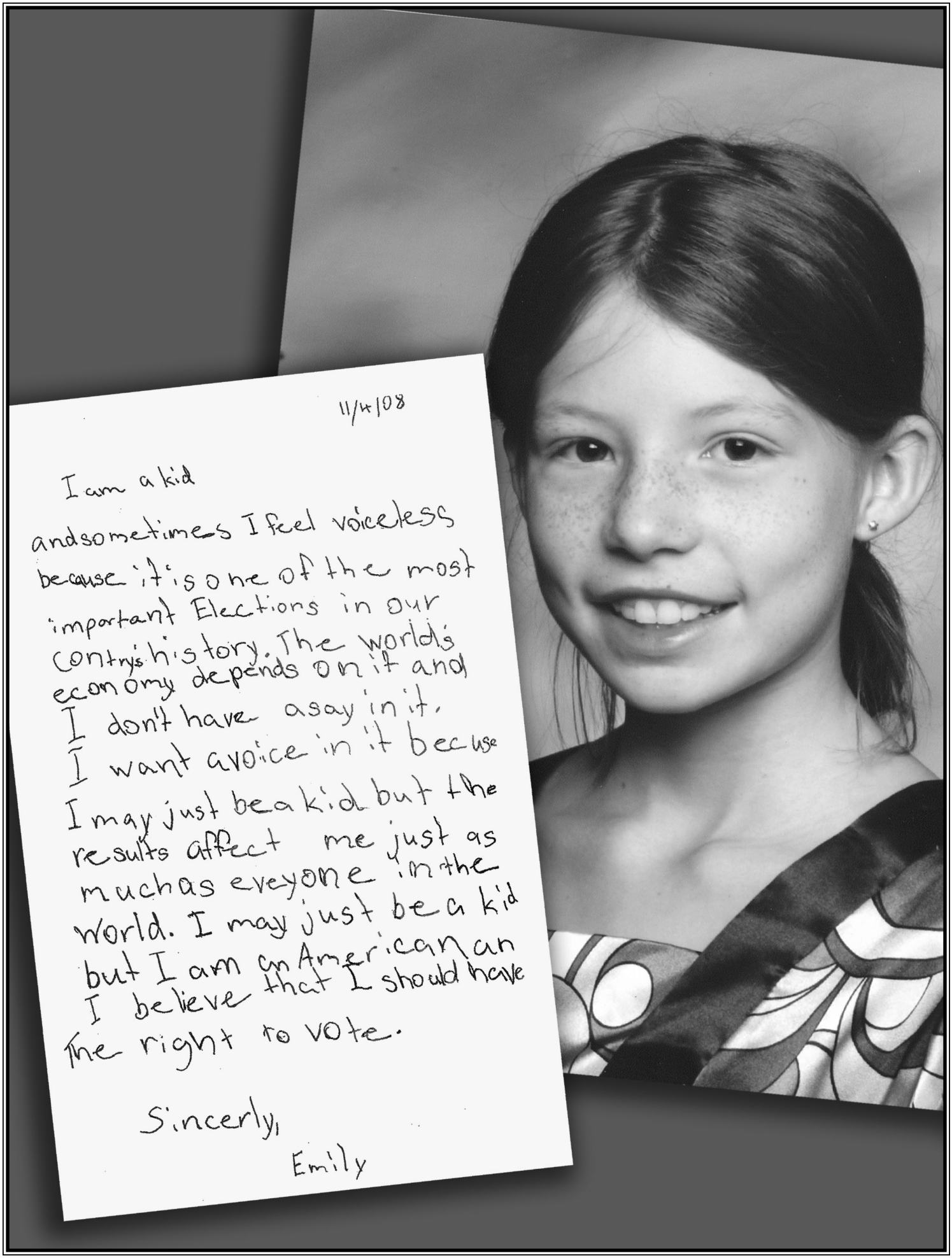
VOLUME 22, NUMBER 1 • SPRING 2009

ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice



11/4/08

I am a kid
andsometimes I feel voiceless
because it is one of the most
important Elections in our
contrys history. The worlds
economy depends on it and
I don't have asay in it.
I want avoice in it because
I may just be a kid but the
results affect me just as
muchas eveyone in the
world. I may just be a kid
but I am an American an
I believe that I should have
the right to vote.

Sincerly,
Emily

ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 1 SPRING 2009

Table of Contents

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) in Rutland, Vermont. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ENCOUNTER , P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328.

Editorial

Jane Goodall

Last May, I heard Jane Goodall give a lecture. She spoke softly and clearly, telling brief stories about her life and her work with chimpanzees in Africa. There was a peacefulness about her. When she finished her talk with a simple plea to save chimpanzees from the threat of extinction and to create a better world, many people in the audience were moved to tears. I overheard several people say that her speech was a life-changing event.

What makes Goodall so inspiring? In part it's because of what she has accomplished. She was the first woman to venture into Africa to study chimpanzees and she made important discoveries. She also became famous, and fame increases a speaker's impact.

But Goodall also gives voice to important ideas, several of which we are trying to express in this journal. I will give a brief summary of Goodall's life and work and then point to some of the ideas we share with her.

Early Years

Jane Goodall was born in 1934 in Hempstead Heath, North London. A year later her family moved to the suburb of Weybridge. Her father Mortimer was an engineer and race car driver who took little interest in his daughter's upbringing. Her mother Vanne had been a secretary for a show business entrepreneur before her marriage, after which she became a full-time homemaker. Jane grew up with a younger sister, and, for a while, an imaginary companion who could fly (Peterson 2006, Ch. 1).

Jane was always fascinated by animals. At 18 months, she took a handful of earthworms to bed with her. "Jane," her mother said, "if you keep them here they'll die. They need the earth." So Jane hurriedly took the worms back to the garden (Goodall 2003, 5).

At the age of 4 years, while visiting her grandmother's farm, she was determined to see how a chicken lays an egg. First she followed a chicken into the henhouse, but the chicken squawked and ran away. So she tried another approach. She went into the henhouse before the hen arrived and silently waited for the hen to enter and lay an egg. Jane was gone so long the family called the police to try to find her. Finally she saw how the hen did it, and rushed back to the house. Her mother must have been angry, but Goodall (2003, 6-7) says, "She did not scold me. She noticed my shining eyes and sat down to listen to the story of how a hen lays an egg." Her mother decided that the important thing was her child's sense of wonder.

Young Jane's life wasn't always pleasant. When she was 5½, England declared war on Germany, and the war was constantly on everyone's mind. When Jane was 12, her parents divorced. What's more, the family was poor.

Jane wasn't keen on school, either. But her interest in nature continued, and she found comfort in it. She spent hours in the family's garden and especially loved a tree she called Beech.

> There, high above the ground, I could feel a part of the life of the tree, swaying when the wind blew strongly, close to the rustling of the leaves. The songs of the birds sounded different up there — clearer and louder. I could sometimes lay my cheek against the trunk and seem to feel the sap, the lifeblood of Beech, coursing below the rough bark. (Goodall 2003, 20)

The tree gave Jane a place to be by herself and think. She thought about the horrors of the war, the Holocaust, and the dropping of the atomic bombs. These events affected her deeply, and made her question her belief in a benevolent God.

In the tree she also read books, including books about Tarzan, with whom she fell in love. She dreamed about going to Africa and being with the animals.

Jane developed a crush on the town's new young minister as well, a crush that led to renewed religious devotion. Over the years, Goodall has experienced

religious doubts, but an underlying faith has played a significant role in her life.

Although her family was poor, it found ways of giving her opportunities to ride horses, and one day Jane went on a fox hunt. The riding was so exciting that she gave no thought to the fox, but then the hounds killed it. "How could I for even one moment," she wondered, "have wanted to be part of this murderous and horrible event" (Goodall 2003, 19). As an adult, Goodall has thought a good deal about that event. What if she had grown up with fox hunting from an early age? Would she have accepted it as the way things are? Pressure to be part of the group, to go along with conventions, is very strong. Would she have had the courage to resist? (Goodall 2003, 20).

After high school, Goodall wanted to attend a university, but she lacked the funds. Her mother told her that a secretary could get a job anywhere in the world, so with the hope of one day travelling to Africa, she went to London for secretarial training. She continued to read widely and enrolled in evening classes in literature, journalism, and Theosophy (Goodall 2003, 30-32).

Africa

Unexpectedly, in 1956, she received a letter from a childhood friend who had moved to Africa. The friend asked, "Would I like to visit?" (Goodall 2003, 35). It was a thrilling moment. To save money for the trip, Goodall gave up her apartment in London, moved back with her family, and worked hard as a waitress.

After the excitng visit, she found employment as a secretary in Nairobi, followed by a position as the personal secretary of the eminent paleontogogist/anthropologist Louis Leakey. In 1959, while Goodall was working for him, Leakey and his wife Mary made their famous discovery in Tanganyika's Olduvai Gorge, unearthing a human-like fossil that helped trace our evolutionary past.

Leakey wanted someone to study chimpanzees in the wild — something that had barely been attempted — because he thought that chimps, as humans' closest living relatives, would provide insights into the how our Stone Age ancestors had behaved. After much effort, Leakey raised money to support Goodall's field research in the Gombe forest reserve. When the British government refused to allow a white woman to venture alone into the bush, Goodall's mother Vanne came to Africa as a companion (Goodall 2003, Ch. 3).

In her first studies, which began in 1960, Goodall typically went alone for the day up a cliff, while Vanne remained at the camp. From a high vantage point, Goodall could observe chimpanzees with her binoculars, although several hours usually went by before any sighting of them. It was a full year before the chimps trusted her enough to allow her within 100 yards (Goodall 2003, 65). Goodall's quiet patience is reminiscent of the way she waited silently as a four-year-old for a chicken to enter the barn and lay an egg.

As she got to know the chimpanzees she gave them names such as David Greybeard, Flo, and Satan. At the time, the scientists who studied animal behavior considered personal naming to be totally inappropriate. Striving for objectivity, the scientists would only tolerate giving the chimps numbers. But Goodall lacked the university training that would have informed her of her sin, and so she helped scientists begin to see that not only humans have individual personalities (Goodall 2003, 74).

Although Goodall was learning a great deal in her first four months at Gombe, her funding was just about to run out when she made two discoveries that brought attention to her work (Peterson 2006, 205). The first discovery was that chimpanzees sometimes ate meat. The second and more stunning discovery was that chimps use tools. With her binoculars, she saw David Greybeard (so called because of the white hair on his chin), poke a stick into a hole and pull out termites. A few days later she saw chimps strip the leaves off twigs for the termite fishing. So they were not only using tools, but making them. Goodall (2003, 67) says,

> It was hard for me to believe what I had seen. It had long been thought that we were the only creatures on earth that used and made tools. "Man the Toolmaker" is how we were defined. This ability set us apart, it was supposed, from the rest of the animal kingdom.

With these discoveries, Goodall became well-known and received funding from the National Geo-

graphic Society. The authorities also allowed her to study without the support of her mother.

Gradually, the chimps became less fearful of her. This was especially true of the bold chimp, David Greybeard. One day, sitting next to David, she had one of the most wonderful experiences of her life. She noticed a nut on the ground and offered it to him in the palm of her hand. He took it and dropped it, but gently grasped her hand.

> I needed no words to understand his message of reassurance: he didn't want the nut, but he understood my motivation, he knew I meant well. To this day I remember the soft pressure of his fingers. We had communicated in a language far more ancient than words. (Goodall 2003, 81)

This communication deepened her sense of belonging to the natural world. It gave her a sense of the human place in the greater scheme of things. She says,

> Together the chimpanzees and the baboons and monkeys, the birds and insects, the teeming life of the vibrant forest, the stirrings of the never still waters of the great lake, and the uncountable stars and planets of the solar system formed one whole. All one, all part of the great mystery. And I was part of it too. A sense of calm came over me. (Goodall 2003, 81).

Goodall had other, similar experiences — some of which were especially intense. At the end of one day, when the chimps were feeding after a rain, she became "lost in awe at the beauty around me" and "slipped into a state of heightened awareness" that she found difficult to put into words. "Even the mystics," Goodall (2003, 173) adds,

> are unable to describe their brief flashes of spiritual ecstasy. It seemed to me as I struggled afterward to recall the experience, that *self* was utterly absent: I and the chimpanzees, the earth and trees and air, seemed to merge, to become one with the spirit power of life itself.

Later, people would wonder where Goodall acquired her inner peace (Goodall 2003, xvii). Although religious faith contributed, her serenity was primarily the peace of the forest, which "reached into the inner core my being" (2003, 78).

Another discovery was chimpanzee aggression. After 10 years of studying the chimps at Gombe, she heard about or witnessed attacks by chimps on chimps, some of which were fatal. Primarily, one group of chimps waged warfare against others who had broken away and formed their own group. This aggression shocked and horrified Goodall. It also came as a surprise to the scientific community, which generally believed that members of mammalian species (with the exception of Homo sapiens) rarely fight to the death.

Margaret Power (1991) and other scientists have charged that Goodall artificially stimulated this aggression. Although Goodall's initial observations of the chimpanzees were completely unobtrusive, after two years she created a banana-feeding station for chimps who visited her camp. Soon the chimps took so many bananas that her research team had to use a box to limit the chimps' access to the bananas, which frustrated the chimps and created conflicts and hostilities. Thus, Goodall might have sewed the seeds of the tragic violence that followed.

The issue of primate violence is controversial (Moore 1992). Goodall herself (1986, 357) has observed that acts of aggression are relatively rare in ordinary chimpanzee life — much rarer than friendly and playful interactions. She has also provided numerous examples of chimpanzee altruism, as when the 12-year-old male Spindle adopted the young orphan Mel, who would have died without Spindle's care. Spindle allowed Mel to travel on his back, as Mel had done with his mother, and Spindle often risked danger to himself to keep Mel safe. (Goodall 2003, 139).

A New Direction

In 1986 Goodall's work took a new turn. At a conference she learned that the chimpanzees in Africa were rapidly vanishing, largely because of hunting and logging. She was stunned. The Gombe Reserve, where she worked, had been protected from hunting and logging, but most other chimpanzee habitats had not. Goodall says,

> For twenty five years I had lived my dream. I had gloried in the solitude of the forest, learning from some of the most fascinating creatures of our times. Now, with my newfound profes-

> sional confidence, the time had come for me to use the knowledge I had acquired to try to help the chimps in their time of need. (2003, 207-208)

So Goodall began touring the globe, giving speech after speech on the plight of the chimpanzees. Since then, she has been constantly on the road, battling exhaustion to carry her message far and wide.

In addition to the condition of the chimpanzees, she speaks out on the cruel treatment of animals in general. In factory farms, which supply almost all the meat modern humans eat, animals are caged so tightly they can barely move. In response, Goodall (2003, 221-222) has become a vegetarian. Goodall also has written several books and initiated the Roots and Shoots youth programs to help the environment, animals, and local communities.

During her travels, Goodall visited a medical research facility owned by New York University that experimented on animals. There she met the chimp Jo Jo, who had been caged in a standard 5′ by 5′ wide, 7′ tall cage for at least ten years. It was, Goodall writes,

> ten years of utter boredom interspersed with periods of fear and pain. There was nothing in his cage save an old motor tire for him to sit on. And he had no opportunity to contact others of his kind. I looked into his eyes. There was no hatred there, only a sort of gratitude because I had stopped to talk to him, helped to break the terrible grinding monotony of the day. Gently, he groomed the ridges where my nails pressed against the thin rubber of the gloves I had been given, along with mask and paper cap. I pushed my hand in between the bars and, lip smacking, he groomed the hairs on the back of my wrist, peeling the glove down…
>
> Jo Jo had committed no crime, yet he was imprisoned, for life. The shame I felt was because I was human. Very gently Jo Jo reached out through the bars and touched my cheek where the tears ran down into my mask. He sniffed his finger, looked briefly into my eyes, went on grooming my writs. I think Saint Francis stood beside us, and he too was weeping. (2003, 216-217)

I have not covered all Goodall's life and work. I have not mentioned, for example, that she had two marriages, raised a son, and took time to earn a PhD in ethology. For readers who want to learn more about her, I recommend her book, *Reason for Hope* (2003), Dale Peterson's biography (2006), and videos by Karen Goodman and Kirk Simon (1990), Emily Goldberg (1999), and David Lickley (2002).

Themes Central to our Journal

Even from my brief summary of Goodall's life and work, readers of this journal will recognize several themes and ideas that are important to us.

First, Goodall emphasizes that her mother Vanne nourished her sense of wonder. When 4-year-old Jane was missing for several hours, having spent time in the henhouse to see how a chicken lays an egg, Vanne must have been very angry when her daughter finally appeared. But instead of giving vent to her frustration, Vanne shared her daughter's feeling of wonder — a feeling that many of us also prize.

Second, Goodall expresses a healthy skepticism toward conventional attitudes. For example, she is concerned that she might have unthinkingly adopted the conventional view that fox hunting is all right, and might have become less sensitive to animals' lives. With respect to the chimpanzees, Goodall defends her spontaneous impulse to name them and recognize their individual personalities, even though her behavior violated the standards of mainstream science and university education. Such skepticism with respect to the conventional positions is fundamental to us as alternative educators.

Third, Goodall's methodological approach, at least for the first months in Gombe, was that of patient, unobtrusive observation. Goodall gave the chimpanzees the freedom to live naturally, without her interventions, and to approach her only when they were ready. This kind of freedom is important to us as child-centered, holistic educators, who believe that conventional education is far too intrusive. It directs and controls children without giving them a chance to be themselves and develop in their own ways.

Fourth, Goodall places a premium on spiritual development. Indeed, in the video *Reason for Hope* (Goldberg 1999), Goodall says that she puts more weight on mystics' ways of knowing than those of

scientists. She has drawn strength from her mystical insights into the unity of life, particularly in the Gombe forest but in other natural settings as well. Similarly, articles in *Encounter* emphasize spiritual development and have pointed to the importance of natural settings for fostering spiritual experiences (for example, Crain 2006 and Sobel 2008).

Finally, Goodall travels almost non-stop in an effort to educate people on the plight of animals. She hopes her lectures will motivate people to help the animals and save their natural habitats. Goodall shares with us the conviction that education should inspire people to work for a better world.

In this issue, you will find shades of Goodall in many articles. Marc Bekoff, who has worked closely with Goodall, has contributed an essay, and I have written a review of his two recent books. I would like to give special thanks to Elizabeth Goodenough, who helped me select the works by Polly Devlin, Marcia Lee, Jerry Herron, and Joan Almon. These articles advance Elizabeth's work to raise awareness of children's need for play, especially in natural settings (See Goodenough 2008 for a description of her *Where Do the Children Play?* film and book project).

— William Crain, Editor

References

Crain, W. 2006. Howard Thurman. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 19 (4): 2-5.

Goldberg, E. 1999. *Reason for hope* (video). Twin Cities Public Television.

Goodall, J. 1986. *The chimpanzees of Gombe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goodall, J., with Philip Berman. 2003. *Reason for hope: A spiritual journey*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

Goodenough, E., ed. 2008. *A place for play: A companion volume to the Michigan Television film,* "Where Do the Children Play?" Carmel, CA: National Institute for Play.

