearly 63% of survey respondents felt this way — a 25% increase. For about half of the items on this list, which includes commodities ranging from a home to really nice clothes, the greatest increases in those who consider them important to the "good life" were among 18- to 29-year olds (Anonymous 1996). "Young adults pursue a more materialistic version of the American dream … they are more likely than baby boomers to see money as the most important reason to work" (Crimmins, Easterlin, and Saito 1991, 24).

Schweitzer had strong views on the effects of materialism, which was an evolving trend in his lifetime. While he acknowledged that progress, as evidenced by materialism, is an essential element in modern civilization, he stressed the importance of coupling materialism within an ethical foundation. In *Civilization and Ethics* (1929, 2) he argued that

> Civilization which develops itself on the material, and not in a corresponding degree on the spiritual side, is like a ship with a defective steering gear, which becomes more unsteerable from moment to moment and so rushes on to catastrophe.

For our children, this "rush to catastrophe" has clearly begun. Schor's (2004) analysis of the effects of our consumer culture on children reveals that increased consumerism among children is associated with reduced levels of physical and psychological well-being. The phrase "corporate-constructed childhood" (Steinberg and Kincheloe 2004) suggests the extent to which our children's primary sources of influence have shifted. Schor (2004, 211) observes that "the prevalence of harmful and addictive products, the imperative to keep up and the growth of materialist attitudes are harming kids."

According to Schweitzer (1933), an imbalance between materialism and spirituality arises when organizations and corporations begin to control our thinking. The end result of this process is the loss of self-confidence and the inability to develop and follow one's own convictions.

> Corporate bodies do not look for their strength in ideas and in the values of the people for whom they are responsible. They try to achieve the greatest possible uniformity … in this way they hold the greatest power…. From every side in the most varied ways it is hammered into [man] that the truths and convictions he needs for life must [come] from the associations that have rights over him…. Over and over again convictions are forced upon him just as he is exposed in big cities to glaring neon signs of companies that are rich enough to install them and enjoin him at every step to give preference to one or another shoe polish or shoe mix. (Schweitzer 1933, 224)

The practices of contemporary marketers exemplify the trend Schweitzer adeptly describes. The process of creating brand loyalty (Schor 2004; Sutherland and Thompson 2003), for example, is, to a certain extent, a mechanism for controlling consumption in such a way that it is guided by associations (i.e., the label on the product rather than its taste or quality becomes the driving force behind the purchase). Marketing researchers have found that 90% of all requests from children are made with brand names, and that brand preferences develop as early as 20 months of age (Sutherland and Thompson 2003).

It has been argued that consumerism has altered human interaction and transformed our consciousness in many ways. Interactions that are centered around commodities can become depersonalized because they are often product- rather than person-centered (Ritzer 2005). As teachers, we can observe this phenomenon in our own classrooms. When our students are oriented to "consuming knowledge," they think less about the educational *process* and focus more on the *product*: What is my grade? Why must I take Latin when I'll never use it? More and more, throughout the various settings in which they find themselves, our young people are experiencing their lives every day as a series of "transactions." And so they ask: "What can I get from this experience," as opposed to "How can I make a difference?"

This tendency — to make choices guided by the associations they will yield — is perhaps best exemplified in the statistics on youth volunteerism. The number of youth pursuing volunteer experiences has risen to record levels. In 2004, nearly 29.4% of teenagers volunteered. A closer look at these statistics reveals an interesting trend, however; 36% of young people who intend to apply to college volunteer, while only 19% without plans to further their education do so (Child Trends Databank 2005). Thus, it seems that one important rationale for volunteering stems from the decision to further one's education. That is, for some teens, volunteerism comes to be seen as an essential prerequisite to creating yet another association: admission to college.

In a recent *New York Times* article, students offered various reasons for participating in short-term overseas volunteer programs that combine service and travel, including: self-development, maturity, the acquisition of language skills, going to exotic places, and learning how other people live (Steele 2005). Notably absent from this list are more altruistic goals such as sharing talents or helping those who are less fortunate. A parent who was interviewed for the article was quick to note: "They have to get out of their environment and reflect on those things that money doesn't buy. It's not their fault they come from Fairfield County." One of the young people observed: "While the school requires community service…. I'm doing it for myself too." Volunteerism, for some, seems to be focused on what it will offer the volunteer.

Schweitzer observed that "material dependence has an effect on [the] mind" such that we eventually believe we are not qualified to come to our own conclusions (Schweitzer 1933, 225). It is ironic that while we live in an era of vast consumer choices, our freedom of choice is increasingly constrained (Ritzer 2005). Rather than making conscious decisions framed around individual prerogatives or influenced by close acquaintances, what our young people choose is often defined by larger forces like marketing or consumer trends. The phrase "playing less and shopping more" (Schor 2004, 29), aptly summarizes the changing set of influences that frame our children's choices from the dinner table and neighborhood to the media and mall.

What does all of this have to do with character development? Character is frequently described by character educators as "what you do when no one is looking." (Berkowitz and Bier 2003). Consumerism

has created an environment in which we are *constantly* looking at one another; where all that matters is appearance. In comparison to other countries, American children are more likely to see clothes and brands as an important indicator of their social status — an indicator of who they are (Schor 2004). One rationale offered frequently by college students who cheat and violate academic integrity standards on our college campuses is "Everyone does it." It is no doubt our consumer culture has played an important role in their tendency to respond to external observations rather than their internal moral cues.

Heeding Schweitzer's Words

If our goal in implementing formalized character education is to provide children with the fundamental tools to make good choices, the words of Schweitzer suggest that there may be a better solution. Formalized character curricula, particularly when implemented with flashy posters and much fanfare, reflect the same consumerism that has brought our children to a place where character can be so difficult to nurture. Perhaps we can be more successful in promoting character if we take a less formal approach — one that emphasizes the notion that character is inherent *in* each of us, and that it will naturally emerge in a setting where it is valued. Some opportunities for creating such an environment in the context of Schweitzer's philosophy follow.

Provide Opportunities for Quiet Reflection

Contemporary America is dominated by an appreciation of what is visible. Appearances matter. Our pursuit of material satisfaction, however, leads us away from our internal lives, which, according to Schweitzer, play an important role in the development of life philosophy and character.

> We do not have enough inwardness, we are not sufficiently preoccupied with our own spiritual life, we lack quietness; and this is not only because in our exacting, busy existence it is difficult to obtain (Schweitzer 1939, 43).

If our classrooms are to become places of character, Schweitzer might argue that they must first become places where quiet reflection and inwardness are nurtured.

In academic subjects, we provide directed instruction through prescribed lesson plans designed to achieve a set of performance outcomes. Character need not be taught using this same model. Process matters. And process — *how* I choose to do something — is often at the crux of the most important character decisions I face. Character educators have acknowledged the importance of what is unspoken in the character curriculum.

> The habits of civil behavior can do much to bring safety to a school's halls. But the meanings of civil behavior are much tougher to present. They transcend one's immediate environment. One has to *grapple* with those meanings. If not, behavior is reduced to glib catchwords (Sizer and Sizer 1999, 23).

Schweitzer's "quietness" and the Sizers' "grappling" are related. That is, we cannot grapple without ample time and space to do so. Contemporary consumerism often defies these habits. As consumers, our children are trained to make quick, superficial choices. Thus, they are unfamiliar with the need for quiet reflection, and we will need to make a special effort to encourage it, and perhaps even teach them how to do it and to recognize its value. Character requires both reflection and action, and without both of these components, it will never fully evolve.

Teach Children to Value Intangible Outcomes

For Schweitzer, the expression of character is a give-and-take process. He advised young people to "impart as much as you can of your spiritual being to those who are on the road with you and accept as something precious what comes back to you from them" (Schweitzer 1931, 92). This statement holds appeal for our consumption-oriented society, for it suggests something is to be gained. However, the exchange Schweitzer has in mind doesn't really fit in our material world, where brand recognition and labels predominate. At its most basic level, teaching character is about teaching our children to have faith in the unseen; to recognize that long-term, positive outcomes sometimes require short-term sacrifice and that the results of one's effort are not always immediately visible. Helping others, for example, might not even result in a "Thank you," but

there is nevertheless a special feeling that comes from having made a difference.

Young people have been raised in an era characterized by material, short-term rewards. My own children have received everything from stickers, to lollipops, to trophies for engaging what I consider to be everyday activities not necessarily worthy of acclamation. How can they even learn to recognize intangibles when they are conditioned to believe that only what is observable matters? Direct character education offers us a starting point: it provides the labels (e.g., honesty, fairness) that our consumer culture has trained our children to value. What our children need more, however, is to be taught to recognize and value the feelings of inner worth that will arise when they wear these invisible labels.

Tolerate Restlessness

Character often evolves in fits and starts, and it sometimes arises when it is least expected. Schweitzer (1933, 88) tells us: "I often had to recognize that the need to 'do something special' was born of a restless spirit. Such people wanted to dedicate themselves to larger tasks because those that lay nearest to them did not satisfy them." A restless spirit poses something of a threat to society; the individual is restless because he or she is not satisfied with conventional goals, expectations, and opportunities. In our material culture, where conformity and convention rule — and where everyone seems always to be watching — restlessness is not readily tolerated. It is not tolerated because it compels us to examine what we take for granted. Must things *really* be the way they are, or are there alternatives? When we channel our restlessness into keeping up with the Joneses, we can avoid these larger questions. It is easier to consume more and more than to take time to reflect upon what is most valuable in life.

Schweitzer's endorsement of restlessness is counterintuitive for educators. So much of formalized character education is about producing and reproducing the "right" behavior that we have lost sight of the need to sometimes tolerate a bit of impatience in our students. Often those with a restless spirit will go against the grain — for example, objecting to an organizational rule that is unfairly biased. There is, of course, a fine balance between rebelliousness and self-indulgence. But if Schweitzer is right, restlessness is often the precondition to "doing something special." In tolerating restlessness, then, we are also promoting character development.

