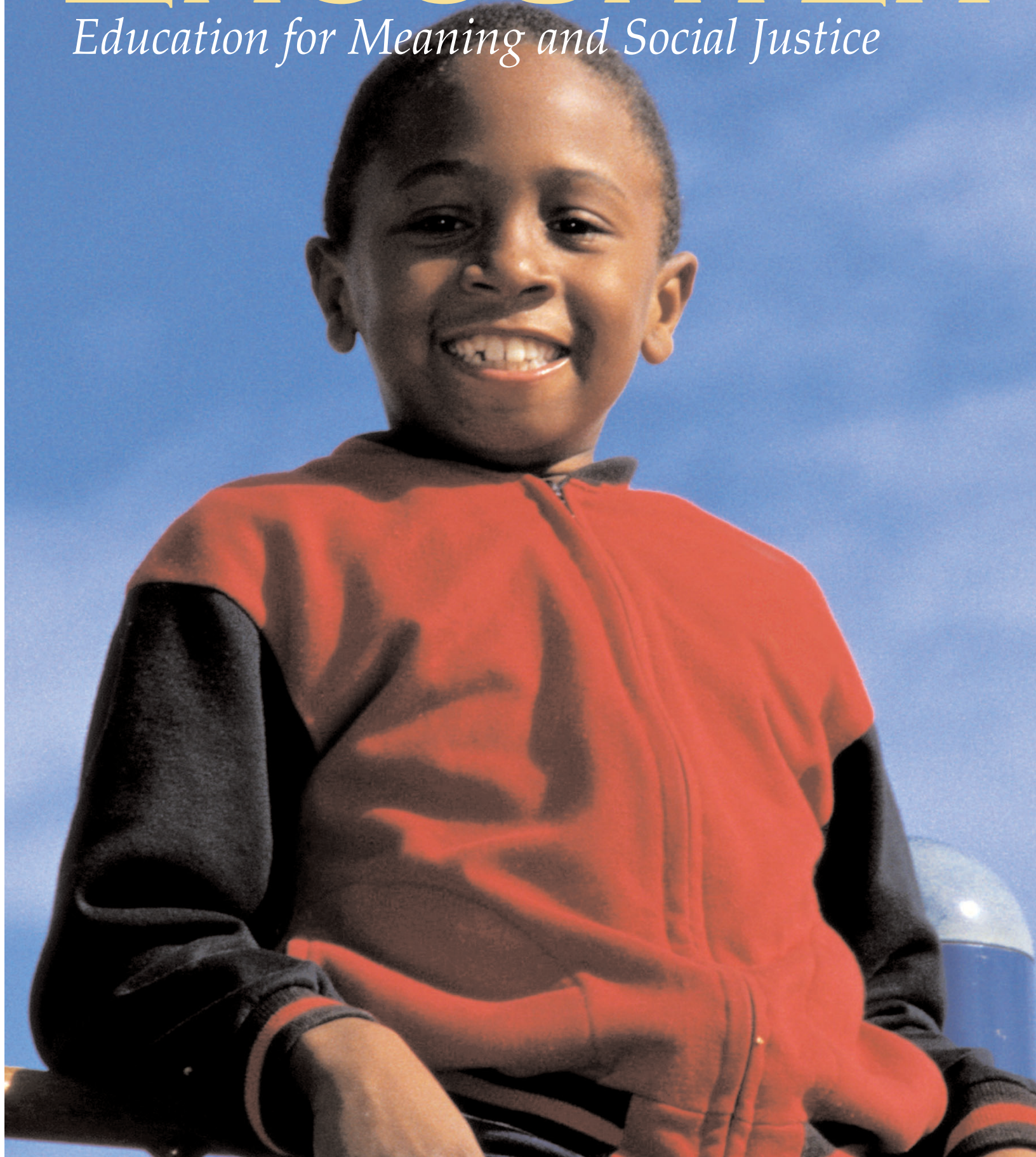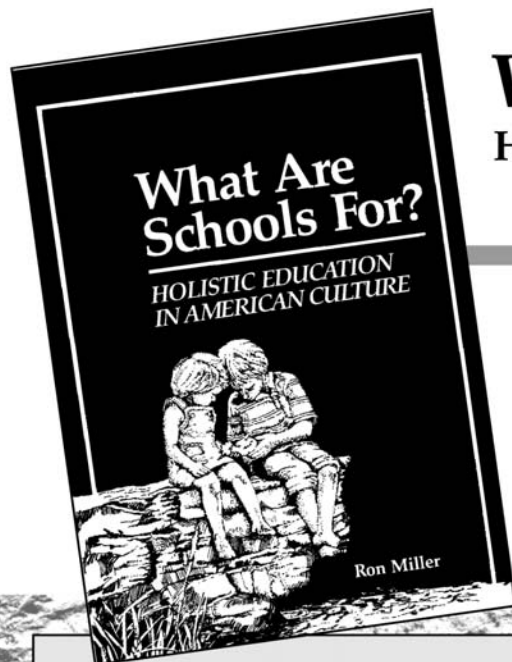# ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice

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Holistic Education in American Culture
by Ron Miller, Ph.D.

What Are Schools For? is a powerful exposition and critique of the historical context and cultural/philosophical foundations of contemporary mainstream American education. It focuses on the diverse group of person-centered educators of the past two centuries and explores their current relevance to the new challenges facing education in the post-industrial age.

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Testing

Every January, *Education Week* publishes an annual report, titled *Quality Counts*, which evaluates the progress of the standards and testing movement. The 2006 issue is special because it attempts a lengthier evaluation — from 1992 through 2005. Using test data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the lead article concludes that the test results "are at once heartening and sobering" (Olson, p. 9). The results are heartening because the nation's 4th and 8th grade scores have improved in math. However, the reading scores have barely budged since 1992. Overall, African American and Latino students have made progress, but they continue to lag far behind white students (p. 9).

This mixed review is notable because *Quality Counts* is pro-testing. The publication annually grades the nation's states, from "A" to "F," on the degree to which they have established standards and standardized tests. But as much as *Quality Counts* would like to maintain a positive outlook, there isn't a whole lot to be enthusiastic about. Indeed, if one turns to international comparisons, the U.S. still lags far behind many other nations — and not only at grades 4 and 8, but in high school as well (PR Newswire Association 2005).

The standards movement actually began before the 1990s. It emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Japan and West Germany challenged our nation's economic preeminence. To regain our edge, our political and corporate leaders called on our schools to do a much better job of producing a competitive workforce. In response, the states steadily raised academic standards and increasingly implemented standardized tests to measure students' progress. They also added high-stakes components to the tests. For example by the end of the 1980s, 21 states had made high school graduation or grade promotion contingent upon specific test scores (Firestone et al. 1992). Since then, most states have established more rigorous tests, and over half the states hold students back if they fail to meet cutoff scores on specified exams (Olson 2006, 85).

So the standards movement has had at a number of years to demonstrate its success. To the movement's advocates, the lackluster results to date must be disappointing. Nevertheless, most standards advocates urge the nation to stay the course. Many believe that better results will emerge when the get-tough No Child Left Behind law has time to work. This law, signed in January 2002, imposes sanctions on school districts that don't make yearly testing progress. The early results aren't particularly encouraging, but President Bush, who initiated the act, is pleased (Dillon 2005).

Quality Counts takes a more sober view. Although it obviously wants the standards movement to press on, the publication raises the possibility that additional tactics may be necessary. It questions whether it's sufficient to initiate reform from "on high," from government offices alone. Perhaps it is also necessary to address what goes on *inside* the schools (Olson 2006, 16).

Looking Inside

A very prominent condition inside the schools is fear. "Stressed. Scared. Nauseous. Sick" — these were some of the words 9- and 10-year-olds recently told a *New York Times* reporter when asked about an impending test (Herszenhorn 2006). Such anxiety is especially intense, of course, immediately before and during the actual days of testing. But according to the children, parents, and teachers I've talked with, the anxiety is present at some level all year. As long-time school consultant Sue Bastion (2000) says, children are "living anxiously every day in school, for fear that they won't do well, they'll have to go to summer school, they'll be left back."

To prepare children for the tests, schools are implementing testing at younger and younger ages,

and the effects on young children are often disturbing. A *Los Angeles Times* reporter described a 4-year-old boy who stared blankly at the test booklet because he hadn't yet learned to read. The boy looked desperately to his teacher for help, but the rules prevented the teacher from assisting him. "Keep going," was all she could tell him. Other children in the room cried and wet their paints out of frustration (Ragland 2001, cited in Kozol 2005, 114).

A second prominent emotion is boredom. Student boredom is, of course, nothing new. Generations of youngsters have been less than enthusiastic about school. But test prep drills and exercises are particularly tedious, and they now commonly take up a significant amount of the school year (Kozol 2005, 113; Bastion 2000). To make room for test-driven education, schools are cutting back on activities that children often enjoy, including the arts and gym. Many school districts have eliminated recess. Kindergarten, once a playful introduction to school, is now largely academic and includes homework. Preschools are following the same trend. One mother recently told me that her child hates his academic preschool, but the school staff said the instruction was necessary to prepare the children for the rigors of kindergarten.

The standards movement, then, is making school an increasingly miserable experience — and at very young ages. Jonathan Kozol (2005, 115) reports that the new term for introducing testing at an early age is "frontloading." "Short-term pain for long-term gain," is how the term was explained to him.

Now it's conceivable that "frontloading," together with the current emphasis on testing, will raise test scores. After all, if students take enough tests, they are bound to get better at them. Even so, strenuous objections are in order because of the way testing affects children's emotions.

Defending the Child's Emotional Life

First, there is an ethical consideration. We assume that we, as adults, have the right to pursue happiness, so what justification do we have to deny happiness to our children? Sure, we all want children to succeed in the future, but the child's present happiness is important in its own right. As Rousseau said,

it's a cruel education that sacrifices the child's present well-being for some far-off goal.

And even if we focus more narrowly, on effective educational practices, we need to pay careful attention to children's emotions. Although we tend to think of education as a purely intellectual process, this is a mistake. Real thinking involves curiosity, excitement, and passion. These emotions are the driving force behind the growth of the mind. When children become emotionally engaged in tasks, they think deeply and imaginatively, and their minds expand. But today's policy makers have turned schools into such boring and anxiety-ridden places that children's enthusiasm for learning is destroyed. Test scores may rise, but what is the benefit if children conclude that learning is an odious process?

Full Development

To child-centered educators, emotional attitudes are important for another reason. They indicate the kinds of experiences children need to develop fully. When children find tasks that enable them to develop their emerging powers, they take a keen interest in them and work on them with great energy and concentration. And, as Montessori (1967, 272-273) observed, afterward they seem to be happy and at peace, for they have been able to develop something vital within themselves.

In the early childhood years, from about the ages of 2 to 7, children reveal these emotions with respect to artistic activities, play, and the exploration of nature. They throw themselves into these activities and appear fulfilled by them. What's more, their achievements in these areas routinely blossom in breathtaking ways. For example, children go through a period, from about 5 to 7 years of age, when their drawings are fresh, lively, and beautifully organized. Great masters have said they try to recapture the artistic attitude of the young child. Similarly, young children create elaborate dramas in their make-believe play, and free time in natural settings fosters particularly rich dramas (Crain 2003). However, the standards movement, with its emphasis on early academics and testing, is crowding out these experiences. In the process, it is curtailing the child's full development.

After the age of 7 or so, children are better able to handle academic work, but they still think most ener-

getically when they are engaged in concrete activities or interacting with real people. For this reason, later elementary and middle school children work with great effort on creative projects and activities such as building things, producing newsletters, holding mock trials, gardening, drawing murals, writing plays, and conducting research projects. And, as Dewey (1966) emphasized, children can learn a considerable amount of academic material through such activities. They can learn mathematical concepts, for example, through the design of a bird house or a garden plot. And unlike the math in their textbooks and worksheets, children place a high value on math they use during these projects because it enables them to fulfill their creative impulses.

But such projects and activities take time, which today's testing environment sharply limits. Students might be engaged in lively and thoughtful discussions during a mock trial or deeply absorbed in a research study, but with high-stakes tests looming, the teacher will have say, "I'm sorry, we must stop now to prepare for the upcoming tests."

During the high school years, students' maturing cognitive capacities generally enable them to perform purely academic work. However, creative projects are still more engaging than textbooks and lectures. Social service projects also become particularly meaningful to teenagers.

Moreover, with their emerging capacities for abstract thought, their minds turn to philosophical concerns. They want to discuss the meaning of love, ethics, religion, and a better society. They also want to think about their personal identities and what they are cut out to do, their personal calling in life. But such reflection requires leisure time, and in today's high-pressured environment, leisure barely exists. Instead, young people feel they must concentrate on graduation tests, SATs, and, in many cases, high grades in advanced placement courses and extracurricular achievements that will score points with college admission committees. Adolescents lack the leisure they need to develop one of the strengths of this period, the contemplative mind.

Fighting Back

The standards movement, then, is stifling young people's enthusiasm for learning and full develop-

ment. Young people themselves perceive the narrowness of test-driven education, and some have engaged in protests. For instance, in May 2000, hundreds of Massachusetts high-school sophomores boycotted the state's new mandated tests. In 2003, 15-year-old Kimberly Marciniak boycotted the Texas statewide exam, and in 2005 11-year-old Macario Guajardo stayed out of school to protest the state's reading test. He said "the big deal" of the testing program was keeping kids "from expressing their imagination," adding that "We don't do any art. We don't get enough recess." "I don't think I'm brave," Macario said of his protest. "Any kid could do this. It does take a little bit of guts" (Blumenthal 2005).

As educators and child advocates, we can speak out against the tyranny of testing in a variety of settings, including meetings of faculty, PTA's, and school boards. We can write letters to newspaper editors and contact local public officials. In group settings, a parent or teacher who rises to speak up may initially feel alone, but it frequently happens that another person will express his or her agreement — and then there is a force of two, which can quickly grow.

At some point, those who speak up are usually asked, "Don't schools need to evaluate students' progress?" I agree, but I also have found it helpful to draw a distinction between the kind of testing that is diagnostically useful and the high-stakes testing we have today — the testing that narrows the curriculum and destroys students' enthusiasm for learning.

It also is also important to point out that testing is only one form of assessment. We need to give less weight to standardized tests and more weight to portfolios, samples of students' work, and teacher observations.

Finally, we should emphasize that assessment ought to assess much more than knowledge and skills. It should provide information on children's confidence, creativity, empathy, independent judgment, and love of learning. Such information is difficult to quantify, but it is central to those who wish to nurture the real strengths of the growing child.

— William Crain, Editor

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When Imaginary Companions Are Sources of Wisdom

Tobin Hart and Erin E. Zellars

Imaginary companions can provide an avenue for self-expression, emotional release, and exploration — and , in some cases, they offer profound comfort and counsel.

Childhood imaginary companions have been getting a new lease on life. Fresh understanding reveals that imaginary companions are quite common among children and most frequently represent a healthy expression of the child's imagination, but not all imaginary companions are created equal. Some are expressions of healthy fantasy play; others provide a means of "working through" issues; and still others may be a sign of pathology. In addition, credible descriptions of imaginary companions that are qualitatively distinct from these conventional accounts warrant a further look. These companions sometimes take the form of wise guides. The profound nature of the encounters with these companions suggests that we may need to expand our understanding of imaginary companions further still.

Following a brief review of contemporary literature, we will offer a note about imagination in general and then present several cases of companions as wise guides.

Research Findings

A commonly used definition of imaginary companions articulated by Svendsen (1934, 988) is "an invisible character, named and referred to in conversations with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child but no apparent objective basis." The imaginary companion may be entirely invisible or may take the form of a stuffed animal or doll.

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Several studies have estimated the prevalence of imaginary companions between about 12% and 31% (Bonne et al. 1999; Harter and Chao 1992; Manosevitz, Prentice, and Wilson 1973; Schaefer 1969). However, other estimates are higher. For example, a recent investigation found that 65% of children up to the age of 7 had an imaginary companion at some point in their lives (Taylor et al. 2004). In part, the figures depend on whether one counts stuffed dolls and stuffed animals as imaginary companions (Taylor 1999).

It has been previously thought that imaginary companions are specific to the preschool years, or at least prior to the age of seven. However, some research suggests that imaginary companions may exist, at least to some extent, throughout childhood and even later (Pearson et al. 2001; Prinsen and Hellendron 1989). Other common beliefs about imaginary companions are being challenged as well. Although some research had found that imaginary companions are a bit more common among girls (Taylor 1999), other research questions this conclusion (e.g., Taylor et al. 2004).

Children with imaginary companions do not appear to differ from other children on many measures, including family structure, education level of mother, styles of play and patterns of interaction with friends, involvement in myth, and involvement in music and stories (Bouldin and Pratt, 1999). Nor do children with imaginary companions differ from others with in their ability to differentiate reality from fantasy (Taylor, Cartwright, and Carlson 1993). Young children do not appear to mistake their imaginary companions for real beings (Taylor 1999).

Some researchers have associated the presence of imaginary companions with high levels of intelligence and creativity, while others have related it to social isolation and pathology. Seiffge-Krenke (1997) described these as "the deficit hypothesis" and "the gifted hypothesis." The deficit hypothesis implies that "children or adolescents who have deficits in social skills are especially prone to constructing an imaginary companion," while the gifted hypothesis postulates that "especially bright and creative children may invent fictitious characters" (Adamo 2004, 277). It seems that imaginary companions do not all serve the same function for every child: Not all companions are created equal.

The presence of an imaginative companion should not necessarily be considered a sign of emotional and psychological trouble. The invention of an imaginary companion is increasingly recognized as a normal part of childhood development (Taylor 1999). However, it appears common for young people with severe dissociative disorders to have imaginary companions as well. "Normal" children tend to have between one and three imaginary companions that are usually younger and smaller than the child or are close in age (Trujillo et al. 1996). They are often cute and toy-like with babyish names. Children with Dissociative Identity Disorder/Multiple Personality Disorder symptoms may have numerous characters that can have complex roles and responsibilities. The companions of these children may be of different ages and frequently have qualities of real people. These imaginary companions are often older, may be family members, and can be God-like or diabolical. Trujillo et al. (1996) also report that the companions of children with dissociative disorders are more likely to appear unbidden (having lives of their own and coming and going as they please). However, Taylor (1999) found that such independent agency of imaginary companions is also common among "normal" children. In addition, many accomplished fiction writers describe a sense of independent agency in the lives of their characters (Taylor, Hodges, and Kohanyi (2002/2003). That is, the writers perceive their characters as possessing an unfolding life of their own rather than being subject to the conscious direction of the author. In fact, the more accomplished writers (at least as judged by having been published) tended to more frequently ascribe independent agency to their characters. As we shall see, a sense of independent agency is described in the cases below.

