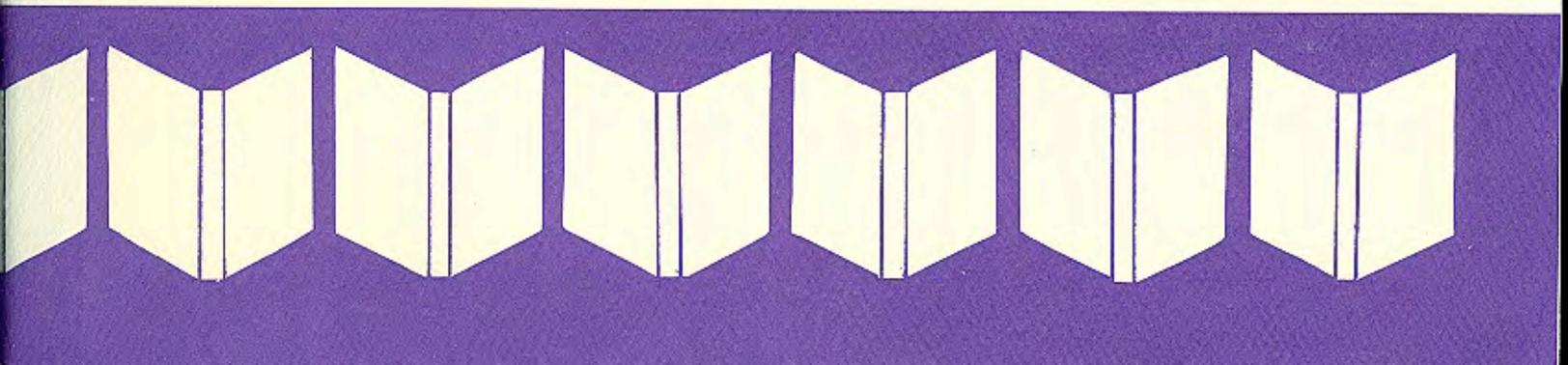


ISSN No.  
0146-9283

Spring  
1997

# educational considerations

published at kansas state university college of education



## GUEST EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Almost five years ago we at *Educational Considerations* had an issue largely devoted to the social and philosophical foundations of education. There was widespread comment on the edition because many who write on foundational topics are apt to stretch the boundaries (or stiffen them up, depending on the readers' perspective.) I expect that no thinking person will read this issue and not take fairly serious offense to something in one or more of the articles. Such is to be expected when thoughtful men and women meet and exchange thoughts.

Although the last few articles that I have penned have been vaguely (well, maybe it hasn't been so vague) critical of the uncontrolled and uncritical enthusiasm of some of my colleagues for technology, I used technology to set up this issue of *Educational Considerations*. Almost all of the manuscripts in this issue were scanned by James Elliott of the Topeka Educational Center who then applied the mysteries of the OCR (Optical Character Recognition) program to what was scanned. It is all very amazing and deserves watching. I thank him for his efforts and hope that his soul has not been endangered by such close proximity to high technology—touch, pitch and be defiled!

I was holding forth on "Families, Metaphysical Dreams, and Villages" and our youngest son, Joshua, was chiming in with ideas which I thought were worthwhile and on target. We decided that this was truly a collaborative effort and so his name is added. It may be something that he will live to regret when the Postmodernist Horde completes its occupation.

These are articles which require some reflection, and perhaps some meditation—which is not a very popular activity in 1997. Sit back with a serious adult beverage and a good cigar—both delightfully politically incorrect these days—and in the spirit of Chesterton and Belloc, two curmudgeonly friends of mine who (at least Chesterton) died before I was born, read the articles. One can at the same time enjoy life to the full and yet avoid the hysterical optimism against which Richard Weaver warned us.

Enjoy the read!

G. Daniel Harden  
GUEST EDITOR  
Washburn University  
Topeka, Kansas  
March 3, 1997

# educational considerations

Vol. XXIV, Number 2, Spring 1997

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**Educational Considerations** is published at the College of Education, Kansas State University. **Educational Considerations** and Kansas State University do not accept responsibility for the views expressed in articles, reviews, and other contributions appearing in this publication. In keeping with the professional educational concept that responsible free expression can promote learning and encourage awareness of truth, contributors are invited to submit conclusions and opinions concerned with varying points of view in and about education.

**Educational Considerations** is published two times yearly. Editorial offices are located at the College of Education, Bluemont Hall, 1100 Mid-Campus Drive, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506-5301. Correspondence regarding manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. No

remuneration is offered for accepted articles or other materials submitted.

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Printed in the United States of America.

The flow of writing is rarely derivative of free thought.

# Experience and the Philosophy of Composing

Daniel J. Royer

Educational foundations require a philosophical framework for thinking about students, the world, and the educative events through which we see them brought together. But what philosophical options do we have in this postmodern era? There has been talk about the "end of metaphysics" and even the "end of Philosophy." (Kane; Rorty). But this is not new. Modern eulogies for metaphysics date back to Hume's judgment that it "contain nothing but sophistry and illusion" and his injunction that we "commit it then to the flames." (quoted in Post, 16). And Alfred North Whitehead reminds us that it was Hume also who repudiated the philosophic basis of science, yet adds, science "has never cared to justify its faith or to explain its meaning; and has remained blandly indifferent to its refutation by Hume" (*Science* 16). But educators don't have the luxury of the renaissance scientist who could narrowly focus with detachment and impunity on the world of stubborn facts: our purposes require that we explain our faith, justify our meanings, and sound the depths of educative events. We must remain philosophers.

Postmodern philosophy is an option, but there are at least two distinct traditions claiming that title. I believe that our most viable option is the second. The first, and most familiar, is the anti-metaphysical philosophy led by the proponents of deconstruction. Its historical roots are traced in such figures as Hume, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Davidson, and Rorty. The second tradition, calling itself *constructive* postmodernism, has sought to ally Peirce, James, Dewey, Bergson, Whitehead, Hartshorne and others in the pragmatic-process tradition by emphasizing the way these philosophers have corrected the shortsightedness of the moderns.<sup>1</sup> Both traditions claim to address modernist problematics: the former renders them otiose and makes a deconstructive move "around" them; the latter reunites them with pre-philosophic experience for illumination and guidance in the effort to work "through" them.

Modernism presents us with a dichotomy. We have a human world and a world of nature; a world "in here" and a world "out there." This disjunction between the world of human thought and feeling and the world of science is well documented in the history of many academic disciplines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Stephen Franklin explains that we now live in a Kantian culture, a culture that has abandoned

the claim to genuine knowledge about the human world and limits its real knowledge claims to the phenomenal world of "scientific" and "factual" understanding. (79)<sup>2</sup> Thus, modernism takes knowledge of human affairs to be a matter of making practical postulates about the preconditions of our actions. In other words, cut off from nature and from our basis for making theoretical claims about what is the case in the world itself, modernists live with a bifurcation that traces its most rigorous formulation back to Kant's distinction between the *phenomenal* world of measurable sensation and the *noumenal* world of freedom, ethics, art, immortality, and metaphysics. The former yields facts about what is the case in the world; the latter reveals the presuppositions of our cultural commitments. Franklin says this distinction raises a fundamental question: "Do these bifurcations serve to protect our human integrity or do they destroy our human integrity by isolating us from the very world which provides us with our context? Western culture is profoundly ill at ease with this question" (77).

In education we see the modernist influence in the compartmentalization of subjects, in the competition among research methodologies, in behaviorism, and in mechanistic views of learning. That we are still moderns is evidenced most viciously in our educational research where there is a sharp distinction between the cognitive and the affective.

The deconstructionist postmodern response to these dualisms leaves the world well lost and abandons the rational aim of demonstrating the systematic coherence of man and nature, thought and language, individuals and societies, mind and body, thinking and feeling. The constructive postmodern response, on the other hand, is working from a theory about experience where these dual features of nature are understood as aspects of a unified experience. In Whitehead, for example, there is praise for the Romantic poets because they reacted against these static bifurcations and, valuing synthesis over analysis, sought to reunite human experience with nature, while also revising the view of nature that had been reduced to mechanistic push and pull. Wordsworth writes,

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things—  
We murder to dissect.

Unlike its deconstructive counterpart, constructive postmodernism does not reject everything associated with modernism and this is one example. It seeks to reunite aesthetic intuition and scientific analysis. Shelly loved science. Romantic poets remind Whitehead that science supplies us with only a limited abstraction, a partial and simplified view of the world. "The point I wish to make," Whitehead says, "is that we forget how strained and paradoxical is the view of nature which modern science imposes on our thoughts. Wordsworth, in the height of genius, expresses the concrete facts of our apprehension, facts which are distorted in the scientific analysis. Is it not possible that the standardised concepts of science are only valid within narrow limitations, perhaps too narrow for science itself?" (*Science* 84).

The remaining sections of this essay will attempt to make good my claim that constructive postmodern philosophy can serve as a foundation for guiding educators through the perplexities of educative events and illuminate their relational fullness. In this essay, I can only suggest that this philosophy has far-reaching application across the curriculum and point to other scholarship that helps make this case.<sup>3</sup> I can show, however, that as a foundation for thinking about education, its philosophical footings are deep, and I can demonstrate specifically the shape and possibilities of a Whiteheadian view of experience and written composition. I will begin with one aspect of Whitehead's description of the nature of events generally and then discuss the nature of composing as an event.

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Daniel Royer is a professor at Grand Valley State University and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. His professional interests are composition studies and process philosophy as it affects education.

### *The Nature of Events and the Unity of Experience*

Whitehead describes the unity of experience in terms of generic features common to all events. He calls fundamental events, "actual occasions." Whitehead argues that events, rather than substances, are the basic building blocks of reality, and in this, his analysis agrees with contemporary physics. Hence, his philosophy is relational and opposes static independence whether in the physicist's laboratory or the sociologist's study of human culture. For Whitehead, there is a generic structure to all events and he analyzes them in a highly technical, systematic manner. These common, basic structures, as complicated as they are in their systematic context, he explains, lie at the base of all experience, human and non-human. Every event, therefore, can be understood in terms of common structures. Complex events that endure through time, what psychologists call "molar activity" (e.g. walking the dog, visiting the sea, writing a poem) have an isomorphic relationship to the singular actual occasions of which they are composed.

In order to appreciate the value of Whitehead's analysis of actual occasions for understanding educative events such as writing, one must understand the way that the metaphysical analysis of such events integrates human experience with the non-human world. Once this connection is made clear, I will compare the metaphysical structure of events to the peculiarities of writing or composing events and seek thereby to view the fuller meaning of Whitehead's theory for education generally while at the same time we gain clearer insight into the nature and practice of writing.

### *Causal Efficacy*

The nineteenth-century Romantics appealed to tacit knowing and to the deep, gravid feeling that pervades our experience in the world especially noticeable when in nature and during pastoral moments of reflection. When Whitehead says that the "romantic reaction was a protest on behalf of value," (*Science* 94) he is directing our attention to a metaphysical proposition that is denied by modernism: the unity of experience. This unity, however, is not the deconstructive postmodern unity of shared cultural commitments, language, politics, or ideology—a kind of solidarity that we seek in our common alienation from the non-human world. Instead, it is a unity of feeling that runs deeper than consciousness itself. Whitehead puts it this way: "The brooding, immediate presences of things are an obsession to Wordsworth. What the theory does do is to edge cognitive mentality away from being the necessary substratum of the unity of experience. That unity is now placed in the unity of an event. Accompanying this unity, there may or there may not be cognition" (*Science* 92).

How different Whitehead's view is from the contemporary notion that language and cognition are the foundation (and the sole determiner) rather than the apex or late achievement of deeply rooted experience. Whitehead's constructive postmodern conclusion is related to his rejection of Locke's (and the prevailing postmodern) identification of perception with sense perception and the deconstructive postmodern claim that there is no bottom layer of experience common to humanity, the more deep and more general "something there" described here by William James.

It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call "something there," more deep and more general than any of the special and particular "senses" by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed. (58)

Are we, as the deconstructive postmodernists imagine, cut off from our noumenal grounding and contact with the perceptions, feelings, and experiences that make the human world

count for more than the projection of our cultural-linguistic commitments? And if not, is there still some sense in which our phenomenal world the world of scientific study and ordinary sense perception is socially constructed? Is our knowledge of one world any less reliable than the other?

To answer these questions, Whitehead, like James, develops a distinction between *sensuous* and *nonsensuous* perception. The former he describes as handy, vivid, well-defined, superficial, and derivative: "it halts at the present, and indulges in a manageable self-enjoyment derived from the immediacy of the show of things" (*Symbolism* 44). The latter is massive, primitive, underived, and "however insistent, is vague, haunting, unmanageable . . . heavy with the contact of the things gone by, which lay their grip on our immediate selves" (*Symbolism* 43-44). These two modes of perception are essentially two different sources of information about the world. In Whitehead's technical vocabulary *presentational immediacy* (the former) and *causal efficacy* (the latter) are brought together in the complex experience of *symbolic reference*, the correlation of these two modes resulting in what the actual world is for us as our datum for conceptual analysis. These levels of experience are prereflective and prelinguistic, although enhanced by both reflection and language.

The distinction is important because it supplies the conceptual grounds for talking about our relation to the "external" world. There is a conceptual problem to be overcome. If Kant's two worlds, the noumenal and the phenomenal, are to be reunited in the broader notion of experience, there must be some sense in which the world "out there" is handed over to and occupies the world "in here." If our very human lived-world "out there" is to be known with more conviction and authority than Hume's habits of mind or Kant's categories of thought, if we don't merely construct the human world of freedom, ethics, art, nature, feeling, immortality, and metaphysics, there must be an explanation for the real presence of the noumenal in the phenomenal, some theory that accounts for how the external world really informs and participates in the subjectivity of personal experience.

Whitehead's theory of symbolic reference, with its accompanying notions of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy, introduces a theory and a way of talking about the integration and unity of experience. The brooding, immediate presence of things in Wordsworth is Whitehead's causal efficacy. Surface features of color and shape are presented in the mode of presentational immediacy. It is not the case (as with Hume and his modernist successors) that our easy familiarity with presentational immediacy makes causal efficacy a plausible inference. On the contrary, Whitehead says,

In the dark there are vague presences, doubtfully feared; in the silence, the irresistible causal efficacy of nature presses itself upon us; in the vagueness of the low hum of insects in an August woodland, the inflow into ourselves of feeling from enveloping nature overwhelms us; in the dim consciousness of half-sleep, the presentations of sense fade away, and we are left with the vague feelings of influences from vague things around us. It is quite untrue that the feelings of various types of influences are dependent upon the familiarity of well-marked sensa in immediate presentment. (*Process* 176)

Nature impinges on or permeates personal experience just as, more obviously, persons impinge on nature. Perception in the mode of causal efficacy is our primitive state of being in the world. Again, Whitehead remarks, "those periods in our lives—when the perception of the pressure from a world of things with characters in their own right, characters mysteriously moulding our own natures, becomes strongest—those periods are the product of a reversion to some primitive state." (*Symbolism* 44)

These periods are the subject matter of Wordsworth's poetry. This massive, primitive, underived, perception is, to repeat, "heavy with the contact of the things gone by, which lay their grip on our immediate selves" (*Symbolism* 44). The world about us, Whitehead explains, participates in each new moment of our lives. Wordsworth supplies some of the most telling phenomenological evidence to which a Whiteheadian can appeal.<sup>4</sup>

An implicit point not to be overlooked, however, should now be made explicit: "Causal efficacy is the hand of the settled past in the formation of the present" (*Symbolism* 50). The clearest phenomenological evidence of causal efficacy can be discerned in our awareness of the immediate past. Our awareness that each present moment begins with a conformation to the immediate past is another way of recognizing the world from which we issue, or as Whitehead says, "the inescapable condition round which we shape ourselves," (*Symbolism* 58) impinging on, and participating in, our subjective immediacy. A moment of experience begins with the issue of the past, we consider and respond, and we hand over to a future moment our creative synthesis. The character and structure of this event or moment of experience thus described is what Whitehead describes in technical detail as "conrescence," i.e., the coming together of an actual occasion. It is important to keep in mind for the remainder of this essay that the basic structure of this conrescence is isomorphic to such enduring events like "writing a paper."

#### *The Solidarity Thesis and Two Principles of Whitehead's Organic Philosophy<sup>5</sup>*

Whitehead's argument is much different from the ones offered by those who follow the (deconstructive) linguistic turn in contemporary thought. The claim that we have two sources of information about the world instead of one causal efficacy and presentational immediacy—the latter derivative of the former, puts human knowing back in real contact with the kind of experience that informs our religious, artistic, ethical, and creative educational lives. Whitehead does not deny that human knowers have a hand in constructing the world as it emerges in experience and is handed over to superseding moments. His *principle of process* claims, for example, that "how an actual entity becomes constitutes [i.e. creates] what that actual entity is" (*Process* 34–35). But Whitehead's metaphysics does insist that we are not cut off from the noumenal grounds of our existence. His *principle of relativity*, in this regard, maintains that "every item in its [actual entity's] universe is involved in each conrescence" (*Process* 33). More generally, this means that there are no radical bifurcations within nature and experience, including human experience. Each new moment of experience inherits its entire corresponding universe. This view entails a kind of "constructionism" far more radical than deconstructive postmodernists imagine, but it is of a different, one could say, *realist* philosophical order. As one interpreter says, "the fundamental thesis of Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of organism is that the final actualities of the universe cannot be abstracted from one another because each actuality, though individual and discrete, is internally related to all other actualities" (Nobo 1). This *thesis of solidarity* is an important metaphysical claim, for it supplies a conceptual view of our human world that accounts for the simultaneousness of our individualness and our plurality, a paradox that lies at the core of many postmodern dilemmas. The principles of *process* and *relativity*, and the thesis of *solidarity* are fundamental in Whitehead's philosophy. This process theory of experience is the grounding for what Whitehead calls a "provisional realism." And without denying the many ways that symbolic use of language constructs our lived-experience, it also supplies the metaphysical basis for a constructive postmodern alternative to the variety of constructionism that so often slips headlong into relativism.

#### *Feeling as Foundation*

Generally speaking, this view of experience suggests that feeling is the foundation of a process philosophy of education. Howard Woodhouse argues from a Whiteheadian perspective that physical elation, enjoyment, satisfaction, and even pain "ground all our experience in a direct way to our bodies and, through them, to the world around us." "These feelings," he adds, "are rarely acknowledged as having any pedagogical or philosophical importance, and yet they are the root of all human experience" (41). But "feeling" is a technical term for Whitehead. Emotions are akin to feeling, but feeling may be preconscious. Causal efficacy is feeling, but in phenomenological terms, so is the physical reception of our past, the enjoyment of things received and the entertainment of possibility in the present, and the satisfaction that accompanies the choice and determinateness with which we hand ourselves as new creatures over to a promising future.

And yet there is another feature related to feeling and causal efficacy that figures in a general foundation for a process philosophy of education. Feeling connects us organically with ourselves and the universe. Again, Woodhouse makes this very point and illustrates it with this example:

the radiance of the sunset is a process imbued with feelings that can reach out from the depths of space to someone watching it here on earth. In feeling the beauty of the sunset (its warmth, light, and energy), the subject appreciates it as "the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality" (*Science* 199). That is, s/he feels the process of the suns setting as an integral part of the same rhythm that runs through his/her own experience. This rhythm carries both the subject and the sunset, as object of the experience, from an initial dim awareness of one another through a process in which their feelings begin to merge to a sense of satisfaction in which those feelings become fully integrated with each other. In achieving this unity of feeling, the subjective and objective poles of experience merge with one another, thereby breaking down any distinction between them. . . . This rhythm of becoming, founded on fluid feelings, provides an organic link between human beings and the rest of the universe, a link that makes new and creative configurations possible. (42–43)

The upshot is this: Whitehead's philosophy argues that subjective experience retains real and efficacious ties to the world without. But it must be kept in mind, that his is not what philosophers call *naive* or *direct* realism. Ordinary human experience is rooted in primitive modes of perception that we share in common with, for example, plants—we both may be unconsciously attracted to a warm, sunny window. But in higher forms of experience such as consciousness, vision, and language use, many animals make complex use of a symbols. In such cases, although we gain much in terms of precision and ease of expression (e.g., words are very handy for calling attention to slick spots on the highway) we often pay the price through error (the "water" may only have been rising heat). For Whitehead, all experience is imbued with symbolic activity. Language is symbolic and thus it can elicit in our experience things that would otherwise have remained in the dim shadows of causal efficacy. This is why we love our poets. Language thus has a hand in constructing our lived world. Nevertheless, human experience, despite all the errors it suffers for presentational immediacy, finds itself in the grip of the vague and unmanageable things gone by.

#### *The Nature of Writing Events and the Composing Life*

Modernism's legacy to writing instruction has come to be called "current-traditional" rhetoric, and to a large extent, this pedagogy is associated with what has come to be called the

*modes of discourse.* One historian of rhetoric describes current-traditionalism this way:

Such convenient abstractions as . . . the forms of discourse were ideally suited to the purpose of instruction in a subject that had been cut off from all relation with other subjects in the curriculum and, in a sense, from life itself. . . . They represent an unrealistic view of the writing process, a view that assumes writing is done by formula and in a social vacuum. They turn the attention of both teacher and student toward an academic exercise instead of toward a meaningful act of communication in a social context. Like Unity-Coherence-Emphasis or any other set of static abstractions concerning writing they substitute mechanical for organic conceptions and therefore distort the real nature of writing. (Kitchhaber 220–21).