The Quinnipiac Experience

Among Schweitzer's insights, one had particular relevance for the Quinnipiac students during their time in Nicaragua: the appreciation of intangibles. During our last evening on campus before the trip, we packed up backpacks and duffle bags full of school supplies that had been donated for the school we would visit. Much of the conversation was focused on how useful these items would likely be for the students we would meet. As the bags were emptied, the Nicaraguan children were, in fact, quite grateful for the supplies they received. The Quinnipiac students, however, who received nothing material in return, left the school that day with much more. The value of intangibles was quite evident in this exchange. As one student described it, "While I was there, I realized I don't take time to sit back and enjoy life — it's not the American way. The people in Nicaragua may not have anything, but they have everything." This student had come to appreciate something immaterial — another way of being in the world.

Upon our return to the United States, the phrase "I got more than I gave," floated among the volunteers. I believe that here, too, they were referring to something intangible, the feeling of gratification that cannot be measured in any concrete way. In my mind, it was an awareness that emerged from quietness. Through many long, bumpy bus rides across the Nicaraguan countryside, and evenings spent socializing in the neighborhood, without their favorite television shows and other distractions, the Quinnipiac students had come to realize a different kind of satisfaction.

In my conversations with the members of my student delegation over the last few months, I have witnessed their efforts to go beyond their immediate, material culture. Two of the students have chosen to enter the Peace Corps. Others have expressed the need to spend time with the students who accompanied them or students who have had similar experiences "because they understand." The phrase "I got

more than I gave" is lost on a 19-year-old who is focused on consuming. There is nothing to be seen, no credit card receipt. It is unfortunate that these students had to "rise above" our materialistic culture in order to understand all of this. It would be preferable, if our cultural norms were oriented to the intangible rewards of service for service's sake.

Perhaps the most important message in Schweitzer's writing is his innate faith in humanity. Although we have cause to be concerned about consumerism and its potential effects on the evolving sense of character in our youth, character education affords us a great opportunity. Schweitzer (1933, 91) reminds us that

> Great values are lost at every moment because we miss opportunities, but the values that are turned into will and action constitute a richness that must not be undervalued. Our humanity is by no means as materialistic as people claim so complacently. Judging by what I have learned about men and women, I am convinced that far more idealistic aspiration exists than is ever evident. Just as the rivers we see are much less numerous than underground streams, so the idealism that is visible is minor compared to what men and women carry in their hearts, unreleased or scarcely released. Mankind is waiting and longing for those who can accomplish the task of untying what is knotted and bringing the underground waters to the surface.

Schweitzer's thoughts give us hope. However, the consumer society presents great obstacles. In our role as character educators, we must confront the norms of consumer culture in order to combat its effects.

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I Am a Holistic Educator, Not a Dancing Monkey

Andrew P. Johnson

To teach authentically is to teach from one's philosophy. To teach from *another's* philosophy is to become a dancing monkey.

I was on this teaching journey for a long time before I got to the place called holistic education. It's a wonderful place. However, now that I'm here, I recognize that few of my colleagues in higher education know exactly where "here" is. That is, they have no idea what holistic education is all about. This creates a sense of philosophical isolation that can be very frustrating. Few people understand why I feel as passionately as I do about certain issues, or why I found the Nation Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation process to be so invasive and unnecessary. In a world of Praxis exams, No Child Left Behind, standardized achievement tests, behavioral objectives, technical teaching, emotionless pedagogy, and standards-based education it often feels like a holistic philosophy and authentic teaching are not valued.

To teach authentically is to teach from one's philosophy. You align your actions with your values and your beliefs. However, as holistic teachers, we're sometimes asked to adopt philosophies to which we do not ascribe or to use methods that are not consistent with our philosophic framework. To teach from another's philosophy is to become a dancing monkey. I am not a dancing monkey. Dancing monkeys are not good for education. I'm writing this article to provide a sense of what holistic education is or might be and to examine how it could be used to bring education to a higher place. To begin, I will follow Miller (1996) and contrast holistic education to two dominant orientations in education today: transmission and transaction.

Teaching as Transmission

The transmission orientation views teaching as simply a matter of transmitting knowledge from Point A (teacher's head) to Point B (students' heads).

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Academic achievement is seen as students' ability to remember, replicate, or regurgitate this knowledge back to the teacher or to some other measuring agency or entity. (By the way, "remember", "replicate", and "regurgitate" are the new three "R's" of education under No Child Left Behind.) This is where I began my teaching journey back in 1983. I was a 2nd grade teacher at Greenwood Elementary School in River Falls, Wisconsin. Those were the heady days of Madeline Hunter and her direct instruction lesson plan model. I thought that if I would just follow the technical formula put forth by the good Dr. Hunter that all children would learn and life would be wonderful. I chanted the liturgy of behavioral objectives, anticipatory sets, input, modeling, guided practice, assessment, and closure.

Consistent with this orientation, public schools are seen as 13-year conveyer belts where all students march along in lock-step, while standardized parts are added at predetermined times. Standards become synonymous with standardization. While this is a very good model for creating Dodge Neon automobiles, it's not so good for developing caring, intelligent, self-actualized human beings. Sadly, this limited view is the one held by the general public as well as most decisionmakers in government. Education is seen as something you do to students instead of something students do. All learning is externally derived and evaluated. Teachers are measurers instead of educators. Standardized tests become a form a quality control to hold schools and teachers "accountable." And somewhere in the great beyond, George Orwell is saying, "I told you so!"

Teaching as Transaction

The transaction orientation views teaching to be a matter of creating situations where students are able to transact with the material to be learned in order to construct new knowledge. In a transaction both parties give as well as receive. Constructivism is an educational philosophy consistent with this view. Here, knowledge is not passively received; rather, it's actively built up or constructed by students as they connect their prior knowledge and past experiences with new information and skills (Santrock 2004).

Somewhere during my graduate work in the 90s, I embraced constructivism. I realized that teaching was not all about me and what I could do to manipulate my students to make them perform in ways that I wanted. Rather, real teaching was a matter of creating the conditions where my students were able to transact with new information to create knowledge. And if you allow students to truly transact with knowledge in constructivist fashion, you can't expect a predetermined conclusion.

Much to the dismay of the traditionalist who thought our university should be a Madeline Hunter factory or a Charlotte Danielson machine, I began to encourage preservice teachers in my courses to develop their own teaching style and to find their own teaching philosophy. I wanted them to be able to bring their authentic selves into their future classrooms. I didn't want them to be standardized products; instead, I asked them to adopt and adapt the pedagogical tools that worked best for them and to use the strategies that enabled them to create experiences in which all students are able to learn. I invited them to become intelligent decision makers, not simply teaching robots or wooden Pinocchio-teaching-manuals brought to life.

Teaching as Transformation

Constructivism was a necessary stop for me on my educational journey, but I eventually found it lacking. It was still very two-dimensional, addressing only the mental and physical aspects of those before me in a classroom. It didn't mesh with what I was learning about expanded views of intelligence and human consciousness (Harman and Rheingold 1984; Sisk and Torrance 2001; Wolman 2001), nor did it reflect the higher purposes of education to which I had begun to ascribe (Maslow 1971; Miller 2000; Palmer 1993). It also was not in harmony with my new notions about the nature of reality based on my understanding of quantum physics (Johnson 2005).

I thus moved to the transformation orientation, which is a holistic model. This orientation perceives teaching as creating conditions that have the potential for transforming the learner and the teacher on many different levels: intellectual, emotional, intuitive, spiritual, social, and psychological. Transformational teaching invites both students and teachers to discover their full potential as learners and as human beings. The ultimate transformational goal is to

become more nurturing human beings who are better able to perceive the interconnectedness of all human, plant, and animal life (Nava 2001). This reflects a consciousness-centered approach. Consciousness is what we are aware of, both internally and externally. We can transform our selves and ultimately the world around us by transforming consciousness. But how is this done?

The transformational view of teaching, which is the holistic model, incorporates the basic elements of constructivism and adds meaning, consciousness, and interconnectedness.

Consciousness is transformed by what we choose to give our attention to. The Buddhist mystic, Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) says we have both wholesome and unwholesome seeds within our store consciousness (like a store room). The wholesome seeds uplift and help us transform our suffering. These are traits such as humility, self-respect, non-craving, non-anger, concentration, diligence, equanimity, and non-violence. The unwholesome seeds are heavy and imprison us. These are traits such as anger, greed, hatred, ignorance, pride, and doubt. We have a choice in every situation as to which seeds receive our attention and thus, become watered. Thought precedes action, thus, the fourth step of the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, right action (good), is dependent on our attention (right-mindedness and contemplation). Focusing on internal states is an important part of helping us transform ourselves into beings that nurture the self, others, and the environment.

Holism or holistic education is the educational philosophy consistent with the transformative view. It centers on the principle of interconnectedness and seeks to integrate multiple levels of meaning and experience (Miller 1996). There are many philosophical and practical derivations of holism; however all hold that the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. That is, you cannot understand the whole by breaking it into parts for study. From this perspective, ultimate truth resides within each individual. Learning is said to have occurred when educational experiences elicit a transformation of consciousness that leads to a greater understanding of and care for self, others, and the community (world and local).

I had never heard of holistic education until early 2001 when I ran across John Miller's book, *Education and the Soul: Toward a Spiritual Curriculum* (2000). How was it possibly that I had completed five years of undergraduate education, two years of a Masters program, and five years of Ph.D. work without having been exposed to these ideas? It might be because higher education is still controlled (and I use that word purposely) primarily by those who consider behaviorism, cognitive psychology, and positivism to be the only paradigms from which to view reality. These academic gatekeepers, who claim to value objectivity in the pursuit of knowledge, reject without consideration those things that do not fit into their tightly held reductionist paradigm. But they are very subjective in their pursuit of objectivity as they select only certain types of data to examine and dismiss all others.

The Principle of Interconnectedness

A holistic education framework is based on the principle of interconnectedness. This means that curriculum and other educational experiences are used as vehicles to develop three kinds of connections: intrapersonal connections, interpersonal connections, and transpersonal connections.

