

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 4 • WINTER 2008

# ENCOUNTER

*Education for Meaning and Social Justice*



# ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 4 WINTER 2008

## Editor

William Crain

## Table of Contents

### Book Review Editor

Judith Kaufman

### Editorial Board

Sue Books

Riane Eisler

David Elkind

Diana M. Feige

Maxine Greene

Tobin Hart

Jeffrey Kane

Kathleen Kesson

Rob Koegel

Jonathan Kozol

Jack Miller

Ron Miller

Nel Noddings

Jack Petrash

Madhu Suri Prakash

David Purpel

Molly Quinn

Douglas Sloan

Huston Smith

Dale T. Snauwaert

David Sobel

Shirley Steinberg

Jesse A. Stoff

Paul Theobald

Dilafroz R. Williams

Atsuhiko Yoshida

### Cover Design

Anything Graphic

### Production Editor

Charles Jakiela

*Guest Editorial.* The Earth and Its Young:

Where Do the Children Play? Elizabeth Goodenough . . . 2

Symbols Don't Wiggle in Your Hand. Lowell Monke . . . . . 5

Second Wind for a Retired Police Horse. Peggy Ellsberg. . . . . 8

Riding Out. A Poem by Peggy Ellsberg. . . . . 10

Hoof Prints: Equine Therapy for Autistic Children.

Alexandra Dingman. . . . . 11

"Appareled in Celestial Light": Transcendent Nature

Experiences in Childhood. David Sobel . . . . . 14

Out of Bounds: Insights from Australian Children to Support

Sustainable Cities. Paul Tranter and Karen Malone . . . . . 20

Freedom in the Cultural Sphere. Ron Miller . . . . . 27

*Chris's Column.* What's in a Name? Chris Mercogliano . . . . . 31

Constructivism and the Bhagavad-Gita. Priya Kumari . . . . . 34

Conversations about Social Justice.

Kelly Donnell, Li-Ling Yang, Annie Winfield,

Alan Canestrari, Bruce Marlowe, and Mieko Kamii . . . . . 37

My Father's Garden. A Poem by Kate McReynolds. . . . . 39

Teaching World Religion in the Public Schools.

James W. Peterson . . . . . 40

### Book Reviews

*Against Schooling* by Stanley Aronowitz

(Reviewed by William Crain) . . . . . 43

*New York and Slavery* by Alan J. Singer

(Reviewed by Marlene S. Munn-Joseph). . . . . 44

*Fertilizers, Pills, and Magnetic Strips* by Gene Glass

(Reviewed by Scott Fletcher) . . . . . 46

*Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way* by B. D. Schultz

(Reviewed by Alicia A. Broderick) . . . . . 49

Encounter (ISSN 1094-3838) is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by Holistic Education Press, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328. 1-800-639-4122. E-mail: <encounter@great-ideas.org> Website: <<http://www.great-ideas.org>>. Annual subscription rates are \$39.95 for individuals and \$100 for U.S. libraries and other multi-user environments. (Postage is extra for delivery to non-U.S. addresses.) Selected back issues are available. Periodicals postage is paid at Brandon, VT, and at additional offices. This issue of ENCOUNTER was produced with Corel Ventura software and printed by Quickprint ([www.quickprintvt.com](http://www.quickprintvt.com)) in Rutland, Vermont. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ENCOUNTER, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328. Copyright © 2008 by Psychology Press, Brandon, VT. All rights reserved.

# The Earth and Its Young

## Where Do the Children Play?

Elizabeth Goodenough

*A Robin redbreast in a Cage  
Puts all Heaven in a Rage.*  
William Blake,  
*Auguries of Innocence* (1803)

As a university teacher of literature for over thirty years, I may possess an atypical perspective.

I've worked with academicians while remaining in contact with children — who require outdoor play for integrity, both physical and mental. Yet children are powerless to express their wishes when decisions about natural resources are made.

Children's imprint on the land is light. Adults tread more heavily, etching their ambitions on the environment.

As a sense of place marks itself on those growing up, the physical world is written upon by each generation. This and the following issue of *Encounter* highlight play and the natural world in ways that suggest how rapidly both are changing. Like Bill Crain, who helped me select and edit the first six works in this issue, I watch with suspense. Focusing on the earth and its young, we must ask what mutual exchange creates the best possibilities for each? How can we enhance multi-species living? How does caring for animals protect the lives of all species, including our own? Our contributors aim to engage in a conversation about the relationship that children and the natural world need so both can thrive.



ELIZABETH GOODENOUGH helped produce "Where Do the Children Play?" a project that includes an award-winning PBS documentary written and directed by Christopher Cook and Mark Harris, a three-volume anthology, and an outreach campaign to promote outdoor play. She teaches at the University of Michigan <lizgoode@umich.edu>.

### Threats to Play and Nature

Simone Weil wrote, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (1978, 41). Yet our ruptured root system has been dragged to the brink: technology may have outrun us — not just in financial systems driven by supercomputers but also in the demise of outdoor play and direct experience with nature.

New research in New York and Los Angeles by the Alliance for Childhood (in press) suggests that many kindergarteners are spending two to three hours per day on literacy, math instruction, and standardized testing, and 30 minutes or less engaged in play. In recent decades, the distance an average 12-year-old can travel independently by bike or foot has shrunk dramatically (Chipeniuk 1995). Recess threatens to become extinct. Eight- to 18-year-olds spend on average 6.5 hours per day looking at a screen (Roberts, Foehr & Rideout 2005).

People in daily contact with children know less and less about unscripted play in unstructured settings. Estranged from this vital activity, the next generation loses touch with places that teach them how to become creative, flexible, and alive. Will growing up minimally engaged with living things result in stress-related diseases and an accelerated destruction of nature itself?

Not enough has been written about two essentials: contact with animals and universal access to play. William Blake, the first English picture book artist, illustrates the interdependence of creatures and the physical landscape in "Auguries of Innocence" (1988). His *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* — each plate engraved and water colored by hand — portray pastoral frolic. He capitalized

Imagination, a divine quality that originates inside us. The poet's words take root in the ground, but they dance up like flames. They convey what Walter Benjamin terms the liberatory potential to encounter the world without preconceived notions. Play is not as much about imitating previous use of materials as about bringing these elements into new relationships with each other.

Behavioral neural scientists aided by MRI technology are beginning to provide proof of the importance of play to learning and wellbeing. Supporting the intuitive knowledge of astute preschool and primary grade teachers, scientists are now better understanding the impact of play — from neo-natal handling to laughter and rough and tumble — on the chemistry of the brain. As psychiatrist Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play, puts it (2008), play fulfills a need as fundamental as vitamins or sleep. This core affect of mammals is shared by humans first in activities such as peek-a-boo, hide and seek, and fort building.

### Secret Spaces

In 1998, teaching at the University of Michigan, I began to think about the secret spaces of childhood. Delving into localities of cultural memory, I wondered how idyllic sites in classic works — a raft in *Huck Finn* or the locked turf in *The Secret Garden* — shape our identities. Fantasy and insight in such hidden locales often inspire works of art. Questions about how the young process their own ecology expanded into an exhibition and a two-day conference. A thousand children explored Nichols Arboretum and found performances and storytellers in the woods. Architects, children's authors, educators, and artists convened at the Residential College to discuss issues of environmental justice, property relations, and the need to preserve and recreate sanctuaries for free play. Biologist E. O. Wilson (2008, 110) defined the quest for secret hideaways as a fundamental trait of human nature of "ultimate value in survival."

Brought to life in the displays and installations, indoors and outside, were the inchoate and the ineffable: the excitement of collecting booty or finding a remembered retreat. "Secret" is the special meaning children give to a place when they own it deeply.

Such a place persists in memory like love. These sites are captured by many of the best childhood books. In representing hiding games, fort building, toy making, and the possession that comes from the hands, these texts liberate learning. Embedded in them are unique but forgotten ways of shaping and inhabiting the world. Just as hide-and-seek brings our bodies into a synchronous relationship with an environment, the intimacy of a secret space reverses scale and expands a sense of place.

### Where Do the Children Play?

From compiling and editing *Secret Spaces of Childhood* (2003), I became aware of the profound changes affecting childhood over the last twenty years. To document this story from the perspective of those growing up today, I began raising funds for the Michigan Television production, *Where Do the Children Play?*, its two companion volumes, and an outreach center at University of Michigan ([www.michigantelevision.org/childrenplay](http://www.michigantelevision.org/childrenplay)). Directed and written by Christopher Cook with consulting producer Mark Harris, this PBS documentary won five Emmys and a top award at the Eugene Oregon International Film Festival. It airs nationally on American Public television through May 2010. We are now working with the National Wildlife Federation, the Children & Nature Network, and the Alliance for Childhood to establish roundtables to identify local obstacles to universal access to recreation — whether these involve safety or transportation issues, a dearth of time and space, or the disinclination to play outside.

### New Possibilities

Although the six pieces selected for inclusion in this issue of *Encounter* are varied, they examine possibilities at the heart of every encounter of children with their landscape. Assigning words to the deepest desires takes time. "Might I," quavered Mary, "might I have a bit of earth?" This stammering request, half-way through *The Secret Garden* (Burnett 1951, 103), startles the speaking girl and her listening uncle. But it engenders instinctual understanding of the child ecology in the tale. In this issue, writers also point to new directions. Poetry and narratives like those of Peggy Ellsberg and David Sobel and programs like

Alexandra Dingman's reach mysterious places locked away from conventional awareness. Their offerings exemplify what is missing when we employ authority and compulsion in dealing with children and other creatures. As Edward Hoagland (1975, 26) once said, "In order to really enjoy a dog, one doesn't merely try to train him to be semi-human. The point of it is to open oneself to the possibility of becoming partly a dog."

In this issue Lowell Monke, Paul Tranter and Karen Malone help us see how schools and cities shut down the spirit of the next generation. These authors show how children need contact with nature and how technologies and built environments cut them off. I am reminded of Bill McKibben's (2008) comment that in the "endless rows of individual houses, each opening out onto the same ribbon of sterile concrete," there is "a sort of invasive individualism, a hyper-individualism that makes us a new species." Inspired by the solutions these essays offer, I'd like to suggest how an early years agenda chimes with an outdoor learning and play manifesto — one relevant to citizenship, geography, and spiritual soundness. In this issue, Ron Miller's essay describes the possible roots of a broad new revolution that is emerging.

Readers also will get a sense that connections to the natural world are ultimately *personal*. For example, Peggy Ellsberg's poem "Riding Out," about her horse Leroy, conveys how the elegiac cycles of season and mortality cannot be virtual. As Stephen Talbott has observed, "special effects wonder" does not lead to the same reverent curiosity that accompanies prolonged contact with nature. The latter develops "from a sense that the inner essence of what one is looking at is somehow connected to the inner essence of oneself" (Talbott 1995, 146).

Policymakers, city planners, and landscape architects need to learn from interdisciplinary childhood studies to challenge some deep rock-hard assumptions. Too often as former children, we believe we've "been there" and merely regard the young as less complete versions of ourselves. I believe that readers will find in this issue glimpses into the world of childhood that are new to them. As Barrie Thorne (1987, 125) has said, "When adults seek to learn about and from children, the challenge is to take the closely familiar and to render it strange."

Play as an autonomous mode of experiencing emotion must be nurtured and persist in adult life. In *Homo Ludens* (1970, 4, 5) Johan Huizinga says play takes place in a dimension distinct from "'ordinary' life." It creates "a second, poetic world alongside the world of nature." With high stakes testing, we may be losing not just recess but also those psychic spaces where imagination and confidence grow. Operating within schools and universities, we need collaborative programs that look at the places where children and adults learn best. The only way educators are going to create a good environment for children is through partnerships that enable our global village to understand that, in the words commonly attributed to Gary Snyder, "Nature is not a place to visit. It is home."

## References

- Alliance for Childhood. In press. Let the children play: Reversing the loss of play in early education. College Park, MD: Alliance for Childhood.
- Blake, W. 1988. Auguries of innocence. In *William Blake: Selected poetry*, edited by W. H. Stevenson. London: Penguin. Originally published 1803.
- Brown, S. 2008, November 1. Scientific retreat. Stanford University.
- Burnett, F. H. 1951. *The secret garden*. London: Penguin.
- Chipeniuk, R. 1995. Childhood foraging as a means of acquiring competent human cognition about biodiversity. *Environment and Behavior* 27 (2): 490-512.
- Goodenough, E. 2003. *Secret spaces of childhood*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hoagland, E. 1975, February. The tug of life at the end of the leash. *Harper's*.
- Huizinga, J. 1970. *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press. (Originally published in 1938.)
- McKibben, B. 2008. Introduction. In MacLean, A. *Over: The American landscape at the tipping point*. New York: Abrams.
- Roberts, D., U. Foehr, and V. Rideout. 2005. *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8-18 year-olds*. Washington D.C.: Henry Kaiser Foundation.
- Talbott, S. 1995. *The future does not compute: Transcending the machines in our midst*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.
- Thorne, B. 1987. Learning from children. In Hess, B., E. Markson, and P. Stein. *Introductory sociology*, 3rd and 4th eds. New York: Macmillan.
- Weil, S. 1978. *The need for roots: Prelude to a declaration of duties toward mankind*. Translated by Arthur Wills, with a preface by T. S. Eliot. New York: Routledge.
- Wilson, E. O. 2003. Symposium. In *Secret spaces of childhood*, edited by E. Goodenough. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

# Symbols Don't Wiggle in Your Hand

Lowell Monke

**Today's children typically spend so much time dealing with symbols on screens that they miss out on direct experiences with the real world, and their intellectual and emotional development suffers.**

One of the most significant, but widely misunderstood, changes of the past fifty years has been the shift from an environment steeped in physical things to one saturated with symbolic representations. This shift has not been too pronounced for those of us who grew up early in the era because we brought with us a huge backlog of experience with actual objects that we have been able to connect imaginatively to their symbols. Let me give just one example.

The term "night crawler" is a literary symbol of a particular animal. Readers who have dug in the soil, pulled a night crawler out of its hole, felt it wiggle around in one's hand, perhaps tried to thread it onto a fishing hook, will experience an explosion of memories and maybe even feelings at the sight of that word (or a picture). You may even recall the sensation of dirt under your fingernails, or teasing your younger brother or sister with it (or being teased). Your knowledge of night crawlers is bound up with your earlier direct experiences with them.

But what happens if we present a child with a symbol of a night crawler who has never even seen a real one, or any other worm-like animal, before? This disconnect between symbol and what it represents is a rapidly growing problem. As symbols flood our children from every kind of electronic and print source, there has been a drought of actual experiences with real things. Kids now spend on average five hours a day in front of screens, including those of the TV and the computer (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout 2005). That doesn't leave much time to encounter real objects.

## Mistaking the Virtual for the Real

As the physical world becomes increasingly alien to children, some of the consequences are predictable: confusion, distorted understandings, and boredom. But there has also been a not-so-predictable re-



LOWELL MONKE, a founding Board member of the Alliance for Childhood, is Associate Professor of Education at Wittenberg University. He has written numerous articles on the role of technology in education and is coauthor (with R. W. Burniske) of *Breaking Down the Digital Walls: Learning to Teach in a Post-Modem World* (SUNY Press, 2001).

sult: More and more it appears that children are actually mistaking the representations for the real thing. Again, let me give an example.

A few years ago students from a fifth grade class in Johnston, Iowa, (I was teaching near there at the time) participated in a program call Africa Quest, in which they communicated via a video and audio satellite link with a man riding his bicycle across the Great Rift Valley in Kenya. A reporter came to the school to do a story on the activity and the headline the next day read: "Students Visit Africa Without Leaving Home" (Villanueva 1998). Toward the end of the article the reporter quotes one of the students as saying, "It was great to see first hand what was happening in Africa." There is some curious language used by both the reporter and the student. "Visit" used to mean actually going somewhere. "First hand" used to mean actually being there, doing what actually was being done, not just sitting in an air conditioned classroom watching someone else's excellent adventure.

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson called this kind of confusion, "Eating the menu instead of the meal" (Grof 1981). The metaphor is apt for this discussion because it conveys how little symbols alone nourish a child's soul. No one prays over a menu. Reverence grows out of first hand experience, as do such important human qualities as sympathy, respect, honor, and compassion. All of these inner qualities are nourished primarily through direct encounters in the real world. All of them get flabby and tend to atrophy during those five hours a day children gaze into screens.

### **Seductive Power**

So why are children so willing to isolate themselves into the artificial world of screen media? There are many reasons, but when it comes to computers, children are compensated for their interior idleness by gaining enormous external power through the use of a powerful machine. This is crucial to understand because it signifies a social condition we need to spend much more time contemplating: Power has become the greatest gift our culture believes it can give to a child.

I have lost count of how many times I have heard teachers, parents, school administrators, futurists, and politicians extol the educational value of the

computers and the Internet because it gives kids the power to virtually go anywhere, at anytime, to gather any information. What is overlooked in all of this hype is that this "go anywhere at anytime" capability has been accompanied by an erosion of our children's sense of belonging anywhere, in any time, to anybody, for any reason. In general, what these great symbol manipulators do for our children is give them enormous power over a symbolic world, but at the cost of never getting to discover how they fit into their real one.

### **Two Recommendations**

So what do we do? In this short essay I will mention two actions that I consider of prime importance.

#### **Delay Computer Use**

When elementary teachers ask me what kinds of great things they ought to do with the computers in their classrooms I typically tell them to sell them to the high school, where computers' abstract processing capacities better fit the level of student thinking; then take the money they get, go out and buy some shovels, and send their children out to dig up night crawlers. What I'm trying to get across to them is the importance of giving their students the vast background in real, physical experiences they will need to give meaning to all of the symbols they are going to encounter later in life. I honestly believe that the mental and emotional health of our children would be improved enormously if we declared our elementary schools to be electronic-media free zones.

I know that lots of good teachers object to this radical dismissal of high technology from the elementary classroom. I do not dispute that there certainly are many educational activities that can be performed with these machines, or that good teachers will balance computer activities with time outdoors. But the crisis associated with the loss of first-hand experience for children has reached the point where it really doesn't matter if we balance things *within* schools — we need to use schools to provide balance to the seriously unbalanced, technologically saturated lives our kids live outside of school.

#### **Realize that Children Aren't Machines**

My second recommendation is to convince our education, business, and political leaders to stop looking

at schools as machinery that cranks out products — economic resources — *and views the children themselves as new machines to be assembled and fine-tuned.* My portrait might seem extreme, but consider the following:

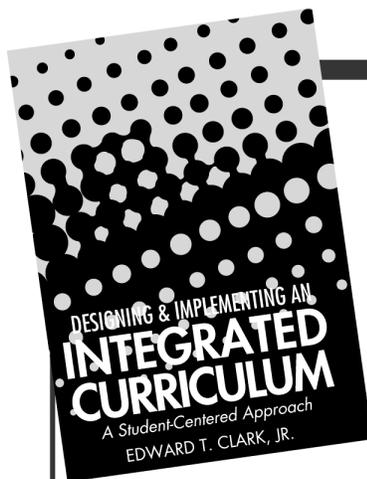
- Only if we viewed kids as machines would we believe that we can assess their knowledge, intelligence, and skills and predict their future success based on a meager set of numbers generated by a test itself graded by machines.
- Only if we viewed kids as machines would we believe that one standard curriculum serves a kid growing up in Harlem just as well as a kid growing up in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.
- Only if we viewed children as machines would we look at a small child who has problems sitting in one place for an hour — who can't pay attention to all the disconnected, abstract symbols being thrust at him on paper, chalkboards, and screens to the point that he disrupts the school operations — and decide

that all we need to do is apply a little chemical grease (like Ritalin) to a malfunctioning gear inside his head.

