

**FRONTIERS**  
IN EDUCATION



**Education for Unity  
within a Diverse Community**

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# THRESHOLDS

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<b>EDITORIAL</b>		
<b>CAN WE HAVE UNITY AND DIVERSITY TOO?</b>	<b>Byron F. Radebaugh</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>RETHINKING THE ROLE OF SCHOOLING</b>	<b>John E. Corbally</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LANGUAGE POWER THROUGH DIVERSITY OR UNIFORMITY?</b>	<b>Jeanette M. Kuhn</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND VALUES</b>	<b>Terry L. Eidell and Edward E. Gotts</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>TOWARD LIFE-CENTERED EDUCATION</b>	<b>Walter Wernick</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION REVISITED</b>	<b>Arthur Brown</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>FRAGMENTED SCHOOLS IN A FRAGMENTED SOCIETY</b>	<b>Joan L. Peterson</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>EDUCATION: FOUNDATION FOR UNITY</b>	<b>Wilson Riles</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>STERILIZING THE GOLDEN GOOSE</b>	<b>Joseph R. Ellis</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>RESTORING A BALANCE BETWEEN UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY: A SUMMARY</b>	<b>Byron F. Radebaugh and Joseph R. Ellis</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>AN INVITATION TO OUR READERS</b>		<b>28</b>

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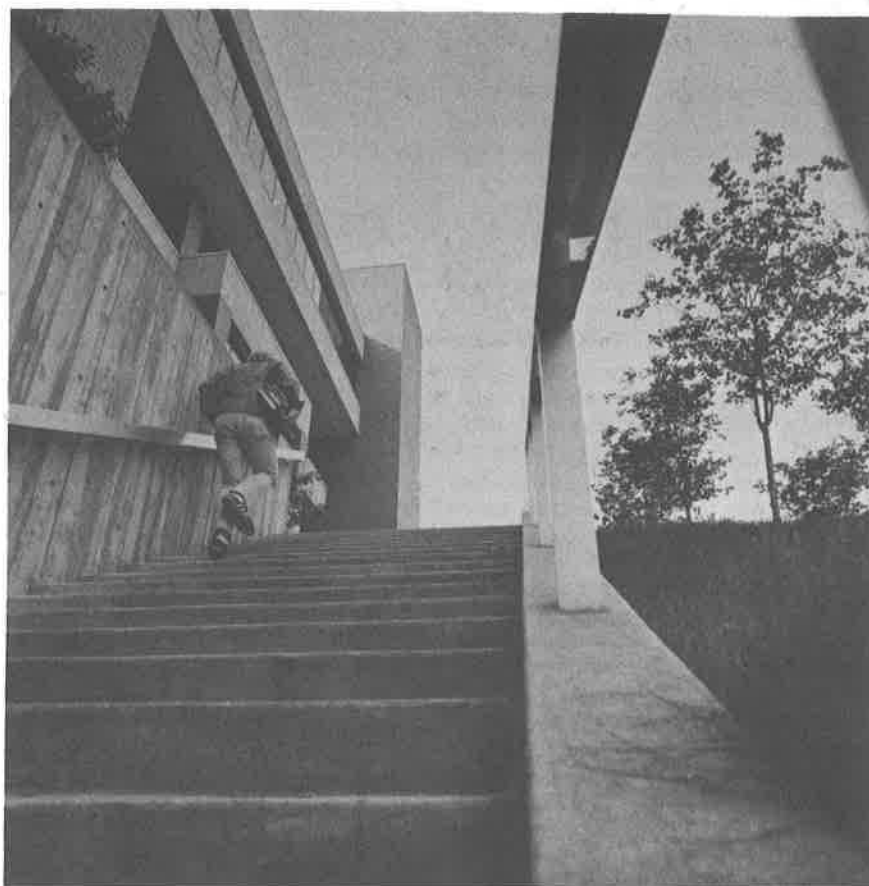
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## Editorial

