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ABSTRACT

Social responsibility is a difficult but essential aspect of being a professional educator. The contributors to this volume hope that the social policy debate within the education profession will be encouraged. The book provides practical assistance for educators in developing curriculum and instruction programs that foster creativity and critical thinking in relation to social issues. In this volume are: "Forward" (Gerald R. Firth); "The Emperor Has No Clothes" (Alex Molnar); "Tracking: Beliefs, Practices, and Consequences" (Jeannie Oakes); "Confronting Social Attitudes in Textbooks: The Response and Responsibility of Today's Educator" (Steven Selden); "Children's Play and Adult Leisure: The Social Responsibility of Educators" (Nancy R. King); "Ethnic Diversity, the Social Responsibility of Educators, and School Reform" (James A. Banks); "Peering into the Well of Loneliness: The Responsibility of Educators to Gay and Lesbian Youth" (James T. Sears); "Educating for Excellence on an Endangered Planet" (Tony Wagner); "Literacy in a Democracy: Our Responsibility as Educators and Citizens" (Harold Berlak); and "Promoting Equity: The Forgotten Responsibility" (Vito Perrone). (BZ)

SOCIAL ISSUES AND EDUCATION: CHALLENGE & RESPONSIBILITY

Edited by Alex Molnar

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Social Issues and Education: Challenge and Responsibility

Foreword

THE AUTHORS OF THIS PUBLICATION HOLD UP A MIRROR THAT MANY EDUCATORS WILL find disturbing to gaze upon. Most assume responsibility for helping students understand and realize the necessity for improving the social condition. That the responsibility requires action within and beyond the schoolhouse to actually change society may be more than many of them are willing to accept.

Molnar is direct in stating early in the opening chapter that the responsibility to our profession, our students, and to society itself is "to see through social myth, to keep our eyes firmly fixed on reality, and to say what we see."

His case is shaped and supported from diverse perceptions and perspectives by the various contributors. Data from Goodlad are utilized by Oakes to suggest that school reorganization based upon a common curriculum and classroom heterogeneity is a key to reducing inequity in students' experiences. The presence of political ideology masquerading as objective content in biology textbooks is analyzed by Selden as illustration of pressure to reconceptualize science as social policy or theology. The effects of conforming play to norms of behavior expected by a work force in a workplace are described by King as preparation of children for leisure activities that accommodate dominant modes of work in adult society. Reform of the total school environment to reflect a multicultural ethos is proposed by Banks to meet the challenge of developing cultural, national, and global identification of students. Inclusion of gays and lesbians is advocated by Sears in the obligation of educators to promote human dignity and to further social justice for all students in all areas, not only for those currently in vogue or most conveniently served. Modeling active citizenship in schools and communities is offered by Wagner as the critical factor in preserving democracy and perhaps survival of the species. Shifting power for determining priorities and programs to local school communities is advanced by Berlak to obtain literacy that ensures democratic social practices; risking implementation of new structures is argued by Perrone to assure a democratic, fully equitable, and accessible system of education.

The magnitude and pervasiveness of the task of social responsibility are considerable. Banks emphasizes that to help students develop democratic values and clarified identifications the total school must be reformed, including institutional norms, power relationships, verbal interactions between

teachers and students, culture of the school, manifest and latent curriculums, extracurricular activities, attitudes toward minority languages, and the counseling and testing programs.

If the educational profession does not exercise its opportunity to participate in formulating government policies, contends Molnar, "it will not only leave the destiny of American education in the hands of others, it will be abdicating a good part of its professional responsibility to our society as well."

Molnar captures the challenge succinctly: "We cannot escape our responsibility for the world we turn over to our students."

GERALD R. FIRTH
ASCD President 1986–87

Introduction

SOCIAL ISSUES AND EDUCATION: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSIBILITY IS BASED ON THE premise that educators have responsibilities that go beyond the technical aspects of their work in schools. Many of these extracurricular responsibilities stem from the fact that social context influences the professional work of educators.

Educators today are in a contradictory position. Through their work in schools they experience keenly what Henry described in *Culture Against Man* as society's need to remain stable while at the same time introducing and allowing enough change to keep from stagnating. The tension between stability and change in American society is reflected, for example, in the contradictory expectation that schools educate both for creativity and critical thinking and that they do so in a way that produces allegiance to a set of socially prescribed values and behavioral norms.

If, on the one hand, creativity and critical thinking are to be an integral part of education, then the organization of our society and the relationship of the U.S. to the rest of the world cannot be ruled off-limits as legitimate topics. On the other hand, the responsibility to socialize students to believe that the social relations in the U.S. (and between the U.S. and the rest of the world) are legitimate and just dictates that educators allow critical thinking and creativity only in certain acceptable and noncontroversial areas, for example, in areas that serve society's manpower development needs. In other words, students are to learn to be effective workers, and at the same time learn not to question a mainstream view of American society and the U.S. role in the world.

Examples of mainstream views abound: The war in Vietnam was a tragedy but not an American war of aggression; unemployment is sad, but most people are unemployed because they did not pursue the proper training or do not want to work; at the United Nations the United States frequently finds itself voting in the minority because of the reflexive anti-Americanism of many Third World countries, not because the policies of the United States often isolate it in the world community; the poverty and blight in city after city in the United States is regretable, but there has always been poverty and the government can do little or nothing to change things. And so on.

Since educators know very well the problems caused by the contradiction between the charge to educate for critical and creative thinking and the charge to socialize, it is very common for practitioners to consider books such as this just so much idealistic preaching. This point of view is as understandable as it is false. It is understandable because schools are often directed by events that educators cannot directly control. It is false because it assumes that the professional work of educators is confined entirely to their work in schools. To be sure, the extent to which educators can foster critical thinking and creativity in the schools is sharply proscribed, especially in relation to social issues. However, work in the schools only accounts for half of the professional equation. Work outside school accounts for the other half. In school, educators can, to a limited extent, clarify and explain the many and varied contradictions in U.S. society. For the most part, however, the flag will be wrapped around the schoolhouse, not only to promote what is good and noble about the U.S. but, perhaps more importantly, to obscure what is unjust and destructive. This highlights the importance of professional work outside the school for educators as they pursue social justice and world peace. In order to be meaningful, the conception of professional work as encompassing work outside of school requires that educators possess a critical understanding of U.S. society, the role of the U.S. in the world, and of the social function of education.

In social terms, the principal problem facing our planet is the wildly unequal division of the earth's resources. One need only compare the circumstances of the starving millions in Africa to the casual affluence of large segments of American society to realize how unequal this division is. Following the end of World War II, the United States enjoyed unprecedented prosperity in relation to the rest of the world. In the postwar period, although the *distribution* of wealth in American society remained virtually unchanged, the *absolute* wealth of American society increased dramatically. Even the poorest Americans benefited to some small extent from America's economic position vis-à-vis the rest of the planet.

In the last 20 years, however, the emergence of Japan and Western Europe and, more recently, Korea, Brazil, and other countries has challenged U.S. economic dominance. In addition, Third World countries which have historically provided raw materials for industrialized nations have attempted to secure a bigger piece of the economic pie. These developments have reduced and continue to threaten the U.S. share of the planet's wealth. The current solution to this problem calls for creating more wealth through economic growth. However, anyone who has seen the pervasive environmental devastation of the world's industrial countries knows that creating an American level of wealth on a planetary scale could well destroy the earth's capacity to sustain human existence.

Faced with these circumstances, what political and social developments might one expect in the United States? Internally, one would expect the

wealthy and the powerful to lay claim to a larger piece of America's relatively smaller economic pie in order to maintain their privilege. In fact, in the past decade, tax reform designed to promote economic growth has gone a long way toward accomplishing a more unequal redistribution of wealth *away* from the poor and *toward* the wealthy. Externally, one would predict the increasing militarization of American foreign policy and an increase in the general level of international violence as it is more and more necessary to use force to maintain the unequal economic and political relations once held in place by diplomatic means. As more tax dollars are devoted to military spending, less money is available for programs designed to benefit poor and working-class Americans. The withdrawal of public funds for social welfare in order to pay for increased levels of military spending has further widened the distance between poor and affluent in American society.

As class divisions become more sharp and as the U.S. becomes more involved in foreign military operations, pressure on schools will increase to support and legitimize the status quo by teaching ideological justifications for poverty and injustice in the United States and for the world's state of perpetual war or preparation for war. Demands that children be taught to uncritically accept governmental policies that maintain the current inequitable state of affairs as legitimate, just, and reasonable will become more explicit and more shrill. The contradictory nature of the official expectation that educators teach students to respect and promote democratic social practices and institutions will also, no doubt, become ever more apparent.

The unequal economic relationship between "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries assures that advances in the well-being of the majority of the world's people must, inevitably, pose a political and economic threat to the U.S. and the entire western world. It is not by chance that, increasingly, many of the greatest friends of American democracy abroad are not democrats but dictators and small ruling cliques. These cliques can profit from the unjust economic relationship between the Western World and the Third World only so long as the wealth of their own countries is inequitably distributed. In order to secure their positions of privilege these cliques subjugate their own countrymen politically, economically and, when necessary, militarily. In that moment when a previously oppressed people are free, the demand for a more equal division of wealth is inevitable.

The idea that the relative economic well-being upon which the Western democracies are built is achieved only by denying the rest of the world those freedoms which we so cherish is difficult to accept. Perhaps this explains why the establishment of governments which are, formally, democratic in countries where the economic and social conditions necessary for democracy do not exist is currently such a popular political goal in the U.S. It allows the Western world to have its cake and eat it too, i.e., to point with pride to democratic political structures in countries where economic domination is the order of the day, and to declare that country "free". Nonsense. It has, with

some justice, been said that nowhere on earth are better democratic constitutions written than in South America.

Democratic institutions can develop and flourish domestically and internationally only if the world's wealth is more equally divided. Democracy in Pullman, Ind., was a sham in the nineteenth century in the U.S. because the economic domination exercised by one man made the political rights of his workers meaningless. Democracy in El Salvador in 1986 is a sham because a few families own virtually all of the useful land, and any attempt to alter this economic dominance is opposed with deadly force by the army and, if necessary, by death squads. Since even if further industrial development were capable of relieving the misery that is the inheritance of most of the earth's people, it would do so only by the unprecedented, and perhaps fatal, destruction of the earth's environment. The simplistic economic growth policy being pursued by the United States (in which "the market" is regarded as the best determiner of social well-being) is doomed to failure. The contradiction between formal, democratic rights and economic injustice can ultimately be resolved only by a fundamental reorganization of industrial society *and* a more equitable distribution of the world's wealth.

For the U.S. to set itself on a course for the redistribution of wealth inside of the U.S.—and internationally—would be unprecedented in world history. It is also very unlikely. Nevertheless, for the U.S. not to take such a course could mean unending military conflict abroad and the gradual destruction of our democracy at home. Nowhere else in the world are democratic institutions strong enough for such a scenario to be politically imaginable. If they are to encourage such a course, and thereby strengthen democracy at home and abroad, educators must help to educate American citizens for political democracy *and* economic justice. These two principles are inseparable. This analysis sets forth a daunting task for educators. It is not, however, a hopeless task.

For example, educators can identify and speak out against government policies that legitimize domestic and international injustice and portray violence as an attractive and often justifiable alternative for resolving conflicts.

In the past six years decisions made by the Federal Communications Commission have effectively deregulated most of the programming that children see on television and have given broadcasters much more latitude in deciding which commercials are allowed during children's programs. The results are alarming. According to the National Coalition on Television Violence, the amount of war cartoon programming aimed at children 3 to 11 has grown from 1.5 hours a week in 1982 to 27 hours a week in 1985—with projections for 1986 of 42 hours a week. It is estimated that the average child will spend the equivalent of 22 school days watching war toy commercials and war cartoons each year. What are children to learn from this tidal wave of militaristic programming? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics,

children are developing a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice.

Increasing numbers of children in the United States are "at risk." This is not the result of happenstance. The amount of money available for children's nutrition programs, Head Start programs, low-income housing, and social welfare in general has been reduced significantly over the last six years. As long as the federal government's current economic, military, and budgetary policies remain in place, the number of "at-risk" children in America's classrooms will continue to climb. Social responsibility, in this instance, means educators informing themselves and alerting America's citizenry to the educational consequences of inadequate social welfare spending. Clearly, the general welfare of America's citizens will either enhance the quality of educational programs or give lie to official rhetoric about educating all of the nation's children.

Social responsibility also implies exercising a lively concern about the amount of money in the federal budget diverted from education in order to help fund the ongoing U.S. military build-up. Already, in many school districts across the country, teachers are finding that because of fiscal constraints placed on states and local governments by federal budget priorities, they must educate greater numbers of children with more learning problems and must do so with fewer materials and for relatively lower salaries than in the past. Property-tax payers, who are themselves victims of those same budget priorities, sometimes must choose between making their house payments or paying for schools for their children. Rather than reacting with hostility when hard-pressed taxpayers resist property tax increases based on education expenditures, educators can actively help to create the kind of society in which citizens don't have to decide between keeping their homes or providing quality education for their children.

It would be foolish to argue that educators can, solely by virtue of instructional technique or curriculum design, transform American society into something more humane and just. However, educators ***can*** respond to the social aspects of their professional responsibility critically and creatively. I believe this book provides an example of what can be done.

Educators can make social, political, and economic issues a part of the ongoing dialogue within their professional organizations. By doing so educators will help to define for themselves and for the public the full nature of their professional responsibility. Professional organizations provide a forum for educators to explore how political, economic, and social factors affect education programs and practices. And they provide a framework for collective action inside and outside the schools. In a democratic society such as ours, educators have the opportunity to participate in formulating the government's social policies. This amounts to having a voice in determining the conditions of our own employment. If the education profession does not take

this opportunity, it will not only leave the destiny of American education in the hands of others but will also abdicate a good part of its professional responsibility to society.

Social Issues and Education: Challenge and Responsibility has nine chapters. Two chapters, by Molnar and Perrone, discuss the general social context of contemporary education in the United States. The other seven chapters each focus on a specific issue and discuss its professional and social aspects.

In "The Emperor Has No Clothes," I describe the dominant characteristics of American society in 1986 in terms of their educational impact. Specifically, four social trends are discussed: (1) the increasing distance between the poor and the affluent in American society; (2) the equating of commercial and business interests with the public good; (3) the linking of school performance to social performance; and (4) the growth of American nationalism disguised as patriotism. The discussion of these social trends illustrates how social-policy decisions that ostensibly have nothing to do with education can have a dramatic effect on our schools.

Does tracking in high school reflect and help to reinforce the social tracking of American society? Jeannie Oakes thinks that it does. In "Tracking: Beliefs, Practices, and Consequences," Oakes draws upon the data used by John Goodlad in *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future.* Oakes' work shows how widely accepted school practices exist not only because of their educational merit but also because of their resonance with the dominant characteristics of American society.

Steven Seldon provides a historical analysis of biology textbooks. In "Confronting Social Attitudes in Textbooks," he illustrates how social ideology finds its way into text material that is ostensibly neutral. The lesson Seldon draws from his review of these textbooks is that educators must remain vigilant for social ideology disguised as objective fact in their curriculum materials.

Most people would think nothing could be more straightforward than children's play. Not Nancy King. In "Children's Play and Adult Leisure: The Social Responsibility of Educators," King examines how schools wittingly and unwittingly help to socialize children into particular norms of behavior and ideological belief about the nature of work and the nature of play. Not all play is alike according to King. She argues that educators have a responsibility to understand the difference between various types of play and how they serve differing social purposes.

In "Ethnic Diversity, the Social Responsibility of Educators, and School Reform," James A. Banks discusses the challenge and the opportunity of designing educational programs in a multicultural society. Banks develops guidelines for educators who wish to respond to social multiculturalism with constructive and effective educational programming.

In "Peering Into the Well of Loneliness: The Responsibility of Educators to Gay and Lesbian Youth," James T. Sears outlines the responsibility of educators to students who are, arguably, members of America's mo. despised minority. Sears discusses the often-stated reasons given in support of the social ostracism of gays and lesbians. He then goes on to provide a rationale for the development of educational practices that address the needs of gay and lesbian youth.

The danger of nuclear annihilation is present in the lives of every human being on this planet. While all people are placed at risk by the continuation of the nuclear-arms race, most individuals feel powerless to control or even to understand the dynamics of nuclear proliferation. In "Educating for Excellence on an Endangered Planet," Tony Wagner describes the key aspects of education in a nuclear age. Wagner avoids the "it's best left to the experts" approach of so many in our society and in the education profession.

In his chapter on literacy, "Literacy in a Democracy," Harold Berlak focuses on and examines the impact of recent reforms. Berlak argues for a conception of literacy that promotes democratic social practices. He concludes by suggesting basic changes that he believes are necessary if genuine literacy is to be achieved.

It is common in 1986 to describe the social and educational reforms of the 1960s and early 1970s as failures. It is frequently argued that social and educational reforms aimed at promoting greater equity in our society and our schools have resulted in a serious erosion of educational standards. In "Promoting Equity: The Forgotten Responsibility," Vito Perrone challenges the idea that educational excellence and educational equity are mutually exclusive goals. In his view, it is not possible to have one without the other.

Social responsibility is a difficult, but essential, aspect of being a professional educator. It is the hope of the contributors to this volume that *Social Issues and Education: Challenge and Responsibility* advances the social policy debate within the education profession and provides practical assistance for educators in developing curriculum and instruction programs that foster creativity and critical thinking in relation to social issues.

ALEX MOLNAR
Milwaukee, 1986

CHAPTER ONE

The Emperor Has No Clothes

Alex Molnar

THIS CHAPTER IS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL FOR SEVERAL REASONS. IT IS UNUSUAL IN THAT most of the data cited came from sources readily available to a general audience—that is, newspapers. Newspapers were selected to demonstrate that a considerable amount of social-policy data of value to educators can be found in the popular press. In order to use the data, however, we must sift through and make sense of the welter of sometimes conflicting information, using the same critical thinking we are so fond of advocating to our students.

This chapter is also unusual in that the facts and figures cited, while they will quickly go out of date, will provide an enduring snapshot of social policy affecting education in the 1980s. Too often the history of education is, as Adorno has characterized the history of philosophy, the history of forgetting.

Finally, the unusual title, The Emperor Has No Clothes, was selected to capture the chapter's theme: our responsibility to our profession, to students, and to society to see through social myth, to keep our eyes firmly fixed on reality, and to say what we see.

In the fairy tale, it fell to a child, who didn't know any better, to proclaim that the emperor, far from being clothed in the finest of garments, was parading around naked. The message of the tale is that people are often afraid to describe what they actually see instead of what they are supposed to see.

Who was the fool in the fairy tale? Was it the emperor? Perhaps. But as Obi Wan Kenobi said to Han Solo in the movie *Star Wars* "Who is the bigger fool? The fool? or the fool who follows the fool?" The emperor was, as all leaders are, only human. Unfortunately, however, the mistakes of leaders are amplified by the number of people who follow them unquestioningly.

I believe that the better part of an educator's job is to reduce the general

level of foolishness in our society. It's hard enough to teach the times tables, the long 'A' sound, or the triangular trade routes. It's difficult to keep up with committee-meeting schedules, curriculum developments, or the paperwork without having to consider what's lurking out there beyond the schoolhouse door. I'm very sympathetic. When I taught high school history, each year I found myself confronted with more history to cover! A thankless task!

Nevertheless, I have learned in my 20 years as an educator that we cannot hold ourselves separate from the events, the passion, or the prejudice that swirl through our society. Surely the number of so-called "reform" reports over the last six years and the number of new State Department of Public Instruction regulations are evidence that even if *we* want nothing to do with the outside world, *it* wants something to do with us.

Fifty-four years ago, an educator named George Counts made a now-famous speech at the height of the greatest depression the United States has experienced to date. In it he challenged educators to formulate school programs designed to reconstruct American society into something better and more just. Is America better and more just than it was in 1932? Perhaps. As for the question Counts raised in his title, "Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?" the answer is obviously and resoundingly, "No!"

Schools in every industrialized society—the United States or the Soviet Union, Japan or Sweden—strive to keep things going pretty much the way they are, to serve and to make legitimate the existing social structure. In democratic societies, however, we educators do more than simply serve society through our work in schools—as citizens we participate in formulating the very orders that society gives us. In a sense we are our own bosses. Therefore, at least in the United States, there is more to being an educator than working in schools—or at least there should be.

Educators *can* have something to say about issues that affect them—class size, resources available to support teaching, special programs for exceptional children, and the nature of their own professional training, to name just a few. But we can have that influence only if we are willing to help shape the society that gives us our marching orders.

For example, it doesn't make sense to me for a kindergarten teacher, or any teacher for that matter, to be ignorant about funding for children's nutrition programs. It is well-known that nutrition in the child's earliest years plays a significant role in subsequent academic progress. For teachers to cheer politicians who want to cut approximately 12 percent from nutrition programs, as proposed in the 1987 federal budget, is to compound the hardships faced by poor children and to make their own professional lives that much more difficult (Pear 1986).

Would it make little sense for art supervisors, for example, to decry the low level of aesthetic awareness among students and the low priority given art, music, theater, and dance in the school curriculum, and then applaud spending $18 hundred million for 21 spare MX missles at the same time—or

accept a 1987 budget call for cutting funding for the National Endowment for the Arts by 12.5 percent to $144.9 million (Gamarekian 1986).

Shouldn't school counselors, who every day see the reality of adolescent drug abuse and turmoil, have something to say when the Justice Department recommends the withdrawal of virtually the entire $70 million in its budget devoted to juvenile programs, which range from drug treatment clinics to aid for runaways (*The Milwaukee Journal* 1985).

Despite political efforts by many teachers to shape national priorities in support of quality education, most teachers seem to view their work only in terms of what happens in school.

I recently attended the annual conference of a professional educators' association and found virtually no session devoted to a social or political topic. I found, instead, sessions on the flannel board, on selecting a wardrobe of flattering colors, and on retirement planning. After looking through the program, I harbored the dark suspicion that it had been organized by a descendant of that famous Roman fiddler, Nero. Those educators were fiddling while their schools burned.

I believe the social trends are clear, unless we alter our course. Those of us in public education will earn less money while teaching more students who have severe difficulties. And we'll have fewer educational resources than we do now. I fear we are heading toward a society in which there are two "American ways."

The American society that I see in 1986 reminds me of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Just as Dickens captured the enormous contradictions of prerevolutionary French society, I have tailored his introduction to fit American realities in 1986—which I use here to introduce my discussion of four social trends that educators should be very concerned about.

It Is the Best of Times—Mercedes and Porsche autos are selling at a record rate, and the stock market is hitting record highs.

It Is the Worst of Times—In Dane County, Wisconsin, where the state capitol is located, the home foreclosure rate has increased 450 percent since 1980 (Martin 1986).

It Is the Age of Wisdom—An intelligence estimate prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff documents Russian compliance with the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (Gordon 1986).

It Is the Age of Foolishness—Between 1983 and 1986 the school tax of the average household in Milwaukee increased by $19. During the same period, households paid an extra $410 in taxes for military expenditures. Indeed, in Milwaukee the average household pays more for military expenditures than it spends in state income tax and local property taxes combined (*Jobs With Peace Newsletter* 1986).

It Is the Epoch of Belief—President Reagan has announced that "one of our highest public health priorities is going to continue to be finding a cure for AIDS" (Weintraub 1986).

It Is the Epoch of Incredulity—The Reagan administration has proposed reducing funding for AIDS-related research by 22 percent in the 1987 fiscal year (Weintraub 1986).

It Is the Season of Light—For the last seven years elementary reading scores in big-city schools have been going up (Hodgkinson, 1985).

It Is the Season of Darkness—Every day in America 40 teenage girls give birth—to their third child (Hodgkinson 1985).

It Is the Spring of Hope—On Sunday, Feb. 9, the *Milwaukee Journal* listed more than 1,750 job openings.