Getting rid of the mechanical view of children and learning will require us to move away from the technological ideology that currently dominates the cultural landscape. We can only do so if we offer our children opportunities to stand apart from all the powerful tools around them and engage the world directly. In the process, we can help them develop an ecological orientation to the world that acknowledges the interrelatedness of all things; establishes *life*, not machines, as the measure of value; and teaches them how to live in harmony with the world as opposed to seeking power over it.

### References

- Grof, S. 1981. Nature, mind, and consciousness: Gregor Bateson and the new paradigm. *Phoenix: Journal of Transpersonal Anthropology* 5, no. 2, 31-72.
- Roberts, D., U. Foehr, and V. Rideout. 2005. *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8-18 year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Villanueva, E. 1998, October 10. Students visit Africa without leaving home. *Des Moines Register*, M 1.



## Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum

### A Student-Centered Approach

Edward T. Clark, Jr.

*Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum* is a powerful curriculum development tool for teachers, schools, and school districts. It can be used to help educators evaluate the effectiveness of their current curricula and develop new ones that better meet the needs of their students as individuals and members of society.

**"This is a visionary book, yet firmly grounded in the author's extensive and successful work with school staffs attempting genuine restructuring."**

—Ron Miller, Editor  
*Great Ideas in Education*

**"Clark's perspective has stimulated and sustained us as we have reconstructed our curriculum."**

—Kurt Anderson, Middle School Principal

### Table of Contents

- Educational Reform: A Design Problem
- The Design Solution: Systems Thinking
- Creating a New Educational Vision
- Creating a Context for Teaching and Learning
- Questions Worth Arguing About
- Concepts as Organizing Frameworks
- Implementing an Integrated Curriculum
- Designing Schools as Learning Communities

ISBN 0-9627232-7-4  
4th printing, 2002 \$21.95  
**Holistic Education Press,**  
P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT  
05733-0328

1-800-639-4122  
<http://www.great-ideas.org>

# Second Wind for a Retired Police Horse

Peggy Ellsberg

**The rescue of an old horse brings many benefits.**

*I have seen this horse stand in the rain, the snow, the sun at 110 degrees, with the patience and equanimity he carries in the face of conditions that send most people running for cover.*

(Linda Kohanov 2001)

In May of 2003, while supervising a 4-H meeting, I encountered a retired police horse named Leroy from the White Plains, NY, mounted unit, or maybe I should say he encountered me. In the three years that have passed since then, I have never been able to determine who initiated our relationship. I have since read an account that mirrors my experience somewhat: In Henry Blake's *Talking with Horses* (1975), Blake, an English farmer, describes the moment when he met his champion steeple-chaser, Jolly Roger. During the lean times after WWII, at a sheep market, Blake felt what he describes as a sensation of grief and despair hitting him from behind, between the shoulder blades. He turned around, and there was a seriously emaciated horse being auctioned for slaughter. The horse, named Roger, was weeping. Blake impulsively bought the horse and led it slowly up the road to his barn, where he immediately began grooming and feeding it. Soon Roger gained weight and recovered his spirits, and went on to become the famous performance horse, Jolly Roger.

On that May day in 2003, I had no idea that I would meet, and fall in love with, a horse. Leroy's police officer and daily companion of many years had retired and was hospitalized. Leroy, a smart, talented, and beautifully trained animal, became depressed and stopped eating. He was famously child-friendly. Someone had the good idea of giving him to the 4-H. On the day he arrived, Leroy badly needed a new home and, as it turned out, a new job,



PEGGY ELLSBERG teaches English at Barnard College in Manhattan and lives in the Hudson Valley with her husband Robert, three children, and numerous animals, who have included her 35-year-old adopted police horse, Leroy.

and I, in a decision stunning for its apparent impracticality, decided to adopt him.

Remarkable benefits followed. I learned how to take care of a horse. My two daughters, then eight and nine years old, learned to ride him. Eventually I learned to ride him. Recognizing his gentle gifts, I arranged for Leroy, an exceptionally intelligent and sensitive horse, to become certified for Pegasus, a therapeutic riding program for children and adults with disabilities. My daughter Christina took him to children's horse shows, and

he won three championships. At the age of 31, he was voted Schoolhorse of the Year for our region in 2004. Following these successes, he has appeared on the front page of the county newspaper. He has maintained a visiting relationship with his retired human police companion, Officer William Archer of the White Plains Mounted Unit. Almost every week, visitors travel to see the sweet-natured and now fairly distinguished old horse. And every day, I spend hours with him, riding, grooming, grazing, gazing.

As a new horse owner with academic inclinations, I have undertaken for myself an extensive if random course of reading. I started with Henry Blake's book, and have moved on to Vicki Hearne's *Adam's Task* (2000); Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum's *Animal Rights* (2004); and Jane Smiley's fresh treatments in *A Year at the Races* (2004) and *Horse Heaven* (2000). In addition, Linda Kohanov's *The Tao of Equus* (2001) and *Riding between the Worlds* (2003) have been influential in my thinking about the relationship between horses and humans.

What Stanley Cavell calls "inordinate knowledge" and what St. Paul might have been thinking when he said in 2 Corinthians, "Now I know in part as through a glass darkly," describe the liminal nature of our connection with companion animals and

the difficulty we encounter in attempting to describe it. Just as poetry, folktales, drama, and fiction

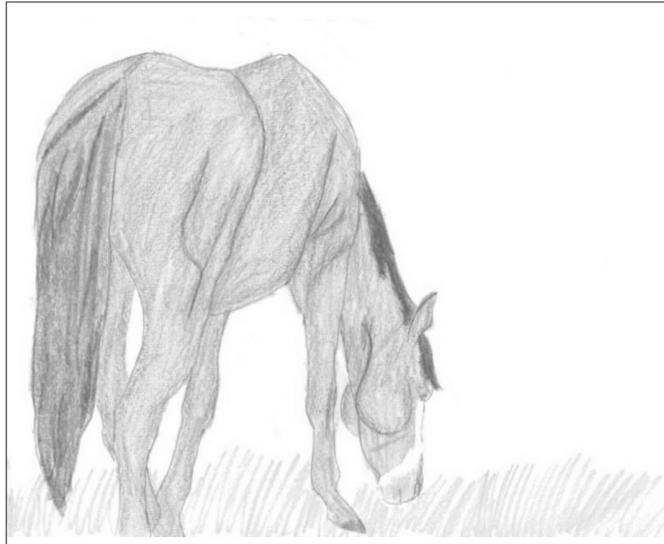
can evoke truths inaccessible through formal narrative, we often can most effectively approach a conversation on animals through stories. In addition, film provides our culture with many of its folktales and archetypes about horses. In cinema, from *National Velvet*, *Black Beauty*, and *Flicka* to more contemporary movies like *Seabiscuit*, *Hidalgo*, and *Dreamer*, horses accompany and even embody a human hero's

moral or spiritual quest. Likewise, in written narrative, Henry Blake's horse, Jolly Roger, Jane Smiley's Mr. T, and Linda Kohanov's Noche and Rasa, teach and even save the human storytellers.

And so we should save them. Leroy has introduced me to the prospect of equine rescue. I have met a number of women who, like Henry Blake, have rescued horses from the thoroughbred racetrack, from trail-riding businesses, and even on their way to slaughter. Every region in the United States has organizations that enable the rescue and adoption of horses who need a home, some fit for companionship, and many fit for riding.

## References

- Blake, H. 1975. *Talking with horses*. New York: Dutton.
- Hearne, V. 2000. *Adam's task: Calling animals by name*. Pleasantville, NY: Vintage. (Work originally published in 1982).
- Kohanov, L. 2001. *The tao of equus*. Navato, CA: New World Library.
- Kohanov, L. 2003. *Riding between the worlds*. New York: New World Library.
- Smiley, J. 2000. *Horse heaven*. New York: Ballantine.
- Smiley, J. 2004. *A year at the races*. New York: Anchor.
- Sunstein, C. R., and M. C. Nussbaum, eds. 2004. *Animal rights: Current debates and new directions*. New York: Oxford University Press.



At the age of 11, the author's daughter Christina made this sketch of Leroy while he was grazing.

# Riding Out

By Peggy Ellsberg

1

Morning so early, stars still  
pace the cold black sky,  
and we ride out together  
over the hard sleeping body of earth.  
Quiet is his swaying gait,  
and pure is the quiet  
that travels beside us.  
All mortal flesh keeps silence.  
So this is what it means  
to be alive as a flame,  
the horse and his sweet cold breath  
blessing the air.

2

The blue face of day  
at the open window of his stall,  
his white face at the gate,  
watching for me.  
He rests his muzzle  
on my shoulder.  
Brushed and combed,  
dressed and tacked,  
he is ready to take me  
safely over fields.  
He wants to lumber up the hill,  
trudging, pushing, toward the lake.  
Between my thighs,  
he rocks like a boat.  
I feel, within him, the beating  
cave of his big heart.  
All the way, his hoofbeats play  
the ancient music  
of this riding.



PEGGY ELLSBERG is the author of "Second Wind for a Retired Polic Horse" also in this issue, about her horse Leroy. Peggy wrote this poem about Leroy after his recent death, at the age of 35.

3

We enter the lake, water drips from his muzzle,  
and we swim together, neither father nor mother.  
He pumps his thin legs, and we dip.  
Then he drinks, and we are both drunk,  
from the deep sweet green fragrance of lake,  
its wet lips. Then the horse hauls us up,  
up and onto the bank, and he vehemently  
shakes, sprays of lake water flying.  
On his back, I plunge forth holding hard  
to his mane, so slippery and wet,  
and smelling of balsam.  
Alone, still alone, we spot meadows  
of green mustard grass.  
A poet would call them fields of praise.  
My horse walks forward into them.

4

Thursday nights, light just fading, we ride out  
and learn the earth underfoot like a prayer.  
How long have I needed  
to be held just like this.  
I want to touch the base  
of your being, when,  
munching and cropping, you bow and kiss  
the earth again and again.

5

I remember your  
one back hoof cocked  
in the ice-cast morning  
as you waited for me.  
Your good-natured face  
clouded the air with cold breath.  
In your mind, it was summer,  
the orchard hung heavy with apples.  
In my mind, you would live on forever,  
never lie down and leave.  
Let earth turn her course  
and let grey willows weep.  
Let woods, where together we chanced,  
fade and sleep.  
And let all mortal things  
sacred silences keep.

# Hoof Prints

## Equine Therapy for Autistic Children

Alexandra Dingman

**The patience, loyalty, and quiet responsiveness of a horse frequently engender positive feelings in a child, making a relationship with a horse especially helpful to a child who is having difficulties in life.**

*A man on a horse is spiritually as well as physically bigger than a man on foot.*  
John Steinbeck, *The Red Pony* (1994, 12)

He'll be here in a few minutes. I can't help feeling nervous. There is no guessing the mood he will be in, or how he will react to the horses or to me. Seven-year-old Jonah rarely makes eye contact and would rather be by himself. His speech is mumbled and often incoherent. Just one of the estimated 1½ million people diagnosed with autism in the United States (Autism Society of America 2008), this boy displays few nonverbal cues, has poor social skills, uses repetitive language and movements, and is inflexible with routines and schedules. But Jonah reacts differently with horses. Though it is rare for Jonah to talk directly with humans, he will talk to horses and even the barn dog. Last year, Jonah's mother reported that Jonah picked up the telephone and asked her to talk to Ginny, his favorite horse at Lake Auburn Equestrian Center. During the last two years, Jonah has gradually become more interested in me; he now seeks me out in the barn when he arrives, makes eye-contact and engages in games with me at the barn. For Jonah, riding has been therapeutic.

Having worked with horses for over twenty years, I sometimes forget what it is like to see the riding world through the eyes of a novice. Horses are graceful, beautiful, and wild. Their movements inspire awe. "Riding a horse makes someone small feel large, long-legged and powerful." (Friends For Tomorrow 1999). All too often children stay inside, play video games, listen to music, or watch TV, instead of running around and socializing. Riding encourages children to work with their hands, exercise, connect with horses and people of all ages, gain confidence, and learn new skills. As anyone who has spent time



ALEXANDRA DINGMAN is a graduate of Bates College, Lewiston, ME, where she majored in Special Education and wrote her thesis on the effects of therapeutic riding on children with autism. She is currently the Associate Director of the Friends for Tomorrow Therapeutic Riding Center in Lincoln, MA.

around a barn knows, there is always work to be done, whether it is brushing a horse, cleaning leather, filling water buckets or sweeping. These activities can be physically challenging, but they frequently are also *shared* activities, creating easy social interactions. The focus is not on humans but on horses, and children can develop their strengths and relationships with creatures as alive as they are.

After a year collecting and analyzing data about my students (in a program called ManeStreaming in Auburn, ME) and working with therapeutic riding

---

***For children with physical disabilities, riding corrects abnormal muscle tone and improves coordination, balance, and posture, and enhances sensory motor skills.***

---

programs in Massachusetts (Friends for Tomorrow and Lovelane) and Maine (Riding to the Top and Flying Changes), I came to the firm conclusion that the special relationship between children and horses was very real: Horseback riding for children, particularly those with autism, *is* therapeutic. Horses naturally have patience, loyalty, and a quiet way of listening and responding that draws out children and encourages engagement. But horses also require care, patience, and understanding from the people around them, thus giving riders a sense of responsibility for another creature. Temple Grandin (2005, 5) maintains that "riding a horse isn't what it looks like: it isn't a person sitting in a saddle telling the horse what to do by yanking on the reins. Real riding is a lot like ballroom dancing or maybe figure skating in pairs." This special relationship between horse and rider can lead to increased confidence, patience, and self-esteem. Learning how to trust and communicate with a horse can help a child feel more comfortable with humans. More importantly, these relationships provide safe opportunities for children to challenge themselves and to try new things.

In 1994, Carolyn M. Gatty, Assistant Professor in the Master of Occupational Therapy Program, Chat-

ham College, PA, studied 23 children with special needs from the age of 11 to 15 who showed a slight increase of self-esteem after eight weeks of therapeutic riding (Gatty et al., 1994). These positive effects may have resulted from the development of unconditional bonds with horses, confidence gained from "controlling" a creature ten to twenty times their size, and increased physical strength (Roberts 1997).

Horses are very sensitive and seem to understand when a person needs extra attention. One day last winter, Jonah arrived early for his lesson and, before anyone could catch him, he ran to the barn and ducked under a stall guard, into my horse's stall. This 1,000 pound high-strung ex-race horse named Riley is quite territorial. I could only imagine what he would think of this whirling dervish flying into his stall. To my amazement, when I finally caught up with Jonah, Riley was standing quietly alongside Jonah hanging his head by Jonah (a gesture of comfort and relaxation), just watching as this child played in the hay. I have witnessed countless occasions in which horses have behaved in miraculous ways around children with disabilities. For example, a horse will stand perfectly still for a small child and even shift their weight if a small rider is slipping to one side (see also Splinter-Watkins 2002).

In addition to social and emotional connections, research proves that a horse's rhythmic, repetitive movements work to improve a rider's muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, strength, and flexibility (Borzo 2002). One mother told me about her seven-year-old daughter:

Being on the horse has improved her sense of balance tremendously. At one time she had to think about sitting up, and if she relaxed she would begin to tumble to one side. Sitting up straight has become a natural response for her now.... (MacNamara 2005, 2)

For children with physical disabilities, riding corrects abnormal muscle tone and improves coordination, balance, and posture, and enhances sensory motor skills (Borzo 2002). Brushing, carrying tack back and forth, picking up manure and sweeping are demanding, but this work is considered fun by children and is great exercise.

Children with autism and special needs are not the only ones to benefit from work with horses. Riders often develop bonds with horses that alleviate loneliness, depression, and isolation. For Sarah, a six-year-old with low self-confidence and social anxiety, identifying with a loyal equine friend was all she needed to open up to other riders at the barn. This unique setting, filled with friendly people of all ages, horses, and often barn cats and dogs, puts children and adults at ease with its simple focus and community. Sarah struggled to make friends in school, but the barn was a safe place where she was never teased and where all the horses listened to and accepted her. In response to a kind person, a horse will often offer a gentle nuzzle or greeting. Children who have trouble relating to humans often learn through interactions with horses how to communicate with peers. Many children who find it hard to make friends walk into a barn and become buddies with other children immediately as they converse about the daily updates on the horses.

As prey to mountain lions, coyotes, and humans, horses can be fearful, untrustworthy, and shy. Children often behave the same way (Canfield 2003) because they don't have much control over their lives and believe that no one listens to them. With two loving but high-powered, controlling parents, Noah was not used to being listened to until he came to the barn. Noah's parents admitted they did not give their child enough responsibility for decisions. They thought he would like riding and that he should try a new activity now that his weekly Latin classes had ended. As this ten-year-old nervously arrived at the barn, I introduced him to Captain, a Roan quarter horse, and demonstrated how to lead Captain out of his stall and through the barn aisle. Noah looked shocked and pleased when Captain followed him without hesitation. Children are constantly being reminded of what they should be doing, how they should do it, and, of course, what they should avoid doing. It is empowering to be handed a horse that looks to you for direction and guidance. This kind of recognition, though commonplace in adulthood, is infrequent in childhood.

Therapeutic riding has an impact on the whole person: socially, emotionally, mentally, and physically. Horses do not care how a child walks or talks or

performs in school; such a lack of judgment frees up all relationships. As Kathy Splinter-Watkins put it, "I know that therapeutic horseback riding works — just look at the smiles!" (Splinter-Watkins 2002, 1).

## References

- Autism Society of America. 2008, January 1. About autism. Available online at <[www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about\\_home](http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_home)>.
- Borzo, Greg. 2002. Horse power: When riding turns into treatment. Damascus, PA: American Hippotherapy Association. Online at <[www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org/aha\\_hpot\\_a\\_horsepower.htm](http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org/aha_hpot_a_horsepower.htm)>.
- Canfield, J., and M. V. Hansen. 2003. Chicken soup for the horse lover's soul: Inspirational stories about horses and the people who love them. Deerfield, FL: Health Communications.
- Gatty, C., R. C. Cawley, D. J. Cawley, and K. Retter, K. 1994. Therapeutic horseback riding and self-concept in adolescents with special educational needs. *Anthrozoos* 7(2): 129-134.
- Friends For Tomorrow Therapeutic Riding Center. 1999. *A story of children and horses* and *The story continues*. Video. Lincoln, MA: Friends for Tomorrow.
- Grandin, T. 2005. Animals in translation: Using the mysteries of autism to decode animal behavior. New York: Tantor Media.
- MacNamara, C. 2005, February 12. Interview with mother of autistic daughter who has participated in therapeutic riding in New Hampshire for 3 years.
- Roberts, M. 1997. The man who listens to horses. New York: Random House.
- Splinter-Watkins, K. 2002. Research: Past to future? NARHA Strides Magazine Online. Available online at <[www.narha.org/PDFfiles/research.pdf](http://www.narha.org/PDFfiles/research.pdf)>.
- Steinbeck, J. 1994. *The red pony*. New York: Penguin.

## Therapeutic Riding Resources

North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, Inc. NARHA Denver, Colorado <[www.narha.org](http://www.narha.org)>.

Friends for Tomorrow Therapeutic Riding Center, Lincoln, MA <[www.friendsfortomorrow.org](http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org)>.

Friends For Tomorrow Therapeutic Riding Center. 1999. *A story of children and horses*. Promotional video.

Riding to the Top: Therapeutic Riding Center Running out of Pineland Farms Equestrian Center in Gray/ New Gloucester, ME <[www.ridingtothetop.org](http://www.ridingtothetop.org)>.