Psychoanalysis traditionally speaks of imaginary companions in terms of incomplete ego development and providing the means through fantasy to cope with events, such as the birth of a child or the loss of a loved one (see Nagera 1969 for a summary). Companions may also provide the child opportunities to experiment with different roles or identifications, and to get in touch with parts of the personality that are not yet integrated fully into the self. The

writings of Assagioli (1976), Schwartz (1995), and others describe the psyche as a constellation of "parts" or "subpersonalities" rather than a singular ego. Companions in childhood may represent an externalized personification of an inner part or subpersonality. These may be integrated over time or may remain relatively distinct in the orchestra of self.

Real Imagination

Before going further, a word about imagination in general may be useful for understanding the importance of the inner world. Imagination is understood as a kind of self-generated fantasy or idea. This is generally considered as something other or opposed to that which is real. It represents the mind's natural capacity for creative thought and visualization. Of course, this is a powerful capacity, but one that has not often been encouraged in contemporary schooling or recognized for its value in domains very far outside of the arts. Imagination has often been dismissed as a distraction from the educational enterprise ("Pay attention; you're daydreaming again.") in favor of more "rational" or "real" concerns.

However, imagination is also recognized as a powerful resource for invention, creativity, and much more. For example, Einstein's work was essentially conducted as imagination. His "thought experiments," for example, in which he imagined himself riding on a beam of light, provided the vehicle for his insight and discovery. He considered this so significant that he claimed "imagination is more important than knowledge" (Viereck 1929, 17). Similarly Jonas Salk, creator of the polio vaccine, described his "secret" to deep understanding as what he called Inverted Perspective in which he imagined what it would be like to be a bacterium or a virus (Salk 1983). The use of imagination in discovery is described across disciplines. As mentioned earlier, fiction writers often experience their characters with such intensity that they believe their characters to have independent wills.

From physics to fiction, it is important to appreciate the role of imagination, especially at a time where a modernist-rationalist milieu still dominates the educational and developmental landscapes and relegates non-rational experiences like imagination and intuition to secondary significance, immaturity, or even a sign of pathology. As it did for Einstein, imagination builds a bridge between the known and the unknown; it enables us to ponder, play with, and generate new possibilities — to go beyond the information given, beyond the facts and the maps as they exist, in order to create new ways of seeing the world. Few human capacities may be more powerful for our evolution as a species.

The realm of imagination is also one of symbolic representation of a world that is very real, but not real in the same way as the computer on which this is written. Jung (1953, 5-8) helps clarify this point. Just because a realm lacks flesh and form that can be touched, this does not mean it is unreal. Instead, we might say it is "differently real." It as real as our hope for humanity or the love for a child.

Eleanor Roosevelt provides one example of the reality of her childhood imagination. Eleanor had a very "gray" and "unhappy" childhood. Both her parents, who were largely unavailable to her to begin with, died before she was nine. She was withdrawn, hostile, and isolated, yet she kept a fantasy alive that provided the clue to her purpose. She wrote, "I carried on a day-to-day story, which was the most real thing in my life" (Roosevelt 1960, 18). Eleanor's story involved her imagining that she was the mistress of her father's large household and a companion in his travels. Hillman (1996, 22) offers this interpretation:

> Their [her fantasies] caring and managerial content was purposeful preparation for the dutiful life she would later live. The fantasies were invented by her calling and were indeed more realistic in their orientation than her daily reality. Imagination acted as a teacher, giving instruction for the large ministering tasks of caring for the welfare of a complex family, of a crippled husband, of the state of New York as the Governor's wife, the United States as its first lady, and even of the United Nations. Her attending to "Father" was a preliminary praxis into which she could put her call, her huge devotion to the welfare of others.

The suggestion is that her calling was represented and kept alive until the days that she might move into her roles as an adult. We might ask for how many other children does imagination serve as this

seedbed for identity, creativity, calling, and meaning of the most profound order.

The Wisdom of Friends: Four Cases

A child's doll, in moments of absorbed play, becomes a baby treated with great care. A stuffed animal becomes a friend to cuddle and talk to in the midst of a tough day; an imaginary playmate allows us to try on various perspectives and roles; a childhood fantasy hints at our calling and provides an outlet for our creativity. In the face of an abusive childhood, perhaps the companions represent dissociated or fragmented parts that are trying to buffer and integrate a difficult life. But sometimes the imaginary companion may be something more than what we commonly recognize as imagination. At times, children and adults report an order of companions that appears qualitatively different from what we have described so far and is generally acknowledged in the literature. In our studies of childhood spiritual life (e.g., Hart 2003; Hart 2004a; Hart 2005) we have come across numerous accounts of what might be labeled guides, and even those that we might refer to as ghosts. This evidence pushes the edge of conventional psychological explanation, and while one may dismiss this as fantasy or interpretive naiveté, good science suggests that the qualitatively different nature of this material warrants further inspection.

In using case material and phenomenological description of private subjective experience, the validity of the material depends largely on the credibility and fidelity of the source — their ability to represent their inner experience with depth, clarity and accuracy. With this in mind, we have selected cases from individuals whom we have known personally over long periods of time (25, 10, 15, 6 years respectively) and who are emotionally balanced and psychologically mature. Where possible, we will emphasize the participants' own accounts of their experience and its distinction from more conventional imaginary companions, according to their own understanding of it. A pseudonym is used for each participant.

GiGi

Meg is a professional in her late 40s. She spontaneously offered this description one day when she learned of our research on the spiritual life of children.

Beginning around age five, I had a friend named GiGi. She would sit on the end of my bedpost in my bedroom. I remember her quite distinctly. She was like a spirit who watched over me much in the way that I watched over my dolls. I had no confusion that she was quite real; our interactions were very distinct from the kind of imaginary play that I had with toys and dolls. As a child I wondered where her name came from. It was so different from the names that I heard in my family and neighborhood. In sixth grade, I started taking French in school and it just clicked for me: I realized that my GiGi must have some French heritage. (Hart 2003, 36-37)

[Meg happens to have a talent for languages, especially French. Native speakers often remark that she speaks their particular dialect, whether from Montreal or Paris or some more remote region of France, with no trace of an accent.]

I didn't see her the way I saw my dolls, but I did see her in some inward way; I knew very clearly when she was there. We had this very special connection. A couple of years later, my life changed. I went through extremely difficult times — some abuse in my home — and I starting feeling just horrible about myself. During these dark days, GiGi would speak to me and comfort me. I never talked to my dolls for help or protection, but I knew I could talk and listen to GiGi and I'd feel better. She helped me to survive. Later in [Catholic] grammar school, we learned about patron saints, and I felt that my GiGi was kind of like this (Hart 2003, 36-37).

Meg found a way to open to her friend GiGi.

We had a small tile floor in a bathroom. It had those inch-square tiles with a pattern of black and white, but with other colors too, almost like a mosaic. I would be in the bathroom at times, and I would just fall into the pattern. I don't know exactly how to describe this, but I would begin to see 3-D layers of things superimposed on one another. I would be sitting there and she would be on my shoulder. As I focused on the floor, it was like going into a trance. During that

time and in those superimposed layers, I would understand things — things about the world and my life; I just "got it" intuitively. It felt like it came from some deep place within me.

I just knew that in order to stay safe, I needed to keep GiGi a secret. She started fading when I was about ten years old, when there was much more imposition of morality. I picked up what was okay to believe and what was not. It became unsafe to have this relationship, and so I started burying this. (Hart 2003, 37)

The original meaning of the word *genius* meant guardian spirit, and the ancients believed that everyone had at least one. Over time the notion of a genius has changed from everyone *having a genius*, to extraordinary poets in the Middle Ages, for example, as *having genius*, to the 20th century where an unusually talented individual might *be a genius.* The notion of self has become more self-contained. Perhaps there is some value and phenomenological accuracy in rehabilitating the original idea of genius.

Rather than getting caught up in an interpretive/explanatory conundrum about how ultimately "real" GiGi is or whether she represents a "higher self," a spiritual guide, or a fantasy creation, we can maintain an ontological neutrality, as William James (1950) suggested, and determine the legitimacy and value of these experiences based on the quality of the phenomenon, the information provided, and the impact this has on one's life. How we name them is not as important as the quality of their impact. In these and scores of cases, we have found a qualitative difference from conventional accounts. For some children imaginary companions provide a profound source wisdom, comfort and guidance. This may shed new light on children's innate capacities for wisdom.

Sanka

Jamie is a 20-year-old student on full scholarship at a premier university; I [T.H.] have known her since she was 11 years old. She is an extremely balanced and psychologically healthy individual with no history of mental illness. She offers a particularly cogent explanation of the difference of a guide-type experience and a more conventional imaginary companion.

The difference in the felt experience was that in the case of the imaginary friends there was a sense that I was leading it, creating the adventure or whatever was happening. It was akin to daydreaming. It didn't require any specific amount of focus or shifting focus. It's like the difference between talking and listening. Talking is similar to having an imaginary friend. In listening you're focusing your attention or tuning in and receiving what they have to say.

Notice the similarity to Meg's description of falling into a kind of trance and being the receiver of information. Note also that the trance-like phenomenon has been described in dissociative disorders.

Jamie goes on to describe her friends:

I had three boys who were my imaginary friends from about 5 to 8 years old. I directed our play. I never named them; they all followed my lead for the most part, or would end up doing so. I had a strong feeling of being a male as a young child. One day near the beginning of 3rd grade I finally accepted my life as a girl; I never played/imagined the imaginary boys after that time. They may have disappeared earlier than that; however, I don't remember exactly. In any case, retrospectively, it seems clear that I was identifying with these boys as a boy myself. In some way I think I was working through my issues on that front, providing the acceptance as a boy in my imaginary world that I didn't have in my life. We faced many struggles together. One setting for our play was a large mansion with lots of secret passageways where there lived a mean headmistress. The storyline involved overcoming challenges/obstacles. These friends disappeared really when I seemed to accept that I was a girl and would remain one.

On the other hand, from the age of approximately 8 on, I had a spirit guide in the form of a wolf who I communicated with on a regular basis. The quality of experience was entirely different. I *listened*. I connected with this being, who was unfailingly a positive presence. I met her originally at an Indian mound during a very brief ceremony. When I asked her name, She/he introduced herself to me as something like

Sanka (years later I learned Shunka in Hopi means wolf). Through the years I came to realize that she presented herself to me as a wolf, because that was a powerful symbol for me at the time. When I communicated to her, I shifted my focus, and though I was in a dialogue with her, I did not lead the experience. We did not go on adventures together; we talked, or she simply was present. She did offer me courage sometimes, for me to know she was always there. Occasionally she would caress me or I her, and I always felt a wave of love and happiness at these times. Sometimes I would invite her to, but I still was never in control of the experience. They were usually fleeting and a sign of friendship. Since then I've come to feel that Sanka is a personification of an inner/deep/higher aspect of myself/spirit/soul. I have expanded to include her in my daily life. Sometimes I still connect in with that aspect of myself, but her wisdom is close, it requires just a shift in focus. She doesn't appear in wolf form any longer, though the power from the symbol is still there. To access that part of myself I still have to listen.

Both Meg and Jamie report a distinct difference between the "made up" friends and their special guides. Jamie characterizes the difference as "listening" and not leading.

Great sages and mystics have recognized the possibility for receiving deep guidance. Abraham, Moses, Mohammed, and Mary all claimed to tap a deep source of wisdom. So, too, did Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, George Washington Carver. Socrates called his inner voice *Daimon*, which means "divine." In first-century China, individuals, called the *wu*, received guidance from inner voices (Klimo 1987). Medieval Jewish rabbis conversed with disincarnate teachers known as the Maggidim (Gordon 1949; Liester 1996). Christian mystics attributed their inner guidance to the Holy Ghost, deceased saints, and angels.

This source is also sometimes described as arising from within the individual. As a source of wise guidance and insight, Aurobindo (Ghose 1987), the Indian sage, called this the "inner teacher." Meister Eckhart (1958), the thirteenth-century Dominican priest, referred to the "inner man." Ralph Waldo Emerson (1979) spoke of the "oversoul." Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1976) wrote about various dimensions of the "higher self," "transpersonal self," and the "universal self."

Note how Jamie described her experience with Sanka as originating as a distinct other and later cameg to think of it as an aspect of her "higher self." We have seen this same transition among others, although not always.

Laura and Adam

Many imaginary companions are animals like Jamie's. Traditional representations ranging from Hindu gods to Native American totems use animals to depict spiritual qualities and capacities. They often are described as providing a link between the material and spiritual worlds. Jungian thought may conceive of these as archetypes: primary and shared patterns of our human consciousness. In most accounts of animal guides, you do not choose the animal; instead it pays you a visit.

Adam, a beloved dog, had just died and Laura, 7, was having a very difficult time getting over the loss (Hart 2003, 29). She had really loved Adam and she didn't know how to deal with losing him. According to her mother,

> Over many days Laura was crying a lot about him and I just didn't seem able to comfort her very well. We were driving in the car and Laura was talking a lot. I was tired, and I asked her to please just lie down and rest for a few minutes. Thankfully she did, and after about twenty minutes she sat up and said, "Mom, something wonderful happened! I left my body and went to talk with Adam. He told me that my being so upset about him dying was making it harder for him and if I really wanted to help him, I should send him love and light. So I did and it feels better." Laura and then added, "Adam said the reason he came to see me is that when somebody else close to me dies, I'll know what to do."

A few weeks later, Laura's aunt gave birth to a baby with an unexpected terminal illness. It was a very difficult situation for everyone. Laura insisted on visiting the baby in the hospital. Her mother said,

I wasn't sure about this. Normally, given Laura's emotionally charged personality, I would have expected her to fall apart, to be really hysterical, and I didn't think this was what the family needed. But Laura was adamant about going and I finally agreed. We went to the hospital, and in the middle of all this grief, Laura insisted on holding the dying baby. She was unbelievably calm and clear; she was not upset or crying, but was working hard to help this dying baby by sending him love and light. She helped all of us by demonstrating what we could do.

At the end of the nineteenth century, American psychologist and philosopher William James (1950) likened consciousness to a flowing stream. While we are often caught up in our own little eddies, children sometimes seem to be able to tap the currents in the depths of this stream, just as Laura did.

In each of these cases, it appears that a shift in the individual's state of consciousness is required in order to access these depths. Meg became absorbed in the tiles on the bathroom floor; Jamie emphasized "listening" and a "shifting focus"; Laura found her friend as she rested silently in the back of the car. Such shifts in states of consciousness are extremely well documented in meditative or contemplative practices, and they are described as essential for expanding perception, quieting the mind, and accessing insight. (For a summary see Murphy, Donovan and Taylor 1997.) The natural contemplative and absorptive capacities of children are at odds with the hurried pace, the constant electronic stimulation, and the demand for highly rational-linguistic thought in contemporary culture. These cases suggest the value in intentionally inviting the contemplative space in children or, alternatively, providing the kind of "free-range" play, lack of electronic stimulation, and rest time that may invite opportunities for spontaneous shifts in consciousness that seem to bring such profound insight (Hart 2004b).

Peggy

Peggy is a professional in her 50s. At age 5, home was a farm in rural Louisiana about thirty miles from

the nearest town. In an accident on the farm she received third-degree burns over two-thirds of her body, second degree over most of the rest. Only her face and feet were spared (Hart 2003, 55-57).

Following the accident it took an hour to get Peggy to the nearest hospital. She said, "I could see everyone panicked around me. But I was totally calm; I didn't feel any pain. When we got to the hospital, I was asking questions about the equipment around me: 'What does that do?' 'What's that for?'" Later, Peggy understood that the staff had been making plans for her to be airlifted to a better-equipped hospital in Galveston, but her doctor had said not to bother; Peggy was so badly injured that she would not make it through the night.

> I remember them putting on orange gauze, and the next thing I remember I was repeating that the "light was too bright." I was squinting and the light was so brilliant that it hurt my eyes. I looked up and saw these silhouettes over me, but it wasn't the nurses or doctors. They were larger and their voices were different. They were reassuring me, "You're going to be OK." And they started telling me about animals in the winter who hibernate, like taking a long sleep. And they said to think of this as sleep, as hibernation. "We'll take care of you while you're sleeping," the voices said.

> The longer I was there, the softer the light got. It became like a pinkish glow, like you see at sunset sometimes. There is no way my words can capture what it was like. It was wonderful; I felt so engulfed with love, in complete acceptance. I knew that nothing is separate about you and me. Nothing about you is judged. You're completely known and you know everything; words aren't spoken — every thought is known instantly. There's no right or wrong, it's just part of your existence. There's a reason why you're experiencing this and everything.

Peggy went into cardiac arrest, and after several minutes the hospital staff told her father that she was gone. With nothing left to lose, the doctor tried a procedure that he had only recently read about. To everyone's shock, it worked: her heart started again.

Peggy came out of a month-long coma on April 19, her sixth birthday. She would have 38 surgeries and would spend the next four years, except for an occasional weekend furlough, in the hospital. She had to grow her own skin, as there was no alternative at the time. Every time she made a wish during those years it was always the same: "God, please just let me grow skin."

> I got to the point where I could leave at will. The bright light would return, then soften to that pinkish glow. On the other side, colors were deeper, smells more intense, and people would always be there to greet me. Before the fire, I loved to climb a mimosa tree near our house. Many times when I crossed to the other side, I would find myself at the base of a huge mimosa tree that was full of children. They would ask me to climb with them and call me to go higher. The higher up I went, the brighter the light became. I would sit on branches and talk with them. I still know them intimately; it feels like they're part of me.

> At other times I would be surrounded, like a circle of friends holding hands around me. It felt like complete love. I still see them.

> I know they're always with me. I always have a special one with me. He was the first one I saw. Sometimes he would be there with his arms open and just envelop me with love. Sometimes it would be hours and he wouldn't say a word. He would just love me. I would come away much stronger. The charge he would give me might last three days, and people would say I looked different or had a glow. My family would notice and say things like "Your face looks different" or "You're glowing."

Peggy's accounts have kinship with other near death accounts (e.g., Ring 1985). As she mentioned, fifty years later she still experiences this companion.