It Is the Winter of Despair—Approximately 60,000 adults in Milwaukee County are without work.

We Have Everything Before Us—Between 1980 and 1983 the richest one-fifth of American households gained an average of $1,480 as a result of changes in the federal tax law (Lewis 1986).

We Have Nothing Before Us—A congressional study has found that 40 percent of the 11.5 million workers who lost jobs because of plant closings or relocations from 1979 to 1984 have not found new jobs. These workers were primarily middle-aged people in manufacturing with long and stable job histories (Noble 1986).

We Are All Going Direct to Heaven—The Rev. Jerry Falwell has recently announced the formation of the Liberty Federation to promote the "American Way" and to fight communism.

We Are All Going Direct the Other Way—A five-year-old held a plastic Rambo Uzi water pistol in his right hand, and a Rambo M-16 water gun in his left. "What do I like about Rambo?" the boy said, as he paused to reload. "I like all the violence" (Greer 1986).

Accepting that American society today is full of contradictions, what social trends are likely to have the greatest impact on the work of educators? I have identified four trends which, if they continue, could potentially undermine our best efforts in individual schools and classrooms:

1. the increasing distance between the poor and the affluent,
2. the equating of commercial and business interests with the public good,
3. the linkage of school performance with social performance,
4. the growth of American nationalism disguised as patriotism.

The Increasing Distance Between the Poor and the Affluent

The U.S. standard of living has been declining for more than a decade. Today a 30-year-old male head of household earns 10 percent less in real terms than his father did at age 30. Furthermore, if he has a house he must pay 44 percent of his earnings to the mortgage payment, compared with his father's 14 percent (Wright 1986).

The decline in the standard of living may have gone relatively unnoticed up to the 1980s because of the entrance of so many women into the workforce and the variety of state and federal programs that helped to provide health, educational, and recreational services for millions of working people.

Since few families can send three adults to work full-time, and since the federal government has chosen to devote less of its resources to domestic welfare, the class divisions in U.S. society are becoming more apparent.

Most people love symbols. I still remember the photographs of the sad-faced Korean children featured in newspaper and magazine aid appeals in the 1950s. Those pictures, and the response of the American people, symbolized the generosity of my country. Last year, in our nation's capitol, Christmas dinner for 1,000 street people was provided by the Korean Chamber of Commerce (*New York Times* 1985). Perhaps we should be grateful for their generosity—and then again perhaps we should be ashamed of the need for it.

If our Gross National Product were apportioned equally, each family of four would have approximately $60,000 (Hug 1985). Yet today 10 percent of all American families hold 57 percent of the country's net wealth (Anderson 1985). At the same time one child in five is from a poor family, and one child in four under the age of six lives in poverty (Lewis 1986). These children will affect how we go about our business in school. Perhaps the best thing educators can do to increase school effectiveness is to agitate for health, nutrition, and housing programs for these children—and for their parents.

Equating Business and Commercial Interests with the Public Good

In the 1950s, when the president of General Motors inadvertently proclaimed that what was good for General Motors was good for the nation, people laughed because they recognized that while the welfare of General Motors and the welfare of the United States were related, they were certainly not the same thing.

Today *The Wall Street Journal* advertises itself as "The Daily Diary of the American Dream"—and politicians routinely point to the need to improve the "business climate" as a way of advancing the general welfare. Usually, improving the business climate means lower taxes on business and business investors, less stringent environmental and safety regulations, and lower wages for workers. While these measures will doubtless increase business profits, there is not much evidence that they will produce jobs or improve the quality of life for the general public. Indeed, there is evidence of a negative correlation. Moore and Squires (1985) write:

> Economic development is the current watchword among public officials at all levels of government. Yet the economic development policies aimed at improving the operation of the economy are generally narrowly defined in accordance with the tenets of the conservative growth ideology pervasive in the United States today. This

popular view is that economic growth will solve social problems as long as policies are limited to creating a "good business climate"—that is, to creating conditions conducive to private capital accumulation. . . .

Proponents of the growth ideology, even the most conservative, foresee a continuing role for government in assuring a good business climate. Government, they argue, should offer expanded financial incentive programs to the private sector in order to encourage investment spending and create jobs. These financial incentive programs often take the form of off-budget subsidies. One of the most popular, expensive and controversial off-budget subsidies are industrial revenue bonds (IRBs). . . .

The City of Chicago recently examined the 101 IRB projects it has initiated since the inception of the program in 1977 to June 1984. . . . This study found that during these years total employment among these firms dropped from 17,670 to 15,356, a 15 percent job loss. . . .

A similar picture emerges for Milwaukee. Among 41 IRB projects receiving IRB financing between 1973 and 1980 for which data could be obtained, total employment fell from 7,966 to 6,764—a drop of 15 percent. . . .

According to studies conducted by the Congressional Budget Office (1981, 1983), the costs of the IRB programs now include an annual Federal revenue loss of approximately $3 billion and an indeterminate revenue loss at the state and local levels. . . . [The IRBs also result in] the regressive redistribution of at least $1 billion a year to institutional investors and wealthy individuals. While the majority of taxpayers foot the bill for the reduced tax obligations of bondholders. . . .

It might be argued that industrial revenue bonds are simply an isolated failure in an otherwise successful social and economic policy. Perhaps. On the other hand, consider the example of General Electric:

During the first Reagan term G.E. made nearly $10 billion in profits, yet paid not a penny of tax. G.E. gave its shareholders a 30 percent dividend increase and its chief executive officer a 141 percent pay raise. . . . It also increased plant outlays somewhat. But did G.E. need the tax subsidy to afford that? It's questionable, because late last year G.E. executives considered the firm flush enough to spend $6 billion to buy R.C.A. For that $6 billion, nary a new machine will be bought, and nary a new job created . . . (Stein 1986, p. 21).

An article in the 16 February 1986 *Milwaukee Journal,* "State's Business Climate Warms as Standard of Living Declines," reports that as a result of lower taxes and lower wages there is a new optimism in Wisconsin's business community. At the same time, however, the average Wisconsin annual wage has fallen nearly 10 percent below the national average.

Lower taxes on business, lower taxes on wealthy investors, and lower wages for workers may be good for business profits and good for building the membership of private clubs, but they add up to less money in the government treasury and less money available to working people to pay taxes. This creates enormous pressure to reduce state expenditures for governmental services such as road building, health programs, public parks and yes, public education.

Compare my home state, Wisconsin, with, for example, Mississippi. Is Mississippi the proper model for Wisconsin in defining social well-being?

I chose Mississippi because Wisconsin and Mississippi have historically provided stark contrasts to each other. Wisconsin ranks eighth among the states in teacher salaries; Mississippi ranks 50th. Wisconsin ranks 12th among the states in per-pupil expenditures; Mississippi ranks 50th. Not surprisingly, Wisconsin graduates more than 82 percent of its high school students, while Mississippi graduates 6 percent (Hodgkinson 1985).

I learned very early in life that not much worth having comes without some cost. For my part, I would gladly forego all of the business-sponsored "Adopt-a-School" programs and all of the free business propaganda from McDonald's, J.C. Penney, General Motors, and so forth, disguised as objective fact and wrapped in so-called curriculum materials on nutrition, consumer education, and environmental education (Harty 1979). I think it would be better to have enough tax dollars to see to it that no public school is an "orphan" in the first place, and that each school has enough tax dollars to choose the best available curriculum materials for our students.

Before educators jump on the "business climate" bandwagon, it may be wise to consider that, in some instances, what is *good* for business may be *bad* for public education.

Linking School Performance to Social Performance

To a certain extent, this tendency has been present in American society since the establishment of common schools. The belief that public schools are the conveyor belt of American social mobility is one of the most powerful myths in American culture. This myth persists despite the fact that the position and relative size of the social classes in the United States have remained virtually unchanged in this century. It persists despite the fact that the schools which are supposed to provide equality of opportunity for every American child have vastly different resources. For example, a Milwaukee County school district serving the affluent north-shore suburbs spends more than 50 percent more per pupil than a working-class district in southern Milwaukee County (*The Milwaukee Journal* 1986).

Do the working-class parents in southern Milwaukee County value education less than their well-heeled fellow citizens to the north? I think not. Indeed, if their communities are characteristic of similar working-class communities across the nation, they may well be devoting a higher percentage of their income to support public schools than are the wealthier folks on the north shore. It's just that they have less money.

Given their belief in the impact of schools, it is hardly surprising that citizens turn on the schools when U.S. society doesn't deliver on its promises. I can't say I blame them, since they are egged on by so-called opinion leaders who profit mightily by keeping things the way they are. Someone might ask those who decry the lack of excellence in U.S. schools why they have been

such miserable failures at producing jobs for American workers. Does anyone seriously believe that the American textile industry has collapsed because of a temporary decline in SAT scores?

About one million jobs have been lost in the U.S. since 1980, and about four million have been created. This seems impressive until you realize that the jobs lost were skilled jobs—machinist, pattern maker, steelworker—and that the jobs created for unskilled labor—retail clerk, short-order cook, and keypunch operator, occupations which in some instances pay wages that leave full-time workers below the poverty level (*The Milwaukee Journal* 1986).

The largest single category of new jobs in the next ten years will be building maintenance workers, and only a handful of the fastest-growing high-tech jobs will require a college degree. According to the New World Foundation report, *Choosing Equality:*

> We confront a labor market with the middle dropping out, and with competition growing at every level. Contrary to the human capital theories so optimistically put forward for current education influentials, there will *not* be more room at the top to compensate for the losses in the middle. . . . The labor market of the future cannot be pictured as a bell-shaped curve, but rather as a bottom-heavy hourglass. The emerging top will include only a small, elite strata of well-paid, professional-technical employees, who themselves will face growing problems of skill devaluation and intense competition. . . . On the bottom of the hourglass will be a shrinking number of blue collar workers, faced with a continuous reduction of labor standards. The bottom will also include a growing segment of relatively skilled but low-paid employees in paraprofessional, technical, administrative, and service fields, a large proportion of them women, as well as the traditional secondary workforce of low-skill, low-paid service jobs which are dead-end, unstable, and rapidly expanding. In addition, there will be a swelling pool of structurally unemployed workers, joining the vast reserve of irregular workers and "hard core" unemployed (Bastian et al. 1985, pp. 36-37).

Clearly, measures such as changing high school graduation requirements are not relevant to these problems—yet we are asked to believe they are relevant. If it wasn't so serious, it would be laughable. Is anyone really prepared to draw a relationship between requiring a third year of social studies for high-school students and America's ability to compete in world markets?

Today, the movement which best represents the school performance/social performance ideology is the educational excellence movement. I don't want to detract from the hard-working educators who see to it that their school programs are excellent. I want to suggest, however, that the social *function* of the so-called educational excellence movement has less to do with improving the schools than with making educators and students the scapegoats for our society's failure to provide enough jobs for its people. It does this by using overblown educational rhetoric about excellence to obscure the political decision to withdraw public funds for human services.

No one opposes educational excellence. However, educators who argue for educational excellence without commenting on those aspects of current federal social policy which intensify educational inequities and strangle worthwhile educational programs for lack of funds put themselves (perhaps unknowingly) in the service of a reactionary political program that will ultimately undermine their best efforts to improve our nation's schools.

In a biting article entitled "Huffing and Puffing and Blowing the Schools Excellent" in *Phi Delta Kappan,* Susan Ohanian describes the situation this way:

> The good gray managers of the U.S., the fellows who gave us Wonder Bread, the Pinto, hormone-laden beef wrapped in styrofoam, and *People* magazine—not to mention acid rain, the Kansas City Hyatt, $495 hammers, and political campaigns—are now loudly screaming that we teachers should mend our slothful ways and get back to excellence. I would invite the corporate leaders, the politicians, and the professorial consultants to climb down from their insular glass towers before casting any more stones of censure at, or advice about, my lack of excellence in the classroom. Life in the 80s is complicated. All of us are, in Thomas Hardy's words, "people distressed by events they did not cause." There is no reason for teachers alone to shoulder the blame. . . .
>
> The various commissions and task forces on educational excellence seem to exemplify one of those laws of human nature: you can tell what a community thinks of you by the committees you aren't asked to join. All this education commission razzle-dazzle is nothing new; it constitutes just one more in a long histrionic string of repudiations of teacher savvy and sensitivity. When national leaders decide that it's time to find out what's going on in the schools, they convene a panel of auto dealers and their fellow Rotarians. . . .
>
> As things now stand, the U.S. would be better served if these commissions and task forces developed the master plan for getting rid of astro-turf and saving the spotted bat, a species as endangered as the science teacher. The education community is ill-served by their unilateral advice pacts. Yet one can't help but wonder why our corporate brethren don't go off and figure out how to run an airline or a steel mill. . . .
>
> I wonder if concerned commission members and community leaders have any notion of just how debilitating it is for teachers, having figured out what to teach and even how to teach it, to then be forced to beg, borrow and steal—and mostly do without—basic supplies. . . . I know a lot of teachers who would cheerfully give up their copy of the reports on excellence for a ream of paper, a handful of No. 2 pencils, or a box of staples that fit the stapler (Ohanian 1985, pp. 316-317).

The Growth of American Nationalism

I want to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. In doing so, I draw on George Orwell's "Notes on Nationalism." By patriotism I mean a devotion to the United States and to our way of life, and a belief that it is, perhaps, the best way of life in the whole world—without the wish to force it on any other people. By nationalism I mean the belief that human beings can

be classified like insects and confidently labelled good and bad, and the placing of the United States above good and evil. To explain it in terms of two current heroes of our pop culture, the difference between patriotism and nationalism is the difference between Bruce Springsteen and Rambo.

I've always thought that slogans such as "America—love it or leave it" or "My country right or wrong" were unpatriotic. Unpatriotic because such slogans seem to be saying that the United States is weakened by the very thing that I believe makes us so strong—the right of free citizens to criticize their government when they believe it is wrong and to work to change its policies. In other words, I believe patriots are required to be critics, whereas nationalists are required to be obedient, true believers.

Since nationalism and militarism go hand-in-hand, I see real cause for alarm in the amount of time that American children now spend wathing and playing with toys the likes of Voltron, Gobots, Transformers, and G.I. Joe, which project strongly nationalistic and militaristic values. According to the *Christian Science Monitor:*

> Since September [1985] the weekday-afternoon airwaves have been peppered with half-hour television cartoons featuring war toys—produced by the toy manufacturers themselves for the express purpose of selling more toys. . . .
>
> In itself, the toy-and-entertainment tie-in is nothing new. Plenty of American adults spent their formative years wearing Superman sweatshirts and carrying Peanuts lunchpails. What's new here is the cynical manipulation of the child's love of cartoons for the purpose of selling toys—and the flat-out equation of deadly force with child's play. . . .
>
> According to National Coalition on Television Violence studies: The nation's supply of war-cartoon programming beamed out to the 3-to-11-year-old group has grown from 1.5 hours a week in 1982 to 27 hours a week in 1985. In 1986, when the 10 current war cartoons are joined by another 6 already in production, there will be 42 hours a week. . . .
>
> The average war cartoon features 41 acts of violence per hour, with an attempted murder every 2 minutes. The most violent show, 'G.I. Joe,' doubles the average with 84 acts of violence per hour. . . .
>
> The average child will see 800 war toy commercials this year and watch some 250 episodes of war cartoons. That's the equivalent of 22 days in a school room. . . .
>
> According to Professor Charles W. Turner of the University of Utah, whose research has been largely on the effect of firearms on adult behavior, several studies (including one he conducted) seem to show a convincing link between playing with war toys and exhibiting aggressive behavior—hyperactivity, kicking, biting, punching, and general rule breaking. . . .
>
> We need to re-think our national willingness to tolerate oversimplified, black-and-white thinking. . . .
>
> These cartoons are teaching our children to think of the enemy as repugnant, loathsome, deserving of hatred, and subhuman. And the only method of problem-solving and dealing with the enemy in every one of these cartoons is . . . physical force and military weaponry (Kidder 1985, p. 23).

But can we really hold the toy manufacturers solely accountable for their desire to cash in on our national obsession with weapons? Is it surprising in

an era in which advertising in the mass media has been virtually deregulated by the federal government to find the air waves filled with violent cartoons?

Do we have the moral standing to lecture children on cooperation and the peaceful resolution of their conflicts while so much of our national pride, wealth, and ingenuity is devoted to producing weapons of mass destruction? Isn't it time we asked ourselves if we really need to spend:

$4.8 billion for Strategic Defense Initiative research,
$3.9 billion for F-16 Falcon Air Force fighter planes,
$3.5 billion for F/A-18 Hornet Navy fighter planes,
$3.1 billion for Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missiles,
$2.6 billion for the DDG-51 destroyer program,
$2.4 billion for the SSN-688 attack submarine program,
$2.3 billion for F-15 Eagle Air Force fighter planes,
$2.2 billion for M-1 tanks,
$2.1 billion for the GG-47 Aegis cruiser program,
$2 billion for the C-5B Galaxy transport plane program,
$1.8 billion for MX missiles
$1.7 billion for the Trident nuclear-missile submarine program,
$1.4 billion for the Midgetman ballistic missile program,
$1.4 billion for AH-64 attack helicopters,
$1.2 billion for Bradley fighting vehicles,
$1.1 billion for Patriot surface-to-air missiles (*The New York Times,* 1986).

And this list only represents the most costly of the *unclassified* weapons systems. Add to that another $8.6 billion for weapons the government classifies as secret and will not tell us about (*The New York Times* 1986). Mind you, I am talking about only *one* fiscal year—1987.

Quite apart from other considerations, the amount of money devoted to war production is probably harmful to our economy. It employs a relatively small number of highly trained scientists, engineers, and technicians to make products that everyone hopes will never be used, while the Japanese, the Germans, the Koreans, and so forth produce TV sets and compact disc players.

Decisions about the economic and social costs of the militarization of our culture are too important to be left to the so-called armaments experts, to economic gurus, or to politicians. National security involves much more than weapons.

At the moment, the vision of America in the year 2000 as a Burger King restaurant staffed by college graduates earning the minimum wage and surrounded by nuclear missiles seems all too possible for my taste.

Is this what winning the race to the future means?

It would be understandable if one were discouraged by the social trends I have discussed. Withdrawal into the schoolhouse in order to devote oneself to the day-in, day-out details of life in school is not without its allure. After all, something always needs doing.

But it would, I believe, be a mistake to withdraw. We cannot escape our responsibility for the world we turn over to our students.

None of the trends that I have described represents a natural force such as the sun coming up in the morning--each of them is the result of political decisions made by human beings. They *can* be changed.

However, the time is long since past when we, as educators, can comfort ourselves with the belief that if we teach our children to think critically, to support and encourage one another, and to take an active role in decisions about their lives, that they will make the world better when they grow up.

Children need role models.

If we want to teach our students the "American way," then the time has come for us as individuals and as a profession to return to the basics and to show our children what well-informed and active citizenship in a democracy looks like. If *we* don't believe we can make a difference, why should our students believe that *they* can?

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CHAPTER TWO

Tracking: Beliefs, Practices, and Consequences

Jeannie Oakes

NEARLY ALL SCHOOLS TRACK. SCHOOLS EVERYWHERE ORGANIZE INSTRUCTION BY DIVIDing students into groups that appear to have similar aptitudes, achievement levels, or future plans. Given the inevitable diversity of student populations, tracking is seen as the primary way to address individual needs and to cope with individual differences. It was not always so.

Tracking became standard practice in turn-of-the-century America with the spread of compulsory schooling laws, the proliferation of publicly supported high schools, and the influx of immigrants and newly freed blacks into northern cities. A heated debate occupied the educational agenda and public interest for nearly two decades over how curriculum should be organized in schools confronted with greater numbers and unprecedented diversity. Deliberations by school leaders and boards of education were quickly augmented, and largely supplanted by, the arguments of university presidents, industrialists, labor union leaders, and social scientists. Controversies centered on

Author's note: The material in this chapter is more fully explored in *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

the nature of human abilities and the proper functions of schooling. Then, as now, the schooling debate was as much social as educational. The search for instructional strategies was heavily layered with a strong sense of schools' social responsibility. Tracking emerged as an educational response to a society in crisis.

In the following pages I argue that tracking has been both an educational and a social error. Rather than ameliorating the problems that mushrooming industrialization, urbanization, and immigration brought to turn-of-the-century schools, tracking has exacerbated the difficulties. Further, tracking forces upon schools an active role in perpetuating social, economic, and political inequalities. Tracking contributes to mediocre schooling for most secondary students and erects obstacles to the future opportunities of those least advantaged in the American social order—poor and minority children.

To make this argument, I pursue the answers to several questions: (1) What is tracking? (2) What assumptions underlie current tracking and grouping practices? (3) What are the educational effects of tracking, and whose interests are served by them? (4) How did tracking emerge historically as the reasonable answer to student diversity? (5) What might it take for schools to reconsider their tracking practices? This critical scrutiny is made possible by bringing together years of research on tracking and data collected in *A Study of Schooling* on school practices in a national sample of schools (Goodlad 1984, Oakes 1985). It is intended to reopen the debate and to provoke among educators serious reconsideration of tracking as a socially and educationally responsible school practice.

What Is Tracking?

Tracking separates students into high ability, average ability, and low-ability classes; into academic, college preparatory, general, and vocational curriculums. Often students are grouped according to their scores on aptitude or achievement tests. Usually teachers' and counselors' estimates of what students have already learned and their predictions of how much they are likely to learn in the future help determine what group students are in. Often, in senior high school, students are placed in groups depending on their post-secondary destination—what the school expects them to do in the future. Sometimes senior high students themselves are asked to help decide which groups they will be in.

Many schools claim they don't track students, but it's a rare school that has no mechanism for sorting students for instruction. In *A Study of Schooling,* 37 of the 38 schools we studied tracked students for instruction in at least some subjects (Goodlad 1984). At the elementary level, we found that students are nearly always separated for instruction in what are considered the

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5. Based on their group assignments and the accompanying expectations for school performance, students at various track levels experience schools very differently.

What Assumptions Underlie Tracking?

On the most obvious and conscious level, most schools track students because they believe it is best for them. Tracking, like most school practices, is a well-intentioned effort to act on knowledge about student aptitude and instructional practice. Most educators would find it unconscionable to track for any other reason. But, like a number of school practices, tracking appears to be one of those well-intentioned practices based not so much on *knowledge* about teaching and student learning, but on taken-for-granted assumptions. These assumptions are rarely subjected to critical scrutiny if, in fact, they are ever questioned at all.

What are the assumptions underlying tracking? First, and clearly most important, school practitioners generally assume that tracking promotes students' achievement—that all students will have academic needs met best when they are learning in groups of students with similar capabilities or prior achievement. Fundamental views of human capabilities underlie this assumption, including the belief that students' capacities to master schoolwork are so disparate that they require different and separate schooling experiences.

The extreme position contends that some students, in fact, just can't learn. Grouping is seen as the only appropriate means to accommodate these differences. That slow or less capable students will suffer emotional as well as educational damage from daily contact with brighter peers is a second assumption underlying tracking. Lowered self-concepts and negative attitudes toward learning are widely considered consequences of mixed-ability grouping for slower learners. Also widely held is the assumption that group placements can be made both accurately and fairly. And finally, most teachers and administrators contend that homogeneous grouping greatly eases the teaching task. This assumption is grounded in the belief that when groups are formed the range of differences among students is narrowed sufficiently to permit whole-class instruction organized around a common set of learning objectives, a single teaching strategy, common learning tasks, and universally applied criteria for success and rewards.

Little evidence exists to support any of these assumptions. A great many studies have been conducted into the effects of tracking and student learning. Despite many inconsistencies in the work (and, frankly, the poor quality of some of it), taken together little support emerges for the relationship between tracking and achievement (Calfee and Brown 1979, Esposito 1973, Findlay and Bryan 1971, Froman 1981, NEA 1968, Persell 1977, Rosenbaum

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gather specific information about what students were being taught, how teachers carried out instruction, what classroom relationships were like, and how involved in learning students seemed to be. By studying tracked classes themselves, we hoped we might begin to explain why tracking has the effects that it does and how practitioners' good intentions for students have such negative consequences.