Flying Changes Therapeutic Riding Center, Topsham, ME <[www.flyingchanges.org](http://www.flyingchanges.org)>.

# “Apparelled in Celestial Light”

## Transcendent Nature Experiences in Childhood

David Sobel

**Environmental stewardship isn't rooted in knowledge-based education, but is grounded in early experiences in which children feel love for and oneness with their natural surroundings.**

I spend a lot of time these days talking with teachers, foundation directors, environmental educators, and evaluators about how to most effectively shape environmental stewardship behavior. The \$64,000 question is — what's the most effective way to educate children who will grow up to behave in environmentally responsible ways? Or, more specifically, what kinds of learning, or what kinds of experience will most likely shape young adults who want to protect the environment, participate on conservation commissions, think about the implications of their consumer decisions and minimize the environmental footprint of their personal lives and the organizations where they work? There's a surprising dearth of information about exactly how this process works.

A number of researchers have studied environmentalists to try to determine if there were any similarities in their childhood experiences that contributed to their having strong ecological values and pursuing an environmental career. When Louise Chawla (1992) of Kentucky State University reviewed these studies, she found a striking pattern. Most environmentalists attributed their commitment to a combination of two sources: many hours spent outdoors in a keenly remembered wild or semi-wild place in childhood or adolescence, and an adult who taught respect for nature. So children need lots of time rambling in neighborhood woods and fields and a parent or teacher who cares about nature.

In his autobiography about growing up in Denver, lepidopterist Robert Michael Pyle (1993, xv-xix) describes the urban semi-wild place that inspired him.

My own point of intimate contact with the land was a ditch. Growing up on the wrong side of Denver to reach the mountains easily and often, I resorted to the tattered edges of the Great

Note: This article is reprinted with permission from Chapter 2 of the author's book, *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators* (Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2008).



DAVID SOBEL is Director of the Center for Place-based Education at Antioch University New England in Keene, NH. He is the author of *Children's Special Places*, *Mapmaking with Children*, *Beyond Ecophobia*, *Placed-Based Education*, and, most recently, *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators*.

Plains, on the back side of town. There I encountered a century-old irrigation channel known as the High Line Canal. Without a doubt, most of the elements of my life flowed from that canal.

From the time I was six, this weedy watercourse had been my sanctuary, playground and sulking walk. It was also my imaginary wilderness, escape hatch, and birthplace as a naturalist. Over the years, I studied its natural history, explored much of its length, watched its habitats shrink as the suburbs grew up around it, and tried to help save some of its best bits.... Even when living in national parks, in exotic lands, in truly rural countryside, I've hankered to get back to the old ditch whenever I could....

Even if they don't know "my ditch," most people I speak with seem to have a ditch somewhere — or a creek, meadow, wood lot or marsh — that they hold in similar regard. These are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin.... It is through close and intimate contact with a particular patch of ground that we learn to respond to the earth, to see that it really matters.... Everyone has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches — and the fields, the woods, the ravines — can teach us to care enough for the land.

One problem, of course, is that every child doesn't have a ditch, or even if they do, they're not allowed access to it. As more than half of the world's children live in urban settings, the availability of ditches, or just urban parklands, is shrinking. Even in rural and suburban settings where patches of woods and ponds are available, parents' concerns about pollution and abduction make these places unavailable. And so the task of providing access to semi-wild places with the tutelage of caring adults often falls to environmental educators. But as environmental educators seek to professionalize their endeavors and work more closely with schools, they become assimilated into the world of standards, curriculum frameworks and high stakes tests. Learning about the environment becomes ingesting a sequence of facts and

concepts that create environmental knowledge. The underlying assumption is that knowledge leads to the creation of attitudes that eventually lead to thoughtful environmental behaviors.

For instance, one early version of California's curriculum guidelines for Understanding the Local Environment started out with the healthy notion that "direct experience in the environment also helps foster the awareness and appreciation that motivate learners to further questioning, better understanding and appropriate concern and action." This is followed by content guidelines for different grade levels. Here's an example of a set of related guidelines through the curriculum.

- Grades K-4: Identify basic types of habitats (e.g., forests, wetlands, or lakes). Create a short list of plants and animals found in each.
- Grades 5-8: Classify local ecosystems (e.g., oak-hickory forest or sedge meadow). Create food webs to show, or describe their function in terms of the interaction of specific plant and animal species.
- Grades 9-12: Identify several plants and animals common to local ecosystems. Describe concepts such as succession, competition, predator/prey relationships and parasitism.

This is a developmentally appropriate sequence of knowledge objectives, but there's an inherent problem. Because these curriculum guidelines are connected to state assessments, the focus often collapses into making sure the students can recite the information. They follow the old Dragnet maxim: "Just the facts, ma'am." As a result, providing direct experience with the natural world falls to the wayside. The opportunity to explore the ditch gets replaced by memorizing lists of the plants you might find if you actually ever went to the ditch.

Go back to Pyle's description above to see where the problem lies. From exploring the ditch, he became interested in natural history and then became an advocate for preservation. Sounds like knowledge to attitudes to behavior. My contention, however, is that the crucial element in his description is, "These are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of

place gets under our skin." What gets lost, when we focus on facts, are the initiation experiences, the moments of transcendence when the borders between the natural world and ourselves break down. It's these experiences that provide the essential glue, the deep motivational attitude and commitment, the sense of place. These in turn fuel the pursuit of knowledge that leads to conservation behavior. John Burroughs (1919, 28) puts it simply when he says, "Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow."

Which leads me to my controversial hypothesis: *One transcendent experience in nature is worth 1000 nature facts.* Stated in a slightly more positive form, it may be that one transcendent experience in the landscape has the potential for leading to 1000 nature facts. So the question becomes: *How do we design family outings, school curriculum, and environmental learning opportunities with an eye towards optimizing the possibility of creating transcendent experiences?* Of course, first we have to get a sense of what these transcendent experiences are and if they really make a difference before we can decide that they're important to pursue.

### Nature Mysticism

Writing at the beginning of the 19th century, William Wordsworth was the one of first poets to identify the significance of children's nature experiences. In his *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, Wordsworth (1985) recalls his boyhood wanderings saying,

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Appareled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

Wordsworth contended that children perceived nature differently from adults and that this mode of perception was a gift rather than a delusion. Their experiences were transcendent in that the individual often felt connected to or merged with the natural world in some highly compelling fashion.

Following Wordsworth's lead, anthropologist Edith Cobb (1959, 538-539) reviewed the autobiographies of 300 European geniuses and found that many

of them described similar kinds of experiences in childhood.

My position is based upon the fact that the study of the child in nature, culture and society reveals that there is a special period, the little understood, pre pubertal, halcyon, middle age of childhood, approximately from five or six to eleven or twelve, between the strivings of animal infancy and the storms of adolescence — when the natural world is experienced in some highly evocative way, producing in the child a sense of some profound continuity with natural processes....

It is principally to this middle-age range in their early life that these writers say they return in memory in order to renew the power and impulse to create at its very source, a source which they describe as the experience of emerging not only into the light of consciousness but into a living sense of a dynamic relationship with the outer world. In these memories the child appears to experience a sense of discontinuity, an awareness of his own unique separateness and identity, and also a continuity, a renewal of relationship with nature as process.

Cobb's description of the renewal of relationship with nature as process is surprisingly ecological in character, especially when you recognize that she was writing in the mid 1950s, well before any ecological theory had developed.

It turns out, however, that these experiences are not limited to geniuses. Two similar, but unconnected studies document the widespread occurrence of spiritual experiences in nature during childhood. *The Original Vision: A Study of the Religious Experience of Childhood* by Edward Robinson (1983) was conducted by the Religious Experience Research Unit at Oxford University in England in 1977. *Visions of Innocence: Spiritual and Inspirational Experiences of Childhood* is a study completed by Edward Hoffman in 1992, a practicing psychologist and university professor who solicited descriptions of childhood experiences from adults in the United States and around the world. Hoffman does not reference Robinson's study, so they appear to be quite independent, though their findings are absolutely resonant.

Robinson's British study was based on adult responses to a published query in newspapers asking people if they had ever "felt that their lives had in any way been affected by some power beyond themselves." Of 4000 responses, about 15% described childhood experiences and a significant proportion of these occurred in nature (Robinson 1983, 11). Robinson analyzes these in a chapter entitled *Nature Mysticism*. Hoffman's study (1992, 18) similarly asked respondents if they could recall any experiences from their childhoods — before the age of fourteen — that could be called mystical or intensely spiritual. Again, although no mention was made of nature, a significant proportion of the experiences described are nature-based.

Both authors note that these are accounts written by adults describing their childhood experiences. Many of the writers suggest that though the childhood experience was monumental in significance, they had no way of describing the experience as children. They were swept up in a wave of awe, but had no way to tell their parents what they had felt. Robinson and Hoffman both acknowledge the possibility of the experience being reshaped by years of memory, but the similarity of the descriptions suggests an integrity to the original experience. Let's dip into some of the experiences.

When I was about eleven years old, I spent part of a summer holiday in the Wye Valley. Waking up very early one bright morning, before any of the household was about, I left my bed and went to kneel on the window-seat, to look out over the curve which the river took just below the house.... The morning sunlight shimmered on the leaves of the trees and on the rippling surface of the river. The scene was very beautiful, and quite suddenly I felt myself on the verge of a great revelation. It was as if I had stumbled unwittingly on a place where I was not expected, and was about to be initiated into some wonderful mystery, something of indescribable significance. Then, just as suddenly, the feeling faded. But for the brief seconds while it lasted, I had known that in some strange way I, the essential "me," was a part of the trees, of the sunshine, and the river, that we all belonged to some great unity. I was left filled with exhilara-

tion and exultation of spirit. This is one of the most memorable experiences of my life, of a quite different quality and greater intensity than the sudden lift of the spirit one may often feel when confronted with beauty in Nature. (40-year-old female) (Robinson 1983, 37).

The comments of the woman above illustrate Edith Cobb's notion of discontinuity or unique separateness and continuity or oneness with nature. The woman sitting at the window describes "the essential me" (her unique separateness) being unified with the trees, the sunshine and the river, (continuity with nature). I contend that this sense of deep empathy, of being saturated with nature, yet unique and separate, is one of the core gifts of middle childhood. The sense of continuity provides the foundation for an empathic relationship with the natural world. The sense of separateness provides a sense of agency, of being able to take responsible action for the natural world. The deep bond creates a commitment to lifelong protection. The next question then might be: Are these experiences really specific to childhood? These next two recollections suggest the discreteness of the developmental window of opportunity.

The only aspect in which I think my childhood experience was more vivid than in later life was in my contact with nature. I seemed to have a more direct relationship with flowers, trees and animals, and there are certain particular occasions ... in which I was overcome by a great joy as I saw the first irises opening or picked daisies in the dew-covered lawn before breakfast. There seemed to be no barrier between the flowers and myself, and this was a source of unutterable delight. As I grew older, I still had a great love of nature and like to spend holidays in solitary places, particularly in the mountains, but this direct contact seemed to fade, and I was sad about it. I was not quite able to grasp something which was precious." (46-year-old female) (Robinson 1983, 49)

From a thirty-three year old German woman who grew up in an urban setting:

I can't remember if my parents ever told me that nature is alive or has a certain spirit. But I al-

ways felt that nature had a definite soul. In our backyard an old maple tree stood, and I used to climb up it and spend many hours amid its branches. I would hug this old tree, and I always felt that it spoke to me. Its branches and leaves were like arms hugging and touching me, especially on windy days.

Not only the trees could speak to me, but also all the plants, streams and even the stones.... When I would find an especially beautiful rock on the road, I would take it, feel it, observe it, smell it, taste it and then listen to its voice. Afterward, I would return happily to my parents and relate what the trees or flowers, rocks or brook had told me. They would find this amusing, and were proud of their daughter's imagination....

Then school began, and everything changed. Because of my intense involvement with nature, I couldn't relate well to other children who seemed silly and babyish to me. They found me strange and funny. But even harder was the change at home. Now (my parents) denied everything. "What nonsense! The rocks can't talk! Don't let anybody hear this, because they'll think you're crazy."

How right my parents were. I found out one day when my classmates saw me talking to a big chestnut tree in front of the schoolyard. Not only did they ridicule me, but they told the teacher, who requested a meeting with my parents the next day....

My parents recounted the conversation to me and clearly showed how ashamed they were "to have such a crazy child." From that day onward, my magic was systemically ruined or destroyed.... So it happened, that I started believing that nature was mute and couldn't speak to me. (Hoffman 1992, 24-25)

The window of opportunity is both developmental and cultural. Even when a child has a particular disposition towards transcendent experiences, the cultural context only tolerates this kind of magical thinking up through the end of early childhood. It's like imaginary friends — up till about seven they're

cute, after seven they become indicative of a child's avoidance of reality.

Both Robinson's and Hoffman's studies are filled with similar descriptions. They become almost boring in their similarity, but that's the interesting part. They seem to reveal a frequent propensity towards transcendent experiences during middle childhood. Certainly, no longitudinal studies have been done to assess whether these people behave in a more ecologically responsible fashion in adulthood than the general population. My speculation, however, is that once you've felt at one with the natural world, it will powerfully compel you to environmental ethics and behavior. It follows that if we want to develop environmental values, we should try to optimize the opportunity for transcendent nature experiences in middle childhood.

### Play and Religious Experience

The long term benefits of these transcendent experiences are suggested by cultural anthropologist Paul Shepard (1998, 199).

In play, to pretend is to take "as if" as provisionally true: is this an escape from real life, a venture into fantasy, which is more exciting and entertaining than the adult life routine? The answer is yes, it is more exciting; and no, it is not an escape from life. It is a preamble to a special aspect of real life. Like language learning, play is programmed in the human genes and its developmental expression is age-critical. It is essential for the growth of mental life. Apart from its immediate joyful pleasure, it is preparation for a special adult activity: the "as if" of play is the heart of ritual and, eventually, formal religious activity.... It is a marvelous example of the wisdom of the genes that religion functions and is made possible because of the completely instinctive childhood activity, in spite of all its complex intellectual and aesthetic splendor. The ritualizing activity of play is a biological prerequisite to formal religious experience.

Think about the "as if" of the Catholic sacrament. "Drink this wine, it is the blood of Christ. Eat this wafer, it is his "body." Taking the sacrament asks the believer to suspend reality, to imagine that she is

taking in Christ's body. It's true in all forms of religion. In Buddhist meditation, the challenge is to step out of the flow of everyday reality, and into a deeper, quieter place. It's like leaving all the noise and arguing in your house and slipping into the private world of your fort. And how is praying to God and asking for help any different than when your five-year-old daughter asks her imaginary friend for advice. One prepares you for the other. The ability to enter into play realities prepares you for the meditative state of prayer.

Do we sacrifice a child's capacity to enter a meditative space by not letting them go outside to play in the garden? And, instead, does it make it more likely that they'll use alcohol and drugs to find the altered state of consciousness that they didn't find during childhood play? Regardless of whether you accept this line of argument or not, it's important to recognize the everyday virtues of children's nature play.

## References

- Burroughs, John. 1919. *Field and study*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Chawla, Louise. 1998. Significant life experiences revisited: A review of research on sources of environmental sensitivity. *Journal of Environmental Education* 29(3).
- Cobb, E. 1959. The ecology of imagination in childhood. *Daedalus* 88(3).
- Hoffman, Edward. 1992. *Visions of innocence: Spiritual and inspirational experiences of childhood*. Boston: Shambala.
- Pyle, Robert M. 1993. *The thunder tree: Lessons from an urban wildland*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Robinson, Edward. 1983. *The original vision: A study of the religious experience of childhood*. New York: Seabury Press. (Originally published in 1977).
- Shepard, Paul. 1998. *The tender carnivore and the sacred game*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Wells, Nancy M., and Kristi S. Leckies. 2006. Nature and the life course: Pathways from childhood nature experiences to adult environmentalism. *Children, Youth and Environments* 16(1).
- Wordworth, William. 1985 Ode: Intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood. In *Poems selected by W. E. Williams*. London: Penguin. (Originally published in 1807).

# transform | engage

## Contemplative Education

*"Learning is the interplay of discipline and delight."*

—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

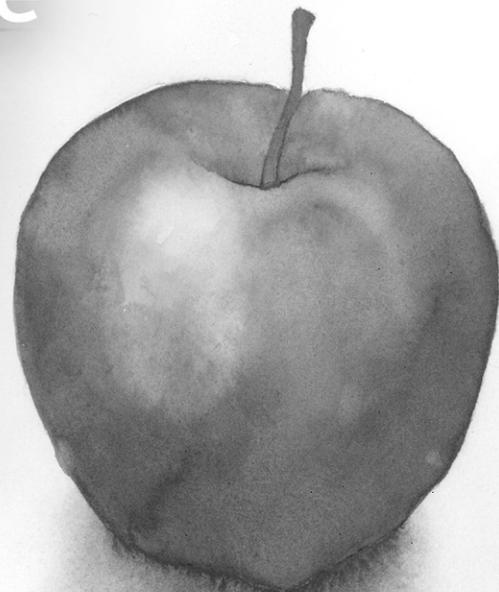
Transformative education drawn from Buddhist meditative traditions and Western holistic approaches nurtures the teacher for passionate engagement in the learning process.

BA in Early Childhood Education  
MA in Contemplative Education (Online)  
Alternative Teacher Licensure Program  
Professional Development

[www.naropa.edu/spirited](http://www.naropa.edu/spirited)

**Naropa**  
UNIVERSITY

Boulder, Colorado  
800-772-6951



# Out of Bounds

## Insights from Australian Children To Support Sustainable Cities

Paul Tranter and Karen Malone

**Cities must give children opportunities to freely move about, explore, and interact with others. To create such cities, we need to give children a voice in their design.**

The principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) highlight the responsibility of the parties to the Convention to uphold the child's right to live in a safe, clean, and healthy environment and to engage in free play, leisure, and recreation. According to the CRC, a child's well-being and quality of life are the ultimate indications of a healthy environment, good governance, and sustainable development (UNICEF 1997). A key characteristic of a child-friendly city is its capacity to provide opportunities for children to have freedom of movement to explore, uninhibited by physical, social, or cultural constraints. Using this criterion, Australian cities rate poorly. Large sections of Australian cities are now effectively "out of bounds" for children.

When Australian parents are asked to reflect on their childhoods, they usually remember having far more freedom than their own children have today (Cadzow 2004). A generation ago, children were far more likely to be able to play independently in their own neighborhoods. Children now have less time available to play outside because they are engaged in more indoor and adult-organized activities such as sport and music. Children are also more likely to be driven to these activities, partly because of the greater distances involved, and partly because of the increased fear of traffic and "stranger danger." Other



PAUL TRANTER is a Senior Lecturer in Geography in the School of Physical, Environmental and Mathematical Sciences at UNSW@ADFA in Australia. Dr. Tranter's research on children's independent mobility and children's playful interactions with their environment has examined contexts from school grounds to cities.



KAREN MALONE is Professor of Social Sciences in the Faculty of Education at University of Wollongong, Australia. She is Asia-Pacific Director of the global UNESCO-MOST Growing Up In Cities (GUIC) project, which focuses on the quality of life of children and youth. She is also an external consultant to UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative.

reasons for the loss of children's freedom include the erosion of natural or wild spaces to explore (Cunningham et al. 1994; 1996); increased social pressure to be "good parents" by driving their children rather than allowing them to walk or cycle (Tranter & Pawson 2001); the increasing choice of the "best" schools and childcare centers that require children to be transported by car; and the trend to overoccupy and overorganize children's lives (Honore 2004; Stanley et al. 2005).