In addition to static abstraction, isolation of subjects from experience and life, modernism in composition studies tends to perpetuate a naive or direct realism when it theorizes about the writers' relation to the world. Consider, for example, what Sharon Crowley says in her consideration of recent writing theory:

The modern model required a double assurance that human understanding could be brought into direct contact with the things of the world and that the syntactic order of language corresponded in some essential fashion with the ordering of things in nature. Locke grounded this double set of representative relationships in the primacy of sensation: the senses handed over accurate information about the world, which the operations of the mind translated into ideas. (9)

Although Crowley simplifies Locke in this quote to the extent that she has mistakenly represented him as a naive realist, her point that Locke is one source of the modern model still stands.<sup>6</sup> Crowley points also to another consequence of modernist current-traditionalism, which is implied in her quote above: its view of invention "trivializes the process of knowledge acquisition any subject whatsoever can be read up on and mastered for the occasion" (164).

A modernist view of invention (to take just one concern of writing teachers) presupposes a substance rather than a process metaphysics. That is, it assumes a Cartesian self or mind that is independent, requiring nothing other than itself in order to exist. In this way, modernism's principle doctrines contrast sharply with Whitehead's principles of relativity, process, and solidarity outlined above. When this static view of the independent subject is coupled with the modernist close identification of experience with sense perception, what follows is a mechanical view of writing: the senses hand over the sense-data to the mind; the mind transforms this data into novel cognitions through such operations as association, generalization, comparison, contrast, and similar modes of thought. Furthermore, these presumed cognitive operations take over the imaginations of writing teachers. Current-traditional pedagogy thrives exclusively on these mental operations taken as narrow modes of discourse. And finally, modernism fosters the view that writing is a singular set of independent operations rather than a matter of synthesizing a plethora of data presented in experience.

Developing a deconstructive postmodern reaction to current-traditional pedagogy is now a major concern of writing professionals. Karen Burke LeFevre represents a position that embodies some of the Kantian themes I've discussed above. Her view emphasizes the role of language as a foundation for a social perspective on invention and takes a position that involves "Ernst Cassirer's extension of Kant's philosophy to include symbolization and the role of culture in influencing the ways we constitute reality" (96). LeFevre affirms Kant's dualism of things in themselves—the world "out there"—separated

from, as she says, "the a priori categories according to which we construct what we know" (107) and tells readers that "Kant leads us to see that science is used not to study the actual things in the world, but to study our ways of knowing and understanding those things" (108).<sup>7</sup> Although LeFevre repeatedly states Cassirer's conclusion that language "is an active agent in a process of constituting reality" (119) and tells readers that this fact is important to writers and their teachers, she does not embrace the more radical claim that the reality that is not language is of absolutely no importance. LeFevre aims mainly to introduce a social view to balance the long-standing tradition of rhetorical invention as the private act of the individual writer.

James Berlin's deconstructive postmodern argument, however, represents a step beyond LeFevre's moderate (by contrast) Kantian posture. Berlin holds that "the perceiving subject, the discourse communities of which the subject is a part, and the material world itself are all the constructions of an historical discourse, of the ideological formulations inscribed in the language-mediated practical activity of a particular time and place" ("Rhetoric" 489). Our language, according to this view, indeed frames the limits of our knowledge claims. Berlin maintains that

the observer, the discourse community, and the material conditions of existence are all verbal constructs. This does not mean that the three do not exist apart from language: they do. This does mean that we cannot talk and write about them—indeed we cannot know them—apart from language ("Rhetoric" 488).

From a constructive postmodern perspective, Berlin is partially correct: language is symbolic activity and one of the most important tools for eliciting and selecting specific things out of the welter of the vague background in our experience. But he exaggerates. Language, he summarizes, "creates the real world by organizing it, by determining what will be perceived and not perceived, by indicating what has meaning and what is meaningless" ("Composition" 775). Whereas the modernist burdens the isolated and private subject with the sole responsibility for experience, the deconstructive postmodernist more or less takes the world itself to be a product of linguistic processes.

Neither modernism nor deconstructive postmodern philosophy encourages the exploration of causal efficacy and pre-linguistic experience as a valuable resource for writers. Theories about writing like theories of education, typically overlook feeling and pre-linguistic experience. It is time now to suggest some of the possibilities.

#### *The Phenomenology of a Writing Event*

Following Woodhouse and my own explication of causal efficacy, I have argued that feeling and primitive nonsensuous perception are highly relevant to our philosophy and our pedagogy. Physical elation, enjoyment, satisfaction, and even pain, to repeat Woodhouse, "ground all our experience in a direct way to our bodies and, through them, to the world around us" (41). What is missing from prevailing educational theories is a corpus of systematic phenomenologies of learning. Whitehead's philosophy, like Dewey and other constructive postmoderns, always returns to pre-philosophic experience to inherit the full meaning of a theory as well as for suggestion and direction. What writers tell us about writing has been enormously helpful for theory construction, but relative to what happens in raw experience, as theorists we typically focus on high abstractions and miss what is most interesting in experience. The compositionist Peter Elbow suggests that composition studies needs a new kind of concrete evidence.

The nascent interest in phenomenology in the profession is a good sign: a respect for the facts of what actually

happens in writers. We've had a decade of protocol analysis and television cameras trained on writer's, all fueled by a devotion to the facts about the writing process. But feelings are facts, and until this research bothers to investigate the powerful effects that feelings often have on a writer's thoughts and choices, I will have a hard time trusting it. . . . My own investigations show me that feelings often *shape* my cognitive choices. When we get a more careful phenomenological research, I suspect that one result will be to give us more respect for this suspect business of being excited, aroused, carried away, "rolling." (205)

The field of writing could greatly profit from what Nobo calls a "guided phenomenology" whereby the description of an experience such as writing is "guided," in a minimal sense, by metaphysical presuppositions. The idea is that the presuppositions might direct a phenomenological description that can help make us aware of previously unnoticed aspects of our experience. A corpus of composing phenomenologies might suggest to writing professionals a real sense of the importance for what Elbow calls the "dangerous territory" of feeling, felt sense and experience (204). A corpus of phenomenologies might suggest theories that are closer to the lived experience and raw pulses of the composing life. As an alternative to a pedagogy that traffics in high abstractions like "prewrite, write, rewrite," a corpus of good phenomenological descriptions could function for researchers much like a canon does in literary studies or perhaps like case studies do in psychology. Such a corpus could be studied by novices and experts as basic texts that document a theory, while challenging its adequacy.

It is not uncommon to see essays like those in Thomas Waldrup's *Writers on Writing*, but rarely are these authors attempting to write anything like a systematic description of the composing event. There is at least one exception however in Waldrup's collection and I nominate it to my canon of composing phenomenologies: a marvelous piece of work by Louise Wetherbee Phelps entitled "Rhythm and Pattern in a Composing Life." I have discussed this essay elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> What I want to emphasize in this essay is the general sense in which causal efficacy is related to the writer's experience. I should note, by the way, that Phelps's description, as Whiteheadian as it is, was written without knowledge of Whitehead's philosophy.

Phelps begins her description by reminding us of the vastness of the scope of what needs explaining. She writes:

Much of my ongoing composing process is submerged below consciousness and only occasionally and partially rises to the *level of intensity* where it can be felt . . . . In my life as a writer part of the stream of my language is continually being directed in all these ways toward multiple, vaguely anticipated or possible textual events, some of which are gradually discriminated from their matrix and realized as individual entities. I see this enlarged, holistic "composing process" as the primary reality to be explained. (243 my emphasis)

What is suggested by this phenomenology and affirmed when we introduce Whitehead's metaphysics to guide us, is the notion that the roots of creativity reside in the very structures of experience, in the welter of pre-cognitive experience out of which consciousness, language, thought, and writing emerges. *Intensity* is Whitehead's word to capture the character of this emergence. The more novelty that is integrated in the becoming of an actual entity, the more intensity that entity attains in its satisfaction because of the greater degree of contrast these conditions entail. Phelps describes such a moment as "a joyous state of physical excitement and the pure power felt in the stomach and rising up in the chest as a flood of energy that pours out in rapid, explosive bursts of language. It

is a pleasantly nervous state" (247). And then she elaborates: "It means being wide open to stimuli from every direction and source. In this state any experience, no matter how trivial, may suddenly seem strikingly relevant, funneling into the expanding connective web of my thought" (247). Surely Wordsworth would approve, for we can recognize here in an intense but otherwise quite ordinary writing event, something akin to his "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion." Or if we consider a poet of extreme experience like Emily Dickinson, we have this: "When I feel that the top of my head has been taken off, then I know, this is poetry."

We have elation, enjoyment, satisfaction, and pain. The flow of writing is rarely derivative of ordered forethought. Writing an essay is not a trip to the grocery store. Causal efficacy informs the critical moments of creative work, but it can't be expected to perform on demand in the classroom. We, and our students, need *composing lives*. Here is another glimpse at Phelps:

At any moment in my daily round—fixing dinner, playing ping-pong, listening to music, talking with friends—such moments of composing attention may crystallize in my consciousness as images, fragments of text, shadowy patterns: sometimes transient, merging smoothly back into the verbal background; sometimes fixing themselves in notes or talk or memory; sometimes pursued effortfully through long periods of sustained composition" (242–43).

I have argued above that the principles of *process, relativity, and solidarity* fundamental in Whitehead's philosophy are also guides for our philosophical foundation as educators. The themes these principles illustrate are varied, but among them is the argument that subjective experience obtains real and efficacious ties to the world in a way that unifies our experience. But more is involved than this, so once again, Phelps' phenomenology illustrates and underscores the nature of the efficacious power (and where it leads) that can be discerned in the unity of our connection to the world about us. Here are her words:

The essence of the generative [writing] moment is experiencing the human power to connect. The small power of my composing is perhaps a very shadowy expression of the unity of being that is felt in profound religious experience—what Freud called the oceanic feeling. It is by nature both an enormous and a diffuse power, because it understands or present everything I know in terms of (ultimately) everything else I know or learn. Nothing is excluded and therefore nothing is selected or directed—except, as we shall see, through the mediation of the structuring moment. Hence to be in the high generative state is to be uncritical, naive, playful, and unfocused. Typically I might wake up from a dream, rush out of the shower, or return from my hour-long commute with my head crammed with inchoate ideas, fragments of phrases, titles, vague patterns that I try quickly to capture in free, telegraphic, idiosyncratic text and, often, little icons—sketches, diagrams, lists. (247–48)

Causal efficacy is elusive. Whitehead warns that it is rarely, if ever, open for inspection in its pure form. Though it fails in precision and immediacy, it generates a diffuse power. A moment of experience begins with the primitive conformation to the past, but its final unity arises out of a conflux of new particulars that will either have their way or they won't. The primitive phases of experience give way to higher phases of selection and determination. If what is prehended in causal efficacy is not to be lost to the useless shadows, the diffuse, naive, playful, and unfocused power of becoming can linger over possibility for only so long before it need be channeled into a determinate and decisive being. Whitehead's *principle of*

process is ineluctable. We corral and harness this concreteness as best we can. That's a writer's work. The task begins in shadow and feeling and sometimes crystallizes into icons, sketches, diagrams, and lists. Eventually, if we can turn loose of the powerful feeling, the vagueness will give way to hard-fought selection, definite direction, and a final written product. But ultimately nothing is excluded, and the final edition of this process will include elation, enjoyment, satisfaction, and pain.

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1. See Griffin for an excellent introduction to these philosophers as constructive postmoderns.
2. Franklin's Whiteheadian analysis of our "Kantian culture" is thorough and insightful. My own development of the consequences of Kant's phenomenal and noumenal worlds is in "New Challenges to Epistemic Theoric."
3. The Association for the Process Philosophy of Education publishes *Process Papers*, an occasional journal devoted to Whitehead, process philosophy, and education. For more information about the association or the journal contact Malcomb Evans at P.O. Box 32, Belle Mead, NJ 08502.
4. In this text I can only appeal to the reader's own phenomenological awareness for evidence of these philosophic doctrines. Their full justification lies in the coherence and applicability of the complete metaphysical scheme.
5. I'm indebted to Jorge L. Nobo for the technical explication of these Whiteheadian principles (see Chapter One). Nobo names creativity, relativity, ontology, and process as the fundamental principles of the organic philosophy. The thesis of solidarity is closely related.
6. For Locke, sensation is only one source of knowledge and sensation does not supply accurate information about the relations of qualities nor about the substances to which these qualities are presumed to relate.
7. LeFevre's conclusion about Kant is not very Kantian. In fact, Kant's first *Critique* affirms the possibility of a "pure" (non empirical) science of nature. I have supplied this quote, in part, to show the influence of Kant on contemporary non-philosophical thought in the academy but also to exemplify the kind of misinterpretations that lead some postmodernists, who think that they are following him, to formulate an idealism and subjectivism that is not even as coherent as Kant's own philosophy.
8. I offer a Whiteheadian appreciation of Phelps' phenomenology in "Lived Experience and the Problem with Invention on Demand."

The current cant about diversity is wrong in this respect: we do not form friendships based on differences that would be essential, but on shared ideas, and more, on the love of those ideas.

# Friendship and Education

James S. Taylor

It has been said, by Whitehead, I believe, that all of philosophy is a footnote to Plato; likewise, it can also be said that all of education is a footnote to his teacher, Socrates. If the essential quality of philosophy is exactly what the word means, the love of wisdom, then what is the essential quality of education, that is, of a school? In this regard, Plato's remembrance of his master, where we see the man Socrates, is more revealing of the essence of education than the theoretical details in the dialogues. For example, toward the beginning of *The Republic*, Socrates is playfully and affectionately restrained by his students from leaving the ceremonies so that he may stay with them and talk about justice. They are drawn to him, they seek him out, and surrendering in mock defeat, Socrates is heartened by their enthusiasm and is pleased to remain among his students. Then, in the *Symposium*, as the various speeches deal with some aspect of love and friendship, the subject rises to a crescendo with Socrates' recollection of Diotima's mystical encompassing counsel that the love of all earthly beauty ultimately leads to friendship with God.

In Werner Jaeger's classic, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, commenting on the *Symposium*, he says that the nature of friendship and education is fundamental to Plato's whole philosophy.

His teaching about friendship is the nucleus of a theory of politics which treats the state primarily as an educational force . . . When society is suffering from a great organic disorder or disease, its recovery can be initiated only by a small but basically healthy association of people who share the same ideas, and who can form the heart of a new organism . . . Therefore the problem covers a far wider field than any conception of friendship existing in our own highly individualized society.<sup>1</sup>

Since all of these comments about friendship by Jaeger are mentioned in the context of education, it is not straining my purpose here to translate a concrete application of the statement that, "a small but basically healthy association of people who share the same ideas", to be that entity that is the basis of a school: the faculty. Furthermore, all but the most naive or obstinately optimistic would deny that our present society "is suffering from a great disorder or disease". Notice too that Jaeger's observation for a recovery of such a condition in the

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James Taylor holds a Ph.D. in foundations of education from the University of Kansas. He is the author of a new book *Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education*, to be published by SUNY Press this summer.

manner of Platonic principles calls for an education that would "form the heart of a new "organism", instead of typical solutions that impose from the head down what seems to be an endless stream of new methods. This reference to the "heart" is no sentimental proposal, but is meant to be, as its Latin root implies, the core, the center, of education, as well as pointing to a real emotional engagement between teacher and student. Nor does this have anything to do with any mechanical model of education, as in some new system, but rather this is an "organism", the very living cell of true education. That is, a school in the legacy of Socrates would be first of all a faculty of friends, of those who love one another, love their students, and the beauty of truth in all things.

The current cant about diversity is wrong in this respect: we do not form friendships based on differences that would be essential, but on shared ideas, and more, on the love of those ideas. In fact, it is only this love of what is shared that can sustain and tolerate the inevitable differences between even the best of friends. There may be a heady fascination these days with bringing together diverse groups, but love only grows on the principle that like seeks out like, and the friendship that Socrates and his successors discovered to be true, was based on a mutual love of virtue (arete, excellence) and the good. Aristotle distills this insight by saying that only good people, that is, those who love and practice virtue, are capable of true friendship.<sup>2</sup> This legacy, sadly misunderstood or rejected in our day, has been replaced by "our own highly individualized society." In our work, education, and even in our play, we are often separated from our neighbor and are quite alone; thus, all the trendy gimmicks deployed to bring people together almost as if by force, like the joke among perceptive children at summer camps when they know it's time for mandatory fun.

Also, it is likely in our times of modernism that the complaint would be raised, as John Dewey voiced, that what might have been true for the Greeks was suitable for their times, but not necessarily for ours.<sup>3</sup> It is also easy to be overwhelmed by the entire apparatus of institutionalized progressive education that persuades us to believe it is impossible to seriously turn our attention back to ancient discoveries as the means of addressing current educational problems. But this is false, because there is an essential human nature that thrives on real friendship, and because there is such a thing as the tradition of Western civilization that continues to teach us that this is so. Western civilization is not just a topic for study, but it is a real and living thing no matter how vigorously we have tried to kill it. There is after all such a thing as discovery, and the Greeks did discover truths in astronomy, geometry, architecture, politics, economy, and literature which we have attempted to reject only at our great peril. The discovery of the wheel is final, and while the telescope enhances (and distorts) vision, the presence of the planets of earth's solar system, the observance of the yearly cycle of each with the moon, stars, sun, and earth, remains the same since their habits were discovered. In spite of the highest tech navigational equipment, one can still sail around the world using the stars as guides. All of geometry is divided by Euclid. And, Socrates said there were four basic forms of government, aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy—not five or three—and as it turns out, with obvious allowance for overlapping transitions between these forms, history has demonstrated that this is so. (Tyranny, which often emerged as the result of anarchy, was the perversion of government, and anarchy, as the name implies, is no government at all). It is only because we are intoxicated with the scientific-technological age that we do not extend such finality to other areas of art and science.

And so it is with the principles of education discovered by Socrates—they are still true, and the disastrous neglect of their application today only proves how true they are. One of the reasons they are true is because they are not a body of theo-

retical principles imposed from the top down, but instead are based first on the keen understanding and sympathy of what the human being is at the various stages of development. And at all stages in all things, Socratic teaching took place in an atmosphere of friendship—it was not a theory, it was a living thing that shone forth from the interior life of the teacher, and like the spiritual flame Plato spoke of his *Seventh Letter*, leaped from the life of the teacher to the heart of the student. Without this species of love, the discovery of the love of the truth of anything is impossible. In this regard, recall that the reigning mode of instruction in Socrates' time was that carried out by the Sophists—brilliant teachers who taught for gain, clever rhetoricians who, because of their lack of love of the truth, used true things to manipulate arguments to coincide with such specious arguments as the relativist position that whatever is right is what those in power declare. One of their prize pupils was Thrasymachus who makes his appearance at the beginning of *The Republic*, venting his personal attack on Socrates. It is not that such students are unintelligent, it is that, lacking a love of the good, they are incorrigible and cannot be taught. It is only when Socrates patiently reveals the bad will of this student, the famous moment when Thrasymachus blushed, that there is any hope that he may indeed be able to learn.

Therefore, issues such as which curriculum to follow are at first beside the point. High ACT scores and admittance to national honor societies, all the efforts to catch up with the Japanese, piling on homework and attempts at year-round schools, are even less relevant. Education at the elementary and even at the secondary level is not to advance knowledge—it is to first see what is already there that is true—and it certainly is not intended to produce “bookish” students with over-stimulated minds. It is not an education for parents to be able to say: My kid is smarter than your kid. Certainly at the first twelve years of education, if there is to be a recovery of education within our tradition, there will be no quarrel concerning the books to be read. They will be the good and great books of Western culture, from *Mother Goose* to the *Odyssey*, and the classics of history and science taught proportionately to the student's ages. But even here, these books must be in the hands of teachers who love them and love their students, so that they become occasions of something more important than what is now considered education. And this is why.

The philosophers spoken of here recognize such distinctions by speaking of causes or ends; that is, in addition to reading the books for enjoyment, an immediate experience, the student, under the teacher's imaginative guidance, is able to consider imitating the good therein, as well as knowing something of the dangerous and forbidden in a vicarious way. Furthermore, with as much direct experience with nature as possible observing things as they are and the nature of things running in tandem with the “book-learning”, students discover that language lives, moves, and has a being, and as a result become better readers and writers in this quite simple way, not by methods of attacking the discrete topics of a language arts programs. Enjoyment of hearing stories, learning to read and write, are examples of the ends called immediate and proximate causes.

But there are also *remote* and *ultimate ends*. It is these last two that describe the experience of real education. The reward teachers and students know when they abandon all the cumbersome paraphernalia of scientific education and confront one another and the truths of the subject at hand directly and simply, is friendship. This is as true with the direct study of natural science as it is reading an adventure story. They have loved the same thing, together. These last ends of education are more difficult to define because they point to the mysterious bond between teacher and student who have been brought together by something other than themselves, some-

thing they both love, something that begins to encompass them both. Perhaps these four causes can be better understood by using the example of a dinner party where the immediate occasion for gathering is to eat and drink, to be nourished; the proximate cause is to visit and to behave as social beings, as the term *proximus* implies, to be neighborly. But the remote end of feasting is to arrange the pleasant occasion for real friendship, which, in turn, may lead to the ultimate and more mysterious end: a participation in a transcendent feast and friendship, to be caught up in the way of love as understood in this tradition.