To discover how track levels were alike and different, we selected a representative group of classes at each level. We settled on nearly 300 English and mathematics classes at 25 secondary schools. The classes represented (in relatively equal numbers) high, average, and low tracks, and heterogeneous classes. We used several sources of information about these English and math classes; teachers and students completed extensive questionnaires; teachers were interviewed; and teachers put together packages of materials for us about their classes, including lists of the topics and skill they taught, the textbooks they used, and the ways they evaluated student learning. Many teachers included samples of their lesson plans, worksheets, and tests. Trained observers sat in all of the classrooms recording what students and teachers were doing, including their interactions.

In all three areas we studied—curriculum content, instructional quality, and classroom climate—we found remarkable and disturbing differences among the classes at different track levels. There were differences in (1) students' access to knowledge, (2) their classroom instructional opportunities, and (3) their classroom climates.

Access to Knowledge. In the area of content, we found considerable differences in the kinds of knowledge students had access to and in the intellectual processes they had opportunities to develop. For example, students in high-track English classes were exposed to content that might be called "high-status knowledge." It was knowledge that is required for use in college. High-track students studied standard works of literature, both classic and modern. They studied the characteristics of literary genre and analyzed literary elements. These students were expected to do a great deal of expository writing, both thematic essays and reports based on library research. They learned the vocabulary that would boost their scores on college entrance exams. To the extent that students were expected to do critical thinking and problem solving, it was high-track students who had such opportunities (although we found too little critical thinking everywhere).

Low-track English classes, on the other hand, rarely, if ever, encountered these kinds of knowledge, nor were they expected to learn these skills. Prominent in low-track classes was the teaching of reading skills, generally by means of workbooks, kits, and "young adult" fiction. They wrote simple paragraphs, completed worksheets on language usage, and practiced filling out job applications and other forms. Their learning tasks were either memorization or required low-level comprehension.

The differences in mathematics content followed much the same pattern. High-track classes focused primarily on math concepts, low track on basic computational skills and math facts.

These differences in knowledge access have important social and educational consequences for students. Much of the curriculum of low-track classes was likely to "lock" students out because it was taught at the expense of other important concepts and skills. Since so much was omitted from their curriculum, these students were denied the knowledge that would allow them to move into higher track classes or to be successful if they got there. These kinds of locking-out differences were noticed in some middle schools as early as 6th grade.

Opportunities to Learn. We also looked carefully at two classroom conditions that can powerfully influence how much students will learn: instructional time and teaching quality. The marked differences we found across our data led us to conclude that students in higher tracks were provided greater opportunities to learn than students in low tracks. For example, all of our data on classroom time led to the same conclusion: Students in high tracks get more; students in low tracks get less. Teachers of high-track classes set aside more class time for learning; and more actual class time was observed to be spent on learning activities. High-track students were expected to spend more time doing homework. Fewer high-track students were observed to be off-task. More of them reported that learning took up most of their class time, rather than behavioral problems, socializing, or noninstructional class routines.

The instructional environments of high-track classes were more often characterized by a whole set of teacher behaviors likely to enable learning. High-track teachers were more enthusiastic, and their instruction was clearer. They used strong criticism or ridicule less frequently than did teachers of low-track classes. Classroom tasks were more highly organized and of a greater variety in high-track classes, and grades were more relevant to student learning.

These differences in learning opportunities portray a fundamental schooling irony: Those students who need more time to learn appear to be getting less; those students who have the most difficulty learning are least exposed to the sort of high-quality instruction that seems to best facilitate learning.

Classroom Climate. We were interested in studying classroom climates at various track levels because we were convinced that warm and positive feelings in class are more than just a nice accompaniment to learning. We were convinced that when trusting relationships exist among teachers and students in classrooms, time and energy are freed up for learning. Where these relationships do not exist, students spend a great deal of time and energy establishing less productive relationships with others and interfering with the teacher's instructional agenda. In those classrooms, less learning is likely to occur.

The data about the *Study of Schooling* classrooms permitted us to investigate three important aspects of classroom climate: relationships between teachers and students, relationships among the students themselves, and the intensity of student involvement. And once again, we saw a distressing pattern of advantages for high-track classes, disadvantages for low.

In high-track classes students saw their teachers as more concerned about them and less punitive. Teachers spent less time on student behavior problems and encouraged their students to become independent, questioning, and critical thinkers. In low-track classes teachers were seen as less concerned and more punitive. They emphasized matters of discipline and behavior. Teachers of low-track classes often mentioned such things as "following directions," "respecting my position," "punctuality," and "take a directive order" as among the five most important things they wanted their class to learn during the year.

Similar differences were found in the relationship students established with each other in class. Students in low-track classes were far more likely to report that, "Students in this class are unfriendly to me," or, "I often feel left out of class activities." They reported high levels of disruption and arguing in class. Generally, they seemed to like each other less than did students in high-track classes. Not surprisingly, given the differences in relationships, students in high-track classes appeared to be much more involved in their classwork. Students in low-track classes were more apathetic, reporting more often that they didn't care about what went on, and that failing wouldn't bother most of the students in their class.

Once again, our data on classroom climate in various track levels revealed a pattern of classroom experiences that seems to enhance the learning possibilities for those students already disposed to do well. Correspondingly, we saw even more clearly a pattern likely to inhibit the learning of those at the bottom. Again, we found that those who needed most help got the least.

These data show clear instructional advantages for high-achieving students, and clear disadvantages for low. The quality of the average student's experiences fell between these two extremes, although they were usually more like those of students in high tracks than low. Taken together, the findings begin to suggest why students in low-track classes are likely to suffer because of their placements. It would be a serious mistake to attribute these differences to consciously mean-spirited actions by school practitioners. Obviously, what teachers decide to teach and the type of instruction they provide are greatly influenced by the students they interact with. It is unlikely that students are passive participants in the tracking processes. Undoubtedly, their self-perceptions, attitudes, interests, and behaviors help produce tracking effects. Thus groups of students who, by standards of conventional wisdom, seem to behave as if they are less able and eager to learn are very likely to affect a teacher's willingness or even ability to provide the best possible learning opportunities.

Finally, consider the obvious conclusion: Students who are exposed to less content and lower teaching quality will not have their academic achievement enhanced. This is exactly what happens when low-achieving students are grouped together for instruction. These data show a frightening pattern of curricular inequalities. While such patterns are disturbing under any circumstances, they become particularly so given the prevailing pattern of student placements: disproportionate percentages of poor and minority students in the low-track classes. A self-fulfilling prophecy can be seen to work *institutionally*: Tracking is a school structure that teaches and reinforces that those not defined as the best are *expected* to do less well. Few students and teachers can defy those expectations.

Added to the day-to-day differences that students experience are the long-term consequences of tracking. Tracks are very inflexible, even when school practitioners do not intend them to be. Students rarely move from one track to another, and when they do it's most often to a lower track. The data on the content students are exposed to helps explain this. Children who are placed in low groups early in elementary school are most likely to be placed in low-ability classes in junior high. Low-track students in junior high are nearly always placed in noncollege-preparatory tracks in high school. The net effect of tracking is that students identified as having the greatest educational difficulty can experience a decidedly lower quality of education for their entire school careers. The effects don't end with schooling. Students in high tracks have substantial educational, social, and economic advantages as adults. These effects have serious implications in terms of race and class, since poor and minority children suffer these consequences in disproportionate numbers.

A reasonable question at this point is whether these differences in classroom experiences are inevitable. Fortunately, 73 of the mathematics and English classes we studied were heterogeneous, or mixed-track classes. What we found in these classes led us to some hopeful speculations about alternatives to the negative consequences of tracking. We found that 70 percent of these classes were exposed to knowledge that was quite similar to that of high-track classes. In the quality of their classroom learning opportunities—time for learning and teaching quality—heterogeneous classes were considerably more advantaged than low tracks. Further, in 86 percent of the classes that mixed slow students with others, markedly more positive relationships among teachers and students were found. Fifty-six percent of these mixed classes were among the group of classes reporting the friendliest relationships among peers; nearly all of the others were very much like average-track classes—generally quite positive places to be.

These data about heterogeneous classrooms should not lead us to believe that all would be solved by simply mixing students up and leaving everything else in schools the same. That is an unlikely scenario: Neither would it be likely to be effective. What these data provide is a hypothesis that

school reorganization featuring a common curriculum and classroom heterogeneity might equalize students' school experiences in several important ways. These data provide evidence that curricular inequality is not inevitable.

How Did Tracking Become Common Practice?

In tracking systems we can observe troublesome cycles that do not appear to be inevitable, patterns that run counter to the best intentions of school practitioners. Understanding why tracking profoundly shapes American secondary schools requires historical inquiry.

Tracking emerged as the central organizational principle of secondary schools with the expansion of free secondary education at the turn of the century. It resulted from the triumph of particular beliefs about students and schools. These beliefs emerged from the interaction of events such as immigration, urbanization, and new social thought (social Darwinism and scientific management, for example).

The Ideology of Individual Differences. The intellectual, moral, and even biological differences among turn-of-the-century adolescents were thought to be vast and immutable. A misguided social Darwinism posited that darker-skinned, recently arrived immigrant youth were on a fundamentally lower rung of the evolutionary ladder. Consequently, potential for school learning was seen to differ enormously among students from different social and ethnic groups. Therefore, the curriculum suitable for a more advanced group (white, native-stock, Protestants, for the most part) was seen as entirely inappropriate for those of lesser capabilities (predominantly immigrants from southern and eastern Europe). Lewis Terman wrote, for example, "Their dullness seems to be racial. . . . Children of this group should be segregated in special classes. . . . They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers" (Terman 1923, p. 28). These views did not go uncontested, but the emerging organizational pattern—tracking—clearly reflected their acceptance.

Schooling Purposes. Terman's statement also supported the emerging belief that a critical role of public secondary schooling was to prepare and certify students for work. For the first time, students who would not become scholars, professionals, or gentlemen were attending secondary schools. The traditional academic curriculum seemed a mismatch, particularly for immigrant youth. Industrial employers needed immigrants socialized with the work habits and attitudes required to "fit in" as factory workers (proper deportment, punctuality, willingness to be supervised and managed) and with technical skills. These requirements of industry coincided with the curricular vacuum in schools. The curriculum was differentiated with tracks leading to further education for some, industrial work for others. One school admin-

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schooling. This is surely a testimony to the power and complexity of the contextual conditions of tracking.

Typically, practitioners respond to empirical findings on tracking with ambivalence. The negative processes and outcomes for low-track students are almost universally recognized and lamented. Conclusions that able students will likely continue to do well even if they are placed in heterogeneous groups are almost universally distrusted. Research conclusions such as these conflict with their experiences. The feared negative effects of mixed-ability grouping on the achievement of the highest-achieving students are understandable because, under typical tracking systems, clear school advantages do accrue to these students. Research findings that high-achieving students can learn equally well in heterogeneous settings simply don't account for the noticeable, concrete advantages that practitioners, students, and parents can see high-track students receiving in schools.

The point is that, where tracking exists, the top tracks offer more to the students in them; it is difficult to give up that particular "bird in hand" for promises that these students would do "no worse" if tracking were stopped. Additionally, since parents and teachers of high-track students often comprise the most visible, vocal, and respected school constituencies, the concerns for "all the others" who might benefit are not so fully represented.

Much practical concern centers on the perceived near-impossibility of teaching classes with a wide range of student ability. Maintaining the current secondary school curriculum while accommodating this range is mind-boggling to practitioners already struggling with too many students and ever-increasing expectations. Few practitioners have had extended experiences teaching hetergeneous groups, and they cannot imagine mixing what they know to be two or three distinctly different groups of students and maintaining the high quality of instruction they see high-ability groups now receiving.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers, quick fixes, or staff-development programs ready to cure tracking problems in schools. There *are* promising concepts and strategies for working with heterogeneous groups, including mastery learning (Bloom 1981) and cooperative small-group learning (Slavin 1983), to name just two. But teaching strategies are only one small piece of the assumptions and practices that lock schools into tracking. Seriously considering de-tracking our schools requires dramatically altered assumptions about students, learning, and schools.

Just as tracking assumes that some students can't or won't learn, successful heterogeneity requires the belief that all students can and will. Just as tracking is the logical organization for curriculum built around small sequential segments of skill-based learning, de-tracking probably requires curriculums reconceptualized around organizing concepts and themes. Just as tracking is central to a system prepared to separate winners and losers, to sort and certify students for their adult lives, so schools without tracking must focus on

educational aims, aims to be achieved by all children. Tracking can be reconsidered, but it will require rethinking much of what now happens in school.

The Research and Practice We Need

Asking practitioners to rethink tracking is asking them to virtually reconceptualize all secondary school processes and to entertain the possibility that they work in settings that are contrary to their noblest objectives. Serious thought about reforming tracking practices requires an understanding of both its centrality and complexity.

There is much yet to be learned about how and why teachers decide to conduct instruction in various tracks as they do. Undoubtedly, they are influenced by history and tradition, by school and district guidelines, by standards of common practice, and by perceptions of students' abilities and limitations. But how these influences translate into track-level differences is not clear. There is much to be learned about how students' backgrounds, motivations, peer-group influences, and track labels interact with their curriculum and instructional opportunities to produce track-level differences in achievement and attitudes.

These are appropriate questions for educational research. They are also the very questions that must guide practitioners in their day-to-day conduct of schooling. The issues that underlie school tracking are laden with values, history, and politics; they go far beyond matters of pedagogy and human learning. Empirical research can and increasingly will shed light on tracking processes and effects, and research is likely to generate practical alternatives.

This knowledge is essential. But critical reflection and thoughtful dialogue among practitioners is the necessary precursor to a serious reconsideration or reconstruction of school practice. The historical circumstances and beliefs, the assumptions about students' abilities and the role of schooling, and the standards of common practice that ground tracking, particularly those linked to race and class, must be examined for their relevance to contemporary school events and beliefs. Only when professional educators bring human history and human concerns together with research and theory, can tracking considerations extend beyond the frustrating "Does it work?" question to include issues of "Toward what ends?" and "In whose interests?"

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CHAPTER THREE

Confronting Social Attitudes in Textbooks: The Response and Responsibility of Today's Educator

Steven Selden

What averbal man of the past thought about anything is probably lost forever to historical research, but one can at least discover those ideas to which most Americans were exposed by examining the books they read.

—Ruth Miller Elson,
Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEXTBOOK HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN AT THE CENTER OF THE curriculum. It organized the curriculum and gave it meaning; in many cases it was synonymous with the curriculum itself. During the nineteenth century, for example, the *McGuffy Electric Readers* served in just such an organizing role. Combining literary content with moral imperatives, the McGuffy books transmitted a clearly articulated social message. Be responsible, be frugal, be punctual, they advised, and you will succeed. To nineteenth-century students, these books taught both syllables and social ideology.[1]

Academic content and social values are once again in a central position in educational discussions. In recent years fundamentalist groups have attacked textbooks that present "secular humanist" positions, and they have put substantial pressure on textbook publishers to reflect their views of science and social studies. There is educational danger in this situation. Such pressure can lead to a curriculum that teaches children *what* to think rather than *how* to think. For a democratic society that depends on its schools for its continuing political strength, this pressure must be resisted. Curriculums must be rigorous as well as intellectually honest. When explicit social and political ideologies capture the curriculum and become content, rigor and honesty are threatened.

It is the responsibility of educators to respond to such pressure and to join in public professional debate about textbook content. And they have. For example, People for the American Way, a nonprofit public-interest group that lobbies for quality education, recently sponsored a substantive analysis of social studies textbooks. When reviewing current American history texts, their panel of nationally respected educators reported that the improvements in these books have been "dramatic." The only caveat in this positive review dealt with the treatment of religion in American life. The reviewers found that the topic was generally ignored by the texts.

In fact, the same observation has been made from a variety of positions on the political spectrum. This situation presents educators with the opportunity to assure that future texts reflect a rigorous and honest perspective on the religion question. Once again, it will be critical for educators to help the public to differentiate between curricular materials which teach children

[1] For an excellent discussion of the nineteenth century textbook as a transmitter of selected cultural values see Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

about religion and those which teach young people *how to be* religious. The former task is well within the responsibility of public education; the latter is within the province of family and religious organizations. There is also every reason to believe that the positions of atheists and agnostics should also be taught *about* in such a curriculum. Here one can begin to see the ways in which such debates can become politically volatile. Educators cannot ignore such heated issues. It will be their responsibility to bring *reason* to discussions in which competing groups put explicit pressure upon the curriculum. As noted above, differentiating between *about's* and *how-to-be's* can be a most helpful first step.

It is not surprising to find that the textbook has been under pressure from political and religious groups. It is also not surprising that professional educators, with their responsibility for maintaining a rigorous curriculum, have joined in the debate and have positively influenced the quality of education in America's schoolrooms.

But these political pressures need not be so explicit; they can be tacit and can influence content areas other than the social studies. When these pressures influence the hard or natural sciences, they are even more difficult to counteract, for one does not expect to find such political content in the sciences. The case study that follows considers the presence of social ideology in just such an unanticipated place—a biology textbook.[2] The texts are not new. They are more than 40 years old and are no longer in use. But the issues of quality, rigor, and tacit pressure are contemporary. And the investigation is well worth our time, because a careful study of the past can surely help us deal more effectively with our curricular present.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Each is concerned about the presence of social attitudes masquerading as objective curriculum content in the textbook. The first section includes a brief discussion of hereditarian social attitudes found in the geographies of the late nineteenth century classroom. The second section focuses upon the biology textbook of this century's first four decades. Here the analysis focuses on discussions of eugenics in the textbook. Eugenics was the "science" of human improvement through breeding. The analysis reveals a strong hereditarian bias in an overwhelming majority of these texts. The third and final section of this chapter ties these historical analyses to the current scene. Here the discussion focuses upon those who would once again include narrowly defined social messages as curriculum content. This section concludes with specific suggestions and recommendations for action on the part of the professional educator.

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[2] For a useful analysis of the history textbook see Jean Anyon, "Ideology and the United States History Textbooks," *Harvard Educational Review* (August 1979): 361–386.

Early Geographies and Social Differentiation by Race

For the authors of many of the early geographies the issues of human *races* and their differences were highly important. By tying these differences to attainment, whether individual or national, the texts served to describe and legitimize existing social and political arrangements. Today we would call this view racist. For example, to the authors of one geography, the world's people could be divided into three unequal racial groups, white, yellow, and black, with the Caucasian at the top of the racial pyramid. To the readers of the *Natural Complete Geography,* the message was straightforward: race and civilization were linked together. The authors note that the lesser of the world's people include "the yellow race . . . about as numerous as . . . the white race . . . but not so highly civilized," and "the black race . . . the least civilized of all the races."[3] And in the section on human progress they conclude that, "the greater part of the Mediterranean type, and especially its great Aryan branch, have continued to improve, and are still making inventions and discoveries; and [that] these people form the enlightened nations" of the day.[4]

For the Anglo readers of this text, these observations would be both self-serving and reassuring. Race would determine success, and they were from an advanced racial group. But race did not survive as a key explanatory factor for human differences in the biology textbooks of the twentieth century. In its place the texts presented the concept of inherited characteristics which ran in families of differing social worth. Here it was *not one's race but one's family or inherited traits* which determined social location. As with the geographies, it was nature that mattered. It was nature or heredity, now in the form of traits and families, which continued to be of greatest importance in the text's recommendations for human improvement.

Yet in the early twentieth century the evidence for the primacy of heredity in human betterment was far from clear. As Leon Kamin notes, even today our most compelling studies in the nature/nurture debate—studies of twins—"do not and cannot separate genetic and environmental variables, and the data cannot be unambiguously interpreted."[5] This was equally true in the early twentieth century. But many of the biology texts did not reflect this ambiguity; instead they reflected their authors' strong hereditarian attitudes. As a consequence, the poor and disenfranchised, those with limited access to America's cultural capital, were judged as members of low-quality families

[3] Jacques W. Redway and Russell Hinman, *Natural Complete Geography: Kentucky Series* (New York: American Book Company, 1912), p. 28.

[4] Ibid., p. 28.

[5] Leon J. Kamin, "Is Crime in the Genes? The Answers May Depend on Who Chooses What Evidence," *Scientific American,* February 1986, p. 24.

which were the repositories of poor inheritance. In this way human social inequalities were justified in what appeared to be scientific terms.

The poor and their inherited traits, the volumes appear to say, will always be with us, and they needed to be controlled. During the early part of this century there were political, social, and seemingly scientific organizations interested in just such control. Classified under the general heading of the Popular Eugenics Movement, they organized hereditarian social attiudes and influenced the biology textbook. Before reviewing the texts in question, let us first consider a brief history of eugenics.

Eugenics

Francis Galton coined the term eugenics in the early 1880s. He viewed heredity as of greatest importance in the process of human improvement, and he proposed programs of selective breeding as the most effective route to human betterment. His ideas were strongly supported by American eugenicists, who used them as a rallying point for their social action programs. The Popular Eugenics Movement in the United States was remarkably effective. Promising progressive reform and social control, the movement realized successes in programs of human sterilization, immigration restriction, and education.

A central theme of the eugenicists was human *inequality.* In its most virulent form the theme was racist, as it proposed that individuals differed in racial worth and that social policies should reflect this fact. One early eugenicist even went so far as to identify a race of chronic paupers and to recommend its exclusion from society. As extreme and unwarranted as these ideas may seem today, they were accepted by many members of the literate public during the first three decades of this century. It was not until the collapse of the world economy in the early 1930s that such hereditarian positions were generally called into question. International political changes and an awareness of scientific genetics discredited racist eugenics, but for millions trapped in Europe by eugenically motivated immigration quotas, these changes were too late.

There was another eugenics, equally hereditarian, that can be identified during this period. It also focused on the theme of human differences, but it substituted merit for race in the equation. For many educational professionals this apparently color-blind approach rationalized calls for a eugenics of intellect and character. It was this latter form of eugenics that proved to be most pernicious and most enduring. Long after the racist form lost its popularity, more moderate eugenics played a role in programs for rationalizing society in terms of hereditary merit. While the poor would no longer be considered a race, their social position would be explained in terms of their poor inheritance and would be found just.

In both forms then, eugenics was to serve as an apology for the status quo, and organizations were formed explicitly to maintain the existing social hierarchy. For example, when Madison Grant described the Galton Society he saw it as an organization "with a governing body, self elected and self perpetuating, and very limited in numbers, and also confined to native Americans, who are anthropologically, socially, and physically sound, no Bolsheviki need apply."[6]

While not the first organization to advocate eugenics, its message was clear; both the Galton Society and the Galtonian society it desired were to be alike. They were to be class and race biased. And the eugenicists wanted to educate young people to their vision of the hereditarian truths of eugenics. They saw a central role for schooling in their plan for progressive improvement that encompassed both the content of the curriculum and the form of educational institutions. The history of eugenics and American education included in this chapter suggests that the science curriculum was a recipient of their interest, efforts, and successes.

Eugenics in the Biology Textbooks: Differentiation by Biological Merit

In the 35 years between 1914 and 1949, numerous biology texts for high school students were published. Of these many volumes, 40 have been selected from the National Institute of Education's archive for review. It is to these 40 texts alone that the research summarized here speaks. Given our prior knowledge of eugenics and the textbook, the findings are quite remarkable.

Eugenics did indeed enter the curriculum. Of the 40 volumes reviewed, 37 include eugenics in their treatment of biology. Only three volumes, on the other hand, either did not include eugenics or did not support it.

A second issue considered in this review was the way in which eugenics was made legitimate in young readers' texts. One approach suggested that human traits (from intelligence to wandering to prostitution) "ran" in families. This is essentially the argument presented in more than two-thirds of the biology texts considered. The books presented superior families such as the Bachs, Darwins, and Edwards as being threatened by inferior types such as the Kallikaks, Jukes, and Pineys, and they recommended corrective social policies.