While many Australian parents strive to provide the best possible upbringing for their children, they may collectively be contributing to city environments that are not child-friendly. This is particularly clear in regard to children's independent mobility, which is dependent on walking, cycling, and public transport, all of which are more sustainable modes than car-based transport. This paper explores the links between child-friendly cities and sustainable cities, where the provision of services, including transport, is based on principles of fairness and the protection of the built and natural environment. The UNICEF child-friendly cities initiative is discussed as one way in which a child-focused approach can have benefits for the sustainability of whole cities.

### **Children's Views of Sustainable Cities**

The UNESCO Growing Up in Cities (GUIC) research developed a set of indicators of the quality of life of children (Chawla 2002a). GUIC uses the participation principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to emphasize that cities should be evaluated not for children but by children themselves.

Research with children in cities throughout the world shows that despite diversity of place, children value similar qualities in urban environments (Malone 2001; UNICEF 1997). The list of positive sociophysical indicators for urban environments identified by children includes the provision of basic needs, social integration, safety and free movement, peer gathering places, and safe green spaces. The negative indicators include social exclusion, violence and crime, heavy traffic, lack of gathering places, boredom, and political powerlessness (Chawla 2002b). For children, a child-friendly city supports social integration, where they feel welcome and are valued as part of a caring community (Malone &

Hasluck 2002; Hart 1995). In such places children are able to freely explore and extend their range of movement as they mature.

A sustainable urban transport system should meet a range of criteria (Schiller & Kenworthy 2003; Centre for Sustainable Transportation 2003). It should meet the need for access and mobility in harmony with the health of individuals and the environment; be equitable, both within and between generations; limit the consumption of resources; and avoid the destruction of green or natural spaces within cities. The transport system should "enhance the liveability and human qualities" of cities (Schiller & Kenworthy 2003) as well as provide affordable, efficient transport that supports economic goals.

Many of the features of a child-friendly city parallel the features of sustainable cities. In particular, the need of children for safe and free movement around their neighborhoods and cities requires forms of transport that are equitable and produce little environmental impact. Any transport strategy that devotes large levels of resources (including urban space) to a system that serves the needs of a minority of its population, and undermines the freedom of other sections of the population, does not meet the requirements for a child-friendly city.

In Australian cities, along with many other western countries, the advantages conferred on individual children by the increased use of private motor vehicles are outweighed by the collective negative impact of these same vehicles. An increase in the reliance on private motor vehicles has decreased the viability of child-friendly transport: walking, cycling, and public transport. In contrast, the more adults use the streets as pedestrians or cyclists, the more supportive streets become for children. The presence of people provides the passive or natural surveillance that makes cities feel safer (Jacobs 1972).

### **Assessing Children's Freedom in Australian Cities**

Children's independent mobility, their freedom to explore their own neighborhoods or city without an adult, is low in Australian cities compared to many other countries, and will worsen if car travel continues to rise. Many Australian children have less freedom to explore their city than children in nations with higher levels of absolute poverty. For example,

in Braybrook (suburban Melbourne), where young people are seen as a problem and hence removed from the streets, they are less able to participate in community life than the disadvantaged young people of the very low income Boca-Baraccas area in Buenos Aires (Chawla 2002a).

In comparison with children in German cities, children in Australian cities have lower levels of freedom to walk to school alone, cycle on main roads alone, visit friends alone, use public transport, cross main roads alone, and go out after dark. We can see each of these as "licences" that parents give their children. The age at which children are granted these licences, or the percent of children in each age group that possess these licences, is an indicator of the level of children's independent mobility. Data collected by Paul Tranter in the 1990s shows that children in Australian and New Zealand cities have much lower levels of freedom than children in German cities (Tranter 1996; Hillman et al. 1990). For example, while 80% of 10-year-old children in German cities were allowed to travel to places other than school alone in 1990, only 37% of 10-year-old children in the Australian schools surveyed were given this licence in 1992.

The decline in children's freedom over the last two or three decades is illustrated in data on children's licences to walk or cycle to school. For example, data on the journey to school for Essendon (suburban Melbourne) show a pronounced shift to less child-friendly transport modes between 1974 and 2005. Recent data relating to the licence of children to walk or cycle to school indicates that the independent mobility of Australian children continues to decline. Data for Sydney show that the number of walk trips and the mean time per day spent walking declined significantly for all Sydney residents between 1991 and 2001, and the biggest decreases were for the 5-14 year age group (Corpuz et al. 2005).

Two important reasons for the restriction by parents of their children's independent travel, particularly as pedestrians and cyclists, are traffic and "stranger danger." Yet there may be an important link between traffic and fears of assault and molestation in residential streets. As traffic levels increase, more and more people (adults as well as children) cease to use the streets as pedestrians. There is also a

loss of local shops and services. Residential streets are perceived as being deserted, lonely, and dangerous. There are few adults around on the streets to provide surveillance and support for children. In contrast, if traffic levels are low enough to allow streets to be used for walking, cycling, social interaction and playing, neighborhoods would become reinvigorated with supportive community life (Engwicht 1992; 2005).

Another important consideration for parents when deciding whether their children can walk or cycle is the distance involved, for example to school. Primary school children are unlikely to be allowed to walk or cycle to school if they live more than one kilometre (about 0.6 miles) from school. However, government policies in Australia have led to the closure of many local schools, with the narrow focus of saving money. As a result, parents must drive their children to more distant schools, reducing children's freedom to walk or cycle to school, and further contributing to traffic danger and pollution.

### Freedom on School Grounds

Growing numbers of urban primary school children lack access to natural or wild spaces in their local neighborhoods. School grounds provide some of the space left where children have independence to explore and interact with their own environment. Consequently, school grounds have increasingly important implications for children's environmental learning (Moore & Wong 1997). However, the restriction of children's independent mobility in Australian cities may now be extending to green spaces in schools (Evans 1995b; Malone & Tranter 2003; Tranter & Malone 2004).

Despite a growing awareness of the importance of children's play, changes to some Australian primary school grounds have reduced opportunities for creative and diverse play. The most serious of these include the reduction in the time given to recess (lunch and other recess periods) (Evans 1997); the amalgamation of schools in the name of greater economic efficiency (Evans 1997; 1998); the removal of play equipment (Evans 1995a); and the implementation of restrictive rules about children's use of school grounds that force teachers into a policing role (Evans 1995b).

Recent research on school grounds in Melbourne and Canberra (Malone & Tranter 2003; Tranter & Malone 2004) revealed that most schools surveyed had strict limits on what activities they could engage in and where they could play. One of the techniques used in this research involved tracking the spatial movements of children during recess and lunch. This technique illustrated how schools restrict the mobility of children. Often the most interesting and valuable parts of the school grounds were "out of bounds" for the children, including areas of forest, walking tracks through shrubs, and gardens.

Not all schools restrict children's play in this way. Orana School in Canberra, a Steiner school, strongly encourages children to interact with their environment in both formal teaching situations (e.g., using the educational garden in class activities) and in informal play (e.g., building cubbies (dens) in the forest). This school allows children to be creatively untidy in their play; to dig up their school grounds (or at least a section of them); to engage in "dirty" activities, such as playing in water channels or gardening; and to use available materials to construct their own worlds.

The majority of children surveyed desired more freedom to use their school grounds. Yet staff restrict use of the playground for a number of reasons: ease of supervision; safety considerations, including traffic danger and bullying; keeping the school grounds neat and orderly and children clean and tidy. At this micro-scale of school grounds, we can see some of the same processes operating that restrict children's freedom at the neighborhood or city-wide scales. Adults restrict children's freedom on school grounds because this simplifies adult's lives: It keeps children out of the way, or easily supervised; it keeps children in their place.

The conceptualisation of children in transport and environmental planning as "a problem" has resulted in an urban environment which is extremely hostile to their needs and aspirations. As problems, children are tidied away behind railings, in parks, in gardens, and — best of all — indoors. (Davis & Jones 1997)

#### **Value of Free Play in a Local Environment**

Children's freedom may not be compensated for by increased mobility of children in cars, or by access

to virtual worlds. Australian parents are now more protective of their children than ever before (Cadzow 2004). Could our concerns for our individual children be making whole cities less child-friendly?

Parents of primary school children are concerned about three main risks: traffic danger, "stranger danger," and injury while playing or getting to a play activity. However, the individualistic response of parents who protect their own children from these dan-

---

***If we wish to develop sustainable, child-friendly cities, then we must stop making large sections of our cities out of bounds to children. If we wish to promote a shift towards sustainable cities, a very useful starting point is to develop policies that will give our cities back to our children.***

---

gers by driving them everywhere has the unintended effect of exposing children to a new set of risks, which may be far more damaging in the long term.

Children who are driven everywhere can miss out on regular exercise, important for optimal physical development, which they once got from walking or cycling to school, to their friends, or to the local park. Medical experts describe increased levels of obesity as epidemic in Australia (Waters & Baur 2003; Stubbs & Lee 2004). Lack of exercise and obesity are also linked to Type II diabetes and other "lifestyle" diseases (Lewis & Ker 2005). The extra traffic created by ferrying children to school, to sport, to music lessons or to their friends' houses also contributes to higher levels of air pollution, including "in-car pollution" which is usually much higher than levels at the side of the road (Rank et al. 2001; International Center for Technology Assessment 2000). Children are more susceptible to pollution because they breathe more air per unit of body weight than adults (O'Brien 2003).

The saddest part of this “bubble-wrapping” of children is that they miss out on the joy and wonder that come from exploring their world at their own pace (See Figure 1 below). Sports and other adult-organized activities are beneficial, but they are not a substitute for spontaneous play. For children to develop a sense of place, they require direct contact with vegetation, soils, and animals (Orr 1992).



Figure 1. A child's view of the world from the backseat of an automobile. (Taken by Kaela, age 16).

Not only is it important that children be able to get to local play areas by themselves, but walking or cycling to school and other destinations provide vital encounters with place. Cunningham et al. (1996, 37) found that when children are taken to school by car

there were no opportunities for kicking rocks or toads, looking for dead birds, making friends with animals, playing, or simply dawdling along with friends — all activities unremarkable in adult eyes but part of the experience and development of childhood.

### UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative

Ideally, towns and cities should be where children socialize and learn how society functions. The sites also should be places where children can find refuge, discover nature, and find tolerant and caring adults who support them. If feeling secure, connected, and valued are universal indicators of quality of life, what better place to evaluate cities than through the eyes of children?

The principles of sustainable development articulate the importance of children's voices in envision-

ing the future. UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities initiative has captured the essence of these principles and has, through worldwide partnerships, endeavored to support mayors and municipal councils in encouraging children to participate in discussions of environmental responsibility and learning.

The connection between children's rights and sustainable cities has been formally articulated in global declarations and documents emerging from inter-governmental summits and meetings. The most significant documents include The Plan for Action that resulted from the World Summit for Children and the Rio Declaration and the action plan of Agenda 21 both endorsed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Principle 21 of the Rio declaration clearly reinforces the role of youth in sustainable development:

The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilised to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all. (United Nations 1992)

Chapter 25 of the Rio Declaration is entirely devoted to this topic, as indicated by its introduction:

Youth comprise nearly 30% of the world's population. The involvement of today's youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21. (United Nations 1992)

More recently, an emerging focus on urban environments has given rise to the development of the Habitat II Agenda and the Children's Rights and Habitat Report. Presented by UNICEF at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements at Istanbul in 1996, the Children's Rights and Habitat Report draws attention to the important role children have in sustainable cities:

Children have a special interest in the creation of sustainable human settlements that will support long and fulfilling lives for themselves and future generations. They require opportunities to participate and contribute to a sustainable urban future. (UNICEF 1997, preamble)

The relationship between sustainable development and children's lives is not just about adult stewards and their capacity to act on behalf of the child. It is also about recognizing the capacity for children and youth to be authentic participants in planning, development, and implementation processes (Malone 1999). Democratic behavior is learned through experience; children must be given a voice in their communities so they will be able to participate fully in civil society (Malone and Hasluck 1998). Local governments have a role to ensure the principles of Local Agenda 21 are respected, and the spirit of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child is the impetus to create appropriate mechanisms for children's participation in building a sustainable and equitable urban future. Sustainable development in terms of children's rights is being supported through UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative.

UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative was developed in response to meetings leading up to the development of the Habitat 2 Agenda. At these meetings participants clearly recognized that the situation of urban children around the world was of critical concern. The guiding principle behind the initiative was that safe environments nurture children of all ages with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychological development, and cultural expression.

### Conclusion

If we wish to develop sustainable, child-friendly cities, then we must stop making large sections of our cities out of bounds to children. If we wish to promote a shift towards sustainable cities, a very useful starting point is to develop policies that will give our cities back to our children. A cultural revolution (to create more child-friendly cities) can occur only when marginalized and diverse voices are listened to and celebrated (Engwicht 1999). If we listen, we may be able to learn from our children about more environmentally friendly modes of living.

Australian children prefer modes of transport that are inherently sustainable (walking and cycling). Given the choice, children would prefer to be allowed to walk or cycle to school and to other locations. Such modes of transport allow children to experience the enjoyment and stimulation of interact-

ing with place — with people and with nature. If children are constantly driven everywhere, they can become conditioned to believe that the car is the best — or the only — way to get anywhere.

Children may become the best advocates for sustainable transport. Research on a community-based social marketing project in Toronto, Canada, suggests that "enthusiastic children may be the strongest force to get parent's attention. Indeed ... if children beseeched ... their parents to let them walk, changes to routine could occur" (Greenest City 2001).

The achievement of more child-friendly and more sustainable cities will require more than physical changes to our cities such as a traffic decrease or the provision of a denser network of services (though these may be important) (Tranter and Doyle 1996). It will require a deep-seated change in how we treat children. As Rushkoff (1997, 13) argues, "let's appreciate the natural adaptive skills demonstrated by our kids and look to them for answers to some of our own problems."

When parents focus on giving their offspring the best chance to succeed in life, they often put them "on the fast track in everything — school, sports, art and music" (Honore 2004, 216). When children have "no time to be slow," they have no time to "relax, play on their own, or let their imaginations wander" (Honore 2004, 218). Instead of cramming our children's lives with adult-organized activities (school, sports, music, and ballet), we should allow our children the time they need to experience the joy and wonder of contact with their own neighborhood and community. In fact, we could take time out to slow down and play with our children, and perhaps even risk getting dirty in the process.

### References

- Cadzow, J. 2004, January 17. The bubble-wrap generation. *Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend Magazine*, pp. 18-21.
- Centre for Sustainable Transportation. 2003. Sustainable mobility. Available online at <www.cstctd.org>.
- Chawla, L. 2002a. *Growing Up In an urbanising world*. London: Earthscan/UNESCO.
- Chawla, L. 2002b. Toward better cities for children and youth. In *Growing up in an urbanising world*, edited by L. Chawla. London: Earthscan/UNESCO.
- Corpuz, G., A. Hay, and D. Merom. 2005. Walking for transport and health: Trends in Sydney in the last decade. *Proceedings of the 28th Australasian transport research forum*,

- Sydney, 28-30 September. Available online at <www.planning.nsw.gov.au/tpdc/pdfs/walkin\_fo\_transportand\_health.pdf>.
- Cunningham, C., M. Jones, and M. Barlow. 1996. Town planning and children: A Case study of Lismore, New South Wales, Australia. Armidale: Department of Geography and Planning, University of New England.
- Cunningham, C., M. Jones, and N. Taylor. 1994. The child-friendly neighbourhood: some questions and tentative answers from Australian research. *International Play Journal* 2:79-95.
- Davis, A., and L. Jones. 1997. Whose neighbourhood? Whose quality of life? Developing a new agenda for children's health in urban settings. *Health Education Journal* 56: 351.
- Engwicht, D. 1992. *Towards an eco-city: Calming the traffic*. Sydney: Envirobook.
- Engwicht, D. 1999. *Street reclaiming, Creating livable streets and vibrant communities*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
- Engwicht, D. 2005. *Mental speed bumps: The smarter way to tame traffic*. Sydney: Envirobook.
- Evans, J. 1995a. Children's attitudes to recess and the changes taking place in Australian primary schools. *Research in Education* 56: 49-61.
- Evans, J. 1995b. Conflict and control in the school playground. *Changing Education* 2 (1 & 2): 17, 22, 24.
- Evans, J. 1997. Rethinking recess: Signs of change in Australian primary schools. *Education Research and Perspectives* 24 (1): 14-27.
- Evans, J. 1998. School closures, amalgamations and children's play: Bigger may not be better. *Children Australia* 23 (1): 12-18.
- Greenest City. 2001. *Small steps/large rewards: A community-based social marketing project*. Toronto.
- Hart, R. 1995. Children as the makers of a new geography. In *Building identities: Gender perspectives on children and urban space*, edited by L. Karsten, T. Bongertman, G. de Haan, G. van der Straaten, and I. Tom. Amsterdam: Instituut voor Sociale Geografie, Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Hillman, M., J. Adams, and J. Whitelegg. 1990. *One false move: A study of children's independent mobility*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Honore, C. 2004. *In praise of slow: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. London: Orion.
- International Center for Technology Assessment. 2000. In-car air pollution, CTA. Available online at <www.icta.org/projects/trans/incar.pdf>.
- Jacobs, J. 1972. *The death and life of great American cities*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lewis, P., and S. Ker, S. 2005. The relationship between Australian transport systems and public health. 28th Australasian Transport Research Forum, Sydney, 28-30 September.
- Malone, K. 1999. *Growing up in cities* as a model of participatory planning and "place-making" with young people. *Young Studies Australia* 18 (2): 17-23.
- Malone, K. 2001. Editorial: Children, youth and sustainable cities. *Local Environment* 6 (1): 5-12.
- Malone, K., and L. Hasluck. 1998. Geographies of exclusion: Young people's perceptions and use of public space. *Family Matters* 49 (20-26): x-xx.
- Malone, K., and L. Hasluck. 2002. Australian youth: Aliens in a suburban environment. In *Growing up in an urbanising world*, edited by L. Chawla. London: Earthscan/UNESCO.
- Malone, K., and P. J. Tranter. 2003. Schoolgrounds as sites for learning: Making the most of environmental opportunities. *Environmental Education Research* 9 (4): 283-303.
- Moore, R. C., and H. H. Wong. 1997. *Natural learning: The life history of an environmental schoolyard*. Berkeley: MIG Communications.
- O'Brien, C. 2003. Transportation that's actually good for the soul. National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW) Forum (Canada) 54,1-13.
- Orr, D. 1992. *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Peddie, B. and Somerville, C. 2005. The ghost of TOD's past: Schools reconnecting, Transit Oriented Development Conference, 2-8 July, Fremantle.
- Rank, J., J. Folke, and P. H. Jespersen. 2001. Differences in cyclists and car drivers exposure to air pollution from traffic in the city of Copenhagen. *The Science of the Total Environment* 279: 131-136.
- Rushkoff, D. 1997. *Children of chaos: Surviving the end of the world as we know it*. London: Flamingo.
- Schiller, P., and J. Kenworthy. 2003. Prospects for sustainable transportation in the Pacific Northwest: A comparison of Vancouver, Seattle and Portland. In *The Earthscan reader on world transport policy and practice*, edited by J. Whitelegg and G. Haq. London: Earthscan.
- Stanley, F., S. Richardson, and M. Prior. 2005. *Children of the lucky country? How Australian society has turned its back on children and why children matter*. Sydney: Macmillan.
- Stubbs, C. O. and A. J. Lee. 2004. The obesity epidemic: Both energy intake and physical activity contribute. *Medical Journal of Australia* 181: 489-491.
- Tranter, P. J. 1996. Children's independent mobility and urban form in Australasian, English and German cities. In *World transport research: Proceedings of the seventh world conference on transport research, vol. 3: Transport policy*, edited by D. Hensher, J. King and T. Oum. Sydney: World Conference on Transport Research.
- Tranter, P. J., and J. Doyle. 1996. Reclaiming the residential street as playspace. *International Play Journal* 4: 81-97.
- Tranter, P. J., and K. Malone. 2004. Geographies of environmental learning: An exploration of children's use of school grounds. *Children's Geographies* 2 (1): 131-155.
- Tranter, P. J., and E. Pawson. 2001. Children's access to local environments: A case-study of Christchurch, New Zealand. *Local Environment* 6 (1): 27-48.
- UNICEF. 1997. *Children's rights and habitat: Working towards child-friendly cities*. New York: Author.
- United Nations. 1992. *Agenda 21: The Rio Declaration and Statement of Forest Principles*. New York: United Nations.
- Waters, E. B., and L. A. Baur. 2003. Childhood obesity: Modernity's scourge. *Medical Journal of Australia* 178 (9): 422-423.