Given the state of modern education—and by modern, I begin counting from the Cartesian revolution down to the pragmatism of Dewey and his over-zealous followers—with all the textbooks and workshops, methods and techniques, as the means to overcome what nearly everyone recognizes as an institution dreadfully disordered in some way—why not introduce ever so gently the suggestion that it is all in pieces and therefore let us return to the original master and integrator of education and see where we might begin again? As school teachers and those interested in education, why don't we begin with ourselves? No curriculum studies just yet, no book list to quarrel over, no buildings, not even any students. Just ourselves. We know it is true that we cannot give what we do not have, so we must know our subject. But do we love our subject, and do we love it because there is something true about it? Or have we found a way of hiding in our subject, using the truths of science, history, literature, and philosophy, perversely, to distance ourselves from the very ones who need our love to be overflowing? There are many teachers and religious leaders who know their subjects, but judging by their actions and results, do not love what they know to be true. The ancient and classical tradition of the teacher was also analogous to a musician,<sup>4</sup> where we tuned the soul for a more significant life, and in this regard, we should ask ourselves, do we play the notes, or do we play the music?

The greater, more disturbing question is, do we love our students? For if we truly love the truth of what we teach, like the good, it will be diffusive, we will want to pass that love on to others. It is in this way that we best love our students. This is not to say we try to recapture this departure from the ancient tradition by becoming “buddies” with our students. Aristotle, the inheritor of the tradition of education from Socrates and Plato, is careful to distinguish that friendship has its definite arrangements based on that great Greek discovery of all harmony, proportion.<sup>5</sup> That is, we do not love our students as we do our parents (though something of the familial relationship should exist in a school), nor do we love them as we would our adult colleagues who we call friends, and most dangerous of all, we do not love them as we would our spouses. This last example calls to mind again that the truly good friend is always a person of virtue, one who desires the good of the other above their mere usefulness or ability to please. In fact, I would say the proper love between teacher and student occupies a class by itself, like all the others in some respects, including the teacher's admiration for their students' physical and emotional beauty, but closer to what Plato sought to explain all his life, the Form of Love.

And we must also be prepared to have our share of the children of Thrasymachus, more so perhaps in our day of deep antagonisms between people in general, between nations, between races, parents and children, husbands and wives, teachers and students. In the presence of such unrequited love, if you are a teacher who holds a religious belief, you will pray for them, even as they may be lost from your presence; if you are agnostic or otherwise, wish them well at least and hope that someday something of the example of what was loved will rise from their memory when age and experience has had their way with them.

Let me say this again another way and return to the essential aspect of the school, the faculty: no change of the curriculum or of the books taught will necessarily produce higher interest from students. Nor will the addition of experts on the faculty produce that light and exuberance we know should be a part of education. What is needed to bond the school again will not happen until they first see that we have fallen in love with our subjects and that we have a species of love, friendship, for our fellow faculty members, loving the same things. That is what draws students to teachers, and even in our day, there always seems to be the one elementary or high school teacher, the handful of college professors, whose love of what they do draws the students to them and changes their lives forever.

When we compare the ends of modern education, be they in the public schools and universities, or the majority of private and religious academies, with the ends of education as conceived by the much longer and vibrant tradition traced here, we see that there can be very little friendship between students and teachers and between the students themselves, at least in this traditional context. First, the faculties of most schools have been brought together to instruct students in certain subjects according to a planned system of coordinated textbooks and tests, so that they master certain skills. Students are present because by law they have to be, and by the "law" of economics, so they are told, they must use an education to get a job. Now, faculty members within this setting, as well as students, may indeed become friends, but it will not ordinarily be because of a remote or ultimate cause of education, but because of the nature of human beings who tend to form friendships of some kind in social settings. Furthermore, since the pervasive influence of Dewey and his overzealous disciples have firmly implanted the idea throughout the training of teachers that there really are no universal transcendent truths to be seen and experienced outside their utility in solving economic, social or political problems, then there is nothing left for teacher and student to gaze upon beyond immediate and proximate ends, nothing for them to love as good in itself. This situation is further revealed to be destructive of friendship because of the confusion, or ignorance of, the distinctions of the kinds of good and the friendships based on them that existed if not always in fact at least in ideal from the time of Socrates.

Aristotle set these down in an orderly manner, which had already been observed in common experience for as long as anyone could reflect on such things,<sup>9</sup> that there are some friendships based on utility, the *bonum utile*, where what love there is, is not based on the good of the other, but upon what each can get from the other. For example, the teacher has information, the student takes this from the teacher for a grade. It is for the good of ourselves that we befriend another person in this case. Then, there is the occasion of friendship based on pleasure, the *bonum delectabile*, similar to the *bonum utile* in that the love of the person is still based, not on the good of the other, but upon what pleasantness we derive for ourselves from that person. Here, the teacher might try to mainly entertain and be well-liked. Aristotle says such friendships are incidental and are easily dissolved because if one person ceases to be useful or pleasant then there is no reason to love them. Of course, Aristotle also points out that true friendships contain a measure of usefulness and pleasantness, for, after all, these

are goods of a kind, and the truly good do desire to be useful and pleasant to their friend. It is just that the useful and the pleasant between real friends must be of a higher order and not subject to change and whim. But perfect friendship, says Aristotle, can only take place between those that are good and are alike in virtue, and interestingly, not normally between old people whose youth and main time for forming friendships have passed; and not possible at all, for obvious reasons, with those who are severe. This *bonum honestum*, is reserved for those who love the good, where we desire, above all, the good of the other. When the teacher, by the fact of his life of love of the good, true, and beautiful, becomes the flame by which the student is warmed by the wonder and goodness of things, then the school of the faculty makes the great inclusive move to the school of the student.

So, it is not difficult to see that the immediate and proximate ends of things are closer to the utilitarian and pleasant goods; whereas, the remote and ultimate ends can rise to the *bonum honestum*, that is, to the honorable good, which, beginning with at least Socrates to present-day Christianity, is recognized as true friendship that when practiced, we humbly participate in the *bonum summum*, the sum, the whole, of all good, philosophically speaking; and, from the point of view of religion, we share in the life of God Himself.

Now it is clear from all experience that youth do not really form the higher degrees of friendship—their's is mainly at the level of what is useful and pleasing. But given the presence of teachers who are friends and who love their students in the highest order, desiring their good, and understanding and patient of their exuberant age, these fortunate pupils will have the model in their memory, the form of love in their minds, especially in a time where as a nation, as a world, we either destroy our youth in unjust wars, or by over-indulgence, or by neglect and deprivation.

So let us take a deep breath, and take a time out, and reflect on the possibility of such a school, with just a few teachers and few students, for a few years based first on a faculty of friends in love with the simple truth of things. Who knows how far the spark may leap? With all the experiments in education, with all the concern about diversity, it would seem there would be room somewhere for this one small experiment in the recovery of education.

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4. Aristotle, "Politics", *Great Books Of The Western World* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.) trans. Benjamin Jowett, Vol. 9, 543, 545.
5. St. Thomas Aquinas on Aristotle's Love and Friendship: *Ethics—Books VIII-IX*, Chapter 7.
6. St. Thomas Aquinas on Aristotle's Love and Friendship: *Ethics—Books VIII-IX*, Chapter 3.

What is needed is an overhaul of the educational system with a new model that is both reflective and integrated.

# THE ETHICS OF CHARACTER: THE TEACHER AS MORAL AGENT

Thomas Foster

It is a sign of the man who knows, that he can teach, and therefore we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for artists can teach, and men of mere experience cannot.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

There is perhaps no problem more fundamental to the manner in which we relate to other people, more central to our lives or more important in the determination of value than the problem raised by moral philosophy. The question of what ought a person to do is a slippery one. On the one hand, the answer must make sense to the average person, that is to say it must include common sense. It does no good to have a philosophy that contradicts the obvious conditions of the world. Still an answer must also remain consistent and valid on the highest level of intellectual investigation.

The development of a moral philosophy is even more critical to educators because they are responsible for not only their own lives but for the lives of practically all children and by extension the whole of society. Although this education comes from many sources, in America especially, the schools are an important means by which those people who shape the culture develop their own values.

When a school is established, it may reflect the values of its founders, but those values did not arise out of a vacuum nor do they remain stable without definition and application by a teacher. The responsibility for the inculcation of values may not have always been a function of school, but in our current situation the schools are certainly a major component in most people's lives.

While an auto mechanic may not need a particularly well defined moral philosophy, he needs a well defined mechanic philosophy. An auto mechanic who told a customer that the transmission really should be repaired at home would not be in business very long. Many people, however, need a very precise definition of values because their jobs put them in a position where their moral philosophy matters in the formation of cultural values. Plato knew that nurse maids and poets must be closely watched because those who told stories to the

young and those who sang to the crowd were important factors in the culture. I am sure Plato would have included television script writers and advertising executives or other media people if he had only imagined such creatures. With other elements so powerful and interested only in a profit, how much more important is it for teachers and teachers of teachers to have a clearly articulated philosophy.

... parents and argue that child-rearing and moral education are no longer solely the responsibility of the family. The family, according to these thinkers, is no longer an effective institution and cannot even serve its original, primary purposes. At the same time that parents have become powerless and feel frustrated, other agencies and influences have preempted parental roles (Sichel 5).

While social pressure has increased, modern schools have to a great extent attempted to retreat from teaching values out of a misplaced libertarianism, a failure of will (Straughan 49), and a growing skepticism. The more schools retreat from a clear articulation of a moral philosophy, the more some other component of our culture will fill the gap (a peer group or television or rock music). A person simply has an innate quality of the mind that seeks what it apprehends to be good, or that is to say, what ought to be done.

In fact, a school curriculum can no more be devoid of values than it can be devoid of subjects or without teachers. The attempt to teach without value judgments is itself a value. The very presentation of material, its selection and explanation, all actually imply quite strong values about what ought to be, not just what ought to be taught. In the same manner no teacher proceeds from a position of neutrality about life or their subjects or the profession of teaching. They all went to school.

A sobering truth is that the schools may have already lost the battle and might be incapable of the transmission of values that are rational or even radically different from the norms that exist in our individualistic and materialistic society (Sichel 6). While this view may be overly pessimistic, there is obviously cause for concern. The schools can no longer simply attempt to remain value neutral, teach skills and subjects and leave it up to the children and their parents to decide on the proper value structure. In the first place, the family is to an increasing extent dysfunctional, and secondly, people do not choose in a vacuum. They often do not consciously choose at all but are indoctrinated by whatever forces are present that do present specific values. The noble neutrality of the schools becomes an impotent surrender. The egalitarianism of ideals leaves our children helpless (even willing) victims to the duplicity of modern culture.

The situation is not simply whether the schools should teach moral philosophy or ethics. Most educators, although not all, agree that some ethics should be transmitted to the young. Since value neutral education is a contradiction in terms and even the attempt to be value neutral relinquishes one of the increasingly important roles of the school, the real question is what values to teach and how to transmit them.

Often teachers feel that they should not prescribe but only offer an example or a situation where moral choice is necessary. Yet, the students, unless they pick up some clue as to the right answer, can fail to see the moral dilemma and consequently the whole point of the exercise. The instructor will sometimes make the example obvious or use some other inducement like a test question to elicit the approved response, which is actually less honest than making a position clear. The need for an ethical position is clear, but even the fundamentals of the construction of ethical theory is called into question.

Ethical theory is divided into two groups. The theory of value, what is a good or bad, a desirable or undesirable thing, is called axiology. The theory of obligation, what is a right or wrong, a wise or foolish thing to do, is called deontology.

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Thomas Foster is a doctoral candidate in Foundations of Education at the University of Kansas and a curriculum director in the Auburn-Washburn School District in Topeka, Kansas.

These divisions are sometimes considered complimentary since a good thing is one that performs right actions. A good man acts wisely. A good apple tastes right. A good airplane is one that flies without crashing. In each case the judgment is a reflection on the act performed. Other thinkers separate the two by considering "good" a meaningless concept, and "right" as relating only to the specific situation.

The question of what things are good or what is the highest good can then be divided into three areas. Some hold that the highest good is pleasure or satisfaction or a state of feeling. Others maintain that it is virtue, a state of the will, and/or knowledge, a state of the intellect.

The question of what is a right act depends upon how a person uses various terms. Axiological theories see the rightness of an act dependent upon the goodness or value of something. The goodness can be the thing itself or motive or comparative goodness. Deontological theories separate the two and make a right act something independent of the goodness of the thing or how much (if any) good will result.

Even to the well informed, the field of ethics seems crowded to say the least and can be confusing. It is not hard to understand how the confusion of ideas in modern culture has encouraged a retreat to neutrality. Many people adopt a position of cultural relativism as a defensive mechanism. (We cannot tell which are wrong; so they all must be right.)

This cultural relativism or moral pluralism is one of the problems that is a cause for the moral disorder in the schools and society.

The acceptance of moral pluralism and diversity by society created many problems for educators trying to transmit moral standards and engender in their students the good, humane, and moral life. Which moral ideals and standards should a teacher transmit when confronted with pluralistic moral views? The moral pluralism of society and the linguistic analysis of theoretician could not provide substantive moral standards for teachers to transmit to students (Sichel 49).

Sichel identifies several other factors that all contribute to what is actually an unstable climate of moral uncertainty and a paralysis of the will. After Marx, Freud and Darwin the universe grew smaller and theories with a teleological quality were replaced by ones that denied either objective truth or a rationality of moral judgments.

Emotivism especially was a powerful force by providing a psychological basis for moral statements. At the same time the science of behaviorism developed so that not only were values relative, but the responsibility for moral acts was assigned to the inner self. The inner person became more real than the outer person that was only a reflection of those inner forces we cannot control. If all moral content is an emotional expression (Bull 6), then society must accept all values as being equivalent and entirely subjective.

Early on this subjectivism seemed the ideal solution. Moral pluralism was the essence of the egalitarian ideal that our democracy was founded on, all men equal. Everyone was right. We were spared the nasty task of deciding which values were wrong. Most people, while accepting this as a political idea particularly suited to an American brand of individualism, still believed in traditional moral values. They lived their lives, taught their children and in general did not pay much attention to strange ideas.

The problem with subjectivism is that while it denies no position, it also gives no reasons to follow one over another.

In short, the principle is clear: take away the real or ontological ground for the rightness or wrongness of an action, and there will no longer seem to be any proper reason for anyone's holding it to be right or wrong. And without reasons for our moral judgments, we must

acknowledge that such judgments are quite arbitrary (Veatch 17).

While on one hand an attitude of "minimize pain, maximize pleasure" was the response to a world without reason, a need to have a means by which to make moral decisions grew. Numerous forces from television to the call for cultural diversity have shaken the moral ground of America. Linguistic analysis began to dominate modern philosophy and attempted to provide a methodology for solving moral dilemmas. Linguistic analysis did not recommend any single moral judgment but only a method for making them, the correct form and abstract principles to use.

Linguistic analysis, emotivism and any other of the ethical positions that are not grounded upon some objective truth tend toward relativism and its clearer definition nihilism. Stanley Rosen comments

Nietzsche defines nihilism as the situation which obtains when "everything is permitted." If everything is permitted, then it makes no difference what we do, and so nothing is worth anything. We can, of course, attribute value by an act of arbitrary resolution, but such an act proceeds *ex nihilo* or defines its significance by a spontaneous assertion which can be negated with equal justification. More specifically, there is in such a case no justification for choosing either the value originally posited or its negation, and the speech of "justification" is indistinguishable from silence (qtd in Veatch 17).

Relativism is a retreat from the difficulties of determining which of the competing ethical theories is correct. The basic position is that truth is different for each individual or group, and there is no absolute, objective and knowable truth that is the same for all people at all times. The relativist is positive that there is absolutely no absolute truth. The eventual result of this contradiction is skepticism. If there are several truths, then there must be some underlying quality that is common to all. If this is not true, then there is no truth at all and to speak of relative truths is to equivocate the term.

This type of relativism has helped produce two more cultural developments that plague the schools and make meaningful moral education difficult. First is the development of a categorical morality such as a greatly enlarged concept of "rights". The centrality of rights theories has created a school climate that rejects moral education. Instead the schools become a place where specialists conduct discussions about rights, and a "reductionist version of intellectual virtue" is the standardized test score (Sichel 9). (one commentator noted that standardized tests unfairly discriminate against the stupid.)

A second cultural element that interferes with our ability to teach ethical ideas is the loss of historical perspective. This coupled with the idea of living only for the future causes a disconnection with what we are. As humans in human society, we re-encounter problems but ignore solutions or pitfalls because we are blind to our moral experience.

The solution to the problem of moral education is to find a new way of applying old ideas. A new ways of thinking, new categories that contextualize old concepts are needed. We cannot start over or go back in time, and a "clean slate" is not only impossible but wasteful. Instead of rejecting the past, we need to redefine aspects of previous moral theory so that it can be incorporated into a new set.

#### CHARACTER

This new category is called character. Character, a concept that behavioral research buried, should again become a "vital dimension of moral education". Since moral education is not a separate discipline but is at a point where various disciplines and the realities of the world interweave, it can not be a "set of tools" with which to fashion a moral position, but it must

be a condition out of which a moral agent acts. A philosophy of ethics must recognize its interrelated status and the need to produce a moral condition, not just a methodology. A moral agent must be in a condition to make proper use of moral "tools".

Character is not then a specialized term for a complex reasoning process:

[It] represents the unified, enduring ways by which moral agents handle simple and perhaps trivial moral interactions. Character includes a set of moral excellences or virtues that represent for a moral agent principles and means of justifying moral actions. In addition, character provides agreed upon ways of describing the ongoing, persistent moral being of an agent (Sichel 35).

The excellences are the core of the concept. The inculcation of these creates a basis for moral action. Example of virtues are benevolence and compassion. A person might justify an action or rather simply act out of a benevolent or compassionate character. Societies have always valued and sought to develop character, from the early Greeks to the modern idea that "it builds character" being a good thing. Once a person possesses this foundational character, the intellectual tools such as those provided by utilitarian consequentialism or neo-Kantian would be much more useful and the results justifiable of course only good character is a good thing, and the problem is that schools have generally tried to avoid making that kind of judgment. The result is a kind of character dependence that cripples the moral agent's ability for independent action. People (especially the young) have no desires and impulses that are their own but have only those that they are told they should have by a peer group or the media or another agent. Those "whose desires and impulses are not his own has no character, no more than a steam engine has character" (Mills 73).

Character can be fostered developing qualities (virtues) within the individual and then provide the means and standards to evaluate and assess "personality accepted character" through expectation of social norms. This is only to recognize that character is modified by culture. The assumption is that we all should be able to agree on some basic social values.

Even though this seems to be an impossibility in our current condition, many appropriate moral values already exist and derive from traditional sources. They have been forgotten or rejected because they are old and should be revived via character. Further more society must develop this kind of moral character because moral philosophy affects all aspects of life. It is not separate but interwoven. A good doctor or a good business man or a good repairman or any productive member of society does not become good by acquiring certain skills and knowledge. They must also acquire the moral dimensions of that profession or trade.

The most important agent in the process of character formation is the teacher. Consequently the moral character of the teacher becomes an important consideration since the role of teacher does not negate the moral character of the individual. Neutrality of the teacher is not desirable, nor is it possible. Teachers often claim moral neutrality and deny transmitting specific values. In practice, however, many student behaviors are not accepted while others are rewarded, and these actions reveal (perhaps unconscious) moral positions that comprise the moral character of the teacher. This is in the nature of good teaching, which even in practical matters is a moral judgment.

#### TEACHER

A group of researchers, once upon a time, wanted to find out what good teaching was. They decided to do a research study and find out. Their conclusion was that good teaching is what good teachers do. This, of course, presents a problem. Good teaching turns out to be not so much doing something

but rather being something. Being is something of a rather elusive nature, better suited to the poet and the philosopher. The scientist and the researcher are more interested in "just the facts ma'am". After all, how does one teach a person to be something? If they learn to do something and practice it, then perhaps they will become what they do. So, with some understatement, one might say modern educational methodology was born.

If once the education of teachers was based on what other teachers did, it is no longer. Now it is classroom models, measurement and evaluative instruments, desired outcomes, and research applications. All of the scientific attention focused on learning has certainly produced many successes and many valuable insights into the learning process. Many realize that more than anything, what teachers do is an imitation and composite of what they have seen good teachers do. A teacher somewhere is probably responsible for the career decision of most teachers. It may be, in part because it does not fit the current paradigm, that we are missing a very important element in the making of teachers. A consideration of the great teacher should yield some valuable insights into what teaching is.

There are a few givens in the world of educational research. One of them is that there are problems, and another is that generally things are getting worse not better. An analysis of popular culture revealed that there has been an important change in the portrayal of the teacher in society. Since the 1950's the image of the teacher has gone from authority figure or hero, to teacher as helper with an emphasis on the role of student as learner and hero, to the portrayal of the student and teacher on nearly equal terms (Arenz 119). In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom says that "the absence of docility by an intellectual egalitarianism renders the educational process impotent, and education as a human institution pointless." In other words, if the teacher lacks authority, education is impossible. Even the best scientific methods and instruments in the hands of a teacher who lacks authority are useless.