Intrapersonal connections. Curriculum and other educational experiences are used to connect with and understand the central self. The central self is the part of you beyond the ego that some might call the soul. Intrapersonal connections can help students to understand themselves, solve problems, make decisions, and come to know the world using intuition and emotion in conjunction with knowledge and logic. For example, in coming to understand the Iraqi War, we would present the facts and the reasoning that lead us into the conflict, but we would also attend to emotions or what our feelings tells us about decisions or actions. Emotions would be used as a barometer to guide logical decision. Personal experiences of domination and conflict with other people would be explored to deepen our understanding.

Intrapersonal connections would be made by examining the warring and destruction parts within our selves. There would be an exploration of related themes in art, music, literature, movies, and popular culture. We would then use art to help us examine, and create art to help us express reoccurring patterns in the exosphere of universal and personal consciousness.

Interpersonal connections. Curriculum and other educational experiences are used to connect with and understand others. Interpersonal connections can help students develop social and other interpersonal skills with the goal of understanding and learning to live in relationship or harmony with others.

Transpersonal connections. Curriculum and other educational experiences are used to perceive and understand the world in terms of interrelated systems and interconnected experiences. This might take the form of global education where students see how their daily lives affect or connect with others around the world. This might also take the form of ecological education where students describe their impact on and relationship with the environment. Transpersonal connections invite students to be fully in relationship with themselves, others, and local and world communities and to see the interrelationship of all things.

Teacher Preparation Programs

The transformational view of teaching, which is the holistic model, incorporates the basic elements of constructivism and adds meaning, consciousness, and interconnectedness. When I began to apply the holistic model to my courses in our teacher preparation programs, they became places of both personal and professional growth. My goal was to invite preservice teachers to learn how to be and how to be in relationship with self, others, and the community. I asked them, *"Who are you? What do you value? What do you believe? What is your passion? What brings you joy? What does this experience mean to you? How do you like to learn? How will these qualities or questions manifest in your classrooms?"* I started trying to have more questions and fewer answers.

Similar to the transaction view of teaching, I still defined a general body of knowledge and a set of teaching skills for my courses; however, within this context I now invited pre-service teachers to use these to discover and develop both as professionals and as persons. We are human beings who happen to be teachers and learners; not teachers and learners who happen to be human beings. And what is it that makes us human? Among other things, it's our capacity to think reflectively, and to imagine, dream, create, intuit, emote, and wonder. It makes sense then that these very human dimensions be included in the very human act of teaching and learning. Sadly, because they can't be quantified and tested, they'll be left out of most curriculums and lesson plans.

To illustrate this, I include five activities in my classes: First, students draw a line down the center of their paper. On the left side they list or define who they are as a person. On the right side they list or define who they want to be as a teacher. They then make connections between these two sides and share in groups of four. I do this activity along with my students and also share in a small group, moving from my role as professor to fellow human being. Second, students find a metaphor in the text or lecture that describes them or something they are dealing with currently. These are also shared in small groups. Third, near the end of the semester students describe how they have changed as humans and as teachers. Fourth, students draw two large bubbles on a blank sheet of paper. A personal dream or future vision is written in one bubble and a professional dream or future vision is written in the other. Below each bubble students list three to five specific things they need to do to reach that dream or future vision. And finally, students describe what brings them joy. They are then asked to see how these things may be included or manifest within their future or present classrooms.

My goal as a holistic educator here at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is to help develop effective teachers. Effective teachers, from the holistic perspective are those who are able to utilize their authentic selves in all dimensions to create meaningful learning experiences for their students and to transform consciousness. I want our public schools as well as our teacher preparations programs to be places of inquiry where questions become just as important as answers. I want schools to be places of learning instead of places

of conforming. The primary role of teachers in these places would be to enable students to discover and embrace their central self and develop their interests and unique abilities to the greatest extent possible; in other words, to become self-actualized. Curricula in these magical transforming schools would be a means to this end, not an end in and of itself. Internal states (emotions, intuition, consciousness, ideals, and values), would be attended to. Authentic assessment would be widely used. Schools and teachers would be held accountable by assessing students' and teachers' movement toward personalized goals and by examining the extent to which students are engaged in meaningful learning experiences. Schools and teachers would also be held accountable by the degree to which they engage in teaching practices that research and their own experience have found to be effective.

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From Silence to Dissent

Fostering Critical Voice in Teachers

Alan Canestrari and Bruce Marlowe

In today's top-down school structures, new teachers need to develop capacities for critical reflection during pre-service training.

Despite their sense of expectation, enthusiasm, and energy, new teachers too often become assimilated into school cultures that are characterized by cynicism, resignation, and, ultimately, compliance. As Albert Shanker once famously remarked, it only takes about six weeks for new teachers to look like old ones. The reasons for this sad state of affairs are obviously complex, but we believe that such resignation is, at least in part, due to a lack of pre-service opportunity for potential teachers to think critically about the most salient characteristics of American public education.

Teacher preparation programs seem to cover every conceivable facet of teaching. However, in their breadth and their depoliticized, neutral stand on every question, they perpetuate what Tyack and Cuban (1995) refer to as the "grammar of schooling." That is, there is plenty of expository, rhetorical discourse describing the management of student behavior, methods of instruction, the construction of curricula, and the assessment of students. And, there is narrative too: for example, about what it is like to be a teacher. But there is virtually no critical discourse. As a result, the tone and level of student engagement with such programs rarely moves beyond the prosaic. Worse, when teacher preparation programs take a critical stance about current practices or provide examples of alternative models of teaching and learning, they do so in a way that invariably margin-

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alizes these approaches as radical, impractical, or, at the very least, controversial. In part, this framing of the critical stance as extreme occurs because teachers no longer set the agenda.

In fact, teachers today have lost almost all control over their work. Few are capable of standing up to state-mandated, top-down curricular and instructional mandates. They are tightly constrained by school districts seeking compliance and higher test scores. We need critically literate teachers capable of challenging the technocratic demands of state-mandated curricula. Preparing such teachers must begin at the *pre-service* level; otherwise new teachers will find themselves looking very much like the old ones, mindlessly going through the motions without question or reflection.

But even when new teachers know that the top-down system is wholly inadequate, they lack clear direction as to how to move purposefully in another direction, to ask questions and challenge assumptions. But what questions should teachers ask? What answers should teachers accept? We hope new teachers will consider asking whether their instruction promotes the status quo. New teachers need models of critical reflection (and even dissent) in order to help them develop their *own* critical questions, their *own* voice, by being given the opportunity to engage in serious conversations about learning and teaching in the context of increasing pressures for accountability and uniformity of instruction.

Serious discussions with our students about teaching and learning inevitably begin with what we have begun to call the "Yes, but …" question because this is how the conversation inevitably begins. That is, after introducing common sense — and research-based — notions about teaching and learning we frequently hear, for example,

- Yes, but … won't I have to teach to the test if the district demands that scores on statewide assessments improve?
- Yes, but … what if the principal requires that all second grade classrooms work on math at 9:15, regardless of my kids' needs or interests on a particular day?
- Yes, but … what if the school district adopts basal readers and requires that we use them to the exclusion of other approaches and instructional activities?
- Yes, but … what if the schoolwide discipline policy requires that kids stay in for recess if they don't finish their homework?

On several occasions we have used these "Yes, but …" questions as a point of departure, and after simply asking what our students thought about all of this, we taped the discussion that ensued. The conversations are invariably thoughtful, reflective, and insightful, and the occasional debate — between students — addresses exactly the kinds of questions new teachers should be contemplating. These include the kinds of teacher decisions that rise to the level of moral imperatives, about how we got where we are, about whether teachers should even make decisions about curriculum, and about the role teachers can, and should, play in the shaping of broader educational policy and decision making.

Imagine how our schools might be different if in-service teachers engaged in regular discussions like the one below about whether the mandates they face are consistent with their view of what is in the best interest of their students.

> **Jane**: But, what do we do when we are asked to do something we know isn't right, or is contrary to what we've learned in some of our classes here? I just had a class in literacy where we talked about how research indicates that "Round Robin" reading is not best practice. And yet, the classroom I'm in now as a student teacher, that's all they do. It's the whole reading program.
>
> **Maya**: As a new person, as a first year teacher I wouldn't say anything. I mean you don't have any credibility. You're the new kid on the block and you have to go along at first.
>
> **Marlowe**: Will it be the same as a tenth year teacher? How long do you wait to do what you see as the right thing?
>
> **Ted**: One thing we can count on is that what's wrong today will be right tomorrow. School reforms come in waves.

Canestrari: So will you allow yourself to be swept in and out with the tide?

Kate: Yeah, but I agree with Maya. You want the job, right? You're not going to say, "See ya later," because, I mean, good luck finding another job. There aren't that many out there so you do have to swim with the tide.

Alex: Should you risk losing your job by raising questions? Don't you have a larger responsibility to your family? I mean what do we really know about teaching anyway? We're new. I agree with Maya too. We have to go along at first. After a while, maybe then you can say something. But, definitely not at first.

Marlowe: Is there a point at which you stop saying to yourself, "I'm just going to hold my tongue, and I'm not going to say a thing?" Okay, Jane mentioned round-robin reading. The stakes seem relatively low here. But, what about practices that you view as actually harmful? Is there a point at which you will respond to a principal's directive with "No, I won't do that"?

Ronald: I would. I would absolutely refuse if I thought morally or educationally something I was asked to do was wrong.

Kate: You need to be respectful though. Whether you agree or not, you are the rookie. So you can disagree I guess, but be tactful. Something like, "I know the test scores are down, and I realize that you want more seat time to help my students prepare for the tests, but I'm thinking about doing it a little differently. I've looked into the research…." Something like that, where you go into the discussion with the principal with a knowledge base, with some preparation. Then, maybe he will give a little bit too.

Sally: Isn't there a happy medium here where you can do something of yours and also what the curriculum might dictate? Just so that it's not completely one way or the other. You get to do some of what you want, what you know is right, what will work with kids, and you do some of what they want too.

Ronald: So, it's ok to do the harmful stuff, as long as you do the good stuff too?

Sally: Yeah, well, I mean … to some extent, maybe. No, I guess I wouldn't do the bad stuff. That doesn't make sense. I'm thinking there is stuff that needs to be taught that addresses the standards, but I guess actually, no, I won't do it if it's wrong.