# Freedom in the Cultural Sphere

Ron Miller

**The cultural sphere, which includes education and the spontaneous creative activity of the human mind, must be freed from political and economic intrusion.**

I believe that an educational revolution is taking shape, an expression of the postmodern culture of sustainability and localism that is emerging across many areas of society. I call this a “self-organizing” revolution because there is no single leader, organization, or ideology directing it. Instead, a range of new educational ideas and approaches — from unschooling and democratic schools, to creative adaptations of Montessori and Waldorf principles, to land-based programs emphasizing ecological literacy, and much more — are spontaneously and organically arising across the U.S. and other parts of the world.

## The Principle of Noninterference

We can identify some core principles that define this revolution as a coherent movement, and link it to the holistic worldview of the emerging postmodern culture. One of these principles is the need to distribute power more evenly in society, with different social endeavors given sufficient *autonomy to fulfill their specific purposes*. This principle of noninterference or separation of powers across society was articulated in the unconventional social theory of the Austrian philosopher/spiritual explorer Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and other initiatives, who wrote and lectured extensively in the early years of the twentieth century. Although I am not a devoted student of his comprehensive system of Anthroposophy (to be honest, I find most of it bewildering), I have always been intrigued by his suggestion that a society is healthiest when its three primary functions or spheres — economic, political, and cultural — are allowed to maintain their own integrity, without interference from the others.

Educational alternatives will only truly thrive when the sphere of culture is freed from the undue influence and technocratic control of the other two

*Note: This article is adapted by Ron Miller from his new book, *The Self-Organizing Revolution* (Holistic Education Press, 2008).*



**RON MILLER, who founded this journal in 1988, is an historian and activist in the educational alternatives movement. He is editor of *Education Revolution* magazine and co-founder of two holistic schools in Vermont. He currently teaches history at Champlain College.**

spheres, the economic and political. It is now widely recognized that we are living under the dominion of a global corporate empire, and the source of its power is the alliance between economic interests and the coercive force of the state. These combined powers enable the corporate empire to manipulate cultural institutions — the media, universities and research institutes (policy “think tanks” and scientific research), and schools — to further tighten its control over the entire society.

Steiner and some of his students have described a “threefold” social order that, whatever its esoteric justification, simply strikes me as a sensible, holistic response to technocracy and overpowering capitalism. It is essentially a strategy of decentralization, analogous to the separation of governing powers written into the United States Constitution. Steiner argued that each of these spheres has a distinct role to play in society and can only fulfill its purpose by remaining independent of the other two. The economic sphere, he said, is concerned with the production and distribution of commodities, or more broadly with the relationship between human society and the material world. The political sphere is the domain of justice and human rights, or the proper relationships between people. The cultural sphere includes the spontaneous creative activity of the human mind, or the spirit at work in human life; the arts and sciences and the practice of education are expressions of this free flow of spiritual energy.

Economic activity, which involves differential and fluctuating material values, should not influence political judgment, which must be based on absolute equality of legal rights, and neither of these modes of social endeavor should interfere with the creative freedom of the artist, scholar, or educator. As Steiner saw nearly a century ago, in modern society economic enterprise has spilled over its proper boundaries, and the result is that every aspect of our lives, including education, has become a commodity — something with a market value rather than intrinsic value. He commented that people in modern society are “so used up by the economic life that [they] can no longer feel [their] existence to be worthy of a human being” (Steiner n.d., 82). This is an accurate description of our alienation.

The invasion of the educational process by economic forces is clearly evident in the standards-and-

testing movement. The corporate state provides the funding for education, considering it an economic investment and expecting a good return. Young people are considered to be intellectual capital, their learning a product with a certain value to the economy. Knowledge is packaged and delivered, increasingly through textbooks and other materials produced by corporations with political connections. Students and teachers are accountable to these investors and must demonstrate their success in mastering the authorized body of knowledge. There is little recognition of the student as a unique individual, motivated by a spiritual yearning to reach out to the world for purposeful understanding. There is little recognition of learning as an organic, flowing relationship between person and world, an encounter that cannot be managed so tightly without being strangled. There is little recognition of teaching as an art form, requiring a carefully honed sensitivity and thoughtful responsiveness, because teachers increasingly become technicians tending to the authorized lessons and administering the prescribed tests. In Steiner’s terms, education has been uprooted from the cultural sphere, where it belongs, and engulfed by the economic sphere, which turns it into a commodity, a soulless object to be bought and sold.

Steiner asserted that artistic and intellectual expression are “the loftiest productions of the spirit” and must be allowed to enter social life spontaneously, judged and managed only by the criteria of their own cultural sphere. Spiritual expression may mean, as it did for Steiner, the appearance of ideas or images that literally come from a transcendental realm, a universal consciousness greater than our own, or we may simply interpret it as the spontaneous creativity of the human mind. Either way, the term “spiritual” implies that ideas have a life of their own, and the exchange, critique, or reframing of ideas requires intellectual autonomy, which economic or political interference can only subvert. As Steiner (n.d., 83, 84) put it,

If the activities that spring from such aptitudes find their outlet subjected to artificial influences from the economic life or the political institutions, the true basis of their existence is to a great extent cut away; for the power by which they live must be evolved out of their own resources.

In other words, trying to apply economic or political criteria to spiritual expression can only reduce or distort it. Economic and political endeavors use categories and criteria that are adequate and appropriate for dealing with the material world and social relations, respectively, but they cannot fathom the deeper sources of our ideas. This is why the principle of academic freedom on university campuses has been held sacred, and it is why education at all levels should be independent of the state — especially the corporate state.

The education revolution seeks to return teaching and learning to the sphere of freedom and creativity. The educators, parents, and young people who have left public schooling for independent alternative schools or homeschooling are not simply out to privatize the educational system, for this is still to treat learning as a commodity in the marketplace. Rather, they are intuitively responding to the awareness that Steiner articulated a century ago, that genuine learning is an organic, spontaneous, and deeply meaningful encounter that requires autonomy from the political and economic forces that have taken over public education.

There are many dedicated teachers in the public schools, many schools with healthy roots in their communities, and many idealistic reformers who believe that a public system is the only equitable and democratic way to provide learning opportunities to all. But this system has become increasingly dominated by forces that are not truly educational, and it has become more and more difficult to realize the public school ideal in a technocratic empire. The principle of noninterference between the distinct functions of society warns us that the corporate state is not the proper provider of a truly nourishing education. School and state need to be separated, just as church and state were separated, to preserve the autonomy of each.

Still, this separation raises complicated questions about how society will provide educational opportunities to everyone. In the current economy, independent schools cost too much to be accessible to all, so in contrast to the original ideal of public education, they appear elitist. Steiner's response was profoundly radical: He envisioned the economic sphere freely supporting the cultural sphere, with no strings

attached; funding for education would not be an investment but would reflect authentic generosity toward this vital element of our common social life. Is this possible? I believe we are seeing the seeds of a revolution that can make it happen.

### A Vision for the Future: Philanthropy

Philanthropy — love for humanity — will play a key role in this revolution. One of the exciting developments in recent years is a new, expanded awareness of social and ecological responsibility in the professional philanthropic community. An emerging group of activists in visionary philanthropy are advocating a more democratic approach that goes beyond wealthy individuals providing charity to the unfortunate, beyond short term remedies that ignore the inequalities of class, race, gender, and other foundational issues. They propose that private wealth be placed, voluntarily and joyfully, at the service of the highest common good, addressing the roots of social problems and *transforming* rather than just helping society (see Gary 2007).

This is precisely the basis for Steiner's vision of wealth freely and generously circulating to support the cultural domain. The emerging democratic philanthropy puts this vision within reach for the first time. The bottom line of corporate and personal profit is replaced by the "new bottom line," as the progressive rabbi Michael Lerner (2006) has explained it: the goal of building a caring and loving society that nourishes everyone.

As society moves in this direction, it becomes increasingly conceivable that we might work out the details of a decentralized educational system, free from control by state or corporate power, yet adequately and equitably funded. Instead of being supported by mandatory taxation, which arouses endless conflict over school budgets and requires standardized accountability to the state, education would be generously supported by a new philanthropic spirit that permeates the culture.

What might this look like? Perhaps communities or regional networks would establish local funding agencies, supported by voluntary contributions and administered by representatives (volunteer or professional) of the community. In principle, these would act like benevolent or mutual aid societies

that many religious and fraternal groups have established, with the important difference that their concern would embrace the entire community, not only their own members. Or perhaps local or state government bodies could be entrusted with the task of administering funding, so long as they are prohibited from interfering with the educational process itself. Or we might devise new forms, appropriate to a decentralized postmodern society.

There will be many details to work out, many philosophical and political questions to address (for example, are all types of educational endeavors, even sectarian schools, eligible for such funding?) — but I think it is worth the effort to start this work. State-funded, corporate-controlled schooling has fallen far short of the democratic ideals that presumably gave rise to public education, and in the localist postmod-

ern culture now emerging, this top-down model shows itself to be increasingly obsolete. We need to imagine what will come next. We can imagine an educational system fully supported through benevolence and generosity, accountable to young people and their families and communities, replacing a system that serves as an economic venture accountable to investors and technocrats.

### References

- Steiner, R. n.d. *The threefold state: The true aspect of the social question*. London: London and Norwich Press; reprinted by Kessinger Publishing.
- Gary, T. 2007. *Inspired philanthropy: Your step-by-step guide to creating a giving plan and leaving a legacy* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lerner, M. *The left hand of God: Taking back our country from the religious right*. San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco.

## A Stirring Manifesto for the Transformation of Education

### The new book by Ron Miller

*“marvelously lucid and thought-provoking”*

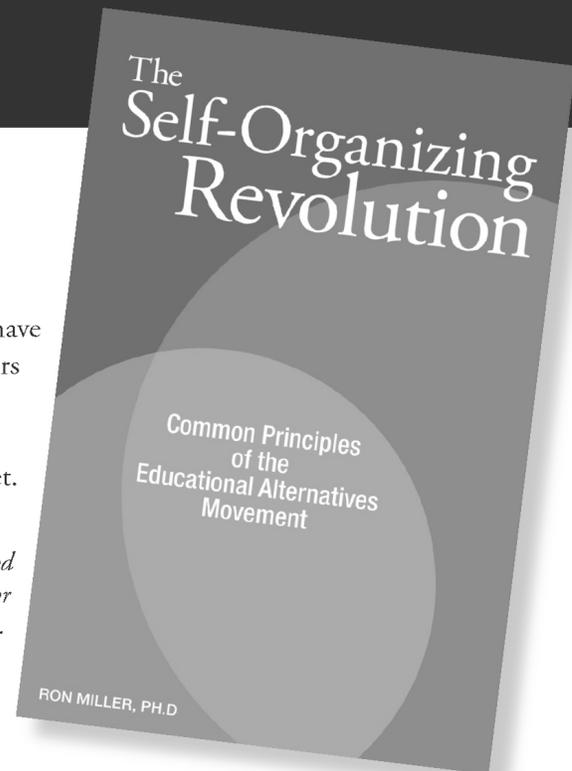
*The Self-Organizing Revolution* provides the clearest and most perceptive description of alternative education movements I have read. Drawing on the wisdom of the great educational pioneers of the past as well as the emerging paradigms of today, Miller suggests how a new consciousness can guide the liberation of children’s potentials and the restoration of life on the planet. This is a marvelously lucid and thought-provoking book.

—WILLIAM CRAIN, author of *Reclaiming Childhood*  
and editor of *Encounter: Education for  
Meaning and Social Justice*.

RON MILLER, the founding editor of *Encounter*, is the author of *What Are Schools For?* and other seminal works on holistic education.

Order from **HOLISTIC EDUCATION PRESS**

**800-639-4122** ● <https://great-ideas.org/Miller2008>



\$12.00 • ISBN 9-18855-80274-1

# What's in a Name?

Chris Mercogliano

**As innovative grassroots schools sprout up, we need a good name for this educational movement.**

In the weeks leading up to Barack Obama's election victory there was much speculation and concern within the education circles in which I travel. What is his vision of education and how far would his promise of real change extend?

While his relative lack of clarity regarding the educational policies he would pursue as President was a concern to many, I found myself thinking the less said the better; for seldom in this country's 150-or-so-year history of institutionalized education has heavy federal involvement come to much good. I started to consider the Supreme Court decision to eliminate segregated schools as an exception because it was absolutely imperative that powers above the state level intervene in that abominable situation. But then I hesitated. I thought back to how little the federal government's edict has done to solve the problem of racism in American education. And, I reflected, When has any mass solution ever truly made schools more responsive to the needs of the individual children they are supposed to serve?

But the fact that President Obama came of age as a Saul Alinsky-style community organizer and that his campaign in many ways took the shape of a social movement has gotten some of us thinking again about education in movement terms. We remember the force of the surging movement to fundamentally change the nature of education in the 1960s and 70s and are wondering if perhaps the time is ripe for a new movement.

Certainly the seeds for such a movement have already sprouted. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands of new schools and resource centers have sprung up over the past decade with education practices that are quite different from the mainstream version. And so, now the conversation has turned to the question of what to call a new movement.



CHRIS MERCUGLIANO writes a regular column for *Encounter*. He was a teacher and administrator at the Albany Free School for 35 years and now devotes his time exclusively to writing and lecturing. Chris's most recent book is *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (Beacon Press 2007).

### Co-opting the "Alternative" Banner

The earlier movement was called the "alternative education movement," and "alternative" was the perfect adjective because it simply means "nontraditional" or "unconventional." This term provided a broad umbrella for many people, including homeschoolers and public school educators anxious to break away from the anti-learning and anti-joy conventions that were strangling their creativity, and instead turn their classrooms into caring, exciting, empowering communities. Feeling a part of the alternative education movement was an important source of strength for them too.

Sadly, the term "alternative" was eventually co-opted by public school officials, who began to euphemistically use the term to refer to dumping grounds for the kids who weren't fitting into their regular schools. I say "euphemistically" because there was seldom anything nontraditional or unconventional about these places. If anything, their methods tended to be harsher and more controlling than the schools their students had been removed from. Around the country the name nonetheless came to signify "schools for problem children," so those of us who really were practicing forms of education that were different in some basic way were forced to give the label up.

Thus far we haven't been able to come up with a suitably inclusive alternative. "Democratic education" is one replacement umbrella we've experimented with. Truth be told, I have never been all that wild about it because its implications are mainly political, and while I have always viewed education as hugely political on a global level, it's hardly what's most important at the level of the individual child, especially at the younger end of the age spectrum.

But then I recently came across some fascinating research from the late 1930s and early 40s by psychologist Kurt Lewin, who was one of the first to apply quantum principles to psychology and was a pioneer in the field of social psychology and group dynamics. Lewin heavily influenced Diana Baumrind's work on parenting styles in the 1960s and 70s, as well as R. D. Laing and M. Scott Peck. Lewin was a very holistic, ecological thinker, way ahead of the curve. His work has helped me to see more value in the term "democratic," so let me review a bit of it.

### Lewin's Work

Lewin and his associates (White & Lippitt 1960) conducted a number of unusual field experiments with children, mainly in summer camps and afterschool programs. Their purpose was to study how the leadership style of the counselors affected the individual kids, the group of kids a whole, and the counselors too. Because everyone at that time was hyper-concerned with the rise of fascism around the globe — for very good reason — Lewin chose political terms for the three basic leadership styles that he identified: autocratic, democratic, and *laissez-faire*. In her research on parenting styles, Baumrind would later adapt the names of the three types to authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The autocratic group leaders were strict and highly controlling. They alone determined what kind of crafts projects the kids would do, and tended to closely supervise the kids to make sure they all followed the same uniform steps. These leaders also tightly structured who worked with whom, and remained aloof from group participation except to praise or criticize the kids' performance.

On the other end of the spectrum, the *laissez-faire* counselors gave the kids permission to do whatever they wanted and generally didn't participate in any group process, other than to make it known that they would supply information and materials when asked. Otherwise they limited their role to making infrequent comments on the activities of the members.

In the democratic groups, the members decided the activities collectively, with the counselors encouraging everyone to express their opinions. The counselors began with a general overview of the various possible techniques and media and then allowed the kids to choose their own approaches, and left it to the kids to work with whomever they pleased and to structure the tasks as they saw fit. The counselors functioned as group members "in spirit," but let the kids do the actual work and generally only gave criticism and praise to the group as a whole.

The results showed, among other things, that the autocratic groups expressed as much as 40 times more hostility between their members, who also tended to be careless and leave their work unfinished, and to dissolve into chaos whenever the coun-

selor left the room. The morale of the leaders was much lower as well.

At the same time, the aggression levels in the laissez-faire groups was as high as some of the autocratic groups. Three out of ten boys also reported in individual interviews that they didn't like their laissez-faire leader because "he was too easy-going, had too few things for us to do, and let us figure out things for ourselves too much." Lewin concluded somewhat paradoxically that the degree of freedom in the laissez-faire groups was lower because the lack of group coherence often interfered with the general flow of activity.

The democratic groups showed a much higher level of enthusiasm and persistence, and a significantly higher degree of self-discipline. The quantity and quality of the children's work was dramatically higher, and they chose on their own to tackle challenging long-range projects. The morale of the counselors, who reported that their jobs felt challenging and meaningful, was much higher, too. They particularly reported feeling more relaxed because the responsibility for the group's behavior didn't fall solely on them.

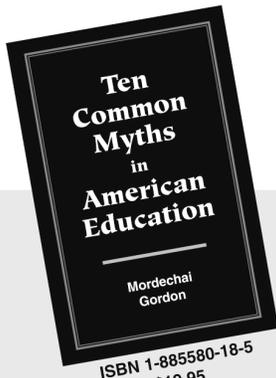
There's a great deal more depth and detail to these studies; however, my reason for sharing them here is that the way Lewin defined "democratic" to include both power sharing and a leadership/teaching style that leaves initiative and creativity in the hands of the kids — with the adult fully present as a model and advisor but not a controller — and that also promotes a real sense of community has significantly warmed me to the democratic label.

### The Search Continues

There is, unfortunately, a major downside to "democratic" as an umbrella term because it tends to exclude educational settings that are loving, nurturing places and employ teaching practices that are unconventional and highly creative, but where decision-making power isn't explicitly shared with the students. As a result the search for a name for the new movement must continue.

### Reference

White, R. K., and R. Lippitt. 1960. *Autocracy and Democracy*. New York: Harper.



