ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice

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Success

America worships success. Self-help books with titles such as *The Secrets of Success* and *The Science of Success* abound. They tell people how to get ahead in life — how to earn lots of money and achieve status and fame. As Frank Sinatra sang in the classic pop tune, "New York, New York," people want to "make it" big, to become "king of the hill" and "top of the heap."

Success also is upmost on parents' minds. They are proud when their children get into gifted and talented programs and honor classes. Some parents put bumper stickers on their cars that announce that their child is an honors student at a local school. In many cities, parents scramble to get their children into the nursery schools that will put their children on the road to prestigious colleges.

The language of success permeates educational policy as well. Key documents such as *America 2000* (1991) repeatedly refer to the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in today's economy. In 2006, one researcher found 9,287 higher education documents that included "student success" as key words (Braxton 2006).

The pursuit of success is so engrained in American culture that it's like motherhood and apple pie; it seems beyond questioning. But some great writers have expressed deep reservations about it. Early in the 20th Century, the philosopher William James (1968a, 41) suggested the moral flabbiness he observed in U.S. society was due to the "exclusive worship of the bitch-goddess SUCCESS." We Americans, he said, are so preoccupied with the goal of " 'getting there' and getting there on as a big a scale as we can," that we will stoop to swindling, cant, and other devious behavior (James 1968b, 40).

Stifling Dissent

In the academic world, I have been more impressed by how often graduate students and young faculty members feel they must stifle their true thoughts in pursuit of degrees, tenure, and promo-tion. One African-American graduate student, pursuing a doctorate in community psychology, told me that she has stopped talking about our society's racism because she was being labeled as a "militant." "It was hurting my progress toward the degree," she said. "So for the time being, I'm just nodding and smiling. I'm going with the flow and holding my tongue."

Recently, an untenured professor called me after a meeting to apologize for her failure to speak up against a testing policy that would adversely affect people of color. "In the meeting," the young woman said, "I just looked at who was sitting in the room — all those people who wanted the policy and who would determine my future — and I just kept quiet. I feel really bad about it. I just hope I get tenure so I can say what I believe."

In these instances, the individuals were acutely aware of the compromises they were making. They hoped they will reach a stage of success that frees them to speak openly. Although they will discover new reasons (such as promotion prospects) for holding back, perhaps they will soon feel sufficiently secure to voice their true views. The fact that their current compromises trouble them is actually a hopeful sign. In this respect, they stand apart from many of their peers, who long ago learned to simply ignore their own inner thoughts and automatically agree with those with the power to reward them. In the current issue of *Encounter*, Mordechai Gordon contends that this kind of compliance is pervasive throughout the school years:

> Students' success in schools is closely connected to their ability to please their teachers. One of the most vocal and consistent messages that students receive from the beginning to the end of their school careers is that doing well means meeting the demands of the teacher…. Not wanting to upset the teacher and hurt their chances of doing well in the class, most students

would rather "play it safe" than say or write something controversial.

Academic Success vs. Full Development

The pursuit of success discourages not only dissent, but also the development of many other personal qualities. Consider today's emphasis on early academic instruction. Parents hope strong academic preschools and kindergartens will give their children a leg up on the competition. National policymakers hope early academics will help U.S. schools compete with other nations on achievement tests. As a result, early academic instruction is so prevalent that it has crowded out the time for free play, the arts, and the exploration of nature — activities that promote children's creativity, curiosity, and sensory development.

In the pursuit of success, adults also press children to master academic material as rapidly as possible. Everyone seems to agree that the most successful students are in the accelerated and advanced placement classes. What's more, the admissions committees of prestigious colleges give extra weight to high grades in advanced placement courses, so students are encouraged to take as many as possible.

But developmental scholars such as Lawrence Kohlberg (1981, 91-94) and Lillian Katz (Katz & Chard 1989, 4) have questioned the emphasis on rapid development. When we rush children on to the next higher plane, we deprive them of opportunities to solidify new capacities by applying them to a wide range of areas. For example, students might learn mathematical concepts in textbooks and get the correct answers on their tests, but their learning is often superficial and the students forget the concepts as soon as the tests are over. To solidify their knowledge, they need opportunities to use the math concepts in other areas, such as research projects, making things, and tasks that emerge in daily life.

In the language of Kohlberg and Katz, when we move students forward as quickly as possible, we are thinking only of their "vertical" development. When we consider their need to apply new knowledge across a wider range of tasks, we are thinking of their "horizontal" development as well. Most advanced placement courses, which involve little beside college-level textbooks, promote vertical development

alone, and the learning tends to be narrow and superficial.

A heavy dose of advanced courses also prevents students from pursuing their own special interests. When my children were in high school, their counselors typically told them to take a very full schedule of advanced placement and honors courses, which would have meant they couldn't enroll in courses in art, drama, literature and other "regular" courses that had great appeal to them. They also would have had to study into the late hours each night. Since my wife and I believe that young people should develop their special interests and enjoy their high school years, we advised our children against extremely difficult schedules. At the beginning of each term, our family had long discussions about course schedules.

In the end, our children were able to strike a pretty good balance between courses that led to successful college admissions and those that they considered most personally meaningful. But that was in the 1980s and 1990s. Today the pursuit of success — of admission to elite colleges — seems even more intense, and many young people may feel they cannot afford to take even a single course simply because it is of interest to them.

"Failures"

So far I have primarily been discussing how our competitive, success-oriented culture adversely affects relatively high-achieving students. But it has worse effects on other students, making them feel like failures.

This point was driven home to me in the mid-1990s, during my time on the Teaneck, New Jersey, Board of Education. One day I was in a diner when a woman encouraged her 13-year-old daughter, Jessica, to walk over to me and tell me her concern about our school district's gifted and talented program. Jessica said,

> I don't think the gifted and talented classes are fair. The kids in the gifted classes get to leave the (regular) class, and all the kids left behind think they're not as smart. They feel bad. I don't feel too bad, because I know I could go too, but it's just not right how they make the kids feel who are left in the class. Can you make it so everyone can go? (Sacks 1999, 45).

Stimulated by Jessica's comments, I gathered information on our gifted and talented program and found that it was part of an overall structure of classes — including honors, advanced placement, regular, and remedial classes — in which students of color were disproportionately placed in the lower tracks and white students were disproportionately placed in the higher tracks. Because this hierarchical structure guaranteed that many children (especially children of color) would feel inferior, I tried to get the school district to experiment with alternatives. I suggested that the district open gifted and talented classes to any student who had an interest in the class' activities. I also suggested that the district try out a projects-based class in which students of varied abilities and talents could work together. But my efforts ran into intense resistance. The parents of high-achieving students wanted to maintain the entire structure so their children could gain superior credentials and compete for admission to elite colleges. And these parents' wishes largely prevailed.

It is natural for parents to be concerned about their children's future success, but I hope educators will increasingly talk to them about the drawbacks of a preoccupation with it. As children grow, they need opportunities to develop their full range of capacities and interests, even when those capacities and interests are unrelated to competitive college admissions. Children also need time to relax and enjoy their childhood years. And, ultimately, I don't believe it benefits any child to be part of a system that makes other children feel inferior.

An Inappropriate Yardstick

More broadly, there are important realms of life, largely outside school and career, where success isn't even a meaningful goal or yardstick. One such area is interpersonal relationships

People do, to be sure, sometimes describe relationships in the language of success, as when they say a man successfully courted a woman and "won her hand." But this phrase only tells us the outcome of the initial phase of the relationship. People also speak about "successful relationships," but the term is superficial and tells us almost nothing. Relationships involve care, mutuality, and love — qualities that cannot be measured in terms of success or failure. If, for example, a woman cares for several years for her sick father and the father dies, do we say her care was a failure? Or a success? Neither term seems appropriate. Her care needs to be respected for what it is — and only she and her father have had a deep sense of what went into it.

Because relationships do not fall within the metrics of success, our society places a relatively low value on them. We admire people who reach the pinnacles of success even if they have sacrificed relationships with family and loved ones to get there.

I first became aware of the extent to which this is true in discussions with my undergraduates at The City College of New York. One day I asked them to imagine they are offered two life paths. One path leads to tremendous wealth, status, and power, but they must neglect their families to achieve it. The second path results in a rather undistinguished job with a modest salary, but they develop loving bonds with their families. Some undergraduates felt uncomfortable with this choice (some protested, "Why can't we choose the best of both?"), but when I asked them to imagine they *had* to choose, the majority chose the first path, that of wealth, status, and power. The same result has emerged whenever I have presented these alternatives. Success trumps relationships.

We also can overestimate the importance of success in another area — the battle for social justice. Activists do, to be sure, seek victories. And they celebrate them. But as I look over my own years of activism — working for equal educational opportunities, defending animals and nature — I consider the successes as less important than the ongoing battles. I have played a role in some victories, but the victories have never been final, and the need to keep struggling continues.

For example, I have participated in protests and civil disobedience against bear hunts in New Jersey, and our actions have contributed to the suspension of the hunts for the past two years. But New Jersey is considering a revival of the bear hunts. Moreover, the killing of other species of wildlife in the region, despite our efforts, is expanding. If those of us who defend wildlife gave considerable weight to a scorecard of victories and defeats, we would probably

give up. But we do not give up because we believe the important thing is to keep working on the animals' behalf.

This point is emphasized in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which advises us to "let go of results" and focus on the action itself (Mitchell 2000, 55). A similar attitude underlies Albert Camus's existentialism. In his novel *The Plague* (1991) the hero, Dr. Bernard Rieux, at one point concludes that although his battles against the disease will result in "a never ending defeat," "it's no reason for giving up the struggle" (1991, 128). He works for the sick people with all his might. Meaning comes from the struggle itself.

The attitudes of the *Gita* and Camus contrast with those in U.S. society, which puts such a high premium on successful results. The *Gita* and Camus call attention to the value inherent in the activity. Whether it is a child absorbed in play, a teenager trying to lift the sadness of a relative, or an activist fighting for a cause, a successful outcome is less important than the energy and dedication the individual brings to the activity.

— William Crain, Editor

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Rats Laugh, Too

Chris Mercogliano

Recent research shows that emotions underlie learning and intelligence.

I will let you in on a little secret: Quite often I use this column to rough out some of the key ideas for the newest book I'm writing. The working title for my current project is *A School Must Have a Heart: Embracing Education's Emotional and Social Core.* My intention is to articulate the moral, practical, *and biological* reasons why it is utterly imperative that education honor children's emotional and social needs.

Regrettably, the dominant educational model has remained largely oblivious to children as emotional and social beings. More than ever, our schools are engaging students only from the neck up, as though they are disembodied brains whose only purpose is data storage and retrieval.

And so the time has come to try to beat the model at its own allegedly scientific game by demonstrating that schools should attend to children's emotional and social needs not only because to neglect to do so is inhumane, but also because recent discoveries in neuroscience make it clear that the emotional and social centers of a child's developing brain are the very foundation of all cognitive learning.

To firmly establish this point, I am currently plunging into the latest research on the neurobiological roots of emotional, social, and cognitive development, with the goal of synthesizing and translating into everyday language the flood of new information. Then I hope to draw out the educational implications of the radically different model of the brain that is rapidly taking shape.

New Insights

These are exciting times for brain researchers. Previously they were limited to the study of people with severe brain injuries, autopsied dead brains, and laboratory animals. Now the rapid advances in scanning technology are enabling them to map the moment-to-moment workings of normal, living, human brains.
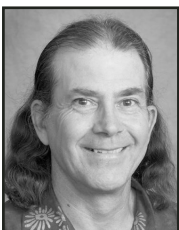
CHRIS MERCOGLIANO writes a regular column for *Encounter*. He was a teacher and administrator at the Albany Free School for 35 years and now devotes his time exclusively to writing and lecturing. Chris's most recent book is *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (Beacon Press 2007).

A number of Berlin Walls in science are beginning to crumble as a result. First and foremost is the two-fold assumption that the brain alone is responsible for controlling the vast network of physiological and psychological processes that make up the human organism; and, second, that the highest and most recently developed region of the brain known as the neocortex ultimately manages all of the brain's actions and reactions.

There are critical deficiencies in the old, brain-as-CEO model. For instance, neuroscientists now know that the processes that coordinate the flow of communication throughout the nervous system and direct the attention of the immune system are highly decentralized. They are regulated by a complex set of neural and hormonal feedback loops in which the brain is a major co-participant but not the chief executive it was once thought to be. In actuality, every individual cell in the body plays its own small role in steering the ship, as it were, and each internal organ behaves like a kind of miniature brain as it works to keep us in a balanced, thriving state.

Furthermore, very recent discoveries in the emerging field of neurocardiology have established the heart to be the leader of those organs, very much like the conductor of an orchestra because, according to cardiologist Paul Pearsall in *The Heart's Code* (1998), the powerful electromagnetic rhythm of the heart literally sets the beat for all the body's rhythmic functions: digestion, brain wave activity, and so on. Moreover, it turns out that only 35% of the cells comprising the heart are muscle cells — the remaining 65% are neural cells identical to those in the brain — meaning the heart is a powerful sensory organ with an intrinsic nervous system of its own that enables it to learn, remember, and make decisions just like the grey matter inside our skulls. It also carries on a constant conversation with the brain centers involved in emotion and cognition, acting in concert with them to such an extent that cutting-edge explorers are beginning to refer to it as a "heart-brain." Thus, the outmoded notion that the heart is simply a circulating pump represents another of the aforementioned Berlin Walls.

The idea that the neocortex rules over all brain operations is equally a myth. This doesn't mean the neocortex isn't a key player; it is the source of our ability to think through situations, solve problems effectively, and make the best possible choices — all with an awareness of our identity as unique selves. In any perceived emergency, however, evolution has cleverly prewired the brain to respond with no input from the neocortex whatsoever.

Here's how it works. Say you're hiking alone in the woods and you hear a sudden rustling in the leaves just off the trail. Your immediate response, unless you're a great lover of snakes, will most likely be to feel a twinge of fear and then to flinch reflexively — because there just might be one. What's happening internally is the sensory receptors in your ears process the sound and send the information through the auditory canal to the thalamus, which sits directly atop the brain stem at the base of the skull and plays a major role in regulating arousal. The thalamus also acts as a kind of relay station and selectively passes messages along according to their content. If that content is an apparent threat, the thalamus immediately alerts a small almond-shaped center in the nearby mid-brain called the amygdala, the Greek word for almond. If, on the other hand, the content had been a favorite piece of music, the thalamus would have delivered the message straight up to the neocortex, which would process the experience on a conscious level and send signals of pleasure and relaxation back down through the brain and then out to various places in the body.

When triggered by fear, the reason the thalamus contacts the amygdala first is that the connection between the thalamus and the amygdala is several times faster than between the thalamus and the neocortex. Also, the amygdala has high-speed lines of communication with all of the neural and hormonal drivers in the brain and other organs that instantly prepare you to avoid the potential snake, and, if necessary, to defend yourself further if it should decide to attack.

The point of this simplistic hypothetical situation is to illustrate how, especially when emotions are involved, the conscious, rational part of our brain plays a relatively minor role in both our inner state and our outer behavior. I should pause here to interject a startling developmental fact: the amygdala, which is the primary mediator of our emotional/social experience, matures *in utero* and is fully functional at birth; whereas it will take the neocortex an

entire childhood to catch up. This means that the younger children are, the more the emotional valence of their lives influences the unfolding of their personality and intelligence.

Stress Undermines Intelligence

It is not by chance that I picked an example involving fear, because neuroscientists are finding that fear, along with its milder cousins anxiety and stress, have a particularly debilitating effect on the neural underpinnings of thinking and learning. We now know that the kind of intense fear associated with childhood traumas such as abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and anxiety or stress *if they become chronic*, literally stunt the development of the cognitive centers in the neocortex that perform the operations involved in learning: memory, synthesizing information, imagination, and the capacity to pay sustained attention. In some cases, according to very recent studies (Lee, Ogle, and Sapolsky 2002), intense fear or chronic stress have both been shown to result in actual neuron death in these centers, as well as in a significant reduction in the production and deployment of new neurons to do the ongoing work of the developing brain.

Which leads us straight to the heart of the matter: The dominant educational approach today, mirroring the surrounding society, is entirely driven by anxiety and stress. There's no need to drag us through the particulars because we're already well versed in how pressurized schooling has become. It's a trend that can be traced back three and a half decades to the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which unleashed a panic over the education of our children that, unlike radioactive isotopes, appears to have no half-life. And yet modern neuroscience has informed us quite conclusively that anxiety and stress literally kill the brain's capacity to learn.

Social Play

Such an utterly Orwellian state of affairs led neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp, in his book on the neurological basis of emotion, *Affective Neuroscience* (1992), to lament the huge extent to which the new knowledge is being ignored by educators. I found it fascinating that Panksepp, whose dense, groundbreaking text is filled with barely comprehensible technical studies on the neurological processes underlying our feelings, ultimately chose to focus on the vital importance of play in the proper development of children's brains. In order to understand emotion from an evolutionary, as well as a biological perspective, he followed Charles Darwin's lead and conducted research on the possibility of emotional expression in other mammals. In one now-classic experiment, Panksepp discovered that when you tickle a rat pup's underbelly it will emit a rapid, high-frequency sound that closely resembles a human giggle. A series of further studies on the play behavior of rats led Panksepp to conclude that the more young rats engage in "rough-and-tumble" play, the more developed were the cognitive centers in their brains. The reason, he suggests, is that rough-and-tumble play, which, whether tongue in cheek or not he abbreviates as RAT play, causes the brain to release opiate-like neurochemicals that promote neural growth, especially in the cognitive centers that participate in learning.

Panksepp's animal studies led him, in turn, to study RAT play in human children and its effects on their brains. He became especially interested in the neurological processes underlying attention. His discovery that these processes develop much faster in some children than in others led him to hypothesize that there is a direct connection between RAT play, attentional focus, and emotional self-regulation. As the brain centers that enable children to control their own thinking and feeling mature, their desire to wrestle and romp naturally begins to subside. The reason, says Panksepp, is that this energetic and highly social form of play has completed its developmental contribution and is no longer needed.