A recent study concluded that an improvement in education must include an increase in the authority of the teacher (Warnock 73-81). This study also found four factors contributing to teacher authority: character, moral integrity, membership in a true profession, and salary. Interestingly enough, they do not mention greater expertise, although this would seem to be especially important at the higher levels. Another study that looked at "communication-related characteristics" [classroom performance] of college teachers found four important factors in their construct: Extroversion, character, competence, and composure (Powers 227-33). While some of these factors are easily understood and others need some definition, the one that stands out because it occurs in both is character.

Character appears to be an important link between authority and performance, and since it is certainly the portion of the personality that is publicly presented to the student, it is a link to the essence of the great teacher. It is clear that character is an important factor and should be regarded as a condition of the individual rather than a methodology. It only makes sense to look the at great men and women among us for examples of this condition. Arthur Schlesinger notes that "great men enable us to rise to our own highest potentialities" (104) They help us to see possibilities in ourselves, and they give us direct experience in the art of inspiration. However, since it is teaching that is the focus here, the great teacher is our immediate object.

There is an objection to the whole concept of the great teacher that should be considered. Robert Heilman, in an article titled "The Great-Teacher Myth", somewhat condescendingly but rather clearly catalogues the general complaints. The most frequent is that the teacher rather than the work becomes the object of the student. Another is that these teachers never seem to actually teach anything. They are accused of a self-worship and a power-love that gathers a group of devotees

away from the mainstream of education. They are seen as performers more than teachers, as generalists more than scholars and as interlopers more than professionals. Most importantly, they do not fit either the current image of the "correct" professor or the system that perpetuates the institution.

An underlying assumption in all these objections of Heilman is that his perspective on what should be taught is correct. If character is what we are interested in, then it becomes the subject. However, it always seems that the mediocre teacher hides behind the subject and teaches only the letters on the page, and if successful, the students leave burdened by the facts. The great teacher always seems to teach to the spirit of the work, and if successful, the students leave the text behind and are enlightened by the ideas.

In *Liberal Education*, Van Doren quotes Pindar as saying that "our chief duty consists in becoming who we are" (17). Van Doren goes on to explain this with the example of educated people. Are they changed by their education? In an important way, no. People who are educated do not become something else. Those people, in a sense, become more of what they are, or could be, that is human. They fulfill their potential. The same is true of the teacher. All teachers have the potential to become good (better) teachers. Each to a different personal potential, but all to a common human potential.

The objections to the great teacher noted earlier either apply to teachers who are becoming something else (i.e. a clown or anything else that a teacher might become that is not a teacher) or they do not really make sense, unless a completely relativistic position is taken, in which case there is no logical ground for criticizing any position. Good teachers must teach themselves in so far as they become a recognizable actuality of the human potential to know math or literature or any subject. Teaching is therefore a science in the older sense of the knowledge of causes, and an art in the sense of knowledge of things.

If teaching is an art, how does one teach people to be teachers? First, they must know, truly know, something—their subject (Demming calls this the "profound knowledge of what they do"), and there are also some tools, techniques, instruments and tricks that also can be taught profitably. Then they must have models to emulate, to admire, and to desire. Finally, they must have opportunity; opportunity to teach, to fail, to become and to love.

This element of love is the crux of the real opposition to great teaching. The failure of many teachers is in the failure to give of themselves. These teachers just do not want the responsibility, not of the work of teaching but of the loving of those taught. It is too personal, too intrusive. It is much easier to think of people as clients and truths as outcomes. May Sarton, in her novel *The Small Room*, portrays a young teacher, Lucy, who struggles with just such a problem. She thought that she could keep teaching and students in the classroom and out of her life, but she found out that this was not teaching.

One of the greatest teacher I ever knew was the first teacher that I met in college. He had on his desk a plaque that said "To Learn and never be filled is Wisdom, and To Teach and never grow tired is Love." Teachers who do not have these qualities can never become great, they can only become what they are not.

Love, of course, is not the only thing. There are three characteristics of good teachers. They must know something. They must really know their area, and they must know life. They must stand for something, that is, they must have a vision. Without this vision their knowledge essentially means nothing since it has no reference point. The vision may be faulty. A student may be impressed with a marvelous teacher but may later realize that this teacher's vision was limited. Recently a professor confided to me that he had concluded

upon reflection (it apparently bothered him.) that most of the teachers whom the students really liked and seemed inspired by were ones that had a very strong position that they advanced.

Finally, a teacher must have character. One does not actually teach subjects, for then the success is always limited to the text. A teacher must be something, and that something is the medium through which the students encounter the subject. If a teacher truly sees what is taught, then the self fades in an assent to a greater truth or understanding of the thing considered. Method people never see this.

A teacher is not a teacher without a student, and the greatness of a teacher is never apparent without seeing the responses of the students. Perhaps this is true because the nature of education is not a product but a process, a process of becoming. Here is what Mark Van Doren said about education in his autobiography:

Nothing is more human than education. Man does all he does by art. Animals have instincts, but men have arts; and the intellectual arts are those that free them to be themselves. College, where the intellectual arts are encountered, makes more difference in a person than anything else ever does: it turns the child into a man. What could be more exciting? (265–6).

Although a growing number of thinkers rightly see relativistic skepticism as the malaise of the modern world, they do not really provide an objective warrant for any virtues or moral goods or ethical positions but ground them in a socio-cultural justification. That is to say, they give them an institutional basis, and this does not solve the dilemma of relativism. "[For] to base ethics on no more than institutional facts is thereby to condemn it to a seemingly ineradicable relativism" (Veatch 48). Perhaps this is all we can do in our weakened condition as a culture. As a swimmer in a flood grasps some flotsam to gain a respite, even though still swept along, he can gather strength to strike out for solid ground; so we may gain some strength from these institutional justifications. Eventually, however, we must reach a firmer footing or be swept out to sea.

There is a sense of frustration even among intellectuals (the common person has long had it) over the problem of objective assurance for moral positions. At a recent AESA conference a Dr. Sean Healy was interrupted during his presentation on the problem of meaning in post-modern America by a member of the audience who suggested that certainly we could all agree on the value of such basic concepts as democracy, human rights, basic equality and social justice. Although we all wanted to rally behind these ideas, no one was able to answer the speaker's question—How?

As much as some may wish to put these ideas into a pre-rational condition, they are still culture driven and therefore subjective. Even an intuitional basis leads finally to a relativistic position. The belief that modern empirical science can be the warrant is itself an ethical position and has in any case failed to become an acceptable justification for, or a guide to right action. In fact most ethical theories do not give adequate reasons for their inferences.

This is because the Good is necessary to the nature of moral education, and admitting to an objective reality raises the specter of all of the philosophical problems of the last five hundred years we imagined we had outgrown—like childish playthings cast aside. We are loath to confess how necessary they are and how much we want to keep them without anyone knowing. These ideals must be of themselves permanent and not just temporary ends that the person or the society desires. What is required of the moral agent is a continual striving to reach the standards set by the moral ideal of the Good. This is, of course, a restatement of the concept of natural law in less technical terms. Here is Aquinas. "Natural laws are but rules or

measures of actions that specify and determine the order of potentialities to their actualities" (Veatch 124).

What is needed is an overhaul of the educational system with a new model that is both reflective and integrated. It cannot be value neutral but must be specific and affirmational of correct moral positions. Its primary focus must be not only to teach subjects but also to frame them in a moral context of socially approved models. These models are transmitted through the development of character in the individual. Specific ideals become the basis for making moral decisions.

Many in education and research appear to be reluctant to go this far, and they may be wise. To be associated with traditional realism today is to invite the automatic dismissal of your ideas, and it is to be held accountable for a host of elitist assumptions. It may be necessary to package any program advantageously. If a person truly wants to effect change, then the realities of the situation must be faced. We may be able to find answers for current problems in the treasury of our cultural past, but they must be given a new suit of clothes.

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Is enrichment or acceleration more suitable for gifted youth in rural areas?

# Gifted Education: Looking at Alternatives for Small, Rural Secondary Schools

Cynthia Abbott

Small schools, whether rural or urban, have traditionally been seen as providing their students with distinctly different educational experiences from those provided by larger schools. As with many facets of life, these different experiences have elements that are seen as "better" and elements that are seen as worse. "Better" might include a strong sense of community where everyone knows a student's name; "worse" might mean that, once branded with a particular reputation, a student is hard-pressed to change it without new peers to turn to for a fresh start. "Better" can include the variety of activities in which each student participates if the school is to offer an annual play, football, and a math club; "worse" is not having access to a peer group of dedicated thespians or computer nerds or to a soccer league. There are always tradeoffs, and for academically gifted children these tradeoffs can be particularly bittersweet. For them, "better" can be the chance to develop sides of their personality that may not be strong suits-like acting or sports, but "worse" is often a lack of peers and academic programs which challenge them to develop their special talents appropriately. With approximately 25% of our children currently attending rural schools (Ornstein & Levine, 1993), this bittersweet dilemma faces a large number of academically talented students.

Beginning with a brief rationale for and history of gifted education as background, the enrichment/acceleration debate within gifted education will be discussed in this paper. The current state of gifted education at the secondary level will then be examined, with particular reference to small rural schools. Finally, potential and "proven" methods of providing for the special educational needs of the academically gifted will be explored, keeping in mind the special challenges and opportunities that small rural schools offer.

## *Rationale for Gifted Education*

A basic tenet of our educational system is that our educational aim should be the maximization of every child's potential.

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**Cynthia Abbott holds a degree in biology and completed the teacher education program at Washburn University. She is interested in gifted education both as a professional educator and as a parent.**

By definition this goal includes academically gifted youngsters. Contrary to the frequent response that "these kids will do all right no matter where they are", academically talented students have been shown to need increased challenge, faster pacing of the curriculum and more in-depth coverage of the curricular material than normal learners. Under-stimulation has been shown to have detrimental effects including emotional effects including emotional effects such as withdrawal, aggressiveness, poor self-concept, and social maladjustment (McLeod & Cropley, 1989). Without appropriate stimulation, these students don't learn how to learn effectively and are sometimes unable to cope when faced with academic challenges in high school or college (Terman and Oden, 1979; Ross, 1993). Furthermore, McLeod and Cropley (1989) hypothesize that the lack of stimulation can have a permanent effect on the intellectual development of these children.

All of these arguments for gifted education center upon what is best for the student. There are also utilitarian arguments about what is beneficial for our society. Page (1979) went so far as to state, "These children represent the most important resource we have for developing future solutions to the complex problems that beset us." Ross (1993) noted that "At the same time our need for the highest levels of skills and expertise is on the rise, many of America's most talented students are being denied a challenging education." She also reported that many of the top U.S. companies, such as IBM, Texas Instruments, and Bell Laboratories, are having to hire foreign-born students to fill job slots that would otherwise go unfilled of a lack of qualified applicants. It is not that America lacks the raw talent, but we often assume that academically talented students will do well without special challenge or attention. The research suggests differently.

## *A Brief History of Gifted Education*

For most of human history, learning has been a very fluid experience, strongly based in individual abilities and the teacher-student relationship. Most learning was experiential, rather than from books, and proceeded at the pace appropriate to the competency of the individual who was learning.

Mandatory public education slowly came into being as people realized their need for the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic so that they could participate fully in our country's government and find work in our increasingly industrialized labor market (Ornstein & Levine, 1993). With mass education and the industrial age came the "assembly-line concept: school should start at a certain age, progress by defined steps at specified times, and culminate at a certain age with a particular set of skills and knowledge (Start, 1989). But, as Start noted, individual people aren't that clearcut. Students learn at different rates, develop at different rates, and have varying levels of motivation and interests. Before the age-grade lock step of modern public education, these differences weren't a problem; afterwards, they've led to a variety of concerns, including what to do with students who learn much faster than most of their age peers.

Ross (1993) writes of American ambivalence toward intellectual excellence, noticed as early as the 1830's by Alexis de Tocqueville. Innate academic talent somehow seems to contradict the egalitarian spirit which seems to undergird this country, potentially conferring an inborn (and thus unfair) advantage to those who possess it. On the other hand, the United States prides itself as being a land of opportunity where an individual's talents and ambitions may be pursued to his/her utmost ability. According to Ross, this ambivalent attitude toward intellectual excellence and academic talent has continually influenced educational policy over the years, leading to a waxing and waning of support for gifted education.

The concept of certain individuals being intellectually "gifted" seemed to arise with the increasing use of the

Stanford-Binet IQ test after World War I. Many authors refer back to Lewis M. Terman's longitudinal study of gifted individuals identified in the 1920s through the use of the Stanford-Binet. With the identification of measurable criteria, educators were free to experiment on how best to serve this population. The major elements of the debate emerged early: acceleration (moving through the curriculum faster than normal versus enrichment (learning the curriculum in more depth than most peers). According to Daurio (1979), acceleration was stressed at two main points: the 1920's and again in the early 1940's. Both times, events intervened to make early graduates unwelcome, since extra job market competition was not welcome either in the Depression of the 1930's or in the post World War II veteran job scramble. As an added complication, in the 1920's social maladjustment was not generally foreseen as a likely outcome of accelerating gifted students faster than their age peers. Consequently it was not guarded against and some social maladjustment did occur in certain individuals. Quickly this became an exaggerated fear. Proponents of enrichment latched onto several well known examples of maladjustment and acceleration became almost taboo in the educational community. Educators of the mid-1900's often actively suppressed rapid intellectual development, subscribing to the "early ripe, early rot" theory.

There was some resurgence in the field of gifted education during the 1950's when the Soviets launched Sputnik and Americans became concerned that they were losing the technological edge (Ornstein & Levine, 1993). Ability grouping became acceptable and was widely implemented.

In the last 30 years, however, gifted education has once again hit the rocky road of American ambivalence. While concern for individual students has led to the establishment of programs for the learning disabled, mentally handicapped, and many others, gifted students are once again being seen as capable of surviving without much additional help. Maximizing their individual potential gets lost in a sea of other priorities. To make matters worse, our identification methods have led to a preponderance of white, middle class students in the "gifted" category and to an underrepresentation of certain minorities and social classes, particularly blacks, Hispanics, and those below the poverty level. Instead of developing more accurate and equitable means to identify gifted students, it has been easier (and cheaper) to simply reiterate charges of "elitism" and minimize those programs aimed at helping these students achieve their potential. As the U.S. Department of Education report "National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent" (Ross, 1993) points out, however, this is shortsighted and ultimately hurts both the gifted students themselves and our country's competitiveness in the global economy.

#### *Current Status of Gifted Education*

Certain concepts are accepted as given within our educational system as givens. Acceleration through the grades based upon time in school is one of the most basic. Students are expected to enter kindergarten at age 5, start first grade at age 6, and graduate from high school at age 18. The vast majority of students are moved together, through the grade sequence, year by year. It is interesting to note that this is the only time in our lives when we are forced into strict age-related peer groups. Certainly after our formal schooling we freely associate with those who have similar interests to us, no matter what their age may be.

Examining secondary education specifically, at the middle school level the current emphasis is on addressing student needs, but the primary area of concern in regards to gifted education is to avoid damaging the self esteem of non-identified students (Ross, 1993). Many individualized learning opportunities for the gifted have therefore been eliminated.

At the high school level, Ross (1993) points out the existence of magnet schools, specialized schools and intensive summer programs but notes that these serve only a fraction of those who might benefit. In particular, there are only limited opportunities available for gifted students in small town and rural schools. Dual enrollment in high school and college is uncommon, but does occur.

Given the relative lack of special programs for gifted students, it is not surprising that most of them spend the majority of their time in the regular classroom. However, Ross (1993) reports that regular classroom teachers make few, if any, provisions for talented students. In fact, she also reports that most high achieving high school students study for less than an hour a day which does not suggest a particularly challenging curriculum. Last, but certainly not least, Ross quotes the current figures on gifted education expenditures—two cents (\$.02) out of every one hundred dollars (\$100.00) spent on education. It seems safe to say that gifted education is not currently a priority for the majority of our educational establishment.

However, gifted education should be a priority—for the sake of the children involved, as well as for the sake of our country's competitiveness. So, what is the best way to implement an effective gifted program, particularly in small rural schools where educational opportunities are often limited by student numbers, tax dollars, and community resources? Looking at the options that have been both tried and suggested is the first step.

#### *Acceleration vs. Enrichment: The Major Dilemma*

The two major camps of gifted education which arose in the 1920's are still very much in evidence today. The "enrichment camp" has been dominant throughout much of this century. Citing potential social maladjustment for students who accelerate, enrichment proponents emphasize the importance of gifted students being able to study at greater depth topics which are normally covered in the curriculum. Some methods of enrichment are special classes, cluster grouping (where students are pulled from class for a specific allotment of time each week), tracking, use of resource teachers (which also generally involves pull-out), and the presence of resource rooms with extra study materials available to gifted students on a part time basis (McLeod & Cropley, 1989). Stanley (1979) categorizes enrichment opportunities into four levels or types:

1. busywork (increased quantity of work at same grade level),
2. irrelevant academic enrichment not related to the student's area of talent; often simply temporary relief from boredom),
3. cultural enrichment (music, art, drama, etc.),
4. relevant academic enrichment (advanced material or higher level treatment of topics in areas related to the student's special talents).

Stanley's discussion goes on to comment that busywork and irrelevant academic enrichment do little or nothing to develop the academic talent supposedly being served. Cultural enrichment, while also somewhat irrelevant, he considers worthwhile for all students, not just for those who are academically gifted. Finally, relevant academic enrichment is where the talent is truly developed and challenged—but this leads almost inevitably, through deeper subject treatment and advanced material, to acceleration.

Dean Worcester (1979) divides enrichment into good enrichment and busywork. Good enrichment is integrated with the general curriculum activities and develops meaningful relationships within the developing child. It requires thought, effort and enthusiasm on the part of the teacher. Busywork, which is much easier to provide, can consist of casual museum trips,

occasional television programs, tutoring other students, helping in the office and so forth. The distinction between busywork and enrichment can be a thin one. Worcester goes on to comment

Enrichment without acceleration is favored, at least verbally, by most administrators and most teachers. It is in keeping with the tradition that it is good for a child just to live a certain number of years in a school situation. It is a plan by which he will not leave home 'too early' . . . He has his childhood. There is truth in all of these points, but in each case only partial truth. To try to keep a bright child thinking like a baby is as unsuccessful as to continue to dress him in baby clothes.

The consensus of quite a few individuals working with gifted students (Worcester, 1979; Daurio, 1979; and Terman & Oden, 1979) is that good enrichment is worthwhile for all students, but that the needs of the academically gifted are better served by acceleration. By providing special material that many students are capable of benefiting from but only gifted students are given access to, Daurio also pointed out that the charge of "elitism" becomes more credible. He goes on to state unequivocally, "No studies have shown enrichment to provide superior results over accelerative methods. Enrichment at best may only defer boredom until a later time."

As opposed to enrichment's goal of deeper treatment of the standard grade level curricula, acceleration generally involves moving through the curriculum at a faster pace than normal. This can involve skipping entire grades, advancing in one or two subjects only, early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, curriculum compacting, early graduation from high school, enrollment in college classes while still in high school, and so forth.

The primary argument used against acceleration in educational circles has been that of potential social maladjustment of the accelerated student compared to his/her peers. Several well-done, representative studies carried out by psychologists, however, show no more problems with accelerated students than with any other group of students (Daurio, 1979). George, Cohn & Stanley (1979) forcefully state that

. . . not a single substantial study has ever shown acceleration to be harmful to the typical accelerant who is intellectually able enough to warrant the use of such procedures. On the average the results are decidedly beneficial, whereas the withholding of acceleration from able, well-motivated youths is likely to harm their academic, social and emotional development.

Regarding emotional maturity levels, Stanley (1979) notes that gifted youngsters who have been given personality measurements such as the California Psychological Inventory test—like people several years older than themselves. Even emotionally, their peers are actually older youngsters, not their actual age-mates. One caveat is worth mentioning—acceleration should only be in response to the student's desire to move ahead and should therefore be equated with "not pulling back" rather than "pushing ahead" (Anastasi, 1979).

Another concern that some people have had in relation to acceleration is that accelerated students would miss out on school activities, awards and so forth. Brady & Benbow (1987) did a study on identified gifted youngsters, following them from their identification in 7th grade until after high school graduation. After dividing their pool into four groups based upon the degree of acceleration experienced, they found that accelerated students did at least as well as nonaccelerated students in accomplishments and in College Board Achievement Tests, and better than nonaccelerated students in grade point average, class rank and the number of national and state awards they won. Those who chose to take Advanced Placement (AP) classes and/or part-time college classes were more involved in extracurricular

activities than any other group, including the nonaccelerated students. There were few differences among the four groups with regard to lifestyle plans and goals, but those who had skipped high school years or had taken AP or college classes attended more selective colleges and more frequently planned to earn advanced degrees. Last but not least, there were few personality differences evident among the four groups—including harmful social or emotional effects. The only difference was that those who skipped one or more years of high school tended to be less conservative than those who chose AP or college class attendance. Brody & Benbow concluded

For the student, accelerative strategies offer the opportunity to select an educational program that is challenging and that meets the needs of the individual student . . . For schools, acceleration offers a way to challenge highly able students without the expense and effort of designing a special curriculum. For society as a whole, it offers the promise of stimulating gifted youths to achieve more at a younger age and, thus, be more productive members of society for more years.