Each of these accounts provided a profound sense of love and comfort; each provided insight and wisdom that seemed beyond the child's capacity; each

offered a bigger view or expanded perspective on the particular situation; and each entered through a shift in consciousness or awareness. All of these experiences were explained as powerfully formative for the person's worldview. For Jamie and Peggy, these "friends" are in some form still available.

We also want to note that there are still other orders of what we could generally call imaginary companions that also warrant consideration. For example, credible accounts of alleged disincarnate beings that are not so wise or comforting are reported in healthy, non-abused children that defy easy dismissal as pure fantasy. As just one example, a mother reports:

> When my youngest son was about two, we were visiting the home of relatives. He could see the garage window from the bedroom where he was supposed to be napping. Pointing out the window, he started to cry and said he couldn't sleep because he was afraid of the "sad old man in the garage." Nobody was in the garage at the time. What he had no way of knowing — although we discovered this later — was that an old man had killed himself in that garage several years before. (Hart 2003, 12-13)

Children describe encounters with beings who seem quite lost or even predatory, with faeries who seem benign, with tricksters who want to play, with other beings and worlds that seem quite real, and with great and comforting beings who show them love and provide profound insight. The notion of a multi-dimensional world is ancient and enduring, and while psychology must remain appropriately cautious, credible evidence may warrant revision of our maps of consciousness and human experience.

There is not space here to consider these other kinds of experiences further (see Hart 2003). However, we suggest a precautionary idea that just because "someone" does not have a body, it does not mean that he or she is trustworthy, has good information, or is smarter than we are. In this multidimensional realm, discernment and judgment are as essential as they are in other areas of life, as when walking on a city street. In discerning the nature and value of the encounter, we might ask whether this companion brings self-aggrandizement or service?

Does it harm or heal? Does it fuel the ego or the soul? Does its message feel "right" in your body, in your heart, in your mind? Does it provide distraction and distortion, or clarity? Does it offer shame and judgment, or love and connection? Does it cause you to feel like you need a shower or like you have just taken one?

In a practical sense, the challenge is to develop discernment through considering what the offering is and what we do with it. In working with imaginary or related companions it may not matter whether this is a fantasy creation, a ghost, a divine being, or a delusional compensation. We might approach it in the same way by holding the questions: "What is the offering or message from this companion? What does it want?" It is not necessary to determine some ultimate reality in order to find value in the messages and meanings underneath.

Conclusion

Imaginary companions can provide an avenue for self-expression, communication, emotional release, and developmental exploration. Playing with an imaginary companion provides a child with a method of processing interesting or significant events or people, reducing anxiety, and dealing with life's difficulties. Imaginary companions may be markers of a natural developmental struggle, healthy expressions of a creative mind, or, for some, markers of dissociation. In some instances, they may also serve as a source of comfort and counsel and perhaps an indicator of multidimensional perception.

In considering the inner world of children and youth, evidence of significantly distinct sources of insight and love provide a remarkable and, in some cases, enduring source of guidance that has been largely missed in the literature on imaginary companions.

Whether it is named as one's genius or guardian spirit, or as an angelic being, higher self, or inner teacher — the name is insignificant in comparison to the quality of the encounter and its impact on one's life. In each of our four cases, the companions provided a profound source of comfort and counsel which appear to go beyond conventional descriptions of imaginary companions. As such, they provide evidence that the inner world of childhood is even richer and more profound than we may have conceded.

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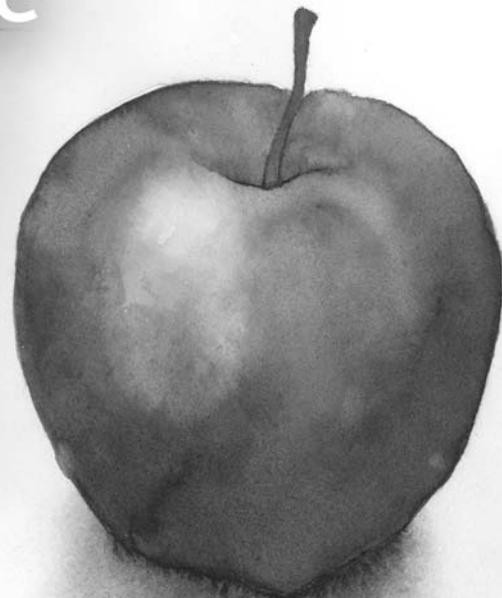
Finding the Zone

Beyond the Social Construction of Masculine Gender Identity

David Forbes

Meditation and contemplative practices help inner-city youth develop new levels of awareness and being.

> Out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and
>   rightdoing,
>   There is a field. I'll meet you there. (Rumi)

In explaining how urban youth develop, many educators tend to assume a social constructionist model. For example, in their call for papers for a special issue of the *Teachers' College Record* in 2003, the editors stated that

> youth create meaning, identity, and a sense of themselves in the world by utilizing a variety of sources, including, perhaps most centrally, existing social constructions of ethnicity, race, gender, and social class.

Youth, the editors suggested, also negotiate, appropriate, and resist elements of their social environment. While youth do engage in active constructions of social meaning and identity, I will argue that a social constructionist view is not the best or only means to account for youth development today. A social constructionist model limits our understanding of how youth can and do evolve. It shortchanges the youth themselves by failing to provide them with a means to transcend social constructions that lead to higher development. I propose that educators consider a more inclusive approach, a contemplative perspective that incorporates and transcends social constructions. A contemplative approach is non-conceptual and discloses the non-duality of all human existence. It opens human development beyond socially determined categories and identities to higher levels of awareness. I will provide some examples of this development based on my work in a meditation and discussion group with mostly black, working

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class football players in a Brooklyn high school (Forbes 2004).

The Social Construction Approach

Urban male youth struggle to define themselves as men in a world in which they face conflicting constructions about masculinity. Conventional masculinity is an example of a socially constructed norm. Young men learn that being a man in this society means being stoic, staying in control, and acting in a vigilant, aggressive, and competitive manner. I met with members of an urban high school football team as a group once a week after school during two seasons and one spring. Besides football we discussed feelings such as anger and stress, relationships with teammates, fathers, and young women. The young men meditated to increase their ability to play "in the zone," a higher state of awareness that athletes describe when they are performing at their peak (Cooper 1998; Murphy and White 1995). The group work confirmed what much of the literature suggests (e.g., Brooks and Silverstein 1995; Pollack 1999; Real 1997), that many young men experience considerable pressure to uphold the conventional version of masculinity, and that maintaining it in order to gain male privilege comes at a considerable emotional cost. Many of them were defensive and aggressive with each other. They felt the need to always prove their manhood and found this to be a stressful experience. The stress is particularly intense for black male youth; society regards them as a threat and has little vested interest in their growing up as men. My aim in the group was to employ meditation as a developmental tool to help the young men extend their awareness and envision authentic ways of being beyond those offered by constructed versions of masculinity.

A counter social construct of masculinity suggests that men should be more expressive, nurturing, and open to themselves and others. Some of the young men on the football team were receptive to aspects of this model. For example, they took a personal interest in fashion and other expressive activities such as drama. They were aware of the double standard with regard to young men and women's sexual behavior and considered it unjust to women. However, most of the young men had good reason to refrain from

adopting the alternative construct to any considerable extent. To do so led to negative consequences within their harsh milieu: they would run the risk of being seen as wimps or gay, and of being ostracized and even physically abused.

In short, the group discussions and interactions confirmed that young men experience painful consequences for pursuing either version of masculinity. The conventional construct restricts emotional ex-

Meditative awareness allows for the higher realization that everything is interconnected and that things to which we become attached do not have solid, impermeable boundaries.

pression and places pressure on the young men to maintain their posture of tough masculinity. Young men pay an emotional price for upholding the defensive, cool pose and other marginalized images of black masculinity; these social postures can hamper their ability for personal development and fulfilling relationships (Lazur and Majors 1998; Majors and Billson 1992). Alternatively, taking on the second, softer construct can lead to harsh teasing and rejection. Risking a more gentle, vulnerable way of being a man can be construed as acting gay or white. Some young black men are subject to teasing by peers if they value academic achievement, as many young men regard overt resistance to schooling as a criterion of masculinity (Ferguson 2000; Fordham 1996; Herbert 2003).

The dilemma for many African American young males, then, is to find a third, authentic alternative. Finding a new way of being requires mindfulness of one's experience that opens one to a higher sense of self and selfhood than those offered through social constructions.

A social constructionist perspective is useful and necessary to help explain how young urban males interpret and negotiate meanings of masculinity. Ultimately, however, it is not sufficient; it cannot provide a satisfying, comprehensive way to address

higher levels of identity development. Socially constructed identities of masculinity, ethnicity, race, gender, and class, and socially defined power relations are assumed to be the parameters of human development; yet this assumption forecloses higher possibilities of consciousness.

The current trend in postmodern analysis of popular youth culture is to study how youth attempt to resist dominant meanings and construct their own. Yet this approach does not have a way out of the language and consciousness of popular culture itself. MTV and corporate commercials co-opt images of resistance and alternative expressions. Within this realm there is nothing for male youth to resist and, as Fuchs (1996) points out with respect to alternative music, there are no real alternative ways to define one's own masculinity. For example, the gangsta pose, rather than signify rebellion, becomes the basis for the next expensive trend in fashion or consumerism. The popularity of the TV show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and the recent use of the term *metrosexual*, could, in theory, point toward more highly developed, expressive forms of masculinity and consciousness. More likely, however, the show will merely provide new products and services that appeal to men's egocentric and narcissistic tendencies.

Within the limits of social construction, categories and narratives of male identity are never surpassed, only rearranged in newer social configurations. Counter-narratives must rely on the same language as before. If social constructs are all there is, youth at best end up in endless opposition to dominant narratives. Societal images of the self at best can be reassembled, not transcended (see Gore 1993).

While literacy skills are necessary for urban male youth, by themselves they do not help young men transcend social constructs of masculinity. Social construction theorists such as White (1998) would like to see youth build new models of identity based on new narratives. But if these writers are correct, if there is no truth except that governed by power and determined by social relations, there is nothing to prevent any newly constructed narrative from being governed in turn by unsatisfying power relations. This is especially true if, as social constructivists argue, no one form of identity is truer than any other.

For example, Denborough (1998) wanted to help male adolescents challenge the conventional male narrative of acting tough and dominating others. He invited them to come up with a counterplot to resist being tough, "being yourself." However, it is not apparent that the young men evolved beyond conventional masculinity. At one school, the students "called the old way of being a man 'cool and tough' and the new way 'a *new* cool and tough'" (Denborough 1998, 104). Without a notion that some ways are more developmentally advanced than others, the same language of cool and tough, in turn, is likely to be used to justify another cool and tough version of masculinity and lapse into an endless power struggle with other socially constructed conventions.

Another like-minded program aimed to promote young African American men's sociopolitical development and liberation (Watts, Abdul-Adil, and Pratt 2002) through critical interrogation of popular culture, such as gangsta rap music, in order to generate the positive values of a "warrior." However, there is nothing in the program that enables male youth to liberate themselves from the socially constructed dualism of Us versus Them, and from shifting from one socially defined role to another.

The ultimate goal of the warrior program appears to be the liberation of the oppressed group. Yet the goals of the program — survival, security, prosperity, community, and unity — are sufficiently ambiguous that even harmful and exclusionary groups could use them to justify their actions. In contrast, Trungpa (1988) defined *warrior* in higher developmental terms as anyone who has the courage to examine the nature of all of one's experience in order to establish an enlightened society for everyone. This kind of warrior courage depends on the cultivation of an awareness that transcends socially defined categories.

A Developmental Alternative

Many youth today harbor and express a desire to find higher meaning and purpose in life and a sense of connectedness with the universe (Kessler 2000). This yearning extends beyond dualistic, socially defined constructs of liberation and oppression as well as socially determined identities (Forbes 2004). For concepts to be meaningful at a higher develop-

mental level they must point beyond the limitations of language and link up with this contemplative awareness.

Western psychologists and educators are beginning to recognize that there are higher levels of human development that extend beyond the socially conventional ego and socially constructed categories (Wilber 2000). Meditation is the most common practice among many contemplative traditions that lead to higher states of consciousness. Of late, meditation is receiving serious consideration in academic and scientific circles to promote wellness and emotional intelligence through mindfulness (Brown and Ryan 2003; Dingfelder 2003; Goleman 2003; Hall 2003). Elsewhere (Forbes 2004) I have described the benefits of meditation for masculine gender identity development through enhancing young men's capacity for self-awareness, empathy, and lessening attachment to the ego (see also Garbarino 2000).

The young men on the Brooklyn high school football team with whom I worked conveyed an awareness of possible higher realms of identity and experience than those made available to them through their everyday schooling, families, and peers, or through political figures, pop culture superstars, or the media. They sensed there was a more evolved way of being than that constructed through their own language and culture and were willing to seek it.

The Zone

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and his associates have described *flow,* an optimal state of being in which one experiences full absorption in the present (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Jackson and Csizkszentmihalyi 1999); moreover, they have stressed the importance of promoting flow among adolescents (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen 1993). The young men with whom I worked were familiar with the experience of flow, often referred to by athletes as "being in the zone." They knew the zone is a higher state of awareness in which one is in complete harmony with one's body and performance, unimpeded by thought. They also knew that Phil Jackson, a Zen Buddhist and coach of the NBA champions Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers, has his players meditate in order to increase the chance of playing in the zone, since meditation is a way to be fully present in the mo-

ment. His players also may be more attuned to what is occurring on the court and sensing where their teammates are (Kabat-Zinn 2000; "Peak Performance," n.d.).

From a social constructionist point of view, meditation in this case is a social practice or technique that can earn athletes success in playing sports. As I explained to the students, however, the zone is an internal state of knowing that must be experienced by each individual himself. It cannot be constructed or willed into being; and if one becomes self-conscious of being in the zone, it disappears. While I used the zone as an incentive to encourage the young men to meditate, I emphasized that meditation is not just a means or technique to gain some personal goal or even reach a desired state. Rather, it is a way of being that lets one experience everything as it is and examine the nature of that experience. This includes loss, sadness, frustration, anger, and pain. Besides playing football in the zone, I invited the young men to consider living life in the zone: being mindful of themselves and of the world, gaining insight into the nature of things, and becoming more responsible, more evolved beings.

In our group the students learned insight (*vipassana*) meditation in which one first attends to the breath. As thoughts, sensations, and feelings arise, one notices them in a non-evaluative manner, without being drawn into them or trying to repress them, and returns to the breath each time. With meditation, over time the mind is able to calm down and let go of all passing thoughts. One lets thoughts enter, becomes mindful of them, and lets them go. One stays in the present.

Meditation and mindfulness also lets one perceive the world, including other people, more openly. One begins to see them as they are, without putting them into categories. It enables one to become more compassionate toward others.

Over time, as the mind is able to rest, it contextualizes all thoughts, feelings, and sensations themselves within a vast spacious awareness. People who meditate for greater lengths of time are able to breathe through sensations, distractions, and thoughts about the past or future that prevent them from experiencing the present moment. They take a meditative approach to pain, anger, sorrow, and suf-

fering and see that these and all things are always changing and have no permanent nature.

Meditators are able to realize that dualistic categories of self and other, even of good and evil, are relative constructs that do not have a solid, unchanging basis. They come to know that socially defined categories such as one's ethnicity, class, and color are not the real nature of the self, and that even the ego itself is a social construct that does not exist and is always changing (for a discussion on color see Wideman 2003). Meditative awareness allows for the higher realization that everything is interconnected and that things to which we become attached do not have solid, impermeable boundaries. It includes an active engagement with the world, compassion in action (Jones 2003). Rather than leading to mindlessness, or pre-rational regression, meditation is transrational; it extends beyond the boundaries of the rational ego and can bring one to a higher level of development. It allows one to transcend the incessant chatter of the mind, such as judgments, ruminations, and attachments to desires, and fully attend to the present moment from a higher state of awareness. As the spiritual-minded rapper, KRS-One (2002), says, there is nothing wrong with the intellect, it just may be the beginning; "it might be time to move on."

I hoped that by meditating, the young men could come to realize that conventional constructs of selfhood and masculinity were just that, constructs, and that over time they could become less attached to them as they became more aware of their own experience. They then might no longer feel compelled to follow a script of what defines a man or get attached to a restrictive self-concept that would lead to inauthentic, mind-less responses.

I met with up to 23 young men once a week after school during the off-season as well as during the football season over the span of two school years. We practiced meditation each time as a group from anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes. I used a guided meditation tape by Jack Kornfield (1996), an insight meditation teacher. One student said he found it helpful that Kornfield compared meditation practice to training a puppy: as the mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breathing: stay, stay. A number of the young men said they began to practice meditation on their own at home. At first many of them were self-conscious

about meditating among themselves. For example, some would open their eyes to see what others were doing. After a time they more easily settled in to the practice. They would even challenge those who did not appear to take the meditation seriously. However, they continued to tease each other, sometimes in hurtful ways, and I encouraged them to become mindful of their part in the interactions. After a time some of them learned to catch themselves, become aware of their feelings, and monitor their reactions. We also did meditative visualizations in which the young men would see themselves as confident and successful. After some of these sessions a number of them said they were able to get deep into the visualization and that it helped their playing.

During the rest of each session we engaged in a group discussion in which we addressed a broad range of issues important to the young men, including relationships with young women, fathers, coaches, and each other as teammates. The theme throughout was mindfulness, being aware of how one feels and how others feel, and not just reacting in an impulsive way. The goal was to be mindful of thoughts, feelings, and events while not being controlled by them, so one can stay focused and in the zone — that is, act out of one's highest self.

After a few months of practicing meditation and engaging in a mindful awareness and discussion group, many of the young men did become more conscious of their own thoughts, feelings, and behavior. They were better able to assume more responsibility for themselves and to monitor their thoughts and behavior when they became angry, frustrated, or sad. Most of the students on a written questionnaire responded that they gained the ability to avoid distractions and to focus and concentrate. As one boy wrote, meditation "makes me a more focused and stronger person." They also became more aware of their feelings towards themselves, women, and their teammates. For example, one wrote,

> I do feel that I have more awareness of my thoughts[s] and feelings now than before I learned meditation practices. I feel it in football a little but mostly in my life and in how I put things in perspective.

The zone became a code word for being mindful and doing the right thing out of one's highest self.