We liken this evolving conversation to "spinning plates." As students formulate their positions and develop their own insights they are forced to consider the ideas of others through this dialectical exchange, thereby positioning another "plate" to be spun, another thought that must be considered. It is this emerging complexity that allows insights to move towards solutions. Notice how the following excerpt concerning teaching-to-the-test evolves with increasing clarity.

Jane: As a student teacher, I'm going to be in a predicament next semester. I'm going into a fourth grade class and I've already been told that we will be making a final push to prepare students for statewide assessments in the spring. Here, in our program, we're all told that we're not supposed to teach to the test, but I mean, my cooperating teacher couldn't have made it any clearer to me.

Canestrari: Testing has become a yearly event. The results are published in the paper and the schools are ranked from low to high performing. Do you have to pay attention to these results, or should you simply teach the way you know is best for your students?

Ryan: Well, again, as a beginning teacher, if I'm told that it's imperative that we do better on the tests, I would highly recommend that you teach more to the test. But, obviously, I mean you could maintain your teaching and still address the test issue.

Jane: Do I drop social studies? Science? My cooperating teacher didn't say specifically, "We're going to drop science," but there's no doubt in my mind that's what she meant when she said, "We need to prepare the students for the test."

> What would I do? I mean, under those circumstances, can you teach the way you want to or do you have to follow some district-wide strategy for test preparation?
>
> **Ronald**: If we teach the right way won't students be prepared for the test anyway?
>
> **Kate**: No. If there's a state-wide assessment in 5th grade in mathematics, and your job is to prepare students to do well on this test, what do you have to give up to do that? I agree that you can do lots of things the right way that will help them in math, but even if you do everything well to teach them math, but drop the rest of the curriculum to prepare for the math test, are you serving your students well?

Although not always sure of why these conversations are important, all of the students, as you will see in the exchange below, are certain that such conversations are a critical part of teacher education, and perhaps more importantly, should be part and parcel of the on-going professional development of in-service teachers as well. In fact, students are so certain of the importance of these conversations that once given the opportunity it is like the opening of the flood gates.

> **Megan**: Isn't this what it's really about, carefully listening to and analyzing each other's views? I mean do real teachers do this? Do they ever really get to reflect on their practice, or do they just go through the motions?
>
> **Ted**: I know I'm only beginning my student teaching, but I don't see this happening in my school. Is this what faculty meetings are like?
>
> **Ryan**: I've been a long-term substitute for a whole semester and I've never been in a faculty meeting where there was a conversation like this. And I don't get it. Shouldn't teachers be engaged in this kind of discussion? Isn't this what should happen in a faculty meeting?

This exchange, and many more like it, underscores the perceived importance — even urgency — of addressing the "Yes, but…" question. The taped transcripts reveal not only deep student reflection about weighty educational issues, but also important insights. Further, there is clearly an evolution in thinking unfolding here that underscores the value of engaging teachers in the kind of dialectical process advocated in the past by notable educators like Dewey (1938) and today by a whole host of critical theorists (e.g., Giroux 1985; Zeichner 1983).

Our students also came to some important conclusions about how deliberate attempts at creating a chorus of teachers' voices may be the profession's greatest hope for continuous renewal — a discussion that echoes an interview we conducted with Deborah Meier earlier last year. When asked, "Can teachers be effective in changing their conditions? Meier responded:

> Of course, once they learn to survive. The second strategy is to organize — join with others. It starts with being a good colleague in one's own schools. Not easy work. Another way is through teacher and staff organizations. The power of solidarity among working people is still, or once again, obviously vital.… Teacher unions also provide us with links to other organized working people. But, it's important to remember that it's not just joining with the teachers. For example, you may also be a parent. Don't hesitate to speak out in that role also…. Then, there's using your professional voice. I don't just mean your teacherly voice, but your broader professional voice. (Canestrari and Marlowe 2004, 214-215)

And, here is what our students had to say after a similar question.

> **Canestrari**: How do good teachers get heard when they have a different vision than the administration about what a classroom should look like?
>
> **Mike**: You are teaching a science kit lesson and you decide that it is going really well and so you ask the principal to sit in. Everybody is interactive, it's going great, learning is taking place or maybe someone else in the school is interested in a demonstration, and so you invite them in to the room.

Ronald: Or you teach together. Let's try something here and approach this unit all from the same standpoint, teaching across content areas.

Ryan: Teaming through integration is powerful. … building consensus, doing things even across grade levels by showing what really works.

Carissa: I think change requires one person first, and then you talk with someone else, and you have a partner and then it grows. Soon, collectively, you can make a push. At some point when districts will realize that it's come to the point where you have pockets of teachers yelling so loudly that you can't cover your ears up any more and even legislators, people dictating policy, administrators … they're going to have to start listening to what we know about good teaching.

As we probed further about how the "Yes, but…" conversation should be initiated, students expanded the focus of the discussion to larger questions about who should participate in such discussions and where they should occur. It was during this part of the conversation that many students realized for the first time that those above them face pressures too. We probed further, "Don't educational leaders have the most and best opportunities to engage in critical discourse?" Together, we came to some important conclusions. Like teachers, educational leaders can also cave in to internal and external pressures. These collapses are often exacerbated by hierarchical school cultures that have evolved into sorts of feudalistic protectorates where each layer of authority protects the layer below it; superintendents protect principals, principals protect teachers, in return for loyalty, compliance, and silence.

It also didn't take long for our students to see the very real ways in which the mandates they will soon face as teachers mirror those that we face as professors. This became abundantly clear as we pushed our students to reflect more deeply about exactly why they thought the discussion was so fruitful. Students were quick to point out that even at the post-secondary level mandatory assessment and grading policies often interfere with learning. As Schap has argued (in Kohn 1994) grading policies interfere with learning when teachers use them as a way to assess the extent to which students have complied with their *demands* as opposed to using grades as supportive feedback to help guide student learning, to inform instruction, and to help teachers understand whether or not their pedagogy is effective. Discussing this demand versus support model of grading was eye-opening for many students; while they expressed discomfort with many of their grading experiences, they had never before really reflected on how, and for what purposes, grades might be employed. Some expressed surprise, and relief, that our discussion was ungraded. Because after reflection, the number of instructional activities students identified in their program that were explicitly evaluated struck many as inconsistent with what professors were telling them about good teaching and learning for its own sake. The fact that this activity was not graded was unique, even liberating.

But, like our students who will soon be teachers, we too often have little say about whether to give grades. Similarly, as university professors in a teacher education program, we must worry about how our students will fare on standardized tests, as the state will make judgments about our program based on our students' performance. But assessment information based on standardized tests is often misleading and can be used to make dubious claims about how much students are actually learning or about the success of academic programs. It is for these reasons that we too perpetually face the "Yes, but…" question, a revelation for many students.

Canestrari: What's different about the conversation we're having now compared to discussions in other classes? What accounts for this very high level of engagement?

Steve: Look at the situation. Is this high risk or low risk? Are we getting graded? No, we're just having a conversation with no stakes attached and we're really learning the most in this kind of setting. Everyone wants to get involved. Remember what we read about the affective filter? [Laughter in class] To get back to the original question, yeah there is a place for this — we need this at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Look how everyone gets involved.

> **Ronald**: In this university setting where everything is graded, everything is assessed, how can you maintain this level of engagement given a threatening environment? I mean we're still in a classroom where every experience, every paper, every assignment is graded and analyzed and evaluated and then we have pre-evals, in-process evals, post-evals … I just realized something!!! This is why kids hate school. Because the energy, the enthusiasm for learning gets sucked right out of them with all the obsessive focus on assessment.
>
> **Carissa**: So you're really in the same position as we will soon be in as teachers. You have people above you telling you that you must give grades, as just one example. You don't really have a choice either.

The students that we engaged in conversation were junior and senior undergraduates and graduate masters degree students that were very close to their final field placements. Ironically, it is at the end of the program when they are closest to classrooms of their own, that our students become less secure as they reflect on the incongruity between what they are learning at the university and what they are seeing in public school classrooms. At a time when our students should be feeling more confident, more certain about the skills they have acquired, the dispositions they have adopted, they are instead feeling increasingly adrift; dissonance abounds. The "Yes, but…" question dominates their thinking and causes them to second guess their education and their good instincts.

Have we prepared our future teachers for the challenges that await them? Do our teacher education programs have enough emphasis on scholarship and tolerance for differing viewpoints? Have we engaged students in a way that allows them to think critically? Have we given them substantial preparation in articulating what's right in a way that either facilitates or causes others to rethink their classrooms? Have we prepared them in the art of resistance and dissent? Our suspicion is that we have not and our conviction is that these questions must frame teacher education.

But, perhaps, there is hope for those teachers who are prepared differently. Hope for those who have internalized Freire's (1970) desire for liberation in the form of "problem-posing education" or Giroux's (1985) insistence that teachers think of themselves as "transformative intellectuals" or even Postman and Weingartner's (1969) urging that teachers be vigilant "crap" detectors. Ohanian (2004) warns us that teachers must be educated rather than trained, that offering recipes leads only to the deskilling of teachers, that teaching practice be informed by philosophy and art and music rather than simply by experts "who promise the keys to classroom control and creative bulletin boards, along with 100 steps to reading success."

It was through the back and forth of our conversation, the student-to-student exchange, the horizontal communication between faculty and students where all participants were peers, that reminded us all of the importance and power of these kinds of discussions to inform teaching and learning.

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Camping Out

Charles Turner

A nature field trip may well be a good preparation for student growth, parental acceptance — and state tests.

Frances Luu had a problem. She couldn't think of what to write. Moreover, she just didn't feel like writing a poem about camping at Fort Funston. She wanted to tell her seatmate, Jenny, about something she had done on the weekend. It had been a hot weekend, and her parents had taken her and her younger sister Fannie to the local YMCA swimming pool to cool off. Frances wanted to talk about swimming. She loved swimming, and that was what was on her mind.