Goodman, K., and K. Simon. 1990. *Chimps: So like us* (video). Santa Monica, CA: Direct Cinema Limited.

Lickley, D. 2002. *Jane Goodall's wild chimpanzees* (video). Sudbury, Canada: Science North.

Moore, J. 1992. Book Review of *The egalitarians: Human and chimpanzee*. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 88, 259-262.

Peterson, D. 2006. *Jane Goodall: The woman who redefined man*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Power, M. 1991. *The egalitarians: Human and chimpanzee*. Cambridge, UK.: Cambridge University Press.

Sobel, D. 2008. "Appareled in celestial light": Transcendent nature experiences in childhood. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 2 (4): 14-19.

Chris Mercogliano Named Associate Editor

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Chris Mercogliano as *Encounter's* new Associate Editor. Chris was a teacher and administrator at the Albany Free School for 35 years and is a leading spokesperson for freedom-based education. His writings include *Teaching the Restless: One School's Non-Ritalin Approach to Helping Children Learn and Succeed* (2004) and *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (2007), both published by Beacon Press.

Chris urges educators to trust children's own inner sense of what they need to develop their full and unique potentials. Believing that all children have an innate desire to learn, Chris feels that education is at its best when we can see the brightness in kids' eyes and their spontaneous expressions of joy and exuberance. Chris will continue to write a regular column for *Encounter*, and we look forward to his contributions as Associate Editor.

William Crain, Editor
Charles Jakiela, Publisher

To Nurture a Flame

Paul Freedman

Teaching isn't just finding sparks of interest. It also is nurturing them.

"Education is not the filling of a pail
but the lighting of a fire."

This quote, commonly attributed to William Butler Yeats (e.g., Jones 1999, 61) has become an often-used, and perhaps overused metaphor among progressive educators. It does, however, call our attention to the inadequacy of the "banking system of education" (Freire 1972). The banking model, or what Yeats called pail-filling, pictures students as empty containers waiting for the teacher to fill them up with the required skills and knowledge. It is a cool and lifeless process, finite and controlled. Lighting a fire is far more dynamic, with much greater potential for growth and transformation; it has heat, passion, and strength. Jiddu Krishnamurti (2001, 64-65) captured this sense of dynamism when he wrote about lighting his own fire,

> I want to learn. I have spent my whole life learning and I want to learn. Here are a group of people from whom I can learn a great deal … and I want to learn from them and together create a flame of learning.

Yet I would argue that there is significantly more to the educational process even than the simple igniting of a flame. Ignition, while a powerful and necessary beginning point, is in many ways the easier part of the holistic educational mission. We must take the metaphor a bit further. It is the careful *nurturing* of the flame, the feeding it with fuel — just enough and at the right moment and in the right places — that is most critical and requires great artistry and care on the part of the teacher.

I recently came across a magnificent poem by Judy Brown (2003, 89), which speaks to this vision of education.

Paul Freedman is the founder and head of the Salmonberry School in Eastsound, WA, where he also teaches kindergarten through the 4th grade. His main interests are in holistic education and its application to the elementary school. Paul can be contacted at <dancingmonkey@rockisland.com>.

Fire

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would.
So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.
When we are able to build
open spaces
in the same way
we have learned
to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible.
We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire
grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way.

Opening Space

Sparking a student's interest can be a magical moment. Such moments even keep many of us going in the teaching profession. But what happens afterward is just as important. Too often, the momentary sparks extinguish prematurely; they are smothered with overwhelming quantities of facts, deadening analysis, or teachers' new expectations. Often, all that is needed is a single carefully laid twig — a question, a suggestion; the flame is fanned, the space is held open. We should be building structures to hold space open as much as building pyres of fuel.

Parker Palmer (1998, 120) is one of many wise educators who have written about holding space open for learners. "I need to spend less time filling the space and more time opening a space where students can have a conversation with the subject and with each other." He likens the proper role of the teacher to that of a sheepdog, circling the flock, allowing the learners to move freely, to graze and explore, while tirelessly keeping watch and looking out for anything that might threaten this determined, patient exploration.

What is it that seems to relentlessly compel teachers to fill any and all available space, with *our* ideas, *our* "insights," *our* facts and trivia? When we are able to back off a bit and simply hold space open, is when real growth and learning thrives.

To Kindle

Perhaps the first scholar to criticize the banking model was Plutarch, who in the first century A.D. Plutarch (1928, 6) wrote, "The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled." Recently, I have begun to think that Plutarch chose precisely the right term — *to kindle*. To kindle is to ignite *and then to tend*; to set aflame *and not allow to extinguish*; to keep aglow, alight. This is what is required of the teacher. It is accomplished through passion and engagement, sensitivity, and receptivity. The holistic teacher hunts tirelessly for opportunities to encourage learners to find meaning and relevance in the learning process. Then we hold space open by promoting reflection, silence, and contemplation; by offering choices — as many as possible; by facilitating inquiry-based learning; and by refusing to fulfill the standardizing mission to singularly strive to "cover" *all* the required content.

We must let go of our obsession with predetermined learning outcomes and allow students to find their own paths by holding space for them. We must fan the flames just a bit and then allow individual sparks to spread to the whole learning community by stimulating thoughtful dialogue and by posing challenging questions. And we must be exceedingly careful not to smother the delicate and precious flickers through our arrogance and authority.

Although I am no etymologist I smiled to myself when I looked up the word "kindle" in my *American Heritage Dictionary*. It immediately follows the two entry words "kindergarten" and "kindhearted." Whether or not there is an etymological connection between these three words, this seemed a fitting placement. None other than Friedrich Froebel (1889, 143-144), the founder of kindergarten, spoke about education as the work of kind-hearted teachers who "set one's soul on fire for a higher, nobler life."

When I kindle a fire I must keep in mind certain basic principles. The wood must be seasoned and ready to burn, there must be the right fuel, and there must be spaces. There must be a draw of air. When I kindle a fire, I do not necessarily have a vision of the precise details of the finished form. Rather I respond to the living, changing shape. I notice how it is burning and I wait, looking for the right moment to add the needed fuel. I follow the guiding principles but I remain open to what the fire asks of me. I am receptive. It is a dance, a give and take.

To kindle a flame also is to care for it (see Noddings 1992). To kindle the flame is to nurse it into growth, to allow it to transform from fragility and dependence towards strength and autonomy.

Dousing the Flames

Quakers espouse a belief of "that of God within each person." Sometimes this is referred to as "the light within." Indeed in education our students come to school full of light. Every one of them brings his or her unique luminescence — passions, capacities, intelligences, dreams, creative impulses, skills, and idiosyncrasies. Tragically, all but a very few of these little sparks are ferreted out and explicitly doused by the bureaucratic factory-based system of mainstream contemporary education. Other flickers of light become expunged through simple neglect; they shine for a while but then fizzle. The sparks that remain, those that are desirable to the educational system, are all too often smothered inadvertently by over-exuberance. Let me give an example from my own teaching.

I teach a multi-age elementary school class in a small holistic independent school. In the Fall, I noticed among some conversations with my 14 five-to-nine-year-old students a common interest in the wonderful books of Laura Ingalls Wilder and in the themes of pioneers, adventure, and bravery in 19th Century America. Attempting to be receptive in my planning and hoping to capitalize on their interests, I began to envision a ten-week multi-disciplinary thematic unit built upon the adventures of Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery. In this unit we would write in journals like the explorers did. We would craft shoulder bags out of deerskin, cook authentic historic recipes over campfires (much kindling here), and make maps. We would try our hand at both botanical drawing and landscapes. We would learn about traditional games and dances, and so much more. My hope was that through an exposure to a wide range of learning modalities we would tap into several different intelligences.

I invite you all to join me in kindling flames in your classrooms, in your homes and throughout your lives. Find sparks. Ignite flames. Hold spaces and nurture life. Let us treat all our learners and each other with gentleness, care , and respect.

Early on in the Lewis and Clark narrative, the class learned of Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase. (It is Jefferson who commissioned Merriwether Lewis to lead the expedition west.) The next day, Tristan, age 8, came to school full of excitement. He thrust a book into my hand. This was an old hard-cover biography of Thomas Jefferson which his father had given him long ago. He had read it through twice already and was infatuated with Thomas Jefferson. Great! While this was not an intended learning outcome, it was exactly the kind of spark for which I am always hunting. Together we made a plan by which Tristan would do some additional independent research on Jefferson and present his learning in the form of a poster.

Things were going beautifully. Tristan was pleased and felt validated. I was thrilled with my young scholar and the promise he showed. Now, to fan the flame: I introduced Tristan to a system of notetaking using color-coded index cards. I taught him mini-lessons in paraphrasing, organization, and writing citations. After all, these were strategies that worked well for 8-year-old, Emma. But Tristan's enthusiasm dampened, imperceptibly at first. Within three days, I checked in with him to see his progress. His note cards were half-hearted, lackluster, covered in scribbles. Many were missing entirely. What happened? I

felt my frustration rising. I unfairly chastised Tristan for his lack of focus, his carelessness with his work. His eyes dropped and he promised to "do better." Later I came to realize my own unbelievable arrogance, ignorance, and authoritarian bullying. I had not held space open; I had smothered it with way too much fuel, no air. The next day I retracted some of my imposed rules and form for writing research papers (He's only in second grade, what was I thinking?). I tried to recreate space to allow Tristan to make his learning his own. But I wonder if it was too late, if the subject of Thomas Jefferson, and that spark of passion will ever glow quite as brightly. Even worse, what have I communicated to Tristan about the process of learning itself? I hope and trust that his resiliency will allow for new sparks to reveal themselves. I resolve to be much more careful and receptive to future glimmers.

At my school, I also facilitate a study group for adult learners. It is particularly in my work with adults that I notice my own annoying tendency to abandon all the principles of holistic education, which I try to apply within the elementary classroom. Recently the adult study group engaged in a discussion about foundational principles and historical antecedents within holistic education. I had so much information I wanted to share and I quickly found myself filling space and lecturing these learners. Predictably, several people pushed back, and I entered into a heated debate, where each person was engaged in verbal sparring, looking for weaknesses, defending against attacks. There was little listening, and no real dialogue.

I spent the two weeks, between the group's meetings, reflecting on my failure to facilitate any real learning, growth, or transformative dialogue. Slowly, I began to see my error. Once again, I was not creating space. I was filling it.

The following week the group met again this time I posed a simple question: "Can anyone share a personal or emotional experience from their own elementary school memories?" One person offered a moving vignette. And then the room was quickly flooded with stories. These were compelling narratives filled with wisdom and insight into common educational methods and their dramatic and powerful effects on learners. Sparks were clearly ignited as some people shared tearful remembrances, others offered hilarious anecdotes. People were speaking from their hearts and listening deeply to one another. The conversation was meaningful, relevant, and engaging. I simply held the space open for folks to share and reflect. I asked questions and suggested lenses through which we could view some of these narratives. The fire was carefully and continually rekindled; it didn't take much. Participants left this meeting clearly filled with new insights and new learning. They had connected deeply with their own past as well as one another. The contrast between this meeting and the previous one was striking.

Final Thoughts

Teaching is a humbling vocation. It has such tremendous potential, but also poses great dangers. We can easily misuse the awesome power and responsibilities with which we are entrusted. Students open their hearts to us and reveal themselves with all their insecurities and vulnerabilities. I invite you all to join me in kindling flames in your classrooms, in your homes and throughout your lives. Find sparks. Ignite flames. Hold spaces and nurture life. Let us treat all our learners and each other with gentleness, care , and respect. Each flame is precious, and as Judy Brown (2003, 89) says in her poem, "each flame knows just how it wants to burn."

References

Brown, J. 2003. Fire. In *Teaching with fire: Poetry that sustains the courage to teach*, edited by S. Intrator and M. Scribner. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, Great Britain: Penguin.

Froebel, F. 1889. *Autobiography of Friedrich Froebel*, translated by Emille Michaelis and H. Keatly Moore. Syracuse, NY: C. W. Bardeen.

Jones, L. V. 1999. *The assessment of student achievement: The hundred years war.* Conference Paper: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Digests No. ED430009).

Krishnamurti, J. 2001. *A flame of learning: Krishnamurti with teachers*. Netherlands: Mirananda.

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

Palmer, P. J. 1998. *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

Plutarch. 1928. On listening to lectures. *Plutarch: Moralia*, Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library.

Entering the World of Play

Joan Almon

Children are rapidly being deprived of the wonderful powers of play, but growing numbers of people are committed to its restoration.

I began to work with young children when I was in my twenties. I was untrained and inexperienced, but I was convinced of two things: that there was a spark of spirit in every child that needed to be kept alive and that there was a way for a classroom full of young children to play deeply with each other without sinking into chaos.

It took me some years to realize how closely related these two realities are — the spirit of the child and her capacity to play. Gradually I began to experience the hum that fills a room when children are engaged in deep-rooted play. At such moments, the thought would arise in me that this is as close to heaven as you are likely to get in this lifetime. The children seemed to have tapped into the same wellsprings of creativity that abounded when the world was young and in the process of being created.

Years later, I met Fred Donaldson, a unique individual who travels the world playing with children, adults, and animals, both wild and domestic. He speaks of play as being the activity where we forget we are different. We meld together. He experiences such play as love. I understand what he means.

It is hard to describe such deep forms of play. To enter the play arena is like opening a door into an internal space that we otherwise rarely enter. In this space, reality is different. Competition ceases to exist, as do thoughts of doing harm to another. This is a space of profound safety and goodwill where we grow and create. Deep play expands our horizons and our potential and capacity. It is an enormous gift that, sadly, is overlooked and undervalued. Like Esau in the Bible, we are willing to trade our birthright of deep play for the equivalent of a bowl of porridge — for the newest toy or gimmick on the market or the latest software or academic program for precociously teaching young children what they so easily can learn a bit later. We fail to understand the power of play and consistently sell it short.

Editor's Note: This article is adapted with permission from *A Place for Play: A Companion Volume to the Michigan Television film* Where Do the Children Play?, edited by E. Goodenough. Carmel, CA: National Institute for Play, 2008.

Joan Almon is director of the US Alliance for Childhood, an advocacy organization seeking to restore creative play and other healthy essentials to children's lives. She lectures and writes frequently on play and early childhood.

Play as a Healing Force

In the 1970s and 1980s when I did most of my teaching, nearly all children could play well, although some needed a bit of help. Today, I hear reports from teachers all over the country that children have forgotten how to play. They know how to play with computers but not with other children. They know how to play with high-tech toys but not how to create worlds with little more than sticks and stones and healthy make-believe forces. They know all sorts of facts but lack their own imagination. This is not true of all children, of course, but of enough to be a growing concern, for the absence of play in childhood is a huge loss for children. It not only hampers their normal development and learning, but it also deprives them of their chief means for healing themselves when something has gone wrong.

I think of Sammy who came into my mixed-age kindergarten when he was about four years old. His use of language was well developed, but his voice was that of a very young child, almost a baby. His play was also unusual. Every day he took seven or eight wooden stumps and built a small circular house for himself. He would climb inside and cover the house with a cloth. The house had no doors and no windows.

According to his mother, Sammy had begun to regress six months earlier, when his baby sister began to attract much more attention than he did. He developed baby speech and insisted on drinking from a bottle again.

When I looked into his play house, I saw that he was curled up in a tight little circle. He had made a womb for himself. I was concerned, but at the same time had a sense that he knew what he needed and that our task was to protect him so he could have this play experience. My assistant and I made sure no one disturbed his play. For about two months he played in the same way during play time. The rest of the morning he participated in our activities, and seemed quite fine, although his baby language continued.

Then, one day, he left a little opening in his house, not a very big one, but it proved important. A couple of days later, he made a bigger opening, and then he went out looking for a friend. He chose a lovely boy named Bill and brought him into his house. They played in it for a few days, but the house was rather cramped. Then it began to grow with more stumps, cloths, and other building materials. Over a few weeks, it grew big enough for other children to come inside and play. Gradually, Sammy's voice came back to normal. He had worked something through with that remarkable wisdom children have that guides their play and directs them toward self-healing.

Another child, Shannon, seemed high strung and fearful and always spoke with a thin, high-pitched voice that could easily get on my nerves. One day she approached me with a doll. She wanted me to wrap it in cloth, but the cloth she had brought me was about six feet long. I was about to send her back for a smaller cloth, but thought, "Perhaps she needs this." I took her doll and began to wrap it slowly, thinking that if she became restless I would speed up a bit. She watched with infinite patience and when the doll was fully swaddled she took it into her arms. After that, she was much more relaxed and her voice, too, came into a normal range. It was as if she felt bare in the world and needed to be wrapped in a warm and protective sheath.

How do children know what they need and act it out in play? A tremendous wisdom is at work when children play; a kind of genius guides them to play out the very scenes they most need for their growth and development. I saw it over and over, in small ways and in large. It is a tragedy that so many of today's children have forgotten how to play and cannot access this genius and wisdom within themselves. I know that many people rave about how brilliant today's children are; at a young age they can write and read and use a computer and other high-tech machines, but so often they cannot relate strongly with other human beings or enter the deeper spaces of play. To me, they seem impoverished in the areas that matter most.

The Erosion of Play

Sandra Hofferth (2008) of the University of Maryland has researched the declines in imaginative play and outdoor play. She points out that children are spending growing amounts of time playing on computers, and decreasing amounts of time in non-computer play — and they spend almost no time in outdoor play.

The lack of outdoor play was made visible to me on a beautiful Sunday in Chicago, when I was driving a British friend all over the city looking at Frank Lloyd Wright homes. It was the first warm day of spring. We covered miles of ground visiting poor, middle-class, and wealthy areas. That whole glorious day, we saw only two groups of children outside playing. Both were in low-income neighborhoods, and both groups were playing in dangerous spaces. The more affluent neighborhoods looked like ghost towns. Beautiful yards and safe streets beckoned to children but no children were to be seen. Where were they? Most likely inside in front of screens.

Electronic entertainment has changed children's lives radically over the last sixty years. But it is not the only hindrance to play. Another is that play has been eliminated from nearly all kindergartens in the United States, and it is now being removed from a growing number of preschools in favor of academic instruction. This early focus on academic instruction robs children of time to play, but it also turns their attention to a set of concerns and learning standards that do not coexist well with open-ended creative play. Deep, make-believe play requires a mood of freedom and self-direction. Continually being called out of those spaces to be instructed in letters and numbers weakens the child's capacity to enter into play. Soon, the children forget where the doorway is, or if they remember and try to reenter, they often are scolded for misbehavior, or even drugged to fit into a system that is sadly skewed against them.

After age six or seven children discover new doorways into chambers of learning. They *want* to be instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic and they learn it with gusto and relative ease, especially if they played well and learned the lessons of early childhood. Eliminating play in favor of very early academic instruction is such a loss, and so little is gained.

Restoring Play

Fortunately, when a child has forgotten how to play, he or she can be brought back to it. Such children need to see that adults value play, and they need some help in re-entering the space of play. They also need healthy nourishment for their imaginations in the form of story telling, including fairy tales and nature tales. Involving children with puppetry, the arts, physical movement, and real work, such as cooking, cleaning, woodworking, and gardening are great aids in restoring children's play. The relationship between hands-on work and imaginative play is one of the unexplored treasures of early childhood. Yet children have been brought back to creative play by first having them do real work.