Of the numerous policies open to the eugenicist of the period, selective breeding was one of the most popular. More than three-quarters of the volumes recommended increasing the birthrates of those they judged superior, while nearly one-half of the volumes supported restricting marriages among inferior types. As one can see from this analysis, eugenics deeply

[6] Allen Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 165.

penetrated the biology curriculum. But we can still ask whether these observations and recommendations were based upon social goals or scientific data. In other words, how did the authors of these books implicitly describe science?

Today educators describe science in terms of both content and method, and central to their discussions is the question of evidence. These texts legitimized programs of human breeding through the use of *proxies*. That is, having no way to identify "high quality" genes, the texts substituted the family to which an individual belonged, or his or her social performance, as a proxy for genetic value. If someone did well or was "well born," the texts seemed to say, then they must be of superior stock. Let them breed. The point is that these authors had no compelling biological evidence to supply. Given the ambiguity of the data (after all proxies are not genes, and one cannot separate nature and nurture) the authors' commitment to hereditarian explanations was just that. It was a socially informed and socially driven commitment. It was not strong science. It was not compelling evidence. Yet these proxies were presented in support of eugenics. If there is social inequality, the texts explain, it is justified by biological inequality. Biology explains existing hierarchical social arrangements, and social location is simply a mapping of biological inequalities. Further, such inequalities are just. Attempts to equalize them deny the laws of natural science.

Yet there is a serious flaw in this argument. If social location is a reflection of class, race, or gender, then recommendations to breed from the "best" are reflections of these "environmental" forces and not of biological merit. In a social order based on class, gender, and race such recommendations are, as Daniel Kevles notes, "freighted with class bias."[7] And indeed that is exactly what one finds in the analysis of these textbooks.

Eugenics in the Classroom: The Biology Texts Reviewed

The following section presents an analysis of nine volumes from the NIE collection. They were selected because they are both representative of the 40 volumes reviewed and, in the case of the books by Hunter, they indicate the continuity of the eugenicists' message. These are not individual volumes out of context. They reflect the continuing presence of eugenics in the science curriculum for a period of three and one-half decades. The volumes in this case study include:

George Hunter, *A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems* (New York: American Book Company, 1914).

George Hunter, *New Civic Biology: Presented in Problems* (New York: American Book Company, 1926).

[7] Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 176.

George Hunter, *Problems in Biology* (New York: American Book Company, 1931).

George Hunter and Walter G. Whitman, *Science in Our World of Progress* (New York: American Book Company, 1935).

George Hunter, *Life Science: A Social Biology* (New York: American Book Company, 1941).

James E. Peabody and Arthur E. Hunt, *Biology and Human Welfare* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924).

John W. Ritchie, *Biology in Human Affairs* (New York: World Book Company, 1941).

Charles E. Dull, Paul B. Mann, and Phillip G. Johnson, *Modern Science in Man's Progress* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1942).

Michael F. Guyer, *Animal Biology* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948).

A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems (1914). George William Hunter wrote five biology texts published by the American Book Company between 1914 and 1941. The earliest volume, *A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems,* includes a discussion of eugenics. For Hunter this meant "freedom from certain germ diseases which might be handed down to the offspring," including tuberculosis and epilepsy as well as feeble-mindedness and criminality. The latter seriously concerns Hunter, who cites studies of the Jukes and Kallikak families and warns that, "Hundreds of families such as those described above exist today, spreading disease, immorality, and crime to all parts of this country. . . . Largely for them the poorhouse and the asylum exist. They take from society, but they give nothing in return. *They are true parasites.*"[8] Here we see Hunter's social views tainting his science. While the number and location of the poor are empirical realities, identifying them as parasites reflects social attitudes, not science.

New Civic Biology: Presented in Problems (1926). Here Hunter links social efficiency to biology and introduces changes from the earlier volume. For example, the study of environmental reform, which had covered *34 pages* in 1914, now was limited to a *single page* with a section on "choosing a vocation" added to the discussion of inherited traits. Here we can see the utility of eugenics to the social-efficiency educator: A careful identification of inherited traits will allow for a rational social order with one's social location being driven by one's biology. The author reminds his readers, "blood does tell!"[9] and that while "life is made up of our social inheritance or what we *learn* through our *environment* . . . success, after all, depends on our *inheritance.* No one becomes *great* unless he or she has a nervous system of

[8] George W. Hunter, *A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems* (New York: American Book Company, 1914), p. 263, italics added.

[9] George W. Hunter, *New Civic Biology: Presented in Problems* (New York: American Book Company, 1926), p. 401.

superior capacity."[10] We need to remember that in 1926 objective tests of the nervous system were far from conclusive.

Problems in Biology (1931). In the six years since the publication of Hunter's last text, biology had changed, and he kept abreast of those changes, noting that "this mechanism of heredity is not as simple as it seems."[11] He moderates his previous recommendations and notes that "it is clear, then, that experiments which will attempt to separate the genes and make new characters appear in the offspring will be extremely difficult, to say the least."[12] These caveats, however, do not significantly influence Hunter's general discussion of individual improvement. Characters still run in families, sons are like fathers, and wise choices in marriage and vocation, he argues, are still driven by the imperative of biology.

Science in Our World of Progress (1935). Hunter's fourth volume focuses on an integration of science subject matter "written from the pupil viewpoint."[13] Such an integration takes place in the discussion of eugenics. Here the reader is warned that, "if we study . . . certain well known families in this country which have become a burden on society, we find that *breeding* in man . . . must be taken into account."[14] Environmental explanations for human performance are incorrect, the authors imply. "We . . . know," they explain to their 9th grade readers, "that it is not the environment that always causes crime, any more than it is the environment which always conditions an individual's life."[15] The authors note that "Germany [had] laws which allow such persons to be sterilized or rendered incapable of reproduction."[16] A complete analysis of these laws would have revealed considerably more of their political motivation, but the authors include *little* such analysis. Indeed, supporting the Nazi policy on sterilization, they present their position on eugenics: "we must . . . do all we can to have persons of the better stock mate and have children, they instruct their 9th grade charges." This is an issue with international competitive overtones, for "if this country is to succeed," they warn, "we must have brains and ability handed down to the next generation."[17]

Life Science: A Social Biology (1941). Hunter's last text presents the most straightforward articulation of the eugenical theme. Its final unit warns 10th

[10] Ibid., p. 403, italics in original.

[11] George W. Hunter, *Problems in Biology* (New York: American Book Company, 1931), p. 628.

[12] Ibid., p. 628.

[13] George W. Hunter and Walter G. Whitman, *Science in Our World of Progress* (New York: American Book Company, 1935), p. viii.

[14] Ibid., p. 482.

[15] Ibid., p. 483.

[16] Ibid., p. 484.

[17] Ibid., p. 486.

grade readers that "social progress depends upon biology."[18] While environment cannot be discounted in human development, "this is the important fact to remember, there is no real evidence that the environment changes the intelligence of people. Those of low-grade intelligence would do little better under the most favorable conditions possible, *while those of superior intelligence will make good* no matter what handicaps they are given."[19]

Peabody and Hunt, *Biology and Human Welfare* (1924). A review of other biology texts from the NIE archive suggests that Hunter's views were not atypical. Peabody and Hunt also focus upon "the intimate relation of biological science to human welfare."[20] " 'Like produces like', " the authors remind their readers, just as it is "race horses [that] are descended only from other race horses. 'It is blood that tells,' whether in race horses or in human beings."[21] Again, the dual messages of euthenics and eugenics are given, " 'improved environment and training may better the generation already born,' " so work hard, but " 'improved blood will improve every generation to come,' " so marry and breed well.[22] The source of such recommendations was surely from what the authors call "a great movement of the present day known as *Eugenics*," which instructs that, "any permanent improvement of the human race can only come as a result of better heritage."[23]

The text goes on to compare the superior Edwards family and inferior Kallikaks with average family types, and it would not be difficult for the book's adolescent readers to see their future based upon this discussion. For descendants of the Edwards the future holds continued promise for contributions to the "national welfare."[24] For offspring of the Kallikaks a life of institutionalization awaits in which they would be "prevented from transmitting to other generations their physical, mental, and moral weaknesses."[25] Correspondingly, for the middle-class reader, of middling heritage, a life of perseverance and hard work will lead to equally modest accomplishments. It would seem that success in life comes in three flavors. Based upon biological inheritance, one can look forward to a future of excellence, of competence, or of institutionalization.

John Woodside Ritchie, *Biology in Human Affairs* (1941). With his interest in education for social efficiency, John Ritchie strongly recommends that

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[18] George W. Hunter, *Life Science: A Social Biology* (New York: American Book Company, 1941), p. 747.

[19] Ibid., p. 759, italics added.

[20] James E. Peabody and Arthur E. Hunt, *Biology and Human Welfare* (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1924), p. vi, italics in original.

[21] Ibid., p. 542.

[22] Ibid., p. 543.

[23] Ibid., pp. 547–548, italics in original.

[24] Ibid., p. 547.

[25] Ibid., p. 547.

his readers bend to the iron will of biology. Biology, he advises, "more than any other science . . . teaches us to understand ourselves. [It] helps us to see ourselves as we are—to perceive what we can and cannot do and to concentrate on what we can change and improve."[26] "When we understand the world and our own abilities we tend to give up impossible hopes and ambitions and to seek that which is possible for us;" for "the only wise course," he instructs, is "to bow to nature's authority, learn her laws and live in harmony with her decrees. An understanding of biology," he concludes, "helps us see this and to do the things that nature will approve."[27]

In response to his contemporaries who might want a society of equal outcomes, Ritchie warns that such social programs deny the fixed laws of biology. He tells his readers the woeful story that in order "to secure equality of accomplishment in any field of endeavor, the more efficient must be shackled that they may not outrun the less efficient."[28] Yet this does not really describe the inevitable. It merely interprets one set of possible social relations. A set not so much informed by science as by social attitudes.

Dull, Mann, and Johnson, *Modern Science in Man's Progress* (1942). The authors conclude this volume with seven rhetorical questions: Are all persons biologically equal? Are there good family lines? Who were the Kallikaks and the Jukes? What is eugenics? To what extent is eugenics being used today? How much can man really improve himself? What is the goal for each individual?[29]

The answers suggest the authors' position on the legitimacy of eugenics. In response to the query about human equality, the text is direct. Equality in the "eyes of the law" is not the same as biological equality. Given such inequalities, the authors answer that, yes, social traits do appear to run in families, and yes, there are both good and bad family lines. Further, they hold that eugenics is legitimate science. The authors then apply the notion of human variety to a vision of an efficient corporate society. In a society that generates a variety of work settings, "there must be a variety of kinds of individuals to meet these different needs. We need heavy draft horses as well as fast racers; beef cattle as well as good dairy cows; crab apples as well as McIntosh apples."

Having explored differences in the plant and animal worlds, the authors move to human applications. "Among humans," they explain, "great leaders gather devoted followers, worthwhile musicians play to keen listeners, good athletes are applauded by enthusiastic sports fans, and conscientious teachers

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[26] John W. Ritchie, *Biology in Human Affairs* (New York: World Book Company, 1941), p. 31.

[27] Ibid., p. 31.

[28] Ibid., p. 40.

[29] Charles E Dull, Paul B. Mann, and Philip G. Johnson, *Modern Science in Man's Progress* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1942).

have co-operative pupils."[30] Their point is that people are differently endowed as leaders or followers, athletes or fans, players or listeners. Maximize your natural abilities, they recommend, and find your place. By ignoring the fact that these "places" are social, not biological, creations the authors ignore the possibility of social transformation and thereby legitimize existing social relations.

Michael F. Guyer, *Animal Biology* (1948). This post World War II text by the well-known University of Wisconsin biologist Michael F. Guyer introduces practical eugenics in its first chapter as "a subject upon which the very perpetuation of our civilization depends."[31] In the context of his concern for the nation's natural resources, Guyer recommends monitoring the nation's people resources. Animal and plant breeders, Guyer tells the reader, can predict and control future generations, and the same is true for humankind. "In his various strains of plants and animals . . . [the geneticist] can often combine desirable characters or eliminate undesirable ones. And it is now known that human structures and aptitudes, whether they make for man's weal or woe, are subject to the same laws." To these "natural" laws of biology he recommends the control of marriage as a necessary response to the demands of increased genetic knowledge. "In brief, such definite advances in our knowledge of the processes of human heredity are being made that we can no longer refuse to take up the social duties which the known facts thrust upon us."[32] Once again, to know is to serve.

Summarizing the Textbooks

What are the implications of this rendering of biology texts from the NIE's archive? First, we find that eugenics, as much a social movement as a science, was included in biology textbooks during the period spanning the First and Second World Wars. Secondly, social programs of a seemingly anti-democratic tone, programs of selective breeding, were supported by a significant majority of the texts. Further, the argument for human breeding was *infrequently* made in genetic, that is, in scientific, terms. Very few of the texts talked of genes or of chromosomes. Even when such terms were presented, there was no indication of how either had achieved their differential effects.

Surprisingly, there are few direct references to Gregor Mendel, whose work might serve to legitimize the "unit characters" approach to controlled breeding. Indeed, for the great majority of the books, the scientific data supporting selective breeding were studies of family lines, or types, with the Kallikak and Edwards families regularly exemplified. One needs to remember that these early studies of family pedigrees could *not* separate nature from nurture. They could not make a powerful argument for the importance

[30] Ibid., p. 568.
[31] Michael F. Guyer, *Animal Biology* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 14.
[32] Ibid., p. 15.

- By the kind of verbal and nonverbal interactions teachers have with students from different racial and ethnic groups; by the kinds of statements teachers make about different ethnic groups; and by teachers' nonverbal reactions when issues related to ethnic groups are discussed in class. Research by Gay (1974), Rist (1970), and the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1973) indicates that teachers often have more positive verbal and nonverbal interactions with middle-class Anglo students than with ethnic minority and lower-class students.

- How teachers respond to the languages and dialects of students from different ethnic and racial groups. Some research suggests that teachers are often biased against the languages and dialects spoken by students who are members of particular ethnic and racial groups (Saville-Troike 1981).

- Grouping practices used in the school. Research by Mercer (1981) and Samuda (1975) indicates that members of some ethnic groups in the United States are disproportionately placed in lower-ability groups because of their performance on IQ and other standardized aptitude tests that discriminate against these groups because they are normed on middle-class Anglo Americans.

- Power relationships in the schools. Most of the individuals who exercise the most power often belong to dominant ethnic groups. Students acquire important learning by observing which ethnic groups are represented among the administrators, teachers, secretaries, cooks, and bus drivers.

- The formalized curriculum reveals the school's values toward ethnic diversity. The ethnic groups that appear in textbooks and in other instructional materials teach students which groups are considered to be important and unimportant by the school.

- The learning styles, motivational systems, and cultures that are promoted by the school express many of its important values toward cultural differences. The educational environments of most schools are most consistent with the learning patterns and styles of Anglo-American students than with those of ethnic-minority students, such as Blacks, Indians, and Puerto Ricans. Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) have found that Mexican-American youths tend to be more field-sensitive than field-independent in their cognitive styles. Anglo-American students tend to be more field-independent. Field-sensitive and field-independent students differ in a number of characteristics and behavior. Field-sensitive students tend to work with others to achieve a common goal and are more sensitive to the feelings and opinions of others than field-independent students. Field-independent students prefer to work independently and to compete and gain individual recognition. Students who are field-independent are more often preferred by teachers and tend to get higher grades, although learning style is not related to IQ.

An Interdisciplinary Conceptual Curriculum

While it is essential that educators take an institutional approach to school reform when implementing multicultural education, the formalized curriculum is a vital element of the school. Hence, curriculum reform is imperative. The curriculum within a multicultural school should be interdisciplinary, focus on higher levels of knowledge, and help students to view events and situations from diverse ethnic and national perspectives.

In many ethnic studies units, activities, and programs, emphasis is placed on factual learning and the deeds of ethnic heroes. These types of experiences use ethnic content but traditional teaching methods. Isolated facts about Martin Luther King do not stimulate the intellect or help students to increase their levels of cognitive sophistication any more than discrete facts about George Washington or Thomas Jefferson. The emphasis in sound multiethnic programs must be on concept attainment, value analysis, decision making, and social action (Banks 1981, 1984). Facts should only be used to help students to attain higher-level concepts and skills. Students need to master higher-level concepts and generalizations in order to increase their levels of cognitive sophistication.

Concepts taught in the multiethnic curriculum should be selected from several disciplines, such as the various social sciences, art, music, literature, physical education, communication, the sciences, and mathematics. It is necessary for students to view ethnic events and situations from the perspectives of several disciplines because one discipline only provides a partial understanding of problems related to ethnicity. Students can attain a global perspective on ethnic cultures by viewing them from the perspective of the various social sciences and by examining how they are expressed in literature, music, dance, art, communication, and foods. The other curriculum areas, such as science and mathematics, can also be included in an interdisciplinary study of ethnic cultures. Other concepts, such as communication and interdependence, can also be analyzed and studied from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Summary

The tremendous racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity that characterizes Western societies today presents both challenges and opportunities. Ethnic conflict and tension are inevitable consequences of pluralistic societies. We must learn to live with a degree of conflict and tension in a culturally diverse nation-state. However, we should also formulate policy and strategies to reduce ethnic conflicts and tensions. We can reduce interethnic conflict and tension by formulating and implementing educational policies that promote the structural inclusion of all ethnic, racial, and cultural groups into the nation-state.

While pluralism is a challenge to Western nation-states, it is also an opportunity. It provides a source of innovation and helps a society to perceive problems in new ways and to develop novel ways to solve them. Structurally excluded ethnic and cultural groups also serve as a moral conscience for the nation-state by challenging it to close the gap between its democratic ideals and social realities.

To help students develop clarified, positive, and reflective cultural, national, and global identifications, the school environment must be reformed so that it reflects the diverse cultures of students. The school must also help students to develop more positive attitudes toward different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups if they are to become effective citizens of our nation and world. Efforts to reduce prejudice and to help students develop positive racial and ethnic attitudes must be based on a total-school, holistic model. When changes take place in the total-school environment, students have the possibility to attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to improve the human condition.

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The contributors to this book examine the various ideologies, concepts, explanations, and paradigms that have emerged in the major Western nations in which multicultural education has developed over the last two decades and present guide-

lines for teachers, teac[illegible]ers, administrators and other practicing educators. It includes bibliographies [illegible]al index.

Banks, James A., *Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice* (Newton, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1981).

This book discusses the historical, conceptual, and philosophical issues in the fields of multiethnic and multicultural education and strategies for curricular and school reform.

Banks, James A., *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies,* 3rd ed. (Newton, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1984).

This resource book for teaching ethnic studies includes historical overviews, teaching strategies, and bibliographies for teachers and students. It also includes a chronology of key events for the major ethnic groups in the United States.

Katz, Phyllis A., *Towards the Elimination of Racism* (New York: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1976).

This volume consists of a group of well-researched papers that describe research and theory related to the acquisition of racial attitudes in children.

Milner, David, *Children and Race* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1983).

This book discusses a number of important topics related to children's racial attitudes, the socialization of attitudes and identity, children's racial attitudes, culture and prejudice, and race and education.

Paley, Vivian Gussin, *White Teacher* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Teachers often express the belief—contrary to research developed since the 1920s—that young children are unaware of racial differences and have developed no conceptions about racial status. A sensitive and creative teacher undercuts this belief by describing how the children in her racially integrated kindergarten classroom express the racial attitudes and behaviors mirrored in the wider society. An extremely readable and important book.

Trager, Helen G., and Marian Radke Yarrow, *They Learn What They Live* (New York: Harper, 1952).

This is a seminal study of the racial attitudes of children in kindergarten and first and second grades. It indicates that young children are acutely aware of racial differences. Many of the students in this study made role assignments which reflected the pervasive stereotypes of Blacks and Whites when they were given brown and white dolls and asked to assign them roles. This study also documents the fact that children's racial attitudes can be changed by effective intervention strategies.

CHAPTER SIX

Peering Into the Well of Loneliness: The Responsibility of Educators to Gay and Lesbian Youth

James T. Sears

IT IS IGNORANCE THAT DEGRADES, NOT POVERTY OR TOIL.
—OSCAR WILDE

Author's note: My thanks to Bob Williamson for his critical comments and thoughtful suggestions.

EARLY ON AN AUGUST MORNING I WAS BORN INTO A FARMING COMMUNITY. MY TOWN—my world—had a checkerboard flatness to it. My world was clearly divided. Adams always followed Jefferson Street; First Avenue never crossed Second. In my town, like the black-and-white television world of the Andersons, Cleavers, and Nelsons, there were no shades of grey. There were no dark shadows. There were no long-kept secrets.

As a white, middle-class male, I learned through my family, my school, and my church how to dress, what to think, and when to repent. I learned that only girls wore dresses and sported stylish, long hair. I learned to write on broad-lined, ruled paper as I sat beneath an American flag. I learned that God punished sinners but loved the repentant. I learned that homosexuality was sinful and that I was a sinner. I was alone, afraid, and in the dark.

That autumn members of the Mattachine Society stood in a circle, joined hands, and took a pledge:

> We are resolved that our people shall find equality of security and production in tomorrow's world. We are sworn that no boy or girl, approaching the maelstrom of deviation, need make that crossing alone, afraid, and in the dark ever again (D'Emilio 1983, p. 68).

Established in 1951 by political activists, this organization sought to unify gays and lesbians. Through consciousness raising and political activities, the group sought to develop within each member a sense of pride and a sense of group identity. Through able use of the judicial system and the media, the society waged a campaign for human rights. Its numbers grew rapidly. Within two years membership exceeded 2,000 homosexual men and women.[1]

These efforts, unfortunately, were short-lived. Under the spectre of McCarthyism and beneath the clouds of the Cold War, assertiveness and conflict were replaced by consensus and accommodation. Group-therapy sessions

[1] Throughout this chapter I use "homosexual men and women" or "gays and lesbians" interchangeably. There are, however, differences in meanings among "homosexual" and "gay" or "lesbian." The term homosexual was not coined until the late nineteenth century by psychologists and had little general usage until the 1930s. The term gay, on the other hand, originated in the thirteenth century and referred to courtly love most popular in southern France, an area known for gay sexuality (Boswell 1980). The term lesbian comes from the name of an island in Greek mythology (Lesbos) inhabited by homosexual women. To adopt a gay or lesbian identity is both a personal and political act. Homosexual behavior, on the other hand, is a universal component of human sexuality.

This use of language (e.g., "faggot," "homo," "queer") to define, categorize, and control is a political struggle. A recent article in the national gay publication *The Advocate* argues, "We are no longer bound to perpetuate the language of oppression. We can create our own references. We no longer have to verbally condemn ourselves, but can modify our terminology to reflect the goodness within our community and the unlimited potential of every gay human being" (Lebonati 1986, p. 9).

replaced consciousness-raising groups; informal lobbying and reliance on professions replaced the court battles and grassroots leadership (D'Emilio 1983, Katz 1976).

During the past quarter of a century, great battles have been won by gays and lesbians on medical, legal, and moral fronts. But compared with the number of activists in the anti-war, women's rights, nuclear disarmament, and civil rights movements, few educators have participated in this struggle. The struggle, though, is all about educators and their work in school. There are students in every school district who are gay or lesbian. There are students in every school who have ambivalent feelings toward their sexuality. There are students in every classroom who harbor stereotypes and negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians. The task for socially responsible educators is to further human dignity and social justice in all areas—not just those that are currently in vogue or most convenient. The failure of educators to assume this responsibility will permit some youth of this generation, like my own and those preceding mine, to lose their sense of dignity and to deny that which is most precious to them: their sexual identity.