She struggled to start her work. She wrote her name on the paper. Then she began again to talk to Jenny. Mr. Turner, her teacher, came over to check on her progress several times. Finally, somewhat frustrated, he suggested, "Stop talking so much and write. This should be easy for you. You only have to write one poem before recess. That's in thirty minutes from now." Jenny too, tried to get Frances to stay on task, but Frances stubbornly continued to talk about swimming to anyone at her table who would listen.

The class had just returned the week before from an overnight campout at Fort Funston, a former Air Force installation, now the San Francisco school district's environmental science center, located at the beach in the extreme southwestern corner of the city. Mr. Turner had asked the students to write a short poem about their experience at the Fort in preparation for making a giant thank you banner, to be delivered to the science center staff. Making the thank you was a requirement for participating in the program, and Mr. Turner had a definite idea about how he wanted the children to proceed. First, they would write the poem as a warm-up exercise. Then, they would write a personal thank you to the naturalist who had been their group leader. All this was not to be finished in one day. They would only write the poems on this particular day. The poem exercise was

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simple really; all they had to do was write a three-line poem using the frame:

> Fort Funston is _____.
> And Fort Funston is _____.
> But Fort Funston is not _____.

It was not that Frances didn't enjoy or appreciate her experience at the science center. She had loved it. And she also had some understanding of what it had taken on the part of her teacher and her parents for her to have made the trip at all. Normally she was a girl who always tried to do her best work. It was just that at this time she had something else on her mind, swimming; and she wanted the whole world to know about it, even if she didn't finish by recess. The bell rang, signaling the start of the fifteen-minute morning recess. Everyone stood up to get into line except Frances, who remained at her seat with her paper that still had only her name on it.

The Journals

It had all started back in September. After another particularly hot weekend, Frances had written about going with her family to the YMCA pool:

> Dear Journal:
> Today is Monday September 15, 2004.
> Outside it is a sunny day.
> On the weekend I went to the YMCA to the pool to go swimming. It was so fun. Me and my sister, Fannie, got to splash and play and my dad played with us. But my mom did not want to get wet. After that we went to a place to eat rice and shrimp and chow fun. It was a great weekend but now I am back in school doing my work.
> Frances

Because this was an interactive journal, Mr. Turner wrote back:

> Dear Frances:
> I'm so glad you got to go out and do something fun and physical on the weekend. I love swimming too.
> Mr. Turner

Again, that week Frances wrote about swimming:

> I love swimming but I don't know how to swim. Maybe I will ask my parents to let me take swimming lessons.

Mr. Turner responded:

> I'm so happy you are interested in learning to swim. Swimming is such a great activity. I think it's much more fun than any video game and it's good for your body.

And again that week she wrote:

> I asked my mom to let me take swimming lessons and she said she would think about it.

Mr. Turner wrote:

> Maybe you could offer to do something to help out around the house to help your parents understand how much you want to learn to swim, something like sweep the floor or do the dishes?

Mr. Turner was pleased that Frances had taken such an interest in swimming. Just that week at the annual Back To School Night meeting he had explained to the parents how important physical activity was to the well-being of their children. He wanted them to understand the link between physical activity and academic success. This was difficult for some of them to accept. Most parents knew that their children needed physical outlets for their energy, but they put a much greater value on academic success.

In this working class, immigrant neighborhood, several extended family members commonly shared the living space, making it difficult to do much except sit on your bed and watch TV or play video games. There are playgrounds and parks in the neighborhood but for the most part the parents had time to use them only during the weekends or on their days off.

Mr. Turner told them that the students would have a daily twenty-minute physical education lesson, that this was mandated by the state as part of their educational program. He said he believed that this was one of the keys to their doing well academically. Certain students, particularly some boys, Mr. Turner said, could not concentrate and sit in their chairs to do work without a good P.E. program. He emphasized P.E. and thought this was one of the reasons his students always did well on the State Test given at the end of the year.

The parents listened respectfully. They were very interested in hearing about the State Test. Second grade is the first year in which the students have to take the State Test in California, in contrast to the rest of the country. Federal law, No Child Left Behind, requires the standardized testing begin at the third grade level, but California, insists that second graders also take the test. The parents wanted to know all

about this. Mr. Turner took time to carefully explain these things and answer all their questions. But he also wanted to talk about the other, untested, things, which he considered to be important components of a good year in second grade. P.E was one of those components.

Another was science, and that included informing the parents that he would be signing up to try to take the class on an overnight camping trip at the school district's Environmental Science Center at Fort Funston. He wanted them to begin to think about the trip. The trip was a great opportunity, the best science learning experience he could offer.

Frances didn't write about swimming again until after one weekend in October.

> Dear Journal:
> Today is Monday October 21, 2004.
> Outside it is a partly cloudy day.
> On the weekend we went swimming again at the YMCA pool. After that we went to Chucky Cheese. Swimming was fun but so were the games at Chucky Cheese. Then we went home and went to bed. I asked my mom again about taking swimming lessons and she said maybe after Fannie has her birthday in December.
> Frances

And in December she wrote:

> On Saturday it was Fannie's birthday. She's six now. We had a party and a cake and Fannie got some cool presents, she got a dress and a Hello Kitty notebook. She says she's going to write a journal in it like this one. I asked her if I could write back to her in her journal like we do at school but she said, no. Then she said, maybe.
> P.S. my mom said I still can't take swimming lessons. She thinks if I learn how to swim then I will want to swim more, then I will drown maybe. She says to stop asking her about it.

Mr. Turner wrote back:

> Dear Frances:
> I'm sorry your mom said you can't take swimming lessons. I think you should give your mom some time to think about swimming. I agree. Don't bug her. If you don't make her mad maybe she will see that learning to swim will really make you safer. Don't worry; I believe you will learn to swim.
> Mr. Turner

Fort Funston

In the meantime, in November Mr. Turner had participated in the lottery and won a camping reservation at Fort Funston. The date of the reservation was not the best possible date, however. They would be going Thursday the week after Spring Break, and the week before the start of the State Test. After consulting with the principal, Turner decided not to worry about the possible negative effect the camping trip might have on the student's performance on the test. Camping dates at Fort Funston were difficult to come by. He had gotten one of the last, less desirable dates, but he had gotten in. They would go camping.

Perhaps the trip would have a beneficial effect on the student's performance on the State Test. At least the students will not be spending their time fretting about the impending test, and maybe the camping experience would have the effect of energizing the students to do their best on the test. Maybe the self-confidence gained by having gone camping together would carry over into the test. The principal was supportive. He called the camping trip "the experience of a lifetime for some of the children."

The Fort Funston program was started in 1978 by Marcia Trouton. The program uses one barracks building of a former Air Force base, located in an area of sand dunes and cliffs just south of the San Francisco Zoo. At night in the camping area you can hear the gibbons and howler monkeys at the zoo. The program is run like a one-room school, with Marcia as the head teacher/principal, and up to five naturalist/teachers, who are hired by the school district as paraprofessionals. In the time that the program has existed it has enjoyed varying degrees of support from the district officials. At present, a time when funding is difficult to come by, Marcia often has to fight for money to run the program.

Now it was March and time for serious preparations for the trip. Mr. Turner met with the Fort Funston teachers to prepare the activities for the two days and one night trip. The children were already divided into work groups in the classroom and knew well how to cooperate and work together, using a system called Tribes, which emphasized mutual respect, positive language (no put-downs), attentive listening, and the right to say "pass" in certain situations when asked to share personal information. Mr.

Turner used Tribes rules in the classroom. Marcia Trouton is a well-known Tribes trainer and the Fort Funston program uses Tribes rules.

The problem of the moment was to convince the parents to allow a sufficient number of the children to participate. There were a couple of parents who gave their permission right away. The rest could not commit until the very last minute. Luckily the last week of March was Parent Conference Week so Mr. Turner at least had access to the parents.

When Frances and her parents came for their conference, Mr. Turner began by telling them all the great things Frances had been doing since the last time they had met. Frances squirmed in her chair and smiled. She was a truly excellent student and had come a long way, during the course of the year, in overcoming her natural shyness. Then he broached the topic of the camping trip. Frances' mom immediately said that Frances would not be going. Mr. Turner knew that for some parents, especially the parents of girls, it was almost inconceivable that their child would not be home after school each day. After all, Frances was only seven years old and had never spent the night away from home except with other family members.

Then Mr. Turner took another approach. He needed more parents to come on the trip. A requirement for participating was that each group was to have a ratio of one parent to each five students. At the time of that conference he had only one committed parent. He told Frances' mom that he understood her reluctance to let her daughter go away overnight. He said that if her main concern was for Frances' safety, she could come with Frances. And if she wanted to do that she could also bring her daughter, Fannie, with her on the trip. Siblings were welcome under such circumstances. And if he could secure a ride home that night for all of them it would not be necessary for Frances to spend the night. She could come just for the day. That way she could participate in all the wonderful science learning experiences. Frances' mom looked over at the dad, who had not said much during the conference. They exchanged a few words in Chinese, and then he said in English that they would think about it and give their answer by the end of the week. They all stood up and everyone shook hands and smiled. The conference had ended on a very positive note, Mr. Turner thought. He had already made an arrangement with another teacher and friend, Ms. Doris Tsang. Ms. Tsang would drive out to Fort Funston and give rides to students who might need them. And that's exactly what happened. Frances, Fannie, and her mother all came on the trip.

The trip itself went off like clockwork. The Fort Funston people always tell the classroom teachers to just get the students out there to them and then relax because they will take it from there. Except for the nighttime hours, all activities are run by the naturalists. All the planning and worrying, the buying of food and supplies, is over once the bus pulls up and the kids get out to meet the naturalists. The classroom teacher really can relax to a degree and let it happen.

The night before the trip had been rainy and cool, but that morning dawned bright and sunny. The forecast was for pleasant, warm weather for the next two days. What luck! The final group consisted of fifteen students and two parents, plus Mr. Turner and a student teacher, Ms. Kathy Abrahamson.