Football in the Zone

The immediate goal was to apply meditative practices to football. After a tough loss played at the other school's field, the young men talked about how they lost their concentration. One admitted that he used to be "violent" on the field but this time he hesitated before tackling an opponent. He thought too much about whether to tackle high or low, and how hard. I pointed out that if one practices football properly during the week then meditation can prepare one to play the actual game with less disruptive thinking, not more. Just as one lets distracting thoughts come and go during meditation, and stays focused on one's breathing, one can avoid getting caught up in distractive thoughts during the game. One recognizes the thoughts, but keeps one's awareness on the task at hand. Players began telling me, "Meditation works." As one said, "I was able to concentrate on catching the ball, and not letting my mind get ahead of myself, like I used to."

We also practiced visualization, which helped with James. Before one session James spoke with me privately. He told me he feels a lot of pressure to excel; he was recruited from another school to play football and feels very pressured to prove how good he is. What's worse, he's concerned about playing too tough and hurting an opposing player. So then he lays back and doesn't play well enough. He also hears his mom's voice telling him not too play too hard so that he won't hurt himself and others.

I told him first that he doesn't have to give in to the pressure; he knows he's good and doesn't have to prove anything to anybody. I then asked James if he can visualize or imagine a middle way to play that was based on mastery, and drew this on the board. On top he is playing too aggressive, hurting himself or others. On bottom he is playing too soft, not playing well. I asked him, Is there a middle ground where he can play well, not be ineffective, yet not be hurtful? He said yes, he can imagine it. I encouraged him to visualize the third way of playing during practice and see how that went. Eventually he was able to do so. He told me the visualization practice helped him to have a good experience

during summer training. James then went on to play a solid season during the fall.

James benefited from a non-conceptual visualization of a higher way of performing that did not fit into his socially constructed identities of being a football player. On one hand, he rejected the conventional, peer-based role of being aggressive and hurtful; nor did he wish to view himself through his mother's eyes as being too sensitive and worrying about hurting himself and/or someone else. His socially determined world did not provide him with the language or the vision of how he could accomplish his goal of being a good football player without falling into the two pits of toughness or weakness. Based on our meditation group, the zone was familiar to him as a valued but as-yet unattainable realm of being. Because of this he was able to use it as the image of his highest desire. By taking a contemplative perspective, visualizing while meditating, James was able to find the higher ground and see what he needed to do. This realm of consciousness is what athletes aim for and is not adequately described by the social construct of mastery. It is a higher way of being that transcends giving in to the harsh, hurtful, and commodified aspects of competitive sports. Yet it also allows one to enjoy sports without succumbing to a blanket, one-dimensional, social critique that considers current sports, especially football, to be oppressive (Messner and Sabo 1990).

Over time, attending to the present cues, noticing the distractions, and returning to the present demands of the sport may allow the athlete to perform in the zone. The mind gets out of its own way and the athlete becomes one with the experience. There is no ego, no social convention or approval; just mindful attention. This way of being extends beyond athletics to all areas of life

Ethnicity, Race, and Conflict

Meditation and contemplative practices can extend well beyond football and help people in their broader social lives. People can learn to appreciate themselves and others more fully as people—as more than conventional categories.

Actually, a number of the young men came from diverse backgrounds that did not easily fit into conventional ethnic or racial categories. For example al-

though most of them were black, only a minority were African American. Many of the students were first generation Americans whose parents were Guyanese, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Jamaican/ Puerto Rican, Barbadian/ Indian, Haitian, Dominican, Panamanian, and African. I asked some of them how they identified themselves, especially those whose parents were from different countries. While they were aware of their ethnic backgrounds, many shrugged and dismissed the question, or just said they were American. Yet, what is striking is the extent to which they assimilated to an American black youth subculture: hip hop clothing, language, music, and mannerisms. They called each other "niggaz" and "son," adopted a similar dress code (e.g., do-rags), and listened to the same music. To some extent this was an active choice. However, it may also reflect the fact that in this society, the socially constructed identity of being black trumps whatever cultural or ethnic background they possess. For example, when racial tensions flared up between some white and black students, the black students, regardless of their ethnic background, construed the situation in black and white racial terms.

Among these students, then, there already was some rejection of traditionally constructed ethnic identities and a desire to freely define themselves as existing beyond these categories, except when it became unsafe to do so. From a social constructionist perspective, hip hop represents the highest, culturally accessible way for youth to meld urban life across ethnic differences through the common expressive forms of clothing, music, language, and attitude. Hip hop culture, however, is ambiguous with respect to higher development. For example, a range of rap artists reflect commodified, materialist, conformist, nationalistic, and sexist values, while others represent more liberating values of social justice, equality, and personal expression. Sometimes these contradictory values are even apparent in one rap star.

An encounter in the group between a white student, Larry, and some of his teammates of color shows how a contemplative perspective can point the way beyond the limitations of socially constructed categories into a transcendent zone of being. At the beginning of a discussion on race, Larry be-

came upset and said he felt uncomfortable. He told his teammates he didn't like it when they called him a "cracker" and "redneck." This occurred after a few months when group members began to feel safe enough with each other to risk telling teammates they were not happy about being "dissed," (teased in a harsh manner). The group was able to hear Larry's statement and acknowledge his feelings. They assured him he was "one of them" and did not want him to feel excluded. However, they replied that they too had felt dissed and hurt by him whenever he joined another white student and teased them about being black. Larry was able to hear them and acknowledge his piece in the conflict. A black student, Pat, then said he had a close relationship with another Italian American teammate. He asked Larry would he too "openly bring me to your house in Bensonhurst and take me to see all your friends and introduce me to your mom and do all that? Would you feel comfortable comin' back to my 'hood doin' the same thing around my black friends?" Larry said he felt he could.

I framed the group interaction and Pat's experience as one in which people are in the zone; a higher level of awareness in which one is open to the present and not drawn away by fear to a preconceived thought or an imagined scenario. I pointed out that this is the same process we practice during meditation in attending to one's own mind. The students were able to hear each other, and Pat alluded to what many of the students wanted but did not have the words for, a way of being with oneself and others that acknowledged (that is, did not deny) but also transcended socially determined categories and identities. Because we were familiar with the experience of the zone through meditation and had discussed how it manifests itself in everyday life, the students could envision the connection. They could experience being with a teammate in this capacity as being in the zone, beyond self and other from a higher vantage point. For some black students, this was a way of expressing one's highest self. It required neither an alienated, resistant pose to maintain their black identity nor the necessity of conforming and assimilating to another, dominant culture. In developmental terms, it was neither egocentric nor conventional; rather, it reflected a higher level of be-

ing that respected difference but from a universal basis that transcended social categories such as race. Framing this level of awareness as the zone gave it a name, and gave the internal experience of being in the zone a face as well.

Relationships with Young Women

In one group discussion Drew described his troublesome encounter with a young woman at the elevated train station after school. She rebuffed his overture, and they both became angry. Drew hit her first "to calm her down" and the police were called. To some extent Drew expressed remorse but he still blamed the young woman for provoking him as well as making him look bad in front of his friends.

Most of the group members felt that even Drew's initial come-on to the young woman was disrespectful. They challenged his view that it was normal and that they all would have said the same thing. I asked the group, "When you guys are really in the zone are you ever going to say something disrespectful to a woman?"

"No," almost all said.

"I wasn't in the zone," Drew admitted.

Another young man, Calvin, expressed an empathic response for the young woman in that situation, imagining what it would be like for her. The discussion then turned to the fact that Drew and many of them were often angry and unable to handle their feelings. I extended the analogy of being in the zone as one in which you are aware of what is going on with yourself and then act responsibly out of your highest self.

Drew was still struggling with feeling disrespected and embarrassed and with wanting to retaliate. Stephen offered a somewhat higher response: Try to calm the other person down, restraining rather than hitting her. Another student, Charles, said he thought he could be a bigger man and walk away. I pointed out that that was the highest response of all, to let it go or find a way to defuse the situation, and that it took more courage than fighting. If you have to defend yourself, you do, but you do it in order to end the fight, not for retaliation.

"I understand what you saying, Mr. Forbes, I thought about it," Drew said.

I understand what Calvin said, that you gotta think of the female point of view. When I was locked up [for one night] I thought about that. I said, "Yo, what if that was me and I was walking down the block, and shorty tried to pull me into some shit, I could think of other ways to approach it."

Drew was capable of some empathy and of taking the other's point of view. I told him he needed to keep sitting with his anger and underlying pain, to examine what they were and where they were coming from, and then to realize how these feelings led to self-destructive and aggressive behaviors. In this case, a higher way of being a man involved mindfulness, empathy, skillfulness in relationships, and the courage to take responsibility for one's actions. Being in the zone means sitting with what is going on, inquiring into it, and doing the right thing — not on the basis of attachment to ego, social pressure, or convention, but from a higher place of compassionate awareness. After the discussion the group members were eager to meditate.

Conclusion

For urban young men today socially constructed versions of masculinity are problematic. Conventional masculinity is harsh and hurtful and restricts the full range of human feelings. The alternative norm offered to young men, insisting they be kind, soft, or nice at the expense of their authentic experience, is also inadequate. Young men working in supportive groups can share in creatively constructing new narratives of masculinity that are healthier and more fulfilling for everyone. They need support and help to evolve in ways that are neither harshly confrontational nor threatening.

To be sure, critical awareness of social inequities and social identities is essential to promote full development of all. Yet new social constructions alone are not enough for full development; as externally defined categories they risk endlessly reverting to dominant paradigms that are in turn used against new Others. My work suggests that male African American and other youth can develop a higher, more authentic awareness that is not limited by socially constructed conditions. Meditation as a form of self-awareness is a means to help young men do

so. It enables them to notice their feelings and then create a space between their experience and their reactive response. It helps them face what is happening concretely in urban life and yet also to evolve to a higher self that no longer requires external validation. Educators and counselors who care about urban youth can consider adopting a contemplative practice themselves and to introduce this way of being in their work with all children.

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Lions and Tigers and Beggars, Oh My!

Chris Mercogliano

"I was downtown this morning and saw some kindergarteners from your school with a guy who said he was their teacher," the concerned caller began. "He was carrying a big bag of bagels that he told me Brueggers gives them to use for snacks. Is that true?"

I recognized her voice immediately. Apparently she didn't remember mine. Earlier, she and a fellow office worker had stopped to chat with the kids while we rested on the long wooden bench at the bus stop on South Pearl Street. We were sharing the bench with a homeless woman, to whom we had given several bagels when she mentioned that she hadn't eaten in days.

At the time I was pleased to have other adults showing an interest in the children. Very often when we go downtown the kids appear to be invisible. It's as though people consider their presence so incongruous that they don't even notice them. Unfortunately in this case, it was information and not conversation that these two women — whose suspicions I failed to pick up on — were after.

"Yes, it's true," I replied. "Twice a week he takes the kids with him to pick up bagels."

Now, some of you may question the ethics of my not letting on that I was the teacher to whom she was referring. But I wanted to know what it was that had disturbed her to the point of contacting us, and identifying myself might have ruined everything.

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"Are you sure it was okay for them to be with him?" she continued. "I mean he didn't look at all like a professional educator."

I couldn't resist. "Actually, he's our director."

She emitted a guttural sound that is hard to translate into type. Then, when she had recovered: "But he was by himself with *six* children. Usually when I see a group of kids out walking, there are at least two adults and the kids are arranged in some kind of buddy system, which these kids didn't appear to be. Are you sure that's safe?"

"I can assure you it's totally safe," I replied, still not letting on. "He's been teaching here for many years and six isn't too many for him to handle. Also, because we take our kids out frequently and don't rope them together, they become quite responsible about crossing streets."

She wasn't reassured in the least. "But there's so much traffic downtown, and so many people. And… there are … *beggars*."

It was my turn to nearly swallow my tongue. There were so many things I wisely refrained from saying, because clearly this was a situation that called for diplomacy. "Listen, it is almost lunchtime here and I'm going to have to get off the phone. But before I do I want to thank you for calling. You saw something that concerned you and you followed up on it, and I think that's awesome."

"I'm glad I did too. I really care about children, you know."

I hung up and then paused before heading in to help serve lunch. I wanted to try to put myself in the caller's shoes for a moment in order to understand why the sight of me with those kindergarteners had aroused such anxiety in her. For starters, the image of us was probably all wrong. Middle-aged males

aren't supposed to be with groups of small children, and no doubt my long hair flowing out of a red Washington Nationals baseball cap (DC is my hometown) didn't help matters any. Nor did my black sweat pants (it's imperative to dress comfortably when you're working with small children) or my worn tennis shoes. I'm sure the large trash bag full of day-old bagels slung over my shoulder didn't help any either.

Then, compound my "unprofessional" appearance with the fact that we weren't doing it "right." I was alone and didn't have the kids holding each other's hands or on to a walking rope. And the clincher, I suspect, was that we were talking with a homeless person, and giving her food to boot. I wonder if that wasn't what tripped the alarm in her mind. Children should never talk to strangers, and certainly not to ones who don't have a roof over their heads every night.

I wasn't taking the young woman's critique personally. Not at all. She is everywoman, or for that matter, everyman, and the truth is that increasingly we are living in a world filled with fear. It's a world in which the majority of children are stored away in warehouses called schools and daycare centers, and in which great pains have been taken to remove the risks from everyday life.

It's no wonder we're all so scared. We are bombarded hourly with headlines about terrorist attacks, natural disasters, urban crime, fatal diseases, and impending environmental catastrophe. Fear, like sex, sells newspapers, and so the media everywhere is in the business of portraying the world as a dark and foreboding place.

Parents are especially susceptible to all the hype — on a deeply instinctive level — because they have offspring to nurture and protect. And it isn't exactly a new phenomenon. According to historian Stephen Mintz (2004), twentieth-century America saw a steady stream of what he calls "panics" regarding children's health and welfare. For the first third of the century posture was a national concern, followed by an anxiety over left-handedness that finally faded out in the 1950s. There was also a series of panics over childhood diseases, beginning with polio in the 1920s, then smallpox, measles, mumps, and chicken pox, culminating in today's panic over Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

What was then known as "juvenile delinquency" and lives on today under the name of "youth" or "gang violence," became yet another source of panic beginning in early '50s. In the '60s fear became focused on teen pregnancy and stranger abduction. The '70s saw the great Halloween candy scare, a spectral phenomenon that will forever cast a shadow over the ways in which we celebrate children's favorite cultural event, even though there never was a single verified report of a child being harmed by tainted treats. In the '80s child abuse and illegal drug use became major sources of panic, only to be replaced by falling achievement in school for the remainder of the century and the start of the next.

During this hundred-plus-year period, says historian Peter Stearns (2003), the prevailing image of the child underwent a 180-degree about-face, from that of a naturally sturdy being with inherently good instincts, capable of learning from experience and independently surmounting obstacles, to a fragile, vulnerable creature in constant need of guidance and protection. And even though the fatal illnesses that had caused premature death for many young people in previous centuries had been largely eliminated, childhood gradually came to be seen as an accident waiting to happen. Peter Stearns (2003) in *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern American Childrearing* observes that

> an American society normally hostile to government regulation became obsessively safety conscious, with warning signs, car seats, railings — every conceivable intervention between children and danger. By 2001 [he adds] even traditional games like dodge ball had come under scrutiny for the threat they posed to physical and moral safety.

But I for one refuse to give in to the current hysteria. I'll be darned if I'm going to teach children that the world is a dangerous place, because I don't believe it is. Yes, there are dangers, and the sooner kids learn how to respond to them the better. Street crossing can indeed be a risky undertaking, especially at busy intersections where drivers are in a hurry to get through the green light, and so we teach our kids to

look both ways and scan for turning cars before they step off the curb, and to continue scanning as they walk across.

And yes, not all strangers can be trusted. But the popular perception of the danger has been blown way out of proportion by fear-mongering reporters and politicians. So we teach kids to be discerning when they encounter an adult for the first time, to listen to their gut and trust their instincts. If they have an uneasy feeling about someone, get away immediately; and if they think they are being followed, then ask for help from the nearest person. This is where the never-talk-to-strangers rule can really backfire,

because that person is likely to be a stranger, too. We also remind our kids never to get into a stranger's vehicle or go off alone with him.

I say let's bring back the pre-20th century belief that children are naturally sturdy. Because it true. They are. And then let's empower them to embrace life as an exciting journey filled with challenge and opportunity. Because this is true, too.

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Student Poems
India June and Luke Solomon

Blades of grass
slowly poking
their tips into
the sun.
     — India June

I would give you fields of high grass,
and tall trees
to feel the fresh wind
from the trees
blowing against your face
and smell of the blowing air.
And I'd give you treats to taste,
and days to play with your friends.
     — Luke Solomon

I'm walking in the woods
on a mountain, thinking
that the mountain
will be there forever
but I will not.
     — Luke Solomon

These poems are by children attending the Blue Rock School in West Nyack, NY. INDIA wrote her poem while in the second grade; LUKE wrote his when he was in the fourth grade. The poems were first printed in 2005 in a school booklet, *In the Moment*, edited by Gerald McCarthy.

When Teaching Young Children, Trust the United Mind of All Beings

Sookhee Im

If we really believe in the oneness of all beings, it will help us figure out what children need to learn and what teachers need to do in the classroom.

Kindergarten teachers must deal with many complex issues. In my work with future and current kindergarten teachers, I draw upon what I have learned from the Zen Master Daehaeng. Daehaeng talked about *one mind*, that is, a united mind of all beings and how it can be applied to everyday life. In particular, she emphasized that the tangle of problems in human life cannot be resolved by human rationality, but by utilizing the function of one mind, which she calls *Juingong*. She said (2001a, 29),

> When I see you and what is going on around you, it seems like there are many problems that are very difficult to take care of. How can these things be resolved and melted away? As inputting data into a computer, input all the situations you encounter into your fundamental place. You have to firmly entrust everything that comes to you to the fundamental self, Juingong, and keep watching, believing that only that place can resolve your problems…. When you entrust everything with firm faith, what is the result? Karma dissolves, habits melt away, and you discover your true self. The previous data will be eliminated and the new data will be taken care of automatically.

Daehaeng's teaching inspired me to apply the principle of one mind to education. The principle can be simplified as follows: believing in Juingong, entrusting problems to Juingong, watching how Juingong works, and accepting what one faces.

Trusting Juingong

To apply Juingong, one first needs to have faith that teachers, children and learning objects are all interconnected and move together. Daehaeng (2004,

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25) stated, "Everything in the universe is directly connected to the mind of human beings, and so every single thing works together as one with mind."