The argument in this chapter is simple: Educators have a social responsibility to promote human dignity and to further social justice for gays and lesbians. In simplest terms this means providing a learning environment that is free from physical or psychological abuse, that portrays honestly the richness and diversity of humanity, that fosters an understanding of human sexuality, that integrates homosexual themes and issues into the curriculum, that counsels young people who have or may have a different sexual orientation, and that supports gay and lesbian teachers.

To support this argument, I examine and refute three interrelated homophobic[2] beliefs: that homosexuality is a sin, a sickness, or a crime. I also discuss their implications for education and the opportunities for action by educators.

Sin: Homosexuality Is an Affront to God's Laws

The wages of sin is death.
—St. Paul

Homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern of the Church.
—Episcopal Church USA

[2] Weinberg (1972, p. 29) has defined this as "a revulsion toward homosexuality and often the desire to inflict punishment as retribution." Weinberg links this irrational social prejudice to several sources: religious prohibition, fear of being homosexual, repressed envy, threat to traditional values, and loss of vicarious immortality.

I believe AIDS is God indicating his displeasure and his attitude toward that form of lifestyle which we in this country are about to accept.
—Rev. Charles Stanley

Homosexuality, according to many church denominations, is a violation of God's law. It is morally wrong since children are not possible from such sexual communions. This argument, most vigorously defended by the Roman Catholic Church, judges that sexual relations without the possibility of procreation are unnatural and sinful (Harvey 1967). The concept of human beings as selective and reasoning creatures of God, capable of expressing love in a variety of ways, is ignored.

From this perspective, the male and female are social and biological counterparts: the intellectual with the emotional, the sperm with the egg, the active with the passive, the penis with the vagina. Each is dependent upon another for what the other lacks. This, of course, ignores the fact that passiveness, "homemaker," aggressiveness, and "breadwinner" are traits and roles into which boys and girls are socialized. Within this culture, human qualities are polarized into either masculine or feminine roles, thereby squelching opportunities for full human development and self-identity (Bianchi and Ruether 1976).

It is argued that homosexuality is unnatural since it does not appear elsewhere in nature, but what is considered natural order, natural law, or human nature is often nothing more than a social construct. "Natural" or "human" within a particular culture or historical period is a given only for those who are products of that culture. The argument that homosexuality does not exist in nature is not rooted in scientific evidence (Denniston 1980, Geist 1971, Hunt and Hunt 1977, Kinsey 1953, Trivers 1976, Weinrich 1980). Among domestic livestock, for example, the practice of using young bulls and steers to sexually arouse mature bulls is common. Bulls more readily respond to being teased by members of their own sex (Denniston 1980). Dolphins also display a wide variety of sexual behaviors, including homosexual (McBridge and Hebb 1948). Both male and female homosexual behavior has also been observed in wild langurs and other primates (Akers and Conaway 1979, Goldfoot et al. 1980, Hrdy 1975). Reviewing these data, Denniston (1980) concludes, "homosexual activity . . . occurs in every type of animal that has been carefully studied" (p. 38).

Contemporary religious and political fundamentalists have been more prone to rely upon Scripture than scientific evidence. While some of the passages cited by the video ministers are clearly taken out of context (Boswell 1980, Kosnik 1977), others, on the surface, appear germane. The tale of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:4–11) is one such example. Cited as compelling evidence of God's displeasure with homosexuality, recent Old Testament scholarship (Bailey 1955, Nelson 1978) has challenged this tradi-

tional interpretation by holding that inhospitality and injustice, not homosexuality, are the major themes.

After an exhaustive review of this and other Biblical passages, an Episcopal diocesan task force unanimously concluded:

> [T]he time has come to discontinue a use of Scripture that is out of harmony with an understanding of God we have derived precisely from Scripture, a God who has revealed himself in a spirit of love which seeks the lost. Long ago St. Paul argued that Christians were under neither the letter nor the law of Scripture but under its spirit. We believe that our insistence upon the spirit of sacrificial love is fully in harmony with the spirit of Scripture and that we must permit that spirit to guide us more fully in the future than we have in the past (Episcopal 1980, p. 131).

As Reverend McNeill (1976) rightly observes, the misuse of the Sodom passage may be one of the great ironies of the Christian age:

> For thousands of years in the Christian West, the homosexual has been the victim of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by the Church, he has been the victim of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of Sodom and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day (p. 50).

In the introduction to his extensive study of the history of gay people from the time of Christ until the Middle Ages, scholar John Boswell (1980, p. 7) observed, "Careful analysis can almost always differentiate between conscientious application of religious ethics and the use of religious precepts as justification for personal animosity or prejudice." For those who believe in Divine love, to judge others on the basis of a set of religious precepts that they may not share is contrary to Christian morality.

There are, of course, denominations that either embrace homosexual men and women or advocate their civil rights. The United Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Lutherans, for example, while viewing homosexual behavior as sinful and contrary to the Natural Law of God, have condemned the legal and social discrimination of gays and lesbians. The Metropolitan Community Church, founded in 1968, the Unitarian Universalist Church, and the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ are the only denominations which provide liturgical recognition of homosexual commitment. Other churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, official teachings notwithstanding, and the Episcopal Church, provide regular fellowship meetings in many parts of the country. Dignity and Integrity, organizations representing these two churches, counsel and support gay and lesbian Christians. They believe that Christianity and homosexuality are not antagonistic and that gays and lesbians "can express their sexuality in a manner that is consonant with Christ's teachings" (McNeill 1976, p. 174).

Given the theological scholarship that challenges the taken-for-granted scriptural admonition against homosexuality and the recent scientific evidence challenging the Natural Law position, those who believe that homosexuality is an affront to God's laws can muster respectable support from neither the religious nor scientific communities.

Sickness: Homosexuality Impairs a Person's Mental Health

Yesterday my grandchildren asked me what homosexuals do. . . . They're eleven and twelve years old, and the eleven-year-old was the one who asked me. Well, that got me. I thought for a moment, and then I told them I suspected that homosexuals shopped for groceries like other people, and that they did all the same things as everybody else except that they loved their same sex more than the opposite sex.—A seventy-four year old woman (Burkhart 1981, p. 235).

To ostracize him because he is Black, because he is homosexual, because he is a Jew, because he is anything else—especially when what he is cannot be remedied—is to chart that person's doom. (Valente 1970, p. 45).

With the advancement of science, homosexuality was transformed from sin to sickness. As the science of mental health progressed, the choices for many gays and lesbians changed: Repentance or damnation was replaced by treatment or confinement. Given advances in the sciences and willingness in the homosexual population, a cure was expected. Theories of causality for homosexuality, ranging from a powerful mother figure and a passive father to sibling rivalry, were advanced (Bieber 1962, Saghir and Robins 1973). A proper medical model for treatment was anticipated. In the search for an effective treatment of homosexuality, or even prevention, the goal of social workers, counselors, and educators was to counsel gays and lesbians about their illness and guide them to treatment.

Experimentation with techniques ranging from psychotherapy to aversion therapy has yielded few promising results and has been plagued with methodological and conceptual flaws (Gonsiorek 1981). For example, the view of homosexuality as pathological is seldom separated from studies of particular homosexual men and women who exhibit pathological behavior. More recent thinking on this subject has led the psychiatric and medical establishments to conclude homosexuality is, itself, neither a psychopathology nor an illness (Bell and Weinberg 1978, Evans 1970, Freedman 1975, Gagnon and Simon 1973, Hooker 1957, Meredith and Reister 1980). Instead, homosexuality is now viewed as an integral part of human sexuality, present in all cultures and during every historical period (Bullough 1976, Carrier 1980, Dover 1978, Ford and Beach 1951, Katz 1976, Marmor 1965, Taylor 1970, West 1967). In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association revised its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* and removed homosexuality from its list of disorders, concluding "Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in

judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities" (Bayer 1981, p. 137).

The research into homosexuality has been flawed by an uncritical acceptance of a number of unexamined assumptions. Among those assumptions was that same-sex behavior was restricted to a small minority of the population. To the contrary, most human beings exhibit a range of sexual behaviors. As Kinsey (1948) concluded a generation ago:

> The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. . . . Nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects (p. 639).

Kinsey's research, substantiated by more recent research (Churchill 1967, Gebhard and Johnson 1979), revealed that most adults in the U.S. have neither an exclusively homosexual nor heterosexual orientation. Rather, they fall somewhere within a continuum of sexual experiences and feelings.

Another false assumption concerned the power of parental influence in shaping a child's sexual identity. Parents have little influence on the sexual orientation of their child (Bell et al. 1981). Homosexual feelings are a basic part of a person's psyche, not something that is consciously chosen. Sexual orientation is established at an early age (Bell et al. 1981, Kinsey 1948, Marmor 1980).

The question of why some people are attracted to the same gender is far from settled. However, setting aside the issue of what society would do if the "reason" was found, the question for educators is "What are my professional responsibilities in dealing with homosexual students?" While specific steps are outlined in the concluding section of this chapter, two of the most critical are creating a supportive environment and providing accurate information.

A major cross-cultural study of homosexuality (Weinberg and Williams 1974) concluded that the factors which contribute to healthy, well-adjusted homosexual men and women are close and supportive relationships with other gays and lesbians, an unwillingness to change their sexual identities, and a rejection of the concept of homosexuality as a sickness. Interestingly, these are precisely the conditions demanded by therapists who attempt to treat homosexual men and women. Gregory Baum, professor of religious studies, observed (1974):

> People who are held in contempt by society, marginalized by custom, vilified by a vulgar or subtle language of exclusion, and judged as sick, as immoral, as perverts, will in one way or another internalize these judgments in the form of self-rejection and self-hatred. Homosexual men and women belong to the most oppressed of all groups in society. For while other groups exposed to contempt and rejection can find in their own tradition sources of pride and self-respect, homosexuals are led to believe in the pervisity of their own nature and deprived of the very ground of their self-respect (p. 480).

The task of schooling is to transform the ignorant into the knowledgeable; a goal of education is to replace self-condemnation and self-contempt with self-respect and self-awakening. As educators it is our responsibility to assist students in their long pilgrimage toward selfhood. For gay and lesbian youth this is a "sometimes fearful, sometimes courageous journey through the chaos of a world whose souls dwell in darkness" (Hesse 1969, p. 24).

Crime: Homosexuality Threatens the Civil Order

The history of civilization is a history of a long welfare between the dangerous and powerful forces of the id, and the various systems of taboos and inhibitions which man has erected to control them (Taylor 1970, p. 37).

Pushed around and kicked around
Always a lonely boy
You were the one
That they'd talk about around town
As they put you down
And as hard as they would try
They'd hurt to make you cry
But you'd never cry to them
Just to your soul

"Small Town Boy," Bronski Beat

Authority is defiled by the son who stares at his father with a private secret smile, and winks (Pinar 1983, p. 43).

As I have discussed, the meaning of "normality" as well as morality is problematic. Nevertheless, until the adoption of the Model Penal Code of Illinois in 1962, sexual relations between two people of the same sex were criminal in all 50 states (Barnett 1973). Selective enforcement and entrapment by local police were the rule. Conviction resulted in a criminal record (in many states a felony) and difficulty in obtaining employment, securing housing, or entering into professional or military service.

During the intervening quarter of a century, 26 states have decriminalized private homosexual behavior between consenting adults, even though the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that gay sex is not constitutionally protected (Knutson 1980). Fifty-one municipalities, most recently New York City, have also passed ordinances forbidding discrimination in public accommodations, housing, and employment. Nevertheless, in most communities homosexual men and women are at the mercy of local landlords, employers, and public officials. Not surprisingly, most gays and lesbians have chosen to remain a hidden minority.

Why has the state chosen to regulate homosexual behavior? Quoting from Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Romans; citing tradition; and fearing con-

tamination; the Washington Supreme Court in 1977 upheld the dismissal of a teacher fired because he was gay (*Gaylor v. Tacoma School District No. 10*). The opinion said:

> Homosexuality is widely condemned as immoral and was so condemned as immoral during biblical times. . . . In the instant case the plaintiff desired no change and has sought no psychiatric help because he feels comfortable with his homosexuality. He has made a voluntary choice for which he must be held morally responsible (Stivison 1982, p. 307).

In December 1985, a brief (*Hardwick v. Bowers*) filed in the U.S. Supreme Court, seeking to reverse a lower court's decision that Georgia's sodomy statute violates the right of privacy, stated:

> To decriminalize or artificially withdraw the public's expression of its disdain for this conduct does not uplift sodomy, but rather demotes these sacred institutions [marriage and the family] to merely other alternative lifestyles. . . . If the legal distinctions between the intimacies of marriage and homosexual sodomy are lost, it is certainly possible to make the assumption, perhaps unprovable at this time, that the order of society, our ways of life, could be changed in a harmful way (Walter 1986, p. 13).

In June 1986 a five to four ruling upholding the Georgia law was rendered by the Supreme Court. Writing for the majority, Justice White states, "I cannot say that conduct condemned for hundreds of years has now become a fundamental right." In his dissenting opinion, Justice Blackmun argued, "a way of life that is odd or even erratic but interferes with no rights or interests of others is not to be condemned because it is different. . . . What the Court really has refused to recognize is the fundamental interest all individuals have in controlling the nature of their intimate associations with others."

The case is about both privacy and politics. Since the Georgia Statute applies to specific sexual activities regardless of the identity of the persons who engage in them, the power of a state to prohibit such activities among all adults in their homes has been sanctioned. Not only are private relationships between consenting adults criminalized, but the rights of a politically unpopular minority are placed in greater jeopardy. The Court's ruling provides legal justification for discrimination against gays and lesbians in housing, employment, and child custody. The decision in *Hardwick v. Bowers* may also provide the stamp of legitimacy for those who hate, harm, and harangue homosexual men and women.

The quality of justice in a society is judged by the legal protections it affords its minorities. A review of recent newspaper articles reveals the quality of justice that most gays and lesbians can expect. In the United States the modest judicial gains made in the past are coming under attack as right-wing politicians and evangelical Christians exercise their power. For example, Washington state Rep. Glenn Cobbs introduced legislation to overturn gay

rights ordinances and to direct schools and other agencies dealing with children to fire any employees discovered to be gay, to bar gay parents from being granted custody of a child in a divorce case, and to prohibit some businesses from hiring homosexual men and women.

Law enforcement agencies are also sometimes less than eager to vigorously investigate crimes involving gay and lesbian victims. In Stockton, a quiet, flat-land town in the San Joaquin Valley, the pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church, who had received numerous death threats, was brutally beaten and stabbed. No suspects have been arrested for this or for the other seven gay-related deaths in Stockton during the past year. Congress, recognizing the seriousness of anti-gay violence, has scheduled subcommittee hearings. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) is hopeful that this may "encourage some law enforcement officials to take it more seriously" (Frieberg 1986, p. 15).

The quality of justice in a society is also judged by how it treats those who violate the civil rights of minorities. A 17-year-old Michigan youth charged with bashing a gay man's skull with a sledgehammer was found innocent by a Kalamazoo jury. In a rare departure from judicial procedure, the judge, noting the overwhelming evidence against the defendant, told the jury, "If this were tried without a jury, my decision as judge would have been different from yours" (Frieberg 1986, p. 12). In the absence of extenuating circumstances, judges in other courtrooms have been more reflective of the bias in their communities. For example, a gay Bangor, Maine, man was thrown off a bridge to his death by three male teenagers. The judge elected to try the offenders as juveniles. The assailant of a Virginia Beach man who was stabbed 14 times was sentenced to a 12-month jail term. The defense claimed the murderer experienced "homosexual panic."

These are not isolated instances. A recent survey of anti-gay violence and discrimination in Philadelphia concluded that gay people are at least four times as likely to be victims of criminal violence as members of the general public. Nationally, there were 2,042 reported incidences of anti-gay violence last year. During recent Congressional hearings on anti-gay violence, the director of the Violence Project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force testified that more than one in five gays and nearly one in ten lesbians are victims of violent acts motivated by homophobia. Eighty percent of these cases go unreported (Walter 1986).

The politics of sexuality operates on a number of different levels. I have discussed the most obvious relationship between the state and sexuality: the criminalization of certain sexual behaviors and the violation of the human rights of homosexual men and women. Power and ideology, though, is another critical dimension. The organization and control of the body is one method of organizing and controlling the body politic (Altman 1971, Altman 1982, Bianchi and Ruether 1976, Dinnerstein 1977, Firestone 1970, Foucault 1978, Gay Left Collective 1980, Hocquenghem 1978, Marcuse 1968, Marotta

1981, Smart and Smart 1978, Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson 1983). "Compulsive heterosexuality" (Rich 1980) is one mechanism that perpetuates patriarchal social relations:

> [T]he possibility of a sexual relationship between women is an important challenge to patriarchy because it acts as an alternative to the patriarchal heterosexual couple, thus challenging the heterosexual ideology that women are dependent on men for romantic/sexual love and satisfaction (Ferguson 1982, p. 153).

Similarly, male/male sexual relationships are abhorrent precisely because they defile male power, position, and prestige.

Ideology is also important in understanding the process of schooling (Apple 1979, 1982; Aronowitz and Giroux 1985; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Freire 1985; Giroux 1981; Young 1971). The answers to such questions as "What counts as school knowledge?", "Who has access to that knowledge?", and "How is that knowledge distributed?" are rooted in power and ideology. Heterosexual hegemony is present when the legitimacy of discussing homosexuality and related issues is denied, when violations of the human rights of a mostly closeted minority are ignored, and when gay and lesbian youth are deprived of relevant knowledge and information.

As educators follow legislative mandates, implement administrative policies, develop weekly lesson plans, and evaluate students, they assume a political role. Decisions to select particular curriculum resources for students, to invite guest speakers into the classroom, and to encourage debate on controversial issues are also political. Yet many educators, like Dallas School Superintendent Linus Wright, who recently rejected participation of the Dallas Gay Alliance in the Adopt-a-School program because of potential controversy, think that educators can be above politics.

Refusing to act upon our social responsibility as educators does not extricate us from politics. Our abdication of these responsibilities merely means that we will uncritically serve and carry out the orders of those who sit at the table of power.

Imagining the Possible: Steps for Action

> I can't imagine there is a school district in South Carolina where the parents would willingly accept role models for their children being continued in a position to influence the conduct of those children when they were known practicing homosexuals.
>
> —a 1985 ABA delegate

> Imagine a world where you and your husband had to hide not only your relationship but even the possibility of your relationship. Imagine not being able to hold hands in a public place for fear you'd be told you had to move out of your apartment . . . . Imagine hearing your friends talk openly about their love and not being able to say a

word about yours. Imagine having to go to a "swingers' bar" because that's the only place you could find someone to be intimate with. Imagine being told you weren't fit to be in the company of children without supervision. Imagine walking down the street and being yelled at by people in passing cars calling out obscenities. Imagine being blackmailed, beaten up in alleys, even brutally murdered. That's what it's like in the closet.

—a high school student (Fairchild and Hayward 1979)

Imagine all the people
Living life in peace
You may say I'm a dreamer
But, I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

"Imagine," John Lennon

Gays and lesbians have been condemned by churches as sinners, diagnosed by asylums as neurotics, and sentenced by courts as criminals. So it is not surprising that homosexuality is also a taboo topic in most American classrooms. Nevertheless, there are several steps that socially responsible educators must take.

As the first step, educators must examine their own attitudes toward homosexuality. This might involve asking personal questions, such as: How do I feel when talking about sexuality? During my childhood, how was the subject of homosexuality treated in my home? Did I have any friends who I later found out were gay or lesbian? Did I grow up believing the myths discussed in this chapter? Personal questions such as these (Morey 1984) are a good way for educators to begin considering homosexuality in a responsible manner.

When people become comfortable with their feelings, they more easily educate themselves about this subject. Several excellent resources are cited at the end of this chapter. However, they are not substitutes for human interaction. In metropolitan areas, organizations and community groups such as Dignity, Planned Parenthood, and the Gay/Lesbian Alliance welcome the comments, questions, and participation of educators. In rural areas, a computer and a modem provide access to a number of gay bulletin boards and networks.

The second step is educating others about homosexuality, with particular emphasis on replacing myths with accurate information. Teachers can begin to integrate a healthy attitude toward the panorama of human sexual experience into the curriculum through anonymous surveys and journal writing (for example, "What does sexuality mean to you?").

Not surprisingly, the elementary and secondary curriculums provide few, if any, references to homosexual men and women or homosexuality. Three resources which are useful starting points are *Teaching and Learning About Lesbians and Gays* (Minneapolis: Education Exploration Center),

Demystifying Homosexuality (San Francisco: Human Rights Foundation), and *Lesbian Studies* (Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press). These books include lesson plans and course syllabi, chapters on a variety of relevant areas, and suggested activities.

Personal reflections of gays and lesbians are another valuable teaching resource. *Word is Out* (Dell), *Coming Out Stories* (Persephone), *One Teenager in Ten* (Allyson), and *The Homosexuals* (MacMillan) reflect the diversity of experiences, attitudes, and life-styles of gays and lesbians. Such materials can replace the stigma associated with homosexuality with understanding and a greater appreciation for the complexity of human experience.

More powerful than books are audio-visual materials and classroom speakers. Films such as "Word Is Out" can engage students, encourage discussion, and engender reflection; speakers who respond candidly to questions can confront homophobic fears as well as provide positive role models.

Science and the social sciences have been employed traditionally to define normality and to prescribe morality. The homosexual experience has been expurgated from the curriculum (Newton 1979, Stevernagel 1981). However, a variety of homosexual themes and issues exist in literature, the arts, and social sciences. The task of the socially responsible educator is to be aware of these and to integrate them creatively into the school's curriculum.

While many of these resources and teaching strategies have been discussed elsewhere (Chng 1980, Goodman 1983, Sears 1983, Wilson 1984), the use of bibliographies and anthologies such as *Like a Brother, Like a Leaf* (Doubleday), *Lesbian Images* (Doubleday), *The Male Homosexual in Literature* (Scarecrow) and *The Lesbian in Literature* (Naiad), and *Gay American History* (Crowel) will be useful in selecting those works which best fit particular objectives, student interests, and community standards.

The use of such materials presumes that public schools in a democratic society are a marketplace for ideas. "Access to ideas," as Justice Brennan wrote, "prepares students for active and effective participation in the pluralistic, often contentious society in which they will soon be adult members" (Dutile 1986, p. 37).

Certainly, teachers or administrators cannot work in isolation as they integrate this issue and these materials into the curriculum. Communication with the school board, as well as parental and community groups, is critical. These people must be provided with accurate information and reasoned arguments. Such dialogue can lead to a groundwork of support and the emergence of parental advocates and community allies. Sensitivity training with school staff and frank discussion regarding the problems and issues in working with gay and lesbian youth is also important.

As a third step, concerned educators must be responsive to the needs of gay and lesbian youth. Seldom within our public institutions are there safe harbors for these young people. Many students choose to hide their sexual identity for fear of verbal or physical abuse. For example, Antonio, president

of a gay youth group in Boston, finds it difficult to attend school. The 15-year-old says, "If they ever found out, I think I'd be killed in the halls" (Kantrowitz 1986, p. 52).

The plight of Antonio is not unusual. A recent study of 2,100 homosexual men and women by the National Gay Task Force found that 20 percent of lesbians and 50 percent of gay men reported being harassed, threatened, or physically abused in junior or senior high school because of their sexual orientation. Some reported that teachers simply ignored the harassment and humiliation.

Understandably, few youngsters acknowledge homosexual feelings. Those young people who have not "come out" fear rejection by their family, friends, teachers, and church. Given the absence of support, the major problem of these youngsters is social isolation. There are few opportunities to discuss this concern with their friends, seldom are there any adult role models and, unlike their heterosexual counterparts, they lack opportunity to develop social skills, to experience trust and intimacy, and to receive public affirmation of their sexual behavior. Lying becomes a part of their lives—lying to their family and friends, lying to the minister and their God, and lying to themselves. Hiding, too, becomes part of their lives—hiding behind pregnancy, behind delinquent behavior, behind drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, concentration on schoolwork is not their primary concern.