The opening circle activities consisted of icebreaker games and songs. The naturalists quickly memorized the students names as they handed out the special name tags the students were to wear for the first day. After that there was a puppet show in which they introduced the theme, chosen by Mr. Turner and the staff at their previous meeting. The theme was the interdependence of plants and animals in the Fort Funston environment. The puppet show portrayed various plants and animals and how they interact, use and benefit from each other, and how the students' being there might effect the environment, both positively and negatively. This included a discussion of the rules, such as how they were to deal with their trash, where to walk and not walk, etc. The naturalists were skilled at presenting the material and using the puppets to engage the kids in a discussion of the theme. They were all young, energetic adults and very attractive to the children, who quickly began to fall in love.

After the puppet show, it was on to putting up the tents. Like Fort Funston itself, with old and barely functioning plumbing and a not always functioning electrical system, the tents were WW II-issue pup

tents, with no floors and space for two students. This didn't matter to the students, many of whom had not seen a tent up close before. Of course they all planned to sleep outside in the tents that night. Mr. Turner promised to act as their bodyguard and occupy one of the tents himself. (Later, however, when night actually fell, one by one they would all opt to sleep inside the barracks, on the carpeted floor.

The Nature Hike

Next there was lunch and a brief break for the naturalists, followed by the nature hike. This three-hour hike was the main event of the two-day trip. It was during this activity that the idea of interdependence was explored. This was done mainly through games and activities like collecting and sorting. First the students were divided into three hiking groups based on the work groups they had named and used in the classroom. Each group was led by a naturalist and consisted of five students as well as a parent or one of the classroom teachers. It is the policy of the program that parents do not follow their own children in the same group. This proved to be a problem for Frances' mom. She really wanted to be with Frances and Fannie. After a brief consultation with the naturalists, Mr. Turner decided to let her go with her daughter.

The first activity for the group was identifying various plants that grow in the area, discussing whether or not these plants were native or introduced and trying to determine how they got there. The students used cards that had pictures of the plants. When they came upon a particular plant for which they held the card, they were to make a chirping, gecko noise to call everyone else over. Then they would all try to figure out if the plant was native or introduced, and what were its special properties or uses.

The coyote bush, a low growing grey-green shrub, was a native plant. The students thought it resembled a slinky, grey coyote. The ice plant, or Hottentot Fig, was a plant native to South Africa. It was introduced by the military in order to hold down the blowing sand dunes. If you broke off a leaf and touched it to your tongue, it had an astringent quality that made made it temporarily difficult to speak. It also had beautiful purple or yellow flowers. The Australian Tea Tree was spread all around the Pacific Basin, originally by Captain Cook, as a source of vitamin C. The children each picked three of its small leaves and crushed them with their fingers and added them to hot water in a vacuum bottle which the naturalist had brought in her backpack. Later in the hike, they would stop for a break and a snack of cut up fruits and veggies, which the parents had prepared. They would then use the "tea" they had made from these leaves for a tea ceremony.

By going on the trip, at least the students will not be spending their time fretting about the test, and maybe the camping experience would have the effect of energizing the students to do their best. Maybe the self-confidence gained by having gone camping together would carry over into the test.

They also found wild strawberries, which they immediately washed with water from their water bottles and ate. Every now and then the naturalist would point out various animal droppings. All this activity led to much discussion about how animals, people, and plants need and use each other.

As the afternoon sea breeze began to beat everyone down, the group sought a sheltered spot for their snack and tea ceremony. The students were tired. The fresh air and sunshine made Mr. Turner want to curl up and sleep, but the food and the short rest quickly revived the children. Now however, they wanted to dig. The warm sand of the dune where they were resting was an irresistible call to them to start digging. The naturalist saw this and let them go for a while, but as she had more on her agenda, at last she called them all together to play a game called Camouflage. In this game one person was the predator or the "it,", and everyone else was the prey and hid. If the "it" saw the hidden person, he would call them out. If the "it" could not find everyone, he hid

his eyes again and the prey had to find new hiding places, closer to the base. This went on until everyone was "caught."

Next they played a game based on the idea of echolocation, as practiced by bats. The person who was "it" was blindfolded. Then she would make a call and the others, who were hidden, would complete the call, giving away their hiding places. Frances immediately pointed out to the group that this game was much like the swimming game in which the blindfolded "it" called out, "Marco,", and the others responded by saying, "Polo."

The Night

Finally it was time to return to the center. The naturalists each got out one of the center's animal pets and the children sat in their small groups touching the corn snake, the turtle, the rabbit, the chinchilla, and the other animals maintained in cages at the center. Then it was time for closing circle and saying goodnight to the naturalists. By this time the students were completely attached to them and were sad to see them go. They assured the students they would return, bright and early, the next day, ready to resume the activities planned for them. They reminded them that the fun was not over for that day; the children would be cooking dinner with the parents and their teachers, making their "nests" to sleep in, going on a night hike, and making S'mores at the campfire — all before going to bed that night. Satisfied, the students settled into writing and drawing in their Fort Funston journals, helping to make dinner, and checking out the bones, shells, and objects in the "museum" area of the center.

After dinner Frances' mom decided it was getting too late for them to stay for the night hike and the campfire. Frances' protests were somewhat mollified by Ms. Abrahamson's offer to drive into the city and pick them up at the school the next morning. Frances looked hopefully at her mother who said, yes, they would like to return for the next day's activities. The original plan was for Frances to go only for the first day. Now, as she got into Ms. Tsang's car to go home she was all smiles, anticipating her return in the morning.

The night hike was short and sweet. Just as the sun was setting in the Pacific, they hiked to one of the ruins of the old World War II gun emplacements. As the kids played with their flashlights, Mr. Turner told them how huge eighteen-inch cannons had once been set up on this coast in anticipation of a Japanese invasion after Pearl Harbor. They were never fired and were melted down for scrap after the war. Then they returned to the center and made a campfire and cooked their S'mores. After that, they sang all the songs they knew and took turns telling jokes and stories.

Then it was time to go to bed, but they didn't want to. They didn't want the day to be over. There was plenty to do tomorrow, Mr. Turner assured them. They would need their rest to be ready for tomorrow's day at the beach. Reluctantly, they all marched inside washed their hands and faces, brushed their teeth, and prepared for bed. Finally, at about eleven, the last child had fallen asleep. Mr. Turner walked around the center, making sure everything was in place and then turned in. He didn't fall asleep right away; rather he laid there on his sleeping bag and thought over the events of the day, all the energy of all the people that had gone into making such a wonderful day. And to think: the Fort Funston staff does this this every week for twenty weeks, two different schools a week, one for Tuesday and another on Thursday!

Goodbye Fort Funston

The beach hike the next day was also very memorable. Frances, Fannie and Mrs. Luu had returned shortly after breakfast, in time to help with the center cleanup. At the beach they played various tag type games on a wide expanse of sand in front of the gently rolling Pacific surf. Usually the surf pounds this stretch of coast but on that day the Pacific lived up to its name. At one point a school of dolphins spent nearly an hour frolicking in the waves in front of the children. The naturalists all said they had never seen the beach so mellow. And everyone got to dig. This is what they really wanted to do. After some pleading, Mr. Turner allowed the children to bury him in the sand. Then they took turns burying each other.

When it came time to say the final goodbye, the children presented the Fort Funston staff with a large pickle jar, filled with coins and some bills, which they had collected over several weeks back at school. This

was in response to a request by the center staff for help in maintaining the center's animals. There were hugs all around and many teary eyes as everyone pilled into the bus for the return trip back to Tenderloin Community School. "This place is better than Disneyland", said Joey, a boy not easily impressed. All agreed Fort Funston, or Fort Fun, as they now called it, rocked.

The Test

On Monday, the week after going to Fort Funston, they all started the State Test. It would be two weeks before they were finished. Mr. Turner knew that since this was the first time these students had ever seen the test, they would begin with the attitude that it was kind of fun to take the test, that now they were big, like the upper grade students, doing big kid work. He hoped this spirit and carry-over good feeling the group had from going camping would serve them well during the coming days.

As they all filed into the room after the morning bell, the students who had gone on the trip were busy filling in the five students, who had not been able to go, on what had happened. The first day of the test is always relatively easy, just the practice test, which takes about an hour, including going over the answers at the end. Mr. Turner had a test-taking ritual that he always had the children do. It involved the poem, "I Can," by Mari Evans. "I can do anything, think anything, be anything I want to be," said the poem. This poem was to be taken home as part of the week's homework packet, and the students were to recite it upon rising each morning of the test. They also recited the poem as a class just before starting the test each day. Then they all yelled, "BEAT THE TEST, DON'T LET THE TEST BEAT YOU." To an uninformed onlooker this might have seemed extreme. Mr. Turner knew, however, that as the test days ground on this would help them to not become discouraged. At first they made jokes about the poem and the chant, saying that they were sure they could beat the test. But by the time they were finished with the practice test, two children had started to cry and say they hated the test. Most were upbeat at the end of the first day. All appreciated the special food treats Mr. Turner gave them upon finishing the test.

They followed the same procedure for the next two weeks. The poem and the chant to begin, followed by two hours of testing each morning, followed by food treats,such as goldfish crackers. All tried to do well, for as long as they could. They knew they had to answer every question, even if it meant guessing on some. For some, like Frances, the test was sometimes easy. Almost all, Frances included, were second language learners. Still, most were good students, and they had prepared well all year by doing their work and trying their best. It was the shear volume of the test that began to wear them down. In the reading comprehension section, for example, in one hour they were asked to read fifteen short, half-page to one or two page stories, and answer up to five questions on each one. Most tried to answer each question correctly, but some who could not read all the words began to just fill in the answer bubbles.

After the test, they did their daily journals. The rest of the day was spent doing more pleasant things like art, science, P.E., social studies, and music.

During journal writing time, on the fourth day of the test Frances wrote:

> Dear Journal:
> Today is Thursday April 14, 2005.
> Outside it is a sunny day.
> Today I beat the test up and down. Sometimes I think the test is too easy for me. After school I am going to the park with my sister and my dad. I want to go up and down the slide like beating the test. Then I hope my dad will take us to McDonald's for ice cream.
> Excuse me, I have to go back and kick some butt, but after the test I'll write something again. Bye for now.
> Frances

The Poem, The Thank You, The End

Frances Luu stood up from her desk. Mr. Turner walked over and looked down at her paper. She had written:

> Fort Funston is sand between your toes,
> Is breathing salty sea air,
> Is not cars honking, bottles rolling down the street.