**Ten  
Common  
Myths  
in  
American  
Education**

Mordechai  
Gordon

ISBN 1-885580-18-5  
\$19.95

**Table of Contents**

Foreword by Joe L. Kincheloe

Introduction	Technology is the Cure for All Problems in Education
Good Teaching Means Following a Recipe	Good Techniques Are Those that Seem to "Work"
Theories Can Be Applied Directly to Practice	More Testing Results in Higher Standards
Students Need to Know "The Basics"	Multicultural Education: It's All About Heroes and Holidays
Keeping Students Busy Enhances Learning	Easy Solutions Work in Education
Confusion and Uncertainty Hinder Learning	

# Ten Common Myths in American Education

## Mordechai Gordon

"Mordechai Gordon has emerged in just the last few years as one of the top educational foundations scholars in North America. His ability to get to the heart of an issue, to make educational and moral meaning in ambiguous situations, and to express his ideas in a clear, concise, and compelling manner is treasured by those of us interested in the social, cultural, and philosophical contexts in which education takes place.... *Ten Common Myths in American Education* presents Mordechai Gordon at the top of his game. Educational leaders, education students, and teachers need to read this book — especially at this ominous juncture in the history of education."

— Joe L. Kincheloe

---

**Available from**  
**Great Ideas in Education**  
[www.great-ideas.org](http://www.great-ideas.org)    **1-800-639-4122**

# Constructivism and the Bhagavad-Gita

Priya Kumari

**Two seemingly different educational traditions have much in common.**

The verb “to construct” comes from the Latin *construere*, which means to arrange or give structure.

Constructivism in education is an application of Jean Piaget’s theory, initially through the work of Constance Kamii (Kamii 1973; Kamii and DeVries 1977). Ongoing structuring (organizing) processes are the conceptual heart of constructivism. Among the earliest recorded proponents of some form of constructivism are Lao Tzu (6th Century BCE), Buddha (560–477 BCE), and the philosopher of endless change, Heraclitus (540–475 BCE). In Western cultures, constructivists often trace their intellectual genealogy to Giambattista Vico (1668–1860), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933) (Regoff 1995). This paper attempts to reveal constructivism in the Bhagavad Gita.

## Independent Learning

Constructivism emphasizes independent learning. Teachers don’t hand down ready-made concepts; children must make their own discoveries and grasp concepts themselves (Crain 2005, 139-141).

Similarly, the Gita initiates struggle for a higher life in every individual, giving hints and suggestions of how one can succeed, but asking the individual person to achieve her own progress. Says Sankaracharya in his the commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita verse 52, The nature of truth must be known by oneself with the clear eye of reason, but not by a scholar on your behalf.

## Learning is Active

The constructivist approach highlights the active role of the learner. Infants *construct* new ways of dealing with the physical world by, for example, inventing new ways of getting things. Later, children create new cognitive structures through activities such as the coordination of perspectives, counting,



PRIYA KUMARI is a Lecturer at the AMRITA School of Education in Mysore, India. Her research interests focus on value education and the relationship between education and Indian philosophy. She may be contacted at <priya9991975@yahoo.co.in>.

and coming up with better arguments in debates with peers (Crain 2005, ch. 6).

All the chapters of the Bhagavad-Gita, from the Way of Self Knowledge to the Wisdom of Renunciation and Liberation, show different strategies adopted by Sri Krishna as a facilitator to help Arjuna construct his knowledge. The Gita advises the learner to use effort (6.5) and strive assiduously (6:45) — advice which reflects that learning comes thorough hard and dynamic work on the part of the novice.

### Teachers are Facilitators

Constructivism shifts our attention away from the instructor and the curriculum to the learner (Greene & Arkerman 1995). The teacher is a facilitator, and compared to the traditional teacher, she must display a totally different set of skills. A facilitator can present problems that may arouse the learner's interest, perhaps through questions, but the learner is left to arrive at her own conclusions (Crain 2005, 139-141). A facilitator should also be able to adapt the learning experience in 'mid air' by using her own initiative to steer it to where the learner wants to create value (Di Vesta 1987).

Similarly in the Gita, a facilitator never dictates what a learner should do. Forced instructions are ineffective and create aversion. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna at the end of his conversation to "try to think over and decide *for yourself* your course of action" (18.63).

### The Practical Precedes the Theoretical

As a general rule, Piaget believed that children first work out cognitive structures by interacting with real things (and people) and then creating increasingly internal, theoretical structures. It is an educational mistake to introduce abstract concepts prematurely, before the child has had the chance to learn through direct experience (Crain 2005, ch. 6; Kamii 1973; Piaget 1963).

Similarly, the Gita reflects the view that true knowledge is based on experience. Theoretical knowledge is not enough, it has to be experienced (Ranganathananda 2003). For lack of experience, one knows yet does not know (Radhakrishnan 2003).

The Gita adds that theoretical knowledge is never sufficient; *jnana* is knowledge and *yoga* is its practical realization.

### Inquiry

Constructivism, following Piaget, proposes that the child invents new cognitive structures in the process of exploration and inquiry. Curiosity is highly desired. The learner becomes interested in problems that she cannot quite solve with her existing cognitive structures, and as she works on the problems, she invents new structures (Crain 2005, 115, 136). The learner also becomes critical of material that is falsely presented (Kamii 1989, 160). The spirit of inquiry and critical thinking are essential for constructivist learning.

Verse 34 of the 4th Chapter of the Gita mentions "repeated questioning" to understand the truth. Questioning is needed for developing knowledge. And what is needed is not merely *prashna* or questioning, but *pariprashna*, constant questioning. A learner should ask: What is this? Why should it be so? What is the truth of a thing? An aspirant should ask questions to resolve his doubts and gain clarity of mind (Rama 1996).

### Social Interactions

Constructivism asserts that much cognitive development occurs through social negotiation and interaction. Productive interactions often include debates and disputes. Young people see that there is more than one side to an issue. They develop a sense of perspective. Arguments also point out deficiencies in the youngster's positions, motivating her to develop better positions. In this way, her mind grows (Crain 2005, 137).

Verse 32 of the tenth chapter of the Gita talks about discussion, disputation, and argument. The objective is find the truth through such interactions. The inquirer is not limited to the Vedic injunctions. He or she needs to get into stimulating discussions.

Piaget and the constructivist also believe that mutuality — working together — is important. Learners need to coordinate efforts. This also is a kind of perspective-taking; people resolve differences and work on strategies that consider different points of view (Kukla 2000; Crain 2005, 132). The Gita also recom-

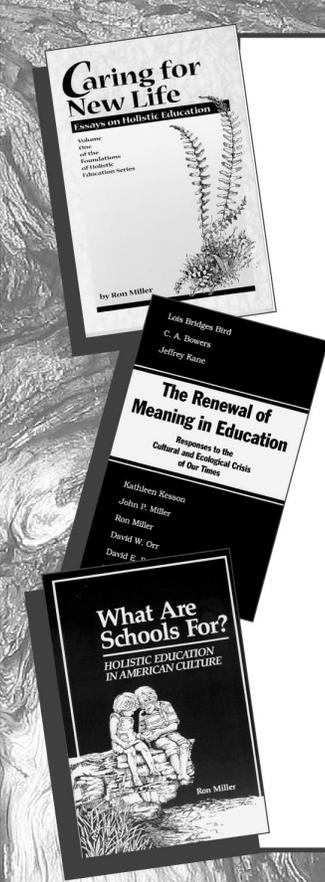
mends interdependence and mutuality as a way toward progress (Ranganathananda 2001, 270).

### Beyond Constructivism

The Gita sees ultimate knowledge as spiritual liberation. This goal has no real counterpart in constructivism. Constructivism assigns no role to the attainment of Supreme Peace or pure consciousness. Constructivism, instead, focuses on what the Gita would consider the first two of three levels of awareness — the physical and the psychological — prior to the spiritual. Nevertheless, the two approaches have much in common, including our responsibility to take charge of our own learning and determine the truth for ourselves

### References

- Crain, W. 2005. *Theories of development: Concepts and applications*. (5th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Di Vesta, F. J. 1987. The effects of encoding variability, processing activity and rule example sequences on the transfer of conceptual rules. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 73: 108-119.
- Greene, S & J. M. Ackerman. 1995. Expanding the constructivist metaphor: A rhetorical perspective on literacy research and practice. *Review of Educational Research* 65: 383-420.
- Kamii, C. 1973. Pedagogical principles derived from Piaget's theory: Relevance for educational practice. In *Piaget in the classroom*, edited by M. Schwebel and J. Raph. New York: Basic Books.
- Kamii, C. 1989. *Young children continue to reinvent arithmetic: 2nd grade*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kamii, C. K. & R. DeVries. 1977. Piaget for early education. In *The preschool in action* (2nd edition), edited by M. C. Day and R. K. Parker. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kukla, A. 2000. *Social constructivism and the philosophy of science*. New York: Routledge.
- Piaget, Jean. 1963. *To understand is to invent*. New York: Grossman.
- Radhakrishnan, S. 2003. *The Bhagavad-Gita*. New Delhi: Harper Collins.
- Rama, Swami. 1996. *Perennial psychology of the Bhagavad-Gita*. Philadelphia: Himalayan International Institute.
- Ranganathananda, Swami. 2001. *Universal message of the Bhagavad-Gita*, Vol. I. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.
- Ranganathananda, Swami. 2003. *Universal message of the Bhagavad-Gita*, Vol. II. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.
- Rogoff, B. 1995. *Apprenticeship in thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press.



## Three Extraordinary Books for Only \$32

**What Are Schools For?**  
Holistic Education in American Culture  
If purchased separately: \$18.95  
A powerful exposition and critique of the historical and cultural/philosophical foundations of contemporary mainstream American education.

**Caring for New Life:**  
Essays on Holistic Education  
If purchased separately: \$18.95  
A compilation of the best of Miller's writings and conference presentations that articulate a coherent approach to holistic education.

**Renewal of Meaning in Education**  
Responses to the Cultural and Ecological Crisis of Our Times  
If purchased separately (Full Book on CD-ROM): \$15.50  
A collection of essays by Ron Miller, Douglas Sloan, David Orr, Chet Bowers, David Purpel, and many others.

<https://great-ideas.org/MillerBundle.htm>  
1-800-639-4122

# Conversations about Social Justice

Kelly Donnell, Li-Ling Yang, Annie Winfield,  
Alan Canestrari, Bruce Marlowe, and Mieko Kamii

**Teachers commonly teach  
*about* social justice, but  
teaching *for* social  
justice — teaching that has  
action-consequences — needs  
much greater attention.**

The field of education has long been concerned with social justice, but progress has been disappointing. Promises of the 1954 Brown v Board decision, for example, have fallen woefully short. Perhaps, as Grumet (1988, xv) put it, we should consider that

If the world we give our children is different from the one we envisioned for them, then we need to discover the moments when we, weary, distracted, and conflicted, gave in, let the curtain fall back across the window, and settled for a little less light.

During the Fall 2007 semester, six of us in the Roger Williams University School of Education came together to examine some large and difficult questions about what we can do. During our initial meeting, it took less than an hour to agree that we wanted social justice to be the focus of our inquiry and a few minutes more to hammer out the question: *How does the School of Education understand and operationalize social justice?* We have met 11 times since then, with each meeting lasting about one and a half hours. We audio-taped the meetings and each of us took the time to write down many of our thoughts. It has been an exacting and emotional journey. Even though we have only begun, we would like to share our experience with you.

## Our University and Its Setting

First, however, we need to set the context. Roger Williams University is in New England, which some have called the most segregated area of the country. All of us live in towns where less than five percent of the population is non-white, and the average income and level of education is substantially higher than

Editor's Note: ENCOUNTER invites letters to the editor on readers' experiences with social justice activities and projects.



Senior author KELLY DONNELL is Assistant Professor of Education at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI. Her research interests include the process of learning to teach in urban settings and social justice in teacher education. Her email is <kdonnell@rwu.edu>.

that of the rest of the country. Our students, too, come from communities that reflect this same demographic reality and struggle to understand why their professors continually ask them to examine it. Finally, an examination of the University itself suggests why: where issues of diversity are concerned, there exists a lack of exposure to questions of social justice. Less than 4% of the student body consists of domestic students of color and the yearly tuition is comparable to that of nearby Harvard and Yale. For some of us, social justice seems like a far-off abstraction, but we are committed to the struggle to achieve an understanding of it. Here are some of the themes that emerged in our discussions.

### Definitions of Social Justice

Most of us defined social justice in terms of equality of opportunity. As one of our group members put it:

From as early as I can remember, I thought school should be the one place you could count on as a great equalizer. Not in the sense of making every one equal in ability or even in status. Instead, I had the notion that schools should provide children the same opportunities, the same nurturance, and level of guidance, and they should also seek to develop the specific talents, interests, and passions of children and young people. And as early as I remember, schools always struck me as places where this just wasn't going to happen, that in fact many young people get tagged, long before they even came to school, as destined for something "less than."

Another member gave the concept of social justice a slightly different slant. "Very simply, to me, social justice is a mutual recognition of humanity unhindered by superimposition of gradations of perceived worth." Anything else, she insisted, is merely verbiage that risks losing the essential element of humanity in social life.

### Teaching *About* vs. Teaching *For* Social Justice

During our discussions, we realized that it is relatively easy to teach *about* social justice. Teaching about social justice is ubiquitous. As one person in our group said, "We produce syllabi, curriculum maps, readings, and resources. Teaching *for* social

justice, however? Well, I'm not convinced that we understand or come very close to operationalizing this at all." In other words, how do we teach in a way that actually translates into action toward a more just world — either action by ourselves or our students? This is something we are only beginning to look at.

### A Risky Business

Many in our group came to the conclusion that teaching for justice often means taking a stand as a teacher — and that doing so is risky. Speaking out against the mainstream pursuit of standards, accountability, testing, and zero tolerance can label one as a troublemaker or someone who doesn't fit in. One of our members phrased it this way:

Taking a stand, actively opposing injustice, teaching for social justice is a highly politicized, controversial, and dangerous pursuit, especially given the current political climate.

Similarly, dedicating a class to social justice action is dangerous. One of our members asked,

Are we ready to make a statement of conscience and teach for social justice or, instead, would we rather simply teach about it? What are the implications of making such a choice? Taking a stand *is* politicized, controversial, and dangerous. How far are we willing to go? What are we willing to risk?

By necessity, those without tenure will think differently about risk than those with tenure. Those of us who are in fields that are more scripted by externally imposed mandates have our own perspectives on the extent to which we can actively resist. We struggle with the fact that we work at the intersection between compliance required for leading our students to state certification and our individual beliefs that are often in direct opposition to those same requirements. Like marginalized students throughout history, we bring our lives, passions, and knowledge of humanity to the work we do, and yet we find we must contend daily with a system that does not acknowledge the possibility of a better world.

Where do we go from here? We hope to take risks, challenge ourselves, do things we have not done before, and continue engaging in this self study. We

also encourage others to form study groups like ours. There is much to be gained from small gatherings in which we can share ideas and provide one another with feedback and social support. If you do form such a group, please take a moment to share your experiences with us. We all need to know if such groups

benefit educators in the long run, and if they provide additional courage for the battles we face.

### Reference

Grumet, M. 1988. *Bitter milk: Women and teaching*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

**My Father's Garden**  
**By Kate McReynolds**  
(1989)

He died before the hot weather crop  
Had been harvested.  
I came home with a bag full of tomatoes  
And a mouthful of dust.  
Day after day  
I ate tomatoes  
Marveling that his garden  
Had outlived him.  
Then one day  
I stood looking for a long time  
At the last one.  
It was a small yellow Early-Girl.  
Its skin as smooth and translucent as a baby's.  
Finally, I ate it.  
  
It was exactly as he said it would be  
A touch mealy, but sweet.  
  
As sweet a tomato as you'll ever eat.

*Kate McReynolds was the Associate Editor of Encounter  
prior to her death in September 2008.*

# Teaching World Religion In the Public Schools

James W. Peterson

**Religion is a taboo topic in U.S. public schools, but teachers must find ways to introduce students to it. Students need exposure to the world's religions to understand diverse cultures and international politics.**

Almost every political crisis in the world today involves religious conflict. Just look at Myanmar, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kashmir, Indonesia, Ireland, and Thailand. Even in America, there are religious divides. For example, many people asked in 2007 whether we could trust a Mormon to be president.

Yet the subject of religion — so critical for understanding culture, politics, and human nature — is ignored or even banned in the public schools.

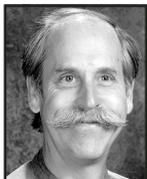
The U.S. founding fathers insisted on the separation of church and state, and this separation has served us well. Indeed, most of the world's hot spots are countries — some supposedly democratic — in which there exists a state religion. And the separation of church and state is the rationale behind the omission of religious instruction in schools. Teachers cannot reveal their own religious ideas, and certainly do not wish to offend others in the school with alternative views.

But the founding fathers certainly never intended to deprive children of religious instruction. The early schools in America were filled with recited prayers and moral lessons in the copybooks, and the McGuffey Eclectic Readers were full of religious references.

Yet today teachers are so concerned about being religiously neutral that even mentioning God is frowned upon.

Such issues have puzzled me in my 40-year teaching career. My recent solution is the focus of the present article.

For twelve years I taught in private schools. And in the private sector, the possibility of including religious education is viable. In fact, in one school the teachers taught the lives of the prophets of all major religions (starting with Zoroaster in the third grade) as part of the social studies curriculum. But in 1989



JAMES W. PETERSON has been teaching elementary school for 40 years in both private and public school settings. Experienced in both Montessori and Waldorf educational approaches, Jim currently teaches in a small, rural public school in California. He is the author of *The Secret Life of Kids*.

when I returned to public education, I feared that I could no longer teach the lives of Jesus or Mohammed, Rama or Buddha.

### **My Public School Experience**

Actually, as I talked with other public school teachers at various schools, I found that in the month of December there is plenty of religion brought into the schools. Teachers routinely have children draw Christmas trees, talk about Santa Claus, and even learn Christmas songs. And then, to make sure the Jewish children don't feel left out, the children learn a Hanukkah song or two and perhaps paint a menorah. The whole business struck me as very hypocritical and odd.

In any case, I wanted children to know something about the world religions, and wondered how was I to introduce students to them in a way that would be acceptable. My answer developed gradually over my first two years in my new school. It occurred to me that many religions have a festival of worship on or near the winter solstice. The winter solstice itself was the focal point of the sacred calendar of ancient, pantheistic peoples around the world. And festivals of light have continued during this solstice season in many established religions. My plan began to crystallize. Why not tell stories of great prophets or saints from different world religions and make December sort of World Religions Month?

I will admit that I'm in a unique public school. My straight-forward approach to this issue might not work in other settings. Canyon School is a small, rural school located in a redwood forest, not far from Oakland, California. We have grades kindergarten through eighth, with four full-time teachers. I have been teaching a combined kindergarten, first, and second grade class for eighteen years. Many parents from neighboring communities wish to enroll their children in Canyon School, because of its unique setting, small classes, and intimate, family feeling. Also, we integrate the arts into academic subjects and do not overemphasize the new "No Child Left Behind" impulse.

The teachers work collegially, and the five-member school board consists of my friends in the community and parents at the school. I, therefore, took my plan to teach stories of religious figures in my class directly to the school board for their consideration. They liked the proposal, but they were ner-

vous about how the diverse community of parents would respond. They told me to write a letter telling parents about my plan and the rationale for the December study unit. And I was told to assure parents that I would not present religious ideas as facts or reality, but as notions that some people believe and stories that some in the world tell their children.