by Byron F. Radebaugh and Joseph R. Ellis

We stand on the threshold of a new decade. As democratic citizens we confront complex problems related to energy, pollution, inflation, medical care, public education, and relations with other nations. The editors of this issue of **Thresholds** believe that, as a people, we have become so diverse that we have lost much of our sense of common purpose and thereby much of our sense of community. We think the balance between unity and diversity that should exist in our society has shifted too far in the direction of diversity. One manifestation of this shift is that we are having an increasingly difficult time developing the consensus necessary to arrive at, agree on, and implement broad public policy designed to solve the major problems that confront us all. Do we as a nation need to create an enhanced sense of common unity, find a common moral purpose and devise new ways of making democracy work better? If so, what are the implications for education?

It was concern about this lack of balance between unity and diversity that motivated the editors to produce this issue of **Thresholds**. We asked our contributors to address the following questions:

1. As a people, have we Americans lost our sense of common purpose and become too diverse?
2. Should education try to further a sense of community in our culture?
3. What can be done by the schools and others to achieve an appropriate balance between diversity and unity within our culture?

In essence, the editors asked our contributors to share with us their best thinking as to what our schools should and can do to "balance the scales" between diversity and unity within our democratic society. We think you will find their ideas stimulating, insightful, and reflective.

In the first essay, Byron F. Radebaugh asks, "Can We Have Unity and Diversity Too?" and thereby sets the theme of this issue.

The essays by Arthur Brown, John E. Corbally, Joseph Ellis, Terry L. Eidell and Edward E. Gots, Jeanette Kuhn, Joan Peterson, Wilson Riles, and Walter Wernick provide insights and answers to the three questions posed above.

The final essay by the editors summarizes the answers and insights provided by the contributors.



# Can We Have Unity and Diversity Too?



Byron F. Radebaugh

Can too much diversity destroy our democratic way of living? Should educators attempt to nurture all kinds of diversity in their pupils? Can we have unity and diversity too? The purpose of this essay is to explore some of the implications for education that flow from these questions and suggest a possible answer for each of them.

I shall take the word diversity to refer to difference, unlikeness, individuality, or variety. The word unity shall refer to oneness, as in spirit, aims, interests, sentiments, purposes, or feelings. I shall take the word education to refer to the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort (Cremin, 1976, p. 27). The word democratic will refer to a way of living characterized by certain basic values such as majority rule-minority rights, those affected by a decision should have some voice in making that decision, the importance of the individual, freedom of belief and thought, and those other freedoms found in our Constitution.

Hook (1948) observes that in a democratic society, diversity can be a positive good—but a danger is also involved.

. . . That diversity of experience, direct or vicarious, is immediately enjoyable, few in our culture will be inclined to deny. It safeguards us against provincialism and the tyranny of the familiar, whose hold may sometimes be so strong as to incapacitate us from making new responses necessary for survival. Diversity in modes of experience refreshes the human spirit. Every discovery is a triumph of variation over repetition.

. . . Growth in maturity consists largely in learning to appreciate differences, in learning to understand them when we cannot appreciate them, and at the very least, in learn-

ing to live with them when we cannot understand them. Whenever we are challenged by the presence of differences, the task of intelligence is to find a way by which those differences that can enrich our life may be distinguished from those that would destroy it (p. 202).

We do not need to fear differences, according to Hook (1948) unless these differences are accompanied by practices that deny the right of differences to others.

. . . A stable pluralistic community is born from the moment it is recognized that all differences are equal which accept a common method of negotiating differences. It seems to me that it is this emphasis upon method as more important than any specific result, as a way of insuring progress without anarchy, that underlies all three facets of our heritage—the empirical temper, the democratic attitude, and our cultural pluralism (p. 202).

The great migration of many diverse people to the United States is described by Counts (1952). He suggests that the first resource of any society is its people, and notes that the true wealth of a country lies in its men and women. He also notes one of the consequences that results from the great differences found in the people.

. . . Thus throughout her history, America has been the scene of a most extraordinary mingling and clashing of classes, religions, nationalities, and races (p. 59).

Lee (1962) lists cultural pluralism as one of the twelve elements of American Democracy, and comments on the value of diversity.