"This is good," he said. "How come it took you so long?"

" I don't know, Frances answered. "It just did."

"There are still ten minutes left in the recess," Mr. Turner told her. "Hurry, go outside if you want."

Frances didn't hurry. Then she said, "OK, see you," and went outside.

The test was over. The school year was winding down. The students finished their thank you banner for the staff at Fort Funston. They had used the extra little photos, taken by the photographers on picture day. Each student had written a personal message to their naturalist on a piece of paper shaped in the form of a dialogue balloon pointing to his or her photo. Mr. Turner had delivered the banner and a two pound box of See's candy to the staff at the Fort.

On the last day of school Frances wrote in her journal:

> Dear Journal:
> Today is Friday June 10, 2005
> Outside it is a foggy day.
> During the vacation I am going to do I don't know what but it will be fun.
> I'm going to tell my mom I will wash dishes for a month, maybe six months if I can take swimming lessons. I'll talk to you later when I'm in third grade. Bye for now.
> Frances

Mr. Turner wrote back:

> Dear Frances
> Don't be mad at your mom if she continues to say, no. Remember, she let you go to Fort Funston. You are great. I still believe someday you will learn to swim. Believe it too.
> Mr. Turner

Then he handed back the journal notebook to her to take home for the summer.

"Here, this is yours now," he said.

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Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground

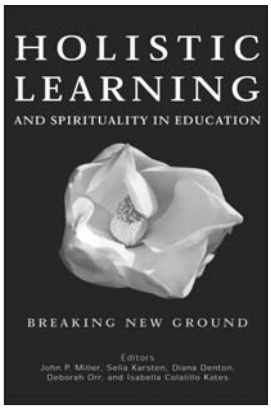
Edited by J. P. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr, and I. Colalillo Kates

Published by SUNY Press (Albany NY, 2005)

Reviewed by Andrea Merlino

Holistic educators often feel like voices in the wilderness; they struggle against the dominant forces of standardized testing and measurable cognitive outcomes and strive for more integrated approaches to education. They want to nurture students' (and teachers') mind, body, emotions, and spirit. This is why it is so important for these "orphan" educators, as F. Christopher Reynolds describes them in this volume, to gather together for support. One such gathering has been *Holistic Learning: Breaking New Ground*, an international conference sponsored by the Holistic and Aesthetic Education Graduate Focus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Begun in 1997, this bi-annual conference brings together educators and other interested people from around the globe, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom. In an effort to share their message and hopefully increase the ranks of holistic education advocates, editors John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, Diana Denton, Deborah Orr, and Isabella Colalillo Kates have compiled selected keynote speeches and workshop presentations from these conferences into one book, *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground*.

Twenty one writers, only some of whom are highlighted in this review, explore holistic education from a variety of perspectives. Their contributions are divided into three categories: theory, practice, and poetics. The book begins with Thomas Moore's description of education for the soul. It is a wonderful opening that emphasizes the value of poetics. As Moore notes, "soul-centered education would emphasize the many dimensions of poetic existence: poetry as such, literature and arts, a poetic reading of science and nature . . . and a generally imagistic approach to all human interactions" (p. 11). According to Moore, soul-oriented teachers need wisdom rather than information. They must think and speak in images, pay attention to beauty, nuance, and ritual, and focus on the unique individuals in their class.



Similarly, both Deborah Orr and Rachael Kessler focus on the nurturing of the soul in holistic learning. In her essay, "Minding the Soul in Education," Orr draws upon the writings of the 20th Century Western philosopher Wittgenstein and the 2nd Century Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna to describe some philosophical reasons why educators should embrace a nonreligious concept of the soul. She also suggests that mindfulness techniques such as meditation can increase awareness, personal growth, and interpersonal understanding. Like Orr, Kessler also emphasizes the need for educators to nourish students' souls and honor their spirits. However, Kessler approaches this conclusion not from a more philosophical perspective, as does Orr, but rather from her practical experience working with adolescents and young children. In her essay, "Nourishing Adolescents' Spirituality," Kessler describes her theory or "map" of adolescent spiritual development, which consists of seven interrelated spiritual yearnings or needs. By attending to these seven "gateways to the soul" the educator can enhance students' spiritual and personal development.

A holistic vision would require major changes in the current Western educational system, changes well-articulated by Douglas Sloan. Sloan takes issue with the current underlying educational image of the human as an animal to be socialized or a computer to be programmed. Instead, Sloan proposes an image of the whole human as body, soul, and spirit. He suggests that education should acknowledge the mind-body connection, nurture students' emotional development and expression through literature and the

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arts, and provide time for silence and outdoor experiences so that students' senses that have been dulled by overstimulation, neglect, and artificial environments can be healed.

Like Sloan, other contributors in Section Two offer practical examples of how education can embrace holistic practice. Gary Babiuk describes a staff-developed holistic model for school structure and organization that was implemented at a junior high school in Edson, Alberta. This model was developed in order to nurture committed and caring relationships among teachers and students. The school was organized into teams of three teachers and 70 students who remained together for three years. According to Babiuk, the benefits of this model included increased compassion, commitment, communication, and continuity. Marni Binder describes a storytelling project implemented at an elementary school in Toronto. This project was based on the belief that storytelling helps people create meaning and recognizes people's need to be recognized and honored. Additionally, storytelling helps students better understand themselves and others, thus creating a better sense of community and compassion. Binder tells about the personal and community transformations that occurred as a result of the project, including increased student self-confidence, teacher understanding, and community spirit.

In another chapter, Rina Cohen describes two journal-writing experiences used in mathematics education. The first is an activity she used in pre-service and in-service teacher training. The activity began with a guided visualization designed to elicit participants' mathematical autobiography — their experiences with math throughout their life and how these experiences might have affected their mathematics teaching. Cohen observes that the participants became more aware of their mathematical history and were able to develop a more positive attitude toward mathematics and teaching math.

Several other chapters discuss the role of meditation and reflection as a vehicle for self-knowledge and understanding. David Forbes describes his experience helping Brooklyn high school football players use meditation and discussion to improve their athletic ability and play in "the zone." Susan Schiller explains an activity in which participants contemplated the greatness that can be found in any place. She showed the participants photographs of a place and used contemplation, meditation, and poetry writing to elicit their sense of awareness of the wonder that can be found everywhere. Leslie Owen Wilson highlights the importance of using rituals and rites of passage as a way to make education more personal and meaningful to students, strengthen community, and honor students' accomplishments, transitions and growth. She describes one rite of passage program used at an alternative magnet high school in Wisconsin.

Finally, Atsuhiko Yoshida shares her experience bringing Waldorf education to schools in Japan. Yoshida outlines the relevant cultural differences between the Eastern and Western educational systems but then personalizes the discussion by describing a particularly enlightening experience in a calligraphy course at the Rudolf Steiner Center in Toronto. By connecting her experience of the oar strokes rowing on a river with the brush strokes of the Japanese word for river, she learned that words have a life in those who are writing them and have the power to transmit culture and spirit.

The final section of the book looks at holistic education from the perspective of poetry, images, metaphor and creativity. Two authors in this section emphasize the role of creativity as a way to awaken and nurture the soul in education. First, Ayako Nozawa suggests that art increases self-awareness and self-understanding, connects people to their deeper, more authentic selves and can be a form of meditation. She describes two workshop experiences that could also be used in the classroom. The first is designed to enhance the process of self-exploration and discovery by using relatively fast-paced art activities, and the second uses art and music to create a sacred, meditative space that helps participants connect to their deeper selves. Isabella Colalillo Kates also suggests that creativity nourishes the spirit and contributes to increased awareness. Reflection, solitude, contemplation, and visualization are all activities that cultivate insight and inspire creativity. She invites people to feel rather than analyze their experiences because feelings open people to intuition, insight and creativity. Creative experiences connect people to what she calls the "Inner Creator," the

source of wonder, exploration and discovery, and the source of the human spirit.

In the concluding chapter, John P. Miller highlights four themes that run through the book. The first is a critical perspective that Miller feels is important to the future of holistic education. Through this perspective holistic educators join their voices with those of antiracist educators, feminist educators and other critical theorists who champion initiatives that help transform education and society. The second theme is the importance of spirituality or soul in education. As Miller writes in the introduction, "perhaps the defining aspect of holistic education is the spiritual" (p. 2) for it is this element that separates holistic education from progressive and humanistic education. The third theme is embodiment, or the mind-body-spirit connection. This connection relates to the fourth theme, which is wholeness, the foundation of holistic education.

The editors have provided an eclectic mix of articles reflecting the various presentations that have been offered at the last four conferences. Therefore, reading this book is a bit like attending a virtual Holistic Learning Conference — there are some sessions that pique an interest or energize a quest for further knowledge and others that may spark just mild interest. Most of the chapters are relatively short and easy to read, so the reader can begin anywhere in the book and if that "session" doesn't spark any interest leave and join another. However, as with any collection of unique and disparate perspectives, it is sometimes difficult to find a theme or thread that connects the contributions. The reader can feel bounced around a bit from chapter to chapter. This is particularly true when the contributions come from four separate conferences, each with a unique theme.

At the same time, the book's division into parts sometimes seems a bit arbitrary. For example, several chapters in the section on theory also offer practical suggestions, while a section on practice also discusses theory. Chapters in the poetics section discuss both theory and practice. This is a rather trivial point, however, for the overlap might simply highlight the interconnected nature of holistic education.

In this book, leading voices provide thoughtful insights and analyses of various issues facing holistic learning and offer ways to help realize the vision of educational wholeness. Reading the book connects the reader with these voices and can help the educator working in any school anywhere in the world feel less like a lone voice and more like an orphan who has found a home.