I think of Andy, who seemed to have lost his ability to play. He mainly wandered around the kindergarten and lashed out at other children or knocked down their play areas. He was very bright and highly stimulated intellectually, but he did not know how to relate to other children or how to use his hands for purposeful activity. Every day I invited him to help me with some basic work. At first he always said, "I don't know how," an expression I almost never heard in the kindergarten. Most young children pick up activities quickly by imitating adults and feel tremendous confidence that they can do what we do. Andy was different. Although he had no disabilities, he needed enormous help to get his fingers to sew or dry dishes or use a hammer. He simply didn't know how and wasn't able to imitate my doing it, as other children could. With help, he gradually was able to do such tasks, and his ability to play also began to grow. Within six weeks, he was very popular with the other children, for he invented wonderful play scenarios and integrated six or seven children into them without being too bossy. He became a great player.

Within the Alliance for Childhood, we asked ourselves how we can bring children back into play. While some of us were experienced in doing this in preschool and kindergarten settings, we felt we needed help in bringing older children back to play. We turned to Penny Wilson, an experienced playworker from London's adventure playgrounds, for help. Her work in the United States during the past four years is already having a profound impact.

At the invitation of Joe Modrich, head of the parks department in Franklin Park, Illinois, near O'Hare Airport, Penny began training the park staff in the art of playwork, which is a profession in the United Kingdom and in Europe. Playworkers know how to encourage children to play without dominating their play. After Penny's first visit to Franklin Park, many of the staff were able to integrate play into their pro-

grams. The children learning figure skating were able to choreograph their own programs, the ice hockey team became more playful, and the summer camp became less "rules-based" and more spontaneous with play. Children loved it and the parents appreciated their children's enthusiasm.

One of my favorite stories came from the head of the afterschool program. She described how parents came after work looking tired and stressed and usually picked up their children quickly and hurried home. Once creative play became a regular part of her program, she found that the parents would watch the children play through a large window and she could see them visibly relax. In our stressful times, play is needed at all ages.

Playwork is beginning to catch on in the United States in parks, children's museums, and other venues. In a few years, we hope there will be enough interest to warrant full training for playworkers.

The Crisis in Preschools and Kindergartens

For thirty years, creative play has been driven slowly out of kindergartens and now it is vanishing from preschools as well. In most kindergartens, open-ended, child-initiated play has been replaced with adult-initiated group instruction. Yet a recent international study found that children showed much greater gains in cognitive ability and in language development at age seven if their preschools encouraged child-initiated learning rather than instruction by a teacher (High Scope 2006).

In California and other states, a growing number of kindergartens are resorting to scripted teaching for instructing young children in literacy and numeracy. Within a full-day kindergarten scripted lessons are given for two to three hours each day, and teachers are expected to follow the script exactly. Inspectors enter the room to check on them and they are marked down if they are not following the scripted text. Some programs even tell the teachers which questions to expect for each lesson and how to answer them. During the time for scripted lessons nothing is left to the spontaneous or creative interaction between child and teacher. This approach is now gaining ground in preschools (Alliance for Childhood 2009).

From a developmental perspective, a tragic disconnect exists between such methods and the inherent ways that children learn through play and imitation. One educator recently said to me, "People don't believe in child development anymore."

The disconnect between children's development and current practices is so great that the Alliance for Childhood issued a "Call to Action on the Education of Young Children" (2005). It is signed by over 150 leading educators and health professionals. The Call to Action states:

> We are deeply concerned that current trends in early education, fueled by political pressure, are leading to an emphasis on unproven methods of academic instruction and unreliable standardized testing that can undermine learning and damage young children's healthy development.

For thirty years, we have watched a steady rise in academic pressure on young children and a steady decline in children's health and well-being. I think the two are closely related. Changing the patterns of early education in this country will not be easy, nor will restoring play throughout childhood, but I am encouraged by renewed interest in play and by the report of the American Academy of Pediatrics (2007) encouraging parents to let their children play.

The pathway toward meaningful change is usually uphill and rocky, often with steep abysses on either side. But growing numbers of parents, educators, health professionals, policy makers, and others recognize the problem and want to restore play to childhood. If we work together creatively, we should be able to find our way up that rocky path and reopen the doors to play.

References

Alliance for Childhood. 2005. A *call to action on the education of young children*. <www.allianceforchildhood.org/pdf_files/call_action_education.pdf>.

Alliance for Childhood. 2009. *Crisis in the kindergarten.* <www.allianceforchildhood.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics. 2007, January. The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. *Pediatrics* 119 (1), 182-191. Available online at <www.aap.org/pressroom/play-public.htm>.

High Scope. 2006. Preschool experience in 10 countries: Cognitive and language performance at age 7. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 21 (3): 313-331.

Hofferth, S.L. 2008. American children's outdoor and indoor leisure time. In *A place for play: A companion volume to the Michigan Television film, Where do the children play*, edited by E. Goodenough. Carmel, CA: National Institute for Play.

Collecting Ovoids

Polly Devlin

Faced with hens, we all become children. That is their magic. Nothing brings you closer to the reality of things than a hen and an egg in a nest (including the ugly peck she may give when you slip a greedy hand under that warm body to get at the treasure). It is one of the joys of my life that even the most sophisticated streetwise child — who often has absolutely no idea that eggs come from a living creature — beams with a kind of angelic pleasure when he or she finds an egg in the nest; and any adult watching is suffused with pleasure too. Something vivid and immediate has happened, some fundamental yearning has been stilled. It harks back to some atavistic urge, to the egg as a token of mythology. You don't have to explain why a child loves to find it, or why we look at it. The ovoid, so shapely, so contained, so secretly full of life, is dreamed about the world over, was dreamed about thousands of years ago, and I hope will be dreamed about thousands of years hence.

Polly Devlin, whose essay "Meadows" also appears in this issue, was named an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) in 1993 for services to literature.

This piece is reprinted with permission from *A Place for Play: A Companion Volume to the Michigan Television Film,* Where Do the Children Play?, edited by Elizabeth Goodenough (Carmel, CA: National Institute for Play, 2008).

Teach the Children Well

Compassion for Animals Displayed in the Classroom

Marc Bekoff

Let's recognize and nurture children's natural sensitivity to animals, people, and environments.

Children are inherently and intuitively curious naturalists. They're sponges for knowledge, absorbing, retaining, and using new information at astounding rates. We all know this, but often we forget, so we overlook their promise as future ambassadors for other animals, nature, and ourselves. Some are future leaders on whose spirit and good will many of us will depend. They will be other animals' and our voices, indeed, voices of the universe. So it makes good sense to teach children well, to be role models, to infuse their education with kindness and compassion so that their decisions are founded on a deeply rooted, automatic reflex-like caring ethic. If we don't, they, we, other animals, human communities, and environments will suffer.

Recently, I've been fortunate to teach and have mutually beneficial discussions with some fourth-graders at Foothills Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado. We considered such topics as animal behavior, ecology, conservation biology, and the nature of human-animal interactions. I was astounded by the level of discussion. The class centered on the guiding principles of Jane Goodall's worldwide Roots & Shoots program, whose basic tenets are that every individual is important and every individual makes a difference. The program is activity oriented and members partake in projects that have three components: care and concern for animals, human communities, and the places in which we all live together.

All the students had actively been engaged in projects that fulfilled all three components. They had participated in, or suggested for future involvement, such activities as recycling, being responsible for companion animals, reducing driving, developing

Marc Bekoff is author of many books, including *The Ten Trusts* (with Jane Goodall), *Animals at Play: Rules of the Game*, and *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (with Jessica Pierce). His homepage is <http://literati.net/Bekoff>. With Goodall, Bekoff founded Ethologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

rehabilitation centers for animals, helping injured animals, getting companion animals from humane shelters, boycotting pet stores, tagging animals so if they get lost people would know who they are, visiting senior citizen centers and homeless shelters, punishing litterbugs, and punishing people who harmed animals. We discussed how easy it is to do things that both make a difference and develop a compassionate and respectful attitude towards animals, people, and environments. One student noted that by walking the companion dog who lived with his elderly neighbor and cleaning up after the dog, he performed activities that satisfied all three components.

Some students had already developed very sophisticated attitudes about human–animal interactions. One thought experiment in which we engaged is called "The Dog in the Lifeboat." Basically, there are three humans and one dog in a lifeboat. One of the four has to be thrown overboard because the boat can't hold all of them. Generally, when this situation is discussed, most people reluctantly agree that, all other things being equal, the dog has to go. One can also introduce variations on the theme. For example, perhaps two of the humans are healthy youngsters and one is an elderly person who is blind, deaf, paralyzed, without any family or friends, and likely to die within a week. The dog is a healthy puppy. The students admitted this was a very difficult situation and that maybe, just maybe, the elderly human might be sacrificed because he had already lived a full life, wouldn't be missed, and had little future. Indeed, this is very sophisticated thinking that perhaps the elderly person had less to lose than either of the other humans or the dog. Let me stress that all students agreed that this line of thinking was not meant to devalue the elderly human. And, in the end, the students and most people reluctantly conclude that regardless of the humans' ages or other characteristics, the dog has to go.

The level of discussion overwhelmed me. Students raised considerations of quality of life, longevity, value of life, and losses to surviving family and friends. But what really amazed and pleased me was that before we ever got to discuss alternatives, all students wanted to work it out so that no one had to be thrown overboard. Why did any individual have to be thrown over, they asked? Let's not do it. When I said that the thought experiment required that at least one individual had to be tossed, they said this wasn't acceptable! I sat there smiling and thinking, now these are the kinds of people with whom I'd feel comfortable placing my future. Some ideas about how all individuals could be saved included having the dog swim along the side of the boat and feeding her, having them all switch off swimming, taking off shoes and throwing overboard all things that weren't needed to reduce weight and bulk, and cutting the boat in two and making two rafts. All students thought that even if the dog had to go, she would have a better chance of living because more could be done by the humans to save the dog than vice versa. Very sophisticated reasoning, indeed. I've discussed this example many times and never before has a group unanimously decided that everyone must be saved.

I also was thrilled by the commitment of the teachers I met. They were dedicated souls, and we should all be grateful that such priceless beings are responsible for educating future adults on whom we'll be dependent.

The bottom line is pretty simple: Teach the children well, treat the teachers well, and treasure all. Nurture and provide the seeds of compassion, empathy, and love with all the nutrients they need to develop deep respect for, and kinship with, the universe. All people, other animals, human communities, and environments now and in the future will benefit greatly by developing and maintaining heart-felt compassion that is as reflexive as breathing. Compassion begets compassion. There's no doubt about it.

The Bicycle and the Broken World

Jerry Herron

A bicycle provides children with a sense of liberation. It can also take one into places that aren't so comfortable.

First we walked. And then we all rode bicycles, across the small West Texas town where I grew up. It was 1956. I was seven years old. My first bicycle was a maroon Schwinn with a two-speed hub; it had cream-colored trim, and fat white sidewalls. We rode to the Carnegie Public Library, with its dark woodwork, stuffed birds, and shaded reading lamps. The librarians — all of them old, or looking that way to a kid — were quick to admonish any miscreant that dared raise his voice above a whisper. My image of the library has turned to cliché, but that's how it really was once.

We rode to music lessons, my friends and I. We all took lessons from the same teacher, old Judge Abbott's daughter, a "maiden lady," who taught piano, imperiously, into old age. We rode to school. It was up to us to choose the route. Sometimes we'd ride past "Aunt" Jane's house. She was crazy, as every kid knew. She'd been an artist, supposedly. "Come sit for me, children," she'd call out from behind her overgrown hedge. "Come sit." Jane always wore a housecoat, her hair in wild disarray. She didn't seem dangerous, but the spectacle of an adult so completely disorganized was enough to make us wary.

Those streets — already old then, fifty years ago — were my cabinet of wonders: doddering Buster Arnold, who came back to his mother's house from the First World War, he'd taken the gas and was never the same; Sally Bell, who smoked Lucky Strikes and told me stories about my parents as children; the miniature Miss Gage, who'd give us dimes; and Annalene, the mother of a school friend, who never took down her Christmas tree, but just let it sit, in the parlor, the fallen needles in a heap underneath, the skeletal branches still decked with tinsel and lights.

Surely the primary wonder is not just that it was safe to walk or ride through that world. It's that there was somewhere real to get to once we did. We had a

Jerry Herron is Professor of English and American Studies and Dean of the Irvin D. Reid Honors College at Wayne State University in Detroit. His books include *Universities and the Myth of Cultural Decline* and *AfterCulture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History*. He is currently finishing a book about Americans' sense of the past.

purchase, even as kids, on the places grown-ups went — the store, the library, the whole of "downtown." We could get there on our own. This was not a suburban theme park invented by adults, fearful for their children's safety, to give kids the impression of an accessible world, when all the while we know — parents and kids alike — that such a place doesn't really exist, so that the more we try to fake it, the more fake it all becomes. It was not like that at all.

*****

The most consequential bicycle ride of my young life took place on a summer afternoon when I was nine. My best friend, John, and I decided to ride to the Metro Theater. The place was "clear across town," as my mother pointed out. I assumed the sharing of this needless bit of geography, which all of us already knew, was preamble to her refusing to let us go. But for whatever reason, she said OK. I remember feeling just the least bit anxious about taking advantage of this unexpected permission.

The ride couldn't have been more than twenty blocks, John on his green, English three-speed, me on my balloon-tire Schwinn. But distance wasn't the half of it; we were headed for a place we'd never been on our own. We rode east along First Street, parallel to the tracks, past the appliance store that had once been the site of my grandfather's Buick dealership, back when my family had a lot more money. We rode past stores in the oldest part of town where I went with my dad on occasion. There were feed stores and barbershops, with dark back rooms. You could hear the clicking of dominos and the men's laughter and smell their cigarette smoke. They told obscure jokes I didn't understand, although I knew my father could give as good as he got in places like this. That was among the secrets I was forbidden to tell my mother.

The Metro Theater was not a first-run house; those were all downtown, where we lived. No, the Metro was a vaguely seedy place where questionable adults passed the afternoon watching second-run matinees. Its contraband squalor was in the smells, the sticky cement floor. The movie itself seemed an afterthought. It was being able to get ourselves here. And back. Where boys like us clearly had no business. That's what counted.

"Ma'am, would you please watch those bikes for us?" The woman in the ticket booth said she would. (I'd never seen a bike lock, and probably didn't know they existed.) What I remember is wanting the film — whatever it was — to be over, so we could get back on our bikes and ride home. Not because I was afraid to be here, or worried that the bikes wouldn't be safe. (They were, of course.) But I wanted to have reached the point when I'd already have taken this ride, so I could contemplate it after the fact, when its value would be clear.

*****

When you ride a bike as an adult, it's like riding backwards in time. Your body never forgets; the past returns. Nowhere else is an adult so immediately in touch with the experience of being a child — with childhood's sense of liberation, like my ride to the Metro. You also get in touch with childhood's vulnerability to the world — because a bike can carry you further and faster than you can comprehend, or comprehend the dangers of, especially if you've never been to a place before.

When, a few years ago, I bought a bicycle and began to ride again, I rode my bike across the world, and it broke — the world I mean. I saw things up close and was exposed to all the forgetting the city has come to stand for: the abandoned streets, eviscerated houses, derelict cars, and wasted buildings. And I became vulnerable to people who have to live in these places and the things they'd call out — not every time, but often enough. Not because they knew who I was, but because they didn't care. Never on foot, but when I got up on that bicycle seat, I became a target. To be run off the road, to be shot at. (OK, it was only once, and with a pellet gun, I'm sure it was a pellet gun. That's what I told my wife anyhow.) I came up against the loss of all that was once present, and the permissions given in advance that this is somehow to be expected, that it doesn't matter. But it does, and that's the trouble a bicycle can get you into. Who would wish it otherwise?

Meadows

Polly Devlin

Except for isolated preservation efforts, the old meadows of the Irish and English countryside are gone forever, and most children will never know their heavenly beauty.

Polly Devlin is a writer, broadcaster, filmmaker, art critic, and conservationist. Her first book *All of Us There* is now a Virago Modern Classic. In 1993 she received an OBE for services to literature. Her most recent book, *A Year in the Life of an English Meadow* (with Andy Garnett), was published in 2007.

This is a story of such sadness that it hardly bears writing. It is also perhaps a hopeful story, though rather pathetic in its hopefulness.

When I was a child in Ireland we lived rather like I imagine the Amish do now in their enclaves in the USA. We had no telephone, no electricity, no modern contrivances; and the community was so close-knit and so remote that a stranger was a phenomenon, though always made welcome. There were no tractors, nor cars, and the air was heavy with silence and the smell of the land, grass, flowers, leaves, dampness, and, at certain seasons, the strange, acid smell of rotting flax shimmering like a vapor over the land.

All the work on our farm was done by men and horses, two huge Clydesdales, Nellie and the inaptly name gelding — Dick — who still had enough race memory in his bloodstream to fuel an occasional sudden eruption from the shafts of the haylifter towards some sexual dream. I remember him careering across the meadow, like something out of a rural Ben Hur with Tommy Coyle as Charlton Heston at the reins, shouting and imploring the Holy Ghost to prevent all being couped into the kesh. The keshes — wide drainage ditches around the meadows — were extravagantly rich in plant and wet life, tranquil miniature canals.

Nellie the mare was colossal in her harness, her rump the most solidly circular object I ever saw, the living definition of a sphere, the skin stretched in a great taut arc over curving compacted muscle and bone and flesh, moving in a steady, intimate rhythm that was hypnotic to watch as we leaned against the stack of hay on the haylifter. The haystack dripped over the edges like the season's essence solidified into summer icicles. And that hay. That hay. That hay against which we lolled so nonchalantly was, if we had but known it, like fairy gold vanishing at the touch and was being brought from meadows that were paradises; and, like Paradise, they are lost. In

later years it was only when I thought of those meadows that I ever wanted to cry, Oh call back yesterday, bid time return. But to us of course, they were just old fields. Ireland was covered with them. So was England. Ornery old pastures and swards and meadows. They were national treasures, and, like treasure, they now lie buried, gone forever, and you could take any map of England or Ireland and cover it with great black Xs to mark the spot but they would be crosses marking the graveyard of the pastures.

When we ran through our meadows there arose from the grasses such a humming and a fluttering as made the eyes and ears dance in trying to accommodate it. You had to watch where you put your feet. Corncrakes, mice, hares, rabbits, and birds scuttered and scolded away from you. Butterflies and insects of every kind rose in a cloud. You didn't know where to look, but then you weren't so hungry to look since such things were common, unregarded, everyday affairs, immemorial parts of life.

That hay we leaned against and ran among was made up of a litany of grasses: Creeping Bent; Crested Dog's Tail; Sweet Vernal Grasses; Timothy; Reedgrass; Field Horsetail; Fleabane; Meadow Vetchling; Devil's Bit Scabious; Sneezewort; Bird's Foot Trefoil; Hairy Sedge; Dyers Greenweed; Red Clover; White Clover; Pepper Saxifrage; Tormentil; Cocksfoot; Creeping Thistle; Dwarf Thistle; Spear Thistle; Ribwort Plantain; Betony; Self Heal; Black Knapweed; and Ox-Eye Daisy. On and on, an astonishing cascade of words in a single field.