. . . Whatever the American people are, it is because of the contributions of countless diverse cultural groups: Germans, English, Swedes, Chinese, Negroes, Jews, and many more. But cultural pluralism as a democratic principle is more than the statement of the fact; it refers more basically to the climate of opinion which accepts

and honors these cultural tributaries. History records examples without number of the rejection by a national or racial group of the advantages of cultural exchange. In all such cases, even down to our own day, such unintelligent inhumanity has been the product of the nondemocratic regimes. Conversely, therefore, one of the essential elements in the American democratic creed is the spirit of respect for an acceptance of the contributions of all cultures, races, nationalities, religions, on their own merits. Out of the blending and reformulation of these culturally unique elements emerges a stronger, more virile, and more humane whole. This is democracy in America (p. 135).

A similar set of ideas is affirmed by Dewey (1937) when he suggests that society loses when, because of some form of suppression, the resources of all its people are not utilized, and Childs (1950) suggests, in his "morality of community", that:

. . . Our continental nation not only is marked by regional and occupational groups with different economic interests: it is also composed of people of different cultural, religious, and national backgrounds . . .

The American people have long realized that we can enjoy unity without coercion only as we are prepared to struggle to establish and preserve the equal rights of all in the fundamental arrangements of our society . . . (p. 239).

Childs (1950) also indicates that American democracy is in a real sense an experiment in human brotherhood. He suggests that the public school was founded not only to equalize educational opportunity but also to breed in the young those basic moral attitudes which recognize human beings as human beings and the things they have in common.

. . . The public school has been expected to nurture this basic moral consciousness, not simply by its in-

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struction of the young in the history, the laws, the political processes and the social ideals of our democratic way of life, but also by the provision of actual opportunity for the children of the various component groups—economic, religious, and racial—to grow to respect one another by living, studying, working, and playing together. . . . (p. 241).

**. . . diversity . . . has some important limits and dangers.**

In light of the foregoing, therefore, I conclude there is considerable agreement among responsible scholars in support of diversity as a positive value in a democratic society. However, as has been suggested, diversity also has some important limits and dangers.

As early as 1957, Stamps (1970), Professor of Government, Rutgers University, warned us of "the contemporary crisis of democracy . . . [which] is [he thinks] mainly spiritual and psychological. Its roots must be found in the loss of common unity, in the inability of parties and interest groups to achieve agreement on fundamental common aims, and in their failure to find and accept a common moral purpose (p. 501)."

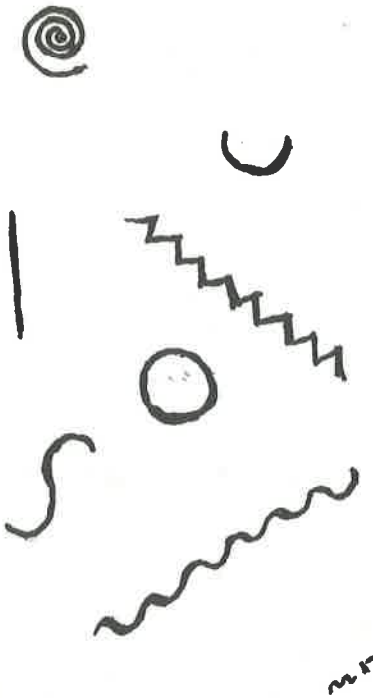
I think this loss of common unity is one of the reasons that our political leaders are finding it increasingly difficult to muster legislative support so that the power of the state can be mobilized in developing and fulfilling broad public policy. It is contributing to our present inability to deal effectively with the problems of energy, pollution, inflation, medical care, and foreign affairs.

Stamps points out the danger he sees inherent in this contemporary crisis of democracy.

The truth is that democracy has failed where it did not produce satisfactory results. Of all forms of government democracy is the most delicate requiring a long period of maturation and growth and presupposing the inculcation of an appropriate philosophy without which it cannot withstand the forces of disruption. When the pressures impinging on the government's stability are moderate, it can adjust to them and undergo gradual reformation or evolution; but when they are extreme, the desperate civil conflict generally culminates in the elevation of a tyrant (p. 501).