Panksepp himself spelled out the educational implications of his findings, and he didn't mince words. He decries the "widespread pathologization" of RAT play in schools today, which he sees as a primary cause of the decreasing ability of some kids to sit still, attend to mental tasks, and regulate their impulses and emotions. Angrily discounting the notion that there is an increased incidence of a genetic neurological disorder in American children, he says it is "unconscionable" to give them "anti-play" drugs such as Ritalin and Aderall, which chemically suppress the desire and the energy to play. Instead, schools should allow lots of time and space for RAT

play, especially first thing in the morning when play urges are highest. If kids fulfill their *biological need* to play, argues Panksepp, then they gradually and naturally acquire the ability to meet the left-brain demands of the classroom.

"We must learn to emotionally educate the whole brain," Pankepp exhorts at the end of his book. "To do that well, we must come to terms with the biological sources of the human spirit" (p. 323).

Pankepp is only one of a number of neuroscientists currently saying that the time has come for a paradigm shift in education, and my new book will devote ample space to the biological imperatives underlying children's emotional and social development.

Let's all pray that educational policymakers will finally begin to hear what author Joseph Chilton Pearce (1992) has been saying for several decades to underscore the vital necessity of putting kids' emotional and social needs first: "The head will follow the heart every time."

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Waldorf Education and its Spread into the Public Sector
Research Findings

Ida Oberman

New studies suggest how Waldorf education broadens young people's capacities and teaches skills in new ways.

In 1996, when asked how she looked at the Waldorf educational model, Michelle Fine, the distinguished education researcher and speaker of the American Education Research Association's annual conference, offered an answer that was clear and succinct: It is a "special philosophy for special children." She then gave a riveting talk on imagination and social action.

The moment was telling. According to Waldorf education's founding father, Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), imagination and social action are at once the vehicle and the goal of Waldorf education. At its inception, Waldorf was not to be a special, "boutique" reform. Nor was it to cater to "special" children. Steiner (1997) called for a "Volks" pedagogy, a schooling of the people for the people, bridging separate castes that had been hardened by emerging industrialization.

When Fine spoke in 1996, the notion of public, let alone urban public, Waldorf-inspired schools was largely unheard of. Times have changed. Just over a decade later, at the 2007 American Education Research Association's annual conference, an invited panel addressed the question of Waldorf education's relevance to the public sector. The room was full, and questions from the audience were many.

As interest has grown, so has the number of public urban Waldorf-inspired schools. Since the founding of the first public Waldorf School, Urban Waldorf in Milwaukee's inner city in 1991, public Waldorf methods schools are popping up like poppies from the ground. By 2000, California saw approximately ten public Wal-

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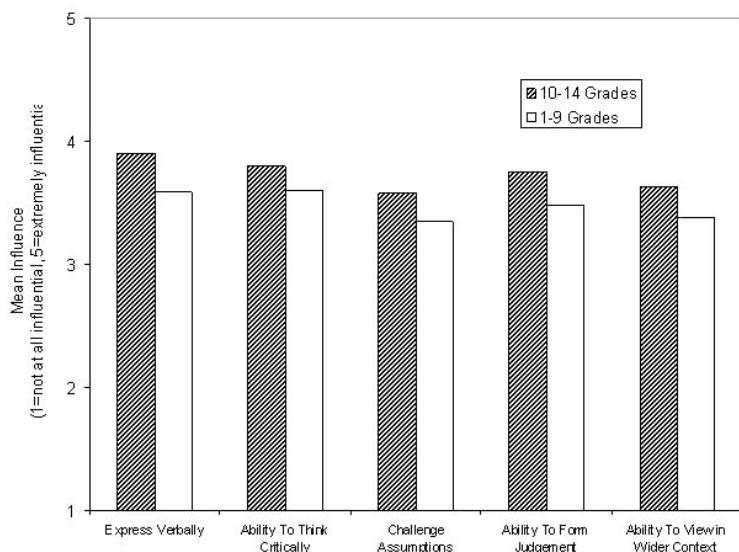
Figure 1. Rigor: Graduates with More Years of Waldorf Reported Greater Influence on their Ability to Do Independent Analysis. (Source: Research Institute for Waldorf Education, Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II, 2007)

dorf methods schools and Arizona two. As of 2007, there are over 30   in the country <www. waldorfanswers.org/PublicWaldorf.htm>.

With the increase in interest and the growing number of schools, the need for empirical research becomes all the more urgent. Research, sadly, has been lacking. In this essay, I will report on a recent survey of private Waldorf graduates that indicates the promise of Waldorf education and then turn to my own study of four urban public schools.

Private Waldorf Graduates 1943–2005

Waldorf education is a holistic approach to education. Arts are an essential part of the curriculum, and it strives to develop the child's full range of capacities. In the words Henry Barnes, founding teacher of the first Waldorf school in America — on New York City's Upper East Side — Waldorf education aims to develop "head, heart and hand." (Barnes 2006). The ultimate goal is to provide young people what they need to develop into free, moral, and balanced individuals. Is it achieving its aims?

In March 2007 a groundbreaking quantitative study was published by the New Hampshire-based Institute for Waldorf Research entitled *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase 2* (Mitchell & Gerwin 2007). The report summarizes surveys of just over 500 alumni, spanning graduation years 1943–2005 and counting graduates from 26 pri-

vate Waldorf schools in the United States. The question asked was: What do graduates report as the key results of their education? Respondents were asked to reflect on both positive and negative consequences. Three themes emerged from the data: rigor, relevance, and relationship. (These themes, incidentally, are suggested by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for meaningful 21st century education <www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/RelatedInfo/3Rs_Solution.htm>.

Rigor

Figure 1 shows that Waldorf graduates with ten to fourteen years in a Waldorf school (left columns) ranked the level of Waldorf influence on their own development higher in the areas of ability to think critically, form judgments, challenge assumptions, and view a wider context.

Relevance

Figure 2 shows that Waldorf graduates surveyed with ten to fourteen years in a Waldorf school (left column) ranked the level of Waldorf influence on their own interest in different views and interest in
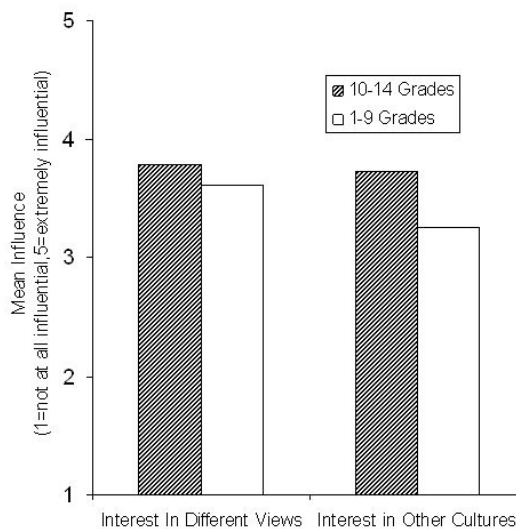

Figure 2. Relevance: Graduates with More Years of Waldorf Reported Greater Influence on their Ability to Serve as Global Citizens. (Source: Research Institute for Waldorf Education, Survey of Waldorf

other cultures higher than did Waldorf graduates with one to nine years at a Waldorf school (right column).

Relationship

Finally, we turn to relationships. In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam reported on his analysis on the basis of the General Social Survey (GSS) data administered from 1972 to 1994 and identified, in his words, "the strange disappearance of civic America" (Putnam 2000, 477). Americans belonged to few social organizations and socialized less with families and friends. More recently, Duke University researcher Miller McPherson and his colleagues (2006) found similar trends. Between 1985 and 2004, the number of people who said they had no one with whom to discuss their troubles had nearly doubled. In 2004, nearly a quarter of all Americans saw themselves in this isolated condition.

At the same time, there has been another — perhaps related — trend. Aguiar and Hurst (2006) report that the rate of TV watching has grown steadily during the past five decades. Further, according to the Nielsen Media's 2005 report, the average American watches more than four hours of TV each day (or 28 hours a week, or two months TV watching per year).

Against this background, the findings concerning Waldorf graduates come into particularly sharp relief. The Survey found that between 1943 and 2005, Waldorf graduates spent decreasing amounts of time watching TV and increasing amounts of time hanging out with friends. They also spent more time making music and other artistic activities and working on crafts.

Four Public Waldorf Methods Schools

I now turn from the self-reports of *private* Waldorf school graduates to *public* Waldorf schools. These Waldorf schools are best described as Waldorf-inspired or "Waldorf methods" schools; as public schools they cannot follow the Waldorf model as strictly as they might like, but they use the Waldorf methods.

I will focus on students' annual test scores and educators' reports. My purpose is not to compare the performance of all Waldorf vs. non-Waldorf schools, but to see what insights could be gleaned from a "case study" of four public Waldorf methods schools that were achieving high success on 8th grade statewide annual standardized tests. I selected four California Waldorf methods schools that represented different geographical areas and size, and compared them to the "Top Ten" regular (non-Waldorf) California public schools with comparable demographics and performances on the California Standards Test (CST). Information on both the Waldorf school and the "Top Ten" regular schools came from the Just for the Kids California website <www.jftk-ca.org>.

The Waldorf Methods schools were the John F. Morse Elementary School in Sacramento, the Wooldland Star Charter School in Sonoma Valley, the Stone Bridge Elementary School in Napa Valley, and the Novato Charter School in Novato. All schools are in urban environments or on the fringe of urban environments. The majority of the children in all four schools were white. The John Morse school had the largest percentage of Latino students (19%), African American students (16%), and students on free or reduced lunch (38%). The Navato Charter school had the lowest percentage of Latino students (5%) and African American students (3%) and students on free or reduced lunch (less than 1%).

I found a similar student performance pattern in all four schools. Each of the four Waldorf schools performed far below their peers in second grade. By the last year of school (8th grade), however, they were on par with the top ten peer-alike public schools. Overall, the Waldorf 8th graders often performed a tiny bit lower on the language arts (reading and writing), and moderately better on mathematics. Figures 3a, b, c, and d, which present the data for the John F. Morse school, are fairly typical.

In both second grade language arts and math John Morse (Waldorf) students score lower than their top ten peers. But in the eighth grade, John Morse students are about the same as their peers in the percentage of those proficient or above in language arts, and they are outperforming their peers in mathematics.

When asked how they explained the pattern, teachers, mentors, and administrators indicated that test-taking strategies were rarely used in the early grades. In the words of one John Morse lower grade teacher,

Large City: John F. Morse, Sacramento Unified

Free/Reduced School Lunch: 38%   Hispanic: 19%
English Learners: 4%   Black: 16%

a. Grade 2 Language Arts 2006 Results

Just for the Kids California - http://www.jftk-ca.org

b. Grade 8 Language Arts 2006 Results

Just for the Kids California - http://www.jftk-ca.org

c. Grade 2 Mathematics 2006 Results

Just for the Kids California - http://www.jftk-ca.org

d. Grade 8 Mathematics 2006 Results

Just for the Kids California - http://www.jftk-ca.org
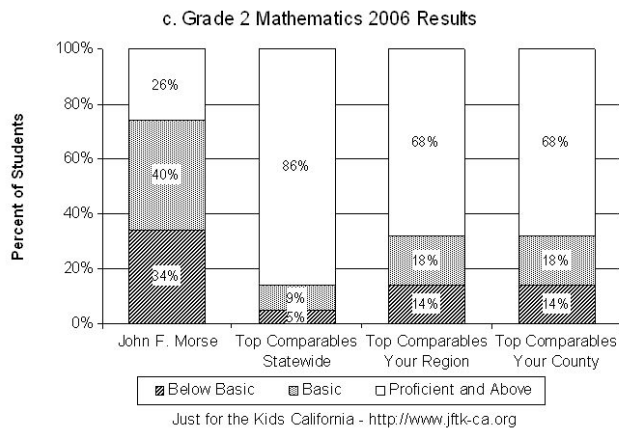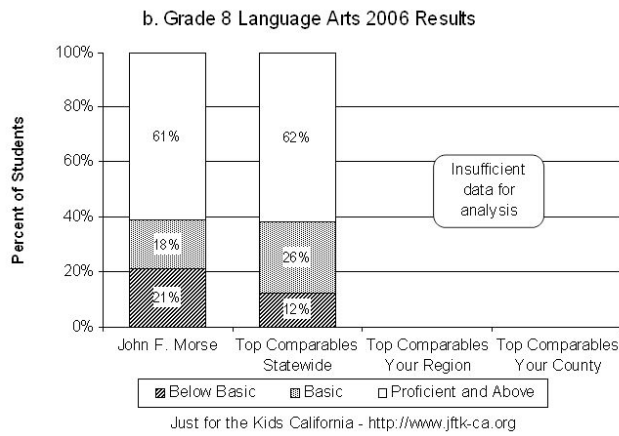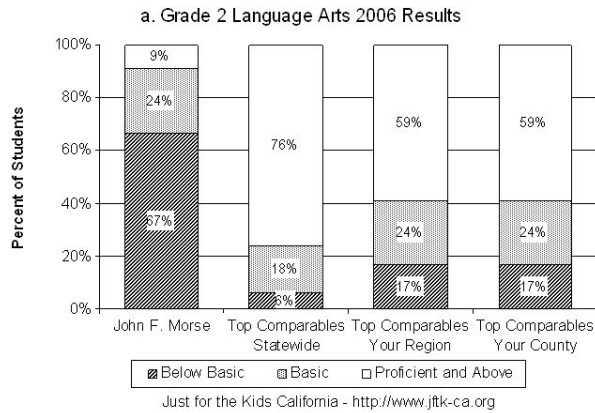
Our focus is developmental.… [I]n the lower grades we focus on instilling beauty, joy and self-confidence in learning. This readies them to acquire the skills, which is the focus of the upper grades.

The teacher described the activities the students engaged in as they were introduced, without textbooks or worksheets, to mathematics, reading and writing. These activities included moving, drawing and jumping rhythmically. She added: "But in all we do in second grade we are thinking about the child's needs in eighth grade. We are laying groundwork." She knew of what she spoke. As is customary in Waldorf schools, she had been with the same students from the first to the eighth grade (and was now moving up with a new class from first grade).
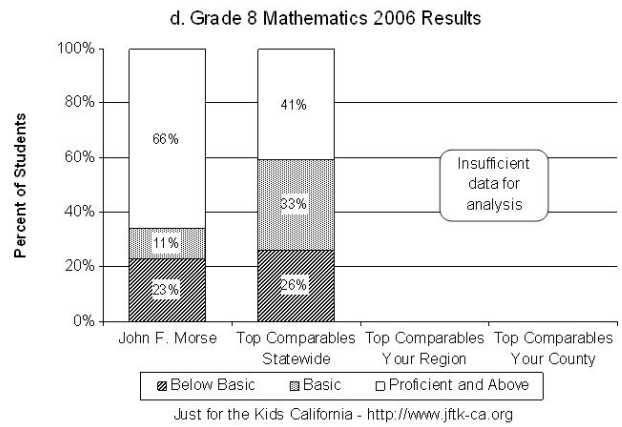
Another teacher added: "I never once referred to any test preparation materials…. There [was] complete avoidance of math textbooks kindergarten through the end of grade five." She underscored the role of arts:

In sixth grade, mathematics was still … done through story, movement and concrete experience.… [And from] kindergarten through grade eight singing was central to their daily school life. In grades one through three the pentatonic flute was taught; we then switched to diatonic flute for grades four through six. In grade four they all learned violin; in grade five the strings teacher split them up into viola, cello and violin; they played through grade eight.

She added, "They also learned Baroque recorders in grade eight."

A John Morse teacher/mentor elaborated the thinking behind these Waldorf methods:

When thinking about building capacity, we might think of building the sense 'I can.' That is where we need to focus in the lower grades. Later we focus on skills, on the 'I do.' The road to skills is through moving, drawing, and jump-

ing to learn the numbers. In this way you en-
hance the capacity, or number sense.

By number sense, a teacher explained, "You have
your bearings in the world of numbers. In the lower
grades the teacher tries to nurture this." This number
sense, she added, is a worthy investment: The greater
the number sense " you build in the lower grades, the
quicker you can later build skills." Certainly the per-
formance patterns in mathematics at John Morse
bear this out.

Says Principal Cheryl Eining,

> In Waldorf education there is no such thing as
> "Open your textbook to page 10," or "Answer
> the questions at the end of the chapter." During
> main lesson time, the first two hours of the day,
> usually 9 to 11 a.m., learning is hands-on, ex-
> ploratory and experiential, rather than simply
> being told a rule, fact or concept directly. Stu-
> dents record their discoveries and learning in
> main lesson books, but rarely if ever will be
> seen filling in blanks on a worksheet. Students
> will be involved in listening to a related curric-
> ulum story being told by the teacher, engaged
> in mental math, word games, moving to the ac-
> tion of a poem/song or planting seeds in the
> garden. Learning is brought to the students in a
> meaningful way, which will hopefully be lon-
> ger lasting and not limit their thinking. When
> instruction comes from a real person, a higher
> level of ownership and rigor is involved in the
> learning.

Artistic work also provides students practice in
staying at a project with rigor. According to Eining,

> A teacher can pull out a row of knitting and ask
> students to try again until they are satisfied
> with their piece. Pride and completion of work
> is essential, and doing as good a job as they can
> is equally important be it knitting or mathe-
> matics…. Last week the handwork teacher was
> cleaning wool collected from a sheep-shearing
> field trip with the third grade class. It's incredi-
> ble to watch the kids' eyes light up when they
> dye it with homemade dyes made from vegeta-
> ble skins. Students are engaged in their work
> and excited to see the finished product. They

> get the sense of what it is to do something well
> from start to finish.

Conclusion

The results of the private school Waldorf school
surveys suggest that these schools instill a particu-
lar set of attitudes that educators may find very
valuable. The schools instill critical thinking, a con-
cern for global issues, and an emphasis on relation-
ships with others. My case studies of four urban
public schools indicate that public Waldorf meth-
ods schools start off slowly on standardized tests,
but their test results catch up by the 8th grade. In
math, Waldorf students may even jump ahead of
their peers. My interviews with teachers and offi-
cials indicate that the early emphasis on confidence,
joy, and meaning, rather than specific skills, helps
account for these results. Further research is needed
to see if the patterns I observed in four schools are
more generally present. We also need to look more
closely at the educational practices that promote
these patterns. For the moment, we can safely say
that Waldorf education presents an intriguing holis-
tic alternative to the skill- and test-dominated edu-
cation that prevails today.