But that litany has turned into elegy, and in the rehearsal of it on paper I have jumped back thirty years and I am standing in my own meadow in Somerset, England, in a field of such beauty that people fall silent when they see it. Very few children of today will ever even begin to know what England once looked like.

Just as those we live with (including ourselves) grow old so imperceptibly that we hardly notice a change until suddenly we are confronted with an image from our own past and thus are forced towards witness, so the older men and women who walk across this meadow are the most appalled at the knowledge of what has gone; for they are suddenly face to face with the countryside of their youth and they realize they had forgotten it or not realized or refused to recognize its terrible destruction and disintegration.

They wonder how such devastation could have happened in front of their very eyes; and after the wonder comes angry blame; blame to be laid at the door of the vandals who are the majority of our farmers, and whom over the years we have paid to destroy the living land.

Farmers say, over and over they say, their little red eyes bulging as they stand accused, as soldiers say when viewing their own senseless butchery, "We were asked to do it, we were encouraged to do it, we were under orders to do it."

Fiddlesticks. They were paid to do it, and the money came from you and me. Greed did the rest. Field after field, pasture after pasture, ploughed up and destroyed. In 1980 a survey of 61 of Oxfordshire's 249 remaining flood meadows revealed that one-fifth had been destroyed in just two years. Drained and ploughed up to produce some more silage to produce more grey milk to be poured away or made into butter to rot in storage, or for oil seed.

In Somerset today the Nature Conservancy Council knows of only five real pastures. In Avon 50% of its original unique meadows were destroyed between 1970 and 1980. But the powers that be, and the farmers and the press and the politicians, don't call them original or uniquely beautiful; they call them "unimproved." Newspeak at its best. Or worst. And the process continues; 67% of Devon's grassland has been lost in twenty years, never mind wetlands and hedgerows and woodland and flight ponds.

And then there is the contingent loss of so much else. The corncrake is extinct in Ireland. One hardly ever hears a cuckoo now. Butterflies are disappearing. For centuries the Adonis Blue — called Adonis because of its heavenly beauty — enraptured observers; it fluttered into extinction in the year 2000. In 1979 the last of the Large Blues laid a few eggs. They were all sterile. It became extinct, this helplessly beautiful inhabitant, largely because of the plowing up of old grassland. Yet far from being curbed in their heedlessness, farmers are still treated as though they were special and tender creatures to whom we all owe a debt. They often did not need planning permission for the hideous buildings with which they litter the landscape. They get concessions on their

rates and have such a powerful lobby in Parliament and such good PR that they still shamelessly speak of themselves as guardians of the countryside. And how they yelp and beat their breasts about articles like this and tell writers and environmentalists that they should concentrate on the other enemies of the countryside. After years of living in the country, listening to farmers, observing them, and reading their horrible journals, I think there are no greater enemies. In England, since 1976 (and without having statistics for the last few years) runoff from farms in the west and northwest with sheep-dip chemicals, silage, and factory farm wastes polluted 1300 kilometers of previously unpolluted rivers. Over 1034 kilometers of rivers are grossly polluted, and 2200 kilometers of "poor" rivers remain and continue each year to get dirtier.

One pollutant coming through your tap is particularly cheering to read about. It comes in the form of nitrates, 60% of which comes from the run-off of agricultural fertilizer. Nitrate runoff takes twenty to thirty years to get into our water, so we still have as yet hardly had to deal with the effects of the enormous increase in fertilizers on farms. I mention all this in connection with my rescue of the field because we can see (when we look with attention) the dreadful ravages of the countryside. But it is not so easy to perceive an absence, such as that of a beautiful butterfly.

We own a pasture because we paid a farmer more than the going price in order to stop him from improving it, i.e. ruining it forever. The farm manure we use on it has to be kept at the side of the field for a year so the toxins in it will lose their toxicity. God alone knows what effect the flesh of the beasts from which this potentially poisonous manure has come has had on those who ate it within days of its slaughter if a dose of its manure will ruin a field even six months later.

Our field lives like a dream of beauty, in its barren surroundings of ryegrass and silage grass, like a multicolored medieval tapestry thrown over a bright green plastic groundsheet. It is striped, flecked, spangled, and eyed like a peacock. It is every color under the sun, a mille-fleur revelation which makes one understand that the great tapestries of the Middle Ages, the lady with the unicorn, were not an artist's dazzling inspiration of the celestial fields but an accurate representation of what he saw around him; and of what four hundred years later I also saw in my childhood, born as I was in the tail end of a dispensation. But in the intervening years I forgot or had to forget or, like most of us, ceased to believe in what I had seen in those enchanted days in the meadow because it seemed to cease to exist.

The tragedy is that for most of our children the only time they will see such a field is when they come to the living museum that I and the likes of me guard in secret and count ourselves blessed to be able to do so.

Earthworks Urban Farm

Harmony Between Neighbor and Nature

Marcia Lee

A Detroit program enables young people to grow fresh vegetables and connect with the land.

Earthworks Urban Farm is a program of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and is located on the east side of Detroit. The Capuchin Order strives for justice, peace, and ecology by "transforming the world through reverence." Our mission at Earthworks is to "create a just, beautiful food system through education, inspiration, and neighborhood development." We believe that everyone deserves to have access to fresh, nutritious food and a community that supports its people. In the city of Detroit, fresh vegetables are difficult to find and are often overpriced. Grocery stores will not relocate to the inner city because they do not believe that it is a good investment. Due to a lack of efficient public transportation, shopping at suburban markets is not an option for many Detroiters. Our programs aim to alleviate short-term nutrition problems as well as solve long-term systemic issues through education and the empowerment of Soup Kitchen guests and Detroit citizens. We want to help them learn to grow their own food and take ownership of their food systems.

Earthworks was started in 2000 by Brother Rick Samyn, who wanted the soup kitchen guests and employees to become more connected with the origins of their food. He began a small garden by the side of the soup kitchen's parking lot. This garden has since expanded to nearly an acre and a half. In 2008, it produced over 6,000 pounds of food. All the vegetables are grown without pesticides and with natural fertilizer. The bulk of the produce goes directly into meals at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

Earthworks emphasizes education and investment. We have an apiary that includes over thirty hives. The hives serve as an educational tool as well as a source of honey and beeswax, which we make into handbalm, and the gardens provide berries for

Marcia Lee has served as a full-time volunteer at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, where she has coordinated the volunteers for the Earthworks program. She has published numerous articles on food and community transformations.

jam. Through these products we reach out to people of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

We also create partnerships with many organizations in Detroit. For example, through our partnership with the Garden Resource Program, we grow and distribute thousands of seedlings to citizens and communities in Detroit so they can grow their own gardens. We help people invest in their own health and the health of the city.

Earthworks is committed to serving young people. The youth programs, Growing Healthy Kids and Youth Farm Stand, meet for two hours once a week. These programs make a long-term investment by nurturing youth and encouraging them to enjoy being in open space. We hope they will gain from their experiences and live a healthier life.

Growing Healthy Kids gives kids between the ages of 5 and 10 an opportunity to learn how to cook healthy foods and realize their connection with the land. The kids are able to work in their own "Kids' Garden" and play in a natural setting. As this program evolved, through the assistance of a grant, we began a Youth Farm Stand program for older youngsters, ages of 11 to 16. This program allows young people to continue their work with us and develop stronger leadership roles. They are learning entrepreneurial skills and have become more involved in the whole process of food production.

Because education is so important to us, the guests and visitors and volunteers in our soup kitchen and our gardens have opportunities to learn a great deal about safe foods and healthy living. We also host educational gardening lessons and monthly discussions related to food justice.

Through their experiences with Earthworks, volunteers exercise their bodies, minds, and spirits in an urban outdoor setting. None of our work would be possible without their contributions. If you are interested in learning more about Earthworks or donating time and other resources, please contact the Earthworks staff at <earthworks@cskdetroit.org>, call 313-579-2100 ext. 204, or visit <www.cskdetroit.org/earthworks>.

The Self-Organizing Child – Part II

Chris Mercogliano

It's time to shed the old mechanistic views of children. We need to see them as creative beings whose behavior is frequently novel and unpredictable.

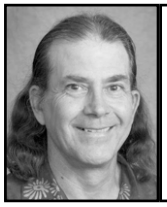
In 2005, I wrote a brief article titled "The Self-Organizing Child" (Mercogliano 2005), which explored the power of scientific paradigms — from the Greek and Latin words for pattern — to shape our perceptions of ourselves and the world around us. My particular focus was how the dominant pattern of our era, which is largely based on the discoveries of Isaac Newton and therefore known as the "Newtonian paradigm," has provided the theoretical foundation for the misguided educational practices of the overwhelming majority of our schools.

Newton conceived of the universe as essentially a giant machine controlled by a handful of forces. He declared his formulations to be the "laws of nature," which exist as universal absolutes and impose a logical order and structure on all that exists (Nadeau & Kafatos 1999, 95-96).

Today's conventional model of education is quintessentially Newtonian. It regards children as though they are disembodied brains in need of programming, an idea epitomized in the May 1998 *Newsweek* cover story entitled "How to Build a Better Boy," and it presumes the existence of a set of immutable "laws of learning" that prescribes the methods and means by which all children should be educated. Then it proceeds to slice up the knowledge humans have accumulated thus far into bite-size bits, insisting that every child consume an equal amount. Such an approach is steeped in the notion that learning is a logical, predictable process that depends upon structures and forces outside of the learner, and that every outcome must be measured and compared to some mathematical norm.

In my earlier essay I went on to describe an entirely new paradigm that is gradually coalescing as scientists delve more deeply into the cellular and subatomic realms that were invisible to Newton and his contemporaries. There is as yet no agreed upon name for the new paradigm because it is still in its

Note: The author's initial essay on this topic is available on the web at <https://great-ideas.org/Child.pdf>.



Chris Mercogliano, who directed and taught at the Albany Free School for 35 years, is the Associate Editor of *Encounter*. Chris's latest book is *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (Beacon Press, 2007).

formative stages, but systems theory, superstring theory, chaos theory, complexity theory, and self-organization are some of the current candidates.

My earlier efforts to explain the basic principles of the new paradigm, and more importantly its relevance to a better understanding of how children learn and develop, were superficial because I had just begun to scratch the surface of the exciting discoveries in biology, psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary theory that are coming together to reveal a universe quite different from the mechanical, predetermined one that Newton envisioned. My purpose in the present essay is to describe the new paradigm in greater detail, and then to demonstrate how radically different learning and development look when viewed through a post-Newtonian lens. The implications for education, as I think you will see, are enormous.

Closed and Open Systems

The new paradigm's basic conception of reality is virtually the polar opposite of Newton's. A major reason for the difference is that the Newtonian version is based on the study of what scientists today call "closed systems." A closed system — the solar system provided Newton with his template — is self-contained and isolated from its environment. Its behavior is quite machine-like, in that its operation is regular and predictable and can be explained in terms of a series of neatly linked causes and effects. Also like machines, closed systems have tightly organized structures which keep them in a routine state of equilibrium that involves a continual loss of energy and an eventual wearing down to nothing.

Open systems, on the other hand, are constantly sharing energy and information with the environment, meaning that children and all other living organisms are by definition open systems because their survival depends on such an exchange. The ongoing interaction with their surroundings keeps them in a continual state of flux and their more flexible structure allows them to move fluidly from orderly equilibrium states to disorderly, nonequilibrium ones. This characteristic leads to perhaps the most fundamental distinction between closed and open systems: whereas the behavior of a closed system is, for all intents and purposes, controlled by immutable forces — gravity, velocity, and momentum govern the motion of the planets — living systems possess the capacity to spontaneously organize in novel ways.

A perfect example is the cell. Every cell's DNA produces RNA, which regulates the production of the enzymes that enter the cell nucleus and repair damaged DNA and keep the cell healthy. There are myriad other self-regulating loops as well, and even the cell membrane, which keeps the cell intact but is also semi-permeable, participates in the system by using special filters to select what enters the cell as food and leaves as waste (Capra 1996, 97).

Another core difference between the two types of systems is that the overall behavior of closed systems tends not to vary all that much, while living systems are changing all the time. It is the exploration of the processes by which they change that is leading to the emergence of the new paradigm because it is precisely here that the Newtonian, closed-system framework falls short as a rationale for life's incredible complexity and diversity. According to it, for instance, an organism's genetic endowment controls its developmental unfolding. However, argues Nobel Prize-winning biologist Gerald Edelman (2004, 29-34), it is mathematically impossible for the genetic code to be the sole explanation. Considering that humans start out as a single cell containing 10^5 genes and will ultimately be comprised of 10^{11} cells with over 200 different tissue types, 10^9 physiological control loops, and 10^{15} synapses in the brain, there is no way that our DNA can contain enough instructional information to generate and coordinate patterns of complexity on such a monumental scale.

Yes, says Edelman, our genes influence development by establishing certain guidelines, but they don't control the process in the pre-designed way that a Newtonian perspective would suggest. For example, genes determine the overall number and shape of the neurons in our brains, but the branching out of axons and dendrites to form the neural matrix that supports thinking, learning, and feeling depends heavily upon the input from our experience, which gradually etches the nervous system as our lives unfold.

Similarly, complexity theorist Stuart Kaufman (1995, 25) and others have called into question Darwin's Newtonian declaration that the incredible diversifica-

tion of life on earth is caused solely by random mutation and natural selection. Darwin's image of evolution as the gradual accumulation of useful variations, they argue, can't possibly account for the 100 million different species that have come to populate the planet. There simply has to be more to the story.

Self-Organization

If the Newtonian picture of invariant forces and laws doesn't adequately explain the development and adaptation of living organisms, then what does? The consensus answer among new paradigm-inspired researchers is, in the words of biologist Humberto Maturana (1980, 79), that all living systems are "autopoietic." Autopoietic comes from the Greek word for "self-making" and refers to the unique ability of living systems to maintain themselves by means of their own creativity. Or put differently, living systems are autopoietic because, through internal interactions among their component parts and external transactions with the environment, they generate their own order and organization. It also means that when changes are necessary in order for an organism to adapt successfully to shifting conditions, those changes aren't strictly caused by outside forces. Instead, living systems undergo an internal process known as "self-organization."

Self-organization refers to the spontaneous emergence of new structures and new forms of behavior in open systems (Capra 1996, 85). This is where the above-mentioned fluid structure of open systems that allows them to enter into states of significant disequilibrium comes into play, because only under conditions of "chaos" are living organisms able to mobilize the necessary energy and variability to develop and evolve (Prigogine 1984, xv).

Here we have the enormous contribution of chaos theory to the new paradigm, in which the word *chaos* takes on a meaning somewhat different from the common parlance notion of randomness and total confusion. Scientists chose the term because, particularly during times of transition, the behavior of open systems can give every semblance of being random and disordered. However, if an observer looks more closely and isn't wearing Newtonian blinders, he or she will begin to detect an underlying pattern that is actually quite orderly.

Consider, for example, the analogy of a throng of commuters scurrying through Grand Central Station at rush hour. At first glance it may appear as though people are running every which way without reason — in other words, chaos. But if you watch a little longer and zoom in on the movements of the individuals comprising the crowd, it becomes clear that just about everyone knows exactly where they are going. Moreover, their movements are coordinated and cooperative. Contrast this scene with a packed theater in which someone has just shouted "FIRE!" and the terrified audience is madly stampeding toward the exits. Mass hysteria is entirely random.

Paula Underwood Spencer's intention as a teacher was always to look at each of her students with new eyes, by which she meant allowing herself to see her kids as they are in the present moment and not as they were yesterday or the day before.

Another interesting illustration of a self-organizing process is termite nest construction. When termites in need of a new nest start gathering in sufficient numbers, individual termites spontaneously undergo certain chemical and behavioral changes. First they release a chemical that attracts still more termites, and then they randomly begin dropping bits of earth within a localized area. As more and more individuals join in on the activity, the earth begins to pile up into the pillars that will support the nest, and eventually the nest itself. The key here is that the termites don't build the nest according to an orderly plan that is steered from the outside. Instead, in the language of the new paradigm, the nest "emerges" out of the termites' chaotic behavior, which is a cooperative, intelligent response to the need for shelter. The sense of purpose and direction

comes from within the termites, not from without (Briggs & Peat 1999, 60).

Again, the bottom line difference is that according to the new paradigm, change doesn't happen *to* the organism. Rather, all organisms, from microbes to human beings, actively seek out and orchestrate their own changes, primarily through trial and error problem solving and without being guided by some already determined plan of action. There are no laws of nature with a life of their own, as Newton imagined; and furthermore, the whole is always more than the sum of its parts, because via the process of self-organization the parts of any living system are continually combining in original ways.

Or to quote microbiologist Lynn Margulis (1989):

> When scientists tell us that life adapts to an essentially passive environment of chemistry, physics, and rocks, they perpetuate a severely distorted view. Life actually makes and changes the environment to which it adapts. Then that "environment" feeds back on the life that is changing and acting and growing in it. There are constant cyclical interactions.

Children

Perhaps you are starting to see what inspired me to explore the new paradigm in greater depth. Here, I envisioned, lies the potential for the theoretical validation of what thirty-five years spent in a freedom-based school with no preset curriculum and a minimum of external structure and routine taught me about the extraordinary extent to which learning is a self-determined and self-organizing process, and also to which children, given the chance to be and think for themselves, possess an innate sense of direction that leads them to the people and experiences they need to hone their skills and deepen their understanding of the world.

As a teacher I witnessed children's natural wisdom — their ability to think independently, critically, and creatively, to overcome obstacles, and to forge relationships — on a daily basis. Such observations have received abundant confirmation in the writings of iconic educators like Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey. However, their arguments for entrusting kids with their own learning were largely philosophical and continue to be dismissed by the mainstream as romantic or naïve. The possibility of a hard scientific foundation for an open-ended approach to education struck me as tantalizing indeed.

And so I have spent the past two years pouring over the latest research in psychology, biology, and neuroscience in search of the developmental and educational implications of the new paradigm. Serendipitously, it wasn't until I had done enough independent searching to be sure I was onto something that I discovered the work of two pioneering developmental psychologists at the University of Indiana. In the 1980s, Esther Thelen and her assistant Linda B. Smith launched a groundbreaking project to reexamine many of the old-paradigm assumptions about child development. Their book, *A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition and Action* (1994), lays out a thorough, carefully constructed model of child development entirely based on new paradigm principles and represents a radical departure from a conventionally accepted version that remains steadfastly Newtonian.

Thelen — who died of cancer three years ago at the height of her brilliant career — started out as a zoologist and biologist, and as a result her orientation was always pointed toward the common factors underlying the development of every living organism. Her bottom line was this: The primary thrust of all development is the generation of novel structure and behavior. At what she calls "low magnification," development appears to unfold in a lawful, predictable, clock-like — Newtonian — manner that is common to whole classifications and species of organisms. However, when you zoom in on individual aspects of development the old "laws" no longer seem to apply (Thelen & Smith 1994, xvii).