Renzulli (1979) does offer some notes of caution about acceleration as the total solution to gifted education, however. He notes that, although acceleration takes advantage of a gifted student's ability to comprehend more material and to do it faster, to deal with higher levels of conceptualization and abstraction, and to reach higher levels of generalization more rapidly and with greater understanding, it does not take into account two other dimensions of gifted learners: sustained interest in particular topics or disciplines, and ways in which that person becomes involved, specifically in inquiry into real problems.

#### *Looking for Solutions for Rural and Small School Gifted Education*

So where does this leave us in regard to gifted education for small, rural secondary schools?

First, it is important to examine the constraints generally specific to these types of schools. Because they are small, there tend to be only a few gifted students in each grade or even in each school—rarely enough to form special classes, even if their interests and talents did coincide. Secondly, budgets are usually stretched tightly, meaning that coaches are more important to school functioning than gifted coordinators (because they serve more students) and that teachers rarely can specialize as much as they might desire. Thirdly, educational community resources such as cultural activities, well stocked libraries, colleges or universities, and even large numbers of professionals are likely to be in short supply.

Despite these constraints, there are viable options available for rural gifted education that will go far to meet the needs of academically talented students. Flexibility—being open to a variety of options that can be considered, is a particularly crucial characteristic to keep in mind both in terms of what the gifted students need and in terms of how the school administration should provide for the delivery of the necessary coursework. Small size and individuality can work to the advantage of all parties concerned, if the reasonable mindsets are maintained.

As discussed above and working within the traditional school structures (rather than looking at comprehensive school reforms), one of the simplest, least expensive, and most effective options for gifted education is acceleration in one of its various forms. The willingness to examine accelerative options is where flexibility becomes important. Discussing some of these different options in relation to the specific constraints of rural school systems will highlight some of the approaches that can be used to individualize programs for particular schools and for particular students.

At the secondary level, one of the more recently developed techniques of acceleration, *curriculum compacting*, can work well to provide a combination of acceleration and enrichment based in the regular classroom (Reis & Renzulli, 1992; Rogers & Kimpston, 1992; Reiss & Follo, 1993). To define it briefly, curriculum compacting involves testing the students for their knowledge of new material to be presented in class and, if they already exhibit mastery of the material, substituting alternate materials more suited to their interests and abilities. Further, if the academically talented students do not know the material ahead of time, curriculum compacting can provide the framework through which the students can be rapidly exposed to new material and then be tested as soon as they are ready. Once again, this frees the gifted student to move on to more challenging material rather than spending his/her time in needless practice and repetition. This method has several definite advantages for small, rural school districts. It is very flexible and can be tailored to meet the needs of a wide range of interests and abilities. Because the student(s) is tested on each major unit or concept in the standard curriculum there is no fear that a "hole" will be left in their education that might create problems later. It is relatively inexpensive because there is no need for a separate classroom or a separate teacher, although the gifted coordinator, if there is one, can aid the classroom teacher in developing alternate material for the student work. It works for one student just as readily as it does for many students. And finally, and very importantly, curriculum compacting does not have to be confined to "identified gifted" students. If the teacher feels comfortable with the concept, it can be offered to any student who can demonstrate mastery of the proposed curriculum. On the downside, curriculum compacting does require some extra effort from the classroom teacher in overseeing the gifted student's alternate material and in helping to develop or choose that material and guide the student through it. Despite this limitation, curriculum compacting may be a very reasonable and worthwhile alternative for many small schools to consider. Reis and Renzulli (1992) summed up this instructional technique well when they commented that it "... simply follows the natural pattern teachers would follow if they were individualizing instruction for each student."

Moving on to more well known means of acceleration for academically gifted students, two of the most classic methods have involved honors classes and advanced placement (AP) classes. These methods may run into numerical problems in small, rural secondary schools: there may simply not be enough students to support separate sections of above-average learners. AP classes are particularly problematic in this regard as they involve the use of nationally determined criteria and requirements (Reiss & Follo, 1993) which small rural school districts may not have the money, expertise, or number of students to implement. Honors classes are potentially more feasible, since their curriculum is set by the teacher and the district and can take into account staff expertise, student ability levels, and district budgets.

Although advanced classes are fairly common in larger school districts for educating gifted students, the first reaction to many people is "grade skipping". Despite its bad reputation, grade skipping can have a place in the repertoire of strategies for appropriately educating gifted students (Rogers & Kimpston, 1992; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991). As noted earlier, academically talented students are often emotionally advanced for their age and may find their true peers among older students anyway. If care is taken through concept testing and spot tutoring that no educational "holes" are left, grade skipping can be very beneficial. At the secondary level, it can be done on a subject by subject basis, allowing for better individualized learning.

Taking grade skipping one step further, two more accelerative strategies at the secondary level are *dual enrollment* in

high school and college and early entrance to college (Reiss & Follo, 1993). Dual enrollment in high school and college can work extremely well ... where it can work at all. Rural areas are rarely blessed with institutions of higher learning nearby, but where they are, these colleges and universities can be a wonderful resource for gifted students and their secondary schools. The students can have the benefit of more advanced and rigorous academic coursework while still participating in high school activities and social life. In the near future, even the physical distance constraints may be removed from dual enrollment as computer networks allow access to many college classes for anyone with a computer and modem. Or early college entrance may be determined to be the best option for a gifted student in a small, rural secondary school if further academic challenge is simply not locally feasible. In that case, student desire must be of paramount importance and considerations such as missing high school social activities must be carefully weighed.

Despite the advantages that many of the accelerative options have for small, rural secondary schools, enrichment programs still have a definite place. Efforts should be made to steer away from busywork and to keep the enrichment relevant or *cultural* in Stanley's (1979) terms.

Sharing resources between neighboring small school districts can be a very cost effective way to increase the services offered. It is also possible to bring gifted students together from different school districts, at least for occasional enrichment-type activities. More extensive and long-term multidistrict programs, allowing for increased peer interaction and challenge, might even be a possibility given committed coordinators and supportive administrators.

Opportunities for challenging gifted students outside of the traditional school system should be utilized whenever possible, as well. Mentoring, the pairing of a student with an established adult working in the student's area of interest, is an ancient idea which still can provide great benefits today. Planned outside reading, internships and visitation programs with local businesses, clubs, and community classes are also among the variety of outside options that exist.

Finally, it is important to remember, too, that it is possible to establish regular classrooms anywhere that are favorable to the development of intellectual talent at all levels. McLeod & Cropley (1989) speak of four classroom principles that provide support in this way:

1. Establish a favorable classroom climate including open goals, acceptance, respect for effort, interest in high performance, and a provocative (to learning!) environment.
2. Promote self-directed learning through content, timing, location of materials, and methods. The teacher should also set an example as a self-directed learner and not appear as having finished his/her learning.
3. Encourage self-evaluation by the students.
4. Employ a diagnostic teaching approach, establishing what the students have already mastered and what needs to be taught to fill in weaknesses.

Specific classroom activities can include challenging projects (undertaken individually or in groups), questioning beyond the basic knowledge testing levels, discussions aimed at testing ideas and sharpening thinking skills, an emphasis on task completion to teach self discipline and productivity, and plenty of opportunities to write.

#### *Conclusion*

Despite a seeming lack of available resources when compared to larger school districts, small rural secondary schools can offer a wide variety of options to their academically tal-

ented students to help them meet the special challenges and opportunities that their talents provide. In particular, because of their effectiveness, low cost, and relative ease of implementation, accelerative options can play a crucial role. Curriculum compacting, honors classes, grade skipping, dual college and high school enrollment (possibly through computer networks), early college enrollment, relevant and cultural enrichment programs, and certain school activities are all among the options that can be mixed and matched to individually challenge and develop each gifted student. Supported by regular classrooms that reward and encourage intellectual development, rural schools can truly offer their academically talented students a first class education. The commitment to do so is the important first step.

In fact, it turns out that for academically talented students the bittersweet tradeoff of academic challenge versus small school benefits is avoidable after all. Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Flexibility, determination, willingness to try new paths, and support of the gifted student's desire to learn lay the groundwork that makes a successful fire possible. Gifted students ignite easily; instead of quenching their fire, let's set the groundwork and fan the flames.

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Neither Sen. Dole nor President Clinton were speaking of either families or villages.

# Families, Metaphysical Dreams, and Villages

G. Daniel Harden and Joshua K.T. Harden

In the Great Election Campaign of 1996 which Wasn't, there was some light sparring for a few weeks on the topic of whether children needed families or villages for their nurture and care. The exchange got nowhere at least in part because in both cases the presidential candidates had failed to define carefully either family or village. Both were using these terms to promote their domestic agendas, and a general understanding was not achieved.

When Robert Dole stated flatly that it didn't take a village to raise a child but rather a family, he was certainly not talking about the family as traditionally defined. He gave every indication of eulogizing what his political adversaries summarily dismiss as the mythical family of Ward and June Cleaver or of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson. While even these nostalgic pictures from the 1950s are more attractive than many of their dysfunctional counterparts in 1997, they too fail to represent what during most of history was seen as the functional family. The case can be made that the Cleaver and Nelson families themselves represented a decadent form of the traditional family. For many reasons the extended family and the entire set of kinship relationships that were once associated with it were already in grave distress by the 1950s. The family has traditionally been seen as a very extended sort of kinship alliance including aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins so far removed that it was only realized that there was "some connection". In other words: perhaps there isn't that much difference between the traditional family and what President Clinton describes as a village.

But that isn't quite right either. The village that the President talks about isn't really very similar to the villages from which the African saying that "It takes a village to raise a child" comes. Those villages were almost always associated on kinship. The villagers shared their way of looking at the world and at the people who inhabited it. They were largely of like mind in terms of human origins, purposes, and destinations. They were secure in their knowledge, for the most part, what the world

was meant to be and agreed as to how to get there. In the words of Richard Weaver the villagers shared a *metaphysical dream*.<sup>1</sup>

The village was not exactly the *state*, though it was not without its authority of insist on conformity that ranged from nominal to rigorous. The village was an association of people who shared a metaphysical dream, and because of that were willing to abide by certain village norms that grew naturally from it. The village culture was based on an inherited and consensus view within the community as to the *telos* of the village and its culture. This does *not* seem to be the village about which President and Mrs. Clinton speak.

The point that the Clintons make is not incorrect: a child to be adequately reared, probably needs a good deal more support than that which can be provided exclusively by the nuclear family, and today the nuclear families seem to be less capable of delivering the sort of physical, intellectual, and spiritual support to children than at any time within living memory. The statistics of social pathology are not difficult to come by and most of them reflect quite directly on the failure of the nuclear family to provide the sort of consistent *integral* support that children need.

One reason that the village was as effective as it was is that it provided an *integral* environment for the acculturation of children and youth. Everything meshed, at least when it was working. The religious, moral, and ethical belief systems were *integral*. This integration also often indicated the sort of clothes that would be worn without censure, the way that language was used, the behavior at the morning meal, and how to conduct oneself at a funeral and at a family gathering. There was no effort to bring this alignment about because it naturally flowed from the metaphysical assumptions of the community. The village was in many ways *organic*.

This was based on the same arguments forwarded by Orestes Brownson, the great antagonist of Horace Mann, who opposed the establishment of state school boards in the 1850s because he saw them as potentially threatening to impose a uniform state-sanctioned morality through the common school rather than allowing the school to represent the particularities of various community cultures.<sup>2</sup> James Coleman attributes the success of Catholic parochial schools to the shared purpose of everyone connected with the educational endeavor—not to facilities, teacher competence or preparation, or to levels of funding. On the basis of each of these measures Catholic schools should almost uniformly be perceived as less effective.<sup>3</sup>

The argument usually made in favor of the school "village" model, is that the families no longer are meeting the responsibilities that, in a well ordered society, are within its sphere. In far too many cases this is, sadly, true. Many of the social services that various levels of government are now willing, and even eager, to provide are probably needed though through what delivery mechanism is not clear. However, to redefine the delivery of social services as the creation of a "village" is enough to make even the most dedicated postmodernist blush. The so-called *global village* is, in fact, no traditional village at all. While obviously the boundaries of communication and interaction that we have known before have been breached, a computer in every home does not recreate the characteristics of the village.

## Causes for the collapse of the village-family

In 1996 both Senator Dole and President Clinton were the great *simplifiers*. Both were aware that there were serious problems in the land, but were satisfied to address them with little more than rhetorical flourishes that had instant political appeal to their separate constituencies.

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Dr. Harden is an associate professor of educational administration and foundations at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas.

Joshua Harden is in the Social Studies Education program at Washburn University.

*Emphasis on the self rather than on responsibility.*

It has been noted that the later half of the twentieth century has been marked by a new and disturbing kind of self-absorption. Some of the causes as well as the symptoms were analyzed by Christopher Lasch's interesting book *The Culture of Narcissism*.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis in society has shifted from responsibility and duty to self-fulfillment and self-actualization. A full life is given precedence over a responsible and productive one. Weaver's metaphysical dream has disappeared in the fog of self-absorption and the thrill-chase.

In Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* one morning a man awoke and found himself slowly turning into some sort of giant beetle. One morning quite recently Western Civilization woke up and found itself disintegrating into an inchoate goo; the Traditional Religion has lost its transcendent clarity and power to invigorate the culture, and our common institutions, practically down to the corner drugstore, were reinterpreted by the newly declared intellectually elite as instruments of social oppression. Nothing remains constant, all is throbbing in a chaotic and unpredictable flux.

*Western Civilization is the midst of post-traumatic stress syndrome.*

Traumatic situations can be described as *destructively rapid changes* in the environment. If we contend that culture is organic in that it acts and develops in many ways as would a sensate organism, then we must give it the collective psychological capacity to develop pathologies such a man might develop were he transformed into a loathsome beetle.

To avoid such pathological cultural deformations is why Russel Kirk listed three major barriers which he saw as necessary to maintain cultural strength; continuity, convention and custom.<sup>5</sup> President Clinton's village represents a contrasting template designed by the contemporary secular social engineer. The true village cultures that did at one time exist in urban neighborhoods and in small towns are undergoing a centrifugal breakup due to the fragmenting pressures of constant innovation and radical secularization.

### **The Metaphysical Reconnection of the Village**

What is needed is a restoration of the traditional village, with people of similar mind and disposition acting together as an extended family. This does not develop easily, is difficult to maintain in a modern context, and resists the quick fix of government programs and abstract social planning.

The idea that every classroom needs computer access and every home needs to be cable ready is a symptom of the very dementia which plagues the culture. To learn love a child does not need to scan the *International Amor Homepage*, but should only have to see a teacher, a parent, a priest: members of the village. Before trying to recreate the Norman Rockwell village, it is necessary to identify and combat the centrifugal forces that led it to its demise in the first place. This does not require an Amish-like purge of everything associated with the industrial and postindustrial age, but it does require a reorientation. If we really value family and village we must do some detaching. The cure is not more of the same personless government prescribed medicine that helped create the pathology in the first place. More social planning, more technology and more secularism will not recreate the village that these very contemporary templates destroyed.

We must cherish and reinvigorate regionally-specific particular cultures. The primary condemnation of these close-knit, traditional "villages" is the fact they inherently rejected the trinity of modern gods—pluralism, egalitarianism, and secularism. President Clinton's "village", the village that it takes to raise a child, is not the global village. In order for village to exist, the paradigm of the modern trinity must be discarded for that of the traditional village.

It is interesting that some of those who are now talking about the village are the very ones who support anti-natalist government programs which limit the children to populate the villages, and which have so completely altered family demographics ever since the 1950s.

### *The Great Disconnect.*

There is very little that the state can do to aid in the recovery of the American cultures. There are a few things that individual groups can do and the government might, if it had any real interest in doing so, help them.

To have a family, even a simple June and Ward Cleaver nuclear family, requires a Disconnect, a detachment from the artificial reality of the television, from the computer monitor, the Nintendo, the VCR and anything else which has the effect of lessening communication with other members of the traditional village. The moral anarchy and intellectual chaos of, say, *The Jerry Springer Show*, are much easier than a true village which requires that you play ball with the neighbor kid and try to get along with his grumpy father.

The post-traumatic stress of our culture has its own drug of choice: television. And like all drugs, the television is an escape from reality. The disconnect must come in the concerned homes of the traditional village and also in the public schools that are serious about community and the village.

What can be done with education? Very simply, disconnect and isolate. Our schools should become dispensers of good cultural mental health, which means that they must become centers of continuity, convention and custom. If a school is not operating within a village's traditional understanding of continuity, convention and custom: change it!

A return to the traditional center is possible in schools, even public schools. However, the day of expecting that *neighborhood* schools, considering the social fragmentation of today's urban culture, will in any significant way constitute anything approaching a common metaphysical dream is over. Society has been thoroughly fragmented by the centrifugal and narcissistic forces already mentioned. The answer lies in allowing special schools for aggregations of people who do, more or less, share a common metaphysical dream. This can be done through the mechanism of the charter school or through a magnet system, though the magnet must be based on a philosophical core rather than trendy material or behavioral accidents such as technology or the performing arts.

By encouraging the formation of these legitimate schools of choice, an archipelago of various metaphysical dreams can be created. Effort can be united with purpose and true community can be fostered. Is this an educational panacea? Of course it isn't. There are many students and parents who not only do not have a metaphysical dream but have no interest in developing one. They will probably not benefit. But those who do have a purpose and can integrate the school into their purpose and dream will be able to benefit immensely.

There will, of course, be objections to this from certain elements of the academic community and the educational establishment. In this issue of *Educational Considerations* there are several articles that deal either directly or indirectly with post-modernism, certain strains of multiculturalism and even deconstructionism. Although those authors who espouse such thinking often give mighty lip service to the notion of diversity, they are surprisingly unwilling to accept diversity but on their own terms. Although there are some favored forms of diversity, normally schools based on the formal and systematic study of the Western literary canon, for example, do not make their cut. Those modernistic or postmodernistic educational thinkers are not the champions of school choice movement. They may speak in hostile tones of cultural hegemony and exploitation, but their preferred hegemony is their own.

Is there a future for the village? There is, but let no one think that its recreation is going to be easy. It will take the slow and plodding effort to find people, families if you will, who share a metaphysical dream and then have the intellectual and political resources to propose, organize and defend it. For those who believe that the preservation of an archipelago of integral villages is desirable in this Year of our Lord 1997, (and I don't whether that would include President and Mrs. Clinton or not), the challenge is great but the battle must be joined. The professional establishment managers tend to be more interested in uniformity, efficiency and filling the needs of the corporate workforce than they do with the variable cultures that their systems serve. The outcome is uncertain, but, as usual, T.S. Eliot gave us solemn advice.

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again: and now, under  
conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor  
loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our  
business.

T.S. Eliot  
"East Coker"

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Future teachers should have . . . some workable philosophy regarding the nature of language.

# De-Centering the Center: Postmodernism and Meaning

Scott E. Smith

"In a sense, of course, all philosophizing is a perversion of reality: for, in a sense no philosophic theory makes any difference to practice. It has no working by which we can test it. It is an attempt to organize the confused and contradictory world of common sense, and an attempt which invariably meets with partial failure—and with partial success. It invariably involves cramming both feet into one shoe."

—T.S. Eliot

Appropriate in its perversity, Eliot's image of cramming both feet into a single shoe seems to provide an apt backdrop for any careful consideration of the current theories surrounding postmodernism. As a theoretical discourse, postmodernism continues to enjoy *haute monde* status in education departments across the nation. Given this, one would not be altogether wrong in concluding that, as have other vogue discourses, postmodernism has brought much to bear in the way of variant (and most probably virulent) strands of theory not only in education departments but also, and most importantly, on the students within those departments. One might also make a reasonable and corollary assumption that, though they may not be cognizant of them or able even to refine or articulate them, students within these departments go about the process of adopting as their own certain epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding their chosen disciplines.

Future teachers of composition and language, as will be the focus of this paper, should have, prior to entering the classroom, some workable philosophy (however crude or unsystematic) regarding the nature of language. Either directly or indirectly English teachers will encounter seemingly banal questions the answers to which will actually be the stuff of higher criticism. For example: Does a standardized English exist? If so, does instruction toward student mastery of standard English a reasonable and realizable goal? What relationship, if any, exists between language and truth? Can writing be depended upon as a means of conveying or even possessing

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Scott Smith is a graduate of Purdue University and a graduate student at Washburn University in educational administration. He currently teaches in a private school and has an interest in the philosophical foundations of education.

meaning over time on a consistent basis? Though these questions, all variously treated by postmodern thinkers, seem abstruse and perhaps even of little relevance for high school language teachers busily marking narrative paragraphs for parallelism, they are precisely those questions teachers ponder when going about the business of establishing criteria for acceptable work. It would seem wise, therefore, for all those whose business is education to investigate the degree to which postmodern theories, chewed, swallowed, and digested by education students, eventually make themselves manifest in popular instructional and curricular trends throughout elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Though postmodernist discourse is arguably so diffuse and syncretic as to be understood as irrelevant by many scholars, there is throughout the postmodernist thinking an assumption that actually collects errant, even bizarre theoretical statements. For example, in an attempt to give shape to the elastic and elusive prolegomena, Patrick Slattery in *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* defines postmodernism as, "a philosophical movement that seeks to expose the internal contradictions of meta narratives by deconstructing modern notions of truth, language, knowledge and power."<sup>2</sup> Anyone trying to find from this definition a basis for continued study would have to look to the currently popular postmodern technique of analysis: so-called *deconstruction*. Postmodernist analysis has a tendency to subsume theories across the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines—specific and often esoteric theories from such disparate fields as semiology, ecology, and anthropology. This novel and highly speculative method of analysis is evident throughout the literature. It finds its genesis in, among other sources, the works of semiologist and structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and literary critic and father of deconstructivist criticism Jacques Derrida.