The response was enthusiastic. My plan had many supporters and no opposition. Even agnostic and atheistic parents could see the validity of exposing children to an ecumenical introduction to the religions of the world.

My approach is to first locate three stories of the lives of spiritual figures from three different traditions. I always pick stories from living religions, and I do not tell myths from ancient pantheistic societies. Some years I base my winter dramatic presentation on a religious story. One time, for example, I told the story of Prince Siddhartha's childhood and how he renounced the world to become the Buddha. This made for a stunning "Christmas" show.

After telling the story I develop it as a language arts lesson. I have been a friend of Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf approach to education for my entire career. In Steiner schools, images from stories are artistically presented to the children to suggest a letter of the alphabet. Last year I told incidents from the Hindu Krishna's life, and our drawing of Krishna, with one hand up, made the letter K. Then we wrote, in our lesson books, some of the material we had learned about Krishna's life.

I try to pick interesting and exciting stories. One summer my son and I had traveled to Loch Ness in Scotland; so that December I decided to present the life of St. Columba who brought Christianity to Scotland. But with the children I particularly focused on his legendary confrontation with the Loch Ness monster. As you can imagine St. Columba became a very admired figure in my class.

I pretty much leave the actual teachings of the religions out of the unit. I just let the stories stand alone. I do have a world religions table display set up in the classroom, with statues and symbols of various religions. And I have the kids copy the "secret sign" of each religion we discuss. We do drawings of the cross, the sanscrit om, yin and yang, or the star and crescent.

Sometimes small lessons do come up that draw attention to doctrinal issues. One year I told about Mohammed's escape from Mecca. Ali, his son in law, bravely pretended to be Mohammed by disguising himself while Abu Bakr helped Mohammed to escape from town. I pointed out to the children that after the prophet died, his followers split between those who "liked" Ali and those who "liked" Abu Bakr. Such simple understandings can help a lot in comprehending current events in the Middle East. Also, when discussing Christian saints, I expose the children to the fact that Protestants de-emphasize any stories of saints.

One of my favorite activities during World Religions Month is our annual field trip to a place of worship. Over the years we have been to several Buddhist temples and monasteries, a Mormon temple, the largest synagogue in Oakland, a Greek Orthodox church and, my personal favorite, the Golden Temple of the Sikhs. When we visited there, the Sikh guide put turbans on all the kids' heads, and even fed us an Indian luncheon after our tour of the temple.

Such visits make religious education come to life for the children. To see a building created to honor God, and to see folks who practice various religious approaches, is the concrete learning that children need.

World Religions Month became so popular with the parents and children in my class, that in the following years the Canyon school board decided to make this a school-wide focus each December. All the children in the school would study world religions each year. Sometimes I told religious stories to the entire student body during assemblies. On other occasions, representatives from different traditions gave presentations in individual classes or assemblies. Sometimes parents with strong or unusual religious paths shared their experiences.

### Older Students

In the higher grades at Canyon, religious traditions are taught differently. The combined third, fourth and fifth grade teacher has created her own unique approach. She takes a theme, such as creation stories, flood stories, or concepts of life after death, and leads her class in an examination of each theme from the standpoint of different religious traditions.

These grades get a taste of the study of comparative religion.

The class of sixth, seventh and eighth graders also has its own curriculum. Generally, the teacher's approach has been to relate the study of religion to social studies, or to focus on current political issues. One year, for example, the class studied Islam in depth. It visited a mosque and had guest speakers, including the distinguished poet Deema Shehabi. Another year the class was discussing the Puritans in early America, so the teacher decided during World Religions Month to analyze the differences between Protestant and Catholic approaches to Christianity. That year the students also focused on recent political developments in Northern Ireland. Basically, the upper grade teacher tries to connect religious studies to current events so that the children can better understand the larger world around them.

### Concluding Comment

I would like to emphasize that I am hardly alone in seeing the need for the study of world religions in the public schools. In particular, my friend and colleague, Dr. Charles Haynes, has written insightfully on this matter. In *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (1998, 75), Warren Nord and Haynes say,

An elementary school curriculum that ignores religion gives students the false message that religion doesn't matter to people — that we live in a religion-free world. This is neither fair nor accurate. Silence about religion also denies students the promise of a good education. If they are to understand the world they live in, they must be exposed at an early age to the religious dimensions of society, history, literature, art and music.

In my public school we use the model of focusing on religion during the month of December. I'm sure there are many other ways of bring religious ideas to public school students. As educators, we should not deny children the right to learn about perhaps the most fascinating, complex, and mysterious component of the human psyche.

### Reference

- Nord, W., and C. C. Haynes. 1998. *Taking religion seriously across the curriculum*. Nashville, TN: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

# Book Reviews

## **Against Schooling: For an Education that Matters**

By Stanley Aronowitz

Published by Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO, 2008

Reviewed by William Crain

Mark Twain once said, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education" (1989, 66). Education, Twain implied, is something broader and more valuable than mere book-learning. In *Against Schooling*, sociologist and union activist Stanley Aronowitz elaborates on this distinction.

Aronowitz sees contemporary schooling as a tedious process that culminates in a credential and prepares the student for the job market. Schools put a premium on obedience and academic skills, and are dominated by standardized tests that "subordinate teachers to the role of drill masters" (p. 48). "Contrary to their democratic pretensions," schools "teach conformity to the social, cultural, and occupational hierarchy" (p. 19).

Education, in Aronowitz's view, is very different. Education not only includes learning that occurs outside the school walls; it also is capable of fostering independent, creative, and critical thinking. A real education does not just adjust students to existing social conditions; it enables people to criticize these conditions and envision alternatives. It is the essential ingredient in the creation of a better world.

With this distinction in mind, Aronowitz takes up a wide variety of topics. He discusses, among other things, the union movement in higher education, distance learning, the decline of the humanities and social sciences, working class kids' attitudes toward school, popular culture, and the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Friere. To my mind, however, nothing is more interesting than the book's first sec-

tion: a brief memoir on the self-education of Aronowitz's Russian immigrant family.

Aronowitz's grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents were skilled laborers who read philosophy and literature, revered classical music, played musical instruments, and spoke several languages. They also worked on union activities, and some wrote for immigrant newspapers. They all were highly educated, but they acquired their knowledge in the course of their lives — not in school.

Working class intellectuals, Aronowitz adds, did take some classes. These were union-sponsored English literacy classes whose reading matter included socialist texts and world literature. Union newsletters also published poems and stories by workers, and unions and radical organizations sponsored lectures by distinguished scholars. The major sites of education were the shop floor, union hall, and back room bar.

Education was valued because it broadened one's social perspective — and, I sense, simply for its intrinsic pleasures. This certainly was the case for Aronowitz's mother. She attended public school in the Bronx until the age of 14, but then her mother died, forcing her to leave school to earn money. She worked in department stores for 25 years, and for the next 25 years she was employed as a bookkeeper in union textile shops. After her retirement she earned a high school equivalency diploma and attended The Center for Worker Education at the City College of New York. She had been a voracious reader, musician, and painter throughout her life, but she wanted to attend college to discuss her favorite topics — literature and politics — with students. For her, college had nothing to do career preparation. It had its own reward: the pure enjoyment of sharing ideas.

Aronowitz himself obtained most of his education outside the classroom. He dropped out of college after his freshman year, feeling that "further schooling was superfluous to my intellectual development" (p. 5), and went to work in steel factories. When, 15

years later, he returned to college to become a writer and teacher, he attended The New School, which certified him as a bachelor of arts after writing a thesis. Aronowitz also earned a PhD through unconventional routes that required minimum time in school buildings. He has since taught young people in alternative high schools, experimented with innovative college programs, and is currently a Distinguished Professor of Sociology in The City University of New York's Graduate Center. Aronowitz is widely regarded as one of today's top social theorists, and like his family members before him, he is largely self-taught.

Aronowitz's family history illustrates how education can be much deeper and more stimulating than that which typically occurs in today's schools. But Aronowitz doesn't recommend eliminating schools altogether. Instead, he wants them to be "rendered benign" (p. 50). They must be freed from the grip of standardized tests and the job-training mentality of the corporate state. They must become places where teachers introduce all students, regardless of their social class, to the liberal arts and sciences and critical thinking. Teachers should be intellectuals who help students understand the world in its cultural and historical context so students can critically evaluate social conditions and begin to change them.

Aronowitz gives considerable attention to contemporary higher education, which he criticizes for allotting a liberal education to "elite" students while providing vocational-oriented studies to the rest. Beyond such specific claims, however, is a call for more thinking about what a college education should be. Aronowitz correctly points out that many faculty members, facing right-wing assaults on the academy, have adopted a largely defensive posture. At the City University of New York (CUNY) many faculty have fought hard to defend past social gains, especially opportunities for low-income students and students of color to get a college education. But while trying to defend these opportunities, faculty members have overlooked the need to reflect on educational goals. *Against Schooling* is just the book to stimulate such thinking. In fact, it has already become a springboard for such discussions at CUNY.

My only criticism of *Against Schooling* is that it tends to be rather general and abstract. I hope that in

future writings Aronowitz will provide more specific examples of the corporate model in education, as well as the experiences of students trapped in narrow educational systems. Nevertheless, Aronowitz has lucidly stated the basic task before us: "to foster the possibility of educational systems that can help people develop a sense of themselves in relation to the larger world: a sense of history, a sense of structure, and a sense of how they themselves can begin to re-create the world" (p. 57).

### References

Twain, M. 1989. *The wit and wisdom of Mark Twain*. Edited by A. Ayres. New York: Meridian.

---

## New York and Slavery, Time to Teach the Truth

By Alan J. Singer

Published by State University of New York Press  
(Albany, NY, 2008)

Reviewed by Marlene S. Munn-Joseph

As a professor of curriculum and teaching, I found Alan Singer's book, *New York and Slavery, Time to Teach the Truth*, to be an indispensable resource for practicing teachers. The book presents an approach to teaching that can be described within the tradition of social reconstructionism in curriculum studies. Singer emphasizes the process of curriculum decision-making for teachers, and highlights the literature on student understanding and how it is critically shaped by racial and ethnic identity. Like earlier historians such as Horace Mann Bond, Singer's work moves the curriculum beyond a set of facts to be delivered to students, to knowledge that needs to be critiqued and discussed. With this approach, teachers must consider students' connection to the knowledge brought into the classroom, which is why from the beginning Singer addresses his own position as a white man.

Drawing from Banks's (1993) typology of knowledge, this book is an excellent example of transformative academic knowledge, an approach to knowl-

MARLENE MUNN-JOSEPH is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Hofstra University.

edge construction that recognizes that no knowledge is neutral, but influenced by social relations in society. This is illustrated when Singer introduces the reader to the complexity of the history of slavery by raising the question of New York State's role in it. His work challenges the conventional wisdom that only the South was involved in the slave trade. As an historian, Singer resurrects what he describes as the wastebasket of history: knowledge that has been ignored but is very relevant. Singer's intent is to prepare the social studies teacher to be an agent of social change because, as he asserts, "the study of history is a powerful force for human understanding and social change." He explains that the idea for the book arose out of his work with the award-winning *New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Guide* (Singer & Carter 2004).

The book is organized into thirteen chapters. Seven of the chapters outline in careful detail the history of slavery in New York. Singer criticizes the traditional social studies curriculum for obscuring important historical data and failing to tell the truth. The remaining five chapters provide teachers with a rationale for this work, instructional ideas and resources, and an invaluable section on what students understand about slavery. Throughout, he offers a dialectical understanding of history, and he looks at the complicity and resistance to the institution of slavery during the colonial period in New York. What is particularly impressive about this work is how, through the historical data, Singer links the importance of individual and collective choice to the professional practice of teachers. He encourages teachers to engage in pedagogy that fosters complexity.

In the chapter, "Erased from Memory," Singer describes his work with a New York City teacher's social studies class to create a walking tour of the historical sites in lower Manhattan that marked New York's participation in slavery. The problem, he explains, is that New York had "no museums or permanent exhibits on slavery in New York City or the city's role in the transatlantic trade ... except for a recent exhibit and monument of the African American burial ground site." Singer's walking tour, which can be found at [http://people.hofstra.edu/alan\\_j\\_singer/slaverywebsite/slaverymain.html](http://people.hofstra.edu/alan_j_singer/slaverywebsite/slaverymain.html), takes

participants through lower Manhattan and locates fifteen historical sites related to the history of slavery in New York.

In the chapter, "Teaching about Slavery," Singer describes his commitment to helping teachers and students struggle through teaching and learning about the institution of slavery. He suggests that what was significant about this work was the dialogue it fostered. Singer encourages the use of texts by African Americans, and he offers perspectives from African American teachers on how they approached the teaching of slavery.

One of the better approaches to teaching about slavery is through drama, and Singer describes his work with various students groups performing scenes from Martin B. Duberman's (1964) documentary play, *In White America*. Additionally, he has had students in both middle and high schools perform a version of the book, *A People Could Fly*. In this example, Singer explains that two groups of students he worked with protested a scene which was particularly violent, and together they made decisions to not cast the roles in the play according to the race of the characters.

The central theme of complicity and resistance, which Singer claims is erased from our historical memory, is central to the book. Singer carefully documents New York's role in the transatlantic slave trade, and by tackling this "erased history," he challenges traditional historical renditions that locate the institution of slavery only in the South. He also illustrates why the approach of regional compartmentalization in the traditional social studies curriculum is problematic because of the connections between the development of the Netherlands, the settlement of the Dutch North American colonies, and the transatlantic slave trade.

Singer raises a crucial question for teachers and students when he asks them to "examine why some people took a stand against injustice while other people, under similar circumstances, tolerated it or were actively complicit." He outlines the persistent contradiction that plagues American history, the promise of freedom and the brutalizing institution of slavery and its aftermath, and observes that when students are studying this contradiction, it is critical that Africans not be reduced to objects but viewed with

the humanity they deserve. Readers are provided with rich documentation of how repressive laws were used to control Africans in New York and how Africans in that historical period resisted their control. In Chapter 5, runaway slave advertisements from colonial and revolutionary New York and New Jersey are useful resources for visual representations of the barbaric conditions Africans had to endure.

Singer also outlines how major historical figures were complicit in the preservation of the institution of slavery, and how Americans debated over the future of slavery. He describes how he facilitated a discussion with a group of high school students about the name of their school. Singer asked these students if they knew that the person for whom the school was named was possibly a slave trader and whether the school's name should be changed. This example illustrated to students that history is not relegated to the dustbin, but in fact, their perspectives mattered, inasmuch as they are part of history making.

Overall, this work will be quite successful in helping teachers create classrooms where students can engage in the development of their critical consciousness. Through a host of practical examples, Singer's work illustrates pedagogy that enables teachers and students to learn about "erased" ideas and challenge mainstream depictions of the institution of slavery.

### References

- Banks, J. A. 1993. The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher* 22 (5): 4-14.
- Duberman, Martin. 1964. *In white America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hamilton, Virginia. 1985. *The people could fly: American black folktales*. New York: Knopf.
- Singer, A. J., and M. Carter. 2004. *New York and slavery: Complicity and resistance curriculum guide*. A document-based curriculum guide prepared for the "Gateway to the City" Teaching American History Grant Project. For more information see <[www.nyscss.org/resources/publications/new-york-and-slavery.aspx](http://www.nyscss.org/resources/publications/new-york-and-slavery.aspx)>.

**Visit  
ENCOUNTER  
on the Web at  
<https://great-ideas.org>**

## Fertilizers, Pills, and Magnetic Strips: The Fate of Public Education in America

By Gene Glass

Published by Information Age Publishing  
(Charlotte, NC, 2008)

Reviewed by Scott Fletcher

Like Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, Gene Glass's new book, whose title consciously plays on this popular text, is a work of broad intellectual inquiry, drawing on the insights of a researcher's long experience in the field. It is also similar in its attempt to bring a variety of complex disciplinary perspectives to bear on a pressing social question for a general audience willing to engage the text, connecting the dots to create a picture that ends up being bigger and more illuminating than anyone might have imagined at the start. *Fertilizers, Pills, and Magnetic Strips: The Fate of Public Education in America* lives up to this description, in large measure, even when some of the underlying conceptual supports for the analysis get a little blurry. Still, Glass brings the welcome clarity of his unalloyed empiricism to questions that many others, perhaps better on the underlying social and political theories, have left opaque to thus unmoved readers.

It might be best to begin with the central claim of the text, which is captured a number of times in bluntly worded passages of the following sort:

The major education reform proposals debated today in the halls of legislatures, in the media, and in academic discourse arise from the circumstances of an aging, White middle class wishing to reduce the costs they bear for public education and secure some quasi-private school setting for their children and their children's children. (p. 199)

This is the touchstone of the text and the thesis that drives the analysis of demographic trends associated with urbanization (fertilizer), changes in the composition of society (pills), and patterns of consumption (magnetic strips). The explanation that

E. SCOTT FLETCHER is Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Counseling at Lewis & Clark College.

Glass offers is richly textured with data that is generally accessible (as he points out, "it is scarcely heavier than that of USA Today," p. xiv) in a text that is well-paced for a general audience. There is enough argument to support the position being developed, with few of the customary academic epicycles of qualification, unnecessary methodological detail, or overzealous engagement with past critics. Glass describes the emergence of a set of circumstances in which a single powerful group (the White middle and upper classes), threatened with a lower standard of living (through overconsumption and downward swings in the economy), exert influence over public policy (voucher programs, tuition tax credits, etc.) to reduce their transfer payments to others (often people of color), while maintaining access to services that sustain their social dominance (schooling).

The power of the analysis lies in the careful working through of each of these elements. The text is effectively put together for the general reader, even sporting an image of the Fordson Model F Tractor and a portrait of the chemist Fritz Haber among the many charts and graphs. The writing is occasionally personal (cameos by Glass's in-laws, father, and surgeon), proudly well-footnoted, and always grounded in empirical measurements of birth rates, racial demographics, census data, and the like. It has both the currency of a piece of policy research and the reflective quality of a senior scholar surveying the field (or several fields, in this case).

Despite the beauty of the book's balance, there are some pieces of this complex empirical puzzle that would benefit from deeper grounding in the social and political theories on which the analysis depends. Glass doesn't always pursue these connections and sometimes his writing suggests an ambivalence toward possible interpretations. These are the issues that I'll address in the remainder of this review.

### **Ideology and Educational Policy**

Curiously, Glass makes no use of the concept of ideology in a text that otherwise seems preoccupied with its function. Beginning in the Preface, Glass describes his coming to write this book as part of his recognition that the language of educational reform obscures the real struggle for social control and privilege.

Eventually, I came to believe that debates in education are not about achievement or test scores or preparing tomorrow's workforce at all. They are about gaining the political power to control money and secure special privileges. Behind the rhetoric lies material self-interest, a drive for comfort, and a need for security. (p. xii)

Glass then goes on, in Chapters two, eight, and nine particularly, to offer an analysis of how putative reformers manipulate "choice," "accountability," and our ever-present educational "crisis" to promote policies that defend the power of white middle class families and insulate them from responsibility for poorer and "brownner" students who are often the children of immigrants. He demonstrates how the privilege of white middle class families is consistently sustained, and often expanded, by voucher programs, tuition tax credit plans, and other educational policies justified by what are ostensibly efforts to improve social efficiency or expand individual freedoms. Of course, the policies described do neither, but they do produce the kinds of cost reduction and quasi-private educational benefits that Glass describes above.