These young people need a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which they can process their feelings and come to terms with their sexuality (Tartagni 1978, Jones 1978). They need to find out that they are not so unique, that others have similar problems, and that they are "okay." Schools, in general, do not provide these opportunities.

In response to this problem, social service agencies have sometimes intervened. The most well-publicized agency is the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth. Established in 1980, this New York agency serves youths 13 through 21, many of whom have attempted suicide, dropped out of school, been tossed out of their home, sent to special schools for the emotionally disturbed, or have run away from home in response to reactions to their sexual orientation.

While the agency provides crisis intervention and individual, group, and family counseling, it also serves in an advocacy role. The Harvey Milk School[3] is one of its best known advocacy projects. Established by the New York City Board of Education in 1985, the school's principal goal is mainstreaming students back into the public school system. The school has been effective in

[3] The first openly gay San Francisco supervisor, who was assassinated in 1978. His assailant, former city supervisor Dan White, was sentenced to five years for the murder of Milk and Mayor George Moscone. White committed suicide in 1985.

attaining this goal.[4] Its program strives to meet the needs of gay and lesbian youth, many of whom find that public school is not a very gay place to be.

On an average, it takes about six years from first awareness of same-sex orientation to acknowledgement of homosexuality. The average "coming out" age is 19. On average, homosexual men and women wait 11 years before reaching a positive acceptance of their sexual identity (Dank 1971, McDonald 1982, Troiden 1979). Educators have a professional responsibility to help reduce these years of guilt, anxiety, and secrecy. Unfortunately, as one gay teenager wrote:

> The gay child sees *no* healthy gay people, as such. He/she hears the locker room humor, reads about "homosexual murders" in the paper (did you ever see a reference to a heterosexual murder?), sees the limp-wristed stereotypes in the movies and on TV. If a child is gay he/she usually has no healthy role models to turn to (Fairchild and Hayward 1979, p. 24-25).

Fourth, as professional educators, regardless of our moral or political convictions, we are duty bound to protect and promote the human and civil rights of all people within the classroom (Dutile 1986). This responsibility is even greater when Bible-thumping fundamentalist preachers and right-wing politicians exploit public fear and ignorance during the AIDS health crisis in an effort to reverse the trend toward toleration and acceptance of homosexual men and women.[5]

A recent *Los Angeles Times* poll noted that more than one in four Americans believe AIDS is God's punishment for homosexual behavior. In a *National Review* article AIDS was described as "Nature's revenge," and William Buckley, in his syndicated show *Firing Line,* has suggested that AIDS victims, including children, be tattoed. The inference is clear: Homosexuality is a threat to the moral fiber of this country. The *Wall Street Journal* states the case more vividly:

> For most of us, pollution is physical—toxic waste, for instance. In the Bible, pollution has a moral or spiritual sense—Jeremiah 3:2, for instance: " . . . thou hast polluted the land with the whoredoms and thy wickedness." AIDS embodies both meanings. . . . [T]he consequences of certain private acts are the public's business (Himmelfarb 1985, p. 26).

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[4] The primary goal of many contemporary public alternative schools, such as the Harvey Milk School, is to mainstream youngsters back into the school system. Accepting as "normal" the public school curriculum, they fail to acknowledge that it is part of an institutional structure in which children are routinely sorted, labeled, and tracked on the basis of class, gender, and race (Oakes 1985).

[5] The most timely and informative discussions of this topic may be found in Altman 1986, Gong 1985, Peabody 1986, and Reed 1986.

Fear and ignorance are the fuel for this most recent attack upon social justice. Despite media attention ranging from Ted Koppel's "Nightline" to a made-for-television family drama, "An Early Frost," behavior that puts me at risk by exposure to AIDS is routinely linked to sexual orientation. Fully 96 percent of the respondents recently polled by Lou Harris (1985) cited homosexual acts as a cause of AIDS. The fact that many heterosexual couples engage in the same sexual practices is seldom acknowledged. More than one-half polled also believed that living with a person who has AIDS would likely lead to contracting the disease. One-third thought that either breathing close to a person with AIDS or sitting in class with such a person would be hazardous to one's health.

Schools are directly involved in this controversy. For example, 10,000 Queens parents kept their children out of school for several days last fall to protest the decision of the New York City Board of Education to allow children with AIDS to attend public schools. Similar controversies have erupted in New Jersey, Indiana, and Massachusetts despite the overwhelming evidence that the transmission of AIDS is not associated with casual contact.

According to guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control, the benefits of attending school overshadow the "apparent nonexistent risk of transmission" (Flygare 1985b). A New York judge ruled that "automatic exclusion from school of all children with AIDS would violate their rights under the Rehabilitation Act and to equal protection of the laws" (Adkins 1986, p. 10).

The American Psychological Association recently adopted a resolution condemning AIDS-related discrimination and called for more public education about the disease:

> Given current research evidence that individuals do not become infected with the AIDS virus through casual contact," the APA resolution deplored "the exclusion of persons with AIDS or those suspected of having AIDS from housing, employment, education," and denounced the "use of the AIDS epidemic as a vehicle for fostering prejudice or discrimination against any group or individual (Fall 1986, p. 6).

Among the more than 24,000 cases of AIDS that have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control through August 1986, 348 are children under the age of 13. The figure has doubled each year. The vast majority of these cases of pediatric AIDS are traced to an infected mother or contamination with infected blood or blood products. Twenty-one percent of all AIDS cases are among the 20-29 age group. Since research indicates that the incubation period for AIDS is two to five years, some of these victims contacted AIDS during their teen-age years.

Secondary school students, despite what some may prefer to believe, are at their sexual peak; a majority of these teen-agers are sexually active (Finkel and Finkel 1975, Jessor and Jessor 1975, Sorensen 1973). Not surprisingly, high school and junior high students get sexually transmitted diseases. (For

example, in 1982 the Centers for Disease Control reported nearly one million school-age children who had contracted a venereal disease.)

Also, during these early years of sexual activity, experimentation is not uncommon. Sixty percent of preadolescent males and between one-tenth and one-third of the adolescent male population report at least one homosexual experience (Sorensen 1973, Kinsey 1948, Wagner 1980). Nevertheless, 73 percent of the teenagers polled do not view AIDS as their problem. Paradoxically, since these young people do not consider themselves part of the several "risk groups" identified by the media, many put themselves at risk. Given the magnitude of the problem, educators share, with other professional groups, a responsibility to address the AIDS crisis.

Several school districts are developing or using AIDS-related curricula. In Ohio they are providing students in junior and senior high school with information about AIDS. The Philadelphia School Board authorized the purchase of 200,000 booklets on AIDS—plus 20,000 copies in Spanish—for high school students, staff, and parent groups. Los Angeles has also distributed information to its students about AIDS and allocated $37,000 for AIDS-related inservice training of teachers. Only high schools in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York require AIDS education classes.

Sooner or later other school districts will have to respond to this issue. There will be a student diagnosed with AIDS or a teacher who has died of AIDS. What should be the response? What constitutes effective leadership within the school and the community?

The fifth step that educators can take is to encourage the hiring of and to provide support for gay and lesbian educators, who will be healthy role models for such students. Some school districts and states, however, are moving in precisely the opposite direction. Following a bitter debate, the Idaho House of Representatives recently approved legislation prohibiting the teaching of homosexuality as "a normal or acceptable form of behavior." Last year an even broader Oklahoma statute, barring gays from assuming an advocacy role in the schools, was struck down by the courts on First Amendment grounds. In Ohio the contract of a bisexual high school guidance counselor was not renewed after she freely admitted her sexual orientation and counseled a gay student's parent to accept her son's homosexuality (Flygare 1985a).

Finally, educators, as articulate citizens of the community, must speak out in favor of gay-rights ordinances and national legislation that bars discrimination against homosexual men and women. When a recent Gallop poll (1985) found that 47 percent of the adult population (compared to 39 percent in 1982) oppose such legislation, the task will be neither easy nor popular. Support for candidates who endorse these measures or who are openly gay or lesbian is important. Recently, an openly gay high school guidance counselor narrowly won a city council seat in upstate New York despite a tough campaign waged against him by the "Citizens for a Decent Community."

Resources for Gays and Lesbians

AIDS Hotline: (800) 342-2437

American Library Association
Gay Task Force
Box 2383
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Association of Gay Psychologists
38 West 87nd Street, #48
New York, NY 10024

Dignity, Inc.
1500 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Suite 11
Washington, DC 20005

Gay Academic Union Newsletter
Box 927
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Gay Teachers Association Newsletter
Box 435 Van Brunt Station
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Integrity, Inc.
10 Mercier Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02124

Metropolitan Community Church
5300 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90029

National AIDS Network
729 8th Street, S.E.
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20003

National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays
930 F Street, N.W., #514
Washington, DC 20004

National Gay and Lesbian Crisis Line: (800) 221-7044

National Federation of Parents and Friends of Gays
5715 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

National Gay Youth Communications Network
816 I Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20002

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
1517 U Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
P.O. Box 24565
Los Angeles, CA 90024

National Caucus of Gay and Lesbian Counselors
Box 216
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Children of Gays/Lesbians
691 S. Irolo Street, #1151
Los Angeles, CA 90005

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
123 W. 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

Senior Action in the Gay Environment (SAGE)
208 W. 13th Street
New York, NY 10011

The Gay and Lesbian Advocacy Research Project
P.O. Box 5085
Columbia, SC 29250

These and other such steps taken by socially responsible educators will have a positive impact upon the quality of life in school for *all* students. The struggle for social change must begin with a critical examination of arbitrary, narrow, and socially constructed categories in our lives as well as an assessment of how those categories affect the lives of those around us. Only when human beings accept themselves and respect the dignity of others can a genuine commitment to social justice be possible.

At the end of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness,* Stephen soliloquizes, "Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence." For those students in your school district who have been the butt of locker room jokes, who have lost the significance of pink triangles and the struggles of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis in the dustbins of history, and who have never been exposed to positive gay and

lesbian role models, I ask that our existence be recognized. And for those who have been taught that gays and lesbians are sinners, criminals, or neurotics, I ask that educators work to destroy these myths.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Educating for Excellence on an Endangered Planet

Tony Wagner

Educating for Active Citizenship

EDUCATION REFORMERS THESE DAYS STRESS THE NEED TO HAVE BETTER EDUcated students so that our country can maintain a competitive economic edge. However, few discuss what kind of education will be needed to preserve democracy in the future. *I believe that the first social responsibility of educators is to educate for informed and active citizenship.*

The need for educated citizens is more urgent today than ever before. In the next 20 years, our country must choose solutions to profound social, political, and economic problems—issues that affect our quality of life and perhaps even the very survival of the species. Yet the percentage of eligible voters who participate in national elections remains very low—less than 55 percent—and is lowest of all among 18- to 24-year-olds.

My classroom experiences, as well as recent studies, strongly suggest that many young people are concerned about the future, but cynical about the democratic process. If we do not help the next generation to understand the critical issues of our time so that they can become effective citizens, funda-

mental decisions will be left to the experts or perhaps not made at all. Democracy may be imperiled.

A Threatened World

Our planet is threatened by a number of problems that grow more serious each day. In 1945 Albert Einstein observed that "the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift towards unparalleled catastrophe." We must forge new social and economic policies, rooted in a full understanding of global interdependence, in order to deal with issues such as the following:

- The environment is increasingly polluted; toxic wastes threaten human life and fragile ecosytems. Many nonrenewable resources are being consumed at an alarming rate.
- Serious disparities between the haves and the have-nots, world-wide, contribute to the problems of starvation, social instability, and terrorism. In many parts of the world the gap is widening, not closing.
- The rapid pace of technological and social change is creating a world of ever increasing complexity. Significant numbers of people in both developed and underdeveloped countries feel displaced and powerless against the onslaught of change. Many fear the loss of social cohesion and the erosion of traditional culture and values.
- The threat of nuclear war, the increasing danger of nuclear-weapons proliferation, and a runaway arms race call into question the very survival of the species. These problems are both the most serious threats to our survival and symbolic of the overall failure of a generation to guarantee its children a safe and secure future.

A D[illegible] World

Our world is divided into hostile camps of competing ideologies, needs, and interests. These divisions make the search for solutions even more difficult:

Communist and capitalist countries fiercely compete to acquire new markets and spheres of influence. Third World nations struggle to pay their debts even as they aspire to achieve the lifestyles of the industrial world—ways of living that the planet cannot, in all likelihood, sustain for more than another 50 or 100 years.

By far the most dangerous competition is between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rather than collaborating in the search for solution to global problems, the superpowers appear to be locked into an intensely hostile competition for military and ideological supremacy.

In our own country the debate about foreign as well as domestic policy alternatives is polemical and polarized. Clashing ideologies and conflicting

special interests increasingly paralyze the legislative process. Thus the serious, long-term problems that confront our country and our planet remain unaddressed. Meanwhile, many Americans, perhaps in part because they are upset and confused by the nature of the debate, seem less and less interested in participating in the democratic process.

Understanding the Interests, Needs, and Concerns of Students

Educators teach people, not subjects. The work of developmental psychologists like Jean Piaget helps us to understand that what and how we teach must engage students actively in order for real learning to take place. *I believe that the second social responsibility of educators must therefore be to more deeply understand the interests, needs, and concerns of students.*

Most good teachers excel at the fine art of uncovering students' individual interests and relating them to what the teacher considers essential to learn. However, very few teachers take the time to understand students' responses to the world. What do the young see and hear about the larger world around them? What are their concerns for the future? And how might their views of the future affect their behavior? Beginning about five years ago, members of Educators for Social Responsibility, as well as others in the social sciences, began inquiring into young people's view on current issues and the future.

Visions of the Future

I will never forget my first conversation with a student on these topics. It was the winter of 1982, and I happened to ask a 4th grader in the school where I was principal if he thought that nuclear issues ought to be discussed in class. I purposefully did not mention the words "war" or "bomb."

"Yeah, for sure," was his reply.

"What would you want to know?" I asked.

"I want to know what the danger of nuclear war is," he said. "And I want to know what would happen if there is a nuclear war."

"Why do you want to know those things?"

He turned away and mumbled, "you really don't want to hear my answer." When I assured him that I did, he stared at me and said, "So that when we all get blown up, I'll know why it happened."

In the last several years, evidence has been mounting that this boy's fear is shared by many of his generation. In 1983 a survey of 1,500 students in grades 7 through 12 done by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, *The Mood of American Youth* (1984) found that,

> The percentage of today's students who are very concerned about the possibility of global confrontation [is] almost 50 percent. . . . These student views on world

problems were remarkably consistent regardless of the students' ages, geographic region, and family-income levels. . . . Given this uncharacteristically high degree of uniformity in the students' responses about world problems—most notably, nuclear disaster and war—it appears that young people today very strongly believe and fear that some type of global violence is a real possibility within their lifetimes."

More recently, research done by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (1986, February 5), found that 35 percent of college students surveyed thought that nuclear war would occur within their lifetimes.

In order to more fully understand the nature of students' concerns about the future, I have conducted an informal poll of my own. I have asked students in high school classrooms around the country to write, without any prior discussion or introduction, on the topic, "The Year 2000—what will it look like, either for you personally, or for society?"

Student responses were extraordinarily powerful and suggested that the problem we educators face is far more serious than the surveys indicate. A clear majority of students envisioned variations on a doomsday theme. But also disturbing were the smaller number of papers that described a kind of technological Disneyland. Consider the following excerpts:

"The world, as we know it today, is heading quickly for disaster. It is becoming a less and less safe place to live. No longer do I feel my life is in my own hands. . . . I'm not just talking about the possibility of nuclear war obliterating mankind but also of the deterioration of society."

"In the year 2000 society in general will change. Everything will be different than it is now. There would probably be more computers and robots used for everything imagined. Cars, houses, and things that are used every day would likely be computerized. We might not even have to lift a finger in the year 2000."

"In the year 2000 I think most everything will be run by computers and machines. Our armed forces will be very large because there will not be many jobs for people that do not have a really good education in the computer field. Since most all children now are learning about computers in school there will be many people trying to get the same jobs."

"I think it will be more killings crazier people, let me just say that more violence. It's going to be a lot more control over people. The younger people without jobs will be getting into trouble."

"I am 33 years old and it's the year 2000. I am settled in a good well-paying job as a fashion designer. I am currently married to a husband who is Vice-President of a very large corporation. My house is located in Atlanta and is very up-to-date. We have an electronic maid that does just about everything. We have 'moving stairs' that take us to each floor. We also have a telephone which you can see the person you are talking to on your screen. . . . Cars are very expensive but very nice. They have all kinds of electronic things in them that makes traveling much easier."

"Armies of scavengers, both human and animal, roam the cities. Well armed soldiers guard the factories, and try to contain the scavengers in the slums. The

scavengers, themselves, feel shut out and desperate. There is not enough to go around. The scavengers must be left to die in the interest of survival. . . . The world is in a new Dark Age. Civilization has deteriorated because of unemployment, overpopulation, and inflation which resulted in feudal wars of factions and social classes."

"The sun rises slowly over a gray landscape. The gutted ruins of a small building stand blackened against the reddish sky. A faintly glowing spider races across the charred wall. The strange mewing of an unknown creature breaks the silence. This is the terrible scene of 2000. How did it happen?"

Cynicism About Democracy

After giving this essay assignment to students, I select a few papers representing divergent points of view to read aloud as a beginning for class discussion. Sadly, the students who have optimistic views of the future often will not defend their point of view. Their faith in new technology is usually overwhelmed by the point of view of students who see the technologies we have already created as much more of a threat than a promise.

After discussing students' concerns for part of the class period, I try to spend more time talking about what students can do, and what adults are already doing, to try to bring about a more secure and hopeful future. In such discussions, cynicism about democracy quickly becomes apparent.

"How many of you think that citizens can help to bring about change in our society?" I often ask. In elite private schools, as many as 25 percent of the students will raise their hands. In urban public schools with high minority enrollments, the percentage of students who think citizens can effect change in our society drops to about 10 percent.

The replies to my follow-up question help to explain the cynicism. I ask, "Can any of you think of examples in American history where citizens have brought about social progress or change?" Rarely do I see a student's hand go up in response. The emancipation of slaves, womens' suffrage, the labor movement, and, more recently, the civil rights, women's, and environmental movements, are topics that a majority of these students probably studied in required American-history classes. Yet, somehow, the message that citizens, working together in a democracy, can create a better world has not been communicated to this generation of students.

To summarize: Growing evidence from a variety of sources suggests that many of today's high school-age students have little hope for the future. Perhaps because of the pervasiveness of electronic media in their lives, they are much more aware of world problems than we adults may realize. They worry about a world with dwindling resources and an increased population. They sense that the economic pie is shrinking, both globally and within our own country. They see computers eliminating more and more jobs.

Many students also sense that a consequence of intensified competition for jobs and resources will be increasing violence. As many as 50 percent

believe that the ultimate expression of this violence may be a nuclear war that will destroy all life on earth. Finally, many students today feel powerless. Few believe that there is anything they can do to alter what they see as the likely course of events.

I am concerned that the primary motivation for students to excel in school today is not interest in learning but fears: fear of not being able to get a well-paying job; fear of not being able to hang on to the rung on the social ladder that their parents worked so hard to achieve; fear of being a have-not in an increasingly divided and competitive world. And for the students who are already left out, who don't have a place on the social ladder, there is no motivation at all for learning.

I think a likely consequence of this increased anxiety is self-centeredness and an almost desperate striving for the pleasures of the moment. The attitude of many students today seems to be, "I'm going to get mine, now, while the getting is good." Or as one bright 12th grader said in a class discussion, "A lot of us don't care so long as we've got everything we want. We don't think about the future so long as our bellies are fed or we've got our national forests. While we're living, who cares what everybody else has got after we're gone?"

I believe that the most vital question in education today is not, "How do we improve students' test scores and basic skills in order to create a more competitive economy?" Rather it is, "How can we motivate students to aspire to intellectual and moral excellence in a world that appears to them to offer so little hope for the future?" We need the best from this generation—the best that their minds and hearts are capable of—if we are to find solutions to the urgent problems which confront us. How can we educators prepare students, and inspire them, for this task?

Educational "R & D"

Recent education reform efforts have accelerated the trend toward making education an assemblyline process with standardized texts, homogenized students, and quantifiable products. However, most good teachers reject this industrial view of their work, believing that good teaching is part art, part science. It requires a constant effort to refine what is most essential to learn and to make the learning process more active and dynamic. *I believe that the third social responsibility of educators must be to engage in ongoing efforts to improve the quality of their work through trial and error, or what might best be called "research and development."*

For the last several years, a growing number of educators around the country, many of them members of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), have acted on the increasingly urgent need to develop new teaching methods

Related Curriculums

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) has developed a number of curriculums relevant to the subject of this chapter. They include:

Perspectives: A Teaching Guide to Concepts of Peace, K-12. Edited by Sheldon Berman, 1983. A 400-page guide that challenges students to create definitions of peace that include conflict and the pursuit of peace. The curriculum raises questions about the relationship between peace and justice; conflict resolution; the structures by which peace can be promoted and preserved; obstacles to peace, such as propaganda and images of the "enemy"; and individuals and groups that have helped to create social change and work for peace. Like all of ESR's teaching materials, this guide was written by classroom teachers and stresses the importance of critical thinking skills and a balanced approach to teaching controversial issues. It is filled with practical lesson plans as well as guidelines about age-appropriateness.

The Participation Series. Coordinated by Sheldon Berman, 1984. This ESR series is built on experiences with young people who have expressed feelings of powerlessness and hoplessness about the future. In part because of such feelings, ESR views nuclear age education as the empowerment of individuals everywhere—in school, classrooms, home, and community. The objective of the *Participation* series is to help young people move beyond feelings of powerlessness. Units include:

Taking Part—An Elementary Curriculum. Suggests classroom activities and structures that help children in elementary grades identify issues and areas for responsible, empowered efforts. Premised on ESR's experiences with many older students who feel helpless in the face of nuclear issues, this unit helps young people experience the truth that in a democratic society individual citizens have a responsibility to participate in the democratic process and that they can make a difference through their efforts.

Making History—A Social Studies Curriculum (for grades 7-12). Students learn to make informed decisions and to act on them by choosing an issue or problem in their environment that they feel needs to be addressed, researching the issue, and implementing solutions. The curriculum offers an excellent opportunity for fusing the academic with the affective and for encouraging social concern.

Toxic Waste—A Science Curriculum (for grades 7-12). Students examine the problems of toxic waste disposal and investigate these problems in their own communities. The unit is designed specifically as a model for a variety of social issues other than toxic waste.

Elections—Secondary Teaching Activities (for grades 7-12). Thirty activities focused on the American democratic election process with an emphasis on understanding diverse viewpoints on national security. Students use media studies, political demographics, role-playing, and postelection follow-up, for example, to assess candidates and issues. Although this guide was prepared specifically for the 1984 election, it is useful for general study of how democracy functions.

A 5th and 6th grade curriculum for this series, in mathematics and language arts, was scheduled for publication in late 1986.

Decisionmaking in a Nuclear Age. Coordinated by Roberta Snow, 1983. Designed for high school students, the objectives of this 3- to 12-week curriculum are "to promote an understanding of nuclear weapons within the context of . . . choices" and to help students develop the interest, social insight, and decisionmaking skills to participate in the democratic process. Underlying this design is the assumption that every individual in a democratic society has the power to influence events; that to choose not to exert that influence is also a choice; and that the classroom is a place for students to develop their abilities to propagate and participate in a democracy.

To this end, this curriculum encourages controversy and debate and analyzes and challenges differing perspectives. Yalta; Truman's decision to drop the first atomic bomb; the Cold War; the Rosenberg, Hiss, and Oppenheimer cases; and the Cuban missile crisis, to name a few topics covered, are presented in the context of differing viewpoints. Ultimately, this unit is about how to think, not what to think; as one student wrote, the course is about the "ways we learn to think how we think."