A Divine Ecology

by Ian Mills

Published by FLF Press (Sarasota, FL, 2004)

and

Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism

by David M. Robinson

Published by Cornell U. Press (Ithaca, NY, 2004)

Reviewed by John Miller

An ecological perspective and holistic education are closely related; both see the elements of the world as deeply interconnected. In two recent books, Ian Mills and David Robinson elucidate this concept of interconnection in different and engaging ways.

Mills, an Australian educator who has taught at universities in his home country as well as the U.S. and China, lived the first part of his life in the Australian outback and later was a monk, filmmaker, and broadcaster. His book uses Dante's *Divine Comedy* as his framework, although he has changed the order of his journey; he begins with his vision of Paradiso, followed by Purgatoria and Inferno. Using this frame, Mills weaves together narrative, philosophy, and poetry to develop a vision of personal and global well-being.

Mills begins his book with Paradiso because he felt a deep sense of well-being as he was writing the book. This sense is characterized by a sense of freedom, openness, and contemplation and he uses poetry to describe his feeling:

> Light fades, dripping gold across
> The first flowers on the heather bushes;

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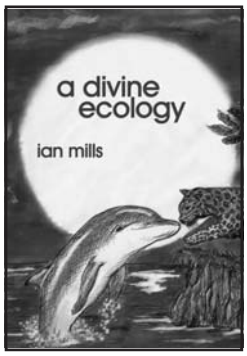
> I follow the sea in my heart
> Rising and falling;
> My shadow adheres to the trees
> Where birds whistle to each other my coming
> My going-my forever staying. (p. 7)

Central to Mills's sense of well-being is seeing himself in relationship, not as an isolated ego. He states:



> So Dante is making the same point as Spinoza, that I come to my self when I realize the inter-relatedness existing between my self and all of Life, all of Nature, Reality. I come to myself when I acquire, as Life has, an under-standing nature while "being-in the middle of. (p. 19)

How does one grasp this under-standing? It is through contemplation which is "aimed at embracing the entirety, the entire pattern of Nature" (p. 64). Mills does not limit his philosophic references to Spinoza; he also makes connections to Eastern thought particularly through Lao-tse and Rumi. References to these thinkers help ground the ideas that Mills presents, for he never lets the development of ideas proceed too far without reference to experience, particularly bodily, sensual experience. Again he uses poetry to describe the experience of interconnection.

> I feel here against my face, pulsing in my body
> the rhythm of the universe;
> we are one symphony and each our own melody:
> the boy cycling along the stony road,
> the woman puffing out the flickering candle
> the root feeling earth,
> the hawk diving on the field mouse,
> thoughts pining eternally. (pp. 162-163)

The theme of Mills's middle section, Purgatorio, is love. Again he begins this section with a Spinoza quotation "Desire is the very essence of man [woman]" and then follows this quote with more of his own narrative. He also links desire with gravity as he sees his "soul-presence is drawn to the flow of E.'s soul presence … as one stream, opening reciprocally to the flow of that Other, thus enhancing the strength of the current of each in their reaching out to an infinity of oceanic possibilities" (p. 227). So desire is not attaching oneself to a thing or object but "connecting a soul with all Soul, eternity, the continuous forceful flow of existence as the essence of all of Nature" (p. 227).

In Purgatorio Mills discusses the importance of being attentive to both internal and external realities. This attentiveness leads to empowerment and deep understanding. The empowerment and understanding arise through being with what is happening in the moment. In concluding the section on love, Mills suggests that love is the ultimate "external cause." We do not make love but it is "love that instigates the making, the co-creating, the remaking."

In the last section, the Inferno, the theme is loss. For Mills love inevitably involves loss because love is part of the flow of life which cannot be held onto. This is similar to the Buddhist concept of impermanence which suggests that all things are in a process of change. Suffering arises when we do not recognize this fact and try to cling to what is changing. Mills argues that an attitude of *being* is distinct from an attitude of *having*. Meditation is the process of where we can access being. At this point in the text Mills cites the Taoist Chuang Tzu (1996) to elaborate on these points.

> Just be empty.
> The perfect man's heart is like a mirror.
> It does not search after things.
> It does not look for things.
> It does not seek knowledge, just responds.
> As a result he can handle everything and it not harmed by anything. (p. 64)

Mills associates loss with autumn and the falling leaves, winter with that "between" space and spring with regeneration. Nature, then, is a guide to learning to live with loss and change. He writes: "I need to acquire a consciousness of being as Nature where "there is letting go" (p. 435). Mills confronts the pain of loss through patience which he feels leads to self-mastery.

The final loss is death, which Mills explores near the near the end of his book. He cites Montaigne at the beginning of the chapter on death: "to practice death is to practice freedom." This is an ancient idea from many spiritual traditions that we have many "little deaths" or losses throughout our lives that can

bring us back to our basic awareness and prepare us for the "big death."

In his last chapter on eternity, Mills makes extensive reference to the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and the idea of flow. Flow is the state of egolessness where we are in harmony with Nature and Humanity. Eternity is then the eternal now where we are fully present in what Mills calls the "neighbour moment." Here we experience communion with other beings through love.

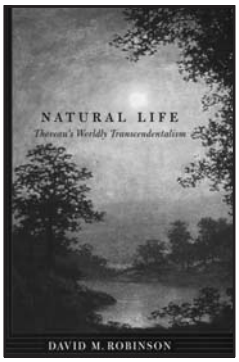
Mills's book resonated at many levels with this reader as I particularly enjoyed the interplay between the philosophy and the poetry. There is one critical feature missing in such a comprehensive book, an index. Despite this gap, the book as a whole is an education in itself and should be of interest to holistic educators as well as philosophers, ecologists, and anyone interested in a powerful alternative vision to our present consumer/capitalist world.

David Robinson's book is very important addition to the literature on Thoreau. Specifically, Robinson makes the case for Thoreau as a holistic thinker. He begins by pointing out that Thoreau thought our "inner life can be understood only as part of the larger life of nature" (p. 21). In his journal Thoreau wrote that the person who "stands stillest" will get to his/her goal first as he advocates a contemplative mode of being. One of the reasons that Thoreau could describe nature so beautifully is this contemplative quality. He (1906, 1:120) wrote:

> Pray what things at present interest me? A long soaking rain — the drops trickling down the stubble — while I lay drenched on a last year's bed of wild oats, by the side of some bare hill, ruminating. These things are of moment.

Robinson cites this passage as an example of Thoreau's fully realized presence in the natural world (p. 23). For Robinson, Thoreau does not just witness the rain; he is part of it. This contemplative approach to nature leads to a deep abiding joy. Thoreau wrote: "Surely joy is the condition of life" (2001, 22) and at one point he compares this human emotion to the production of buds and blossoms in nature.

I want to emphasize that Thoreau's methodology was participant observation. His approach was not a detached observation but seeing himself as connected to what he was observing. Thoreau saw nature as relational and dynamic. Thoreau wrote that "mystery of the life of plants is kindred with that of our own lives" (1906, 12:23). He was interested in how natural processes and seasonal cycles reflected artistic and creative impulses.



> Do you not feel the fruit of our spring & summer beginning to ripen, to harden its seed within you? Do not your thoughts begin to acquire consistency as well as flavor & ripeness? (1981, 8: 256)

Unlike his mentor Emerson, Thoreau's way of knowing relied heavily on the senses. He wrote that "We need for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a *purely* sensuous life" (1980, 382). He felt that people had lost their sense abilities and were "comparatively deaf and dumb and blind."

The goal of Thoreau's spiritual practice was to be "awake" and going to Walden Pond was part of this process. Walking or in nature or "sauntering" was central to this process as he used this experience to observe and be with nature. Robinson cites Thoreau to show how sauntering is a serious spiritual practice:

> We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return, prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again. If you have paid your debts and made your will, and settled your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk. (2001, 226)

Walking, then, is a transformative practice that requires commitment and preparation and can be both an act of discovery of both the natural world and our deeper self. Thoreau, then, is part of long spiritual

tradition of emptying ourselves of our daily concerns so that we can see everything afresh. America as he finds it "is nothing but work, work, work," and an obsession that is "opposed … to life itself" (1978, 156). Thoreau felt that we should nurture the inner life and not gives ourselves over completely to worldly affairs. He wrote:

> Shall the mind be a public arena, where the affairs of the street and the gossip of the tea-table chiefly are discussed? Or shall it be a quarter of heaven itself, an hypaethral temple, consecrated to the service of the gods?… It is important to preserve the mind's chastity in this respect. (1978, 171)

One of the central themes of Robinson's book is that as Thoreau matured he focused more and more on details but always within a larger holistic frame. Robinson argues that Thoreau was indebted to Emerson for the idea that "a particular fact can be known completely only as part of a much larger web of relations and interconnections" (p. 112). Robinson identifies Thoreau's perspectives as "holistic." In the last years of his life, Robinson believes, Thoreau was working on a "remarkable synthesis between philosophy, literature, and science in which a commitment to empirical observation and data gathering was the underpinning of a comprehensive theory of the process of nature's variation and development" (p. 177)

Robinson's book is a significant addition to the literature on Thoreau and he has clarified Thoreau's way of seeing and knowing. Thoreau focused on relationships and interconnections including his own relation to what he was observing. In short, he developed an epistemology which was far ahead of its time when positivism was the emerging paradigm for learning and knowing.

Both these books offer an inspiring vision: Mills through his unique of blend of philosophy, poetry and narrative and Robinson through his exploration of Thoreau's way of knowing. Robinson at the end of his book writes that "It is the greatest of many legacies that he [Thoreau] left his readers a message of affirmation of purpose, of self-discovery and self-acceptance" (p. 203). More than ever, our world torn by terror and fear, needs to hear this message.

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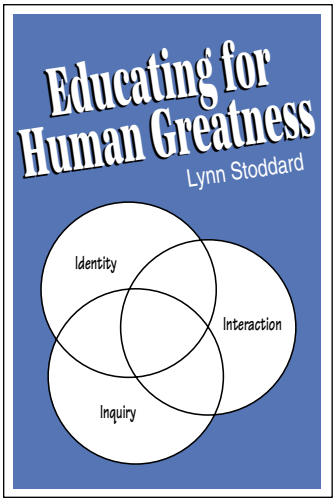

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