In order to apply this principle to education, Juingong and its function must be validated. Conviction cannot be obtained by persuasion, but from first-hand experience. Before attending Daehaeng's lectures, I sometimes experienced the feeling that my mind was connected to others'. This vague, but vivid feeling helped me to accept Daehaeng's words. Like one of the children in Tobin Hart's book on children's spirituality (2004), I sometimes could perceive another's mind directly in my own mind. Here is one example.

> I was teaching prospective kindergarten teachers at a college. One day, a student wanted to see me. She came into my room and took a seat in front of me. When she was about to speak, I burst into tears and I felt heartache with the feeling of emptiness. I was not upset about anything; I had no personal reason to cry. However, I could not stop crying. I struggled to stop crying but it was out of my control. Of course, the student was embarrassed. After a long while, I stopped crying and she started to tell me her story. Her mother had passed away and she was having a serious pain in her heart and felt emptiness. I realized what had happened to me.

Many similar experiences gave me confidence in the united mind, Juingong.

If we really believe Juingong and the oneness of whole beings, there will be a lucid answer to the question about how to figure out what children need to learn and what teachers need to do in a given context. Ask Juingong, the united mind! Answers appear because Juingong penetrates everything and explores anywhere, even beyond the earth and universe to respond to us.

Daehaeng explains that Juingong is especially important today: "Because the world today is changing so fast, unlike the past, if you live without brightening your mind, you will be confused and left behind" (2001b, 49-51). So learning that is responsive to Juingong has become particularly helpful.

For me, whenever I trust in Juingong, I spontaneously begin to imagine the boundless space and in-numerable beings, seeing myself as only one part of a whole being. Then, it becomes easier to be humble and to ask for wisdom from the united mind. With this momentary inner process, I entrust all teaching activities to Juingong, thinking deeply, "Let teachers and children do what they need to do." I have the firm belief that Juingong can deal with each child's desires and social needs in the right way at the right time.

A Lesson on Animals

I trust Juingong as often as possible. Whenever I design a teaching plan, implement it, and encounter problems and questions, I entrust every situation to Juingong in order to let *it* arrange the situation. The following example illustrates this point. It comes not from my own direct work with children, but from one of the kindergarten teachers I supervised, a teacher who was responsive to my newly developing orientation. The example comes from the teacher's diary based on her class of 5-year-olds.

> I gave a lesson on animals, which I hoped would lead to joy of discovery, a new way of seeing, a sense of oneness and caring, and knowledge about animals. On the first day, one child brought two long-horned beetles from his house garden to his class, putting them in a paper box. All the classmates were so excited about the two bugs. I just paid attention to the children's responses to the insects, believing this event would be a good starting point for the animal theme. However, I did not interrupt their observing and speaking, but just watched them. When our class finished, I asked the children whether they were going to release the bugs. They did not want to let them go, but suggested many ideas to protect them in their class.

> After class, I prepared a transparent colorless cookie box and a gimlet to make a bugs' house with the children the following day, wondering if some children were going to make their own houses and what material they would use. The next day, the child who brought the insects brought a big box to make the bugs' house. Other children brought carrots and grass, and

some brought some picture books about insects. One child brought two tortoises.

Three days later, we went to the natural museum where varieties of stuffed and mounted animals were being exhibited. Unexpectedly, the children were not interested in them and kept asking, "Why don't they move? Are they real or not?"

After the field trip, the art activity could not be led properly. The children were not interested, perhaps because it was a purely symbolic activity. I decided we needed to meet animated beings in their natural habitat.

So, a few days later, we went to the seaside. The children and teachers enjoyed playing with in the sand and water and observed many beings living on the rocks, in the sands and water, such as shellfish, hard-shelled mussel, sea urchins spraying water, and very tiny crabs. Then, when we came back to the kindergarten classroom, the children shouted, "They look like they are suffocating; they need fresh air and water." The children suggested that we release the bugs, tortoises, and mudfish that they had brought to class back into the wild.

In this "lesson," the teacher did not engage in the usual activities of teachers: explaining, directing, correcting. Instead, she tried to be mindful of what was going on in the whole context after she had trusted in Juingong. She did not order the children to release the animals or explain the correct morality, but followed her inner sense that the children needed broader experiences. Listening to the children's questions about the dead and mounted creatures, she sensed what children wanted. The teacher then developed their next activity outdoors, in the natural environment.

Beanplants

Juingong assumes that everything is interrelated. Sometimes children themselves perceive relationships and interconnections. The following is from another teacher's diary, based on her class of 4-year-olds.

As soon as the children came into the class, they rushed to the bean plants that they had been taking care of for the last month. Some children shouted, "See them hugging each other! Another child said, "They are holding hands!" The rest of children gathered around the bean plants and they were excited, talking about what happened to the bean plants. "The two stems hugging each other can stand upright but the other three stems that don't hug each other can not stand straight. They are falling down!" One child described the situation like this. "We can help them not to fall down. Let's have them hold each others' hands." Another child suggested, "My grandmother made them stand up by setting up sticks beside them." The more interested the children became, the more solutions they came up with to make the stems stand upright. While preparing the materials for these activities proposed by the children, I realized that the next theme in the Korean curriculum, "friends," would now connect naturally.

In this case, the teacher realized that there was little for her to do, but to trust the children's own sensitivity to natural life and its needs. She therefore simply learned from the children, without interrupting their spontaneous flow, and let them direct her to the next topic, "friends."

A Worried Mother

While practicing what Juingong suggests, acceptance is essential. Acceptance means abandoning our personal intentions, judgments, and emotional responses. Daehaeng (1999, 103) warns us to be especially careful not to be confined to individual thoughts. For Juingong reaches far beyond the individual and encompasses other things and people, often in unexpected ways. The following example shows how Juingong managed the literacy training for a four-year-old child.

A mother in my kindergarten was worried about her child's ability to read. I did not say anything, and did not make a judgment, even to myself. I just trusted in Juingong. At the time I thought that the child was creative and ambitious, with a strong will. Whenever he started to build something with blocks,

he struggled over one hour to put his delicate idea into a concrete form. I suggested entrusting the issue to Juingong to his mother. His mother had practiced the principle of one mind in my kindergarten, so she could understand what I meant. Then, whenever I saw the boy, I trusted that Juingong would let him learn literacy at the appropriate time, without losing the joy of learning.

Some months later, at a meditation meeting, his mother told us her experience with his literacy. Even though she wanted to let Juingong do it, one day she tried to teach him letters with a pencil and a notebook. Stubbornly, he would not do it. That night, in her dream, he told her that he already knew all the letters.

Some days later, his seven-year-old sister wanted to play "school" and brought some picture books. She showed him the books and read him the titles pointing to each letter with her finger. He read them after her. They enjoyed the play repeatedly. After some months, his mother realized that he could read books, and he often asked her about certain letters when he read a book. It was a wonderful teaching and learning activity.

Juingong mobilized his sister to teach her brother and he learned reading easily with joy. It was not training, but just play for them. If I had designed a teaching plan for the child, I would have never put the seven-year girl into my teaching activity.

Through such experiences, I realized that Juingong's presence is not restricted to my kindergarten; it is available everywhere. It makes an exquisite arrangement for the child, apart from our own expectations and beliefs about when, where, and how literacy training should be conducted.

I imagine if I let Juingong deal with another child's academic skills, it might create a different arrangement in accordance with that child's reality. Therefore, after entrusting to Juingong and watching what is happening, it is important to accept Juingong's work by abandoning one's personal thoughts and judgments.
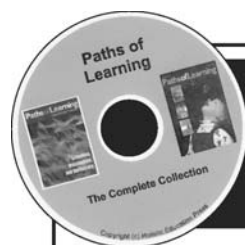
Daehaeng (1999,55) says,

> Truth is the flowing that never stops for even a moment. It flows and penetrates, and is alive. There is nothing in the world that is unmoving; there is only flowing. Without beginning or end, without coming and going, there is only flowing, just as it is.

We need to harmonize ourselves with this truth in our teaching and embrace Juingong. When we do, we find that we embrace self-directed education. Instead of relying on our own fixed ideas of education, we engage in right teaching in which children and teachers emerge as one universal reality.

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A Business Model for Education

Raymond Nowicki

The business principles promoted by W. Edwards Deming make sense for education.

As a long-time substitute teacher, I have often gone into elementary classrooms and seen eager faces greeting me, children ready to learn. Teachers would speak to me about the joys of teaching. But they increasingly have said that in the current environment they are forced to alter their teaching style to fit the system. Then one day, when I went into my 4th grade classroom, I observed a student sitting in the back of the room and doing nothing. I walked over to the young man and said, "Is there something I did to offend you?" The student immediately responded, "Oh, no, Mr. Nowicki you are one of the nicest teachers I have ever had." I was puzzled and inquired why he was not doing the assignment. "Well," the student said, "I don't do any of the work because I am going to fail the TAKS [Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills] test in the spring and I'll have to go to summer school anyway. I never do well on those tests."

I saw this over and over as I worked in the Dallas Independent School District. I even asked one of the school board members why they didn't just statistically sample the students' performances. The school board member said emphatically, "Oh, we have to know what every student is doing. It is the only way to improve education." I asked about following the business model, where sampling is often favored. She said she was aware of that but that it couldn't possibly work in education. I then began to think more precisely about what the business world would do and turned to Kilian's (1992) account of the work of Dr. W. Edwards Deming.

Deming was born on October 14, 1900, in Sioux City, Iowa. When he was still young, his family moved to Cody, Montana, where they lived on a farm with his grandparents. His father had a law degree, but never practiced. Instead, he traveled and sold land for a rail company. His mother was a housewife.

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Deming was typical of Americans who were born at the turn of the 19th Century. The nation was still largely rural, and life was different. The young Deming, for example, sometimes went to school barefoot, something that teachers today would be appalled to see.

*D*eming would have been appalled by the insistence that we test every student. It's a waste of time, effort, and money.

Deming went to the University of Wyoming in Laramie and graduated with a B.S. in electrical engineering in 1921. He went on to receive a M.S. from the University of Colorado in 1928 and then to Yale to get his Ph.D. Both of his advanced degrees were in mathematics and mathematical physics.

One wonders how this academic would influence the business world. It doesn't seem like this would be a person who would shake the old business ideas to their very foundation.

After earning his Ph.D., Deming was offered a job to work for the Western Electric Company, where he had worked during the summers while earning his degrees. But at this time the war was going on and Deming chose to work for the government. With his mathematical background, he began working on statistical theories on measurement and errors. He was interested in improving the way things were put together and using a way to find out how to do it better. His work centered on the idea of improving the quality of war materials by studying the way they were manufactured using his statistical ideas.

After the war Deming decided that American industry also needed to improve the way it did things. Deming has observed through statistical analysis that it was possible to improve not only production, but also the way any corporation is managed. He went to the automakers in Detroit, but they all dismissed him.

After this rejection, business leaders in Japan heard of his work and invited him to their country. They wanted to know how long it would take to shift the perception of Japanese industry from one that

produced cheap, shoddy imitations to one of producing innovative quality products. Deming told that group that if they followed his plan and advice they could achieve this goal in five years. Few of the leaders believed him, but they were decided to give his approach a try. They achieved this goal in four years. For his work Deming was awarded the Second Order of the Sacred Treasure by the former Emperor Hirohito (Kilian 1992).

Education has moved into an era of "accountability" and "standards." The standards movement completely guides the recent No Child Left Behind Law. But the standards movement has been growing for many years, without many people feeling that education has actually improved. It's time to look at public education in a new light. If we look at the principles formulated by Deming, we will see that we are going in the exact opposite of what a really good system would look like.

Deming's book, *Out of the Crisis* (1982), listed 14 ideas of how to better operate a workplace and to achieve business success. The 14 points are:

- Create and communicate to all employees a statement of the purposes of the company.

- Adapt to the new philosophy of the day; industries and economies are always changing.

- Build quality into a product throughout production.

- End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone; instead, try a long term relationship establishing loyalty and trust.

- Work to constantly improve quality and production.

- Institute on-the-job training.

- Teach and institute leadership to improve all job functions.

- Drive out fear; create trust.

- Strive to reduce intradepartmental conflicts.

- Eliminate exhortations for the work force; instead, focus on the system and morale.

- Eliminate work standard quotas for production and substitute leadership methods for improvements. Eliminate MBO (Management by Objective). Avoid numerical goals; instead, learn the capabilities of processes.

- Remove barriers that rob people of the pride of workmanship.

- Educate with self-improvement programs.

- Include everyone in the company to accomplish the transformation.

These fourteen points can be distilled into three working principles for today's educational environment. I believe that they will lead us a very new and positive direction.

The first of Deming's principles is that the customer or product user must be satisfied with the product or service delivered to them. In education the student is the "user" of what we have to offer, but the student's satisfaction is largely ignored. I was in an 8th grade class and asked one of the students if he had ever been asked to look at a textbook that was being considered for adoption and given a chance to provide input whether or not that book would assist him in learning. The student had this puzzled look and said, "No. We are never asked anything." Yet, this student will be using this product and should have some say in whether it helps or hinders in learning.

When I was in Dallas, I would attend committee meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Dallas Independent School District, and one of their areas of concern was the high number of high school dropouts. But although the experts gave lengthy presentations on the problem and efforts to alleviate it, I never heard of anyone going out to interview the drop outs and ask them why they left. In the business world it is common practice to talk to the consumers of the product or service and ask them to help improve what you are offering.

The second basic Deming principle is that the line workers should be the primary ones to suggest new ways and ideas of how to produce a better product or service. In education the innovations are coming from university professors and book publishers; rarely from the classroom teacher. Again in Dallas,

the school district was considering a textbook series and had many meetings with teachers about which textbook series they should adopt. The teachers overwhelmingly supported a particular book series and even warned that one book series was totally inappropriate. Guess which one got the contract? It was the one the teachers specifically rejected. Deming would be rolling over in his grave.

The third basic Deming principle is to measure the effectiveness through statistical sampling and not base goals upon numeric quotas. Contemporary education, however, reverses this principle and measures everything to the infinite degree. You can go to every state and find pages of quantitative data on how students perform on some standardized test.

Teaching and learning are complex processes that do not calculate easily, and we shouldn't force all assessment into a quantitative box. It is the responsibility of the principal, who has a wealth of qualitative information, to monitor how teaching and learning are progressing. It's not the job of some government bureaucrat looking at pages of numbers. Today, there's such a strong emphasis on numbers that we often forget that they only provide partial information that ignores the larger purpose of education: to assess learning so we can improve it.

On a more practical level, Deming would have been appalled by the insistence that we test every student. It's a waste of time, effort, and money. He would ask, "Why aren't you statistically sampling and using a broader based evaluation system? By insisting that you test every student, you are forcing yourselves to limit your assessment to a very narrow range of skills. This method does not provide you with the answers you need."

Deming's ideas can be of great use to us in education. Hopefully someone will see that these ideas make sense and can vastly improve the current state of affairs.

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Learning as a Process

General Observations and Suggestions for Parents

Philip E. Johnson

If we think of education as being on a spectrum from content to process, or from the goal of learned to the goal of learner, we need to move toward the process, learner end.

We hear the word "fundamentalism" a lot today. Frequently it is used to describe a highly conservative religious sect, such as fundamentalist Christianity or fundamentalist Islam. Many of our social and political problems today seem to be associated with fundamentalist religious groups.

But fundamentalism can also describe a way of thinking. It is the rigid adherence to any belief or doctrine rather than a more flexible, nuanced, thoughtful approach. Fundamentalist thinking says, "I have the answers; don't bother me with more questions or confuse me with facts."

Flexibility is an important virtue in today's sometimes chaotic world. We need the ability to see both sides of an argument, to assess our own understandings, and to make appropriate changes as situations change and new information becomes available. Being comfortable with change is crucial to a fulfilling life.

Consider the dizzying pace of world change. If, for example, engineers or physicians finished medical school or engineering school ten years ago, and have not substantially updated their skills, they are simply out of date. In a similar vein, I idly asked my pharmacist a few days ago what percentage of the medications on the racks behind her were not available ten years ago. She thought for a minute, and estimated 80%.

Our grandparents, and maybe even our parents could live a lifetime on the information they acquired in school, from the then-adequate information transfer system of learning. You and I cannot, and our children can't even approach it. We have to learn from experiences as we go along.

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Process Education

As a teacher, I have long been impressed with the importance of learning how to learn, as distinct from merely learning the content. Good teachers work at least a bit on the learning- to-learn side; they not only help kids learn history, science, or mathematics, but also to learn the processes of learning. In this way, they help students become self-directed learners.

A focus on the process of learning is essential in an economy in which occupations change and develop. Today's knowledge can become dated, but if one knows how to learn, one can keep adapting. As Thomas Friedman (2005, 284) has observed that what

> the "muscles" workers need most are portable benefits and opportunities for lifelong learning. Why those two? Because they are the most important assets in making a worker mobile and adaptable.

Focusing on the process of learning is not a replacement for content transmission, any more than holistic medicine is a replacement for traditional medicine. Rather, process education expands our framework, giving us a more inclusive set of concepts as we move further into the complexities of the communications era. Process education is more related to the "how" than to the "what," more to the question than to the answer, more to the trip than to the destination. It includes such processes as learning to think, to value, to relate, and to feel (see Whitehead 1967).

Process learning is exciting, and supports additional curiosity rather than merely treating the learner as a passive recipient. It deals with "living" wisdom and understanding, rather than dead knowledge. It's dynamic.

Process education is based on experiential learning. It emphasizes helping students to learn-how-to-learn from their experiences, using their own experiences as the basis for educational growth. By evaluating her own experiences, the student becomes a learner, not merely learned. The learner is her own theoretician, and thus part of the flowing, self-expanding experiential cycle of learning. In process learning, the teaching role is facilitative. We move away from a reliance on our expert knowledge and ability to provide answers. We become less of a truth-monger. Instead, we support the process of learning; we ask appropriate questions and orchestrate resources for the learner's use. In this way, we reduce the hierarchical distinction between teacher and learner. The student becomes more of an active seeker, not an empty jug to be filled. The teacher becomes a co-learner and helper; one who makes the learning easier, not merely an expert who fills jugs. When content is presented exclusively as a body of knowledge, as in the traditional style of education, learners can justifiably conclude that meaning comes from the outside. But real meaning comes from within, and process education promotes the learner's own search for it.

Because process education values experiential learning, it changes the role of the community. The community at large is no longer a separate entity that students enter when school is completed. Instead, it becomes more integrated with the school, an ongoing source of the content as students spend time working with people and learning from real life. Students' hours in school are more devoted to internalizing those experiences into their own consciousness, their own lives.