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Identity Experiences of Young Muslim American Women In the Post 9/11 Era

Sapna Vyas

Identity-formation in young Muslim American women is special because it must address conflicting value systems in a time of stress. But in some ways, the young women's experiences seem similar to those of adolescents everywhere.

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"Umm, are you actually *bald* under that scarf?" Safiya's classmate bluntly asked her one day as she was standing at her locker in the school hallway. For a moment, Safiya was stunned. She knew that her darker complexion and traditional Islamic attire noticeably differed from the physical appearance of her classmates at her new school, but was not prepared for this question, one that she had never encountered before moving to Kentucky. Of course she had hair! She had long and shiny dark hair that ran down her back. Just because she had covered it with a *hijab* (Muslim headscarf) did not mean that her hair no longer existed!

Safiya (whose name, like all in this article, is a pseudonym) is now a recent graduate of the university where I teach, and she will be entering medical school in the fall. She recalled the incident when she appeared as a guest speaker in my graduate-level course for pre-service teachers. At first, my small class empathized with Safiya's earlier feelings of bewilderment that someone could think that a young and healthy middle school student had no hair on her head. A few moments later, however, it became clear that my class had little knowledge of Muslim American cultural practices, including the *hijab*. As they asked questions, I was thrilled to witness the engaging and respectful nature of the interaction between them and our guest speaker. I felt that many common assumptions and beliefs about issues of culture, gender, and religion were being addressed. And as a teacher/ educator, it made me feel good to know that my students would enter their own classrooms someday with new cultural lenses. Still, I couldn't help

thinking how much less stressful Safiya's adolescent years might have been if her teachers and classmates had possessed more knowledge about her identity as a young Muslim American woman.

Developing a sense of identity is a challenging process for young women who find themselves caught between different cultures (Bhatti 1999). The norms, values, and gender role expectations at school, contrasting with those from the home, cause a confusing sense of duality (Vyas 2002; Phelan,

> *Developing a sense of identity is a challenging process for young women who find themselves caught between different cultures.*

Davidson, & Yu 1998). For some female high school students, particularly those of Islamic origin, occurrences such as the September 11 terrorist attacks and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have posed new challenges to their senses of identity, as individuals of similar cultural and religious backgrounds have been under international scrutiny for a multitude of reasons (French Senate Backs Headscarf Ban 2004; Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown 2002; Young & Sharifzadeh 2003, Vyas 2004, 2006). Just wearing a *hijab* is now a hotly contested global issue. The typical identity questions of "Who am I?", "Who do I associate myself with?" and "Who do I want to become?" (Erikson 1980; Markus & Nurius 1986) take on a different meaning for these young women as they seek to define themselves in an intense climate of sociopolitical change.

On the one hand, young Islamic women are encouraged to "appear loyal" to their Islamic roots, which means preserving their traditional gender roles as females (Rozario 1996). On the other hand, they might try to blend in with mainstream American culture, only to find themselves stereotyped as "foreign," "uneducated," and "oppressed." (Hasan 2002). These stereotypes are largely informed by the general public's lack of education in regards to Islam, as well as the media's negative portrayal of its culture and reli-

gion. Interestingly, many of these young people are not recent immigrants to the United States; in fact, they have spent the formative years of their lives in this country. They consider themselves as American as their non-Muslim classmates, although they often do not feel they are being treated as such (Vyas 2004).

My Research

My current research, which is ethnographic in nature, is aimed at uncovering the unique identity experiences of a group of young Arab American Muslim women who attend a high school afterschool program housed in an Islamic community center. The afterschool program is in a Midwestern city which contains a large Arab population. Using a religious framework, this guidance program emphasizes the development of Islamic values, positive self-esteem, and leadership skills. Weekly lectures and discussions are led by two highly esteemed individuals in the local community: an *Imam* (Muslim priest) and a Muslim American female school counselor who serves as a co-facilitator of the afterschool program. Approximately 40 Muslim American female high school students from varying national backgrounds (including Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen) participate in this program. I have been attending program meetings as a participant-observer, and have also been invited to attend numerous community events, ranging from graduation celebrations to an all female *mawlid* (a birthday celebration in honor of a religious figure).

Conducting ethnographic research is always an interesting and unpredictable venture. As one observes a cultural group over time, one needs patience, flexibility, and sensitivity to gain an understanding of its inner workings. Furthermore, establishing a rapport and building a sense of mutual trust is essential. In my case, trust has been aided by my Indian ancestry, which is in some ways culturally similar to the background of the young women that I am observing.

My data sources, which are qualitative in nature, include field notes taken during and after program meetings and related community events; informal conversations with key individuals involved in the program; and community artifacts, such as religious leaflets and clippings from local newspapers, includ-

ing short articles written by some of the young women themselves. I have now spent six months gathering data, and I have detected three themes in the identity formation of the young women.

Three Themes

Strengthening an Islamic Identity

One theme is the restoration of Islamic tradition in reaction to global conflict and change. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, I found that many young women had stopped covering their heads because they were worried about their personal safety. Issues of identity came to consciousness especially when they were outside of their local communities, where some were apprehensive about becoming victims of hate crimes (Vyas 2004). Recently, however, not only are many children purposefully wearing headscarves, but they are also convincing their own mothers to put them on as well, a role reversal in which they are guiding their parents towards an Islamic style of life (Warikoo 2007).

In addition, I am noticing that a growing number of young Muslim American women are putting on the *hijab* at younger ages. In the past, young women were more likely to start wearing it during their middle school or high school years. Now, it is not uncommon to see girls in the afterschool program who are as young as ten or eleven years old with scarves on their heads. As Kameela, the Muslim-American program co-facilitator, told me, she grew up in this community in the 1990s and did not wear a headscarf until the age of eighteen. Her mother did not wear one until she was in her mid-forties. Kameela, who is now in her early thirties and the mother of three, proudly shared a photograph of her eldest daughter, age nine, wearing a headscarf. More and more, this is becoming the norm in this particular community.

There is also a marked increase in attendance at local mosques and Islamic educational programs such as the one in which I have been conducting my research. In fact, when this program was first started, there were only fifteen participants, but within two months this number rose to forty. Although in conversation many of these young women reveal a strong sense of identification with mainstream American culture as well, the wearing of the *hijab* is a source of cultural pride for young individuals who

have witnessed members of their culture and religion being objects of discrimination and vilification. They want to assert this important cultural aspect of their identities.

What is Permitted

A second theme that I have witnessed in my field work is the young women's strong interest in discerning what is considered *halal* (what is permitted) and what is considered *haram* (what is forbidden) in the Islamic religion. They need this information if they are to excel in their academic studies and life in mainstream American society yet simultaneously adhere to Islamic ideologies and belief systems.

In the afterschool program, a large percentage of their questions deal specifically with items and activities that might be considered *haram* in their daily lives. Devout Muslims typically do not consume pork products, alcohol, or wear immodest dress, and are strongly discouraged from demonstrating arrogance, selfishness, deceitfulness, lust, and indecency, which are considered major weaknesses of character (Maqsood 2003). Some of the questions that have stimulated interesting discussions are the following:

- "Can you be a lawyer and not be *haram*?"

- "If you have a boyfriend and you end up marrying him, would that be considered *haram*?"

- "If your intention is to make someone jealous (by buying a dress they want), is this *haram*?"

- If an ex-friend says something to a boy that is not correct about you, what do you do? Is it *haram* to hit her? Can you make up a rumor about her?

- Is it *haram* to celebrate the 4th of July?

This small subset of thought-provoking questions depicts the nature of the challenges the young women face as they develop their value and belief systems as Muslim Americans. Issues related to maintaining Islamic principles and simultaneously enacting mainstream American ways of being are of paramount concern. I have been particularly impressed with the skill and thoughtfulness by which both the *Imam* and Kameela have addressed these young women's questions. They have provided

them with a well-balanced and realistic perspective that will be useful in their daily identity experiences. The leaders have openly acknowledged the tensions that might arise when one is participating in two vastly different cultures.

Typical Adolescent Concerns

Lastly, a third theme that has emerged in my research thus far relates to the young women's experiences with typical female adolescent matters, such as dealing with peer pressure and an interest in the opposite sex. Their strong interest in boys became

> *We need to recognize that the unique cultural issues young Muslim-American women face can produce considerable stress, but we also need to recognize the universal thread through all female adolescents' identity-making experiences.*

evident when I gave a lecture to the 10th graders at the high school that most of the young women in the afterschool program attend. The school's students are predominantly Muslim and the classes are gender-gegregated. Here I was, a young South Asian American female university professor, determined to motivate these young women to focus on their academic studies and develop their career aspirations, yet the conversation took a turn to questions about my personal life! "So, were you allowed to date when you were our age?" one young woman asked me. "Did your parents let you spend time alone with a man?" Another one said, "You know, what you are talking about is so interesting and I would love to do that one day, but *all* I can think about is boys right now!" It was obvious that they shared much in common with other young women in the United States. The young women's cultural framework for making sense of the world might have been markedly different, but their needs and wants were very much the same.

At the same time, the young women recognize that they are being raised in a more conservative tradition than other teens. This is apparent from the short pieces they have written for the community center's monthly publication (which is widely circulated around the local community). For example, Zaina, wrote that

> Teens experience peer pressure because of the conflict they have between tradition and society around them. Some teens come from very conservative families, but when they go to school, they see this whole world of opportunity that is presented to them … all of these incidents lead to the confusion in teens. They should have a proper understanding of each issue and what to do in that type of scenario. So try to educate yourself about all of the issues you face.

Nawar, another participant in the afterschool program, also wrote about the importance of being pro-active:

> Yes, being a teen is difficult, but no one said that life is easy. Yes, sometimes the stress is unbearable … we all make mistakes, but it's important to learn from them. Talking to parents, teachers, or counselors will help us prepare for what is in store.

Concluding Thought

Today's Muslim female community in the United States involves a diverse mixture of individuals: educated and uneducated, married and unmarried, liberal and conservative. It is important that educators and scholars avoid one-sided stereotypes of them (Shaikh 2003). I have found young women struggling with identity issues as they negotiate two cultures, yet they also share the kinds of adolescent concerns about the opposite sex that probably are universal to the adolescent years. We need to recognize that the unique cultural issues these young women face can produce considerable stress, but we also need to recognize the universal thread through all female adolescents' identity-making experiences. As one young woman, Rasheeda, so aptly wrote in a poem that she submitted to the community center newspaper: "Life is full of meanings: try to understand it."

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Toward a Pedagogy of Dissent

Mordechai Gordon

Currently, our nation discourages dissent. If schools can foster it, they will energize student thinking and contribute to a more democratic society.

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"Consensus destroys democracy!"
(Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle,
Former President of Uruguay, 1998)

Those who have taken the time to watch State of the Union addresses might have noticed a similarity between the way the senators and representatives respond to the President's remarks and how the Chinese parliament reacted to Mao Tse-tung's speeches in the middle part of the twentieth century. The frequent interludes of almost unanimous stand-up applause are reminiscent of the adulation that Mao received. To be sure, the State of the Union speech is a carefully scripted spectacle, and includes audience members who are hand-picked to create feelings of pride, strength, and patriotism. But this event should give us reason to pause and reflect on what is happening to the American democracy today. In particular, we need to take a serious look at the dangers that the lack of dissent in the United States poses to the strength of our public schools, the power of our free press, and the integrity of our political institutions.

By dissent, I mean the rejection of the views that the majority of people hold. To dissent means to disagree with a proposal, law, or action of a government or group of people in power. Dissent also usually implies divergence from conventional views. The list of famous dissidents includes Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther, Rosa Parks, and Salman Rushdie. These dissidents were willing to sacrifice personal comfort and security for the sake of exposing some serious social problem and establishing a more humane and democratic society. Safeguarding dissent is essential for the welfare of a democracy because it ensures that different and even opposing opinions will be considered before taking action. Arguments and disagreements are important because they force people to think, search for evidence, and come up with convincing reasons for their positions.

Despite dissent's importance for the welfare of democracy, it was largely absent when we went to war with Iraq. Almost all the elected representatives from both parties supported the initial invasion in March of 2003, despite the lack of evidence substantiating the administration's claim that Saddam Hussein was amassing weapons of mass destruction to use against the West.

Less well known is the role of the mainstream U.S. media. It sounded the war drums prior to the invasion of Iraq, downplayed the amount of dissent that existed among ordinary people and grass root organizations, and gave much more air time to people who supported the war than to those who opposed it. In August 2004, *The Washington Post* admitted that from August 2002 until March 2003 the *Post* ran more than 140 front page stories that focused heavily on administration rhetoric against Iraq and downplayed critics of the Iraq war (Ricks 2004). Today, more than five years after the invasion of Iraq, there is still not enough informed debate about the colossal failure of this offensive. Even public news networks like NPR and PBS have generally focused on technical details in the operation rather than the question of whether we should even be in Iraq. Analysis from critics such as Noam Chomsky is noticeably absent from the opinion pages of our major newspapers. The country seems to have succumbed to the tacit assumption that dissent is incompatible with patriotism, that we shouldn't challenge the government too much.

In this essay I will first describe the contributions of three famous dissidents: Socrates, Thoreau, and Angela Davis. Next, I will discuss difficulties that educators face when they attempt to encourage dissent. Finally, I will present promising examples of educational efforts in this realm.

Famous Dissidents

The story of Socrates as it appears in the dialogues of Plato indicates that he loved to engage in dialogues with his Athenians. Socrates was relentless in his search for truth. He was an expert at examining the opinions of his dialogue partners and evaluating them from multiple perspectives to see if they hold up to the test of reason and experience. To be sure, Socrates did not always reach conclusive definitions of virtue, justice, or love, but he did help us gain a better understanding of these very complex concepts. Socrates embodied what it means to be a critical thinker: a person who takes nothing for granted and continuously engages in questioning, doubting, analyzing, and revising his ideas.

The United States seems to have succumbed to the tacit assumption that dissent is incompatible with patriotism, that we shouldn't challenge the government too much.

One of the instances in which Socrates presents his views on dissent is in the dialogue *Gorgias.* In this dialogue, Socrates engages in a discussion with Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, all famous orators. In a pivotal moment in the dialogue, Socrates (Plato 1987, 52) tells Callicles:

> And yet for my part, my good man, I think that it's better to have … the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person.

On the surface, Socrates seems to say that we should be careful not to contradict ourselves. More important, however, is the idea that it is better to be true to oneself and uphold one's values than to constantly change one's views so that one would remain popular and not offend others, even though the majority of people might disagree with you.

Because he engaged in dissent, Socrates was brought to trial as a "corrupter of youth" (see Plato, *The Apology*). One of the important arguments that Socrates makes at his trial is that dissidents are valuable because they often expose knowledge from which others can greatly benefit. He speculates that god put him in the state to "wake people up" (Rouse 1965, 436). Conformists, on the other hand, can deprive the public of invaluable information and even tacitly support criminal acts. As Cass Sunstein (2003, 6) emphasizes, society needs whistle blowers.

Conformists are often thought to be protective of social interests, keeping quiet for the sake of the group. By contrast, dissenters tend to be seen as selfish individualists, embarking on projects of their own. But in an important sense, the opposite is closer to the truth. Much of the time, dissenters benefit others, while conformists benefit themselves.

Nevertheless, the pressures toward conformity are strong, and dissidents such as Socrates have often been put to death.

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*T*horeau believed that the government and the majority that support it are not inclined to correct wrongs since that would mean relinquishing some of their power and changing the status quo.

Dissenters are especially important for democratic societies because they often speak out and struggle against unjust laws and practices. Here the example of Henry David Thoreau is instructive. In an introduction to a collection of Thoreau's writings, Joseph Wood Krutch (1962) notes that the slavery question drove Thoreau, who in the earlier part of his life would have been inclined to withdraw from society and immerse himself in nature, to fight against this grave injustice.

Indeed, in January of 1848, Thoreau delivered a lecture at the Concord lyceum in which he preached complete, yet nonviolent resistance to any authority which is unjust. This lecture became the basis for his famous essay "Civil Disobedience," which was published the following year. In that essay, Thoreau (1962, 92) declared that respect for the law is evil if it conflicts with respect for fundamental human rights, such as freedom. He said that

> Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we

transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil.

However, Thoreau believed that the government and the majority that support it are not inclined to correct wrongs since that would mean relinquishing some of their power and changing the status quo. Therefore, it is up to the minority and ordinary citizens to call attention to and struggle against those laws and practices, like slavery, that are blatantly opposed to the basic principals of democracy. As Sunstein (2003, 149) writes, "diversity, openness, and dissent reveal actual and incipient problems. They improve society's pool of information and make it more likely that serious issues will be addressed."

One dissident who dedicated her life to the struggle against the oppression of African Americans in the United States is Angela Davis. Davis, a black activist and member of the Communist Party, became famous during the civil rights era and the Vietnam War as a vocal advocate of equality for blacks and anti-American imperialism. She continuously charged that African Americans and other minorities were systematically discriminated against and oppressed by U.S. institutions, such as the judicial system. Davis was arrested several times. Writing from jail in 1971 about the efforts of people like Anthony Burns and Marcus Garvey to emancipate blacks, Davis (1971, 29) noted that

> At stake has been the collective welfare and survival of a People. There is a distinct and qualitative difference between breaking a law for one's own individual self-interest and violating it in the interests of a class or a People whose oppression is expressed and particularized through that law. The former might be called criminal (though in many instances he is a victim), but the latter, as a reformist or revolutionary, is interested in universal social change. Captured, he or she is a political prisoner.

Unlike regular criminals, dissidents, according to Davis, are generally people who act in order to re-

solve some grave injustice and bring about a better, more humane and democratic society.

Based on the insights of Socrates, Thoreau, and Davis, I strongly agree with the statement of the former president of Uruguay, Luis Alberto Lacalle, that "consensus destroys democracy," cited at the opening of this essay. Consensus destroys democracy by curtailing the possibility that diverse viewpoints, rigorous discussion and critique — all essential to maintain the democratic process — will play a major role in shaping the direction of the country. And consensus destroys democracy by privileging the majority opinion, ignoring the needs and interests of minorities, and marginalizing the voices of dissent. A society that punishes dissenters for speaking out against a wide range of institutional forms of discrimination, inequalities, and racism cannot be considered democratic (see Shiffman 2002, 182).