For a curriculum order form, or more information about these materials and membership and teacher education programs sponsored by ESR, write to Educators for Social Responsibility, 23 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 (phone: 617-492-1764).

and materials for the nuclear age. Several principles have emerged from this educational "R & D" which may be useful guideposts, or working hypotheses, for additional exploration.

New Intellectual Tools

The new knowledge about the crucial issues of our time must be infused into the teaching of all academic subjects. No student should graduate from high school without learning in science classes about global environmental problems, for example, or key arms-control and foreign-policy issues in U.S. History classes.

Other social issues, such as the impact of new technology on society, do not easily fall within the bounds of traditional academic disciplines. For this reason, perhaps the best approach to the problem of educating for citizenship in the 1980s might be to require all high school seniors to take an interdisciplinary class on "Problem-solving in the Nuclear Age." Such a class could focus clearly on the key questions and choices that face us as citizens in a democracy and the alternative solutions posed by people of different political viewpoints.

Teaching about controversial social issues requires a *new definition of critical thinking.* (See, e.g., Snow and Goodman 1984 for a fuller explanation of this definition.) In a majority of the classrooms that cover current social issues, students are either exposed to debates or are encouraged to debate themselves. Their points of view are often hardened and the opportunity for learning limited in a process that is adversarial. They thus replicate the divisions that characterize adult discussions on the major issues of our time.

By contrast, we have tried to evolve teaching strategies that favor dialogue. The goal of this different discussion process is to encourage students to reject a dichotomized, right-wrong approach to social issues. If we are to overcome the increasing polarization in our society, we also must teach students to listen in new ways: to understand the life experience which informs different perspectives as well as the convictions from which they arise. It is only after students have begun to understand different points of view in a more profound way that they can begin to explore the gray spaces between polarized positions and perhaps uncover new truths.

New Ethical Tools

Such education is not value-free. An implicit goal of this new way of teaching critical thinking is to develop students' capacities for empathy. Compassion and commitment are two other essential ethics for an interdependent world which teachers must actively nurture. In the words of Rene Dubois, being a world citizen requires that we "think globally and act locally."

Students do not develop ethics by being taught courses in moral dilemmas or values clarification, though these may be of interest to some. Nor do they learn how citizens can make a difference from a civics test. Rather, students learn these lessons through engagement with the real world. Teachers can play an instrumental role in creating these kinds of learning opportunities, not by trying to enlist students in their particular causes but by listening for students' real concerns and ideals and actively affirming them.

I first began to learn how to do this as a high school English teacher. Every year, I assigned students to write an editorial on the topic of their choice. We then read the essays aloud in class and dicussed both the technical aspects of the writing and the content.

The topics varied from the state of school lunches to major international issues. One year, a number of students wrote about the problems of growing old in our society. After one girl had read her editorial, the fourth on the subject, she spoke out impatiently, "It's one thing for us to write about how old people suffer and have a good discussion where we all agree, but we should *do* something!"

"What did you have in mind?" I asked.

"I haven't really thought about it, but there must be something we can do as a class together."

"Does anybody have any ideas?" I wondered.

"We might go give a reading, or work, or something else at a nursing home," suggested another student.

A number of students seemed to respond to this idea, so two students volunteered to call the nursing home down the street.

The offer of a reading met with a very cool reception. Most of the patients were hard of hearing and not particularly interested in poetry. To gather them into a group also meant a lot of extra work for the staff.

This unexpected development posed an interesting problem in charity: What do you do when the people whom you want to help don't want what you'd like to give? The class was ready to give up the whole idea of the visit, but I suggested they call back and *ask* what we might do that would be more helpful.

When our two negotiators called back, they were told that many of the patients were starved for companionship. If we were willing to just talk with the patients who wanted company in their rooms, that would be a real service.

We discussed this proposal in class and agreed on a time and date for our visit. I made clear to them that this visit was *not* a required part of the class, and they would still have the same amount of English homework that night.

Every student but one met late one afternoon outside of school. Together, we walked down the street to the imposing red brick building that we all had passed many times but never entered.

I hesitated as we walked in the door. What kind of learning experience would this turn out to be for students? The halls were painted dull green, and a heavy antiseptic odor hung in the stale air. Several old people who could not control their head or body movements were being wheeled past us in chairs. Others simply stood and stared with hollow, vacant eyes as we walked by. We went quickly to the office, where we were given the names and room numbers of those we were to visit.

When I knocked on the door of the room number I'd been given, a frail voice called, "Come in." At first I didn't know waht to say to the small, white-haired woman sitting by the window, but I explained who I was, and why I had come, and began asking her how long she had been in the home, where she had lived previously, and so on. The time passed quickly as she told me about her life. She had once been a seamstress for many First Ladies and had a number of stories, both interesting and sad, to tell about some famous people who had been kind to her and others who had taken her and her work for granted.

We talked about our experiences the next day in class. Early in the discussion one student shook his head and said quietly, "I never realized how easy it is to be helpful to another person."

Other students began to ask questions about the nature of welfare and public-assistance programs for both the poor and the aged. Students saw that the patients' physical needs were being met adequately in the nursing home, but many of the patients had complained to us of being bored and treated disrespectfully by some of the staff. Just the physical appearance of the place had been very depressing. More money would obviously help, but what could change the bureaucratic way in which the people there were treated? We all had many more questions than answers.

Now feeling a sense of commitment to a problem that was suddenly much more real, several students who had initially written editorials on the plight of the elderly went back to do more reading. The experience inspired other students to do their best writing of the year. A third group of students, I later found out, made arrangements to return to the home for weekly visits.

The purpose of such learning is not to create a generation of self-sacrificing, liberal do-gooders, but rather to encourage the development of those universal ethical principles that are the underpinnings of civilization. Striving to overcome self-centeredness and developing one's capacities for idealism, compassion, generosity, and moral courage are the common aim of most of the world's religious and humanist traditions. As an ancient Hassidic put it, "If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, then when?"

Traditional religious values have less and less influence on the young. The materialistic values of the competitive marketplace—winning, consuming, possessing—are among the root causes of the plundering of the planet.

To preserve the achievements of civilization, public education must play a new role in our culture. Teachers must affirm the importance of moral as well as intellectual excellence.

New Leadership for Change in Education

Are such goals and teaching methods too idealistic for American education? I think not. What we have learned about educating for excellence on an endangered planet is consistent with the recommendations of many outstanding education critics and is already being quietly practiced by good teachers.

Ted Sizer, for example, talks about reducing the "coverage" of facts and subject matter in favor of engaging students with real questions and problems. Ernest Boyer suggests that community service should be a requirement for a high school diploma. Jean Piaget summarized the goal of education as being to help students overcome intellectual egocentrism by learning to reason, and social egocentrism by learning to work with others. Years ago, Maria Montessori said, "All politics can do is keep us out of war; establishing lasting peace is the task of education."

Many teachers know that more math and science, more tests, and a longer school day will not get students to work harder. Such "innovations" will only slightly improve standardized test scores and will not substantially affect the quality of students' academic work. Good teachers have always understood that the only way to motivate students to aspire to real excellence is to create structured learning opportunities where students take their own questions, interests, hopes, and concerns seriously.

I believe that education can be transformed, but only with creative and courageous leadership from within the profession. *If the first social responsibility of educators is to educate for informed and active citizenship, then I believe the last is for us to become models for what we teach, to be active citizens in our own schools and communities.*

It seems that the opinions of everyone but teachers are sought on how to improve education. We concerned educators must take the initiative in schools to create a real dialogue among our colleagues, administrators, parents, and older students about the basic purposes of education. School communities must spend time talking together to determine the mission of their schools. School self-evaluations, which must be done every five or ten years for accreditation in most parts of the country, are an ideal opportunity to clarify and put in writing the basic mission or ethos of individual schools.

How each school or community defines the larger purpose of education will vary, and a few may reject this concept altogether. However, it has been my experience that, when given a real opportunity to work through the issues, most adults will agree that it is not enough for schools simply to teach the

basics. Most also want schools to educate for citizenship, for a greater sense of meaning which affirms the values of community and the common good.

In the past, we teachers have been timid. We're reluctant to risk criticism or rock the boat. But now time is running short. If we do not affirm Bertrand Russell's words that teachers are "the guardians of civilization," then who will? If we do not stand up for what we know to be important in education, then who will? If not now, then when?

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Literacy in a Democracy: Our Responsibility as Educators and Citizens

Harold Berlak

THE ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY IS THAT ALL PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THEIR OWN GOVERNance. The responsibility of educators in a democratic society is to help citizens acquire the means to evaluate, understand, and influence the social, economic, and political forces that affect all aspects of our lives. The means are the capacity to think, read, speak, observe, and listen critically. All are integral to genuine literacy—a literacy that goes far beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

What aspects of literacy are necessary for democratic citizenship, particularly in light of the political and economic realities of today's world? How is the current reform movement obstructing efforts of teachers, principals, and others who are committed to the teaching of genuine literacy? What can we do as educators and citizens to rebuild our public educational system so that it will foster literacy appropriate to a democratic society? I address these questions in this chapter.

A Definition of Literacy for a Democratic Society

"Literacy," like the terms basics and excellence, appears regularly in public discussions about educational policy. Basics apparently refers to basic literacy, which for some has a self-evident meaning—the three Rs, pure and simple. There have been a number of significant efforts to dissect and clarify the meaning of literacy.[1] I will consider the following as necessary aspects of literacy for citizens in a democratic society.

1. Citizens need to decode and understand the written word and to have a working knowledge of the conventions of language—not only spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax, but also composition and speech.

2. Citizens need to interpret critically the symbol systems of society. They must not take what they see, hear, or read at face value but must be able to read between the lines—to understand how language and other symbols and images may be used to manipulate emotions, beliefs, and values. To be literate in this sense is to distinguish good argument from sophistry, evidence from propaganda, facts from ideology.

3. Citizens also need the will to read and question. Cultivating the will—call it the motivation—to read is absolutely crucial. Many of us know children and adults who read in the narrow sense—they can decode and follow printed instructions—but don't have the inclination to pick up a book for personal enrichment or to obtain information or clarify opposing viewpoints on a personal question or public issue.

These three aspects of literacy are integral to one another and of equal importance. Together they constitute minimum competency for democratic citizenship. Anything less violates the basic commitment of public schools in a democracy.

Literacy and Equality

Democracy requires the highest standard of literacy for all citizens. Without genuine literacy—the capacity to think, read, speak, observe, and listen critically—we are dependent on the experts and those who currently hold political and economic power. Our most basic responsibility as citizens is participating in our own self-governance. This requires far more than voting and participating in the electoral process. It is not enough to select others to make decisions on our behalf. Citizenship requires our involvement in the social, political, and cultural life of our communities. Not involvement for its own sake, but involvement for a purpose. And that purpose is to make our communities and the nation as a whole better places to live. By "better" I mean places where we and our childrens' children are safe and secure; where all men and women, not just a favored few, realize their hopes; where all have an equal opportunity to find work that uses their talents and realizes their

aspirations; where all men, women, and children experience the joys of life and receive the help they need to cope with its hardships; and where all may enjoy the natural world and be enriched by the cultural achievements of humankind.

Democracy rests on the belief in the dignity of all men and women and in their capacity to govern themselves. If democracy is to survive and thrive, all must be educated equally—not to *minimum* competency but to the highest standards of excellence. In a society committed to human dignity and self-governance, there can be no excellence without equality, and there can be no equality without excellence.[2]

Public schools are essential for creating a literate citizenry because they are the only public institutions that carry a legal responsibility to educate all people, regardless of station, race, gender, or national origin, to become intelligent voters, decision makers, and active members of a democratic community.

School and Work

The reality of society today is that only a limited number of men and women realize their hopes and talents. Many—the poor, those who live in economically depressed areas, urban and rural, *including* the well-educated—cannot find meaningful work. Some lack even the most rudimentary skills in the three Rs and live so close to the margin of existence that it is virtually impossible for them to become contributing members of their communities. I single out the job and social justice issue, not because it is any more significant in terms of educational policy than other social, cultural, and political changes but because there is the assumption in our society—widely repeated in a large number of the recent reports on education—that one must be literate to get a job. Thus no agenda for educational renewal can ignore the job market. Nor is it likely that any popular movement for democratic public education and for a more inclusive and broader meaning of literacy will gain public and political support unless the job/school connection is squarely and satisfactorily addressed.

Probably no other issue is more ideologically loaded than predicting the future of the economy. The recent report of the Carnegie Task Force on "Teaching as a Profession" begins with an image of the job market of the future.

> Our economy will be increasingly dependent on people who have a good intuitive grasp of the ways in which all kinds of physical and social systems work. They must possess a feeling for mathematical concepts and the ways in which they can be applied to difficult problems, an ability to see patterns of meaning where others see only confusion: a cultivated creativity that leads them to new problems, new products, and new services before their competitors get to them; and, in many cases, the ability to work with other people in complex organizational environments where work groups must decide for themselves how to get the job done. . . .

> We are describing people who have the tools they need to think for themselves, people who can act independently and with others who can render critical judgment and contribute constructively to many enterprises, whose knowledge is wide-ranging and whose understanding runs deep.[3]

This optimism may be comforting, but it ignores any discussion or analysis of hard economic realities. Two of these realities are the changing nature of the workplace and job market. In today's society, such satisfactions as decent pay and interesting work are not readily available to many people, and this trend is continuing. This recent Carnegie Task Force report accepts and helps to perpetuate the widely held assumption across the political spectrum that schools, whatever else they do, are primarily in the business of preparing persons for paid employment.

The persistent problem of the most widely publicized reports[4] is their failure to examine the educational implications of the striking changes in the U.S. and world economy, and in the ways the new electronic technology is being used to reshape jobs in virtually every sector of the economy, from farming to manufacturing and finance. The Carnegie Task Force report, as well as the previously cited reports, ignores the trends toward a two-tier labor market: one tier composed of a relatively small number of highly technical and high-level managerial positions, and the second tier composed of low-skill jobs that are increasingly routinized and repetitive. If, as appears to be the case, the new technologies continue to be used primarily to further fragment work tasks while computers perform increasingly complex tasks, then educational requirements for paid employment will continue to decline instead of increase, as the Carnegie Task Force Report assumes. This, coupled with "normal" unemployment rates of 6–8 percent (and much higher in many areas, and among minorities, particularly hispanic, Native American and black youth), suggests a future where most new jobs require very limited skills, and where underemployment, part-time work, and several occupation changes over a persons' lifetime become norms rather than exceptions.[5] Even if this whole line of analysis is flawed, a full examination of this scenario is crucial because of its profound implications for school reform. If it is in fact true that the skills and knowledge for a job can be learned in several hours—or, at most, in several months—there is no need for schools to become job training sites. Therefore, except for a minority of the population, the historic connection between school and preparation for paid job is virtually severed.

While vocational or "career" educations at public expense may serve the immediate needs of employers and save them the costs of training employees, such an education cannot prepare individuals to cope with the job situation they will likely confront over the 40 or so years of their work lives. This suggests the need for fundamental changes in the way we think about and organize the curriculum, and the entire administrative and decision making

structure in public education. It suggests also that educating for community involvement and for critical thinking are not adjuncts to the basics but are at their core if we expect citizens to be able to participate in shaping—not merely adapting to—the current job market, and if we expect people to find fulfillment in other areas of their lives besides the job they are paid to do. Thus, the basics for both job preparation and for active participation in the social, cultural, and political life of our community should include humanities, fine and performing arts, the crafts, the study of politics, and the histories of local communities and their peoples at the center of the curriculum, not the periphery. Vocational or career education would change its emphasis from teaching specific job skills or developing computer literacy to teaching *technological literacy*—a broad understanding of how technology along with other social, cultural, and political factors shape our everyday lives, including our employment options.[6]

How Top-Down Reforms Create Illiteracy

Since publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, public education has been in the public eye. This report was followed by dozens of others from a wide spectrum of educational and political perspectives.[7] Several have identified significant educational issues and problems that threaten children, particularly those who are poor, handicapped, female, or speak English as their second language.[8] However, at the core of many efforts aimed at raising literacy standards is a familiar set of mechanisms: mandating minimum competency tests for students; imposing state or systemwide teacher-monitoring systems; requiring the use of basals, or textbooks, in every subject area taken from a list authorized by the state, school district, or principal; and instituting universal standardized testing of teachers for certification, promotion, and advancement. While these reform efforts are intended to increase standards of literacy, it is my contention that they can and often do have the opposite effect—that is, they may actually contribute to illiteracy.

Student Testing

Teachers and principals and other school officials, who are keenly aware of the pressures to improve test performance, stress preparing students for the tests. Because standardized or minimum-competency tests are used as the measure of student achievement, school effectiveness, and professional competence, they become the engine that drives the curriculum and sets teachers' and administrators' everyday priorities. As teachers spend more and more class time teaching for tests, it becomes the tests that shape curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers, principals, and school specialists become mere functionaries in a bureaucratic system. Test-makers and publishers, in effect, are

choosing the aspects of literacy schools should emphasize, making curricular and pedogogical decisions that more properly belong to teachers, principals, other school professionals, and communities.

Virtually all tests widely used to assess student competence in the basics measure only the first aspect of literacy discussed earlier in this chapter: decoding and understanding the written word. The reason is that the current form of test technology (paper and pencil multiple choice items—a form now more than a half century old) can assess literacy only in the most limited sense. And this test technology is largely useless for assessing writing. The fact that these tests are often used as the "bottom line"—*the* quantitative criterion for judging the effectiveness of schools and teachers and the educational achievement of students—squeezes out of the curriculum writing and the two other aspects of literacy, critical reading and the motivation to read and question.

Most teachers and educational researchers readily acknowledge that such tests are deeply flawed. Yet they continue to be used because many educators are convinced they are the most objective means we have of measuring student and school performance. They are objective, however, only in the very limited sense of being able to generate relatively stable numerical scores through the administration of several versions of the same test.

Using these tests, in spite of their inherent validity problems and technical limitations, presents particularly troublesome problems in schools where large numbers of children enter with limited proficiency in the conventions of standard English—low socioeconomic groups and cultural groups where English is a second language. Because time, staff, and resources are so limited, particularly for these groups, virtually all available time and resources are devoted to drill in skills that fulfill only the first and the narrowest aspect of literacy. Thus, the lower socioeconomic and English-as-a-second-language groups may learn to decode and perhaps understand the printed word but most likely receive little assistance in developing their writing or their capacity and interest in being critical of the written and spoken word. The preoccupation with test scores by the public, the press, many administrators, and others distorts the school's curriculum and reduces pedagogy to the lowest common denominator of drilling for tests. The effect is a monotonous sameness that drives out creative and thoughtful teachers, principals, and other school-based professional staff. It also breeds a form of school-sanctioned illiteracy—the illiterate-but-successful test-taker. These pressures affect all students, but particularly those who are already at greatest risk.

Testing is a lever to make previously unaccountable schools—and even whole systems—accountable, especially to the children of minorities. It is one of the primary ways school systems try to restore good faith and a measure of order in what may have been chaotic and irresponsible schools.

However, proficiency in all aspects of literacy can be more adequately assessed in other ways. There are, for example, usable alternatives to simple multiple-choice measures.[9] Money currently spent on centrally written and administered tests could be diverted to school-based efforts to evaluate student and school progress that do not define literacy in such limited terms.

As educators we must be committed to educating the public about the limitations of test-driven curriculum. We also must work diligently with parents, teachers and other professionals, scholars, writers, testing and evaluation specialists, and others in our communities to devise more dependable, sensitive, and reasonable ways of assessing literacy.

Monitoring Teachers' Classroom Behavior

Various packaged programs intended to help teachers learn basic teaching skills have been introduced as a part of district- or schoolwide staff development programs. In some cases they are used to determine staff promotion and advancement. Virtually all these systems—probably the one by Madeline Hunter is most widely known—are introduced by administrators to insure that teachers can perform some elementary teaching skills. These systems, based as they are on a reinforcement behavioral model, lend themselves most easily to teaching for the first aspect of literacy, where specific outcomes can be most easily specified and assessed. When such systems are implemented, teaching styles that require class discussion, higher-level thinking and analysis, or use of imagination become the casualities. In effect these often well-intentioned programs distort the curriculum and again reduce the art of pedagogy to its lowest common denominator.

I visited one school where a systemwide mandate had been introduced that requires every teacher to write on the chalkboard every day a Madeline Hunter-style objective for every class or lesson they teach. In addition, they were required to formulate these objectives in a way that tied them directly to the state-mandated basic skills test. Whatever the advantages of these instructional systems, the costs can be enormous. Our best teachers often feel caught in the contradiction between what is mandated and what they believe students need to become genuinely literate. So these teachers learn how to quietly "sneak enrichment in," as one put it. Though many teachers who are practiced in the art of circumventing bureaucracy discover various means to overcome the limitations of such a system, what our schools and children lose are the energies of the public school's greatest resource, its most creative, committed, and knowledgeable teachers.

Centralized Textbook Adoptions

Another obstruction to efforts to teach genuine literacy is the increasing use of state-, district-, or schoolwide textbook adoptions in virtually all subjects. Again, this policy may be backed by good intentions—to ensure that

each child has covered a basic set of skills and knowledge, and that there is some consistency within and among schools. Access to good texts and books of all kinds is, of course, important. But while many in this country would be appalled at the idea of a nationally mandated curriculum, this, in fact, is what is occurring—first, because of the changing nature of the publishing industry; and second, because of the way testing is influencing the content and structure of textbooks.

In recent years, the textbook industry has become increasingly dominated by a small number of producers. Textbook and test publishing are big business. In the education industry, as in other areas of the economy, differences between mass-marketed products, in this case texts and tests, are relatively small. Large companies with a large share of the market have little incentive to innovate. Not only are we moving toward a national curriculum because of these changes in textbook publishing and marketing, but the problem of increased standardization is exacerbated by the fact that more and more publishers are responding to public pressures for higher test scores by structuring texts to conform to the objectives and content of the three or four most widely used achievement tests. This is particularly true for math and reading basals and workbooks, which are probably the largest and most lucrative piece of the textbook market. I do not hold publishers solely responsible since, by in large, they respond to what they think schools will buy. The increasing tendency to remove the choice of books from teachers and individual schools constitutes a further erosion of teachers' autonomy. It also infringes on their responsibility for developing their own pedagogy and creating their own teaching materials and approaches to teaching literacy. Once again, these developments, if unchecked, will contribute to the deterioration of standards of literacy, except perhaps in the most narrow sense.

What Can Educators Do?

Several recent reports have argued for greater autonomy and responsibility for teachers, principals, and individual schools.[10] They suggest that top-down changes will not achieve what is necessary and that power must shift significantly from the bureaucracy at the local and state levels to the individual school, and to teachers and principals.

I don't know any bureaucracy that willingly transfers power. The Carnegie Task Force is only the latest calling for a bold rebuilding of our public schools, restructuring them so that teachers, principals, and other school-based staff have far more to say about the curriculum, testing, pedagogy, and a variety of other matters, including teacher training. What is missing in this report and in others is an agenda—a clear image of the directions and the specific legislative, administrative, and organizational changes that are neces-

sary at all levels if a dramatic shift in decision making and school structure is to be achieved.

While I agree with most of the Task Force proposals, they do not get to the heart of the matter—who will provide the political pressure necessary to oppose those with vested interests in maintaining the existing decision-making structure. Only if teachers, school administrators, and citizens exercise their collective political strength will there be a redistribution of power. It is possible, but highly unlikely, that state departments of education, test-producers and publishers, and central office administrators will transfer power, particularly if this means dismantling programs, reducing their authority, or losing a lucrative market. Bottom-up responsibility cannot be mandated top-down; it must be asserted by professionals and citizens, working in concert.