Walking

Take infant motor development, for instance, which is where Thelen decided to begin testing her ideas because it is much more visible and concrete than the emotional or cognitive domains. She set her sights first on deconstructing the mechanical, old-paradigm notion that walking is a "hard-wired" behavior that progresses methodically and automatically as the brain gradually assumes control over the body's neuromuscular system. The traditional explanation identifies four distinctive milestones in learn-

ing to walk: the stepping movements that newborns engage in when someone holds them upright and supports their weight; the somewhat mysterious "disappearance" of these movements at 2 months; their "reappearance" at approximately 6 months when babies are able to bear their own weight; and the first independent steps at around a year. The temporary cessation of the step-like movements has always been a thorn in the side of developmental theorists because it violates the old-paradigm assumption that development as a whole is an orderly, sequential progression through increasingly more functional behaviors, driven by a grand plan and scheduled by a grand timekeeper.

Why then, asked Thelen, does infants' initial stepping appear to disappear? The conventional rationale is a theoretical patch job: The initial infant stepping is random and reflexive, and babies gradually learn to inhibit all such impulsive behavior as the "control centers" in the neocortex mature. Such an interpretation reflects the old-paradigm imperative to explain phenomena in terms of single fundamental causes. However, when Thelen turned up the magnification she witnessed an entirely different scene. First of all, the initial stepping isn't random at all. It has a rhythmic quality to it that is also found in the kicking movements babies frequently engage in when they are lying on their backs — which they don't stop doing at age two months. This observation immediately raised the question, if stepping and kicking are essentially the same leg motions performed in two different positions, how can cortical inhibition be the reason infants cease to do one and not the other?

Having come across an earlier researcher's findings that three-month-olds who no longer stepped under normal conditions continued to do so when held upright in water, Thelen designed her own experiment to test a growing suspicion that infant stepping behavior doesn't disappear at all. She placed babies as young as a month old on small, specially modified treadmills that enabled them to remain upright while they "walked," and what she discovered was that not only did they continue to step, but by the age of seven months they had learned how to perform highly coordinated movements even when the two tracks of the treadmill were set at different speeds. Clearly the brains of these infants were not inhibiting their stepping behavior.

So Thelen looked elsewhere for the solution to the puzzle. She detected a correlation between babies' general level of arousal and the frequency and the pace of their stepping and kicking. When infants are calm and happy, they do both much less often and at a slower pace than when they are fussy and agitated. Arousal is a significant factor because heightened arousal causes the body to deliver more energy to the muscles. She also noticed that heavier, better-fed babies tend to be less aroused, and also that the rapid weight gain babies undergo in the first two months consists mostly of fat needed for temperature regulation outside of the womb and not the muscle tissue that will eventually enable them to support their own weight. This helped to explain why it was the infants with the highest weight gain who displayed the most rapid decline in stepping — it's just too much work! — and also why highly aroused babies continue stepping after the two-month mark.

Children don't need outside forces to structure and motivate their learning because they are fully capable of self-structure and self- motivation.

The point of the treadmill experiment wasn't to produce precocious walkers. Rather, it was to demonstrate that walking isn't a static, hard-wired behavior at all, and that it self-organizes in the much the same way that termite nests do, emerging out of the dynamic interaction between infants and their particular environments. The high level of competence that Thelen's infant test subjects achieved proved that the development of locomotion is far more sensitive to environmental factors than was previously believed, and that again, there is no single cause of the behavior and so set of laws or rules that "governs" the learning process (Thelen & Smith 1994, 5-17).

Cognitive Development

Confident she had unpacked the self-organizing nature of motor development, Thelen turned her attention to the cognitive domain. She began by revisiting the work of certain explorers from the previous generation of developmental psychologists — Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, and Eleanor and James Gibson, among others — who had already begun to break away from the old-paradigm view that intelligence is exclusively a mental thing and that learning is the passive absorption and storage of information. Piaget, Lewin, and the Gibsons were all holistic thinkers who viewed cognitive development as an active and interactive construction process that involves the body as well as the mind. For them, development became the study of all of the means by which children learn to adapt successfully to the changes and challenges in their respective environments.

Thelen proceeded to weave into this new orientation the recent neuroscientific discoveries that were unavailable to Piaget and the others. She drew heavily upon the research of the aforementioned Gerald Edelman, one of whose principal areas of investigation is the neural basis of cognitive development, and beyond that, of consciousness as a whole. Like the Gibsons before him, Edelman believes the process begins with perception. Whenever infants see, hear, smell, or touch something, their brains construct actual neural maps that emerge spontaneously from the chaotic interaction of large groups of neurons in the brain. There is no localized control center responsible for the mapping; rather the neural patterns that underlie perception are self-organizing. Moreover, the patterns are "plastic," meaning that their shape readily alters in synch with shifts in experience. Then, over time, the maps overlap and reassemble as babies begin to sort their perceptions into the categories that will become the basis of their concrete knowledge about the world. Categorization, too, is a self-organizing process (Thelen & Smith 1994, 136).

Edelman's mapping theory stands in stark contrast to the old-paradigm assumption that the categories which give order to our thinking — space, time, shape, color, causation, and so on — are fixed and have an independent existence like Newton's laws. According to Edelman, there are no predetermined categories because they are constantly changing and combining in original ways depending on the context, history, and current state of the perceiver. Again, broad evolutionary parameters do exist; however, each individual mind is uniquely shaped by experience and the dynamics of self-organization.

Thelen, as did Piaget, refined her insights into the basic nature of cognition by zooming in on the world of infants. She started out by investigating babies' early efforts to reach and search because these goal-oriented behaviors play a fundamental role in all subsequent perceptual-motor and rational-symbolic learning. Like Piaget — and in some instances repeating certain of his iconic experiments — she was able to show how cognitive development self-organizes in exactly the same manner as sensorimotor development, driven by a child's intrinsic motivation to explore and seek out novel and challenging experiences. Interestingly, Piaget (1952, 407-410) valued kids' self-initiated, self-directed discoveries so highly that he sometimes referred to them by the French word *aliment*, meaning food.

Along the way, Thelen was able to root out the Newtonian vestiges in Piaget's thinking, the most prominent among them the idea that there is a universal template for cognitive development, which occurs in an orderly succession of stages. Her meticulous, high-magnification observations clearly showed that because every child's inner make-up and outer circumstances are unique, and because development emerges out of the dynamic interaction between the two, the developmental process isn't uniform at all. To use Thelen's metaphor, development is "not a marching band; it's a *teeming mob.*" (Thelen & Smith 1994, 21-22).

Thanks to Esther Thelen and her associates, we are presented with an entirely new model whereby development self-assembles in context and in the moment, with the direction always coming from within. Or in her words, "Development can happen in an organized way all on its own with neither an external teacher nor a blueprint for the developmental outcome." (Thelen & Smith 1994, 170). Beginning from the moment we are born it is a cycle of challenge, exploration, discovery, and new challenge that continues until the day we die (Thelen & Smith 1994, 323-325). And again, the process is self-motivated and

self-directed, fueled by children's incessant hunger to understand and relate to the world around them.

All of which brings us back to perhaps the most critical distinction between the two paradigms, the issue of external control. According to Thelen's model, it is precisely the *absence* of the outside control, the bedrock of the old-paradigm view of education, that gives children the freedom to learn and adapt in synch with their worlds. This is because, in the language of the dynamic systems approach, "The very freedom of the system to assemble and reassemble in response to changing needs is the wellspring of new and adaptive forms" (Thelen & Smith 1994, 77). Homogenous, stable systems — our public schools are a perfect example — have no such sources for new forms because they lack sufficient flexibility and variability to support successful, creative development. Reflected Thelen (1994, 244), intelligent systems are unlikely to do exactly the same thing twice. Because they are open to spontaneity and disorder, they are able to shift their behavior slightly to match the nuances of a new context, or radically in order to adapt to an altogether new state if the situation demands it.

Here, indeed, is the confirmation I was seeking. The new-paradigm model of development absolutely validates what I and others who have worked closely with children in organic and open-ended ways have always observed about how children learn best. Now there exists a solid theoretical foundation for the core principles of our educational practice: that a child's primary teacher is experience and, likewise, that living and learning are one and the same; that kids are born with an inner guidance system which tells them exactly what they need and when; that it isn't outside regulation and control they need, but rather a nurturing and supportive environment in which they can develop their own strategies for *self*-regulation and *self*-control; that the freedom to choose and explore is the bedrock of the learning process; and finally, that children don't need outside forces to structure and motivate their learning because they are fully capable of self-structure and self-motivation.

The new paradigm also speaks loudly to what those of us who intuitively understand kids have always known: no two children ever learn in the same way and in the same time frame. Furthermore, due to the interaction of factors so complex that science will probably never fully fathom them, every child's developmental pattern is unique. Any educational approach that fails to recognize this reality is doomed from the outset.

New Eyes

The late Paula Underwood Spencer, a Native American wisdom keeper, educator, and author, once shared with me a special classroom practice of hers that she called "New Eyes." Just as the name implies, Paula's intention as a teacher was always to look at each of her students with new eyes, by which she meant allowing herself to see her kids as they are in the present moment and not as they were yesterday or the day before. The practice was her way of honoring how children are constantly and unpredictably changing, and it was a particularly helpful way of keeping her from getting stuck in negative patterns of relating to challenging students.

Here's hoping that the continuing articulation of the implications of the new-paradigm view of child development will spur us as a society to look at our educational theory and practice with new eyes too.

References

Briggs, J., and F. Peat. 1999. *Seven life lessons of chaos.* New York: HarperCollins.

Capra, F. 1996. *The web of life.* New York: Doubleday.

Edelman, G. 2004. *Wider than the sky.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kaufman, S. 1995. *At home in the universe.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Margulis, L. 1985. Gaia: The living earth. *Elmwood Newsletter* 5(2).

Maturana, H. 1980. *Autopoiesis and cognition*. Boston: Reidel.

Mercogliano, C. 2005. The self-organizing child. *Paths of Learning* 23, 6. Available online at <https://great-ideas.org/Chris2005.htm>.

Nadeau R., and M. Kafatos. 1999. *The non-local universe.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Piaget, J. 1952. *The origins of intelligence in children.* New York: International Universities Press.

Prigogine, I. 1984. *Order out of chaos*. New York: Bantam.

Thelen E., and L. Smith. 1994. *A dynamic systems approach to the development of cognition and action.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

How Educators Can Address Homophobia in Elementary Schools

Joleen Hanlon

Many educators are afraid to address homophobic attitudes in their schools. As a result, many students experience bullying and humiliation. As a first step, educators need to begin discussing this topic among themselves.

JOLEEN HANLON has recently completed the Childhood Education MA Program at The City College of New York. She has taught Pre-K through 5th grade, and is currently teaching in a New York City elementary school. Her interests are the visual and performing arts, history, and learning how to inspire positive change through education.

As a student/observer, student teacher, and teaching assistant in public elementary schools, I have found that homophobic attitudes are commonplace. Nevertheless, homophobic attitudes are rarely addressed in meaningful ways. Nor do discussions of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) issues commonly take place. I decided to look into the reasons for this state of affairs, and how educators (myself included) might best provide an anti-homophobia education.

I define anti-homophobia education as that which works toward both preventing homophobic attitudes through a LGBT-inclusive curriculum, and responding to anti-LGBT attitudes in meaningful ways. The ultimate goal is to provide a safe and inclusive environment that acknowledges the existence of LGBT people.

Initially, I was hoping to practice specific instructional strategies in order to create a safe, LGBT-inclusive environment in my own classroom. However, I was limited by the fact that I was hired as a Teaching Assistant rather than a head teacher. As a result, my inquiry shifted to interviews with educators and observations of student attitudes. Through interviews, I wanted to learn from other educators' experiences and to determine if educators are comfortable, willing, or prepared to address LGBT issues. However, before describing my own study, I will present a research summary of the current vulnerability of LGBT students, relevant laws and policies, and varying perspectives on LGBT-inclusive curricula.

Harassment and Bullying

The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) 2005 National School Climate Survey (NSCS) is the only national survey of LGBT students

in American schools. It concluded that anti-LGBT bullying and harassment are commonplace. This survey is based on a sample of 1,732 LGBT students between the ages of 13 and 20 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The results showed that over a third of students were physically harassed in school due to their sexual orientation. Seventy-five percent reported hearing derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently at school. Consequently, the majority reported feeling unsafe at school because of their orientation (64.3%) or because of how they expressed their gender (40.7%).

As a result of frequent intolerance, abuse, and lack of support from school officials, many LGBT students feel isolated and depressed. LGBT youth are at high risk for abusing drugs, engaging in unsafe sex, and becoming homeless (Cianciotto & Cahill 2003).

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2007), "It has been widely reported that gay and lesbian youth are two to three times more likely to commit suicide than other youth and that thirty percent of all attempted or completed youth suicides are related to issues of sexual identity. " Jamie Nabozny, a gay man from Wisconsin, experienced years of abuse in school, including a "mock rape" by two students in front of twenty laughing onlookers. As the violence escalated and school officials failed to take disciplinary actions, Jamie attempted suicide and dropped out of school in eleventh grade (Cianciotto & Cahill 2003, 33-34).

As in Jamie Nabozny's case, unsafe schools also affect LGBT students' desire to attend school. GLSEN's 2005 surveyfound that LGBT students who had been verbally or physically harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender were almost three times more likely to have skipped school in the last month because of feeling unsafe. The New York State Department of Education reported in 2002 that torment of LGBT students was one of the leading causes for their dropping out of school (Cianciotto & Cahill 2003, 38).

Such harassment often begins in elementary school, and predictably leads to violence as students get older. This is especially common in small schools in which the population rarely changes (Cianciotti & Cahill 2003, 32). In February 2008, the frequent harassment of 15-year-old Lawrence King in California about his sexual orientation and gender expression resulted in his tragic shooting and death. Sakia Gunn, a sophomore student in New Jersey, was stabbed and killed at a bus stop in 2003 after telling her assaulters that she was gay. Perhaps the most publicized act of homophobic violence was the murder of Matthew Shepard when he was a victim of a horrendous hate crime in Wyoming in 1998. After facing years of abuse from school and his community, his life was taken by two men who lured him into their car by pretending to be gay.

Victims of homophobic bullying can turn to violence themselves. As stated in the film *It's STILL Elementary* (Chasnoff & Cohen 2007), 87% of school shootings are committed by boys who were taunted with anti-gay slurs.

Laws and Policies

In 2001, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented attacks against the human rights of LGBT students and the extent to which laws protect them. HRW believes that there is a lack of federal, state, and local laws protecting students from discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. They claim that there has been a "systematic failure of the public school system in the United States to protect these students" (Bochenek & Brown 2001, Introduction, 4).

In fact, according to GLSEN's 2004 State of the States Report (Bauer 2004), only eight states (California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia provide legal protections for students based on sexual orientation. Only three states (California, Minnesota, and New Jersey) provide legal protection based on gender expression or identity. Seven states (Alabama, Arizona, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah) have laws that prohibit any positive portrayal of LGBT issues or people in schools. This State of the States Report is the first systematic measurement and comprehensive analysis of statewide policies that ensure the safety of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. States were scored on six categories: general education issues (e.g., student/teacher ratios), statewide safe schools law, state non-discrimination laws, sexuality education, local safe schools policies, and laws that stigmatize

LGBT people. Forty-two states received failing grades.

It is very common for educators and legislators to think that generic anti-bullying laws are sufficient and that there is no need for special protections for LGBT students. However, some politicians are supportive of policies that address actual or perceived sexual orientation. Michigan state senator Glenn S. Anderson, for example, has introduced a measure that would require all schools to have a basic anti-bullying policy that includes sexual orientation (Robinson 2008).

New Jersey's courts have been successful in protecting LGBT rights. Reinforcing the state's anti-discrimination law, the Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that school districts must take particular actions to stop harassment of gay students. In response, GLSEN's deputy executive director, Eliza Byard, said: "Having a policy is not enough. Schools must implement their policies to ensure that each student is free from fear when entering a schoolhouse" (Kelly 2007, 2).

On the federal level, there are a few laws that provide some protection for LGBT students. One is Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which applies only to schools receiving federal funding. Although this law does not specifically protect students from harassment based on sexual orientation, it does protect students from sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, which often affects LGBT students. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education added a guideline that states that "sexual harassment directed at gay or lesbian students that is sufficiently serious to limit or deny a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's program constitutes sexual harassment" (Cianciotto & Cahill 2003, 44). On the other hand, according to Human Rights Watch's *Hatred in the Hallways*, students are still faced with the difficult task of showing that the harassment interfered with their education and that the administrators were blatantly indifferent to the harassment.

Another federal law that provides some protection for LGBT students is the Equal Access Act (EAA) of 1984, which applies only to public secondary schools that receive federal funding. This act was originally passed in order to prohibit discrimination against religious speech in student-initiated clubs. The law states that a school cannot deny access to student activities because of the "religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings" (Cianciotto & Cahill 2003, 45). Despite its intentions, the EAA ended up providing legal protection for the formation of Gay Straight Alliances within high schools.

LGBT Inclusive Curricula

Many concerned people believe that although stronger policies and laws would make a difference, they would not automatically solve the problem. Proponents of inclusive curricula argue that we need to engage students in meaningful discussions so that students can be more tolerant of differences, and thus safer in the long run. Researchers and educators such as Swartz (2003), Bickmore (1999), Sears (1999), Cianciotto & Cahill (2003), Goodman (2005) and the National Education Association believe that we need to help deconstruct biases and stereotypes and encourage critical thought.

Goodman (2005, 122) says that harsh reprimands and punishments are "quick and easy, but do not confront the stereotypes and assumptions that are the basis of the harassment; this is why they are largely ineffective." Ultimately, principals are responsible for addressing homophobia and providing an inclusive curriculum. Goodman describes a model school to be one in which LGBT members feel safe enough to be open about their sexuality and one that includes positives images of LGBT people in the curriculum.

Some proponents argue that promoting tolerance of LGBT people is a simple matter of good citizenship. Bickmore (1999) refers to censorship as a tragedy and states that children need opportunities to acquire and evaluate information, and to correct their misconceptions, in order to develop their self-determination as citizens and get along with others in our diverse society. Bickmore emphasizes that teachers must create environments in which all types of students are accepted, so that "children may learn, as developing citizens, to question the categories and rules that have formed them, and to create a new world with more democratic space for all" (Brickmore 199, 22).

Similarly, Crocco (2001, 66) discusses how a more expansive definition of citizenship education in so-

cial studies has evolved over the past twenty years due to changing social needs. She says:

> In a rapidly changing society of shifting gender roles and greater openness about issues of sexuality, the future of a healthy society may depend on a social studies curriculum that considers these issues in a more forthright manner.

Would inclusive curricula prematurely expose innocent children to sexuality? Proponents of inclusive curricular say no. Bickmore (1999), for example, argues that sexuality is already present in the lives of students and that it is outdated to assume students are innocent. Children are constantly exposed to sexuality in public and private spaces (media, family, friends, etc.).