Difficulties Educators Face

What would teaching and learning look like if dissent was allowed to be a standard part of schools and classrooms in the United States? I will present a preliminary response to this question, but first I would like to point to some difficulties that educators who are committed to fostering dissent are likely to encounter.

One problem is students' general apathy and ignorance with respect to civics. Kathleen Vail (2002, 5) points out that "the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress civics test results revealed that 75 percent of high school seniors were not proficient in civics." Vail observes that other indicators are equally disturbing, such as the fact that in 1998 "fewer than one in five Americans ages 18 to 24 voted" (Vail 2002, 15). More impressive still, Vail notes a survey that found that being involved in democracy is "extremely important" to only about a *quarter* of young people.

One reason for student apathy is that much of the curriculum and teaching in the United States is devoid of conflict and controversy. Most secondary school students view history and civics as mere dates, names, and facts to remember rather than a struggle between groups of people with opposing interests or a debate over controversial issues. As Sheldon Berman (2004, 18) observes, we can't realistically expect stu-

dents to develop a sense of civic responsibility if they don't appreciate "that democracy is a messy, challenging system of debate, negotiation, and compromise in which addressing almost any issue takes time, persistence, and commitment." Even students who receive a full civics education get a very watered-down, unsophisticated version of this subject.

History textbooks illustrate the problem. In his monumental study of twelve popular history textbooks, James Loewen (1996, 13) concluded that

> The stories that history textbooks tell are predictable; every problem has already been solved or is about to be solved. Textbooks exclude conflict or real suspense. They leave out anything that might reflect badly upon our national character. When they try for drama, they achieve only melodrama, because readers know that everything will turn out fine in the end…. Most authors of history textbooks don't even try for melodrama. Instead, they write in a tone that if heard aloud might be described as "mumbling lecturer." No wonder students lose interest.

Loewen goes on to illustrate many of the other problems with history textbooks, such as the fact that they almost never use the past to illuminate the present or the present to shed light on the past. Also troubling is the notion that most of these books attempt to promote nationalism and blind patriotism as opposed to independent thinking and a critical historical awareness. Finally, Loewen shows that the history textbooks in his sample are over-laden with information, averaging more than 800 pages in length. No student can remember the hundreds of factoids, main ideas, and key terms contained in these books. "So students and teachers fall back on one main idea: to memorize the terms for the test following each chapter, then forget them to clear the synapses for the next chapter" (Loewen 1996, 14).

History coursework, then, generally deadens interest in civic affairs, along with independent thought and dissent. In addition, any efforts to cultivate dissent in our classrooms will be complicated by the fact that students' success in schools is closely connected to their ability to please their teachers. One of the most vocal and consistent messages that

students receive from the beginning to the end of their school careers is that doing well means meeting the demands of the teacher. That is, the vast majority of teachers and schools reward students for conforming to *their* standards, rules, and regulations and punish students who transgress them. Such a message discourages many students who would otherwise want to dissent and offer opposing perspectives or unique ideas. Not wanting to upset the teacher and hurt their chances of doing well in the class, most students would rather play it safe than say or write something controversial.

In his book, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, John Gatto refers to this problem as "intellectual dependency." Gatto (2002, 7) writes that

> Good students wait for a teacher to tell them what to do. This is the most important lesson of them all: we must wait for other people, better trained than ourselves, to make the meanings of our lives. The expert makes all the important choices; only I, the teacher, can determine what my kids must study, or rather, only the people who pay me can make those decisions, which I then enforce. If I'm told that evolution is a fact instead of a theory, I transmit that as ordered, punishing deviants who resist what I have been told to tell them to think. This power to control what children will think lets me separate successful students from failures very easily.

Gatto calls our attention to the limitation of an education system that rewards conformists and punishes deviants, resistors, and dissidents. Paulo Freire calls this model of teaching and learning "the banking concept of education" and claims that it reduces the teacher's role to that of a depositor of information. Students, in this model, are viewed as containers who are merely expected to receive, file, store, and recall the teacher's deposits. Ultimately, this approach to education sacrifices precisely those qualities such as creativity, inquiry, dissent and resistance that make us truly human. As Freire (1994, 53) writes, in "banking" education

> it is the people themselves who are filed away…. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human.

In short, the banking concept of education greatly diminishes the chance that students will develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become critical thinkers and responsible dissidents in a democratic society. By emphasizing the memorization of simplistic facts and the development of isolated skills, this model educates students to accept the information they are given at face value and not question it too much. To be sure, the gap between what teachers teach and what students actually learn means that some students inevitably resist learning the ideas and messages they are taught in school. But this resistance is largely passive. It doesn't lead to thoughtful and creative ideas or disagreement with the conventional views of the educational experts.

Pedagogies of Dissent

Despite the serious obstacles, I believe that it is possible for teachers to cultivate the capacity for creative dissent in their students. One thing that teachers and schools can do is to expand our notion of heroism to include a range of dissidents, freedom fighters, and social justice activists. As Howard Zinn writes (2001, 36), "our country is full of heroic people who are not presidents or military leaders or Wall Street wizards, but who are doing something to keep alive the spirit of resistance to injustice and war." Zinn reminds us of various unsung heroes like Emma Goldman, Fannie Lou Hamer, John Ross, and William Penn, "who have, often in the most modest ways, spoken out or acted on their beliefs for a more egalitarian, more just, peace loving society." Zinn's argument is echoed by Geoffrey Short (1999, 57) who asserts, in the context of studying the Holocaust, that we should reconceptualize our notion of a hero to include acts of non-conformity and resistance.

One history teacher who has inspired his students to write about unsung heroes in a unique and creative way is Bill Bigelow. Instead of requiring his students to report about various social justice activists in the third person, Bigelow (2001, 37) asked his high school sophomores to *become* those individuals and visualize them reminissing about their lives. "Students could construct their papers as meditations about their individuals' accomplishments and possibly their regrets. They might narrate parts of their lives to a child, a

younger colleague, or even a reporter." Before they started their research, Bigelow told his students that they were going to write about their individual in the first person. He gave them a list of questions to try to answer before they began to construct their narratives, such as: What did the person want to accomplish or change? What methods did this person use to try to bring about change? And, what, if anything, about their life reminds you of something in your life? In the end, Bigelow's students produced some of the most diverse and creative pieces of writing he had ever received from high school sophomores. They learned about many of this country's dissidents and activists in a deep and personal way, unlike the usual tedious and alienating way in which these heroes are taught. Ultimately, the hope is that high school students come to realize that struggle and resistance are not just abstract ideals, but rather concrete actions that are possible and meaningful for them as well.

Another way in which teachers can help students learn to value dissent is by engaging in dialogical thinking in the classroom. Inspired by Paulo Freire's revolutionary pedagogy, Karen Grayson contrasts dialogical thinking with monological reasoning. For Grayson (2004, 52), monological reasoning is a process that "happens internally, within the mind of one person, separate from connection or conversation with others. 'Dialogical thinking,' on the other hand, is thinking that occurs externally, with and through conversations among individuals." In this view, dialogical thinking is an ongoing enterprise, which is not aimed at yielding any final truth, but rather attempts to arrive at a deeper understanding and higher awareness of complex social, political and moral issues. In contrast, monological reasoning tends to be closed and concerned with demonstrating that one has the "right" answer.

Grayson (2004, 57) describes some strategies she used in her introductory philosophy course to help her students move from monological reasoning to dialogical thinking:

> It is fairly easy to give students one essay to read and write about one day, and then, when they have decided they completely agree with the arguments, to give them an opposing, equally convincing essay the next day…. Sometimes when students pair up, I intentionally put two contentious students together, and I ask them to discuss their views privately…. Then, each student in each pair reports to the class about his or her partner's arguments, approaches, experiences, and convictions. Sometimes, simply articulating an "opponent's" view builds one's appreciation for, or empathy toward, that other view. Often it allows one to revise or refine one's own position as well.

With time, Grayson's students were able to move quite a bit toward developing dialogical thinking and responsible dissent, which she defines as the ability to defend your convictions rigorously while remaining open and respectful toward others' views.

A different example of a teacher who helped his students cultivate the power of dissent is taken from Bob Peterson's fifth grade class and their study of the American Revolution and the creation of the U.S. Constitution. Unlike the traditional way in which this topic has been taught through sterile lectures and boring textbook readings, Peterson decided to have the students in his class reenact the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Only this particular convention included a twist: the Convention decided to invite many groups of people who were excluded from the original one in Philadelphia (e.g. indentured servants, African American slaves, white women, and Native Americans). Peterson (2001, 63-64) describes this project.

> The basic components of the role play are the dividing of the class into seven distinct social groups, having them focus on the key issues of slavery and suffrage, negotiate among themselves to get other groups to support their positions, and then have debate and a final vote at a mock Constitutional Convention.

In preparation for the mock convention, Peterson poses several questions to his students, such as: Who benefited most and least from the American Revolution? Who benefited most and least from the Constitution? And, how have people struggled to expand the democratic spirit of the American Revolution after the Constitution was ratified? Peterson's experience with this mock convention indicates that "it brings the above questions to life, energizes the class, and helps me assess my students' knowledge and

skills" (Peterson 2001, 63). Through this exciting project, Peterson's students gain a deep understanding of the background, content, and implications of this major historical event, unlike the cursory knowledge that comes from merely reading about it in a textbook. Participating in the role play also enables Peterson's students to hone their critical thinking skills and come to appreciate the value that dissent and resistance have in bringing about social change in a democratic society.

Finally, I would like to mention a school in Hudson, Massachusetts, which has a distinctive and comprehensive way of preparing students to become active citizens and responsible dissidents. Hudson High, like many high schools, has students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. According to Sheldon Berman (2004, 16), the Superintendent of the Hudson school district, "Hudson is an industry-based community and one-third of its population is of Portuguese decent." As such, the school includes quite a few students whose native tongue is not English. Yet, as in most high schools, there is considerable pressure in Hudson to increase student performance on state and national standardized exams.

Despite these pressures, Hudson High has recently transformed its curriculum, teaching practices, and organizational structure in order to empower students to become effective citizens. Berman (2004, 18) describes these changes.

> Our goal is not only to graduate students who have solid academic skills but also to help students develop an ethic of service and civic responsibility and an ability for thoughtful questioning and investigation necessary for informed civic participation. We believe that to accomplish this, students must gain a deep understanding of civic concepts and directly experience civic engagement. They must experience themselves as part of a democratic community that values their voice.

Hudson High has instituted some major transformations such as creating a core ninth grade course in civics. The new course is a year-long English and social studies interdisciplinary collaborative that explores the individual's responsibility for creating a just society. The students begin this course with an introduction to civic institutions using both fiction and nonfiction texts, and then move on to discuss the values that motivate participation and commitment. For instance, ninth grade students at Hudson study the root causes of the Holocaust and other human atrocities in order to better understand how genocide can become state policy. As Berman (2004, 18) points out,

> The curriculum confronts young people with the human potential for passivity, complicity, and destructiveness and helps them understand the need for vigilance and commitment. [The curriculum] is also academically challenging and helps complicate students' thinking so they do not accept simple answers to complex problems. The curriculum develops their perspective-taking and social-reasoning abilities and students emerge with a greater sense of moral responsibility and a greater commitment to participate in making a difference.

Hudson High also includes a comprehensive service learning component. Berman argues that service learning gives students the opportunity for productive civic engagement and teaches them that they can make a difference in the world. But unlike many schools that have an isolated service learning requirement, which is not directly tied to course work, service learning in Hudson is integrated across the school curriculum.

> Chemistry classes test the water quality along the river that runs behind the school. Environmental science classes study the ecosystem of the river valley and support efforts to preserve the natural environment. Physics classes sponsor a Science Olympiad for middle school students to encourage their interest in science. World culture classes host multicultural awareness events in the school. Technology classes teach senior citizens to use computers to access the Internet. Drama classes have developed a disability awareness program for our preschool and kindergarten students. Physical education classes have organized a walk for diabetes. (Berman 2004, 18)

Thus, the service learning program at Hudson High helps students make connections between the subjects they are learning and issues in the larger world. True to Dewey's vision of a democratic education (Dewey 1966), students at this school have the opportunity to take part in active learning projects that require them to reflect on important social, political, environmental, and moral problems. The service learning program at Hudson provides students with opportunities for meaningful involvement in the larger community, teaches them about the value of participatory citizenship, and helps them acquire the skills to be critical thinkers and responsible dissidents in a complex and changing world.

In addition to creating a core ninth grade course in civics and incorporating service learning as an integral component of the curriculum, Hudson High has also established a community council that represents students, faculty, and administration. It has provided time in the weekly schedule to engage all students in school governance.

The preliminary results of the new developments at Hudson High seem promising. More students in the school have been involved in leadership and decision-making roles and many of them have initiated important service learning projects that have helped people in the community.

Conclusion

The examples presented here are not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of techniques for fostering critical thinking. Indeed, my hope is that others will create additional and better ways of helping students understand the power of dissent.

This goal is far from trivial. As a matter of fact, without resistance, critique, and dissent our democracy is in jeopardy. Quite possibly, a major reason for the erosion of democratic participation in the United States is that our nation's schools, media, and other institutions that educate people are not doing their jobs. The majority of the mainstream media in the United States present the news in a very superficial, one-sided, and mundane way. An atrocity in Africa or Asia gets less attention than the transgressions of celebrities in this country. And schools, instead of teaching people to be critical thinkers and respectful

dissenters, merely train them to passively accept the information that is given them. It's my hope, in contrast, that schools will come to understand how critical thinking and dissent promote social change and enable citizens to become full participants in a democratic society.

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Must Intellectual Analysis Destroy the Joy of Reading?

Santiago Colás

A poem is magical in the way that it uses the vehicle of verse poetry to draw intense focus upon a single instant of ordinary seeing of an ordinary object.

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I once had a problem with my daughter Eva. She was almost eleven years old, and she loved to read. That wasn't the problem. The problem was that for homework her teacher wanted Eva to write in a journal about what she read. Getting her to do this was like pulling teeth. It's not that the teacher wanted Eva to write anything sophisticated, just to talk about what she loved in this or that passage of a book of her choosing. She didn't have to write a lot; a page or two a week would do. Fifteen minutes a day. But each day when I reminded her, she made this face, scrunched up her eyes and nose, and said, "I'm busy. I'll do it later." And then the night before it would be due, she just said, "I'm not doing it."

Eva was attending a so-called "open school" that believed a child ought to participate actively in her learning and select "home" activities that are fun and engaging. I reminded her of this: "But Eva you picked this assignment together with your teacher. I mean, you *chose* this. And besides, you love to read."

"Yeah," her voice rose, "I love to READ, Dad, READ, not write about it."

"But maybe it would be good to discover what you love about it, no?"

"That's not how I read," she countered, "I just read it, finish it, and I'm done."

"But," I offered, "don't you want to be able to talk with others about what you've read, to tell your friends about books you've liked, just to share the good feeling, and maybe even to get them interested enough to want to read it too?"

"I just wanna say that this book is great, you should read it."

The Predicament of the Scholar

I can personally relate to Eva's feelings. I used to love to read, just the way Eva likes to read. I'd get a book — it didn't matter much to me what it was — and I would just read and read. All through college, reading was a joyful experience. So much so, in fact, that I switched to Comparative Literature as a major, so that I could spend more time reading. With that came the complicating pleasures of understanding how the books I was reading worked on me, how they made me feel this joy, how they worked. And beyond this, I recovered a childhood pleasure in making things out of words myself. Poems and stories and just, well anything. I just loved that I could make something out of words and could use words to have an effect on people.

I started to think of myself as a poet. Of course, poets can't make a living making poems, and I wasn't brave enough to betray my social class by just striking out on my own and washing dishes or landscaping. So I got into a graduate school, thinking, naïvely as it turned out, that I'd take advantage of a fellowship offer, read more books for a couple of years, write more poems, and when the fellowship was up I'd probably drop out.

But when the time came, I didn't drop out. I dropped into Duke University's Graduate Program in Literature—"Theory Central"—and I *stayed*. The very first week I was there, a conference was held on "Theories of Narrative and Narratives of theory," with speakers like Terry Eagleton, Gayatri Spivak, Fredric Jameson, Jonathan Culler, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Peter Burger, and Stanley Fish. The program was a place where the very idea of finding joy in reading was one of the first things to be analyzed and theorized until for me the feeling shriveled up and shrank away in shame into some dark corner. In place of the joy of reading, I developed the considerably cooler pleasure of producing acute ideological critiques of works of literature. I learned to show how books simultaneously protested and unwittingly betrayed their complicity with the oppressive social conditions in which they were produced. Open enjoyment

of the surface of the text gave way to a suspicious interrogation.

Of course, that's a one-sided way to tell the story. It's not that I believe I was doing anything wrong. On the contrary, I believe it's perfectly reasonable, even desirable, that intellectuals tend to the connections between their particular objects of interest and their

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society. But the overall experience led me temporarily to lose sight of something important. By temperament I preferred the joy of the read, the joy of the ride. Also, I'm more inclined towards affirmations than to negations. And I started to feel that most of us in that program were devoting more energy to our negations of other people's pleasures than from learning to understand the affirmations of others.

So along my academic path, from the beginning of graduate school in 1987 to the beginning of 1995, the year I came up for tenure as a college professor, I came to feel the way Eva feels. I still loved to read, but writing about what I read had become a dull and colorless chore. It was a bad spot: Here I was supposedly getting paid to do what I loved to do, but I didn't love to do it (and I didn't get paid that much either). I mean if I was going to do something joyless for a living, shouldn't I make a bunch of money doing it? Of course, as an adult, I didn't make faces and

cross my arms and argue with the people who imposed the deadlines, but I sure whined around the house a lot. And this inevitably led to someone in the household subtly calling me out on the problem with a comment like, "Do you have a deadline for something?" Mostly, I just sort of numbed out.

A Scholar's Take on a
William Carlos Williams Poem

Last year I had a conversation that reminded me of my situation in those years. I was part of an interviewing team at my university for a search in Latino studies, a joint appointment in English and American culture. The person we were interviewing was a rising star in the field and had finished a book manuscript on some writers she was characterizing as diasporic Puerto Ricans. She argued that if you saw them this way, instead of as just Americans, you'd see their writing in new ways. Among the authors she discussed was William Carlos Williams. When I heard Williams's name I got excited because one of my favorite poems of all time is Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow" and I was curious to know what she, as an "expert," thought of it, expecting she'd reveal to me some new, intensely joyful corner of this poem. So after the other committee members, specialists in her field, talked with her about theory and culture and the canon of American studies, it was my turn. I asked her about it.