To a certain extent, the processes of learning are "built in." Nevertheless, some people are much better at learning than others. And in my experience, the native skills of learning can be substantially augmented. By focusing on the process of learning, we can help students become active, self-directed learners.

In the following pages, I describe several ways in which parents can help their children improve the processes by which they learn. My hope, however, is that educators will also benefit from the recommendations. For example, teachers may find the recommendations useful when they advise parents about helping children learn at home. What's more, teachers may find the tips useful in their own work.

Tips for Parents

Focus on the "How" of Learning

When your child comes home from school, ask the usual questions, such as "What did you do in school today? What did you learn?" Be sure to be positive, supportive, even excited when your child reports some new learning, but also try to add the question "How did you learn that?" See if your child can iden-

tify the learning skill that was used. This is not easy for the child and will take some time. The first answer you will get to the question "How did you learn that?" is likely to be "The teacher told us." You might point out that this is a very good way to learn, since teachers are usually right, but add to it a question about a related experience of the child's, something to use to corroborate the teacher. Even ask, "Do you agree? What do you think about it?"

Ask Good Questions

There is an art to asking useful questions. One strategy is to give your child a chance to teach you. Try asking questions about what the child knows about. Don't fake ignorance. Just be sure to ask about the information she possesses, and then learn from it.

We often learn the most when we teach someone else, so put away your ego or your need to be all-knowing and let your child to be your teacher. Be proud of being curious, of not knowing but wanting to find out. Modeling your own curiosity will be one of the most helpful things you can do. And an extra reward is that you will be seen as a very good listener!

Encourage Your Child's Curiosity

Curiosity is the precursor of discovery, and when we can orchestrate the two of them — curiosity and discovery — we have set the stage for impressive learning. Curiosity is foiled by providing ready answers. We should not deliberately withhold information when a question is asked, but go a bit slowly in being the fount of information. A more measured response might be "That's a really interesting question. Perhaps the answer is that..." Even better, if you can be honest about it, is: "Good question! I've wondered about that too. How do you suppose we could find out?" Or, "My experience tells me that it is... What's your experience with it?"

Encourage exploration, trials, and mini-experiments on the part of your child. Praise the process more than the outcome. Be able to say to the child (or to yourself) "You sure went about learning that skillfully." Curiosity can be supported, encouraged, and rewarded. Once again, modeling is crucial. When your child sees you being curious, acknowledging that there are lots of things you don't know but

would like to learn, your child will pick up on your attitude and be wonderfully curious herself.

Foster Independence

Encourage your child to figure things out for herself. This is easier said than done, of course, in today's world of high tech equipment and complex technology. But when the VCR needs to be programmed, or the term paper needs to be organized, or your teen can't get the computer to do what he wants it to do, don't immediately try to solve the problem yourself (or quickly call the computer expert). Instead, first see what the child can do about it. You might ask some your child to say what the problem is, and whether she has encountered it before and what she did about it then, and then invite her to brainstorm with you. Respect her ideas and give her time to come up with the solutions. Phrase your own suggestions not as solutions but as alternatives with questions: "What would you think of trying?"

Value Inductive learning

There are generally two rather distinct ways to learn something new. One way is the traditional method of learning from an expert, as when one takes notes during a lecture. Quite often the expert presents information in terms of abstract principles, as when a lecturer explains a law of physics or a principle of computer programming and then uses it to solve a particular problem. The other method, no better or worse, but just different, involves simply having an experience, such as playing with a machine. "I wonder what happens when I click on this button?" Then one moves from that experience to a higher level, in essence building a personal theory of how the machine works. In the literature on learning, this second style is often called *inductive*.

It doesn't deduce answers from abstract principles. Rather, it starts with individual instances, like hands-on experiences, and moving toward a more general position. When being inductive, the learner has an experience, like trying something with the computer, then analyzes the experience, such as "Oh, I see. When I click on that button, the computer...."

When you help your child to be a learner, do your best to be on the inductive side of the spectrum. Ask questions such as, "What happened when you tried it?" "What do you suppose that means?," or "What

can you conclude from that?" Because schools typically neglect the inductive approach, it can be particularly helpful when parents foster it.

Support Your Child's Projects

Projects, such as science projects, are fortunately a favorite technique of many enlightened teachers. Children can be helped to determine for themselves an interesting topic or a question that they would like to investigate. Projects are highly motivational, for this very reason, and are another excellent way to use an inductive style. Sometimes in schools, however, projects turn into an opportunity for merely showcasing the students' work, and we don't get a sense of what went into the process.

You can help turn attention to the process dimension. Ask your child details about the project. How did she begin, how did she decide to use this material, what did she do next? Try to elicit your child's thoughts and feelings about *how* she learned from doing the project, not only *wha*t he learned. You can also undertake projects of your own with your child — a wonderful way to become a colleague of your youngster as you work together on an issue which you both want to explore. The project might involve the use of reference materials, interviews with persons in the community, or the use of the astounding research capabilities of the Internet.

Systems

Issues of importance in today's complex world — from personal to interpersonal to international — are highly complex. They frequently require thinking in systems. Several years ago, I observed a brilliant young teacher teach this approach in a seventh grade science class. The children viewed a wonderful film, which described how a farmer dammed up a stream in order to provide power, through a water wheel, to grind his grain. But the dammed up stream created ecological changes that affected the fields where the grain was grown, and a chain of events caused extensive problems. The point was that Factor A can influence Factor B, which then influences Factor C, which can in turn go back to influence Factor A. The teacher used the film as a model for many other systems, and helped the seventh graders to develop skills in understanding more complex systems, based on their own experiences. The kids were really turned on. If

only our political leaders were more aware of systems, and could think in more than a lineal fashion! *When a Butterfly Sneezes: A Guide for Helping Kids Explore Interconnections in Our World Through Favorite Stories* by Linda Booth Sweeney (2001) is a delightful guide to learning systems thinking. It describes ways to help children become systems thinkers through stories and has been highly praised by Peter Senge, the author of the acclaimed *The Fifth Discipline*.

Science as Process

It is very important to keep in mind that science is an approach rather than a body of facts. Scientists try to be open-minded, to make decisions on the basis of evidence, to form hypotheses in ways that enable them to draw conclusions. Many emphasize that real discovery also involves periods of just "poking around" to see what happens. The best scientists are often rather playful and have a passion for the process. Try to keep these aspects of science in mind when your child talks to you about homework or shows an interest in scientific topics. Often, of course, you child will just want to know the "the answers" that will be on a test. But look for opportunities to encourage the more enjoyable, investigative *process* of science. Ask questions such as, "How did the scientist learn that that was true?" In daily life, ask questions such as, "How can we know which fertilizer will work best?" "Does our dog know who's coming to the door by sound or smell? How can we experiment to find out?"

Field Trips

How about using a family trip or even a vacation as the source of learning for yourself and your child? "Of course," you say. "Easy. I do it all the time." But I'm suggesting something more than the usual pointing out scenic attractions, mentioning local history, visiting museums, checking out maps. Also consider the opportunities for focusing on the process of active learning. You might have her help you plan the trip, or be the navigator. Help your child sharpen her observational skills by reinforcing her ability to notice things along the way. After the museum or a stop at the visitor center, discuss what you learned or saw, and model your own pleasure in learning new things. On the road, keep your own curiosity alive and share your questions with your child. "I wonder

what kind of bird that is? Let's look it up in the guide when we get home!"

You might suggest that your child keep a journal, perhaps including drawings of things he sees along the way, or use the family camera or a camera of his own. It's relatively easy to do, and helps children to learn from their own experience rather than merely from presentations or a book. It also helps to define the parental role as one who arranging resources rather than simply being the expert. It lets us be more of a colleague and less of a boss.

Study Skills

One aspect of learning to learn, if a bit on the mundane side, is the area of study skills and memory aids. These are often taught in schools and can be very useful. Here is one from myown experience as a student.

The acronym SQ3R (Robinson 1961) describes a reading skill process that has made a substantial difference in my life. Bless the teacher who shared it with me! It's merely a pattern for effective reading of nonfiction that helps one to get maximum information from reading.

The "S" stands for *Survey*, and for me this means scanning the table of contents and looking at how the chapters are organized. Are there any exercises or other useful supplements at the end of each chapter, such as bibliographies or other similar aids? I read the information on the jacket and the preface, look over photos, charts and tables, and in general get an idea of what this book or article is going to be about.

"Q" means *Question*. I ask myself what I will learn from this book, what questions will it answer for me, how will it fit into my existing frames of reference, and how will it relate to what I already know?

The first R is for *Read*. I read the book, sometimes almost skimming if the information is not relevant to me, or I know it already; sometimes very carefully, repeating sentences and paragraphs if necessary. I underline, write in the margins, and use a highlighter. (My mother would never approve; one must not write in books!) I keep my questions from the "Q" stage in mind.

The second R is for *Review*. I go back over any especially interesting or useful parts, paying close attention to my marginal notes and highlighting. I pay

particular attention to how the various pieces of the book relate to each other and try to formulate connections, summarize concepts, make generalizations. Were my questions answered?

The final R stands for *Recite*. Not necessarily in the traditional way, but I try to find someone to tell about what I have learned. (Emma, our Welsh Corgi, listens very well, and cocks her head to let me know if an idea appeals to her.) Sometimes my reciting takes the form of a few minutes spent at the computer writing notes about the book or article.

SQ3R is merely one of many study skills. Even the youngest child can use it, or an adaptation of it. Although study skills generally have to do with a relatively simple kind of learning, almost rote, they can be crucial, and make the difference between success and failure in school.

Conclusion

If we think of education as being on a spectrum from content to process, or from the goal of learned to the goal of learner, we need to move toward the process, learner end. The world is changing, and we all need to be self-learners, able to adapt to that changing world, able to be independent thinkers. We should not be fundamentalists! And it can be done. There are many ways to help children learn the processes of learning, to become flexible, able to look at both sides of a question, to assemble the resources and make their own decisions. The role of the teacher/parent changes from one of expert and director to one of colleague and supporter. The role of the child changes from being a sponge or a blank slate to being a more active participant in the process.

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Aspects of a Spiritual Life

Rupert Collister

Awe, simplicity, living in the moment, and community are some of the characteristics of indigenous spirituality that we need to pay more attention to today.

For years, the entire notion of soul was problematic to me. I primarily thought of it as the moral and ethical core of a person. But as I have thought about the soul, I have come to see it as the animating essence of any entity, not just human beings. The soul speaks to the *deep mystery of the cosmos* and is *naturally in tune with it*. It is the soul that makes us who we are. It affects the way people act and interact with those around them and the environment they inhabit.

In the West spirituality seems to have been superceded by technologicalism, consumerism, and to a lesser extent religionism. However, indigenous cultures are still rooted in deep spirituality, at least to the extent they are in touch with their traditions. In the East, too, ancient philosophies still foster in some the development of the soul through virtuous living. But Western culture seems to suffer from a state of spiritual bankruptcy; we are often driven by the acquisition of "things" rather than by receptivity to the spiritually rich environment the universe offers.

Many people are aware of this spiritual vacuum, and some are searching for something to fill that void. This search has led to a growing interest in other, more ancient cultures, traditions, and practices, but it is questionable whether popular spiritual practice really does nourish the soul. The adoption of spiritual practice is often a piecemeal affair, a kind of "popcorn spirituality." For example, people will take up Tai Chi but not the other aspects of Taoism. Or some people will attempt to meditate without adopting spiritual practice for their bodies and new ways of interacting with the world. The ancient philosophies focus on a synthesis of mind/body clarity to achieve spirituality and urge spiritual practice through all actions and interactions. But in the modern West, attempts at spirituality are flawed by a worldview that fosters fragmentation.

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In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to illuminate some of the aspects of spiritual experience, recognizing that they are all deeply interrelated parts of a whole.

Awe

Awe is more than a description of a feeling; it is a direct experience. It can occur in the moment you see the perfection of a flower, the magnificence of a mountain, or the calmness of a flowing river — or by standing on a rock ledge and looking into the stormy sea. I believe that at these moments, one senses that what one perceives is but an example of a greater harmony in the world. These moments of awe are windows into the universal balance and harmony that is the web of life. It is what some call the Tao, that which *is* but cannot be understood (Grigg 1989). To me, awe is being deeply moved by the presence of beauty and natural power that reflects the harmonious interconnectedness of the natural world.

Modern Western society does not countenance the existence of awe simply because the Tao cannot be understood from within the Western worldview. The Tao cannot be quantified, measured, and described in scientific detail. Not only is awe being deeply moved by this natural power, but it is acknowledging the part the self plays in the universe, not measuring that part against other elements but acknowledging the mutuality of all the elements in the web of life. Awe is about *feeling* the mystery of life intuitively rather than *knowing* scientifically the how and why of life. To feel and acknowledge awe in the wonders of the natural world is to recognize that one's own thought is limited. Allowing ourselves to wonder, in turn allows us to be open to *feeling* rather than thinking.

Simplicity

Simplicity is a paradox. It's not easy to achieve. One can, of course, simply drop out of conventional life, but this means ignoring the very real complexity that exists. I believe, instead, that achieving simplicity comes about through rediscovering the basics. This is not some "back to basics" catchy sound bite, but a deep recognition of the validity of the wisdom contained in the simplicity and harmony of perennial philosophy. In practical terms, we achieve simplicity by pursuing a meaningful purpose or calling. In this way, we focus on the essential and participate in the enriching of the whole, of nature and community.

As we pursue simplicity, we often find that what most interferes with the task is ambition. Ambition puts us apart from life in an egoistic, superior way. It also produces conflict and imbalance. To me simplicity is about *following a path of meaningful purpose without ambition*.

John Donnelly, who has thought deeply about this matter and has inspired my own work, talks about "engaged service," which I relate to meaningful purpose. He (2002) writes:

> [meaningful purpose] is more than just an act, it is a commitment. It is a commitment to life, to betterment, to self and other. It is a commitment to the realization that a singular act generated by a single individual is the pathway to heal the universe and that single steps are the root of all transformation.

Living in the Moment

As William Crain (2003) has emphasized, modern life focuses on the future. We take it for granted that we should pursue plans, goals, and dreams in life. This focus, Crain argues, makes it difficult to appreciate children as they are. More broadly, we have difficulty living in the moment, yet unless we do, we cannot appreciate life in its fullest sense.

Living in the moment is closely related to awe. It is being fully present in our bodies at any given time and space, being focused on a single entity or event so that you absorb everything about that entity or event while being expansive in relation to that entity or event. This means not being so narrowly focused on, say, a flower that you take in just the color, shape, movement, or aroma. It is not a matter of analysis; instead, it is taking the object in within its full, immediate context. Ultimately, it means acknowledging the role this flower has in the universe and its place in the whole web of life. Living in the moment is like looking at everything as if it were a fragment of a hologram rather than a fragment of a picture.

When a picture is broken into small pieces one can pick up any piece and only see a fragment of the whole. When one breaks a hologram you will see the whole of the image in every single piece.

Hence living in the moment is allowing oneself to see the whole of life in every interaction we have, allowing us *to respect and learn from the ordinary in all its simplicities*. It is our worldview that creates complexities around the simple. Living in the moment is the ultimate educative and reflective experience and as such may be *the* catalyst for transformation of the self.

Community

Human beings inhabit a complex environment of multiple "nested structures," so any individual also is part of progressively larger and more complex structures, like three-dimensional ripples on a pond. The most fulfilling structures provide a sense of community. The word *community* comes from two (or three) words, common and unity, (the third being *muni* — Latin for *gift*) so community, is — to share "the *gift of common oneness* with other people" (Bopp and Bopp 2001). But although humans are communal beings, society is increasingly becoming fragmented. As a result, feelings of despair and hopelessness pervade society at all levels.

As I noted above, our ancestors shared a community-based, inclusive, and mutually supporting relationship with the universe. This relationship provided a moral and ethical framework on which the norms and mores of society were built. We still inhabit the same place but we endure it in isolation. We persist in concentrating on the minute focus of our own lives rather than the expansive focus that comes from acknowledging the interconnectedness of all things. This imbalance is brought about by the perceived need to work against what is happening to us, to struggle at every opportunity.

This struggle clouds our thinking. We can restore balance by becoming in tune with the way of things. We need to experience the contexts of our lives in a balanced way and to have genuine relationships with those around us.

Building sustainable communities is rooted in transformation. Transformation requires a re-visioning of society. If we attempt to re-vision our lives from within our flawed paradigm, all we will achieve is chaos. By re-visioning a society based on common oneness and common doing, everything and everybody can benefit just because they *are*.

The efforts to preserve and honor traditional ways of life, described in the Winter 2004 issue of *Encounter* (Stuchul and Prakash 2004; Teran 2004) suggest ways of working on behalf of true communities. But we also can work on transforming our own communities, beginning with our personal efforts to foster genuine relationships and value people as they are.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that humans are spiritual beings, but in this modern age many of us have lost our way. Often we do not know what we have lost — or how to get it back. We live in the desert of meaninglessness, distracted by all that is around us.

Awe shows us the beautiful simplicity in the complexity of the universe, a simplicity that reflects the harmonious interconnectedness of life. When we realize that everything we do — and do not do — has effects way beyond our own lives, we begin to glimpse the wonder that is the web of life. These glimpses put into proportion the incidents that impact on our lives, as individuals and communities.

Living in the moment provides a specificity of focus while it reinforces the sense that everything exists within a context. There is interconnectedness in the universe we inhabit.

Communities will only begin to become sustainable when we realize that our behavior is rooted in a flawed paradigm and when we allow the power of Nature to guide us through our lives in an environment of reciprocity. It is clear the human race will lose its spiritual connection if it cannot re-vision life. Dorje (2001) reminds us that "things are simply as real as they are real, and one starting point is as good as another." So we always have an opportunity to live a good and balanced life.

Finally Grigg (1989) notes that

> awe is the acknowledgment of humility.… From awe comes respect. From respect comes restraint. Without restraint there will be misfortune.

We should keep his words in mind as we go about our business as educators and members of the universal community.

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Three Poems by Richard Lewis

Layers of stars
are falling
outside our window.

Children rush
everywhere
trying to catch
them.

One by one
the stars
hide.

One by one
the stars
echo.

One by one
the children's eyes
are the echoing
light.

One by one
the lights
vanish.

One by one
fireflies
are turning
themselves

into

stars.