The film *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School* (Chasnoff & Cohen 1996) provides evidence that students are aware of homosexuality beginning in elementary school. Children in six U.S. elementary and middle schools were filmed discussing various homosexual themes (name-calling, stereotypes, definitions, accomplishments of gay figures, etc.). When a fourth grade teacher asks students to write down anything that comes to mind when they hear the words "gay" and "lesbian," responses included: "I think of a boy walking like a girl," "cross dressers," "gross," "pervert," "weird," "shy," "peep shows," "marriage," and "make-out." These responses clearly indicate that young children generate their own ideas about what it means to be gay, many of which are misconceptions. Educators are not introducing something new. Instead, they are confronting stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, promoting tolerance, and creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students.

Nevertheless, people have opposed LGBT inclusive curricula. As with AIDS and sex education, the topic of sexual diversity has been viewed as inappropriate for school, especially within elementary education. Some people think that talking about sexuality in school promotes sexual behavior. Others may express opposition for religious reasons.

Opposition to LGBT-inclusive curricula drew public attention in 1992 when New York City Chancellor Joseph Fernandez tried to implement a multicultural curriculum that included references to gays and lesbians in all curricular areas. The result was a heated confrontation between Fernandez and District 24 in Queens. Mary Cummins, the president of District 24, rejected the curriculum and argued for the district's right to make curricular decisions under decentralization regulations.

Parents played a large role in opposing the so-called "Children of the Rainbow" curriculum as well. In Brooklyn, parents pressured the District 15 school board to suspend aspects of the curriculum regarding homosexuality. Religious leaders also voiced opposition, particularly Roman Catholics, Orthodox Jews, black Baptists, and Pentecostal ministers from the Hispanic community (Roberts 1992). As a result of the debate, the district-wide mandate was removed.

Some local and state school boards have attempted to censor gay curriculum through enacting "No Promo Homo" policies. These policies "restrict or eliminate any school-based instruction or activity that could be interpreted as positive about homosexuality" (Bonauto 2003, 1). They require that any discussions addressing homosexuality must be done in a negative manner. This has prompted challenges in court, particularly citing violations of the First Amendment free speech clause.

A direct result of such policies is self-censorship. For example, teachers at Merrimack High School were uncertain how to interpret the policy against encouraging "homosexuality as a positive lifestyle alternative" (Bonauto 2003, 2). Out of fear of violating the policy, one teacher chose not to use a video about Walt Whitman because it stated that he loved men.

Teachers also practice self-censorship without the presence of "No Promo Homo" policies. Many teachers avoid any topics involving sexual diversity because it is an uncomfortable topic for themselves and/or the students. If unprepared to respond to discriminatory remarks, stereotypes, and questions, teachers may be hesitant to bring up an issue because it is difficult to manage. It is much easier to self-censor than it is to take on the challenge of an unpredictable dialogue. Teachers may also avoid meaningful discussions about moral values, such as tolerance in general, due to time constraints in order to meet academic objectives (Bickmore 1999). The fear of backlash from the administration and parents can also deter teachers from engaging in meaningful conversations.

The Hidden Curriculum

In addition to evaluating the inclusion of LGBT issues in the curriculum, it is important to evaluate the *hidden* curriculum. That is, what are we teaching students about sexuality and gender through our everyday decisions, assumptions, and language? Perhaps without realizing it, educators reinforce gender norms and define gender roles when they assign different expectations and tasks to each gender. For example, teachers may ask for a "strong boy" to accomplish a difficult task, require girls to wear skirts to performances, and assume that only girls like dolls. These daily expectations are not only sexist, but they can also impact students who are transgender. These students are often ostracized for not conforming to society's expectations of gender roles.

Children who defy society's gender norms seem to threaten binary masculine/feminine roles and are often considered abnormal. Wilchins (2004) describes how American children as young as three are diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder. They are submitted to psychiatric treatment and behavioral modification, simply because a young girl might exhibit masculine qualities or a boy might be considered effeminate. This is just one example of society's effort to define people by our culture's gender norms.

Basow (1992) argues that gender is socially constructed and that messages about gender-appropriate behaviors and roles are taught in school. One source of this hidden curriculum on gender is the classroom materials. Basow cites several studies in the 1970s, which found that classroom books portrayed males and females disproportionately and in traditional gender role; women were rarely mentioned as important historical figures.

A primary source of this hidden curriculum is language. Many teachers' word choices carry misogynist messages. For example, the order in which teachers say, "boys and girls" and "he or she" implies that girls are secondary. Using the masculine gender to refer to humans such as "*man*kind," "police*man*," "everyone should do *his* best," and saying "*he*" as a generic pronoun is very commonplace in schools (Basow 1992). This type of language connotes sexist attitudes.

Sexism and patriarchy are directly related to homophobia in that homosexual relationships defy traditional gender roles. Basow (1992) says that homophobia is a political fear rather than a sexual fear. That is, homophobic individuals believe in maintaining traditional family and gender roles in which men control power. She (1992, 209) says,

> Homophobia serves this purpose by defining and reinforcing gender distinctions and the associated distribution of power. It keeps men within the boundaries of traditionally defined roles.

The connection between homophobia and misogyny is exemplified by analyzing the roots of derogatory words such as "pansy,""sissy," and "faggot." All of these words are used to insult men who do not conform to stereotypical gender norms. "Pansy" refers to a flower, which are typically associated with females. "Sissy" roots from the word sister. "Faggot" refers to the bundles of wood that were used to burn mostly female witches during the Middle Ages in Europe. It is a reflection of our misogynist culture that words denoting female attributes are used to insult males (Swartz 2003). Likewise, calling a boy a girl is used as an insult because "girl" implies weakness or inferiority in our culture.

In addition to defining gender norms, most educators assert sexuality norms and teach in a heteronormative manner. Heteronormativity implies that heterosexuality is normal and everything else is different or abnormal. Teachers project heterosexist attitudes without being aware of the underlying message they are giving their students. This can include assuming students or their parents are straight, formatting letters to parents with a section for a father and mother's signature, presuming that marriage is in their students' future, and providing only images of the traditional nuclear family in books. Letts (1999) criticizes the heteronormative nature of elementary science in particular. He analyzes the hidden curricula in textbooks that may normalize the nuclear family or emphasize anatomical sex differences, as well as teachers' decisions to separate students by gender.

The context in which homosexuality is discussed is also a part of the hidden curriculum. Oftentimes, exposure to LGBT issues is limited to health class in schools. In some schools, gay men are discussed only in the context of sexually transmitted diseases such

as AIDS. This inevitably creates an underlying message that homosexuality is linked with disease. Bickmore (1999) argues that when sexuality education is limited to physical/health education rather than literature or social studies, educators are more likely to discuss sexuality in clinical terms instead of human rights, democracy, and respect.

Instructional Strategies

There are various ways in which to approach anti-homophobic education, most of which include class discussions. LGBT themes can be incorporated into every disciplinary subject, especially the language arts and social studies.

The pedagogical documentary, *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School* (Chasnoff & Cohen 1996), provides real life examples of effective, age-appropriate lessons discussing gays and lesbians. For example, a first and second grade classroom made a class book called "Everybody is Equal: A Book about Gay and Lesbian People." Scott Hirschfeld, a third grade teacher in New York City, helped to expand the students' notions of family and had students discuss the current debate over whether or not gay marriage should be legal. A fifth grade teacher provided historical context by teaching students about the origination of the pink triangle that has come to represent gay pride. (The Nazis used this symbol to identify gay people.)

Social studies offers many possibilities to incorporate LGBT issues. Crocco (2001) discusses why and how misogyny and homophobia must be addressed in the social studies curriculum. She suggests a social action approach in which students could research and respond to these social problems through survey research, volunteer activity, or lobbying politicians. Crocco believes that students should be taught about gay and lesbian history, women's history, and contemporary gender issues. Teachers can also mention the sexual identity of historical/literary figures as they come up throughout the year in order to raise awareness of gays and lesbians who have contributed to society.

One instructional approach to anti-homophobic education is homophobic name-calling analysis. Goldstein, Russell, & Daley (2007) describe how these activities help to build empathy for those whom are discriminated against because of sexual orientation. Teachers can use brainstorming strategies found in the language arts such as webbing and mapping in order to generate students' ideas and stereotypes about gay people. Students' ideas can be written from spokes connected to a central circle containing the words "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual." Then, the teacher can replace the words in the central circle with "ME" and ask the class what kind of feelings they might have if they were the target of these derogatory names and stereotypes.

Another effective way to initiate discussions is through storytelling and videos. Gosse (2005) discusses the effectiveness of utilizing these two strategies in his arts-informed inquiry into homophobia in elementary schools. For example, he used the book *My Two Uncles* (Vigna 1995) and the video *Sticks and Stones* (Padjett 2001) as springboards for class discussions about the larger context of bullying.

Swartz (2003, 12) believes that literature is the most important class in which to include multicultural issues. She says, "If future teachers are without awareness of the issues and of the literature that can counter racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and homophobia, attitudes and practices in schools will not change."

Teacher Training

Likewise, attitudes will not change if educators are not trained in how to create a safe environment for LGBT people. First, they must learn to identify and challenge their own biases or misconceptions regarding sexual diversity. Then, educators need to know *how* to create an inclusive environment, support students who are struggling with their own sexual identity, and effectively address homophobic attitudes and harassment. In 2007, 29% of school districts trained staff about sexual orientation issues, which was an increase from less than 1% of districts in 1990 (Chasnoff & Cohen 2007).

Research has shown that educators themselves are guilty of perpetuating and allowing homophobia in schools, thus underlining another need for all districts to provide training. In particular, the Human Rights Watch's study, *Hatred in the Hallways* (1999-2000), discovered through in-depth interviews with 140 youth and 130 teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and youth service providers in seven

states, that teachers themselves often ignored and participated in homophobic behaviors and remarks. Several students reported teachers who had discussed their own religious beliefs to explain why homosexuality is wrong. For example, one student whose teacher knew he was gay said, "She told me devout Christian stuff, like if the Bible is the divine word of God, then gay people have to come to terms with the fact they can't go to heaven," he said. "She'd say she can't believe a sin so strong would strike someone so young" (Participation in Acts of Harassment and Discrimination section, para 7).

GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey also found that 83% of students reported that school faculty never or rarely intervened when a homophobic remark was made. In fact, 42% of students who reported hearing homophobic language said that teachers were present all or most of the time. In contrast, twenty-eight percent of students reported hearing racist language in the presence of teachers all or most of the time.

Of course, there are many teachers who respect gay people, have gay friends and family members, or identify themselves as LGBT. However, this does not mean that these teachers address homophobia in their classroom. In fact, these teachers often practice self-censorship. Perhaps they would choose to include LGBT issues in their curriculum if they were trained how to lead appropriate and effective discussions, how to confront homophobic attitudes, and what materials to use.

When teachers are prepared with the tools to address homophobia, students notice the difference. According to Cianciotto & Cahill (2003), the Massachusetts Safe Schools Project found that 54% of students in schools that provided staff training reported feeling supported by teacher and counselors. In contrast, only 26% of students felt supported in schools without trained staff. Ultimately, everyone feels safer and more accepted when teachers are prepared to handle uncomfortable and potentially harmful situations.

My Study

My own study focused on how to effectively address homophobic attitudes in elementary school. In 2008, I interviewed 9 teachers and 4 administrators in New York City schools to gain insight into their experiences, perspectives, and the ways in which they respond to anti-gay language or bullying. My interviews sought information on their professional backgrounds, their training, and their observations with respect to gay- and gender-related issues, and their responses to anti-gay attitudes. During the time I conducted the interviews, I was a student teacher and a teaching assistant in grades 2, 3, and 5 in two New York City schools, and my data included my own journal reflections as well as observations of student and faculty behavior. Although most of my data came from elementary grades (grades 1–6), it also included some information from grades 7 and 8. After gathering a wealth of data, I sifted through it to uncover the main themes.

Gender Non-Conformity

I found that beginning in the early grades, children stereotype those who like something outside gender roles as "gay." For example, one day, when I was substitute teaching for a second grade class, there was suddenly a loud commotion. Children were exclaiming, "Jade said the G-word!" When I spoke to Jade, she said that she called Adam "gay" because he likes Hannah Montana. I asked her what she thought gay means. She said it means a boy who likes "girl things" and a girl who likes "boy things." Adam was not sure what the word meant. However, now he might think that it is a negative thing to like a "girls" TV show, and it is an insult to be called the "G-word."

Jade's use of the word "gay" demonstrates how young children may believe that it is a bad thing for a boy to like "girl things." Like Jade, many children believe that the world is categorized into "girl things" and "boy things." I have even seen a second grade boy being teased for reading a "girl's book." Strict gender stereotypes can inhibit children from learning new things, especially if they fear being perceived as gay if they cross gender lines.

Less obvious, however, is how boys and girls lines may affect students. With the exception of one classroom, students were separated into boys/girls lines in every class I observed throughout two schools.

Something as commonplace and unnecessary as boys and girls lines can create a problem for students who do not fully identify with their birth-assigned sex (those who may later identify as transgender).

During field observations, I met a third grader named Shauna who helped me to realize this. Shauna identified as a girl, but enjoyed socializing with boys, playing softball, and wearing loose, masculine clothing. Her peers seemed to accept her for who she was, but she was teased for being a "tomboy. " I noticed that occasionally Shauna chose to stand in the boys' line. Her teacher told me that he decided not to stop her because she may be questioning her gender. When the girls would sometimes beckon her to come back to the girls' line, Shauna stayed put. Her bravery surprised me. However, I do not think a child should have to risk ridicule and break a class routine in order to assert one's identity. Boys and girls lines are convenient for teachers, but are they convenient for every child?

While Shauna was generally accepted by her peers, I observed another third grade girl who was not. Like Shauna, Kara expressed her gender in masculine ways. She enjoyed physical activity, socialized mostly with boys, and dressed like a boy. In fact, I assumed that Kara was a boy until a teacher told me otherwise. Kara's classmates continually question her gender. Kara's classroom teacher said,

> She (Kara) told me that boys from the other class will pick on her. "Are you a boy or a girl? Why do you look like a boy when you're a girl?" And I talked to her about it the other day. Kara said, "They know I'm a girl. Why are they doing this? I've gone to school with them since kindergarten."

Kara has even faced humiliation brought upon by teachers. According to another schoolteacher, a staff member once yelled at Kara to get out of the girls' bathroom, assuming she was a boy. Additionally, she heard a teacher ask if Kara was a girl or a boy in her presence, exhibiting insensitivity to Kara's feelings. In this case, the teachers in her school need to be informed of Kara's gender in order to provide a safer environment for Kara and other students who may defy gender norms.

Situations such as Shauna's and Kara's call attention to the need for teachers to be aware of gender issues and understand how our strict gender expectations affect children in subtle yet profound ways. Furthermore, Jade's misconception that "gay" means a boy who likes "girl" things exemplifies how children who defy gender norms are targets of anti-gay name calling at a young age.

Teachers' Fears and Responses

In order for any sort of real change to take place in which students are taught to respect people who identify as LGBT, educators must feel comfortable discussing LGBT issues.

During my interviews, I tried to assess teachers' comfort levels by asking, "How would you feel about discussing gay issues or reading a book with a gay character to your students? Do you feel prepared or comfortable enough to lead these types of discussions?" The major theme that came out of the responses was fear. Eight out of the nine teachers whom I interviewed expressed such concerns as job security, opposition from parents, negative responses from the kids, and fear of how they will be perceived.

I also asked teachers and administrators to describe situations in which they responded to homophobic attitudes. They spoke of a variety of ways of responding to their students. A majority talked about how they addressed the situation immediately by briefly discussing the meaning of the word, or by silencing the language and telling the students that they were being inappropriate. Two middle school educators took the time to have lengthier discussions with their students. Three participants simply ignored the language or said they have witnessed other teachers ignoring it. None of the teachers responded to evidence of homophobia among students with actual lessons.

The educators' responses were related to their fear and discomfort. That is, the teachers who expressed fear of talking about gay issues in school either ignored homophobic behavior or just briefly told the student that their language was not appropriate.

However, one sixth grade teacher did not hesitate to respond to anti-gay language. She recalled a discussion she led with a small group of students, comparing anti-gay attitudes to racism. She asked them, "How is that different than calling someone gay in a negative way because that's who they are?" She reminded them, "We are all people first and we need to remember that." Her openness to discussion was partly because she was *not* afraid of any sort of reper-

cussions from her administration. Her principal provided the entire staff with anti-homophobia training and mandated that teachers respond immediately to anti-gay behavior. In this case, knowing that one's administration is supportive can make a difference in whether teachers respond to homophobic attitudes. However, she felt that the training did not provide strategies on *how* to respond effectively to anti-gay language and make it a teachable moment.

A Composite Scenario

To illustrate the various feelings of fear and discomfort, as well as the differing opinions on how to respond to homophobic attitudes, I have developed a scenario. Strictly speaking, the scenario is fictional, but it is a composite based on my own observations, experiences, and interviews.

Scene: *Ms. Laurens, a 29-year-old fourth grade teacher in New York City, has been hearing frequent anti-gay language in her classroom. The words used most often are "fag" and "gay" (with a negative connotation). Today, Ms. Laurens announced to the class that she will read a fairy tale to them. One student reacted negatively by saying, "A fairy tale? That's gay." Although Ms. Laurens was unprepared for how to respond to this comment, she did her best to address it. However, she was not satisfied that she addressed it in a meaningful way. After reflecting on the multiple times she has heard students make homophobic remarks throughout her years of teaching, Ms. Laurens is considering discussing anti-gay bias with her class. She decides to see what her colleagues think about how she handled the situation.*

MS. LAURENS

Enters the staff lounge on her lunch break. Mrs. Hernandez and Mr. Roberts are sitting at a table eating. Ms. Laurens places her dish in the microwave and leans against the fridge, waiting for it to finish heating up. She looks up at the clock on the wall and sighs.

Is it time to go yet?

MR. ROBERTS

Rough morning?

MS. LAURENS

Yeah, one of my students made a comment that really bothered me and I wasn't sure how to respond. During Writer's Workshop, I told the class I was going to read them a fairy tale. Jeffrey was disappointed and said, "A fairy tale? That's gay."

MR. ROBERTS

That sounds familiar. Kids use the word "gay" to describe just about anything. Half the time they don't even know what it means.

MS. LAURENS

Exactly. That's why I asked him if he knew what the word meant. He said, "Happy?" And I said, "Did you mean to say that fairy tales are happy?" He said, "No, I don't like fairy tales. They're dumb." So I asked him why he didn't just say that they're dumb? I said that he shouldn't use words if he's not sure what they mean.

MR. ROBERTS

I think you handled it really well. I'd probably say the same thing.

MS. LAURENS

I don't know. I think I was just avoiding the real issue here. Plus, I have a feeling he knew what "gay" means, but was playing innocent. I've been thinking about how I can respond in a more meaningful way. I feel like by telling him not to use the word "gay," it's implying that being gay is a bad thing. Maybe I should have told him that "gay" also means either two men who love each other or two women, and that by using the word "gay" instead of dumb or stupid, he could be offending someone.

MRS. HERNANDEZ

I don't think you should say that. You can't talk about that in school.