I said, "This isn't really an interview question. I just really love "The Red Wheelbarrow" and wonder what you have to say about it."

She paused and replied, "I haven't thought about it."

I persisted, "Do you like it?"

"Oh yes, of course I love that poem, it just doesn't fit with the rest of the stuff in the Williams chapter."

As a scholar, she hadn't thought about her love for a poem. It didn't fit into her professional work.

Dewey's Insight

Must the joy of reading be separate from scholarship, from the "work" of writing journal articles or books about what we read? A couple of years ago, I came across a passage in John Dewey's *Art as Experience* that sheds some light on this question. Dewey (1980, 279) objected to our tendency to take what he

called "experience" — the ceaseless exchange of matter and energy of a live creature growing in and with its surroundings — and split it into two opposed halves. On one side is the living person, whom we call a "subject" or our "self," together with our desires; on the other side are the surroundings including other subjects, which we call "objects" or "others," together with the limitations we perceive these surroundings impose on us. When we view art as an escape from reality we implicitly pretend to isolate — perhaps we seek to protect — our "self" from everything that we perceive as "outside" it. "Play" then becomes the name for what we can do when we suppose ourselves to be free of objective limitations. "Work," by contrast, becomes the name for what we do the rest of the time, when we numbly or sullenly submit to those limitations (Dewey 1980, 280).

But for Dewey, "the very existence of a work of art is evidence that there is no such opposition between the spontaneity of the self and objective order and law" (Dewey 1980, 279). True, Dewey admitted, "the contrast between free and externally enforced activity is an empirical fact." However, he added, "it is largely produced by *social conditions* and it is something to be eliminated as far as possible" (Dewey 1980, 280; my emphasis). It is a sad mistake to see this social and historical condition as natural and immutable. And perhaps even sadder to see it and just let it be. After all, as Dewey (1980, 280) points out, "children are not conscious of any opposition between play and work."

Of course, here I'm thinking that Dewey doesn't know my kid. But thinking further, I see that it wasn't until the structure of school, the importance of grades, and the assigning of homework entered her life that Eva started to experience the difference between learning as play and learning as work. Dewey's point is that there's nothing natural or given or about this separation between play and work. Moreover, it's possible that it can be overcome.

Can the Intellect Enrich Our Joy?

Eva, like me in my early years — and many undergraduates and others — read with what Buddhists call the " beginner's mind," with an openness to the world, and with joy and wonder. But we

would also like those emotions to be enriched by the application of the intellectual tools we've acquired through our training. If you write only from joy, you get something along the lines of "I love this book" and there's not much more, unless it is something so personal that nobody else will care anyway. If you write only from the intellect, you get an analysis that may be logically compelling, but will leave your readers merely thinking about feelings instead of feeling them. Can you could put the two together?

I did an experiment. I'm not an expert on Williams. I just love this poem. But I wondered if I could enrich my understanding of the poem and learn more about why I love it.

First, for those readers who aren't familiar with The Wheel Barrow (Williams 1986, 224), see the inset on the following page.

I am exhilarated by the poem's apparent simplicity. Sixteen simple words, bare and stark, merely an observation, just a glance, one look at a gardening implement and this is a poem, and a celebrated, anthologized poem. The language isn't fancy or stylized. It is simple and stated. An uncomplicated expression that makes me feel to my core.

> **so much depends**
>
> **upon**
>
> **a red wheel**
>
> **barrow**
>
> **glazed with rain**
>
> **water**
>
> **beside the white**
>
> **chickens.**

Indeed, it looks so simple that many people may think anyone could write it. In this connection, I remember going to an art show and overhearing a visitor say, "I could have done this and called it a painting." The gallery owner standing next to the person said, "Sure, but you didn't." Williams did it. Henry Miller writes somewhere in *Sexus* (1986, 35) that

> Every day we slaughter our finest impulses. That is why we get a heartache when we read those lines written by the hand of a master and recognize them as our own, as the tender shoots which we stifled because we lacked the faith to believe in our own powers.

Anybody could do it. But some people do. Williams did. And my first response to this poem 16 or 17 years ago — a response I still feel to this day every time I read this poem — is a rush of gratitude for his inspiring model of simple courage required to do it. But I also love that the poem is only *apparently* simple. Williams doesn't simply say: "Look, I see a red wheelbarrow with rain on it next to some white chickens." Williams enlightens by the *way* he reports.

Williams says, "so much depends" on ordinary objects, like red wheelbarrows, being there. Maybe this seems obvious enough, but if it is, it's one of those obvious truths that I can never seem to hear enough. After all, what would crumble to dust in my hands, heart, and head if my world were suddenly drained of ordinary objects: a pencil, a plate, a window pane, a chair, a plum, a cooking pot? Yet do I notice, really notice, such things and feel grateful for them, not grateful that I possess them, but grateful simply that they are; that they are there making up the material fabric of the universe, there quietly weaving themselves into the spiritual and intellectual and emotional fabric of the universes I make for myself and others?

But Williams not only calls attention to the value of ordinary objects. He also alters the way I experience objects. This is where the line breaks come in. The magic is in the way Williams, through this, prompts me to read his words. I'm invited to slow down, and by slowing down, I can imagine objects in a new way.

I love this because Williams has worked the creative or generative side of words. Usually we just use them to represent things in the world. But Williams makes them do something to things in the world. Williams brings this red wheelbarrow forth in language.

I have come to focus on the word "glazed." "Glazed" describes a kind of addition to the surface of the red wheelbarrow. It's where the red wheelbarrow meets the rain and their meeting makes a glaze. The translucent glistening of the surface makes the surface not only visible but also palpable and touchable. When the poem makes me slow down, I can almost feel the cool, slippery surface, and seeing seems like touching. It becomes, then, a question of texture.

And that's where the chickens come in as well for me. I just love those white chickens that seem to punctuate the poem, and I think it is because "white," besides being just a color with its optical contrast/harmony with red, becomes a texture — feathers — in contrast/harmony with the surface of the wheel barrow. And I start to wonder if the feathers of the chicken are also wet and if so how? — surely differently than the way the wheelbarrow is. So I am drawn in to play along these varied surfaces and I think this is so simple and just so nice.

Magic Words

The poem is a prayer or incantation. The poem is magical in the way that it uses the vehicle of verse poetry to draw intense focus upon a single instant of ordinary seeing of an ordinary object. It's a poem made of magic words. And like all magic words, these sixteen magic words bring into being the conditions in the world that they describe. The words are tools with which we reach out and relate to those parts of the world that aren't made of words.

Williams brings us the extraordinary capacities of the poet and turns them over to me like a gift. In that sense he makes me feel gifted. And so I am, in fact, to the degree that I am aware of the gifts of a red wheelbarrow.

I began with an experiment. I wanted to see if I could use the intellect to enrich my appreciation of the joy I feel in Williams's poem. I believe that if I keep my mind open and receptive to the poet's words, I can, in fact, deepen my understanding of how he uses words in a magic way — to bring into awareness the concrete, real, ordinary world. My love of reading, my joy in words, *and* my intellectual training as a professor of literature enable me, like Williams, to see the world more clearly.

Eva

After my experiment, I was somehow able to talk to Eva about her reading in a new way. I noticed she had underlined a few lines in a passage in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*. Maybe you remember that the book centers on the adventures of a young, headstrong girl named Meg whose gifted little brother has mysteriously disappeared. In a climactic scene in the novel, Meg encounters her brother Charles, apparently possessed by this emotionless brain called IT. When you get to the scene that Eva chose, Meg is at the end of her rope, unable to think of a way to rescue him. It goes like this:

> She could stand there and she could love Charles Wallace.

> Her own Charles Wallace, the real Charles Wallace, the child for whom she had come back to Camazotz, to IT, the baby who was so much more than she was, and who was yet so utterly vulnerable.

> She could love Charles Wallace.

> Charles. Charles, I love you. My baby brother who always takes care of me. Come back to me, Charles Wallace, come away from IT, come back, come home. I love you, Charles. Oh, Charles Wallace, I love you.

> Tears were streaming down her cheeks, but she was unaware of them.

> Now she was even able to look at him, at this animated thing that was not her own Charles Wallace at all. She was able to look and love.

> I love you. Charles Wallace, you are my darling and my dear and the light of my life and the treasure of my heart. I love you. I love you. I love you.

> Slowly his mouth closed. Slowly his eyes stopped their twirling. The tic in his forehead ceased its revolting twitch. Slowly he advanced toward her.

> "I love you!" She cried. "I love you, Charles! I love you!"

> Then suddenly he was running, pelting, he was in her arms, he was shrieking with sobs. "Meg! Meg! Meg!"

> "I love you, Charles!" she cried again, her sobs almost as loud as his, her tears mingling with his. "I love you! I love you! I love you!" (L'Engle 1976, 187-188)

Eva and I sit at the kitchen table. And I ask her,

"What words jump out at you?" Almost without hesitation she circles the phrase "Slowly his mouth closed. Slowly his eyes stopped their twirling. The tic in his forehead ceased its revolting twitch." So then I ask her, "Why do these words jump out at you do you think?"

Eva stumbles a bit, "I don't know...they just do...it's like...'slowly his mouth closed'..." and then Eva falls silent but she slowly closes her mouth. And then she stands up and begins to twirl her body around.

Here's what she later wrote for her homework: "I like the way the author said 'twirling' and 'slowly his mouth closed' because it makes me so excited that I want to do the movements instead of just thinking 'I'm reading this, wow whoopee, what the heck!'"

What better demonstration could we have asked that even descriptive words *do* something to the world?

When she had finished her homework Eva danced around the room repeating the words and then, still chanting the magic words, she skipped off to her bedroom to reread the book. She'd been transformed by the magic. She was spellbound. In that moment, the author and Eva and I had worked together to brings word to life, to give words dimension and depth, feeling, and flesh. May she always be so enchanted and may she always be so graceful in communicating her enchantments.

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An Interview with Parenting Consultant Lawrence Cohen

Sara Bennett

Lawrence Cohen, Ph.D., known as "the play guy," is a specialist in children's play and play therapy. His 2001 book, Playful Parenting, *urged parents to do exactly that — play with their children as a way to establish a deep and healthy connection. In the last several years, Cohen's work with children and families has made him concerned about the erosion of play and free time in children's lives.*

Sara Bennett: Can you tell me a little about your background and how you developed an interest in playful parenting?

Lawrence Cohen: I trained as a general psychologist and I worked a lot with male sexual abuse survivors and with sex offenders. Then, when my daughter was turning five more than a decade ago, I moved to Boston and I was looking for something new and different. I realized that I'd hit a brick wall in working with children. I had this model that you had to protect children from their horrible parents and you had to give them an hour a week of wonderfulness and a psychologically corrective emotional experience.

But when I became a parent myself, I realized that it isn't so simple. Parents aren't evil monsters. They're stressed, they have a really hard job, and these families need help. So I started working with children and families and focused on parenting. And in this work, you can't escape the huge amount of stress on children and families. Much of this stress comes from school, in the form of academic demands, homework demands, social demands, and even extracurricular demands.

The more I worked with parents and children, and the pressures they were experiencing, the more I saw the importance of play. I started doing a lot of think-

No

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ing and speaking about why play matters. I became known as the "play guy." I began to run into people who think there's a competition between play and learning. To me that's completely wrong, and there's a movement of people who agree on this. It's not me in the wilderness. There are organizations like Right to Play, and Playing for Keeps, which conducted a conference at Yale in 2003. There's also the work of Dorothy and Jerome Singer.

Bennett: There's The Alliance for Childhood, which I'm affiliated with. There's a pretty new group that Deborah Meier's involved in here in New York called New York Voices of Childhood, and several other groups focused on restoring play. Last year, the American Academy of Pediatrics even joined in, releasing a report that stated that children need more time for play. But I always thought of you as the "play therapy" guy — the psychologist who worked with families to help them resolve their problems through play. Are you concerned about the erosion of play?

Cohen: I'm really alarmed. I was alarmed when play in kindergarten took a back seat to this sort of academic, very narrow, rote learning. But now that this narrow learning is taking over preschool, that's totally alarming to me. And for the young kids especially, the parents are driving it. This is something I've seen a lot of. It's a push and pull between schools and parents.

I consult in schools, and I'll consult at a pre-kindergarten and talk to the staff, and there's a scenario that I'm seeing over and over. There will be a really good preschool. The high-powered parents have done their research and discovered it and want to send their kids to it. And their kids get in and they send them to school, and all they see the kids do is play. And then these same parents start to get worried and annoyed. They want their kids learning to read, learning their numbers, getting ready for kindergarten. But what they really mean is getting a competitive edge in kindergarten to prepare them for the right college. So then the parents start complaining to the teachers and the administrators, and the very thing that drew them to the school is now driving them crazy. And, since the parents call the shots

much more in private schools, it's hard for the school to resist the pressure.

Bennett: I know exactly what you're talking about. My cousin started her son in kindergarten at The Calhoun School in Manhattan this year. Calhoun seems to be one of the only private schools in New York City that gives more than lip service to the idea that children learn at their own pace, that play is important, and that there's no need for homework in the early elementary school years. In fact, I know that Calhoun has eliminated homework up through the middle of third grade and I think they're talking about eliminating homework

I try to get parents to acknowledge — and really understand — that play is important. They get it until they reach a point where they feel they have to make a choice between play and learning.

through all of third grade and possibly fourth. And, when parents go on the tour of Calhoun, they learn this about the school and ostensibly that's why they send their kids there. But then, my cousin told me, whenever she's at parent gatherings, there's a large group of parents who are worried that their kindergarten kids are spending so much time playing, that they're not getting homework, and they talk about how their friends' kids at other schools seem to be so much more advanced. And my cousin tells me she wants to say, "So why don't you send your kids to that school instead?"

Cohen: Parents get scared. If people got scared at 3rd or 4th grade, that'd be a little understandable. But the fact that children don't even get full opportunities for play at two or three or four is really alarming.

Bennett: I don't even understand being scared at 3rd or 4th grade. I wish parents would relax, stop worrying so much, and focus on what's develop-

mentally appropriate. But I think a lot of parents are lost. They're so bombarded with information that they don't really know what's right or wrong anymore and they don't trust themselves or their instincts. In my neighborhood, something new I've been noticing are signs for a class called "Tummy Time." It's for parents or caregivers of young infants, pretty much newborn to 3 or 4 months. And the "trained professional" who runs the class teaches the caregivers that it's important for babies to be put on their stomachs so that they can learn to lift their heads and look around. If, as a society, we don't know something as basic as putting a baby on a blanket on the floor, so that she can learn to look around, roll over, reach for things, etc., then I think that's saying something fundamental about where we are.

Cohen: I think parents, from our age on down to new 22-year-old parents, do not want to do things the same way our parents did, but we don't know what to do instead, and that's a very anxious place. Some people respond by going back to the old ways; some give up and don't know what to do; and some hold on very tightly to essentially good approaches, but too tightly, and that's not healthy, either.

What I like about your homework work is the way it advises reflection. Homework comes along and you either think you can't do anything about it or you rail against it and are resentful, but I think your book (Bennett and Kalish 2006) really made a big difference in terms of asking parents to stop and reflect. What do you want? What makes sense? How does this fit into my family life?

Reflection is valuable. Beside the insights it produces, the process itself gets parents to slow down and become calmer. This is extremely important at a time when we see an overall increase in anxiety. In fact, I see way more anxious kids than behavior-problems kids.

Bennett: And that leads to too much medication, don't you think?

Cohen: There's a huge amount of medication. Ironically, though, anxiety medication is so addictive that there's not as much of a push from the medical profession as there is to give something like Ritalin.

But parents are definitely more anxious; it was already happening before 9/11 but I think 9/11 hit the turbo engines on anxiety.

Bennett: Really? I thought 9/11 made people stop and take stock of their lives and try to focus more on what was important. I know that many of the people I knew who never took vacations, all of a sudden started taking vacations, trying to spend more time with their kids, trying to just enjoy life a little more.

Cohen: I think there was a little of that right after 9/11, but I don't think that was a trend that stuck. Overall, parents are more anxious.

Bennett: So, how do you get parents to relax, let their children play, and get them to let their kids be kids?

Cohen: I try to get parents to acknowledge — and really understand — that play is important. They get it until they reach a point where they feel they have to make a choice between play and learning.

So I think the key is to emphasize that it's not a choice between the two. Rather, parents need the insight that deep learning happens through play. With young kids that means doing what they've always done, just being involved in real, good quality play. For older kids, it means having the free time to do what they choose, that voluntary, self-chosen, creative, open-ended type of activity that many kids don't have time for anymore.

You can look at it as the difference between P.E. and recess. But there's a big difference between play and recess. There's a freedom of choice to recess that doesn't exist with P.E.

Bennett: Even young children's free play is being replaced by more organized sports. These days, I see children as young as two years old playing soccer. When my kids were young, I couldn't believe that there were softball and soccer teams for kids who were only four or five. But now when I walk through the park, I see kids way younger than that, learning, in an organized fashion, how to dribble a soccer ball. They're wearing uniforms. I have to say, it doesn't look like much fun.

Cohen: My focus is on how to connect with families, and play is part of that. Some parents need to learn how to be more playful themselves, and some-

times that can take practice. And when I'm working with one family, I don't mind if they don't get it exactly right because I want them to be spending the time with their child, even if it's not great play. I'm glad they're practicing.

But when you look at the bigger picture, adults really don't know what their role is. Some people are nostalgic for the days when kids were just running around outside without supervision. I'm not nostalgic for that because I was brutalized by older kids. But most people have swung in the other direction. They seek excessive structure. They don't understand that you can look out for kids and also give them a chance to play.

Parents make progress when they, themselves, become playful. Parents need to take a playful approach towards things that are causing trouble — trouble with homework or bedtime or bath time or transitions, or siblings. At the same time, when it comes to children in groups, parents do have a role to protect kids from being scapegoated and tormented while still letting them argue about the rules.

Piaget described the value of play beautifully over 75 years ago, that kids' moral development comes from arguing about the rules of games. And that's the difference between recess and P.E. These days kids don't have the chance to argue about the rules. For this, they need more of the freedom of recess, rather than the structure of P.E.