Sociologists Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1970) also express concern about the basic consensus that binds us together.

The political philosophy we have inherited, then, has given more consideration to the virtues of the typical citizen of the democracy than to the working of the system as a whole. Moreover, when it dealt with the system, it mainly considered the



**Motifs Random diversity**

single constitutive institutions of the system, not those general features necessary if the institutions are to work as required. For example, the rule of law, representative government, periodic elections, the party system, and the several freedoms of discussion, press, association, and assembly have all been examined by political philosophers seeking to clarify and justify the ideal of political democracy. But liberal democracy is more than a political system in which individual voters and political institutions operate. For political democracy to survive, other features are required: the intensity of conflict must be limited, the rate of change must be restrained, stability in the social and economic structure must be maintained, a pluralistic social organization must exist, and a basic consensus must bind together the contending parties. [Underlining added.]

Such features of the system of political democracy belong neither to the constitutive institutions nor to the individual voter. It might be said that they form the atmosphere or environment in which both operate. In any case, such features have not been carefully considered by political philosophers, and it is on these broader properties of the democratic political system that more reflection and study by political theory is called for (pp. 370-371). . . . [Underlining added.]

T. A. Murphy (1979) Chairman of the Board, General Motors Corporation, in a recent speech to the Economic Club of Detroit, asks, "What Ever Happened to E. Pluribus Unum?" He suggests that:

. . . We seem to be in danger of putting no emphasis at all on the unity part of our national motto and a whole lot of emphasis on "Numero Uno"—taking care of number one with little regard for the many. We have long since forgotten the sage advice of Benjamin 'Franklin—to hang together lest we all hang separately (p. 2).

Time magazine senior editor Morrow (1980), in his Epitaph For a Decade, notes that during the decade of the '70s:

. . . The American gaze turned inward . . . Americans found it harder to live with the more profoundly threatening possibility that they might lose a way of life . . . Social critic Tom Wolfe, in a 1976 essay, called it the Me decade, a term that caught the epoch's dreamily obsessive self-regard. The '70s were given over to building private, not public morale . . . Material progress advanced handsomely enough, but the psychology of the decade seemed to follow a downward trajectory. A consensus was lost, and authority seemed to operate only erratically. The screws of the American machine jarred loose—the whole thing rattled. . . (pp. 38-39).

He concludes by indicating . . . There is an impression now of national unity, a feeling that the U. S. is emerging from the privatism and divisions of the Me decade. The lunacy in Iran has a lot to do with that, of course. But it may not be entirely wistful to hope that the mood will last, that the '80s may even prove to be the Us decade (p. 39).

For the reasons listed above, I conclude there is considerable agreement among responsible observers that diversity in our society has been carried too far.

There is evidence that the "unity-diversity" phenomenon appears in educational contexts. The argument over educational vouchers by Butts (1979) and Coons (1979) is an example. An examination of some of these arguments will reveal the presence of this phenomenon.

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# The Unity-Diversity Phenomenon in an Educational Context

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## THE EMPHASIS ON DIVERSITY

**Of Family Choice and 'Public' Education** by John E. Coons, Professor of Law, University of California, Berkeley

1. Public schools have been essentially private schools run by the affluent, except for the form of their financial support.
2. Public education was and remains a profoundly elitist, exclusive, undemocratic structure of privilege.
3. Coercive assignment of the non-rich to schools has created more social problems than it has solved.
4. Freedom of choice is very important.
5. Two new schools are created. Each school is an individual nonprofit corporation—public or private. Beyond the three Rs, these new schools could decide what to teach, and they would fully control the style of instruction.
6. I cannot share this paradoxical view that the brightest hope for the public schools lies in their remaining benign prisons for the lower classes.
7. The public school will prosper only under family choice (pp. 10-13).

## THE EMPHASIS ON UNITY

**Educational Vouchers: The Private Pursuit of the Public Purse** by R. Freeman Butts, Professor of Education, San Jose State U.