MS. LAURENS

What do you mean? Did somebody tell you that?

MRS. HERNANDEZ

No, it's just inappropriate to talk about sexuality in school. I think you should just tell the child that he can't

say that word in school and that he's being inappropriate.

MR. ROBERTS
I don't know if it's actually not *allowed*, but either way, I wouldn't get into a discussion about what "gay" actually means. I would be very careful with what I say. You never know how parents will react.

MS. LAURENS
You're right, but I'm still thinking about possibly leading a whole class discussion on anti-gay language. At the same time, I'm really not that comfortable doing this. I certainly didn't learn how to talk about *this* when I was in college.

MRS. HERNANDEZ
I think you're taking a big risk. You should definitely ask the principal for permission first. That's never been talked about in this school.

MR. ROBERTS
I can see why you want to talk with your class, but it is risky. You never know how the principal will react if he finds out, especially if parents complain. Plus, are you tenured yet? They probably couldn't fire you over this, but they might make up some other reason.

MS. LAURENS
No, not yet. I really can't risk losing this job, but I think this is an issue of creating a safe environment where everyone's respected. I don't want to just let it go.

Another teacher enters the staff lounge and all three teachers decide to end the conversation here.

****

At the end of the school day, Ms. Laurens decides to seek feedback from her friend Mr. Grant, a third grade teacher in the same school. Mr. Grant is gay and out to many teachers, but not to his principal, students, or parents.

MS. LAURENS
Entering Mr. Grant's classroom. Hi Mr. Grant. How are you?

MR. GRANT
I'm fine. Just trying to organize my desk.

MS. LAURENS
Want to help me organize my thoughts too?

MR. GRANT
I can try. What's going on?

MS. LAURENS
Well, I'm trying to figure out the best way to respond to something my kids have been saying. Every now and then, I hear them using the word "gay" in a negative way. Like this morning when I told the class I was going to read them a fairy tale, Jeffrey seemed annoyed and said, "That's gay."

MR. GRANT
That makes sense. Maybe he knows that the word "fairy" is a slang word for gay males. Or maybe he said it because fairy tales are typically liked by girls. When I was a kid, I was the only boy who took tap dancing and played the flute in my school. A lot of boys called me "gay" or a "fag." At the time, I didn't even know I was gay, but kids assume you are if you like so-called girl things.

MS. LAURENS
That must have been hard for you…. You know, I didn't even think of that being the reason Jeffrey said that, but it really is a stereotype.

MR. GRANT
I've had many students make anti-gay comments over the years. Just last week, a few kids were talking about their favorite wrestlers. When one boy said that he loved some wrestler, his friends seemed grossed out and asked him if he was gay. It really bothered me, but I didn't know how to respond.

MS. LAURENS
What did you say?

MR. GRANT
I just pretended that I didn't hear it. Other times, I've said, "That's unacceptable. We don't talk like that." My comments are always pretty surface. I don't know

how to bring them along to have a deeper understanding of it because they're very immature. I always stop short of going at it the way I want to because I'm afraid of a backlash from the kids and from the parents, especially if they're ultra-religious. I'm also afraid that people will be like, Why is this guy doing this? Is it because he's gay? Or is he trying to tell us something? Because some of these kids are pretty savvy. They can really pick up on stuff. *(long pause, continues in a softer voice*) I don't know. Like, I would be nervous. Some people are very open and depending on their upbringing — I was brought up in a community where it was heavily frowned upon. I was afraid to come out to my parents. I was more or less removed from the family. They said we don't want you to be a part of us. So I'm always cautious, and I mean, now it's a little bit easier. But it's still something that's always in the back of my mind. How are people going to perceive me? Are they going to perceive me as a different person? I wouldn't want my students to automatically start thinking differently of me and that'd be my fear — that it would jeopardize my position or my relationship with my students. And then there's the possibility that people will think I have a "gay agenda."

MS. LAURENS

Well, I guess I'm lucky that I don't have to worry about as many things as you do. Still, I don't think it should matter to anyone if you're gay. Even though I am afraid of parents' reactions and even my job security, I still want to have a conversation with the whole class about anti-gay language and respect. I'm not sure how to do it. Do you think I should notify the principal and also send a letter home so parents know that we will be discussing gay issues? What about an opt-out form?

MR. GRANT

Well, I don't know about that. If you send a letter to the parents, then you should definitely give the principal a heads-up. You know, I think it's really great that you want to take a risk and address this. If I were you, I'd probably try to get the social worker or someone to be present during the conversation so someone's there to back you up if anyone tries to misconstrue what you say.

MS. LAURENS

It's crazy that this has to be so complicated. If only we had some sort of training or staff development on how to deal with these issues!

****

As this dialogue illustrates, various fears affect teachers' comfort levels addressing homophobia. Some teachers are concerned about their job security because they are not sure if their administration would support them. Some are afraid of the children misconstruing what they say to their parents and receiving a backlash. Some are afraid of how people will perceive them and that others' knowledge of their sexual orientation would affect their position.

Self-Censorship

One of the consequences of teachers' fears towards talking about gay issues is self-censorship. This consequence became very clear to me during my job as an assistant teacher.

The teacher with whom I worked was originally very supportive of a LGBT-inclusive curriculum and of my research. However, the teacher's stance quickly changed after reflecting on the possibility of parent opposition. Afterwards, the teacher expressed discomfort with any sort of inclusion of LGBT-themed books or discussion. I was instructed not to talk about anything related to same-sex relationships with our students, even in the context of a children's book with different family representations. Fear triumphed over the teachers' initial belief that addressing homophobia is important.

Self-censorship can also occur when teachers do not respond to homophobic attitudes. A few months ago, I was in a situation in which I failed to respond. I was attending a peer mediation training program with about thirty-five fourth through eighth graders and ten teachers. In order to discuss conflict resolution, the trainers showed us the Disney film *Remember the Titans*. This film contains a scene with homophobic undertones, depicting a gay man as sexually aggressive. The first time we see the character, he has long, blond hair. The members of the football team call him a "fruitcake." The next scene shows the man in the locker room. Unexpectedly, he walks up to a

teammate who asks him, "What do you want?" The blond-haired man says, "You know what I want," leans over and kisses him. Practically every child in the room reacted negatively by exclaiming, "Ewwwww! That's disgusting!"

I was just as surprised and disgusted as the children. I was disgusted that the film writers would depict a gay character in such a negative way. Furthermore, I was upset that the trainers would choose this movie for us to watch. If educators are going to expose children to a negative portrayal of a gay person, then they should be ready to discuss it with the kids. Most of all, I left the situation feeling disappointed with myself for not responding to the students' homophobic reactions. In fact, not one of the ten teachers in the room responded. I was afraid of taking charge and interrupting the movie because it was not my program, they were not my students, and because I was a new teacher at the school. As a result of these fears, I ignored the situation

When I spoke to an experienced educator about the situation, she said that she would have stopped the film and had a discussion with the children about why they reacted that way. Was it because a man kissed another man without permission? Or was it just because two men kissed? She would have talked about how the movie portrayed this character with a negative stereotype. I admired this teacher's lack of fear.

In contrast, most teachers would probably avoid such a candid discussion. However, I believe teachers would be more likely to intervene in such situations if they had training in LGBT issues, especially if it was provided by their administration. Teachers would feel support for stepping in, and would have ideas about what to say. But when I asked teachers if they had received any type of training on LGBT issues, eight out of the nine said no.

Exclusion

Fear also leads teachers to exclude LGBT issues from the classroom. When I asked teachers, "How would you feel about discussing gay issues or reading a book with a gay character to your students?," eight of the nine teachers expressed discomfort and concern with possible negative consequences that might occur. All nine teachers had never included LGBT topics as part of the curriculum, and all were unfamiliar with LGBT-themed children's books for their grade level.

When teachers exclude LGBT themes from the classroom or ignore anti-gay bias, students are affected in several ways. First, the lives and existence of LGBT people are not validated or portrayed in a positive context. Students are left with an education that ignores the many contributions LGBT people have made to our society.

Furthermore, it can be very powerful for a student to hear an adult using the words "gay" and "lesbian" in a positive context and be given the opportunity to discuss these topics openly. I can still remember the first and only time one of my teachers referred to a lesbian. It was amazing to hear a teacher validate the existence of gay people in a positive context. This sent an important message to me at a time when I only heard gay people discussed in a derogatory manner. It was significant to hear my teacher say out loud that it is okay to be a lesbian.

Exclusion also leaves students with the impression that heterosexuality is normal and expected. When students are only read books with moms and dads, or princes and princesses, they are shown that heterosexuality is the norm. Perhaps if students were exposed to books with gay characters, or taught about significant gay historical figures, the idea of two people of the same gender loving each other would seem less abnormal.

Teachers unintentionally make heterosexist assumptions with their word choices. I have observed teachers who habitually refer to "mom and dad" when talking to their students. This phrase implies that the norm is to have a mother and father. Students with different family structures may feel abnormal.

Exclusion of LGBT topics sends the message that it is taboo to talk about sexual diversity in school. I recently heard several second-graders and a fifth-grader refer to the "g-word" rather than telling me that they said the word "gay." The fact that they did not say the entire word tells me that they felt that "gay" is an inappropriate word to say in school. (It might be very profound for these students to hear teachers use the words "gay" and "lesbian" in positive contexts.) I can imagine that this is especially difficult for students who are LGBT or have a parent or

loved one who is LGBT. If they think that it is inappropriate to talk about gay people in school, they may feel ashamed of themselves or their loved ones.

When anti-gay bias is not addressed in meaningful discussions, students are not challenged to deconstruct their negative attitudes towards LGBT people. Bullies will continue to harass. Students will continue to say, "that's gay" instead of "that's stupid. " Victims of harassment will not feel protected. The ultimate implication of failure to address homophobic attitudes is a lack of safety.

Safety is perhaps the most compelling argument for providing anti-homophobia education. According to GLSEN's (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) 2005 National School Climate Survey (NSCS), over a third (37.8%) of LGBT students reported being physically harassed based on their sexual orientation and over a quarter (26.1%) were physically harassed based on their gender expression. LGBT students were five times more likely than the general population to have skipped school in the last month due to feeling unsafe. Furthermore, victims of homophobic bullying and/or violence are at risk for suicide, depression, abusing drugs, engaging in unsafe sex, and becoming homeless (Cianciotto 2003).

Despite the risks and frequency of anti-LGBT harassment, many teachers are still not providing a LGBT-inclusive curriculum. According to Barbara Smith (in Swartz 2003, 11), "Homophobia is usually the last oppression to be mentioned, the last to be taken seriously, the last to go. But it is extremely serious, sometimes to the point of being fatal."

Conclusion

My original question was, How can elementary educators effectively address homophobic attitudes in schools and create a safe, LGBT-inclusive environment? I discovered that many factors inhibit teachers from addressing homophobia. These factors include fears about job security, parent opposition, and fears about students' changed perceptions of them. All of these fears, in combination with a lack of training in how to address homophobia, often result in self-censorship. Educators are ignoring a prevalent form of discrimination that has serious repercussions for many students.

I came to the conclusion that homophobia is less likely to be addressed in meaningful ways unless educators begin to talk. Dialogue is key, and should be initiated in teacher training — both as part of a college education program, and as professional development. In order for teachers to be prepared to provide a LGBT-inclusive education, they must be educated first. They must confront their own biases, and become comfortable talking about gay-related topics. Training can help teachers understand *why* including LGBT themes is relevant and important in elementary school; it can also provide ideas for *how* to teach a LGBT-inclusive curriculum. And if training in LGBT issues occurs within schools, teachers will feel they have their administrators' support.

Homophobia is a social justice and human rights issue, and it must be confronted regardless of how controversial it might be. We can draw courage from the educators who fought to protect African American children when schools were being desegregated. They were up against strong feelings of hatred and opposition, yet it was the teachers' responsibility to provide a safe, inclusive environment for students by combating racism. The need to confront homophobia is equally as significant as the ongoing need for combating racism. It is our moral and professional obligation to keep students safe from harassment and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender expression. We *can* make a difference.

References

Basow, S. A. 1992. *Gender Stereotypes and Roles,* third edition. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Bauer, A. F. 2004. *State of the States 2004: GLSEN's policy analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Safer Schools Issues*. New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. Available online at <www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1687.html>.

Bickmore, K. 1999. Why discuss sexuality in elementary school? In *Queering elementary education: Advancing the dialogue about sexualities and schooling*, edited by W. J. Letts and J. Sears.. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bochenek, M., and A. W. Brown. 2001. *Hatred in the hallways: Violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in U.S. schools*. Available online at <www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/toc.htm>.

Bonauto, M. 2003. *Background information on "no promo homo" policies*. Retrieved April 5, 2008 from <www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/30.html>.

Chasnoff, D. (Director/Producer), and H. Cohen, (Producer). 1996. *It's elementary: Talking about gay issues in school* [Film]. San Francisco: The Respect For All Project.

Chasnoff, D. (Director/Producer), and H. Cohen (Producer). 2007. *It's STILL Elementary* [Film]. San Francisco: The Respect For All Project.

Cianciotto, J., and S. Cahill. 2003. *Education policy: Issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth*. New York: The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/education_policy>.

Crocco, M. S. 2001. The missing discourse about gender and sexuality in social studies. *Theory Into Practice* 40(1): 65-71.

Freire, Paulo. 1993. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Goldstein, T., V. Russell, and A. Daley. 2007. Safe, positive and queering moments in teaching education and schooling: A conceptual framework. *Teaching Education* 18(3): 183-199.

Goodman, J. M. 2005. Homophobia prevention and intervention in elementary schools: A principal's responsibility. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education.* 3(1): 111-116.

Gosse, D. 2005, August 24. My arts-informed narrative inquiry into homophobia in elementary schools as a supply teacher. *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 6(7). Retrieved from http://ijea.asu.edu/v6n7.

Kosciw, J. G., and E. M. Diaz. 2006. *The 2005 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

Letts IV, W. J. 1999. How to make "boys" and "girls" in the classroom: The heteronormative nature of elementary-school science. In *Queering elementary education: Advancing the dialogue about sexualities and schooling*, edited by W. J. Letts and J. Sears. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Padjett, J. (Director). 2001. *Sticks and Stones* [Film]. Canada: National Film Board of Canada.

Roberts, S. 1992, December 15. Politics and the curriculum fight. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html>.

Robinson, Matthew S. 2008. Scared not to be straight: Harassment of LGBT teens prompts antibullying initiatives. *Edutopia.org: The George Lucas Education Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/print/5110>.

Sears, J. 1999. Teaching queerly: Some elementary propositions. In *Queering elementary education: Advancing the dialogue about sexualities and schooling*, edited by W. J. Letts and J. Sears. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Swartz, P. 2003. Bringing sexual orientation into the children's and young adult literature classrooms. *Radical Teacher* 66: 11.

United States Department of Health & Human Services. 2007. *The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent suicide (1999). At a glance: Suicide among special populations* (2004). Retrieved on April 25, 2008 from <www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calltoaction/fact7.htm>.

Vigna, J. 1995. *My two uncles*. Morton Grove, IL: Whitman.

Wilchins, Riki. 2004. *Queer theory, Gender theory: An instant primer*. Los Angeles: Alyson.

Book Reviews

Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals

by Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce

Published by The University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 2009)

and

Animals at Play: Rules of the Game

by Marc Bekoff

Published by Temple University Press (Philadelphia, 2008).

Reviewed by William Crain

In the late 1930s the psychoanalyst John Bowlby was trying to understand how children form attachments to caretakers. The best explanations, Bowlby found, came not from psychoanalytic theory, but from a field of biology called *ethology*, the study of animal behavior in natural settings. Bowlby became especially enthusiastic about the insights of Konrad Lorenz and other ethologists into a process by which young animals "imprint" on adults; the young seem to form attachments to adults primarily during a special early period. Bowlby's new, ethological approach to human development, especially as advanced by his student Mary Ainsworth, had an enormous impact on child psychology. Bowlby and Ainsworth stimulated volumes of research on attachment processes — research that continues in full force today (Crain 2005, Ch. 3).

Anthropomorphism

Most classic ethologists, however, tended to think of animals mechanistically, at least in their scientific publications. They were reluctant to attribute emotions and personalities to animals. There were some major exceptions (sometimes including Lorenz himself), but scientists who talked about animal feelings were considered guilty of anthropomorphism, a terrible sin.

In the past two decades, things have changed. Led by Jane Goodall, Marc Bekoff and others, ethologists are much more inclined to assume that non-human animals have emotional lives. Bekoff (2007, 125; 2009, 42) advocates "careful anthropomorphism." He doesn't want to uncritically project human feelings onto animals, but he insists that scientists be open to the possibility that animals may feel joy, sadness, love, fear, and other emotions. To deny this out-of-hand is simply bad science; it forecloses understanding of what is going on within the animal. It also distances us from other animals, placing humans in a special category that obscures the "evolutionary continuity" between us and other species (2009, 41, 137).

As ethologists have become receptive to the inner emotional world of animals, they have given increasing attention to positive emotions. The study of negative emotions such as pain, fear, and aggression has given way to the study of emotions such as joy, love, and pleasure. This shift is apparent, for instance, in Jonathan Balcombe's 2006 book, *Pleasurable Kingdom*, and in Bekoff's 2007 book *The Emotional Lives of Animals*.

Morality

In the soon-to-be published *Wild Justice* (2009), Bekoff and the philosopher Jessica Pierce argue that many animals share with humans the same basic *moral* capacities: empathy, altruism, compassion, forgiveness, cooperation, and perhaps a sense of fairness (pp. 2-3, 19). In the course of the book, Bekoff and Pierce summarize three sources of evidence.

One source is laboratory experiments. For example, experimenters have found that rats refuse to press a lever for food when other rats would receive an electric shock as a result (p. 96). The rats' refusal to harm others suggests empathy and compassion.

William Crain is the editor of *Encounter*.

A second source of support for animal morality comes from neuroscience. For instance, researchers have found that when monkeys observe other monkeys pick up food, the same neurons fire in their brains as when they themselves pick up food. These neurons have been called "mirror neurons" and may be linked to empathy. Humans have many mirror neurons, too. Empathy — feeling what others feel — is undoubtedly an important component of moral behavior, in the sense of doing good things for others. But as Bekoff and Pierce note, little is known about the role of mirror neurons in moral behavior in either humans or other species (pp. 28-29). The same is true of other potential neurological and chemical substrates of moral behavior.

The third and richest source of evidence for animal morality comes from Bekoff's own field of study — ethology. Bekoff and Pierce describe numerous instances in which animals demonstrate compassion and other moral behavior in the wild. One example is a forest elephant who injured her trunk in a trapper's snare.

> The injured elephant learned how to drink and how to eat river reeds, the only food she could manage without her trunk. Group members helped to keep their friend alive by altering their own feeding habits, and bringing her reeds. And now it has been reported that all this group eats is river reeds. (pp. 102-103).

In another elephant herd, an elephant injured her leg and can only walk at a snail's pace. For many years, the other elephants have waited for her and fed her. Without their escort, she would easily have fallen prey to a lion (p. 102).