I see this same dichotomy in the toy industry. Parents got the good message that children learn through play but because the toy industry and the entertainment industry jumped on it, parents began to think that every single moment has to be educational in a very narrow sense. So you'll see parents playing with toddlers and the toddler is having a perfectly good time stacking blocks or pouring water or the kinds of things they do, which is exactly what they need to be doing, and the parent is saying "which one is the blue block, which one is the red block, how many blocks are there," and there's an intensity to it as though they have to stuff information into their child's brain every moment they're with them.

Again, anxiety plays a big part in this.

Bennett: So, were you able to avoid all of the anxiety around you this year, with a daughter applying to college?

Cohen: There was certainly some anxiety but not at the level of intensity experienced by many people. But my daughter is not a fair example. She's an outstanding student; she loves school; and she knew what college she liked when she saw it. She's going to Macalester, which is a great fit for her. I didn't have to push her. She bought books on colleges, and spent Saturdays poring over them. That's not typical. If I could bottle that, I'd be rich.

Parents need to take a playful approach towards things that are causing trouble — homework or bedtime or bath time or transitions, or siblings.

I heard from several parents that what really helped them with college admissions anxiety was when they took to heart what the deans said: "Talk to the people you know and admire. Where did they go to school? I bet they didn't all go to Ivy Leagues. I bet they weren't all first in their class at high school or college. Ask them where they went. Was it a good fit for them?" It really helped people calm down.

In any case, I want to come back to the value of play. We give up play because of anxiety, but the loss of play actually perpetuates anxiety. We have kids who are so high strung — the super high achievers, some of them crashing and burning and some of them giving up on the system for not having a full life. Play is necessary for emotional well being. We give lip service to "we want our kids to be happy," but what happens is we think we know what will make them happy. So we think they need to be in an Ivy League school and then we trip all over ourselves trying to meet some made-up need. We end up nowhere.

Play is actually a basic human need. And if we're throwing out a basic human need, then we have to look at what we're doing.

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Do Freedom-Based Schools Fail to Produce Self-Discipline?

Dana Bennis

When children are given the freedom to direct their own learning, they don't just follow their whims, but work hard on long-range goals.

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A common critique of freedom-based education is that the self-directed and personalized nature of the approach does not provide students with the self-discipline they need to succeed in society. As the early conservative educator William Bagley believed, "if everything were based solely on appeal to students' interests, they would learn to respond only to pleasure and self-gratification, never learning self-discipline and the value of effort" (in Ravitch 2000, 289). Instead, educators such as Bagley contend that schools ought to be marked by "discipline, effort, academic subjects, teacher-directed classrooms, and 'the ideal of good workmanship for its own sake'" (p. 296). Philosopher and Great Books curriculum supporter Mortimer Adler (1988, 77) wrote that an elective system, where students choose what to study, is a "perversion of educational policy which makes the young, i.e. the relatively ignorant and incompetent, choose their own road to learning, according to the fickle interests of their immaturity."

In comments such as these, conservative educators make it clear that they do not trust young people to be able to guide their own education, believing that students can only develop self-discipline through a standardized, teacher-directed environment. Taken in a very limited manner, their general view does have merit. If everyone followed their immediate interests and whims at every given moment, people would rarely follow through on what they began, and society wouldn't function very well.

However, theirs is largely a theoretical view that mistakes how young people actually behave when given free choice. The critique is based on the limited understanding of "interest" as pursuing whatever whims occur to oneself at a given time. This interpretation fails to realize that people regularly choose to do things that are not enjoyable to them, but which

may be in their long-term "interest" in order to achieve a further end.

It is a serious mistake to assume that when given freedom, young people will choose to do only those things that are immediately interesting to them. This assumption sounds plausible because most people, like myself, did not have much freedom in our own education. We think that had we had such freedom we would have only run around, played games, or talked to friends about trivial issues all day. But what if we had experienced this kind of freedom from the beginning of our education?

From my experiences as a staff member at freedom-based schools and from discussions with staff and students at many similar schools around the country and the world, I have seen that when a young person has the opportunity to be in charge of her life, she comes to realize that merely following desires and whims will not lead to achieving her goals and to living well with others. By virtue of having the ability to determine what they do day in and day out, young people in freedom-based schools recognize that their goals will not be reached without disciplined effort.

Time after time I have seen young people engrossed in goal-directed work stemming from their own initiative. When I was working at Albany Free School, a group of 10- to 12-year-old students wanted to travel and take an overnight trip. They gathered together, signed up a few staff to go on the trip with them, researched the possibilities, and eventually decided on Montreal as the destination. For many weeks, the students were hard at work determining the budget for the trip, figuring out their daily schedule, connecting with a First Nations community that ended up hosting them in their longhouse, and raising all the money needed for the trip. If one of the students got distracted and was not helping the rest of the group, it was several of the students, not one of the teachers, who reminded their friend to get back to work.

On another occasion, a group of several girls worked tirelessly, day after day, to create an elaborate tree house. Even though it was hard work and it was not always fun, they persisted over the course of several weeks to gain the carpentry and architectural skills they needed to build a fine tree house.

Examples of self-discipline are abundant in freedom-based schools. One can see students persisting with their efforts, whether they are building settings for their fantasy play, avidly studying computer programming, or initiating a class to improve math skills and gain the skills needed for a career goal. In all of these instances, young people are taking control of their learning, realizing that their lives are in their own hands and that *they* must take the initiative to achieve their own goals.

In freedom-based schools, democratic school meetings and conflict resolution processes further support young people's development of self-discipline. Such activities ensure that all school members are involved in the creation of school guidelines and that all are held accountable to those guidelines. (Yes, it is possible to talk about the concept of accountability in education without referencing high-stakes tests!) The freedom-based school is not an environment in which young people only follow their interests and whims. Rather, it is a community based on mutual responsibility in which all school members support one another to achieve their individual goals, respect the needs of others, and develop the ability to self-regulate.

While a visit to any freedom-based school will provide countless examples of young people directing their own lives with determination and confidence, research confirms that such environments lead to self-motivated effort and activity. Researchers studying Self-Determination Theory have analyzed the various forms of motivation involved in activities. Their extensive studies demonstrate that "autonomy-supportive" environments, marked by respect and choice, are associated with greater intrinsic motivation, greater self-directed learning, and more extensive conceptual learning and creativity in young people, as compared with controlling environments featuring coercion and external rewards and punishments. Meanwhile, controlling environments are associated with extrinsically motivated behavior, in which people act out of a sense of fear or compulsion (Deci and Flaste 1995; Vansteenkiste et al. 2005). It would be difficult to describe such externally controlled actions as self-discipline.

Along this line, I would like to take a second look at what Bagley and other conservative educators

mean by the concept "self-discipline." Do they mean the ability to pursue one's goals with effort and determination, as I was describing? Or perhaps they are referring to self-discipline in the sense of, "Do whatever we want you to do, *willingly*. Do it without even having to be told." Educator and author John Holt (1995, 89), an eloquent supporter of freedom-based learning, claimed that most people have the latter in mind when considering the idea of self-discipline in schools. If authoritarian control and extrinsic motivation is the kind of self-discipline critics fault freedom-based schools for lacking, then the critique is justified: freedom-based education does not create people who will simply do as they are told.

However, freedom-based education *does* lead to self-discipline in the sense of developing an awareness of one's self and one's goals, learning respect for the freedom and needs of other people, and building the self-determination to work hard and achieve one's goals. A question from a student at The New School, a freedom-based school in New-

ark, Delaware, has stayed with me over the years. He asked the simple yet profound question, "How do I make myself do what I want to do?" There may be no greater proof of the value of an educational setting than enabling a young person to ponder the responsibility and discipline needed to lead a self-directed life.

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Nourishing Teacher Development
A Subject Supervisor's Perspective

Danielle Nyman

A highly regarded teacher supervisor offers some experienced-based guidance to her colleagues.

I entered the teaching profession as a fifth grade teacher in the New York City public schools in 1962. Four of my students could not read the alphabet. I was told to teach the New Math. In the middle of the year, I was asked to take over the music program of grades 3-5 because the music teacher had resigned. No one observed me teach. At no point was I given any guidance. I was not given promised materials on the New Math. Needless to say, I did not teach the New Math, nor did my four unfortunate students master the alphabet in my class. It was a study in frustration.

Neglect of teachers is common in our profession. The critical realities facing classroom teachers are often ignored. Classroom observations are frequently perfunctory, and the write-ups often misleadingly glowing. Supervisors want to get the job done with as few hassles as possible.

The generally accepted statistic is that 50% of teachers leave within the first five years. Thus, just as they become competent, knowledgeable, able to help others, they're gone. How can we help teachers to thrive?

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) designates teachers who have just been certified as "highly qualified." This is nonsense. Certification is just a beginning; novices need experience and helpful feedback to promote their development. We need to focus much more extensively on the process of *developing* teachers' abilities throughout their careers. I propose a new approach: No (Promising) Teacher Left Behind.

Educators have different views on what constitutes good teaching, so their views on who has the potential or promise to become a "good" teacher vary as well. In my view, promise begins with an eagerness to learn and to share that learning with oth-

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ers. A promising teacher is often someone who is bright, knowledgeable, and relates well to students. I have found that an open-minded enthusiasm for teaching and eagerness to learn are also vital. These qualities enable new teachers to develop, and they are the same qualities that trigger learning in students.

Even teachers who are widely accepted as "master" teachers are not finished products. They continue to grow. They look for new ideas and new ways of relating to a variety of students and situations. They are in the process of becoming, of developing their own promise.

Teachers nourish others. In turn, they need nourishment. Beginning teachers need help. Experienced teachers need validation and continued professional development. What form should these processes take? To illustrate the principles I have used, I will share examples from my career as a teacher and administrator in both public and private schools, most recently as a K-12 Social Studies supervisor in a New Jersey suburb's public schools.

Recruitment is Key

When Dick Gould, master coach of the Stanford University Men's Tennis Team, was asked the secret of his success he stated: Recruiting! So too with teachers. Excellent teachers do not abound. While some may find their way to your school, many need to be sought, systematically and continually. When found, they need to be wooed. Sometimes this process may take years. I am always searching for promising recruits.

Where do you find those promising teachers? This is not an easy problem to solve. Sometimes a candidate is switching from a dissatisfying job, often in law or in business. Others are moving from a different locale. Job fairs are another source. I interview even when I do not have a job immediately at hand. I offer promising candidates a chance to observe classes for a half-day or full-day and engage in discussions with teachers. This way they get a good sense of the school. I continue in contact with a finalist who decided to spend a year (and then another) in Japan; perhaps this multi-faceted young teacher will be with us next year. I stayed in touch with another strong finalist for several years after she decided to

stay home with her children; she is now a part-time teacher.

Bradley (his and all names have been changed) was runner up for a teaching position, and he did not get the job. He was nevertheless a promising candidate, changing professions after a successful run as a lawyer, bright and well-read. As part of the selection process, he had delivered a profound model lesson on the binding of feet in China.

He was also totally without teaching experience. I wanted to help him become a professional, whether or not he ended up teaching in our system. I offered Bradley the chance to observe classes twice a month, and to discuss those observations with the teachers and with me. He jumped at the opportunity. Throughout the next year Bradley sat in the back of many classes, listening and learning. He connected with each of the teachers in the department and attended some of our department meetings. When we had another opening, we chose Bradley to take the position.

Bradley's first year of teaching was accomplished as an alternate-route candidate, and an intensive departmental mentoring program added to his training. Not only was he observed, he also observed many of his colleagues teaching. He participated in a program for non-tenured teachers, including a day of observations in both Middle School and High School focused on teaching and learning. We discussed classes observed with the teachers, probing for the reasons behind decisions such as who to call on, or what question to ask, or how to maintain focus on the lesson. After only a few years, he is a schoolwide (and department) leader. Bradley has achieved tenure, and he is an outstanding teacher. He has developed a popular law elective. He has mentored several teachers.

This does not mean that all promising teachers become successes. I vividly remember Sue, a teacher with several years of experience whom we hired from a large public school system. She had fine recommendations; because it was summer, we hired her without having seen a demonstration lesson, which is not a good idea and is to be avoided whenever possible. She was intelligent, knew her history, and seemed eager to learn.

On my first (announced!) visit to observe Sue teach a class early in September, I was transfixed by 40 minutes of lecture on what students were doing wrong, how bad their work was, how low their standards were, how poor their concentration was. For the only time in my career, I had nothing good to say at a post-observation conference. Sue asked if I could give her some positive feedback, *any* positive comments. But Sue herself had not learned to be positive with her students, to encourage and draw them out. She made some effort to change her approach, but it was somehow very difficult for her. The school did not rehire her.

Pay Attention to Teachers

Teachers have needs that must be met, and they want to be listened to. Each has his or her own problems—sometimes emergencies. Just as teachers work to understand their students' lives, so too should a supervisor attempt to understand the context of the lives of teachers.

I usually conduct professional development one-to-one. In addition to working with me, each new teacher gets a colleague to help him or her acculturate and achieve a successful transition to a new school. The supportive department culture that has evolved means that other colleagues are also available to give help and support.

Sometimes a teacher needs systematic assistance with lesson planning. When a teacher is weak on content, he or she benefits from suggestions for reading, or even articles placed in his or her hands. Teachers have received a Carl Sandburg poem to underpin a lesson on urban development, statistics on gender differences in wages for an economics lesson, and a new book on memory for a psychology class.

Sometimes mentoring occurs in groups. In one session for three new teachers, each was asked to bring in an example of leadership for the discussion. On another occasion, they brought in samples of good questions they asked that day.

As a supervisor, I believe it is essential to obtain up-to-date technology and materials for the use of teachers. In one school, the main department office had only one phone; it took me half a year and many pleadings to get a second phone, but the effort was well worth it. A teacher requested a scanner and the department got one for everyone's use. If a teacher asks for a teacher's edition or videotapes, or to go to a conference, I work to get these. I try to disseminate books and articles on a variety of topics, such as pedagogy, social science, and general interest. To the extent we can become a community of learners, sharing ideas and experiences, we develop camaraderie and the expansion of learning experiences enriches teaching.

Monthly department meetings (sometimes run by department members) usually focus on a limited but consequential issue. For example, recent meetings have been devoted to grading student papers together. In our discussions the focus has often been on *encouraging* learning as well as *evaluating* learning. Other issues have included presenting data more effectively, the "lies" we teach our students, and how can we best compare clauses in the Japanese and U.S. Constitutions?

Departmental meetings, while task oriented, encourage individual recognition and the development of a positive team spirit.

Differentiate

Teachers are not all alike. They don't all need the "clinical" model, which mandates a pre-conference, lesson observation, and post-conference. Sometimes the process can be much less formal.

I entered Hannah's kindergarten. The class was sitting in a circle at her feet, trying to choose individual activities. She introduced me to three children: one from Russia, one from China, and one from the Philippines. She told me, with the class listening, that they have discussed how the children traveled to the U.S., and found those places on the globe.

I mentioned that I was born in France, and immediately Hannah scrapped her plans and used the "teachable moment." She invited me to show the class where I was born. I took the globe around to each child; most touched the pink that indicates France, my country of origin. We discussed how I got to the U.S. — not by plane! Could I have swum? Too long. "Rowboat," suggested a child. Too far, I replied. I asked the students to guess, and one comes up with the right answer, a ship. That reminded them of a story their teacher had just read to them about the Titanic. A few had seen the movie. One

child had been forbidden to see it because it was too scary. We discussed icebergs, fear, cold water, what brought the Titanic down. Hannah and I were team teaching.

Hannah was confident enough both to invite in the supervisor and to co-teach a spontaneous lesson. Young students saw how two adults can cooperate. Hannah may have learned about technique from my input, and the two of us have developed a good base for future work on curriculum development.

When you find a master teacher, stand aside and acknowledge the achievement.

Perry had enthralled generations of students. He was a genius at involving students, at telling a story with profound meaning. What could I say to him that would be meaningful? Over many years of collaboration we discussed his lessons, with his thoughtful self-appraisal raising my level of knowledge. He was my mentor more than I his. When I had a problem, I came to Perry for a consultation. When I had an issue with a teacher, I came for advice, and sometimes to ask him to intervene and help a teacher in difficulty (confidentially, of course). I asked for Perry's help to mentor new teachers and those learning a new curriculum. At the same time, he was always eager to learn. We team taught classes and learned from each other. He organized curriculum writing and workshops on skill development. When he retired (too early!), I continued to use him to teach workshops for mentors.

Other teachers need direction. For example, Ned, a second year teacher, wanted to understand why students didn't respond enthusiastically to his lessons. Ned needed pre-lesson conferences, so he could develop more open-ended questions that engender serious thought. He needed to discuss lesson plans until he developed the knack to systematically structure and present a lesson.

I make sure that I keep time available for what I call "thinking time," time for reflection on my work. Supervisors as well as teachers need to contemplate how they might improve their work.

I observed Henry teach a lesson, and gave it a superlative review in the post-observation conference and consequent write-up. But Henry was dissatisfied. He had shared the review with a colleague who noted two problematic sentences that Henry wanted me to remove. I reviewed the offending sentences, and felt they were an accurate and fair representation of what happened in the lesson. I checked with three administrators I admire to see if I was overreacting. They agreed that the comments were mild and should not be taken out of the report, that the write-up was of a clearly outstanding lesson, and that Henry shouldn't be so resistant to minor criticism. Nevertheless, I decided that flexibility would help and I toned down the language a bit. Henry and I developed a more profound relationship, and he went on to become a master teacher.

Patience is often needed, even with the most promising teachers.

Gwendolyn was in her first year of teaching, with only a Bachelor's degree. Her lesson plans were superb, her question technique was improving daily, and her sense of the classroom dynamics was excellent. It was hard to believe that she was a beginning teacher. I invited her into my classroom to observe me teach several times a week. She thrived at our school, and in only her second year she was invited to teach an elective. In her third year she created a new elective. She also decided to enroll in a Master's program, so I will have to wait before giving her additional responsibilities. She needs space and not more demands on her time right now.

Unfortunately, some teachers simply don't work out.