1. The basic reason why the founders of the Republic turned to the idea of public education is that they were trying to build common commitments to their new democratic political community.
2. Public schools were intended to overcome the political inequalities and privileges inherent in private education.
3. It was in the hope that public schools would surmount the divisiveness of the many segments in American society, while at the same time honoring pluralistic differences, that the idea of a common school flourished.
4. Public schools were established to promote common civic values. Freedom of choice was limited to achieve other freedoms.
5. This is a particularly dangerous time for a new experiment on our liberties.
6. The choice that a voucher proposition offers is between weakening the public schools still further by encouraging flight from them and strengthening the public schools by recalling them to their historic purpose of promoting the ideals of the democratic civic community.
7. State policy should not be designed to encourage families to promote any kind of education they may devise. Rather, it should encourage innovation, experimentation, and diversity of approaches to the common goal of developing informed, committed, and responsible citizens for a democratic political community (pp. 7-9). . . .

A second example of the "unity-diversity" phenomenon in an educational context is the growth of "Centers" on university campuses. A perusal of the 1979-80 Telephone Directory for Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois, reveals the following "Centers".

Academic Computer Center  
 Administrative Computer Center  
 Adult Education Service Center  
 Biopolitical Research Center  
 Broadcast News Center  
 Campus Assistance Center  
 Career Planning and Placement Center  
 Computer Systems and Operations Center  
 Governmental Studies Center  
 Counseling and Student Development Center  
 Educational Administration Center  
 Health Center  
 Holmes Student Center  
 Illinois Regional Resource Center  
 Latino and Latin American Affairs Center  
 Learning Center  
 Minority Studies Center  
 Rape Crisis Center  
 S.E. Asian Studies Center  
 Summer Conference Center  
 TV News, Broadcast News Center  
 Women's Studies Center

I want to make sure I am not misunderstood here. In all likelihood many of these centers are making important contributions to the university community. However, I suspect that the motivation for the creation of at least some of these centers is sourced in the diversity phenomenon. I also suspect that many of them grew out of a special interest, and they are a result of a tendency to emphasize differences. But where do we find a center that emphasizes our commonalities—those things that bind us together—our oneness—our unity?

I would now like to return to the question, "Should educators attempt to nurture all kinds of diversity in their pupils?" If this question is answered in the affirmative, then at least three problems emerge: (1) we have moved perilously close to an "anything goes" approach to education, (2) we have failed to distinguish between those differences that can enrich our lives and those that would destroy it, and (3) we have failed to deal with those differences that would deny the right of differences to others. Furthermore, if we are to nurture all kinds of diversity or differences in our pupils, then what is not to be nurtured? Presumably, what is to be rejected are those things that lead to unity. But is it not the case that most parents intend to teach their children certain common things such as obeying them and the laws of the land, and expect educators to teach certain common things such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and at least some of the values basic to a democratic way of living? If the "no limits to diversity" criterion is used to guide the nurturing of the young, then differences leading to such things as cruelty, stealing, hatred, exhibitionism, and communism



### Motifs Arranged unity

must also be included. Most of us would reject the nurturing of these differences in a democratic society.

The greatest danger, however, involved in affirming the "no limits to diversity" criterion is the possibility that we might become so diverse that we cannot even agree to defend ourselves if attacked by some external enemy. If the attack was successful and ruthless, then all of us could be destroyed.

Another danger of the "no limits to diversity" criterion, in relation to the institution of the school, is that it could lead to such divisiveness and fragmentation that the system itself might not be able to function or survive as a unity. Broudy (1972) notes that:

Pluralism is beneficial when a variety of members contribute to the over-all functioning of a single organism. The heart, liver, and brain differ from each other but, by their difference, strengthen the unity of the organism. In art, one theory holds that the test of success is the unification of variety. In other words, highly developed organisms exploit great complexities for unity of function.

However, when the diverse members of a collection do not contribute to a unified goal or function, they cannot claim significance as contributors. . . . (p. 226).