Bekoff and Pierce provide stories of compassionate and altruistic behavior in a wide variety of species. These stories help us feel more connected to our fellow living beings. For its stories alone, *Wild Justice* is a wonderful resource.

In fact, the evidence of such behavior in the wild is so plentiful that it makes me wonder if we really need more experiments with animals in captivity and more brain research on the topic. As Bekoff and Pierce briefly note (p. 97), much of this research inflicts great pain upon animals. Bekoff and Pierce call for more humane experiments, but in light of the vast and growing research on animals in natural settings, I wish the authors had more sharply questioned the need for more laboratory experiments that cause suffering.

Play

Bekoff has specialized in animal play, and *Wild Justice* contains a concise summary of his findings. An excellent summary also can be found in Bekoff's delightful book for young people, *Animals at Play: Rules of the Game* (2008).

Play, Bekoff observes, is ubiquitous in the animal kingdom. "From rats to ravens to coyotes to sea lions, the young ones mostly play — with each other, with older sisters and brothers, with cousins, and with adults." (2008, 6) And play involves key ingredients of morality: rules, fairness, and forgiveness. In the canine family, which includes wolves, coyotes, jackals, foxes, and dogs, play has a similar pattern. First one animal bows by lowering the head and front legs. If the other animal accepts the invitation (performing a quick bow in return), play begins. If one of the animals is larger, he or she engages in self-handicapping, such as biting much more softly. If an animal gets too assertive and bites hard, the partner expresses surprise; the rules have been violated. The aggressor will need to apologize with another bow. If the partner forgives the transgression, play continues. If, however, the aggressor bites hard again, he or she is considered a cheater and will be ostracized. This animal will be forced to live alone and will have a tough time surviving.

Summarizing the findings, Bekoff and Pierce (2009, 127) say,

> social play is a perfect activity in which to look for moral behavior in animals (and in humans). The basic rules of the game are: ask first, be honest and follow the rules, and admit when you're wrong.

Play in Human Children

The ethological work on play has important implications for human children. As many of us have been observing in *Encounter* (including Joan Almon in this issue), free, unstructured play is on the decline in the United States. It has become increasingly rare in kindergartens, and many schools have eliminated recess. When today's children play outdoors, it is often

to play structured sports under adult supervision. Indoors, they frequently play video games, which also have been programmed and structured by adults.

When human adults restrict free play, they impede an activity that seems to be very prominent in most mammals and other species (Bekoff & Pierce 2009, 117). Human adults may be interfering with deeply rooted, evolved capacities. We must wonder, what specific capacities are threatened? A rather obvious possibility is the reduction of creativity. The work of Bekoff and Pierce suggests another risk: the development of a sense of fairness. Actually, this possibility was implicit in Jean Piaget's work in the early 1930s (Piaget 1965), but Bekoff and Pierce stimulate us think more deeply about it.

In *Wild Justice*, Bekoff and Pierce observe that many readers will be skeptical about their thesis that many non-human species have a sense of morality. Surely, many readers will think, other species' morality is unlike ours, for our morality involves much greater free choice and rational thought. Bekoff and Pierce acknowledge that there are differences between human and non-human moralities, but they argue that these differences are not as large as one might think. The more deeply I got into the pages of this exciting book, the more persuaded I became by Bekoff and Pierce's argument.

References

Balcombe, J. 2006. *Pleasurable kingdom. Animals and the nature of feeling good*. London: Macmillan.

Bekoff, M. 2007. *The emotional lives of animals*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Crain, W. 2005. *Theories of development: Concepts and applications* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Piaget, J. 1965. *The moral judgment of the child*. Translated by M. Gabain. New York: Free Press. (Originally published in 1932).

Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain

by Maryanne Wolf

Published by Harper (New York, 2007)

Reviewed by Sally Smith

We are what we read, according to Wolf. If so, what actually happens when we read? This question is extremely important to literacy teachers and researchers, as well as to the concerned layperson. Maryanne Wolf's comprehensive text looks at the whole story of reading, from its history at the dawn of literate societies to contemporary research on reading disabilities. In her title, Proust represents the aesthetic and evocative meaning of reading as an intellectual "sanctuary"(p. 6); the squid stands for studies that used the squid brain for neurological research in the workings of the human brain in the 1950s. Her juxtaposition of these symbols is apt, for Wolf covers the cultural and historical contexts of reading as well as the study of the reading brain.

The book begins with a discussion of the history of reading, summarizing the impact that the development of writing systems had on the brain and the development of thought. Wolf describes how the earliest writing systems trained the human brain to expand its abilities.

In Part Two, Wolf delves into natural reading development and the implications of the "wiring" of the brain for the literacy development of infants and young children. She provides a clear overview of a process familiar to those of us who are reading educators and researchers. A thread visible throughout these two sections is that although reading and writing affected brain development, the brain was never specifically wired to read. This issue is fully addressed in Part Three, "When the Brain Can't Learn to Read." This section begins with an examination of dyslexia, a condition that has both very personal (her son is dyslexic) and professional relevance for her, in

Sally Smith is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum & Teaching at Hofstra University, where she teaches courses in reading, language arts, and children's and young adult literature. Her research focuses on reader response. She may be contacted by e-mail at <Sally.A.Smith@hofstra.edu>.

her work as director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University in Boston. Another underlying theme that shadows each of the previous sections concerns the influence of digital literacies, with their multiple and not always trustworthy sources of information.

The underlying premise of both the historical overview and the examination of the neurological aspects of reading is that children do not naturally learn to read. Unlike our brain's ability to enable us to see or learn to speak, she maintains that there is nothing in our genetic makeup that was wired for literacy and can be passed on to future generations. She argues that reading is an unnatural process that has to be learned by each individual. However, once communities began to communicate through signs beyond gestures, the invention of reading rearranged the very organization of our brain, which in turn expanded the ways we were able to think.

Wolf combines this evolutionary history and cognitive neuroscience to show how new research is shedding light on the reading process. She sees the brain as highly plastic, referring to its "protean capacity" to forge new links and reorganize itself to learn new skills. Brain imaging shows that the brain is differently organized for different writing systems. Her findings that different languages create very distinctive brain networks (for example, reading Chinese requires a different set of neuronal connections from those needed to read English, an alphabet-based, phonetic system) is interesting and has real implications for the way we teach reading to English Language Learners with character-based writing systems already part of their literacy experiences. While this text is not a practitioner's guide, it would be interesting to hear her suggestions on this topic. Her interest is more in the neurological aspect; for example, in the case of a bilingual man, fluent in both Chinese and English, who suffered a stroke, resulting in the loss of the ability to read Chinese, while retaining his ability to read in English.

For those who teach reading Wolf reinforces what we know about emergent and continuing literacy: Children learn to read both implicitly, in the context of early listening, reading, and speaking experiences, and explicitly through increasingly complex word study in school settings. While Wolf reinforces the importance of children learning the technical aspects of phonics, vocabulary, and sentence patterns, she gives equal weight to the *experiences associated with* learning to read. As she says, "We bring our entire store of meanings to whatever we read — or not" (p. 9). Children with rich experiences with words and meanings come to reading better prepared to fit new knowledge about grammar and syntax into their already complex schema. These are the children we can expect to read with scaffolding by informed teachers, as described in Cambourne (1993). Those who do not come with these experiences need to catch up — ideally in classrooms with rich and meaningful curricula that build upon what these less prepared children know, exposing them to hundreds and thousands of words, helping them to construct meaning and a purpose to read. For children with dyslexia, this means an expanded instructional environment that supports all the parts of the brain that are necessary for reading.

Wolf provides an absorbing glimpse at the process of reading, both reinforcing and questioning current approaches to reading instruction. The most relevant section for teaching and learning in the contemporary world is the last, in which Wolf asks what new, digital literacies will mean for today's and tomorrow's students.

Wolf worries about the increasing digitalization of all forms of youth culture today. Despite her celebration of the amazing act of learning to read, Wolf is troubled about the future of reading.

According to Wolf, reading does bring decided benefits. For thousands of years, the process of engaging with texts has enriched us, both aesthetically and biologically. She stresses that fluency in reading gives us the gift of time as we automatically process the words on the page. Once we have learned to read proficiently, our brains have time for our thoughts to move beyond the words on the page to new levels of understanding and creativity. Reading is not just about absorbing information and finding ready-made answers, in what Rosenblatt calls "efferent" reading (1976); it is thought-in-action. We create our own meanings and truths as we transact with each text.

But in the "Google universe," with its instantaneous information, how we read is being changed fundamentally. Processing the multiple and rapid im-

ages and words in online texts does not call for inferential, analytical, and critical reading, with its concomitant visualizations and personal connections. Readers faced with on-screen texts tend to skim for pieces of often unrelated information. The associative connections represented by Proust may be lost in the multimedia aspect of digital reading. My own experiences with the differences in young students' patience with — and ability to read — more literary young adult texts (e.g., *Bridge to Terabithia*) ten years ago and today resonate with her concern. Wolf cautions that we need to be "vigilant" in order to preserve "the profound generativity of the reading brain."

Wolf has chosen to tell a story that includes a thorough and comprehensive review of current neuroscience on the reading brain; she has chosen not to include a scholarly review and analysis of reading research. However *Proust and the Squid* would be useful as one of several texts for a doctoral seminar in literacy, for there is much to learn in her extremely readable story, a story that provokes new questions about contemporary and future reading issues.

References

Cambourne, B. 1993. *The whole story: Natural learning and the acquisition of literacy in the classroom*. New York: Scholastic.

Paterson, K. 2004. *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: HarperTeen.

Rosenblatt, L. 1976. *Literature as exploration*. New York: Modern Language Association.

Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society

By Carola Suarez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova

Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008

Reviewed by Theresa McGinnis

The largest-growing segment of the child population in the United States is children of immigrants. *Learning a New Land* provides the reader with an interdisciplinary study on the complexities and challenges immigrant children face, including perceived opportunities, anti-immigrant hostilities, and the roles of gender and social and economic contexts. Overall, Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Todorva's contribution serves as a stark reminder that U.S. schools, particularly middle schools and high schools, are not prepared to meet the needs of this segment of our population, and that changes need to be made at the national policy level to help children of immigrants achieve success.

The study focuses exclusively on the experiences of recently arrived foreign-born youth from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean, whom Suarez-Orozco et al. followed over a five-year period. The authors used a complex mixed method approach that draws from the fields of anthropology and psychology, and provides both longitudinal and comparative data. Thus the book shares in-depth statistical data while giving "voice to the uniqueness and complexity of each evolving immigrant story" (p. 27). In addition, case studies illustrate immigrant youth's journies and consider how multiple influences such as school contexts, family, and peer friendships intersect with the personal characteristics of each child. The richness and depth of the research makes this book well suited for practitioners, administrators, graduate students, and policymakers.

Situated within the demands of the global economy, Suarez-Orozco et al. detail the changing requirements that youth will need to be successful in the 21st Century. Dispelling romanticized notions about immigrants from 100 years ago, who were successful in spite of dropping out of high school, the authors explain that the demands of the 21st Century workplace are higher and youth who drop out of high school today will continue to live in poverty. They also explain that the demands of the 21st Century workplace require "the capacity to think analytically and creatively both within a single discipline as well as in an interdisciplinary manner, the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds and an understanding of both historical and global perspectives" (p. 88). They report that schools that require high standards and expectations through rig-

Theresa McGinnis is an assistant professor in the Literacy Studies Department at Hofstra University. She has worked with immigrant youth for over 12 years as a teacher, tutor, and researcher. Her research interests include the connections between literacy, discourses, and identity, particularly among young adolescents.

orous and engaging curricula can support youth in meeting these workplace demands.

Sadly, however, as the authors report, most schools do not meet these standards, particularly schools serving immigrant children living in lower socioeconomic and segregated neighborhoods. Instead the authors describe these schools as fields of endangerment that are "toxic to healthy learning and development" (p. 89) and as "dysfunctional warehouses that nurture little but anomie and a sense of grievance" (p. 368). It is difficult for any student to flourish in these contexts.

Portraits of high-achieving students and students with improvement in academic achievement are included in this book. It discusses multiple and complex factors that affect a youth's high or low achievement. Factors that are critical to young people's academic success include "family resources, social supports outside of the home, school contexts, and the child's disposition (which here means the ability to work hard, to remain optimistic yet realistic, and to recruit the support of others, including peers, friends, teachers, and counselors)" (pp. 355-356). English-language proficiency is also thoroughly discussed as a significant factor in the immigrant child's academic success. The authors remind the reader that even with the highest-quality English language instruction (which was difficult to find), it can take seven to ten years to gain academic proficiency.

Suarez- Orozco et al. point out that "while some immigrant youth find their path and thrive in their new country, too many lose their way" (p. 363). From their sample of 309 immigrant children in this five-year study, the authors conclude that "only 24% of immigrant youth thrive in our schools while over half see their grades decline the longer they are in the country" (p. 366).

This book is an important addition to the fields of immigration and education. It captures the realities of "those youth who are contending with the profound changes of moving to a new country" (p. 6). It teaches the reader much about our national priorities, values, and goals with regard to the education of poor, immigrant, and urban youth. The book raises many important questions about current testing policies, language policies, the plight of undocumented immigrant youth, mentoring programs, and support for hyphenated and transnational identities. Suarez-Orozco et al. leave the reader wondering, will our schools that have been failing to prepare poor and minority students for generations continue to "stifle the energy of those who arrive ready to succeed at all costs, or will [they] match this enthusiasm with resources to help [all students] excel?"

Dutch Double

By Fran Gordon and Faye Tischler

Published by Inkwater Press (Portland, OR, 2007)

Reviewed by Esther K. Willison

This is a small book full of large ideas. It is the story of 13-year-old Katie, or Katje, who rides a horse back in time to save a village from destruction. She is aided by Lawrence, a friendly Mohawk Indian who is helpful to early Dutch settlers. I believe the novel will be attractive to young people between the ages of ten and fourteen.

Dutch Double is a combination of historic fiction, mystery, thriller, and coming-of-age tale. Katie Van Epps lives in Schenectady, New York, in the 1990's with her father, her stepmother Anna, and her older brother, Gerritt.

In reality, the Stockade section of Schenectady, where Katie and her family live, was established in the 1600s by fifteen Dutch families who came from nearby Albany, New York. The community built a stockade fence around their village to protect themselves, but in February 1690 French soldiers, with the help of enemy Iroquois, attacked the small settlement during a blizzard. Sixty people died and the settlement was burned to the ground. The Stockade neighborhood, including houses built *after* 1690, exists at the same site today. There is also, now, a statue of Lawrence in the middle of the Stockade.

The book is filled with historical references and facts about that time in history and that specific area. Gordon and Tischler have done an extensive job of

Esther K. Willison was one of the founders of The Open School, an alternative, ungraded public school in Schenectady, New York. She also has served as the assistant director of a teen theater bringing AIDS education into the public schools. Currently, Esther works for The Open Door Bookstore in Schenectady.

researching their setting. Yet these details are so naturally embedded in the story that there is not even a hint of "lecturing." This isn't easy to do, particularly in books for kids, but these authors are discerning writers. They have not been afraid to intersperse throughout the book Dutch words that are easy to understand from the context. There is a glossary at the end of the book with all these words included.

Katie receives from her father, on her 13th birthday, a mysterious antique button, a family heirloom. She notices that in one of the family portraits in her house her relative is wearing a button identical to her own, and it glows from the picture! What's more, Katie's button becomes warm, even hot, at crucial moments during the story. However, in spite of this magical touch, it is Katie's own initiative that turns the course of events — not supernatural forces.

Dutch Double is full of suspenseful adventures. Each chapter ends with a paragraph which skips the reader's heartbeat. For example, after Katie has shifted back in time and is the servant in a Dutch family, she hides her button where she sleeps, to keep it safe. However, "she didn't see Pieter [the youngest son] slip silently into the room. He had been watching her the whole time." Will Pieter steal the button? And if he does will Katie ever get it back? There are also several narrow escapes, and there is always the question, will Katie be able to return to her own century?

The most stirring adventure in this tale is Katie's personal transformation. Katie is a sensitive young adult, still grieving for her mother who died three years before this story begins. She is full of anger and resentment towards her stepmother. Katie is also appropriately disappointed when she sees that the box in her father's hand was too small to be the new camera she wanted for her birthday. Later in the story, when Katie realizes her button has been stolen, she breaks down and sobs in the arms of Mevrouw Van Vorst, her Dutch employer. "It had been a long time since Katie allowed herself to be comforted by anyone, although Anna had often tried…. She was so frightened. She was so homesick…." Her responsiveness toward others begins to grow. Thus, her experiences, living in the past with her Dutch family, prepare and enlighten her for her life in the present. She begins to accept her step-mother's kindness, develops a better understanding of her own heritage, and appreciates her safe environment.

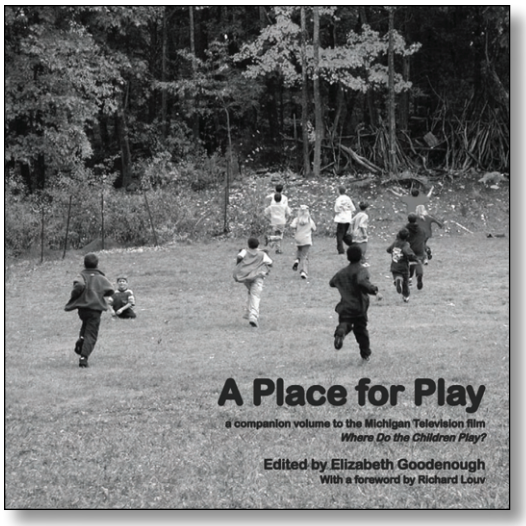
As if historic fiction, mystery, thrills, and emotional growth isn't enough, *Dutch Double* raises a number of moral issues. These include issues of stealing and forgiveness and when it is right, if ever, to lie. At one point, Katie must also decide whether to save herself or the village. Finally, there is the issue of bullying (unfortunately a prominent present-day topic in the schools).

The authors of *Dutch Double* have also written a program called "Dutch Double Connections," a series of workshops designed to help teachers integrate the novel into their curriculums. In the workshops, several learning approaches address higher level thinking skills. In addition, the workshops include various activities to help teachers engage and motivate students and to form more trusting relationships with their students, as well as between the students themselves. The workshop offerings also include an historical overview of the time period and various web-based and real-life activities that dovetail with the novel.

Dutch Double is a significant contribution to children's literature. Its themes, personal relationships, and character development make it a rich and expansive experience for kids. I believe adults will enjoy it as well.

Manuscript Submissions

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. They may also be submitted as e-mail attachments sent to <BillCrain@aol.com>. All mss. should be typed double spaced 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 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.

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 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.

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.

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 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

There now exists a solid theoretical foundation for the core principles of our educational practice: that a child's primary teacher is experience and, likewise, that living and learning are one and the same; that kids are born with an inner guidance system which tells them exactly what they need and when; that it isn't outside regulation and control they need, but rather a nurturing and supportive environment in which they can develop their own strategies for self-regulation and self-control; that the freedom to choose and explore are the bedrock of the learning process; and finally, that children don't need outside forces to structure and motivate their learning because they are fully capable of structuring and motivating their own.

—— Chris Mercogliano