Once a brilliant teacher and an intellectual of note, Duke had descended into the morass of an alcoholic. Complaints increased. He was unable to face his condition, but as a senior and tenured teacher, it would be difficult to remove him. The chief administrator asked me to create a new requirement for teachers, that they must assign term papers. Duke, the administrator knew, wouldn't comply — he had never given a term paper assignment — and we could thus get rid of him. I demurred. I felt it was unethical to introduce a fake reason, and Duke had many years of fine teaching without assigning a research component.

Instead I observed his classes and wrote up what I had heard and seen: rambling, often incoherent lessons. I monitored and tallied lateness and absences, and confronted Duke with the list. He realized that

his usual denials did not stand up to this evidence. School life was no longer so pleasant, and he soon retired. Duke's retirement party celebrated his good teaching years.

Revitalization is Critical

Teaching is a demanding profession. How do you keep 25 or 30 (or more!) students interested, all the time? The literature suggests that many teachers diminish in effectiveness after about the seventh year. There is brownout, if not burnout. It is easy to get into a groove and be reluctant to change, for change suggests giving additional energy to the task, and why bother if you are modestly effective (and perhaps think you are better than you really are)?

There are many ways to counter diminution of effectiveness, or to augment a teacher's efficacy. Creating a new course can generate enthusiasm. Changing the courses taught may energize a teacher. An AP teacher rethought her course when an additional teacher was assigned to teach the same course.

Guest speakers can energize staff development. I once brought in a parent who had lived in Iran, to speak from personal experience to teachers about the position of women in that country. A former teacher directed a number of professional development sessions on Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Heng Yi AiXinJueLuo, a Chinese artist from the royal family of Puyi, demonstrated her art and spoke about her personal history.

Experienced teachers are often inspired by the dedication and energy of newcomers, and in turn they enjoy sharing the benefits of their knowledge and experience. I have found it helpful to subtly encourage interactions between teachers of varied experience.

Teacher Observation

One of the more technical issues facing subject supervisors is whether to sit in to observe a class unannounced. I never do. My job is not to "catch" a teacher unawares and unprepared. If I can't pick up the cues from a teacher and class about the norms of the classroom, I'm not a proficient supervisor. I also do not observe for only five or ten minutes. Early in my career I was observed for five minutes by the principal of a high school who obviously didn't even know who I was. He objected about my teaching Copernican theory during my social studies class; in reality, I was discussing the seasons. I still don't understand what the problem would have been if I had been teaching Copernican theory.

Concluding Thoughts

Personal development is usually felt to be distinct from professional development, but I don't see how we can realistically (or philosophically) draw the line. If, in my free time, I read novels that enlarge my understanding of human behavior, doesn't that enhance my understanding of how to teach history? If a mathematics teacher goes to a play and absorbs the drama, isn't she learning something about how to interest students in their learning? Why must we draw the line so clearly between the personal and the professional? Perhaps one of the reasons is cost, because we don't want to pay for a literature course for a music teacher or a history workshop for a science supervisor. Isn't this shortsighted?

The cost of weak or nonexistent professional development is also not known. How many teachers leave the profession because they receive little help or poor training? Or stay in, and don't develop their full capacities? How many leave because they face difficult professional (or personal) situations, and no one seems to care or pay attention? How many teachers are forced to attend workshops or faculty meetings during which they are bored, and the topics covered don't seem to matter?

Good professional development is costly, but absolutely necessary. The costs of inadequate development are borne primarily by teachers and their students, and ultimately, by our society.

Rethinking Critical Theory

A Review of
Schooling and the Politics of Disaster

Denny Taylor

Schooling and the Politics of Disaster (2007), edited by Kenneth Saltman, argues that U.S. schools and communities should be declared "disaster areas" because public schools are being privatized by education profiteers who are undermining the democratic ideals of U.S. society. I support this proposition and encourage intense, systematic documentation of the sites of contention, including Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New Orleans, New York, and Washington, D.C. There is an urgent need for research studies that cross disciplines and paradigms and provide compelling evidence of the impact of schools on the health, well-being, and academic development of children. My own efforts in this respect are documented in *Beginning to Read and the Spin Doctors of Science* (Taylor 1998).

In *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster,* the authors add to the political mix natural catastrophes that have become social disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. and the Tsunami in South East Asia. September 11 is another disaster discussed, as are the Vietnam War and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Somalia, Darfur, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are also included in the theoretical discussions. These discussions are juxtaposed with references to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Florida Comprehensive Assessment

Test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001. It is an awkward mix, a stretch even for critical theorists, which raises serious issues that deserve to be thought through and acted upon.

It is difficult to imagine any discussion of education without children or teachers being represented. But children stressed by NCLB testing, or those traumatized by the tsunami, are not represented. Nor do we learn anything about their teachers who are also stressed by the tests or traumatized by the Tsunami. *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* is not about them; nor is it for them. In emergency situations, teachers can and do make a difference, but they will find no useful information to help them in this book. Saltman writes of "beginning a discussion" and "a critical pedagogical response" (p. 18), but conversations are already underway across disciplines, paradigms and professions, racial and religious divides, and national boundaries. There is extensive documentation on children, disasters, and mass trauma.

By now it must be clear that I have difficulties with this book. With due respect to the authors and recognizing their scholarship and positive intent, I will outline these difficulties, not with the purpose stated by Peter McLaren and Nathalia Jaramillo, who write that "we need to extend Marx's 'relentless criticism of everything existing'" (p. 83), but with the sole purpose of advocating for teachers and children who live in areas in which disasters have occurred and in which there are on-going emergency situations. I have taken my cues from the authors in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* and organized my review to fo-

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cus on the concepts, ideas, and political arguments they present.

NCLB: A U.S. Centric View of "Disaster"

Schooling and the Politics of Disaster presents a U.S. centric conceptualization of "disaster" to describe NCLB and the privatization of public schools. It is a disaster in the U.S., but not even *une petite tragedie* in the context of global catastrophes. Nevertheless, in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster,* "disaster" is co-opted by critical theorists. Saltman, in his conceptualization of this edited work, makes the fundamental error of confusing the use of "disaster" to describe NCLB with the use of the term "disaster" in global contexts to describe catastrophic events that result in millions of deaths and human suffering. Some chapter authors make the same error, which might seem inexplicable, given the life-death differences in these uses of the term "disaster."

One of the difficulties is the human inability to empathize with large numbers. "Large numbers, we turn off," Paul Slovic (2007), a psychologist, tells Brian Lehrer on NPR.

> If we can't imagine it, our feelings collapse…. We need stories, we need images, it needs to be brought home to us. We are psychologically geared to respond to individuals and small numbers, forging affective connections. That does not occur with large numbers.

The numbing of numbers makes it imperative that we localize problems. This is difficult for critical theorists who focus on abstractions and multiple layers of interpretation. There is talk of "collective suffering" and "fragmented individuals" but we don't know them. They have no faces, no voices, no identity, but the idea that they are "fragmented" stays with us. "Fragmented individuals" might resonate intellectually in a similar way that knowing 75% of youth in Detroit do not graduate from high school is understood intellectually. We might express concern, but, faced with such verbal and numerical abstractions, we would have to fake empathy. We feel empathy for people, not words or numbers.

Without localizing the problem, it is difficult for the public and for many policymakers to appreciate the effects of the for-profit privatization of U.S. pub-

lic schools on the health, well being, and academic development of children in the United States. To appreciate the negative effect of NCLB testing on the lives of young children, it is essential that we document what happens to children like Mike who is in fourth grade on the day of an NCLB test. Rigid and white knuckled, Mike holds onto the edge of his desk. His eyes are open, but he does not seem to see. He is staring ahead vacantly, breathing shallowly. His teacher speaks to him, but Mike does not appear to hear. The aide in the room hurries out of the classroom and returns with the principal. It takes the teacher and the principal almost 30 minutes to persuade Mike to let go of his desk. Mike is one of many thousands of children in U.S. schools who are deeply distressed by the incessant administration of commercial NCLB tests that provide their teachers with very little, if any, information to support their learning. Meeting Mike, even this briefly, personalizes the difficulty.

The problems with NCLB are also localized when consideration is given to the difficulties it caused for teachers and children in the aftermath of Katrina. I was in Louisiana immediately after the storm and I sent an e-mail to colleagues at schools and universities across the U.S. asking them to write to Margaret Spelling and urge her to suspend NCLB testing. "Teachers share their anxiety about meeting the mandates established by the No Child Left Behind Act that includes Federal sanctions for schools and teachers," I wrote. "NCLB has resulted in new lockstep test prep curriculums that leave no room for traumatized children." There was some relaxation of the regulations, but most children still took the tests. Scores dipped and many explanations have been given, but none that I am aware of have focused on the increase in the harmful effects of NCLB testing on the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of children recovering from the complex developmental traumas that resulted from Hurricane Katrina. In *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* these connections are not made. "Disaster" remains an abstraction used for argument's sake and political debate.

Saltman writes in the introduction:

> In education, the political right is capitalizing on disaster from Chicago's Renaissance 2010 to

the federal No Child Left Behind Act, from education rebuilding in the gulf coast of the United States to education profiteering in Iraq. The new predatory form of education privatization aims to dismantle and then commodify particular public schools. (p. 3)

This U.S. centric critical theorist view of "disaster" is compounded when the cooption of the term is legitimized in subsequent chapters. For example, in "Reading the Signs," Jane Anna Gordon and Lewis Gordon write "the term disaster is astrological in origin" (p. 25), and Richard Kahn writes that "etymologically, a disaster is a kind of misfortune" (p. 269). Michael Apple adds credibility to the cooption of disaster as the new word of critical theory when he writes, "words such as *disaster* imply relations of power" (p. 210).

"Disaster" in Global Contexts

In world contexts, "disaster" means "mass exposure to events that are life threatening," (Meyerson 2004, 250). For doctors, teachers, and humanitarian aide workers who respond when catastrophic events take place, or who work in regions of on-going emergency situations, "disaster" is a deadly word that means genocide, ethnic cleansing, an earthquake or a tsunami, extreme poverty and starvation, or a public health emergency such HIV/AIDS. When disasters occur, families see their loved ones killed as they have been recently in Kenya, or in the on-going emergency in Darfur. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, "arms for diamonds" quite literally meant for arms and legs. For children "disaster" is having a limb cut off, witnessing a parent being hacked to death by a machete, watching a mother or sister being raped, or being raped themselves. "Suddenly the Janjawid attacked us," a sixteen-year-old girl is quoted by Amnesty International (2004). Another young woman is also quoted: "Janjawid militia and government soldiers attacked a primary school for girls, raping the pupils…. They were aged between 8 and 13. They were in shock, bleeding, screaming and crying."

In a recent article, Daya Somasundaram and Willem van de Put (2006) provide a very different view of "disaster" — one that documents the involvement of psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, and humanitarian aid professionals in rapid response to catastrophic events and in on-going emergency situations. Writing of the war in Northern Sri Lanka, Somasundaram and van de Put state that "children are exposed to terrifying experiences, such as sudden shock; dreadful noises of explosions; threats to life; witnessing death or injury to domestic animals and pets; seeing dismembered mutilated bodies, raw flesh, and blood" (p. 66). These authors stress that "disaster cohorts comprising children or adolescents are more likely, in the long term, to demonstrate severe impairment than adult cohorts" (p. 66). They present research that focuses on the psychosocial problems of adolescents involved in disasters with the spectrum of problems ranging from loss of memory, anxiety, and hostility, to PTSD, depression, and alcohol abuse.

Somasundaram and van de Put present compelling evidence that children and women are especially vulnerable when disasters occur. They are at increased risk of morbidity and mortality and underrepresented in terms of disaster rehabilitation. This has certainly been my observation in Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza, Ramallah, in the West Bank, or in Sderot or the Sharone Negev in Israel. I have made similar observations in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, in Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the failure of the levees. It is not a new observation.

Given the life and death contexts of global disasters, it is essential that critical theorists take into consideration the significance of the term before co-opting it. Regardless of our discipline and paradigm, it is essential that we challenge U.S.-centric views of "disaster" and reflect on our contribution to the disasters that occur in global contexts.

The Politics of Critical Theory
And the Politics of Disaster

Let me be clear. What happens to Mike matters. There is no doubt that children in U.S. schools are suffering, especially when NCLB includes testing regimes that were maintained after Hurricane Katrina. The effects of mindless government-mandated programs will have a lasting effect on the health, well-being, and academic development of U.S. children. Few in the academy would disagree with the authors in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* that public edu-

cation has become a site for capitalist greed, but the difficulties, however dire they may seem, cannot be compared, as they are in this book, with the world's children in crisis.

In the late 20th Century, critical theorists established a genre of critique that is argumentative and frequently antagonistic. In "Katrina and the Banshee's Wail," McLaren and Jaramillo (2007) write,

> The act of God that began like a susurrus of wind in the eerie darkness swelled into the piercing wail of a banshee, a blackened sky draped over the city of New Orleans like the funeral cowl of the unshriven dead. (p. 74)

They write that "Fox News's Viagra posse leader, Bill O'Reilly, revealed that it was not blood running through his veins, but the muck that lined the city's drainpipes" (p. 75). McLaren and Jaramillo enter into a back-and-forth slanging match with the news media's coverage of Katrina in which they pick and chose to shock and dismay the reader. Inaccurate reporting leads to inaccurate critique, the one just as useless as the other, serving no purpose except to reify negative images and racial stereotypes in the double victimization of the survivors of Katrina.

Henry Giroux's "Hurricane Katrina and the Politics of Disposability" reflects the deep scholarship that we have come to expect from him, but the rewriting of racist descriptions of Katrina's survivors restigmatizes them. Girioux also quotes Bill O'Reilly, whose notoriety is elevated unnecessarily when his opinionated, unsubstantiated, uncorroborated "churnalsim" is used for intellectual critique. Slavoj Zizeck (2007), unusual in his ability to turn critique upon himself and the theorists who are followers of his work, writes,

> the dream of "infinitely demanding" anarchic politics exist in a relationship of mutual parasitism: anarchic agents do the ethical thinking, and the state does the work of running and regulating society…. In compliance with this logic, the anarchic agents focus their protest not on open dictatorships, but on the hypocrisy of liberal democracies, who are accused of betraying their own principles…. The big demonstrations in London and Washington against the U.S. attack on Iraq a few years ago offer an exemplary case

> of this strange symbiotic relationship between power and resistance. (p. 7)

The point Zizeck makes has relevance in the context of this review, and I urge my colleagues to reflect on the proposition that critical theorists have established unhealthy symbiotic relationships.

To be fair, *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* includes more disciplined and systematic political critiques that are culturally sensitive to humanitarian concerns. These critiques are found in the articles by Robin Truth Goodman on teaching women's rights in the "New Iraq"; Kristen Buras on racism and disinvestment in New Orleans; and Enora Brown on NCLB, standardization and deracialization. Each deserves to be the focus of a book, but unfortunately each stands isolated in the present compilation. Moreover, none of the articles in this edited book reflect the experience of *being there* (Geertz 1983), in the moment of crisis, in the way they are written in *Disaster Psychiatry: Intervening When Nightmares Happen*, (Paydya and Katz 2004). Nor is there any reference to scientific studies that focus on human responses to catastrophic events, such as those presented in *The International Handbook of Human Response to Trauma* (Shalev, Yehuda, and McFarlane 2000).

The Absence of Children

The cooption of "disaster" in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* is problematic, but so is its underlying assumption that a discussion of schooling and disaster can take place without any focus on the plight of children either in the United States or in countries around the world. Neither "child" nor "children" are descriptors in the index and there is no discussion of the impact of disasters on children's health and emotional well-being or their intellectual development.

In the U.S., three million children have been identified as experiencing complex developmental traumas (ACE 2006). Given underreporting and missed diagnoses, this is likely to be a very conservative count of childhood traumatic conditions that threaten U.S. children's health and well-being. In global contexts, 11 million children under the age of five die of treatable diseases every year as a result of capitalistic, monopolistic marketeering of medical supplies, including vaccines by U.S. com-

panies and their European allies. In Iraq every child — *every child* — is affected by the U.S. war and will be affected for the rest of their lives and, *if* they survive, medical research clearly indicates that their children will also be affected. There is compelling evidence that offspring of Holocaust

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There has to be more engagement on the part of scholars in the university with teachers and children in communities than "book learning."

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survivors have disordered cortisol metabolism that is associated with greater vulnerability to PTSD (Yehuda et al. 2007). The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2005) provides in-depth documentation on the effects of extreme stress on young children, and longitudinal studies of disasters, for example, the children who survived Aberfan (Miller 1973; Williams and Murray Parkes 1975; Cuoto 1989) provide compelling evidence for potential lifelong effects of catastrophes.

Jan Egeland (2008, 33) references the 2006 collaborative study by Johns Hopkins and al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. Egeland writes that

> the John Hopkins study concluded that an estimated 655,000 Iraqis died as a consequence of the war in the three years and four months that followed the 2003 invasion. The vast majority, 601,000 died from blunt violence. Gunfire was the most common cause of death, but deaths due to car bombings were on the increase.

Egeland reports that in 2007 there were 2.2 million internally displaced persons and 2 million more refugees in other countries (p. 31). Since half the casualties of war in the Twentieth Century were children, it would not be an exaggeration to state that in Iraq more than a million children have been injured or killed, displaced internally, or have become refugees, many suffering from complex developmental traumas, malnourished, and without hope of receiving

an education. The Congo, Darfur, Gaza, Rwanda, the Tsunami, Katrina, armed conflict, extreme poverty, public health emergencies, catastrophic events that become social disasters, whereever the crisis and whatever the emergency, it is imperative that in discussions of the politics of disaster that we focus on children and *act*. It is not enough to write about it.

Hurricane Katrina: Principals and Teachers as First Responders, and Schools as Places of Refuge for Children and Families

Just after the storm I went to Louisiana to provide emergency support to teachers and children in schools in the parishes surrounding New Orleans, and to families in the River Center shelter in Baton Rouge (Taylor and Yamasaki 2007). Cindy Elliott, who teachers at Southeastern Louisiana University, made my visit possible. I stayed with her and her family, along with friends who were evacuees, and she organized the opportunities I had to work with evacuees in the Riverside Shelter and visit schools to support teachers and counselors who were first responders in the aftermath of the hurricane. Cindy, an educator of great courage, continues to work on a daily basis with teachers and children in the schools.