Though a complete analysis is well beyond the scope of this effort, a few generalizations as to the internal arguments of both structural criticism as well as its more aggressively seditious progeny *deconstructive criticism* will prove sufficient in illustrating their relationship to postmodernism. Why deconstructive criticism? What exactly is being deconstructed? Vincent Leitch in *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* provides an invaluable description of the what ideas lurk behind the curtain of deconstructionism. What is being deconstructed are no less than the fundamental and largely occidental presuppositions regarding language.

Leitch points out that the traditional understanding of the relationship between spoken language and written is the result of what to a deconstructionist amounts to the "valorization of speech. This valorization of speech is identified, at least within our tradition, as being brought about by the West's Judeo-Christian heritage. For the West, speech has more closely approximated the primary, generative nature of God's spoken *logos*, or the Word. This primacy in part results from Judeo-Christian tradition maintaining that man participates in the likeness of God, though to a lesser extent, through his capacity to create by means of the spoken word. There has also existed a fundamental Judeo-Christian understanding as to causal relationship between the creation of the world and a divine Will made manifest by the Word. In terms of traditional Western understanding, language begat writing. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates debases the nature of the written figure as a result of its distance in time and space from its origin in the mind.<sup>3</sup> Quite simply, it is easier to understand the spoken word as participating in and with or coexisting with its mental origin. Certainly, within the Roman tradition the spoken language was not only granted primacy but also ultimacy: language begat writing which begat oration. Postmodernism bases its assumptions regarding language on structuralist and deconstructive theories of literature that upend this tradition by placing the written figure first. Approaches to language that retain even vestiges of

this western tradition are pejoratively termed by Jacques Derrida "logocentric."<sup>4</sup> As Vincent Leitch states, they "collapse writing into speech."<sup>5</sup>

The postmodern position is cast in full critical relief only when one understands how the elevated status of the written figure is coupled with the idea that not only an arbitrary relationship between the written or spoken *signifier* and certain signified phenomena exists, but that there is an inherent inability of both written and spoken *signifiers* to consistently *signify* anything. This notion was first espoused by the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure who writes, "Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system."<sup>6</sup> What Saussure argues for is an understanding of language as essentially a study of written figures. However, the deconstructionist and postmodernist analysts exploit Saussure's theory of signs in such a way that it becomes an argument against the very possibility of meaning.

The postmodernist thinker adds to the concept of the inconsistent and arbitrary written figure the notion that language is best understood as existing within competing discourse communities. Each community has its own connotative nuances and lexicon. Such communities are seen as transient and ephemeral. Words constantly adopt new and varied denotations and connotations as they merge with and exit competing communities. Words then can only be understood as existing in a continuous state of relative *not-meaning* or *potential-meaning*.

The notion of *différance* (a French word that combines the words for "difference" and "deferral") as articulated first by the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, points further to an inherent tendency of words to retain meaning only to the extent that they differ in composition from other words. Derrida's is a notion quite a bit more exploitative than Shakespeare's "A rose by any other name." Derrida's argument tends toward the conclusion that words await themselves of only relative differences in shape or form. They can deliver themselves of no real *meaning*. Derrida's theory seems to approximate something like the following: What can be said about the sound *sop* or the letters *soap* is not that they mean anything. Rather, this particular grouping of letters *soap* as well as the sound *sop* retain a tenuous signifying status to the extent that they exhibit a difference from, say, *soap* or the sound *sap*. From a postmodern point of view, the various differences in sounds and forms are precisely those that define competing discourse communities.

Returning to the question of postmodernism's effect on teachers of composition, one might again look to Patrick Slattery's book. Referring to it as the "philosophy of modernity," Slattery describes postmodernism as, "an ecological and ecological world view beyond the modern obsession with dominance and control; or finally a post-structural movement toward de-centering where there is an absence of anything at the center or any overriding embedded truth at the core, thus necessitating a concentration on the margins and a shift in emphasis to the borders."<sup>7</sup> Such a statement clearly reveals the degree to which postmodernism has drawn from the fathers of deconstructionism. The deconstructed and emasculated *logos* has led to a postmodern ontology that does not allow for Truth (ontology addressing what can be known as opposed to the epistemological matter of *how one comes to know*); "deconstructing" has led to "de-centering." Leitch's book again proves invaluable in revealing certain epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding the possibility of knowledge that are often not adequately articulated in various explanations of postmodern theory.

Leitch posits the existence of what he terms "axiological oppositions."<sup>8</sup> These oppositions have heretofore been fundamental in the West's dominant schools of epistemology:

"voice/writing, (spoken word)/graphie(written word), sound/silence, being/nonbeing, phonetic script/phonetic writing, consciousness/Unconscious, original speech/secondary marks, inside (interiority)/ (exteriority), thing/sign, reality/image, essence/appearance, signified/signifier, truth/lie presence/absence. . . ."<sup>9</sup> It is Leitch's point that the West's "logocentric" system has granted primacy to the first member of each pair. To the deconstructive critic and the postmodern critic it seems to be rather the second item of each pair that is privileged. With this, a tradition is uprooted. With Leitch's list of inverted pairings in mind, it can be understood why Slattery places nothing at the center of the postmodern reality and gives emphasis to the margins. It seems that the poet W.B. Yeats proved accurate in predicting that the center would not hold; however, it is not because the center is weak but because it has been "deconstructed."

In what way might one conceive of a process-approach to composition that allows for a world in which silence, appearances, unconsciousness, and lies subvert and transcend sound, essences, consciousness, and truth? Rough drafts being comprised of omissions (silence), redundancies (results of unconsciousness), and sentence fragments (only appearances of sentences) seem to satisfy postmodern criteria. Are they then of any less worth than a final paper? What are teachers to look for in student-produced fiction? Has language been deconstructed enough so as to preclude any possibility for such a phenomenon as the omniscient and reliable narrator? Or, are *omniscient* and *reliable* simply antiquated terms of an obviated system, only to be replaced with *ill-informed* and *unreliable*? If in the postmodern system of inverted axiological oppositions *reality* and *thing* have surrendered to *image* and *sign*, does a student studying symbolism err in moving first from the garden in Richard II and second to Shakespeare's England? Is literary symbolism any longer possible? In other words, far from being a point of departure for further insight, is the scarlet letter an *image* and *sign*, an end in and of itself? Most importantly, are language teachers, especially those in the primary grades, bound to hold students accountable for rules regarding such matters as spelling and punctuation? It seems implicit in postmodern theory that no one discourse community has a monopoly on what should define formal or even standard language. Perhaps this is why fewer young readers and writers are directed by teachers to consider classical or romantic authors and poets as models: the discourse communities of Keats and Pope have long since vanished, and along with them has any desire for *their* language.

Keeping in mind Patrick Slattery's view of postmodernism as a philosophy "deconstructing modern notions of truth," it must be remembered that these so called notions, far from being modern, have their roots in the schools of the ancients. As is commonly the case with novel metaphysical *isms*, postmodernism presumes a relevance based upon insufficient arguments. Many proponents of postmodernism approaches to curricula fall in the way of apologetics by justifying the need for a revised and appropriately postmodern curricula based solely upon the current popularity and almost pervasive influence in some parts of the academy. Education students learning in some methods courses that teachers *can* no longer recognize a formal writing style or that rules regarding usage *can* no longer be emphasized, must ask themselves to what extent postmodernism has successfully refined or broadened the ways language can be understood and used. The fact that the words *can* and *can't* tend to be used over and against *should* and *shouldn't* emphasizes what is allowed for not by a normative pedagogy but by reality itself. Reality from a postmodern perspective has changed, and by definition ontologies have the power to change reality by changing what persons can know. Similarly, then, it seems that perverse ontologies (postmodernism, in the opinion of this writer, being one) can degrade

reality by both deconstructing what can be known and recasting what should be known. As John Gardner in *On Moral Fiction* writes, "With their intuitive philosophies, thinkers like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard overwhelmed such schools as the Oxford idealists, though nowhere in all their writings do they refute or for that matter show that they clearly understood the idealist position on even so basic a matter as whether or not there can be rational goodness."<sup>9</sup>

"The theories are certainly, all of them, implicit in the inexact experience of every day, but once extracted they make the world appear as strange as Bottom in his ass's head."

T.S. Eliot 10

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We are entering into an era as radically different from the modern era as the Renaissance was from the Middle Ages . . .

# NIETZSCHE, GENERATION X, AND THE FUTURE POSTMODERN CURRICULUM

Don G. Smith

I invite you to join me on a speculative journey into the present and not-too-distant future of American public schooling. To properly understand where we are going, however, we must understand where we are. And like it or not, and recognize it or not, we have entered the postmodern era. We are entering into an era as radically different from the modern era as the Renaissance was from the Middle Ages, as radically different from the modern era as the Enlightenment was from the Renaissance. I am reminded of Henry Adams, who, in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), wrestled with the attitude that his formal and informal liberal education had proven useless for dealing with the blinding changes of modernization. Now, modernism itself has waned, and the postmodern is in ascendancy. But before going on, let's be clear about how I am defining postmodernism.

I find Peter Sacks' contrasting of modernism and postmodernism most helpful. In his book *Generation X Goes to College*, Sacks contrasts the two world views in regard to nature of knowledge, media and society, and authorities:

## Nature of Knowledge

Traits of Modernism: Trust in reason, objective reality, and scientific method.

Traits of Postmodernism: Tendency toward relativism, subjectivism.

## Media and Society

Traits of Modernism: Belief in progress, perfection of society, the Protestant ethic, and an emancipatory press.

Traits of Postmodernism: Spectacle of mass produced images; dominance of entertainment values.

## Authorities

Traits of Modernism: Trust in democratic institutions, hegemony of producers and elites.

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Don Smith is an associate professor of educational foundations at Eastern Illinois State University in Charleston, Illinois.

Traits of Postmodernism: Delegitimization of institutions, sanctity of popular culturalism and popular entitlements: hyperconsumerism; dreams and heroes dead.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the greatest prophet of postmodernism was Friedrich Nietzsche. Postmodernism occurs with the arrival of what he describes as *nihilism*. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche writes that nihilism occurs when human beings see no purpose greater than themselves. They lose faith in both the guiding principles of religion and in the guiding principles of the state. Thereafter, people are set adrift. Nietzsche explains the cause of postmodernism's tendency toward relativism and subjectivism:

What has happened, at bottom? The feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of 'aim,' the concept of 'unity,' or the concept of 'truth.' Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking; the character of existence is not 'true,' is false. One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a true world. Briefly: the categories 'aim,' 'unity,' 'being' which we used to project some value into the world—we pull out again; so the world looks valueless . . . Conclusion: The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world.<sup>2</sup>

Nietzsche then describes the nihilist's rejection of modern society's faith in progress:

'Mankind' does not advance, it does not even exist. The over-all aspect is that of a tremendous experimental laboratory in which a few successes are scored, scattered throughout all ages, while there are untold failures, and all order, logic, union, and obligingness are lacking . . . Man represents no progress over the animal.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to postmodernism's delegitimization of institutions and authority, Nietzsche argues that skepticism and libertinism are both consequences of decadence. We no longer believe in legitimate authority or in a set of values that we are willing to defend, live for, and possibly die for. As a result, social institutions lack the power to shape our values and win our allegiance to anything beyond ourselves and our own quest for pleasure.

I wish to make one more thing clear before we go on. I do not believe that Nietzsche has directly influenced postmodernist America, certainly not as Allan Bloom gives Nietzsche credit for doing in his best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). America does not react to what she reads in books. She reacts to what she "sees" on television. Even newspaper readership is waning, especially among members of Generation X. Therefore Nietzsche's direct influence has been considerably less than Bloom postulates. Nevertheless, I return to Nietzsche because he was such a profound and accurate prophet. So, as he predicted, Western Culture is decadent, in the throes of nihilism—and this nihilistic age has been dubbed it "postmodern." But before going on to a discussion of Generation X and the future curriculum, we need to explore what Nietzsche has to say about the decadence of western culture. Such an exploration is necessary because it throws light on the postmodern current demand for multiculturalism in all facets of life, including the school.

In a world in which all metanarratives or comprehensive explanations of life are suspect, it seems necessary to place all "voices" and all "narratives" on equal footing. The Western perspective which trusts reason, objective reality, and scientific method should be constantly challenged in society (and in the classroom) by the subjectivism of chosen minority classes, by

the anti-rationalism of radical feminism, and by the voices of those who view "objective reality" as simply the hegemony of the status quo. But why have the children of western culture turned on their cultural heritage with such vengeance? Nietzsche suggests that western culture has become decadent, no longer willing to struggle for its own existence. Western culture, due to pervasive nihilism, now considers itself indefensible and unworthy of transmission. In the collective, Western culture has been shown unwilling to mount any sustained or comprehensive defense against the direct challenge of postmodernism. *Postmodern* has become the descriptor of the West in its decadence.

In *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, Patrick Slattery writes that "holistic perspective is essential for the emergence of compassion, optimal learning environments, nonviolent conflict resolution, just relationships and ecological sustainability."<sup>4</sup> Many representative postmodern multicultural texts make clear that a holistic perspective must be a non-Western perspective. This is the case because multicultural postmodernists argue that Western culture is the world's primary source of hard-heartedness, oppressive learning environments, violent conflict resolution, unjust relationships, and ecological destruction. As the student's chanted a few years ago with Jesse Jackson at Stanford, "Hey hey, ho ho, Western culture's gotta go!"

A fair examination will, of course, reveal that Western culture has generated its share of negative influences. Yet the same fair examination will also reveal the greatness of Western culture. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. writes:

Whatever the particular crimes of Europe, that continent is also the source—the unique source—of those liberating ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom that constitute our most precious legacy and to which most of the world today aspires. These are European ideas, not Asian, nor African, nor Middle Eastern ideas, except by adoption.<sup>5</sup>

Anyone familiar with history should also in fairness note the atrocities committed in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, etc., by indigenous cultures. The point here is that generations of Americans are now being reared and schooled to view all cultures, all people, and all world views as equal (or at least to view other cultures superior to Western Culture). Generation X, for example, is unwilling to discriminate among governmental, economic, and ethical systems. As Generation X condemns ethical distinctions as closed-minded, it condemns aesthetic ones likewise. Who is to say whether or not Shakespeare is aesthetically superior to a Harlequin Romance? It is all just a matter of opinion, says Generation X, reflecting the current climate of opinion. Furthermore, since white males have historically been the opinion-makers of Western culture, everything they opined regarding the traditional literary canon is subject to deconstruction. Unfortunately, a critical mass of parents, teachers, and school administrators (all victims of the same nihilistic schooling) are unable and unwilling to defend liberal education as we have known it. Hence, postmodernism becomes the prevailing cultural interpretation by default.

So what will be the characteristics of the future curriculum? In an effort to throw light on that question, we shall examine the following curricular areas: 1) the basic skills, 2) the arts, 3) history, 4) the sciences, and 5) philosophy and religion.

The basic skills, of course, are those of reading, writing, speaking, thinking, and ciphering (or mathematics). As communication skills, these basics depend on the mastery of linguistic and mathematical communication.

According to Nietzsche:

We believe in reason; this, however, is the philosophy of gray concepts. Language depends on the most naive

prejudices. Now we read disharmonies and problems into things because we think only in the form of language—and thus believe in the 'eternal truth' of 'reason (e.g., subject, attribute, etc.); We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language. We barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation. Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off.<sup>6</sup>

According to Nietzsche, reason depends on language, and because language produces distortion due to perspective, the search for undistorted truth is illusory. Because language makes survival possible, we must use language knowing that we traffic in untruths for pragmatic reasons. As Tracy B. Strong writes "... the present structure of human understanding forces men to continue searching for that which their understanding tells them is not to be found. This is the epistemology of nihilism." (Strong, p. 77).

Mathematics, too, is a language, that enables human beings to make sense of their world. Though mathematical and verbal language put human beings on the moon, for postmodernists the same holds true for numerical symbols as for alphabets. Both are survival tools that tell us nothing about "reality." According to Nietzsche, we must understand that language is a survival tool that accounts for the genealogy of world views and philosophical systems. Or, as Strong writes, "The language game and the genealogical investigation are analogous and are in the service of a similar purpose: the liberation of men from the unknown chains that bind them prisoner to a particular and destructive manner of viewing the world."<sup>6</sup>

Today, we hear that the reason-dependent perspectives of Western culture are destructive approaches to viewing the world and that alternative perspectives are necessary. After all, every perspective is ultimately illusory, so why should Western perspectives ultimately hold sway? Hence, the call for dogmatic pluralism and multiculturalism. In his essay "What's All the Fuss about This Postmodernist Stuff," Barry W. Sarchett<sup>7</sup> appeals to Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist theory of language and to Jacques Derrida's poststructuralism in an effort to demonstrate the indeterminacy of language. It seems that words mean whatever the powerful deem them to mean, and these words construct "realities" and perspectives that maintain the power of the status quo. Language, while serving as a tool for survival, also serves as a tool of power and oppression. Since language dictates how we think, the basic skill of reason is on just as precarious a ground as that of language. As postmodernists, multiculturalists, and pluralists argue, reason, though a survival skill, is also a tool of power and oppression.

So what does the future hold for the basic skills? Well, if it follows that language and thinking are necessary for survival, but that they do not lead us to an understanding of reality, there will be an uneasy mixture of the three R's along with an attempt to empower the unempowered by means of downplaying such concepts as "correct and incorrect usage" and "rational and irrational thought." We have already seen examples of this trend in many elementary school language arts teachers' dismissal of "correct" spelling as an imperative. According to postmodernist thinking, it is more important to allow the free and full expression of students without encumbering them with stifling concerns about correctness. We have seen the trend exemplified in teachers' reluctance to correct students who reach conclusions not supported by relevant data. After all, according to postmodernist theory, data is just indeterminate language, so students should be encouraged simply to reach "their own" conclusions irrespective of what reason would dictate. If language and reason are mere tools that don't tell us anything authoritative about a real world, then "correct opinions" are arbitrary, and one opinion is just as good as the next. Such approaches probably go far in accounting for the twenty-

year decline in language and reading scores on ACT and SAT tests.

The most recent example of the postmodern trend in basics education is the move by the Oakland (California) School District to classify "ebonics," or Afro-American dialect (or black slang), as a separate language. Of course, if language is indeterminate, the Oakland School District can call a dialect a language, slang a dialect, or a language slang if they so choose, but the more significant issue is that the acceptance of ebonics defies the logic of language. For example, if singular subjects do not require singular verbs and plural subjects plural verbs, then communication is hampered because the structure of that communication is illogical. Here, the survival function of language might be called into question. If in a job interview a Black student says, "I be really interested in this job," the student will probably not get the job (unless some pluralistic-minded university professor is doing the hiring). Therefore, the push for ebonics as a legitimate language might be short lived. Certainly, the attempted legitimization of ebonics has been a well-deserved target of widespread scorn and ridicule from both Whites and Blacks. I predict, however, that the postmodern climate might prevail here. If so, Black students will circumvent secondary and post-secondary language requirements by claiming that they are already bilingual and need not study a "second language." Thereafter, personnel managers in the private sector will be sued for refusing to hire Black applicants who speak "incorrect English." The foundation for such outcomes resides in the conclusion that correctness is a tool used by the status quo to retain its power by oppressing those who do not adopt their ways of doing things and their ways of interpreting the world. I might pause to alert school board members and administrators that such challenges are in the offing. How will you respond?

We turn now to the future of the arts in formal education. Education in the arts today is undergoing rapid change. The most obvious example is literature study. As Gerald Graff writes in his preface to Richard Ohmann's *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession*, "The late Irving Howe is said to have remarked that whereas the radicals of his day wanted to change the world, the radicals of today just want to change the English department. Yet Howe of all people should know better, for changing the world by changing the English department is not the far-fetched project that his witticism makes it sound." In the postmodern age, the arts are not concerned with aesthetics; they are concerned with politics—perspectives meant to support or challenge the status quo. "Silenced" minority and feminist voices compete for a place in the canon at the expense of works considered great for centuries. Construing the arts curriculum as a tool for political power and social change is only one trend devoted to the radical alteration of the arts curriculum. The other is the contention by Generation X students that old books are hard to understand and irrelevant to today's world. After all Shakespeare wrote differently than contemporary newspaper columnists write and he did not comment on American racial relations; and Milton did not address the Vietnam War or unemployment in the twenty-first century! Also, unlike the television and movie screens and newspapers, great books require self-discipline and serious attention on the part of the student. For those reasons, the great books are not entertaining enough, and if a book is not immediately entertaining, it is not good or worthy of Generation X's time investment. Generation X wants to be entertained, and English departments around the country are eager to oblige. Consider Jon Anderson's article in the Chicago Tribune titled "English Classes of Tomorrow will be Business as Unusual." Anderson writes:

In an era of electronic innovation, one might expect 9,000 English teachers to stand defiant against the

decline of the printed world sort of a Chacer's Last Stand mindset.

But no. The mood at this week's gathering of the National Council of Teachers of English, where one session was called "Reading Television With a Writer's Eye," was more "if you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em."<sup>11</sup>

In the article, Anderson invites Beverly Ann Chin, President of the National Council of Teachers of English, to give her vision of the English classroom in the year 2025:

Waving her hands, Chin pictured a room with books, computers, CD-ROMs and other technology linking students throughout the building and around the world.