If we are to fulfill our responsibility to create a future guided by a literate and critical citizenry, we as educators and citizens committed to public education must work together politically to resist intrusions on hard-won gains for access and equality of opportunity. We must use our influence to remove obstructions and to foster legislative, administrative, and judicial actions that extend these gains.

While there are good reasons to celebrate the achievements of public education over the last three-quarters of a century, we must bring new life to the commitment to public education. We must be willing to examine the roots of the problems—and to recognize our own contributions to these problems—and be willing to take responsibility for finding practical solutions. This is easily said and difficult to do. Teachers and educators, as well as elected and appointed officials (including foundation and union officers), must be among the first to examine critically many of our taken-for-granted practices and organizational arrangements—ones that are familiar and appear to work well. We must be prepared to question our *own* institutions and their decision-making processes for determining priorities and programs. A significant shift in power and responsibility from state and district offices to teachers, principals, and the local school community will require concerted and organized political action at every level.

I am *not* saying that federal, local, and state governments do not have a very significant and legitimate role to play, particularly in defending and extending equality of educational opportunities and in protecting the constitutional rights of students and minorities. But the role of government and the educational bureaucracy must be significantly different than in the past. Rebuilding means we must reconstitute the way schools are organized, financed, and run, and how decisions are being made. We must look at the curriculum and the nature of knowledge that has been enshrined in that curriculum, including assumptions about the relationship of schools to work. We must look critically and carefully at current testing and evaluation prac-

tices and be prepared to abandon and replace those that are pushing us in the wrong direction. We must look also at the dilemmas our children and families experience in a precarious world.[11]

Finally, as educators we must recognize that greater professional autonomy for teachers and school-based administrators and staff is not sufficient for building democratic public schools. To fulfill our commitment and to succeed politically we must make common cause with those who share our commitments in our communities—parents, student advocates, government officials, writers, artists, intellectuals, and ordinary working men and women—all who want a better future for our children.

Notes and Further Reading

[1] For an excellent discussion and bibliography, see Robert Pattison, *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

[2] For a lucid discussion of the meaning of human dignity and its implications for equality of education and educational reform, see Fred M. Newman and Thomas E. Kelley, *Human Dignity and Excellence in Education*, Final Report to the National Institute of Education, Grant No. NIE 6-81-0009, December 1983. Available from the Public Education Information Network and from ERIC.

[3] *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). These excerpts are taken from an abbreviated version reprinted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 21 May 1986, 45.

[4] *A Nation at Risk.* National Commission on Excellence in Education (Washington, D.C.: 1983), U.S. Department of Education, *Action for Excellence: A Comprehensive for Educational Reform*, report of the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1983); *America's Competitive Challenge: The Need for a National Response*, report of the Business-Higher Education Forum (Washington, D.C., 1983); *Making the Grade*, report of the Twentieth Century Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1983); John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983); Theodore Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: the Dilemma of the American High School* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); Ernest Boyer, *High School, A Report of Secondary Education in America* (Princeton; Carnegie Foundation on Teaching, 1983).

[5] For discussion of these issues and documentation of these trends, see: Arthur G. Wirth, *Productive Work—In Industry and Schools* (University Press of America, 1983); Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State* (Stanford University Press, 1985); Russell W. Rumberger and Henry W. Levin, *Forecasting the Impact of New Technologies on the Future Job Market* (Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance, Stanford University, 1984).

[6] See Henry M. Levin and Russell W. Rumberger, "Education for the High Tech Future," *The Public Education Networker* 2 (1985/86), Henry Levin, "Low Skill Future of High Tech," *Technology Review* 6 (1986): 18–21.

[7] For a rich compendium of the arguments and counter arguments and an excellent bibliography of these reports, see Beatrice and Ronald Gross, *The Great School Debate* (Simon & Schuster, 1985). For analysis of the shifts in educational policies over the last two decades, see Ira Schor, *Culture Wars* (Routlege & Kegan Paul, 1986); and Ann and Harold Berlak, *Dilemmas of Schooling* (Methuen, 1981). For an

analysis of the political, ideological, and educational assumptions underlying the conservative, liberal, and progressive-democratic views of educational reform, see Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education Under Siege* (Bergin and Garvey, 1985).

[8] Among the reports and books focusing on the equality and excellence question are: *Equity and Excellence: Toward an Agenda for School Reform* a report of the Public Education Information Network (St. Louis: 1985); A Committee of Correspondence for Democratic Schools, *Barriers to Excellence: Our Children at Risk,* a report of the National Board of Inquiry of the National Coalition of Student Advocates (Boston: NCAS, 1985); *Equality and Excellence: The Educational Status of Black Americans* (New York: The College Board, New York, 1985); Jeannie Oakes, *Keeping Track* (Yale University Press, 1985); *A Declaration of the Educational Rights of Women,* a report of the Project on Equal Educational Rights of the NOW Legal Defense Fund (Washington, D.C., 1985); Marvin Lazerson, Judith McLaughlin, and Stephen Bailey; *An Education of Value* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Ann Bastian, Norm Fruchter, Marilyn Gittell, Colin Greer, and Kenneth Haskins, *Choosing Equality: The Case For Democratic Schooling,* a report of the New World Foundation (New York, 1985).

[9] The literature on testing alternatives is vast. See the monograph series on evaluation published by the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, Grand Fork. Also see "The Search for Solutions to the Testing Problem," *Educational Leadership* 43, 2 (October 1985).

[10] Among these are *A Nation Prepared* of the Carnegie Task Force Report (op. cit.); *Equity and Excellence: Toward an Agenda for School Reform of the Public Education Information Network* (op. cit); *Choosing Equality,* a report of the New World Foundation (op. cit.); John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (op. cit.); Ernest Boyer, *High School, A Report of Secondary Education in America* (op. cit.); Theodore Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (op. cit.); Carl W. Marberger, *One School at a Time: School Based Management, A Process of Change* (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1985).

[11] For a more complete discussion of policy alternatives, see *Equality and Excellence: Toward an Agenda for School Reform,* a report of the Public Education Information Network, A Committee of Correspondence for Democratic Schools (St. Louis, 1985).

The Public Education Information Network is an independent, not-for-profit organization that fosters exchange of information and resources among professionals and laypersons actively involved in democratic school renewal. It also provides information to the public and the press about policy alternatives for public education. For information write: The Public Education Information Network, 7133 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63130, or call (314) 725-0710.

CHAPTER NINE

Promoting Equity: The Forgotten Responsibility

Vito Perrone

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF "EDUCATIONAL REFORM." FOCUSING ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY of our schools is salutary. Our children and our communities need better schools—schools with thoughtful, carefully articulated purposes, committed, intellectually alert teachers and administrators, powerful literacy programs, expansive curriculums, high expectations, close connections to important community resources, and accessible public accounting procedures.

Despite the existence of clearly constructive possibilities, there are, however, some disturbing elements in the reform discourse. Principal among these elements is a language and a related public policy of constraint, limits, competition, and punitiveness, as well as an enlarging pessimism about our increasingly pluralistic society. These are negative themes which may well assume precedence if not vigorously challenged by every person who cares deeply about children, schools, and communities.

Implicit in *A Nation at Risk* and other reform reports that have received considerable support in the popular media is the belief that schools were once uniformly better than they are today. During this supposedly idyllic age (*certainly* before 1960), everyone learned to read and write effectively, stud-

ied physics and foreign language and the like. That is clearly a distorted history in need of constant challenge. Everyone didn't learn to read and write effectively in the past. And physics was never studied by more than a small percentage of high-school seniors. More important however, in relation to the past we should feel particularly obligated to ask: How many Blacks, Indians, children of the poor, immigrant and cultural minorities, and children with special needs were in the schools in 1900, 1920, 1940, 1960? There was large-scale de facto as well as de jure exclusion well into the 1950s. However one wishes to rationalize exclusion, these earlier years were never idyllic. Nor were they models to which we should now aspire.

The argument is frequently made that we tried equity in the 1960s and early 1970s and that it cost educational quality. In many ways this argument represents a serious and unacceptable attack on the civil rights movement and the corresponding desire for a truly democratic society. Title I and Headstart worked. Desegregation was right. Nutrition and health programs were needed. Attention to curriculum relevance was logical. Women's equity was long overdue. But, the denigration of 60s reform is, it seems, a constant theme of many educational leaders.

Secretary of Education William Bennett, for example, characterizes the '60s as a time when *all* standards fell, when schools "lost their way." Bennett made this point quite forcefully in his report on the humanities and higher education, issued a year before he assumed his Cabinet position. While not a report on elementary or secondary education, it has implications for elementary and secondary schooling. Bennett suggested, for example, that the 60s inclusion of ethnic, non-Western and women's literature and history is one of the important reasons for the decline of the humanities and a loss of "the best that has been said, thought, written, and otherwise expressed about the human experience." In his report he was critical of "our eagerness to assert the virtues of pluralism." Bennett has continued, as secretary of education, to keep such beliefs in high profile.

To suggest that efforts at inclusion were the reasons for some mythical loss of quality is to pose a false problem. To state, as many educational and political leaders do, that equity and excellence are competing goals or distinct formulations, is an abuse of our social language. The 1960s effort to include all children, young people, and their families in the schools has not yet been completed. In spite of some significant gains, we have, unfortunately, a very long way to go to achieve the promise of universal education. For every school with a commitment to universal education there are hundreds of others in which such commitments have been forgotten or compromised.

For example, the percentage of young people completing high school declined annually from 1972 to 1983. This represents a major shift of direction after one hundred years of keeping more students through high-school graduation. The percentage of high-school students graduating reached its peak in 1967 (76.7 percent), with that percentage remaining stable until 1972.

The percentage of high-school students who graduate now is 72 percent. However, in some of our minority communities the completion rate is well below 40 percent.

I have shed a number of tears during the last year reading dropout reports from Chicago, Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. Unfortunately, these reports don't get much constructive public policy attention. (The February 1986 *Teacher's College Record* is devoted entirely to the issue of dropouts. It points out, accurately I believe, how quickly we have let the dropout problem fade in this "reform" era.) In light of existing dropout data, how ought we to react when hearing about a state greatly toughening graduation requirements although its schools are already losing a very large number of students *before* graduation?

My home state, North Dakota, and our neighboring state of Minnesota lead the nation in the numbers of their students who complete high school. Their 90-plus percent figures are the subject of pride and positive comment in the media. But even in North Dakota and Minnesota we must ask ourselves about those who don't complete high school. And who are those who stay in school but struggle with learning, who lack the skills and knowledge to go on successfully to a full range of postsecondary education settings? I have enough experience to know that race and social class are powerful factors in the educational success of students in these states, as they are elsewhere. But in these more stable, more favorable settings the educational effects of social class are not often part of the ongoing discourse.

In settings where 85–90 percent of young people complete high school, too little time is spent asking about the 10–15 percent who don't. I can assure you, though, that they look a great deal like the 40–50 percent who don't complete high school in New York City and Boston and Los Angeles and Chicago. We speak with pride in North Dakota, as I know educators do in many other places, about "our advanced placement programs" and "our superior math and science and arts programs." But we don't ask often enough about the students who are and are not represented. We should be more troubled than we are when we see only one woman for every eight men in the calculus class or one Black or Hispanic for every ten whites or, as was shown in Michigan State University research, that 9th grade general math is dominated by minority students and White females.

And what is being proposed as the "return to quality" reform in the 1980s? We are seeing more testing mechanisms, more state curriculum requirements that seek greater standardization, increased centralization regarding text and materials selection, time-on-task mandates that foster increased minutes of worksheets, pedagogical admonitions that equate discrete skills with whole meaning, and rule making that confuses the constructs of discipline and responsibility. Similar efforts in the past have not brought much improvement to the schools, and there is no reason to believe that the future will be different. Such regulatory efforts will not only discourage the best and

brightest from considering teaching at a time of growing teacher demand but also demoralize large numbers of those thoughtful teachers whom we most need. In the long run, these efforts will most likely discourage students and parents as well.

Issues that relate to fairness, access, and economic well-being receive too little attention in the discourse of educational reform. For example, only 18 percent of those who qualify for Headstart are being served in spite of the carefully researched and reported benefits of the Headstart program. Bilingual programs, guaranteed by legal and legislative actions, serve fewer than 25 percent who qualify. Special education support still doesn't reach a large percentage of those who need such services. And within special education, Blacks and other cultural minorities are overplaced through misclassification which, of course, strains an already underfinanced system unnecessarily. Black students, for example, are about four times as likely as White students to be in a class for the mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed. Chapter I services, which have proven successful in many realms of school achievement, reach just over 50 percent of those eligible. Very few secondary students receive any assistance from Title I at all. In addition, Chapter I requirements for parent advisory councils, a vehicle for encouraging parents to take an important role in the substance of their children's education, have been relaxed significantly because they are seen by the current national administration as burdensome and unnecessary. Even the states are beginning to drop parent advisory requirements in their compensatory programs. And there's more.

Vigorous enforcement of the Civil Rights Act and of Title IX has virtually come to an end. The loss of funding for Women's Equity Coordinators has meant, for example, that curricular efforts to promote gender equity have virtually collapsed. Enormous inequities of resources and curriculum quality exist between school districts and between schools within the same school districts. Anyone taking the time to make school visits will quickly notice enormous differences in the chemistry labs, libraries, and general aesthetic character of our schools. Overall services for children such as nutrition, child care, and housing are more inadequate than they have been since the Great Depression. Females are still heavily concentrated in vocational programs aimed at the lowest paying jobs in our economy, contributing to the increasing feminization of poverty. Tracking mechanisms that have long worked against the interests of those most vulnerable in the schools have expanded, and new sources of exclusion are being encouraged, in the name of quality. These are critical issues that test our commitment to equity, pluralism, and social democracy.

In regard to democratic commitment, I want to share a little of the report I have had the pleasure and the pain of helping to construct in association with the National Coalition of Advocates for Students. The report is subtitled

Our Children at Risk, a play on the *A Nation at Risk* study. It is based to a large degree on the testimony of teachers, school administrators, students, parents, and political leaders.

At our first hearing in Boston, a witness urged us to ask ourselves one question: "Which children matter, and to whom?" We tried to apply this crucial question throughout our inquiry and came to the conclusion that large numbers of children do not matter enough to too many of those who set both the education and economic priorities of this nation. Minority children do not matter as much as nonminority children; poor children are considered less important than nonpoor children. Non-English speaking children are not as important as English speaking children, and girls matter less than boys. Most educators would, no doubt, like to conclude otherwise. But are different conclusions possible?

Let me share some of the testimony that emerged.

This was a young man in New York City:

> I hated the school. It was overcrowded; teachers didn't care; students walked out and acted up and no one did anything to help the situation. I never knew who my counselor was, and he wasn't available for me. In the year that I attended, I saw him once about working papers. One 10-minute interview period. That was all. After awhile, I began spending my time sleeping in class or walking the halls. Finally, I decided to hang out on the streets. I did this for two years. During this entire time, I received about three cards in the mail asking where I was. Luckily, I always got the mail before anyone in my family did. That was it. End of school.

That story proved to be fairly common in many urban communities.

There are a large number of young people in Boston who are on the school rolls but have never been seen and have never been contacted. The argument is, "They are 16 years of age, and we have no legal responsibility to make sure they are in school." But what of the moral responsibility?

In Massachusetts, a teacher reported to us that whe[n] [s]ied to get enough textbooks for all of her students, she was told to ha[ve] [s]tents share the books because half the class would leave anyway. Still a[n]other teacher, whose principal responsibility was to teach writing, told us her s[chool]'s policy was to hand out half sheets of paper to students, no matter what assignment. She did not understand how she could expect her students to [co]mplete serious writing assignments if the initial message to them was they would not have more than a half-page worth to say. But she often was told not to have expectations greater than this.

A parent who described herself as "an average middle-class citizen" told of her reaction to Seattle's gifted-option program, a program that drained off a fairly large number of students from neighborhood schools. I can see her saying it. It was a powerful statement given with great passion and corroborated by several other White middle-class women.

> Every time I read, or hear, how much somebody loves the Seattle School District, how they love the special program their child is enrolled in, how they applaud the job of educating the school district is doing, I don't have to read any further. I know the next sentence will read, "My child is enrolled in the 'gifted' program. . . . " No one with a child in a non-gifted classroom in Seattle, with one or two exceptions, would ever think of writing such a letter of praise.

She concluded: "If the regular classroom is not good enough for the gifted, perhaps it is not good enough for those left in it either."

Others in Seattle talked about the depressing effect that the "creaming" of kids (and parents)—mostly White and middle class—has had on the regular schools. The parent I quoted above asked, "What are my children, all in the gifted magnet that is almost exclusively White and middle class, learning about the values of democracy?"

A number of witnesses noted how little is done in most schools to retain or bring back pregnant or parenting teens, whether by providing support services or making the school climate more welcoming. As one presenter testified, "Even if she is granted medical maternity leave, she will probably fall behind in her studies . . . because home tutoring is not readily accessible, and schools for pregnant girls do not have a full curriculum."

Lack of day care also appears to be a principal reason teen parents have difficulty returning to school. With child care sporadic or uncertain, many of those who do return cannot meet the attendance requirements and end up suspended from school. The director of a continuing education program for girls in Michigan noted that "teens returning to school after delivery fear being judged immoral, delinquent, or promiscuous by school personnel." Already frightened at the prospect of "being different" and of not fitting into a classroom situation, these young women often "lose heart and stay at home." As a social worker in Chicago put it, "When there are problems with re-registering, and when administrative officials at the school are not supportive, it is hard to feel wanted."

In effect, many of our schools have all but written off this population of young women. Having allocated few resources, schools offer little help once a student becomes a young parent.

It was such disquieting data that those of us working on the report learned, relearned, and were pushed to comprehend, again. The kaleidoscopic nature of what follows reflects what we heard:

> The average child from a family whose income is in the top quarter of the income range gets four years more schooling than the average child whose family income is in the bottom quarter. (This gap has remained rather static for several decades.)

> In 1977 50 percent of all Black high school graduates went to college. In 1981 the rate had fallen to 40 percent and in October 1982, it fell to 36 percent. The percentage for Whites has continued at between 51–54 percent.

Thirty years after the *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education* decision:

62.9 percent of Black students attend predominantly minority schools.

Only 8.5 percent of all teachers are minorities—and this number is declining.

At the high-school level, Blacks are suspended three times as often as Whites; while minority students are about 25 percent of the school population, they constitute about 40 percent of all suspended and expelled students.

The national dropout rate for Blacks in high schools is nearly twice that of Whites.

Women face considerable educational and economic discrimination. By the time they reach young adulthood, females are often at a disadvantage relative to males in basic skills, in academic options, and aspirations, in vocational and career opportunities, and in anticipated economic security.

Vocational-education programs remain overwhelmingly segregated by sex, with females clustered in those programs that prepare them for the lowest-paying jobs. Females comprise 92 percent of those studying to be secretaries, or cosmetologists, but only five percent of those in electrical technology.

Women are less likely than men to complete four years of college.

At all educational levels, women have higher unemployment rates than men.

Women college graduates on the average earn less than men with an 8th grade education. The average woman worker earns about 59 percent of what a man does, even when both work full-time; minority women earn less than any other group or worker. (Women in the workplace, by the way, were doing as well or better in 1883.)

Pregnancy is the major known cause of dropping out among school-age females. Three-fifths of women at or below the poverty level in 1982 were high-school dropouts.

School finance has long been a major problem. The Serrano case in California in the early 1970s brought the fiscal inequity issue to the level of critical public discourse. yet, enormous inequities persist.

Funding varies widely among states. In 1982 New York State spent $2,769 per pupil while Mississippi spent $1,685.

Funding varies widely within states as well. In Massachusetts annual per-pupil spending reaches a high of $5,013 in Roe and a low of $1,637 in Athol. In Texas the top 100 districts spend on average four times more per child than the bottom 100 school districts. Some school districts spend two or three times as much as do neighboring districts. This sort of inequity is repeated in many other states.

The need for educators to raise difficult questions is great. This is not to say that all that appears negative is consciously or overtly pernicious. Nor

does it say that many of the issues that I have outlined are not being seriously addressed in many settings by thoughtful and courageous persons.

We have far to go to assure a democratic, fully equitable, and accessible system of education. But we won't get there unless we continue to raise our voices and keep our commitments vital. We can do this by asking hard questions, challenging simple answers, creating and risking the implementation of new structures.

Now I know that much of what I have said has a negative quality. That was purposeful. I presented it because it represents a dimension of American education that has been put aside by too many, forgotten in the glow of talk about standards, quality, and excellence. I increasingly meet individuals who argue that the quality we need may well have to come at the expense of commitment to a fully equitable and democratic system of education. I refuse to accept that. It seems that many of us in education have become spectators, voicing too few concerns about the loss of minority teachers to the ax of some technical formulation of competence; or watching kindergartners in record numbers being held back and more students failing to complete high school than has been the case for two decades; or accepting funds for more specialized schools for the privileged while inadequate funding is the general rule; or spending even more money on testing mechanisms when we can't support the funds necessary to support bilingual education at minimal levels; or developing larger statewide mandates that diminish even further the potential of individual schools and their teachers and parents and students from becoming sufficiently empowered to develop responsible programs; or choosing not to protest very loudly the loss of arts funds or library resources or jobs programs.

We need to be more than spectators. We need to encourage louder voices from many more of our school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. For all of those reasons and more that I could supply. The struggle for educational and social equity is nothing less than an important responsibility of all educators.

Suggested Readings on Educational Equity

A number of worthwhile books have appeared within the last decade on equity issues that relate directly to schools. They include:

- **Barriers to Excellence: Our Children at Risk** (Boston: National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985). Essentially the report of the NCAS Board of Inquiry, this book grew out of a series of regional hearings about equity issues in schools. It includes powerful personal stories as well as research findings. Its recommendations, grouped around the headings of local schools, state governments, and the federal government, are useful starting points for conversation and policy.

- **Choosing Equality: The Care for Democratic Schooling** (New York: New World Foundation, 1985), by Ann Bastien, Norman Fruchter, Marily Gittell, Colin Greer, and Kenneth Haskins. The backdrop for this book is the spate of recent "reform" literature, beginning with *A Nation at Risk*. It suggests that most of the reports oversimplified complex social forces. By not addressing sufficiently the context of education, these reports did not address issues of equality in realistic ways, according to the authors of *Choosing Equality*. The book is particularly useful for its historical perspective and its vision of democratic schooling.

- **Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), by Jeannie Oakes. This book addresses well the inequalities that schools intentionally and unintentionally structure by their myriad tracking systems. The author makes clear that separating students by achievement or ability does not bring positive results, academically or socially. She argues, essentially, that such separation is a malpractice. While much of her data, the bases for her conclusions, are of recent origin, she also reviews the longer term history.

- **Changed Lives: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youth Through Age 19** (Ypsilanti, Mich.: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1984). This is an interesting and convincing longitudinal study of paired populations—individuals from poor and minority families who had carefully organized preschool opportunities and those who did not. While most of us don't need such a study to recognize the need for or the value of good preschool educational opportunities, the High/Scope research should influence public policy constructively.

- **Caught in the Web: Misplaced Children in Chicago's Classes for the Mentally Retarded** (Chicago: Designs for Change, 1983), by Don Moore. Special education classes have long been settings where poor and minority children are overplaced through misplacement. Designs for Change examined closely the problems of misplacement in the Chicago Public Schools and, in the process, has provided us with a glimpse into practices beyond Chicago.

- **Small Futures: Children, Inequality, and the Limits of Liberal Reform** (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), by Richard de Lone. I have included this book because of its powerful critique of American society. de Lone argues effectively that the socioeconomic system of inequality that surrounds our educational systems subverts the schools, condemning large numbers of children to small futures. He makes particularly visible the pervasive and pernicious impact of social class and race on children and schools. While I personally believe that the schools can be better, more democratic and humane, providing for children larger futures than de Lone outlines, I do agree with him that long-term educational possibilities are limited by inequalities beyond the schools.

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