Going to the Gulf Region as a first responder in the aftermath of Katrina is a different experience than watching the disaster unfold on television or in the newspapers. Being there, spending time with families in shelters and systematically documenting the impact of the storm on the lives of children and their teachers in schools, creates very different understandings of the impact of the storms than the rerun narratives of critical theorists presented in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster*.

Sometimes it's about the struggle for survival. Children's responses to mass trauma depend upon the interplay of social and environmental conditions and how they respond when they are hurt, not only in the long term but also in the first weeks following a catastrophic event. In the aftermath of the hurricanes in Louisiana, teachers focused on the children. Teachers helped teachers, schools became places of refuge, and administrators and teachers became leaders in the recovery efforts.

Many children from New Orleans and the Ninth Ward found refuge in the schools of Jefferson Parish,

which is across the Mississippi from New Orleans. Kate Middle Elementary School was quickly filled. "I am homeless too," Aretha Williams, the principal, tells families on the first day of school. "If your child is anxious, stop in and see me. If you have questions, stop by. If you need help, come and ask me. If there are families in your neighborhood, please tell them we can take their children" (Taylor and Yamasaki 2005).

St. Bernard Parish was destroyed when the levees broke. Out of fourteen schools only Chalmette High School was left standing. It became a last place of refuge for more than 1,500 people, families with children, older adults, some frail, some needing medical attention, some dying. "Cries from the neighborhood could be heard and people continue to arrive wet, scared and upset," Cookie Mundt, the assistant principal says. Speaking of the administration and teachers she says, "We had a plan in place and we don't let each other down." "We had to have a presence," Doris Voitier, the superintendent, says, when she talks about the trailers she bought for teachers so that Chalmette could be reopened in the aftermath of the storm. "I love that the parish has a school," a mother of a first grader, says, on the first day back. "We were ready to come back home," she says, speaking on the day the school reopened after Katrina. It was at this time that Christine Karn, a recent university graduate, went to Chalmette to become an English teacher where she has worked for the last two years, living in trailers with so many other teachers.

In this complicated age in which we live, it is essential that we focus on teacher preparedness for catastrophic events and on-going emergencies. It is imperative that we listen to administrators and teachers from Louisiana who took a leadership role in their schools and communities during Hurricane Katrina and when the levees broke (Taylor and Yamasaki 2005; Elliott and Taylor 2006, Voitier 2006). In the critique of extremes presented in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster,* the courage of educators, including those mentioned above, is not recognized.

Re-Racialization

Representation and re-racialization are serious issues for the academy. An essential consideration is whether academics credentialed in universities, who hold no local affiliations, have the support of the ethnic and racial groups they write about. Often they do not.

Language is also a problem. For example, the use of "disposability" by Henry Giroux to describe political attitudes and actions has re-stigmatize those who are referred to in the critique as "disposable." When Jane Gordon and Lewis Gordon state that "Race, as is now well known, was distinguished by two kinds of people in that catastrophe — those who were innocent by virtue of being white and those who were already guilty by virtue of being black," (p. 27) similar difficulties arise. Just as retelling traumatic events can *re*-traumatize, repeating racial statements can *re*-racialize and deepen the divisions. To minimize this possibility within this critique I want to return to the section above and remind you of the courage of Aretha Williams and Doris Voitier and her colleagues, who are among the most extraordinary educators that it has been my privilege to know. Aretha Williams is African American and Doris Voitier is European American. Both were courageous and both have been nationally recognized for their leadership in the reestablishment of their school communities after the storm.

Gordon and Gordon in their "Reading the Signs" write of "monsters of disasters" and "victims of the plague" (p. 26) and and in this context include racial descriptors that should not be repeated without consideration of the negative images such repetitions might have on the reader. Implicit in this article and in many of the articles in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* is the assumption that if we rant enough, people will think like us. If we write of victims, the reader will know we are really writing about survivors. If we repeat the racial epithets, we are not *re*-othering, *re*-racializing, we are expressing our outrage. They will get it.

Maybe so. Maybe not. Neither words or images work well in reverse. If that were the case, the photographs in the *New York Times* over the last four years would have been enough to stop the Iraq war. Susan Sontag (2003) in *Regarding the Pain of Other*, wrote of the "indecency of such co-spectatorship" (p. 60) and of the lasting effects on the viewer. There is convincing evidence from psychiatric research on trauma that images of catastrophic events can have negative effects and result in PTSD. What we hear and what

we see *can and does* hurt us, especially if the words and images are about you or me.

I know from my own research on the lives of Welsh coal-mining families that the negative images of miners during the coal mining strike in 1926 have stayed in my memory and at the time made me think about my life and work and my identity. In one cartoon there is a dog with a man's head and on his back is written the word "miner." He is being whipped and forced into a doghouse, which has "STRIKE" written above the hole that is the entrance. There is a piece of meat on the ground, which has a luggage label on it "FROM THE COALOWNERS." A man in a hat with the label "EXTREMIST" is saying "Back to your kennel, dog! You'll get only what *I* give you." "INTIMIDATION" is written on the handle of the whip, which curls across the page with the words "crack" as it hits the miner's back. Underneath the cartoon is written "A DOG'S LIFE" and "How much more will he stand it?" It's a complicated image open to multiple interpretations. The cartoon published in the *Western Mail* is accurate in portraying the "underdog" plight of the miners, but at the same time, by portraying the miner as less than human, it re-stigmatizes them. The image and words affect me. The mines were deadly and my paternal grandfather, who was a miner, died before I was born, but I see my maternal grandfather in the picture, and I am aware that my father went down the mines just two years after the cartoon was published. Even so, it is impossible to imagine the depth of emotion experienced by African Americans after four hundred years of racism, when racial incidences are re-analyzed without consideration of the possibilities of re-racializing, re-stigmatizing, and re-segregating.

At the beginning of the 21st Century we have to rethink critical theorists' responses to racism in both U.S. and global contexts. In *No Future Without Forgiveness,* Desmond Tutu (1999) writes,

> It may be, for instance, that race relations in the United States will not improve significantly until Native Americans and African Americans get the opportunity to tell their stories and reveal the pain that sits in the pit of their stomachs as a baneful legacy of dispossession and slavery. We saw in the Truth and Reconciliation Com-

mission how the act of telling one's story has a cathartic, healing effect. (p. 278)

Earlier in the text, Tutu explains,

> Forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth. It could even make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end worthwhile, because in the end dealing with the real situation helps to bring real healing. Spurious reconciliation can only bring spurious healing. (pp. 270-271)

For members of the academy who focus on critical theory Tutu's paradigm provides the possibility of a shift within the field.

Paulo Freire, Schooling, and the Politics of Disaster

In the summer of 1990, a scholars' forum was held at Lesley University in honor of Paulo Freire. Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux participated. Michele Fine and bell hooks were also there. At the forum Freire said that when he was a visiting scholar at Harvard he gave a manuscript he was working on to a woman of color who was a student in one of his classes. When she got home she gave the manuscript to her son who read it and told her when she went to class to "tell the man he is writing a book about me." Freire talked of the conditions of life in Sao Paulo, the children who have no schools. He said his life is the struggle and that he is never very far from those who are oppressed and of whom he speaks. He looked tired and sad. He expressed concern that the ideas he had written about in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* had been reinterpreted by researchers who had moved away from those who struggle in their theoretical critiques.

As a researcher who is a veteran in the field, a grandmother with a flack jacket who would prefer to be there rather than here writing this critique, I encourage researchers to leave their comfortable armchairs. If we are to change the disastrous circumstances in which millions of children live their everyday lives, it will happen because we are documenting what is happening in the field. There is a huge

difference between being there and here, first person accounts and third person analysis, phenomenal experience and theoretical treatise, life-informed theories and theories only informed by the theoretical.

In the notes that I made at the forum I have quotes from the speakers. Henry Giroux asked "How do we come to understand the politics of our own location." He stated, "If you understand the political process, then you can subvert it." He then added, "Understanding the ideology that creates the situation removes the power." Unfortunately, it does not. In the twenty years since the forum with Freire the rhetoric has become more strident and disconnected, but there is very little evidence critical theory has made a difference in the pedagogical practices in U.S. public schools.

Critical theorists, like other researchers in the field of education, rarely look beyond their own paradigms and disciplines to learn from other professions. There are extensive archives of documentation, which focus on "disasters" from multiple perspectives, including anthropology, education, geography, medicine, psychiatry, political science, sociology, religion *and* from literature, poetry, art and photography. And yet, in *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster*, "trauma" does not appear in the index and there are only few passing references to the documentation that is available in these fields. It is difficult to take seriously theoretical works that do not include adequate references to the information that is currently available in academic fields or in the vast databanks of human rights organizations. In the end what is "left" are reified images that disenfranchise and revictimize with no acknowledgment of courage and endurance.

Ironically, as Graeber (2008, 4) states, "capitalism will not be around forever. An engine of infinite expansion and accumulation cannot, by definition, continue forever in a finite world." He continues, "it seems reasonable to assume that within fifty years at most, the system will hit its physical limits. Whatever we end up with at that point it will not be a system of infinite expansion. It will not be capitalism" (p. 4). There is no doubt that capitalism and communism have failed, and with it critical theory. There is nothing that the privileged members of the academy can write about disasters, political crises, or dangerous

capitalistic trends that will make a difference to the suffering of others, without actual engagement in activities in the places in which the disasters occur. Metaphorically, in the critique of extremes, lives are lost again, along with stories of courage and immense pain.

At the forum Freire said, "We never have the right to stop the struggle." He talked of hope, and time, and knowing and he encouraged participants to rethink democracy and then *to act*. "We are not just here," he said, "We are here in order to participate." He stressed the importance of "concrete struggles," and said that "the only way to discover ourselves is to get lost."

Learning From Teachers, Doctors, And Humanitarian Aid Organizations

When the next disaster happens do not expect help from the Federal Government. FEMA will not make a difference. In an e-mail that I wrote on September 11, 2005 from Baton Rouge, I said:

> President Bush left every child behind when he spoke to the nation from New Orleans on Thursday night. He talked of money for churches but not for schools and praised the role of the military but not the role of teachers in what he called "the largest reconstruction in the history of the world." Eighteen-wheelers jam I-55 and I-10, loaded with heavy steel beams, pipes and building materials. Money is pouring in as the water drains out, but so far not a drop has reached the schools of the Gulf Coast where 372,000 children have been evacuated from the communities in which their families used to live.

In the aftermath of disasters, when governments fail, the one thing we can be sure is that teachers will be there taking care of the children. Whatever the difficulty — whether extreme poverty or public health emergency, armed conflict, or natural or social disaster — teachers are always present. Teachers not only teach but, together with the children in their classes, they create and recreate life-sustaining communities that are constantly growing and changing in response to a constantly changing everyday world. Teachers teach at a time when schools are

used as military bases, bomb shelters, refugee camps, and hurricane shelters. Schools have become places of nightmares and desperation, as they were in Rwanda, and places of comfort and refuge, as they were in Louisiana.

In St. Bernard Parish, Chalmette High School became the last place of refuge for 1,500 community members (Elliott and Taylor 2006; Taylor and Yamasaki 2007; Warner 2006). "There were married couples, extended families with children, and older people with no families, and the sick and disabled, and people who had no means or no transportation to go anywhere else, " said Wayne Warner, the principal, who took a leadership role and worked alongside Doris Voitier and Cookie Mundt. The electricity went out and the backup generator failed. Supplies were lost in the five and a half feet of water, a mixture of mud, oil, gasoline, and sewage that flooded the ground floor of the school. On the second floor, windows blew out and parts of the roof were torn off. Except for some small packets of breakfast cereal and a limited amount of bottled water there was no food for five days. The toilets didn't work. There were no medical supplies. There was no oxygen, no possibility of dialysis, and no refrigeration for insulin for those who needed it, just high sugar Fruit Loops to keep everyone alive. When Wayne Warner talks about the ways in which the teachers and administrators responded to the needs of those who found shelter at Chalmette High, he says, "that's what school people do."

"Amid the devastation, you have to look for hope," Chris Rose (2006, 25) writes in *1 Dead in the Attic*. In troubled times when disasters happen, principals and teachers must do it for themselves just as Aretha Williams did when she parked her RV outside the Kate Middleton Elementary School after her home had been destroyed by the storm. Then with her teachers she got to work with a mop and a broom. Together they canvassed the neighborhood handing out fliers inviting every child in the community to come to school. Many of the children that arrived on the first day were from New Orleans Parish and the Ninth Ward. Aretha took care of them, their families, and the teachers in her school (Taylor and Yamasaki 2005). School counselors and social workers also make a difference. "They don't have to talk about it or write about it, but they can if they want to," says Cassandra Smith, who is African American and the social worker at the Kate Middleton Elementary School (Taylor and Yamasaki 2005). Cassandra is working with the children most affected by Katrina. Before Kate Middleton reopened, Cassandra volunteered and worked with children and their families in the Superdome and a year after the storm she voiced her concern about the re-traumatization of the children as documentaries were aired on the first anniversary of Katrina. "I am concerned about the media," she says, "that was the worst thing last night showing the Superdome, seeing the water. When children watch it over and over that's traumatic, re-traumatizing" (Taylor and Yamasaki 2006). I agree with Cassandra.

If I am hard on critical theorists, I am equally hard on myself. It is essential that as social scientists and theorists we continually retrace our steps and explore the contractions between our ways of being in the world and the world's way of being. In my own work I struggle with my own inarticulateness when I attempt to talk about complex interrelated conceptual systems — anthropological, psychological, sociological, or political. I regard participation as essential. I spend time in places of disaster and ongoing emergencies with children and their families and in schools, but the time I spend with them is never enough. Muhammad Yunnis (1999), the Nobel Laureate and founder of the Grameen Bank, writes:

> It is not easy, but participation is both a right and a responsibility. Despite the skepticism, I kept trying to bring the academic world and the village together by championing a university project called the Chittagong University Rural Development Project (CURDT). Through CURDT, I encouraged my students to go with me into the village and devise creative ways to improve day-to-day life there. By now I had almost completely abandoned classical book learning in favor of hands-on, person-to-person experience. Based on their experiences in the village, students could also choose a topic and write a research paper for a course or credit. (p. 36)

I do not want to suggest that academics and their students in universities or teachers and children in schools should give up "book learning," but there has to be more engagement on the part of scholars in the university with teachers and children in communities. There has to be more than the endless griping by critical theorists, more than the worn-out arguments that have the possibility to do more harm than good.

Teachers who work with children in places where catastrophic events have taken place, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, ask academics why we don't work with them, thus raising the questions we should ask not only of ourselves but of the social and political worlds in which we live. How can we live in the world without doing something that might make a difference? How can we connect children of different races, ethnicities, and religions, who are in school together or live in different places? How can we represent different expressions of love and sorrow? Is it possible to create different interpretations of shared and separate identities? Can we create spaces in which those who have hurt each other can tell their stories and know that we will listen? How can we advocate for cooperation and communication in the world arena through the work we do in our classrooms and schools? Can we impress governments and world leaders by our actions and activities that there is nothing more important than the lives of children? No nation, no government, no religion, no soldier, no armed conflict, no freedom fighter, no aggressive act, no politician, no profiteer, no international corporation is worth the lives of children. Not one child, anywhere, any time. In every place I have worked, "suffering" is the word most often used by parents and teachers to describe what is happening to their children. "If one of our children suffers, we suffer," a teacher says, "and if we cause suffering, we suffer too."

Postscript: Pedagogical Implications

In *Schooling and the Politics of Disaster* there are several comments about the impact the book might have on pedagogy but no specific information is given. It is unfortunate because there is a considerable body of research on children and trauma that has significant pedagogical implications (Taylor and Yamasaki 2006; Taylor 2008). Here I will focus on just two findings.

The first finding is that the social fabric of children's everyday lives must be restored if children are to have the best chance possible to recover when catastrophic events take place. This finding is supported by ethnographic research in locations where catastrophic events have taken place and/or emergency situations exist. Medical, psychiatric and psychological research supports this finding, along with the emergency aid initiatives of humanitarian aid organizations including UNESCO and Save the Children. The second finding, which has similar support, is that children need to participate in activities that are joyful and help them imagine possibilities for their present and future lives other than the pain and terror of the disasters they have endured. Given these two findings, we can appreciate how important it is that we focus on the social environments in which children live *before* emergency situations arise, and it goes without saying that if children are to experience joy *after* a traumatic event, it is important that they have the opportunity to experience joy *before* events take place.

After disasters occur the recommendations are more complex (see Taylor and Yamasaki 2007), but it is important to stress here that teachers are not therapists. Children should not be asked to reveal emotional information either by talking or by writing about what has happened to them. Reliving traumatic situations can re-traumatize. Teachers should let an administrator, school psychologist or counselor know if a child needs immediate assistance.

The recommendations presented in this review essay are not earth-shattering. But to implement them it would take a fundamental shift in thinking about the role of schools in local communities and in global contexts. Such schools do exist — in Rwanda, in South Africa, in the West Bank, in Israel. In Jerusalem, at Hand in Hand, a bilingual school, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim children study together. Each class has a Jewish and Arab teacher. "The summers in Israel are always long and hot," the editor of the school newsletter writes, "but this summer was especially difficult as both Arabs and Jews feel themselves isolated from each other and their communi-

ties during a war that we are all still trying to understand" (Khatib 2006). The editor continues,

> We are always concerned about how these events affect our children, parents, teachers and staff. We are happy to say that the children, parents, and staff of Hand in Hand are still working hard developing new bilingual multicultural curriculum. We maintain our values and our beliefs in living together as equals in the complex reality that face us.

Together, progressive educators and critical theorists have an opportunity to make a difference. If teachers in Darfur can create a school, if Arabs and Jews can teach their children together, if there is a struggle for truth and reconciliation in South Africa, *we* have to do better. We have to do better if we are going to provide support to children and teachers in schools in emergency situations throughout the world. We have to do better if we are going to increase the resiliency of the world's children so that they can have every opportunity to recover when disasters occur and to actively participate in the worldwide educational community.

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PERIODICALS

One reason for student apathy is that much of the curriculum and teaching in the United States is devoid of conflict and controversy. Most secondary school students view history and civics as mere dates, names, and facts to remember rather than a struggle between groups of people with opposing interests or a debate over controversial issues.
— Mordechai Gordon

Password: student
Username: apathy