Students would talk on-line about books they had read, then share their own poems and stories, opening the world to each other, she said.<sup>12</sup>

Other innovations of the future will apparently include "Humorology," an educational approach that allows students to study stand-up comedy by learning to judge the effectiveness of comedians. We will be doing a fine job of creating media literacy and computer literacy, but apparently very little to promote general literacy or cultural literacy (as defined by E. D. Hirsch). The emphasis will be on helping students understand how words on television, in movies, and in emerging technologies "effect their own ideas, opinions and choices."<sup>13</sup> Note the emphasis on the students' own feelings and opinions, for these will be the focus of the curriculum in the next century. A picture might be worth a thousand words, but, unfortunately, if words are indeterminate, so are pictures and other images. Everything boils down to the perspective of the student, and since there are no privileged perspectives (or narratives) in postmodernism, all perspectives are presumably equal. The vast majority of students will agree that most writers in the traditional literary canon are difficult and boring—so, enough said. The future English curriculum will focus on popular culture—popular books, films, and television shows that are easy and entertaining.

And what will happen to the great works of Western culture. We need look no further than Harold Bloom's recent prediction:

The study of Western literature will also continue, but on the much more modest scale of our current Classics departments. What are now called 'Departments of English' will be renamed departments of 'Cultural Studies' where Batman comics, Mormon theme parks, television, movies, and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Wallace Stevens. Major, once elitist universities and colleges will still offer a few courses in Shakespeare, Milton, and their peers, but these will be taught by departments of three or four scholars, equivalent to teachers of ancient Greek and Latin.<sup>14</sup>

Other areas of the arts such as dance, film, painting, and music will go similar routes, yielding to what is entertaining, current, pluralistic, and multicultural.

We turn now to history. According to Nietzsche, since there are no correct starting points for asking historical questions, there can be no such thing as historical truth. Since "facts" are shaped by people's perspectives, there can be no permanent facts. History is simply constructions of the past based on the perspectives of the present. Since perspectives change with time, both what we consider historically significant and what we consider historically true changes with time. This is the postmodern position.

Nietzsche considered history noxious to life if approached from an antiquarian perspective, which seeks to cultivate an appreciation of the past for its own sake. Though often misused, antiquarian history does bind people to the past. With some reservations, Nietzsche is more favorably inclined toward

monumental history, which seeks to provide people with models of greatness through a depiction of great people, events, and periods of the past. He is most favorably inclined, however, toward critical history, the study of history for the purpose of dissolving the past: "Man must have, and from time to time use, the strength to break up and dissolve the past, in order to live: he does this by bringing it before the bar of judgment, interrogating it remorselessly, and finally condemning it. Every past, however, is worthy of being condemned for human affairs are always such that it is in them that human strengths and weaknesses become powerful."<sup>15</sup>

Though some advocates of history endorse monumental history, many of these do so with the desire to infuse young people with a sense of patriotism and dedication that postmodernists consider unmerited by the nation itself. Generation X, which distrusts the motives of history advocates, tends to agree with Nietzsche. Though some advocates of history endorse antiquarian history, Generation X considers such an approach a dull, boring, waste of time—a wallowing in dry dates and meaningless names for the sake of some nebulous educational goal. It seems that critical history is favored today by many pluralists and multiculturalists because it can easily be used to denigrate and condemn Western culture. Advocates of critical history call to judgment the people, events, and eras of Western culture, expose the bigotry and cruelty of each, and pass sentence: "Hey, hey, ho ho—Western culture's gotta go!" Generation X is mildly interested in this approach because it distrusts the veracity of what they were taught in their early years about the greatness of our nation and our culture. Still, none of the three perspectives we have reviewed is currently inspirational enough to coax most members of Generation X to study history willfully and seriously.

In response to the "crisis" ignited by Generation X's ignorance of history, the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools published *Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools* (1989). Paul Gagnon and the Bradley Commission then edited a book called *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*,<sup>16</sup> which reprints the Commission's 1989 study along with responses from scholars and teachers committed to the importance of history in the K-12 curriculum—and beyond. Among those making powerful and heartfelt arguments for the importance of history is Professor Michael Kammen, Newton C. Farr, Professor of American History and Culture at Cornell University, who writes that we should study history "To avoid the tendency to ascribe equal value to all relationships and events. Worse than no memory at all is the indiscriminating memory that cannot differentiate between important and inconsequential experiences."<sup>17</sup>

The trouble today is that nihilistic Generation X has bought the postmodern viewpoint which proclaims all relationships and events equal. Everything depends on one's "appropriation" of those events as either important or unimportant in one's own life. All is a matter of individual perspective.

Cajoling students to study seriously when truth does not exist and when all is a matter of mere perspective is a daunting (and probably impossible) task. Granted, history has been often taught atrociously in the past by teachers who neither understood nor loved history themselves, and oftentimes the driest textbooks have been used to transmit Euro-American history. Still, the problem today is one that a change of method will not cure. Postmodernism calls into question the very importance of history itself.

Still, engaging teaching methods can entertain, and here the advocates for history may have a chance. If history can be made more entertaining, there is a small chance that students will sit and absorb it. And the fact of the matter is that history can be made that entertaining. But in this post-literate age, his-

tory in the schools must rely on the visual image—on the film or television program.

As increasing numbers of Americans are getting their history from made-for-television movies and from the cinema of directors such as Oliver Stone. The difficulty is that these visual reproductions of history routinely and admittedly sacrifice accuracy for entertainment value. In postmodern America, however, accuracy is Out; entertainment value is In! In the future curriculum, accuracy (or truth, if you will) shall be sacrificed for entertainment value. Keep the kids awake and interested so they don't drop out and/or cause trouble! When faced with hard choices of this type in the past, American schooling has usually taken the path of least resistance. Of course, historical novels, which we must accurately classify under the arts, usually sacrifice historical accuracy for the sake of telling a good story. It is true that those novels have inspired some to value history and indeed to become historians, but in the future, history, as part of the curriculum, will be engulfed by the arts and nullified as a separate discipline. There will be no admission that this has been done, but the result will be the same. What Americans know of history in the future will depend on how screenwriters and directors re-create history for an entertainment-minded audience. History as a discipline will cease to exist at the K-12 level (much as geography has), and, undoubtedly, to some extent even in "higher education." Generation X would not have it any other way.

The natural sciences present a problem for pluralists and multiculturalists, and for those who would cater to the whims of Generation X. Political freedom depends on a foundation of economic freedom, and economic freedom in the future will depend increasingly on advancing technologies. Of course, the foundation of advancing technologies is the natural sciences. Unfortunately for Generation X and their fellow travelers in the educational establishment, the natural sciences cannot be made as easy and enjoyable as the pabulum which increasingly substitutes for the arts. The arts are disciplines, but, according to multiculturalists and some in the science community, they are "soft disciplines." Natural science is a "hard discipline." An American student's "creative" conclusion based on nothing but ignorance will not compete effectively with conclusions reached by disciplined students from other nations. Here lies the tension in the curriculum battle being fought today between those who wave the "Nation at Risk" report and warn us of a "rising tide of mediocrity" and those who argue that the curriculum should become a multicultural and popular culture free-for-all. The same people who encourage more minority members and women to become scientists are often the first to "debunk" the sovereignty of reason in the marketplace of ideas that science depends on. Yes, some scientific discoveries have originated in creative thought by scientists (i.e. Newton) who were as much alchemists as they were scientists. Yet, there is no denying that objectivity and reason form the foundation of science and make predictability and proof possible.

Of course, some effort has been made to portray natural science as a relativistic study, the most notable being Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970).<sup>18</sup> Essentially, Kuhn argues that science periodically undergoes paradigm shifts such as that from the pre-Copernican paradigm of the solar system to the Copernican, or from the Newtonian paradigm to the Einsteinian. Each paradigm contains within itself the terms, definition, and accepted facts that validate the paradigm. When a paradigm shift occurs the self-authenticating terms, definitions, and accepted facts change. The incommensurability of paradigms therefore renders natural science relative.

Kuhn, however, refused to go too far in throwing out logic and observation. Defending himself against critics, he argues that "To say that, in matters of theory-choice, the force of logic and observation cannot in principle be compelling is neither to

discard logic and observation nor to suggest that there are not good reasons for favoring one theory over another.<sup>19</sup> But radical relativist Paul Feyerabend bars no holds in his assault on a systematic rational method. He writes:

The idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naive a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, 'objectivity', 'truth', it will become clear that there is only one principle that can be defended under all circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*.<sup>20</sup>

In effect, Feyerabend conducts a Nietzschean genealogy of natural science and finds its conclusions as relative as those of history and the arts. Defenders of objectivity and logic attribute the paradigm shifts in science to the self-correcting power of objectivity and logic—an argument for open-mindedness in natural science, but not an argument for intellectual anarchy. Intellectual anarchy, however, is the position of Generation X, and schools are faced with the problem of what to do with natural science in the postmodern curriculum. What will schools do?

This author posits that natural science will be the final modernist vs. postmodernist battleground. National security, economic vitality, and technological progress require that America produce scientists (and technicians familiar with science)—and, regardless of what intellectual anarchists say, scientific progress depends on objectivity and logic. As postmodernists ask us to see it, we can live with an ethical decline, but we cannot live with the technological decline that makes the ethical decline possible! We have for sometime experienced a decline in the number of natural science majors, which should surprise no one because schools are failing to adequately teach the basics of mathematics and the discipline of science itself. Note also the test results showing our students' appalling ignorance in the realm of science literacy.

Business, industry, and the military call for reforms while intellectual anarchists in the teaching profession call for more of "anything goes." We have already reached a critical mass of intellectual anarchists in the humanities, and in time the same will be true in the natural sciences. I predict that the problem will be eventually addressed by raising the pay of natural scientists so as to keep America sufficiently stocked and competitively vital. Science, however, will be a discipline cut off from the curriculum of the masses. It will be as esoteric an offering as traditional literature. Only the pay incentive will keep science departments from going the way of classics departments. The resulting danger (if anyone cares) will be in the growing masses of people who will have little idea of how their world works and why it works that way.

We turn now to philosophy and religion, the latter for which Nietzsche reserved some of his most vitriolic criticism. Since Nietzsche was himself a philosopher he maligned the thinking of most philosophers before him rather than philosophy itself. But Nietzsche left no religious edifice standing during his Sherman-like "march to the sea" of cultural genealogy. For Nietzsche, religion represented the ascendancy of "slave morality," belief systems invented and propagated by the weak in order to control the strong. Nietzsche recognized, however, that in the modern world "God is dead." By that he meant that for modern humanity the belief in a supreme being who supervises our lives is dead. The death of God is therefore the most important of several factors ushering in the nihilistic age.

Nietzsche would approve of the fact that most K-12 curricula have ignored religion since several chilling Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s. Though the Supreme Court

clearly permits the teaching of non-devotional comparative religion, I would predict that K-12 curricula will continue to ignore both philosophy and religion. After all, according to postmodernists, philosophy and religion all rely on indeterminate language—and worse, they touch on areas of national "touchiness"—areas that people are not advised to discuss in polite company. Postmodernists would have us forget the fact that every discipline has a philosophical foundation and that religion itself has a strong philosophical component.

Philosophy has few professional K-12 proponents; it never has had many proponents, and for the foreseeable future will not expand its base of support. The fact that it is a difficult subject relying strongly on abstract reasoning makes it off-side for K-8 students. As fundamental as philosophy is for comprehensive, integrative thinking, it remains largely ignored even at the highest levels of American education. Combine these facts with the postmodern crisis among professional philosophers themselves and one sees clearly that philosophy will continue its slow descent into educational irrelevancy.

Where religion is concerned, postmodernists are committed to banishing from the public consciousness anything suggesting the possibility of commitment to a power higher than humanity. Such commitment suggests allegiance to metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological absolutes and universals. The study of religion demonstrates that vast numbers of people from a variety of cultures have historically committed themselves to such religiously-based absolutes—a fact that one would never conclude from reading contemporary American K-12 history textbooks. The only thing to which most postmodernists desire commitment is postmodernism itself. In other words, they desire non-commitment so as to foster toleration and nonjudgmental attitudes—as long as such toleration does not extend to the foundations of Western culture. Many postmodernists, of course, take the obvious minority and feminist perspectives as axiomatic and philosophically unassailable. If my description of postmodernism appears equivocal, it is because postmodernism anti-intellectual bias makes it off-side for 9-12 students. As fundamental as philosophy is for comprehensive, integrative thinking, it remains largely ignored even at the highest levels of American education. Combine these facts with the postmodern crisis among professional philosophers themselves and one sees clearly that philosophy will continue its slow descent into educational irrelevancy.

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## CONCLUSION

Board members, administrators, and teachers of the future must face one hard fact—we are in a postmodern age, an age predicted with great accuracy by Friedrich Nietzsche in the nineteenth century. As we enter the twenty-first century, Nietzsche's predictions have broadly been proven correct.

What we call Generation X is a postmodern generation of students that distrust authority and intellectual discipline. They demand that their every unfounded whim be taken as seriously as the conclusions of academicians who have given their lives to specialized studies, and they demand that their teachers entertain and amuse them.<sup>21</sup>

There will still be individual defenders of Western culture, but the most influential social institutions (the family, the schools, the government, the news media, the entertainment media, and the economic system) will reinforce postmodernism. Of course, isolated institutions of Western culture (e.g. the Catholic Church) have defended the existence of absolutes ever since the Middle Ages. As Robin M. Williams reports in his book *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation* (1970),<sup>22</sup> there existed before the late 1960s a set of generally-held American values identifiable as personal achievement, work, moral concern and humanitarianism, efficiency and practicality, progress and material advancement, equality, freedom, and nationalism. For defenders of universals and absolutes, truth is not a captive of time and place. Such defenders still exist and will continue to exist in isolation. Things are changing, however. As sociologist Daniel Bell revealed in his book *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976),<sup>23</sup> the need to expand capitalistic markets has "necessitated" barrages of ads from Madison Avenue encouraging Americans to have a good time, travel, drink beer, smoke cigarettes, and continually enjoy life. The hedonistic values promoted by capitalism conflict with many of the values described by Williams. In some ways, postmodernism represents the victory of post-'Sixties self-centered individualism over those virtues of pre-'Sixties: personal and public responsibility.

Because school officials have throughout the twentieth century increasingly given in to student demands for laxity, it is obvious to me that board members, administrators and teachers of the future will consciously or subconsciously promote a postmodern view aimed at giving students what they want rather than what they need. The stream is postmodern. Those swimming against it will be subject to interrogation, ridicule, and worse. As for the curriculum of the future "anything goes."

## ENDNOTES

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20. For repeated examples of this phenomenon, see Peter Sacks' *Generation X Goes to College*, cited above.
21. Robin M. Williams, Jr., *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation*, 3rd edition (New York: Knopf, 1970).
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We must cure our own ignorance before we can hope to cure that of others.

# EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS OF COLOR IN A MIDWEST SCHOOL DISTRICT, 1954 TO 1974

Mary Ann Welch Bendezu

This qualitative study presented the experiences of students of color who studied in the public schools of a Midwest city between 1954 and 1974 and an examination of the policies and practices of the board of education members toward students of color: African American, Hispanic American, and Native American. Their own words provided insight as to the treatment of students of color at that time.

A definition of history came from two citizens in a critique of a school history text: "History . . . provides contemporaries with a view of their past . . . The history of a state, nation or world that omits the history of any of its people cannot be considered as complete" (Bullock & Simpson-Kirkland, n.d.).

The absence of records about people of color in the schools showed me an opportunity to study the history of a group of people whose personal accounts would soon be lost. Many of my students who are people of color claim that "nothing has changed," in regard to the treatment of people of color. For them, in their few years, not much has changed. In this study, I explored the experiences and opinions of people of color in [City] during their school years. In many ways, people of color are now treated very differently than in the past. In other ways, they feel the same kinds of oppression.

Archival data for this study were found in the public and private libraries of [City]. In addition, I interviewed 15 individuals: seven former students, one former board member, one community member, the mother and father of 11 former students, one former teacher, and two former school administrators. Eleven interviews were with people of color: the students, the community member, and the parents.

Banks (1995) wrote about the "historical reconstruction of knowledge about race: "Recognizing that knowledge contains both subjective and objective elements does not mean that we

must abandon the quest for the construction of a knowledge that is as objective as possible" (p. 15).

The nature of this study was subjective: I reject the idea that people of any race are superior to another. I know as a teacher that it will be in the schools that our children will learn to get along with their peers or to fight them; where the racism in our country will turn into acceptance or will grow into hatred; and where all of us will either celebrate our similarities and differences or retreat into mutual distrust.

## Research Questions

I asked participants these questions: (1) How were students of color treated in your school? (2) What events concerned students of color in the schools after 1954? (3) What happened to students of color in the schools from 1954 to 1974?

## Findings

Coding and analysis of the data revealed four categories of comments by participants: (1) official school board policies; (2) traditional school board practices; and (3) policies of other entities affecting students of color.

I found two major themes: (1) the ignorance of European Americans about people belonging to other ethnic or racial groups and (2) the invisibility of people of color to European Americans.

Until the formation of a district multicultural advisory committee in 1972, [City] Public Schools board of education had no written policies about students of color that are now available. The comments of participants revealed that most students of color attended certain schools that were located in their "gerrymandered" attendance areas and that school officials were reluctant to recruit or hire people of color as teachers. The activities of other entities within the city also affected students of color: federal, state, and city government directives; banks; insurance companies; the police; the state university; and local churches.

The majority of comments by participants concerned the every day school life of these students while they studied at the [City] schools: their teachers, good and bad; classes; extracurricular activities; other students; and parents.

## Good Teachers

Former students and their parents had a lot to say about educators. Every participant remembered at least one helpful educator. All but one student of color could also tell of at least one incident of racism, stereotyping, insensitivity, indifference, misunderstanding, or unkindness by one educator. Most people prefaced their comments about teachers by stating that they had received a good education in [City] Public Schools.

[Participant E] was a student at an elementary school where most students were people of color. She remembered a sixth grade class with a teacher who taught her to play chess. She felt that the classroom provided her the freedom to learn on her own. She said, "It was open classroom . . . I learned more that year than ever, because I got to do things I was interested in without being structured. And it helped."

Participants mentioned by name 22 teachers who had a positive interaction with them. One elementary teacher was admired by three participants. [Participant F] said, "She was just really wonderful. She encouraged us kids to read. That is why I wanted to go on with school." The two parents also spoke of this person as one of two good teachers in their sons' elementary school.

[Participant A] said of two teachers whom she admired: "They to me were the best people you could ever really encounter in junior high. She was very, very helpful in having students see their potential. He was always smiling." This

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Mary Ann Welch Bendezu is a professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the Teachers College at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

same participant felt that her junior high school music teacher showed enthusiasm. She said, "He'd push us . . . because he wanted us to do our best."

[Participant G] spoke about a dean at [City] High School who helped him get a loan for college. He said, "I needed some money . . . and she gave me a good recommendation . . . Because of her, I got it." He also recalled an economics teacher who pushed him to do well on a project about the New York Stock Exchange. As a result of this teacher's influence, he majored in business in college. He appreciated the efforts of his home room teacher to encourage him to go to college and of another teacher who pushed him to write.

[Participant B] liked an English teacher who was "One of the few teachers who really went out of her way to encourage all minority students . . . She did not follow that old, 'Okay, these kids are here, and these kids are over here,' routine." She also thought that this teacher had handled correctly their study of the book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1884). She said, "I remember her telling us up front that book had the word nigger in it, why the book had the word nigger in it, and that we were absolutely not to use that against other people or try to make anybody feel bad."

[Participant B] said that she was always put into the classes for rapid learners and encouraged to take college preparatory courses. She stated, "I was always treated very well because I had very high test scores." Her junior high school counselor told her to take the college preparatory track in high school, "forced" her to take a foreign language instead of clerical classes, and pushed her "in that direction." This participant later graduated from the state university.

The mother of former students said of her son's experience with a teacher in elementary school, "He had a reading disability . . . and [she] took her time after school to have [him] stay . . . so she could help him with his reading, on her own time." She said of her children's teachers in general, "Some of the teachers were excellent teachers. They had my children's interest at heart . . . If not, they wouldn't have learned."

### Bad Teachers

Participants mentioned 14 educators who treated students of color in a negative way. The former board member remembered that a guidance counselor told her, "I knew this black girl. She told me she wanted to take a secretarial course when she went to high school. And I just told her, 'Do you find your kind of people working as secretaries in offices?'"

[Participant E] told of problems in a [City] High School history class. She answered a question about Columbus by saying, "Columbus landed in 1492. He didn't discover shit, because it was already there." She got sent to the principal's office for rudeness, was removed from the history class and put into a sewing class. She commented, "I just think they didn't know how to handle it."

[Participant F] recalled being called into his elementary school nurse's office to have his head checked for lice. He said, "I don't know if that was done for everybody, but I know for the Mexican kids in the neighborhood that seemed to be a routine thing." He added that in [City] High School the chorus in which he sang had performed a minstrel show and that, "It was the accepted thing to do."