It's not simply on academic grounds that I think some conception of ideology would be helpful here. I think such an explanation is necessary to move ahead with Glass's central tasks — to explain why we seem unable to let reason guide our educational policy making and why demands for "freedom" in the marketplace almost always bring the opposite effect. Glass cites approvingly the work of Michael Apple in a footnote on p. 8, but he misses the most important connection to Apple's analysis. Rather than explaining "how conservative education reformers are contributing to ethnicity, race, and class division," the genius of both Apple and Glass is their capacity to explain why well meaning people go along with such proposals — or even more startling, why people who are actually harmed by these policies often serve as their advocates (recall Thomas Frank's, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*). Both Glass and Apple seek to expose the underlying ideology of market rationales for educational policies that ostensibly appeal to values such as equality of opportunity and parental choice as actually rooted in the race and class solidarity of privileged groups. This is the reason that Glass would do well to call upon ideology,

or something similar, as a tool in his analysis. But this isn't the only reason. It would also help Glass better explain the relationship between class membership (the demographic data) and the motives of individual social actors (their support for particular educational policies).

### Class Interests and Individual Actions

One reason that ideology doesn't play an explicit role in Glass's analysis may be related to the ambivalence I see in his characterization of social groups in the text and how best to understand their "motives." Early in the book, Glass identifies himself as a cultural materialist (like Marvin Harris), especially insofar as the approach gives appropriate weight to the forces of production (Marx) and to the implications of population dynamics (Malthus). At times, this appears to lead Glass to see the problem he's describing as having a certain kind of historical and demographic inevitability — the *fate* of public education.

For most of the rest of the book, however, it seems clear that Glass considers the choices white middle class people make to support particular educational policies as evidence of their conscious efforts to defend (or extend) their economic interests and privilege of position. He appeals directly to individual motives to explain such actions.

Policies widely advocated in democratic institutions ranging from local school boards to the U. S. Congress have been put forward as solutions to a crisis in educational attainment that threatens national prosperity and security (indeed, national preeminence itself), when in fact these policies have likely arisen from different, less honorable motives, namely, the desire of White voters to preserve wealth, consume material goods, and provide a "quasi-private" education for their children at public expense. (p. 16)

What drives the advocates? What is the source of their partisan energies? It is clearly not a case of having discovered, say, a miraculous cure for a virulent disease and wanting the world to benefit from it. One must look for the motives that drive the reformers. They are not hard to find: Reduce costs; make schooling private at public expense for *my* children. (p. 147, emphasis in text)

The ambiguity here lies in the uneasy relationship between individual motives and class interests. Glass is no doubt right to argue that "people's actions are scarcely comprehensible without thinking about what drives them and what personal interest is served by their acting thus" (p. 12). But an account of the belief system that integrates perceptions of self-interest with class membership (and thus what actions count as serving class interests in the first place) is exactly what's needed here. Demographics, as powerful as they are, are insufficient to explain this relationship. Indeed, Glass demonstrates all too clearly that the effort to promote educational policies that benefit white middle class families requires the deployment of sophisticated rhetorical structures (accountability, choice, educational crisis) to garner the political support necessary for their adoption. The irony here, as well as the conceptual difficulty, is that these rhetorical structures depend on individuals and their actions at the same time that they shape individuals' motives and understanding. I think Glass would do well to say something more on this issue, as it also has important implications for where the analysis would take a sympathetic reader interested in raising the flag.

### How Full is Your Glass?

In the end, it's hard to answer Glass's own question about whether he's a pessimist (I agree with his self-assessment as a cynic — of the best kind). On the one hand, he seems to have a hard time resisting the determination of demographic data:

It would be better to speak of possibilities or likely scenarios for public education rather than its fate in these pages were it not that the forces being discussed have a sense of inevitability about them. Thus we speak of demographic imperatives (p. 235).

But it would take a true cynic indeed to put so much erudition into a book of this kind, only to conclude that nothing can be done. I'm grateful that Glass cannot resist the careful reader's conclusion that the insights conveyed here can help us change our current course, to seek justice in the provision of public education, and unmask false attempts at reform that benefit few at the expense of many.

Will understanding — like that hopefully conveyed here — lead to some degree of introspection, some reflection by the very generations on whom the future of public education depends? If indeed the motives driving school reform are as selfish as is here claimed, can good consciences be awakened? There are no likely solutions to problems possible without knowledge of causes, even if it is partial knowledge. (p. 249)

Maybe that's as optimistic as a hard-boiled empiricist who looks at the figures and finds what Glass does in this book can be. I think it's more than enough motivation to tempt fate and pursue these arguments in the court of public opinion. This book holds out the possibility of reaching a larger audience far beyond the walls of the academy. I hope that it does; I'll certainly be recommending it.

---

## **Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way: Lessons from an Urban Classroom**

By B. D. Schultz

Published by Teachers College Press (New York, 2008)

Reviewed by Alicia A. Broderick

I recently devoured Brian Schultz's *Spectacular things happen along the way: Lessons from an urban classroom*, because like so many classroom teachers and teacher-educators, I am hungry for counternarratives to the dominant storyline of teachers as technicians who implement received curricula. We are all intimately familiar with this dominant cultural narrative, the one in which teaching is something that teachers do *to* students and in which students are either deemed successful or unsuccessful on the basis of high-stakes standardized testing instruments. Schultz's text transgresses this narrative and paints a vivid portrait of teaching as learning that teachers do *with* students, and of curricula as meaningful, authentic issues-based content that students can actively co-construct with their teachers. In the

Deweyan tradition, the disciplines are conceptualized not as received bodies of knowledge to be transmitted, but rather as active tools (e.g., literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, etc.) to be developed and utilized in pursuit of broader questions and issues of contemporary relevance. The counternarrative that emerges in Schultz's text is compelling and complex, and not at all in line with the all-too-common narrative of white-middle-class-educator-as-savior-to-underprivileged-black-youth, or with the similarly common and equally less-than-useful atheoretical autobiographical narrative presented as an idealized example of a heroic "super teacher."

Schultz's text chronicles his experiences of a year spent as a 5th-grade classroom teacher at Carr Community Academy in Chicago's Cabrini Green neighborhood. When Schultz asks his students to identify an issue in their community that they want to actively address, they quickly come to consensus that "Our school is a dump!" (p. 1), and for the remainder of the school year the students seek to rectify this situation through their own social and political activism. This emergent curriculum is powerful in its authenticity (it is derived from and entirely directed by students' concerns and agendas), its interdisciplinarity (students integrate reading, writing, mathematics, and use tools of [social] scientific inquiry in complex ways), and its active engagement of all students as meaning-makers (even historically truant, disengaged, and academically marginalized students have nearly perfect attendance, coming to school early and staying late). This curriculum is not passively received, applied, or implemented; rather it is actively constructed, constituted, and *enacted* on a daily basis by the learners themselves.

Among the most valuable features of this text — relevant to preservice teachers as well as novice and experienced inservice teachers — are the many ways in which Schultz makes his own thought processes, theorizing, and problem solving transparent to the reader. Throughout this book, Schultz articulates (and often uncannily anticipates) all of the "yes, but..." objections of teachers who may have difficulty visualizing themselves engaged in this emergent approach because of their own experiences in highly regimented, often scripted, and heavily

ALICIA A. BRODERICK is Assistant Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

surveilled classrooms. He also shares his struggles, uncertainties, fears, worries, questions, and doubts quoted at length from his own journal. Many of the habits of reflective thought that are so supportive of becoming a critical reflective educator are made transparent. The educative value of Schultz's writing, like his teaching, is in the critical posing and thoughtful pursuit of the questions themselves, not in their answers.

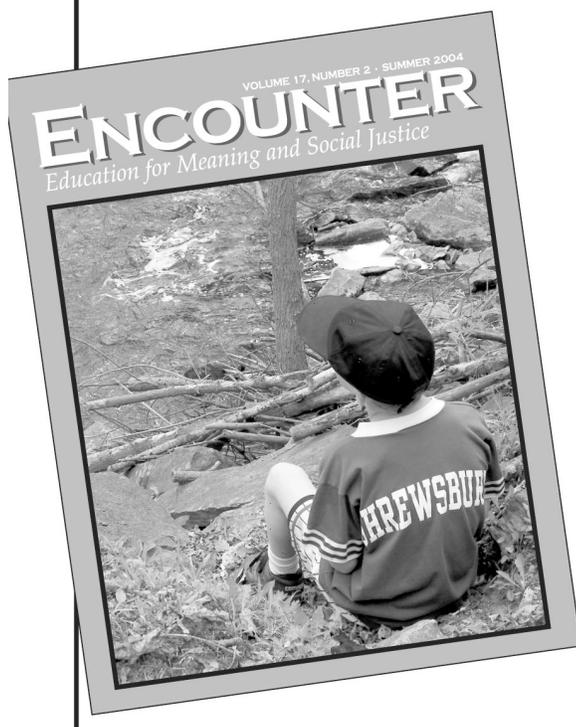
Schultz includes a chapter entitled "Justice-Oriented Teaching," where he revisits the broader issues of what it means to be a teacher who recognizes one's profession as a political undertaking. He shows how the need to take risks must be balanced by enlisting the of support from administrators, colleagues, parents, community members, and appropriately enough, curriculum studies literature. In this discussion, Schultz makes clear not only the ways in which he theorizes his teaching, but also the ways in which all teaching is theorized — even the scripted, canned, and ostensibly atheoretical packaged curricula that so many teachers have handed to them for "implementation." Significantly, he also discusses the ways in which he theorizes democratizing authority and power in the classroom *with* students. He does not shy away from complex political discussions with his students and describes, for example, ways in which he engaged in theorizing with his students around the complexities of race, class, and privilege in his classroom and beyond. He notes, "I saw myself in many ways as a student of my students — able to learn from them by sharing authority in the classroom and allowing them to teach me" (p. 145). Schultz's conceptualization of himself as a learner — and, in many ways, a struggling learner — helps to keep him conscious of the dangers of the potentially colonizing effects of a white middle class teacher working with working class and poor students of color.

Schultz argues that it is no wonder that classroom teachers so often avoid the risks inherent in democratic teaching, particularly the "teachers in schools serving the poorest neighborhoods" that are "under the most pressure to conform" to "constant and looming probationary threats due to accountability factors" (p. 140-141). He states, "With high-stakes accountability at the forefront in schools today, many

teachers and administrators believe democratic classrooms to be impossible" (p. 139). However, he argues that "sustaining and supporting justice-oriented teaching is challenging, yet possible" (p. 148).

***Teaching is learning that teachers do with students; curricula is meaningful issues-based content that students actively co-construct with teachers .***

As a teacher-educator of both preservice and inservice teachers, one of the greatest challenges I face is in convincing my students that justice-oriented, inclusive teaching is *possible*. Two of my students' favorite dismissals of this possibility are: "That's great in theory but it's largely divorced from the reality of teaching in today's schools," and "I'm sure that was possible in prior times when teachers had more autonomy, but it's simply not possible in today's climate of accountability." Schultz offers both novice and experienced teachers a vivid vision of what might be possible in teaching if educators make a commitment to teach for social justice in inclusive, democratic classrooms (and yes, his students fared very well on the standardized assessments). He does not shy away from discussions of the risks and the challenges inherent in democratic, inclusive, social-justice-oriented teaching, yet his text stands as a compelling example. One of the greatest challenges in teacher education is helping students dispense with the rhetorical fatalism of the "yes, but is it really possible?" debate, and the security-blanket-like desires of the "ok, so it's possible, but now tell me how I'm supposed to go about doing it?" conversation. Each of these attitudes either delays or abdicates responsibility for democratic, active engagement with the curriculum of teacher education. I look forward to using Schultz's text as a tool to engage my students (just as Schultz did with his own students) in a democratic conversation about the possibilities we can enact, both individually as well as collectively, in our efforts to teach for democracy, social justice, and a more inclusive society.



# ENCOUNTER

*Education for Meaning and Social Justice*

## An Educational Journal With An Attitude

ENCOUNTER, published quarterly since 1988, is a professional journal characterized by a strong belief that the fundamental purpose of education is to help a child grow as an individual and compassionate member of society.

Expanding the discourse on educational renewal by focusing on the implications of the holistic perspective within the classroom, ENCOUNTER encourages a wider, more unified view of reality and, in doing so, returns the human spirit to the core of the curriculum. It insists that students and *their* needs be the center of the educational process—not the demands of the economy, technology, or bureaucracies.

ENCOUNTER believes that education must focus on the development of personal growth and meaning for both students and teachers in an environment that creates and insures social equality and justice.

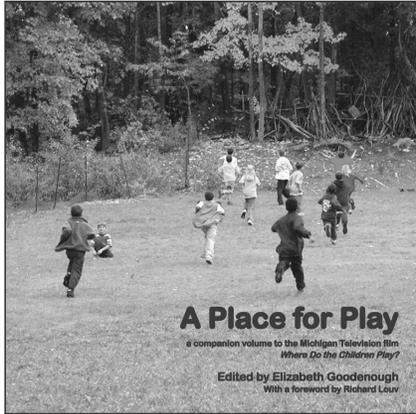
ENCOUNTER is indeed a journal with an attitude. It belongs in *your* library and on *your* reading table.

ENCOUNTER is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Personal subscriptions cost \$39.95 for the year; \$90 for libraries and other multi-user environments. Add \$13 per year for delivery to Canada; \$15 to Mexico; and \$27 to all other countries. Non-print electronic subscriptions are also available. For more information, phone 1-800-639-4122 or write to Encounter, PO Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328, or visit us online at <<https://great-ideas.org>>.

### Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice
2. Publication Number: 1094-3838
3. Filing Date: 10/15/08
4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: Four
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$39.95, Individuals; \$95, Institutions
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: P.O. Box 328, Brandon (Rutland Cty), Vermont 05733-0328. Contact Person: Charles Jakiela. Telephone: 802-247-8312
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: P.O. Box 328, Brandon, Vermont 05733-0328.
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor. Publisher: C. S. Jakiela, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328. Editor: William Crain, Dept. of Psychology, CCNY, 138th St. and Convent Ave, New York, NY 10031. Managing Editor: Charles Jakiela, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT.
10. Owner: Psychology Press, Inc., Brandon, VT 05733; Charles and Nancy Jakiela, P.O. Box 358, Brandon, VT 05733.
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None
12. Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months.
13. Title: Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice.
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Summer 2008
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation. Average of Last 12 Months, (Actual Number of Summer 2007 Issue):
  - (a) Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run): 414 (380).
  - (b) (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions: 354 (281). (b)(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions: 0 (0). (b)(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails: 0 (0). (b)(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail: 40 (40)
  - (c) Total Paid Distribution: 394 (321).
  - (d)(1) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside-County Copies 0 (0). (d)(2) Free or Nominal Outside-County Copies: 0 (0). (d)(2) Free or Nominal In-County Copies: 0 (0). (d)(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes of Mail: 0 (0). Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 0 (0). (e) Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 0 (0).
  - (f) Total Distribution: 394 (321). (g) Copies Not Distributed: 20 (51). (h) Total: 414 (380). (i) Percent Paid: 100% (100%).
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership will be printed in the Winter 2008 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Certifying that All Information Furnished is True and Complete: Charles S. Jakiela, Publisher. 10/15/08.

ENCOUNTER is an independent journal that views education from a holistic perspective and focuses on its role in helping a student develop a sense of personal meaning and social justice. Manuscripts (an original and two copies) should be submitted to the Editor, Bill Crain, Department of Psychology, CCNY, 138th St and Convent Ave., New York, NY 10031, typed double spaced throughout with ample margins. Since a double blind review process is used, no indications of the author's identity should be included within the text after the title page. All manuscripts must be original work not being considered for publication elsewhere and prepared in accordance with the author-date format as described in chapter 16 of the 14th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.



## A Place for Play

*A Companion Volume to the Michigan Television Film "Where Do the Children Play?"*

Elizabeth Goodenough, Editor

Paper 978-0-615-20282-2  
10 x 10, 90 photos, 1 map  
**\$29.95**

**A** *Place for Play* is framed by interviews with experts from "Where Do the Children Play?", a 60-minute documentary from Michigan Television. With a foreword by

learning for the young. Joan Almon, Kenneth Ginsburg, Jack Zipes, and William Crain explore topics central to children's imaginative life and physical health. Offerings by Penny Wilson and Bob Hughes, Suzanne Crowhurst Lennard, and Mark Powell will appeal not only to recreation specialists and childhood scholars but also to parents, teachers, planners and practitioners in many fields. Essayists such as Clare Cooper Marcus, Louise Chawla, David Driskell, Jane P. Perry, Rosemarie Hester, and Susan Solomon offer practical advice and model programs. The collection concludes with a portfolio of playgrounds by award-winning aerial photographer Alex L. MacLean.

Richard Louv, this book explores key issues that have captured national attention in recent years: namely the ways in which free play outdoors is slipping from children's lives. Responding to the sense of lost childhood and fear that pervades our society, this full-color, richly illustrated anthology surveys the history of playground design and the children's garden movement, the benefits of universal access to natural resources, and the challenges of developing child-centered and green communities. Essays address multiple social issues, including restrictive patterns of sprawl, to explain why children are losing the ability to travel on their own or explore green spaces.

Editor **Elizabeth Goodenough**, whose work on *Secret Spaces of Childhood* sparked a national dialogue on play, originated and helped develop the film and outreach projects over the last seven years. Building on this initiative, *A Place for Play* will change the way families think about their neighborhoods, and it will encourage those who work with children to envision recess and leisure time in new ways. The film and its outreach seek to engage communities in a conversation about the role children and nature must have to thrive and be sustained. *A Place for Play* documents the diverse array of partners working on the growing national movement to reconnect children with nature.

Summaries of the research evidence by Nancy Wells, Sandra Hofferth, Stuart Brown, Robin Moore and Nilda Cosco examine the ongoing influence of outdoor adventures and experiential

## Where Do the Children Play?

*A Documentary Film*  
Michigan Television

"The video is superb and should be mandatory viewing and discussing for all educators and parents throughout the States."

—**Jack Zipes**, Professor Emeritus,  
University of Minnesota

*Where Do the Children Play?* is a one-hour documentary for public television that examines how restrictive patterns of sprawl, congestion, and endless suburban development across America are impacting children's mental and physical health and development.

DVD  
978-0-981-65270-2  
**\$19.95**

Checks & credit cards only. To order, go to [www.press.umich.edu](http://www.press.umich.edu) or contact Perseus Distribution at 800.343.4499 x 154; fax: 877.364.7062; 1094 Flex Dr., Jackson, TN 38301

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Shipping address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT INFORMATION—checks, MC, Visa, Amex only (please circle appropriate card)**

**Credit card #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Expiration date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name as it appears on card:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

# ENCOUNTER

P.O. Box 328

Brandon, VT 05733-0328

<https://great-ideas.org>

## PERIODICALS

*“Educational alternatives will only truly thrive when the cultural sphere [which includes education] is freed from the undue influence and technocratic control of the economic and political spheres.”*

— Ron Miller

**Purchase an Entire 12-Volume Holistic Education Library for \$50!  
And Save Almost 75% from List Prices**

### **Titles May Vary Based on Availability**

Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society: A Critique of National Goals, Standards, and Curriculum  
Ten Common Myths in American Education  
Paths of Learning Magazine (All 23 Issues on CD-ROM)  
Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love  
New Directions in Education: Selections from Holistic Education Review  
Partnership Education in Action  
The Primal, The Modern, and the Vital Center: A Theory of Balanced Culture in a Living Place  
Schools Where Children Matter: Exploring Educational Alternatives  
“Under the Tough Old Stars”: Ecopedagogical Essays  
What Every Great Teacher Knows (complete book on CD-ROM)  
Classroom Management: The Dance of the Dolphin  
Lessons from the Hawk

**<https://great-ideas.org/Library.htm>**

Tables of Book Contents and Secure Order Form

**1-800-639-4122**