The river

took
the
mountain
aside

and

in
earthly
tones

earthly
kindness

planted
a
tree

born

in
time

for
spring.

Our victory is surely
how much of a shell

we still are.

Our thoughts
curve
around
us,

barely touching
the waters

we shape
into words.

RICHARD LEWIS is founder and director of the Touchstone Center for Children in New York City. His most recent books include *A Tree Lives* and *Cave: An Evocation of the Beginnings of Art*, both published by Touchstone Center Publications.

The True Self

Kate McReynolds

In his editorial, *The True Self*, William Crain suggests two ways that educators can help children develop a solid sense of self: independent problem solving and creative projects. I know from observing my own children's experiences and those of their classmates that given such opportunities children will flourish in the way Crain describes.

The teachers in our neighborhood public elementary school fostered independent thinking through the use of Kamii's constructivism. For example, the children were not taught the standard algorithms for solving arithmetic problems; rather they were given the opportunity to discover and invent solutions to problems that emerged or were crafted by the teacher. I vividly recall the day my daughter, then in second grade, excitedly told me that she had discovered fractions and how useful they are. At snack time, the children had been sitting in groups of four. The teacher had only enough brownies to give three to each group. She asked the children to see if they could figure out a way to divide the brownies so that each child received an equal share. With her group mates, my daughter discovered that the answer was three-fourths. More importantly, as she told me the story, my daughter illustrated, with diagrams and numbers, that she clearly understood that she had discovered a mathematical principle.

Another method used in this school took me several years to fully appreciate. Starting in about first grade and most days thereafter until fifth grade graduation, the children were given a daily number. Turning conventional math instruction on its head, where children are given problems and asked to calculate the correct answer, the daily number was the answer. The children were invited to create as many ways to get that answer as they could invent. Through their own thinking and by listening to their peers during math congress, the large group sharing time, the children learned that there were many ways to get to the "right" answer. Furthermore, they developed the attitude that answers (being provided) are much less interesting than the myriad and often surprising formulas they, the students, created.

The formulas the children invented to produce the daily number became increasingly complicated as the numbers grew in magnitude and complexity. During the fifth grade, by which time the daily number was in the millions, two very important developments occurred. One afternoon as my daughter was playing the daily number game (as she viewed it), she asked me if I thought there were more ways to get to the number than the several she had invented. As I wondered how best to answer her, I saw her face change as she made one of her most important mathematical discoveries to date. In that moment she had realized that there were literally millions of mathematical formulas that would yield the daily number. She was dazzled by the possibilities and quickly understood that a systematic approach yielded classes of formulas, that within each class one could invent a way to calculate how many formulas could be derived, and so on. It was at this point that the teacher began introducing names for the mathematical laws and properties that the children were discovering. Discussions during math congress shifted now as children invoked mathematical laws to explain why their formulas worked. Astonishingly, children who had never been taught the traditional algorithms for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division were demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of foundational principles.

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It was at this same time that most of the children reached the limit of their capacity to manipulate large numbers in their heads. Although it was not required, my daughter and many of her classmates often preferred to do their mathematical calculations mentally. Mentally operating on seven- or eight-digit numbers using novel methods poses quite a challenge to memory and concentration, and so in response to their need, the teacher taught the children standard algorithms. They learned these methods quickly and made good use of them. But, contrary to the popular belief that early exposure to mathematical algorithms provides the necessary foundation for math achievement, these children viewed them as nothing more than nifty techniques that facilitated their mathematical reasoning. Furthermore, because they had been allowed to develop strong individual identities as learners and problem solvers, the children experienced the teacher's instruction as a meaningful solution to a personal need, and thus were eager to integrate the new knowledge.

I think it is obvious that the work these children were doing — work that fostered independent thinking, self-confidence, and individuality — was essentially creative. Given the freedom and the environmental support to work independently on age-appropriate projects, creatively will flourish. It is here, at the intersection of independence and creativity that the true self develops. Creative living is at the heart of Winnicott's (1986) concept of the true self and, as Crain mentions, is distinguished by the spontaneous gesture. Spontaneity, a human quality that by definition cannot be taught, nor taken in from the external environment, is the source of play. Winnicott maintained that play might be the only source of true creativity (Winnicott 1986), and as such, is essential to the development of the true self. Young children who have been provided plenty of time and freedom to play without excessive demands to conform to external rules and structure will come to school ready to make good use of their well developed spontaneous creativity. It was no accident that my daughter viewed the daily number challenge as a game. She was given the freedom to create her own solutions, the very essence of play, and in the process became a fine mathematician. I

will emphasize that she and her classmates were given frequent opportunities for free play and self-directed creative projects, activities that refresh and invigorate the self, leading to the consolidation of knowledge and to further self-development. Now a junior at a highly competitive, traditional math and

> *Given the freedom and the environmental support to work independently on age-appropriate projects, creatively will flourish. It is at the intersection of independence and creativity that the true self develops.*

science high school, my daughter continues to invent novel solutions to complex problems for which she cannot remember the traditional formulas being taught, and she is not unique. Children who are given the opportunity to find their own solutions to problems and to engage in creative pursuits can do so at every level of instruction. To Crain's suggestions, I would add only one, let the children play, for in this way too, children construct themselves and their knowledge of the world.

In agreeing with Crain's editorial, I referred to my children's academic success within a school that incorporated the methods he suggests. It might therefore appear that I am proposing that we should foster the true self because it promotes academic achievement. That is not the case. As my children, both in high school now, have advanced through the grades, their independence of mind and individuality have often worked against them when they are evaluated by conventional standards. My son, for example, though courteous and well behaved, is frequently at odds with teachers who insist that he learn material in the one way presented, or who require him to master someone else's solution to a problem, e.g., the common interpretation of a literary classic. He has his own ideas; that is, he wants to bring himself to the work, but is rarely invited to.
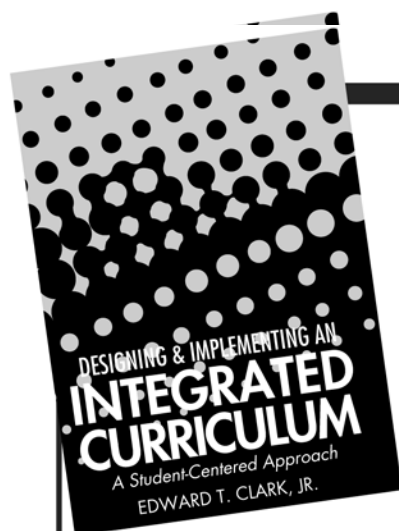
Similarly, my daughter has consistently chosen to devote much of her free time to non-academic pursuits such as singing and musical theater. As a result, she rarely completes all of her assigned homework, doing only what she determines is useful and necessary.

Both my children are dealing with the consequences of self-determination, including teacher disapproval and lower marks than they would receive if they were more compliant. More fundamentally, they are wrestling with the problem Crain points to in his concluding remarks: Educational methods that nurture the self by promoting independent thinking and creativity contradict contemporary values. I know where I stand on this issue — with Winnicott, who maintained that "creative living is always more important for the individual than doing well" (Winnicott 1986, 53). As for my children, I have every confidence that they will find the right solution.

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Book Reviews

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

By Richard Louv

Published by Algonquin Books (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005)

Reviewed by William Crain

Early in this book, Richard Louv quotes a mother who had taken her kids skiing in Colorado. "It was a perfect, quiet day," she remembered. "The kids are skiing down the mountain — and they've got their *headphones* on. They can't enjoy just hearing nature and being out there alone." (p. 12)

This mother is just one of the many people Louv, a columnist for the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, interviewed for this book. Together, they tell a compelling story about the contemporary child's alienation from the natural world. The reasons, Louv points out, are varied. One factor, illustrated by the youngsters on the ski trip, is the lure of electronic technology. Today's kids are pulled away from nature by video games, television, iPods, and the Internet.

Contemporary children also have less contact with nature because less nature exists. Much wild land has been graded and built upon. Park space is diminishing, and much of it consists of manicured playing fields for structured recreation. And even if children do find wild areas to explore, parents have deep concerns about their safety. Parents are often so fearful that they insist on tight control. One Kansas father told Louv, "I have a rule. I want to know where my kid is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week…. Which house. Which square foot. Which telephone number" (p. 124).

It's not just individual parents, but entire communities that restrict children's free outdoor play. Envi-ronmental regulations, park rules, and fear of litigation send children the "chilling message … that free-range play is unwelcome, that organized sports on manicured playing fields is the only officially sanctioned form of outdoor recreation." (p. 31). Rick, a father in a new housing development, says,

> We tell them to go outside and play. But where? How? Join another organized sport? Some kids don't want to be organized all the time. They want to let their imaginations run; they want to see where a stream of water takes them. (p. 31)

Louv believes another important factor is the way we teach biology and nature studies. The instruction is overly abstract and bookish, and, as a consequence, students' knowledge is overly intellectualized. The animal rights movement, Louv adds, is also guilty of an intellectualized approach. It has increased young people's awareness of abuses in factory farms, but "such knowledge … does not necessarily mean that young people are personally involved with their food sources" (p. 21).

In combination, Louv argues, these factors have changed the nature of childhood. More specifically, the baby boomers — "Americans born between 1946 and 1964 — may constitute the last generation of Americans to share an intimate, familial attachment to the land and water." (p. 19).

Louv proposes that the consequences of this loss are so severe that children and adults suffer from a "Nature-deficit disorder." The term is not intended to be a new medical diagnosis, but a description of "the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses" (p. 34). Louv also suggests that isolation from nature is weakening our creativity and our spirituality — our sense that there is more to existence than the self and our need to love and respect all life. To remedy this nature deficit disorder, Louv calls for a "nature–child reunion" (p. 35).

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Louv writes as a journalist rather than as an academician, so readers should not expect summaries of the research findings that support his views. Instead, Louv interviews the researchers, who provide personal statements on what they have found.

The book, to be sure, does include a variety of national statistics. For example, there is information on the incidence of obesity in children (p. 47), the percentage of children who can do more than one pull-up (p. 131), and the projected decline in forests by the year 2022 (p. 30). The book also summarizes many projects designed to bring children back in touch with nature. Unfortunately, the book lacks an index, so it's difficult to use it as a resource with respect to these statistics and projects. The book is clearly targeted for general audiences rather than scholars.

Last Child in the Woods is a wonderfully written book that is fun to read. It has received favorable reviews nationwide. Its central message, that children need much more contact with nature, has gained considerable attention, and this is a significant contribution.

However, I have a strong reservation. Louv advocates hunting and fishing. These activities, he emphasizes, bring children and adults into direct contract with nature, increasing their first-hand knowledge of it.

Louv is right about this, of course. But are hunting and fishing compatible with a reverence for all life?

I realize that there are circumstances in which people do revere life but nevertheless must kill animals in order to live. The indigenous people of the Arctic coast are a case in point (Nelson 1993). But such instances are the exception in contemporary life. It is now clear that most of us can live quite well without eating meat at all (Robbins 1987). Moreover, the hunting and fishing that Louv often defends are purely for *sport*, and I don't see how blood sports are compatible with a deep respect for all living things.

Louv offers other arguments in favor of hunting and fishing. He notes that hunting and fishing groups do a lot to work to protect open space. Environmentalists who oppose hunting and fishing risk the loss of important allies. This is true, but some people, like me, place too high a value on the life of each animal to sacrifice it in our work for open space. If we lose hunters as allies, we must just work harder.

Louv also argues that hunting and fishing introduce children first-hand to the moral complexities of nature. But must an animal's life be sacrificed for this purpose? We wouldn't sacrifice a human life to promote children's moral thinking. Young people don't need to kill to be able to grapple with the ethical issues involved in the act.

When it comes to fishing, Louv says the central question is whether fish feel pain. However, Louv decides not to delve into the controversy, saying only that the answer "depends on your definition of pain and suffering," and that the answer "is not as clear as it may seem" (pp. 192-193). For a writer who has vigorously advocated direct experience with nature, this is an odd retreat into the intellectual realm of abstract definitions. Anyone who has watched a landed fish gasping for oxygen as it vainly struggles to survive should be able to identify with the fish's pain and suffering.

Finally, Louv, points out that fishing and hunting promote parent/child bonds. He even provides a personal anecdote. One day, he visited his 22-year-old son Jason in New York City, and while the two were relaxing beside a pond in Central Park, they saw a man hook a bass. Suddenly it

> grabbed the lure, exploded in the air and tail-danced across the water. Jason and I both laughed with surprise, and I suddenly missed the many hours we fished together when he was a little boy. (p. 193)

A tender moment indeed — except for the fish.

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Real Schools
In Their Own Words

Edited by Mary M. Leue

Published by Downto Earth Books, 2005

Reviewed by Esther Willison

Mary Leue, the editor of *Real Schools: In Their Own Words*, has done an excellent job of including a wide variety of schools. This review is a collection of mini-reviews of many of the essays on schools in the book. There is no particular reason why I have mentioned some and not others. They are all schools and writers from whom we can learn.

In a recent email to me, Leue wrote:

> Recognizing schools that honor and nourish children has always been far too limited in the United States. Countries like India, Japan, the Ukraine and New Zealand are ahead of "us" in this respect. My hope is that this collection of profiles and essays, drawn from the schools themselves which offer a promise to enhance the lives of children, will help to turn the tide of American opinion concerning the education of our young people.

Twenty-three of the 27 schools in the book are in the United States, four in other countries; 19 are still active; eight are no longer in existence.

In 1971, I wrote A. S. Neil, asking him for advice about starting a free school. His response began:

> Good news about that school you want to open. Your chief difficulty will be to get enough parents near you who believe in freedom, that is, if it is to be a day school. I could not have Summerhill as a day school because few around would send their kids….

He ended the letter with "go on seeking freedom in spite of the silent majority that is anti-life. Thine, A. S. Neil." *Real Schools: In Their Own Words* is a powerful testimony to 27 schools that have been, and many still are, allowing children the freedom to be themselves, the freedom to learn, whatever their backgrounds, and the freedom to pursue their learn-ing skills to the fullest. These schools, like Neill's, are "on the side of the child."

Mary Leue includes an essay by Adam Adler about her own school, The Free School, in Albany, NY. Adler spent a week visiting The Free School in 1994. He writes that

> Faculties of Education should place more emphasis on diversification and student-centered teaching strategies, if that is how we are ultimately expected to teach…. An overview course in alternative educational practices, as well as a course in Alternative Education, would inform trainees as to the choices available for teaching style and classroom organization, outside of the standard public school style. As part of such courses, a link could be established with a number of alternative schools which would give trainees the option of being involved in visits such as the one I had at The Free School…. Such courses might generate pro-educational change in the public schools.

Jerry Mintz started the Shaker Mountain School in 1968, in Burlington, VT, with two full-time and two part-time students. He writes that

> during those first two weeks we met wherever we could … at the old Fire Station … at an artists loft … at the old police station (using traffic counts to learn math skills). We spent a lot of time going places in my old Plymouth sedan … we thought about calling ourselves "The Plymouth School."

Mintz took his students everywhere: They saw a "unique sculptural exhibit" at a marble quarry; they visited a horse farm and a poultry farm (planning an egg-hatching project). They visited a metal shop where they learned how to make metal sculptures and they chopped wood, earning money for the school. "We introduced history and art in the

ESTHER K. WILLISON was one of the founders in 1971 of an alternative public school in Schenectady, NY, where she taught until 1985. She also has been the assistant director of a teen theater group that brings AIDS education into the public schools. Her writing has appeared in the *Harrington Lesbian Fiction Quarterly* and numerous other publications. She is currently on the staff of The Open Door Bookstore in Schenectady. Esther lives with her partner of 24 years and has one daughter.

Williston graveyard, doing some remarkably good grave rubbings, good enough to sell for fifteen or twenty dollars."

Mintz describes the development of the school in terms of a democratic society. In the early years decisions were made by a straight majority. Later the school used this method as well as decision by consensus of the group. The school chose an interesting blend of both democratic methods. Mintz's description of how this process empowered the students, particularly those who were considered "at risk," is exciting and thought provoking.

Dan Greenberg, and his colleagues, before starting the Sudbury Valley School, in Framingham, MA,

> were convinced that the time had come for a complete re-examination of what it is that a school had to be about if it were to serve as an appropriate agent of society…. So we spent several years working on this, trying to gain an understanding of what school is.

They knew the *tabula rasa* mode, children as a clean slate, born as infants with nothing in their heads, was the utter negation of the individual as an independent human being. They found that 2000 years ago Aristotle

> developed other models that seemed to us … to be much more realistic and much more in line with what we saw to be the nature of the human species. [Aristotle] considered children from birth as being naturally curious — not born with blank minds, but on the contrary, born with … the need to reach out, to explore, to seek to understand the world and make sense of it.

So the development of the Sudbury Valley School, like all the others in this book, came after years of thinking and planning. Now, says Greenberg, the Sudbury Valley School is a "true Democratic republic of children and adults working together."

Armin Luthi , director of the Ecole d'Humanite, in Goldern Switzerland, reports that

> not much has changed in the public school since the time when I was a high school student. Today, after all these years, the school system still puts more emphasis on what a student can't do than on what he can …. Anxiety about grades is

still a major source of motivation…. L' ecole d'Humanite tries to provide education without anxiety. There are no grades, no report cards, no tests, no compulsion to stay in one's seat for hours at a time, little homework. Each student has a voice in creating his or her curriculum…. The student himself evaluates his own success and difficulties … there is consistent education to prepare young people to take an active part in all aspects of life, as well as to develop tolerance among students and faculty of various nationalities, races, religions, social classes and degrees of ability.

Freedom, in one form or another, is the theme for all of these schools. Freedom from anxiety and oppression, freedom of expression, the freedom of an open environment, the freedom to learn from failure as well as success. These founders, these teachers, and these children are not afraid of freedom. Free of the traditional school restrictions and competition, they can be supportive of each other in a growing community "in spite of the silent majority that is anti-life."

"Central Park East: An Alternative Story," as told by Deborah Meier, is a fascinating one. Central Park East, according to Meier,

> is a progressive [public] school in the tradition of New York's so many independent private schools. Central Park East is firmly fixed within New York's bureaucracy. As its founding principal I remain both ecstatic and amazed…. Central Park East is a dream come true.

This is a school I can relate to, having been one of the founders of The Open School, an ungraded alternative public school, in 1971, in Schenectady, NY. To be able to create a free environment, a child-centered institution, a place of constant change and excitement within the more stationary public school system is indeed an ecstatic experience. It is not without its problems, of course, and Meier describes the history and transformation of Central Park East with detail and precision.