Both he and three other participants remembered reading the book *Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman, 1928) in grade school. Even after 1964, when the book had been taken off the required reading list, teachers continued to teach with it. The two parents told about their African American son being chosen to play the part of Sambo in a sixth grade class play based on the book. When he told the teacher that his parents did not want him to take the role, the teacher recast him as Mumbo, another character in the book. His mother had to go to

the school and tell the teacher that he was not going to take part in the play. The teacher responded to the parent's objection to the book by saying, "Well, this is the story, and all the children love that story." The parent said that this teacher then cast another African American child as Sambo. The parent agreed with the teacher that her own child did enjoy *Little Black Sambo*, but she also said that her son was an "innocent," who did not understand what she found negative about the book.

The two parents remembered that their children on many occasions were "called out of their name," a euphemism for the use of the racial insult "nigger." In one incident, the parents stated that the principal of the junior high school intervened and punished their son who reacted to the insult but did not punish the student who did the name-calling. The mother said: "And, then, [the principal] told [my son] that the name calling wasn't as bad as the licking he gave the boy . . . I didn't know about it until [my son] came home. But [the principal] called the white kid's father to come to the school."

In a second incident her son was insulted by a student and punished by a teacher for fighting. Both parents said the punishment of their sons by a teacher and a principal, when the sons were provoked to fight by racial epithets, should be called racism.

Guidance counselors were also criticized by some participants. The two parents of former students recalled that their eldest son had been placed by his counselor in nonacademic classes after commenting, "You're from a large family, and I know you won't be going to college." The mother said: "His counselor put him as hall guard and movie operator instead of the academic subjects that he really needed . . . Then he got a scholarship to Harvard University and got his master's degree." She stated that the counselor ignored her son's ability and discouraged him from wanting to prepare for college.

[Participant C] said, "I don't remember any guidance counselors at all." [Participant F] commented, "I had very little contact with guidance counselors." The only contact with a counselor that she remembered was after the death of her only parent. The counselor asked who would have custody of her. There was no other indication of concern.

[Participant B] told about one of her elementary teachers: "I had this teacher . . . She told [my friend] that I was the nicest little colored girl she'd ever known . . . In a lot of their eyes I was the exception . . . I was [not] fitting the normal pattern."

This person observed that many of her friends had experiences different from hers as a prospective college student. She said: "I watched a lot of my friends, who didn't have high test scores, who were not pushed . . . [They] were encouraged to go the vocational or clerical route . . . Only two of us were actually encouraged to take the college prep courses."

One student told about an incident in a high school physiology class. The teacher taught students to "do their own blood type," and told about sickle-cell anemia. The teacher pointed out that this blood disease was more common among people of African American descent than among other groups. He expressed eagerness to see this participant's blood smear, came "running over there" and said, "Maybe we'll get to see it." He apparently gave no thought to the fact that if his student had this blood cell, she was seriously ill. This participant felt that the teacher's remarks and actions had been unkind, insensitive, and stereotyping.

[Participant A] said that in a sixth grade science class, she worked a long time on a weather project etc. Her teacher's response was, "That's done so well, you couldn't have done it yourself." She attributed her teacher's refusal to credit her with good work to racism or stereotyping of "females or blacks."

[Participant A] taught for the first time at a [City] elementary school. She said this school was one where she and many students of color studied. Her teacher's assistant worked well with this teacher for two days but then quit the job because, as

office personnel told the teacher, "She felt that she couldn't work with a black person telling her what to do."

[Participant C] said, "It's not that I can think of any teachers who in some way tried to put me down. But, I know there weren't any who encouraged me." He thought that his teachers "just kind of let you go, without trying to push you." [Participant F] remembered having difficulty with mathematics classes in secondary school. She said, "I had weak math teachers . . . I didn't feel that I was given adequate instruction." She said of one junior high school teacher, "I would ask for help. She was too busy to help me. And, she would always help those that really didn't need it. So, I'd just barely slide by in algebra."

The father of former students said his sons experienced discrimination by high school sports coaches. He felt that two of his sons were excellent players who were not "selected to go play in the Shrine Bowl," because of the coaches' racism. He added that football players who were not liked by the coaches did not get good recommendations for University football play. He said, "If the coach [doesn't] agree with them, they don't recommend them for the university. They can play football, . . . but the attitude's against them." His sons got college football scholarships, in spite of their coaches' lack of recommendation.

The mother told about a baseball coach at [City] High School who was thought by her children and her children's friends to discriminate against African American students. She said, "One of the boys wouldn't go out for baseball because the coach was prejudiced . . . And, [my son] was very good at baseball." The parents remembered only one student of color who had gone out for the baseball team at this high school. A check of the [City] High School yearbook photographs of the baseball teams from 1954 to 1974 showed that the team did not have any players who appeared to be people of color until the 1970s ( , 1954-1974).

The experiences recounted by the participants in the study showed that people of color perceived racism on the part of educators in the [City] Public Schools. Even though they also remembered good experiences with educators, they were aware of teachers' unjust actions toward students who were people of color and that those actions were not the same as those experienced by European American students.

#### *Extracurricular Activities*

Every former student and parent participant talked about extracurricular activities during their own or their children's public school experience.

African American students in 1951 reported participation in all but two extracurricular activities at [City] High School. The students who were interviewed in a study done three years before the first year of this study "felt that they were discriminated against because of race." They did not participate in the pep club and the annual student picnic. They did not attend the picnic because the day's activities were swimming, dancing, and skating, and they were not allowed to take part in these activities. City laws restricted swimming pools and other recreational facilities to whites (Collins, 1951). One of the parent participants also spoke of the prohibition against African Americans going to local [City] swimming pools during the 1940s and 1950s.

The former principal dealt with the issue of racism in the girls' pep club "in the early fifties." The school pep club for senior girls selected new members by vote every year. He said, "There had never been any black girls in the pep club," and, "The friends of girls who were already in were usually the ones that got in." African American females were excluded from the pep club. The principal changed the membership rules so that, "Any senior girl would be subject to the same eligibility rules that we had for all students in athletics, which meant that, if they were a student in good standing, with a

good citizenship record, they could be members of the pep club." Some parents of African American students told him, "It was one of the best things that we had done for black girls." The principal's comments were supported by the appearance in the yearbook pep club photographs of women students of color during all but one of the years of the study (*Links, 1954-1974*).

The seniors who were people of color in the [City] High School for 1954-1974 were pictured in the annual yearbooks with their activities and awards. For the twenty years of the study, there was a total of 459 seniors who were people of color. These seniors listed 1,479 different extracurricular activities and awards: in sports activities; in music and drama; and in leadership, career and service organizations. A total of 34 students of color were chosen as "royalty" at social events in [City] High School, all but two of them after 1967. Awards for academic achievement or community service were given to 27 students of color between 1954 and 1974 at [City] High School 1954-1974).

Students of color participated in those extracurricular activities to which they were allowed admittance. The example of the pep club showed how the leadership shown by one educator brought about change for students of color. These changes happened over a period of years, but most of the increase in student of color participation in extracurricular activities happened after 1968.

#### *Friendships*

Five former students in [City] Public Schools spoke of friendships with students from different racial or ethnic groups. [Participant A] said, "We've all kind of associated together in our schools while growing up. So, this was pretty much natural to us. We didn't understand the flap when the dating part of it came." [Participant D] commented "There was interracial dating. I had friends that . . . called at the house all the time. As far as I know, nobody was putting anybody down for it."

[Participant C] told about a Mexican American student who dated a European American girl whose parents did not want her to date a Mexican American. His best friend picked her up for dates. [Participant A] stated that most of the interracial dating was black males with white females. She added that most of the objections to this dating came from adults at school and parents. [Participants D and E] said that some African American females in [City] High School did not approve of interracial dating and once physically attacked black men who dated white women.

An African American student objected to his black friends' hypocrisy in a letter to the school newspaper in 1972: "It was good to see all the so-called Black brothers say, we want a Black this and a Black that . . . But then they leave [the meeting] with a white girl" (So-called, *Advocate*, Feb. 16).

#### *Name Calling*

[Participants A, B, C, E, and F], and the two parents reported that students of color were called insulting names by other students in the schools. [Participant B] told of name-calling at [City] High School. An administrator put the students in a room together and told them, "All right, now you're in here together. We're not going to let you kill each other, but we want you to deal with the problem."

The mother of former students said that her children were "always" insulted by other students with name-calling and racial slurs on the playground and walking home from school. In one incident, her son told the other child, "You know that isn't my name." The other child replied, "Yes, it is, because all of you are . . ." He used the 'N' word." She also remembered that one of her sons had fought with another boy nearly "every day," for name-calling. When both were in sixth grade, the two

became good friends when his adversary told her son that he would never again call him a name. This parent thought that the name-calling diminished through the years because of the parents' teaching. She said, "You learned it at home. You didn't learn it at school."

[Participant C] also remembered name-calling. He said, "It did happen . . . you know, the exchange of words . . . name calling." He then recited a list of four racial slurs that were used against him by other students: "greaser," "wet back," "spick," and "wop." He added, "I do know that there were always little fights among kids because of name-calling, which was based on race, ethnicity."

[Participant B] said of [City] High School: "There was some racial tension. The comment was made to the black students, why did we all sit together at lunch? . . . It was real hard to get people to understand that you wanted to sit with your friends." She commented that, "When white kids all sit down together, like the football team or the cheerleaders, nobody thinks anything about it, because they're just friends. But, as soon as we do it, it's like were segregating ourselves."

Participants remembered that students of color were insulted with racial epithets by fellow students. No participants reported racial name calling by teachers. The two parents did recall tolerance of name calling by principals and teachers. The parents stated that the educators blamed the insulted students for their fighting with other students who did the name calling.

#### Parents

According to all participants, parents played a role in the experiences of students of color in the [City] Public Schools. Participants mentioned their parents' efforts to protect them from racism at school; to guide them in coping with hostility from people in the school; to give them pride about their identity as people of color; to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered; to educate them about the history and traditions of their cultural group; and to deal with school officials for them.

Participants mentioned help with school work. [Participant F] said: "My mother didn't speak much English, so she didn't feel comfortable coming to the school and speaking to any of my teachers. I do know that when I took Spanish, she was very helpful there." She was the youngest of seven siblings, all of whom later finished college after study at [City] High School.

The two parents of 11 children recalled helping their children with classes. They emphasized the fact that the father always worked two jobs so the mother could stay at home. They attributed their children's success to their own resolve to have the mother at home and to careful oversight of the children's progress in school. Their father commented, "I think if you got more of that now, you wouldn't have so much trouble with kids in jail." They drove one of their sons to a teacher's home to be tutored in reading every Saturday. They thought that the price of the tutoring was expensive, but well worth the cost. She said, "We tried to give our children every opportunity there was."

[Participant B] talked about a family friend, a person of color, who "expected a lot of his kids." She added, "That's what I got from most of the black people. They had very high expectations of their kids."

The parents of [Participant A] always told her, "Do what you're supposed to do, and you come home and study. Get your work turned in and do it." She added, laughing, "And that's pretty much the way I did things."

Besides helping children with school work, many parents worked directly with educators. The former principal of [City] High School remembered approval from African American parents for his democratization of the pep club and the speech given by the mother of an African American student at a school

athletic banquet. He said, "I felt that we had good support from black parents in our efforts to be sure that there was equality of learning and treatment."

[Participant A] had attended an elementary school in the neighborhood of the [African American] Community Center and spoke of the Parent Teacher Organization for that school. She said: "[It] was pretty integrated. My parents and a lot of the parents in the neighborhood served on the PTO as officers, and the relationships that they built with the majority population, the white families, were good, too, because some of those relationships still exist."

She also said that when she had a problem with a teacher, her parents, because of their participation in the Parent Teacher Organization, felt comfortable in going to the school to speak with the teacher and to let her know that their child had done her own work on a science project. The teacher apologized to her parents but never to the student herself.

The mother of former students refused to allow her son to play the part of Little Black Sambo in the school play, then was forced to visit with her son's teacher to prohibit his recasting as Little Black Mumbo and to object to the use of this book in the class. She had also gone to her sons' junior and senior high schools to object to her sons' punishments by educators for fighting after they were insulted with racial epithets.

Parents also taught children how to achieve success in a white world. [Participant B] said, "[It's] a real hard thing to get someone who hasn't lived through it to understand . . . the message that was given to me by my grandmother, that you're always going to have to work harder."

[Participant A] told about her parents' view of education. "My parents instilled in us the importance of education . . . We were going to school to learn what was being taught . . . It was our place to learn and get the best education that we could." She emphasized this idea when she added that her parents told her, "As you get your education, you're going to have to do better, do more, than the white students in class. Because people will think that you don't know how to do things . . . You'll have to show them."

[Participant C] at first said that his parents had not played an important role in his education. He said, "Our parents were not aware of what we were up to. We had no real support at the house. The [Hispanic] community was certainly not active in school issues. In fact, probably most of the community were new immigrants." However, at another point during our interview, he recalled his parents' advice to be "clean" and "well behaved" at school, because if he were not, white people would see him as a "dirty little Mexican kid," rather than just a "dirty little kid." His mother did not know how to read and write "in any language," and his father had studied "two or three years of school." However, his parents did give their children the "work ethic." In this sense, his parents were giving him the same kind of instruction as other participants' parents about how to behave in school and to get along by trying harder than white children, studying more, working to the best of one's ability, to be and do better than others.

[Participant G] criticized African Americans who did not take advantage of financial aid for students of color during the late 1960s and the 1970s. He blamed this on the lack of education of most students' parents. He said, "You could get free grants back then. I'm sorry to say . . . most black people [did not] take advantage of them . . . Our parents weren't educated people . . . It wasn't like you had a role model [who could say] 'Sign up!' " This same man took advice from another family member who encouraged him to attend college instead of joining the army after graduating from high school.

From the above account, it was possible to hear from parents of former students, and educators the special kinds of advice, instruction, and help that people of color felt were necessary to prepare their students for adult life, as well as strate-

gies that they knew had to be learned by people of color in addition to those universal to parenting and growing.

### Strategies

All former students talked about methods they used to get along with others or to maintain their pride. [Participant B] said, "We [African Americans] were clean. We were sharp, because we might not have had anything else, but we had nice clothes . . . We took pride in that." Two people remembered changes they made to their hair, in order to make it more attractive and to show pride in their racial group. [Participant G] mentioned that, "We all eventually went to the natural and the 'Fro . . . They quit putting the chemicals in and went natural. Natural wasn't bad." [Participant B] told me, "For years, I used to get my hair permed, too . . . Finally, I just said, This is the hair that I was born with, and why should I be fighting it?"

Students said they learned as children that they would have to work harder at success than European Americans. [Participant C] talked about his family's maxims for dealing with racism: "It was taught that you had to be cleaner than other kids. Your behavior had to be better than other kids. And so, we were raised with that . . . They just prepared you for what could possibly happen on the streets." [Participant A] said, "I learned from my folks: you learn; don't cause any problems; do what you're supposed to do." Parents told [Participant E], "As you get your education, you're going to have to do better, do more, than the white students in class." [Participant B] recalled her grandmother's message that "You're always going to have to work harder . . . I didn't whine about it. It was just given."

Two former students remembered feeling uncomfortable at school because the customs of their school mates were different from their own. [Participant C] did not know "how to eat with the utensils given" and found school food to be very different from that to which he was accustomed. He said, "I think you were always aware that you were a minority, because we were raised differently, in regards, especially, to the kinds of foods that we ate." The family of [Participant F] was poor, and she felt different from other students because of their economic status. She said, "I came from a poor family. I guess I felt bad."

Former students talked about groups to which they could turn for support. [Participant E] belonged to a group of young women who met at the [African American] Community Center to talk about the problems they encountered because of their race. They called their group "Silk and Soul." This woman said, "It really helped." [Participant G] listened to a "black radio station" in another city that was "good at educating you about black history." [Participant A] said, "When we got together as a group it was kind of a time to blow off steam."

### Conclusions

The two themes of ignorance and invisibility were supported by the archival evidence, the interviews, and literature from the years of the study. These themes continue to be pertinent to education today.

### Ignorance

Myrdal (1942) in his landmark study of race relations in the United States said that "the whole issue is enveloped in opportune ignorance and unconcernedness on the part of whites" (p. 383). He thus equated ignorance with lack of concern.

Participants who were people of color called the racist actions of some white people "ignorance." I asked the community member if ignorance could also be called "malice" or "evil." Her response was well thought out: "I think the malice is based on ignorance. In other words, I see it as a reaction to ignorance." She later said, "I've heard such ridiculous things as, 'Black people want integrated schooling so a black child could sit next to a white child.' How stupid can you get?" Her com-

ments about the progress of multicultural education in the [City] Public Schools were no less devastating. She also said, "It makes no sense to me that educators should be so ignorant, and maintain that ignorance."

Other participants spoke of white people's ignorance. [Participant E] said of a history class, "Knowing what they were teaching these kids . . . How could they believe this stuff?" [Participant C] described European Americans' attitudes by saying, "As long as I don't know, I can make an excuse for my ignorance." The former board member commented, "There were a lot of clueless people in the district."

The ignorance about people of color was underscored by the lack of data about the dropout rate of students of color. The rate of graduation of these students was considerably lower on average than that of the total student population, according to numbers deciphered from [City] High School yearbooks. There was no evidence of concern on the part of the school officials during the years of the study, 1954 to 1974 (*Links; Advocate*).

John Howard Griffin wrote about white ignorance in *Black Like Me* (1960). He said that "the word 'nigger'—leaps out with electric clarity . . . And always it casts the person using it into a category of brute ignorance." Griffin (1960) pointed out that once he had darkened his skin color acquaintances and friends did not recognize him at all. In fact, he did not recognize himself in the mirror. He became invisible to them because of his apparent race.

### Invisibility

The second theme supported by the data was invisibility. The man who said that Hispanics were an "invisible people" pointed out a truth that European Americans pretended for many years that people of color did not exist as a vital part of the community. The community member commented about the schools, "Well, I think it was the norm to ignore everything about students who were not white." The student who felt that she was all alone in her own civil rights movement said, "I didn't have anybody else backing me." Her feelings of not being acknowledged were much the same as those of a student of color who had to ask to participate in the talent show.

[Participant E] recalled the names of six Native American people who had studied with her at [City] Junior High School. All six had dropped out of school at the end of ninth grade. She spoke of them as "lost."

[Participant B] said of experiences during her years as a student at [City] High School: "A few of us are allowed to rise to a certain level, but, basically, we're not taken into consideration. We're not causing any problems, and so we're just kind of there, and they just ignore us." Finally, the community member expressed this idea of invisibility when she asked the school district social studies consultant, "Would you please tell me where I am in this [history text] book?"

Ralph Ellison (1984) explored the fact that "Americans can be notoriously selective in the exercise of historical memory and wrote about the absence of African American history in textbooks which the writers of the dominant culture have chose[n] to ignore" (p. 124).

The lack of school records about students of color, policies and board minutes pointed to a lack of interest on the part of school board officials. These lacks certainly supported Myrdal's (1942) idea of "opportune ignorance" and facilitated it. Most of the students of color in the city attended [City] High School from 1954 to 1974; but their presence was barely acknowledged by the school newspaper. [City] school yearbooks did not feature a celebration of African American culture until 1973 (*Advocate*, 1954–1974).

Additionally, most of the schools in the city did not enroll many students of color. Participants agreed that certain schools were attended by most students of color. Therefore,

students of color were not a concern for the all-white schools at all. They were physically invisible, because they were absent, not just invisible out of a refusal to accept them.

The policies of the members of the board of education, such as attendance boundaries and school construction, kept students of color in certain schools of the district. The board's curriculum policies ignored the presence of people of color in history and literature. Hiring policies did not take into account teachers who were people of color or the students they might serve. The members of the board resisted efforts by concerned members of the community to change the schools' policies to reflect the presence of people of color in the schools. Members of the board, the superintendent, and some administrators did not lead the community in its recognition of people of color; rather, they merely reacted to insistent, long-term demands by concerned citizens.

#### *Implications*

The problems produced for people of color by the ignorance of white people and their unwillingness to examine the points of view of people of color are still a part of the educational establishment. Delpit (1995) pointed out in *Other People's Children* that professors from university teachers colleges ignored the learning styles of people of color as they proposed new programs for the teaching of reading. She also told about her experiences in schools where the white, European American viewpoint was the only acceptable one, where the professional opinions of teachers who were people of color were ignored, where students of color were relegated to ignorance because of their bewilderment by and rejection of the dominant group's insistence that they conform to their expectations. She quoted bitter statements by former student teachers and beginning teachers who had left the profession because they felt ignored and pushed aside by the narrow vision of correct teaching methods they heard from their white colleagues and professors of education.

The problem that white people have in their ignorance about people of color—their cultures, their aspirations, their beliefs—is reflected in the stereotypes that the people of the majority groups offer about people of color (Ellison, 1984; Hughes, 1970; Delpit, 1995). As these authors, and many others, have pointed out, the answer to this ignorance is education. Hughes wrote in 1970: "If Camus is right and evil filters into the world through the pores of human ignorance, then racism, with the dreadful and unnecessary suffering it causes individual black children and adults, is curable by ample doses of knowledge and understanding" (p. vi).

Americans of all races agree about the importance of education for success and happiness in this country. If we did not give education such importance, there would be much less controversy about it. As educators, we will soon join in our classrooms with colleagues and students from many racial and ethnic groups different from our own. No matter what our own ethnicity or race, large numbers of our students will not belong to that particular group. We must cure our own ignorance before we can hope to cure that of others.

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