Meier's questions about democratic methods and sharing of decision making is familiar yet particular to her school. I learned a great deal from this essay. She also comments that

the oddest thing of all is that the incredible experience of District #4 has had so little impact on the rest of New York City. Here and there, another district will experiment … but few are willing to break out of the traditional mold.

We found the same thing to be true in Schenectady. It still amazes me that most public school systems, in spite of innovations, maintain the same restricted classrooms we had a hundred years ago.

Bob Ferris, one of the founders of The New Orleans Free School speaks for all of us when he says that

> Twenty years ago we were strong willed full of energy, sure we were right and hell bent on changing the course of history … now we are older and no longer wild and crazy; we have become pensive and reflective.

It appears, however, from Ferris's current statements, that he, happily, is still trying to "change the course of history" by insisting that "we must change our schools from convergent compliancy to divergent creative living organizations." Good for him!

A houseparent and teacher at The Meeting School in Rindge, NH, Judith Randall, talks about "The Teenage Spirit." She cites Patricia Carini, founder of The Prospect School in Bennington, VT. Carini helped us with the development of The Open School; she has a unique sensitivity to the adolescent need for recognition, for belonging.

Randall gives us excellent definitions of adolescence and its manifestations and then illustrates these views with the personal history of one child. Randall's essay is more personal than some of the others in that she shares what she has learned about adolescents and is anxious for her readers to meet them with compassion.

> Twenty three years ago, in the fall of 1969, I was one of four public school teachers who quit their jobs to open an alternative school in Rockland County, New York. We were heavily influenced by A. S. Neill's Summerhill.

With these words Alice Girard begins her perceptive account of the beginning and ending, after 21 years, of The Rockland Project School. The school, like Summerhill, was one of the few places where stu-

dents did not have to attend classes. Being ambivalent about this herself, Girard analyzes this in a provocative manner and concludes that not having to go to class was the best thing for some kids.

Girard began to wonder how some of the students who could choose not to attend classes ultimately fared. She arranged for a Project School reunion. Over one hundred people showed up.

> The most valuable part for me, however, was to meet again those students from the first few years, when noone had to go to classes. I should have known they would be capable, interesting, responsible people. They had managed the transition to other schools and often gone to college.

One of my favorite sections of the book, of course, includes several essays about A. S. Neill and Summerhill. The last essay in the section is entitled "A. S. Neil as a Father: A Personal Memory" by Zoe Neill Readhead.

> Neill's ideas on child-rearing and education did not enter my life on a conscious level until I was in my teens. In other words, although I lived a special and unique childhood because of his ideas, on a day-to-day basis I was not really aware of the significance of it all.

She continues, expanding our view of Neill in many ways, some of which are surprising.

A British teacher, Jon Potter, writes about the Little Commonwealth school for delinquent children in Dorset, England, and about Homer Lane, the founder of the school. Lane believed that man was not composed of good and evil in equal parts. On the contrary, he believed that "almost all delinquent children will resolve their difficulties in an atmosphere of freedom and encouragement." In the short time the Little Commonwealth existed, Lane was able to prove that it is possible for delinquents to govern themselves.

A. S. Neill who, according to Potter, regarded Lane as the most influential factor in his life, asks the question:

> Why does humanity choose a Hitler and not Homer Lane? Why does it choose war and not peace, inhumanity towards criminals rather

than psychological and social treatment? Perhaps because it is afraid of love, of tenderness."

The Laneites, Potter reminds us, are very few in number. Few or no, this chapter of the book is important.

The Contra Costa Alternative School's director, Joel Weber, gives a sermon each year in the church where the school is located. The sermon included in *Real Schools* was given in 1992. Weber's message of trust in our children gives them credit for knowing how to learn, for choosing wisely. His message to the congregation is appropriately called a "sermon," as it is a tribute to human worth; it is a sermon full of love for children, full of reverence for their potential in a free environment. It is a sermon of respect and admiration for all children. It is recognition of the gifts we are able to bestow upon one another. It is a sermon worth listening to.

Judith Kaufman, the book review editor of *Encounter*, pointed out to me that "real schools" are places where learning takes place in everyday life, where learning is a natural part of everything we do. Therefore, alternative schools are not necessarily idealist places, different from the "real" world. From that observation I surmise that most alternative schools simply include learning as it already exists in the lives of their students. Imagine getting dressed in the morning in separate compartments, a room in which to put your underwear on, another room for shirts and a separate pants room, still another for shoes and socks. That would make dressing more difficult. As it is, our clothes are usually together and each person chooses his or her own way of putting them on. Learning to read need not be separated from life's other activities; it includes street signs and TV captions and making paper airplane instructions. Learning for students in "real schools" includes making friends, learning to control your temper, learning compassion, and forgiveness; it is a place where teachers learn with you and from you, as Girard did from her students. The question, then, arises, why do most schools make learning so complicated, so separate, instead of keeping it simple, making it easier for the students, by realizing that learning is already part of the natural flow of their lives?

Real Schools: In Their Own Words is full of the passion of people who know from experience that chil-

dren flourish in an everyday life atmosphere. Mary Leue has assembled a group of teachers who inspire the reader to join the flow towards freedom. It is a reminder of what is possible to those of us who were once in that current and an inspiration for those just entering into it.

Jung and Education: Elements of an Archetypal Pedagogy

by Clifford Mayes

Reviewed by Diane Montgomery

Educators are sometimes accused of functioning only in the waking world, walking a path that responds to students' overt behavior. But there are a large number of teachers who recognize that a personal unconscious is brought to the classroom by each child. The student's feelings and motivations, lying beneath her awareness, are often discussed in terms of her early experiences of abuse or poor parenting. Mayes's new book reveals another, deeper level: the basement of human interactions that occur in any teaching and learning situation, including the spirit world for those teachers who walk a path that includes deeper levels of consciousness. Beyond the personal unconscious, there is the more universal realm of the transpersonal or collective unconscious. This realm includes the richness of archetype that is explicated for the teacher in this book.

Jung and Education is organized in two parts. The first part provides the foundation to Jungian psychology with a clear description of complex concepts. Professor Mayes situates Jung in the context of development, Freud, and politics. Considerable attention is given to the concepts of transference and counter-transference, and Mayes describes

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how these concepts elucidate conscious and un-conscious relationships between teachers and students. Sometimes a particular student evokes an unconscious response in a teacher that has considerable effect on teaching. Mayes reminds us that "Jung said that such situations are so potent that they generate a special, psychically supercharged relational space that he called the *temenos*, or *sacred precinct*." Some researchers have extended this energy as psychic energies that form a quantum field. Nevertheless, these multiple layers of interaction are symbolic and can transform a classroom into a space for honoring the individual and collective psyche. Imagine what transformations are possible when we view and act as though our classrooms were sacred space!

In the second part of the book, Mayes presents his "ten pillars" of education based on archetypal theory. He uses the concepts defined in the first part with genuine concern for students and teachers, facility in reflectivity, and direct application to the practice of teaching and learning.

In these times when educational psychology is often distilled to static developmental stages or theories of learning and teaching styles, it is inspirational and invigorating to read a thoughtful text on the psychology of Carl Jung and the process of education. Professor Mayes presents complex psychological ideas in a way that is both comprehensible and meaningful to teachers. This book is a tribute to Jung by extending the use and understanding of Jungian concepts in education from merely typology to the meaning of archetype, transference, and the full development of individuals.

Mayes points out how Jung integrated and extended the viewpoints of other major psychoanalytic theorists. For example, as Mayes emphasizes Jung's personal dimensions of persona and shadow, he states that Jung

> affirmed throughout his life that the Freudian and Adlerian models of psyche were powerful ways of explaining and treating psychic dilemmas at a purely personal level … and Jung often found it useful to analyze personal psychic functions or dilemmas in a transpersonal context. (p. 22)

Mayes continues the informative discussion with examples from characters in plays, therapy sessions, and existential writers.

Mayes also describes Jung's concept of archetypes (universal energy patterns that become myths and motifs), and how they emerge in the classroom. The first of the ten pillars gives the reader greater understanding of how archetypes such as those of the Wise Old Man or Wise Old Woman and the Young Hero or Heroine reveal themselves in student/teacher interactions. Mayes teaches the reader how to confront the learner who is on his or her own quest for learning with advice from the sage. For example, Mayes describes how students in his classes were shocked to learn of vast economic differences in funding for public schools. His students wanted more information to confront their current reality and envision the hero and heroine who strives to make his or her world a better place through advocacy and action. The sage becomes a guide for such students because they learn to trust the deeper level role or archetype played. Teachers are obligated to demonstrate the social inequities and injustices that are blindly ignored in schools. School culture through individual and collective action transforms when deep archetypes are considered (Reynolds and Piirto 2005).

The second pillar reminds us that technical rationality strips learners of the requirements for healthy and holistic development, physically, emotionally, politically, culturally, and ethically. The current political push for conformity through standardized testing has encouraged states and districts to adopt mechanistic, scripted curricula devoid of human touch and psychic explorations. The result is "psychic disorientation and fragmentation in children" (p. 97).

Other pillars confront the reader with the archetypal dimensions of symbolism, study, intuition, constructive failure, the therapeutic role of education, and teacher reflectivity. Another demonstrates how Jung would advocate both a culturally conservative view and a very progressive cultural view. Mayes points out that while Jung would caution against quick adoption of "new" ideas, he would also promote primitive cultures as being closer to their archetypal roots and therefore, more advanced psychically.

Probably the most important pillar is the tenth pillar that "Education can be spiritual in pedagogically powerful and legally appropriate ways" (p. 119). Our strengths as humans can be explored and enhanced in the classroom by expressing our differences in spiritual values. Furthermore, an examination of one's own socialization and "archetypal depths" (p. 12) reveals how culture is grounded in spiritual values. Views of ethics, universal truth, morality, and inclusion are rooted in the essence of spirit or psyche. Spirituality is itself an archetype that has been long neglected in school and is explored by depth psychology infused in all curriculum, not merely the arts and humanities. This may be controversial and a stumbling block for some teachers who are looking for reasons to hate this book. However, it is fodder for those of us who believe that educating with spirit is a prime responsibility of quality teaching.

Although the author has thought deeply, reflected sincerely, and worked diligently to bring classroom experience to his examples, there is much work yet to be done to translate these concepts into curricula and instruction for elementary and secondary schools. This book begins a deeper discussion of the power of teaching and learning, it honors Jung beyond the overused personality typology, and it brings symbols, images, issues, and impulses to the classroom as transpersonal "facts." These form essential material for integrity in teacher reflection.

Reference

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Action for Social Justice in Education

By Morwenna Griffiths

Published by Open University Press (Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, 2003)

Reviewed by Rosebud Elijah

This book is framed by the question: "How is it possible to understand difference and diversity within a single humanity?" The argument for exploring and answering this question is straightforward: "We need to know how to act fairly, intelligently and with humanity. And education is, inescapably and centrally, about working with other people." Griffiths and the other contributors to this book, then, are centrally concerned with human action required (through education) to live in a more humane, just world which will benefit individuals *and* society.

Having said that, nothing else in the book is straightforward, and with good reason. Griffiths honors process; social justice is a "verb." In making this point, she questions established theories and definitions of social justice, and asks us to continually question our assumptions about social justice, schools, and education. She does this by laying "little stories" alongside "grand narratives," interweaving the personal with the larger social, political structures — and forcing the reader to make connections, question assumptions, find gaps between the personal and political, and draw conclusions. It becomes evident that social justice is dynamic, and that as educators we sometimes mistakenly buy into the "grand narratives," static ones that exclude individual voices, the very ones we need to hear carefully in order to begin to make authentic differences to benefit individuals and society.

Griffiths explains her approach and her working definition of social justice:

I take a concern for "social justice" to be the good of the community that respects — depends on — the good of the individuals within

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it, and the various sectors of society to which they belong.… It is a dynamic state of affairs that is never achieved once and for all. So we are all, individually and collectively, required to exercise constant vigilance, as we hold to a concern for individuals at the same time as focusing on broader issues of race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, religion, ethnicity, nationality, social class and any and all other differences that are systematically divisive in the society. (p. 16)

Philosophically, Griffiths draws predominantly on Hannah Arendt who

argues for understanding the importance of "who you are" and of "what you are." She argues that both are necessary parts of action and speech and of the relationships which depend on them. That is, all people are unique and they reveal their unique personal identities — *who they are* — in what they say and do. At the same time, to be human is to be in relationship in a culture — and this influences *what they are.* The "who" and the "what" both need to be acknowledged in any relationship. She refers to Jews and Negroes as examples, pointing out that while being seen only as a racial "what" is dehumanizing, political speech and action depend on affirming the cultural base of being human. (p. 29)

Griffiths's approach is, as she calls it, "practical philosophy" (p. 21). This approach is both the uniqueness and benefit of the book, since it uses individual stories to make powerful connections to social and political structures and relations. At the same time, Griffiths observes that her approach has the potential drawback of relapsing into "the coziness of apolitical individualism" (p. 21).

Within this framework, which is both personal and political, the reader experiences the

"little stories" of "real individuals, with their *specific socio-political positions* (race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on), in *particular educational contexts* (classrooms, schools, tertiary institutions) and *in relation to identifiable communities* (their own members, local communities, ad-

visors, universities, national or international networks of educators).

Connections are made between stories and structures, and interwoven with each other, providing a context to understand the real.

One of many examples of this is in Chapter 5, entitled "Self-esteem: Ordinary differences and the difference they make," one of three chapters in which Griffiths lays out a framework for social justice in schools and colleges. Griffiths suggests that social psychological educational theory needs to be questioned; there is misguided orthodoxy to discussions of self-esteem.

First, self-esteem is to be understood in terms of individuals and their face-to-face relationships. Second, it can be treated as an independent variable and measured in relation to achievement (does it correlate with high achievements?) or social groups (does it vary by gender, ethnicity, social class and so on?). Causal relations can then be discovered. Third, more is always better.... Books on classroom practice focus on individual responses and face-to-face relationships. Many of them suggest that enhancing self-esteem will improve achievement (or vice versa), especially for disadvantaged groups, and that improving it is always a good thing. (p. 64)

Griffiths challenges this individualistic orthodoxy, suggesting that it disregards social and cultural contexts and the asymmetrical relations of power within which cultures operate. Griffiths suggests that there must be an alternative way to understand difference beyond zero-sum games and individualism. Jacky and Syble provide "little stories" in this chapter that help us challenge the orthodoxy of self-esteem, and help us rethink some of our ways in the classroom. And Deborah and Max facilitate the conversation further by "answering back," and providing other perspectives by drawing on their experiences. Max, for example, responds to the issues raised in the chapter and explores the implications for practitioners. Deborah discusses her changing views about self-esteem and suggests that while difference is ordinary, "it is the way in which we inter-

pret these differences which determines … the kind of identity we develop of ourselves" (p. 74).

Griffiths believes that for an education that is inclusive of all differences, new forms of politics are needed. She advocates "'transversal politics', which has been developed through theorizing from real experiences and struggles to take joint action across difference" (p. 37). Citing Cynthia Cockburn and Lynette Hunter (1999), she describes it as "the practice of creatively crossing (and re-drawing) the borders that mark significant politicized differences" (p. 38). The point of transversal politics is to keep differences deconstructed rather than solidifying them. Griffiths uses this method continually in examining difference in this book. While an obvious critique could be that Griffiths uses traditional categories of such as race, gender, ethnicity, and social class to explore difference, she in fact explores the evolution of these broad categories as they relate to social justice within a socio-historical context. In advocating that her working definition of social justice needs a public space for issues to be debated and discussed, the notion of public space is deconstructed, and "little stories" suggest that private spaces may also serve the purposes of public spaces (see e.g., Note 7, p. 140). Laying "little stories" alongside "grand narratives" indeed exposes gaps in connections between theory and practice and reveals a lack of smoothness that may exasperate those readers who are used to reading for particular information

and answers, but Griffiths holds to her commitment to process and transversal politics. She writes with respect and self-respect, exposing a vulnerability that she believes is essential to the work of social justice. For example, in asking the question, "How to keep a clear understanding of exactly what is fair?" (p. 127), she brings to the forefront a discussion of means and ends and the slippery nature of our humanity when we make decisions about means, ends, and goals. Griffiths implies that to ask whether the means and ends are fair even as we engage in the process of social justice is to be vulnerable. In another example of our humanity, she explores the notion of the DKDK zone — "don't know that you don't know" — a lack of awareness that makes the work of social justice extremely difficult.

This is a daring book, for Griffiths is in mostly unchartered terrain. Holding on to her commitment to action for social justice, she travels where few have, making clear that in bridging theory and practice, in making connections between the personal and the political, and in giving voice to multiple and varied perspectives, she is acting on her commitment to social justice. The text is clear evidence of her commitment to action for social justice, of her commitment to demonstrate the complexities of an action-oriented social justice, and her commitment to be inclusive of a diversity of voices and perspectives.

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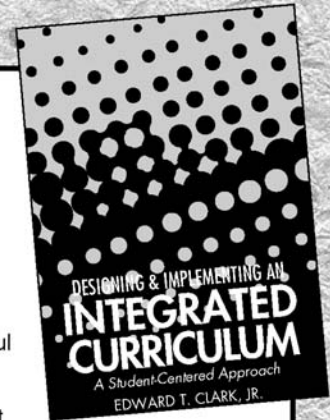
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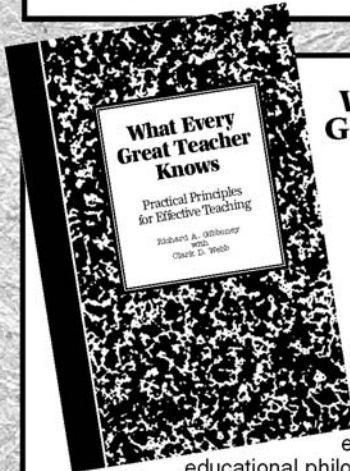
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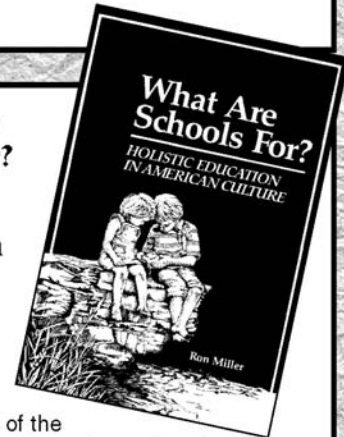
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