How, then, can we begin to resolve the "unity-diversity" problem and work our way out of this current crisis of democracy? It

seems to me that the first step is to recognize the problem: an excessive emphasis on diversity in our society has resulted in a loss of consensus—a loss of a sense of common unity—a loss of fundamental common aims—a loss of a sense of our basic democratic values. These losses have impaired the adequate functioning of our basic institutions and made it more difficult for us to solve crucial common problems.

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**... [we should] commit major resources to the task of identifying those elements in our environment that do in fact tend to bind us together as democratic citizens. . . .**

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The second step is to be aware that diversity can be a positive good only where there is agreement on a common method for resolving differences, assurance that equal rights for all are found in the fundamental arrangements of society, and a deliberate nurturing of those basic moral attitudes which recognize the dignity of human beings as human beings.

The third step is to commit major resources to the task of identifying those elements in our environment that do in fact tend to bind us together as democratic citizens. Some suggested lines of inquiry are revealed in the following questions: What are the basic, fundamental values essential to a democratic way of living? What institutional arrangements, procedures, and practices are consistent with and promote these values? What can be done at this university, school, business, labor union, or faculty that would contribute to the identification of those things we hold in common? What can be done that would help us begin to better cooperate with, stimulate, and support each other?

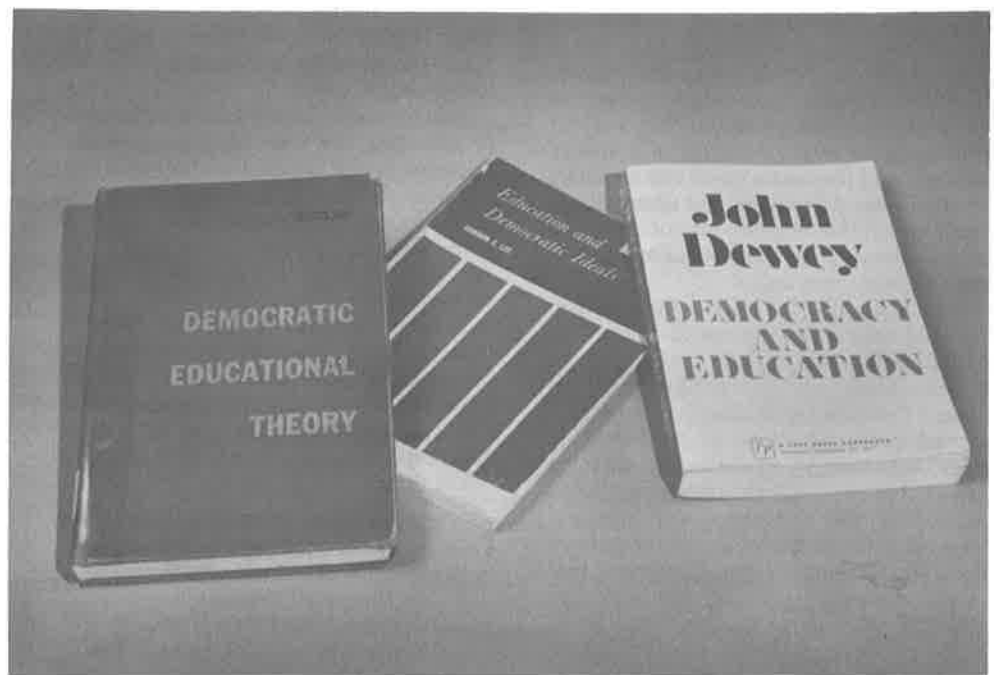
The fourth step is creating and funding "Centers" for the purposes of answering the above questions, and proposing new ways of making democracy work better.

I shall close by providing my answers to the questions raised at the beginning. Too much diversity can in fact destroy our democratic way of living. Educators ought not attempt to nurture all kinds of diversity in their pupils. We can have unity and diversity too, if we implement the four steps outlined above, and begin the task of restoring an intelligent balance between unity and diversity in our society. This is the major challenge facing us during the decade of the 1980's. I think it is worthy of our best efforts.

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*Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community.*

—John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927

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# Rethinking the Role of Schooling

John E. Corbally

The United States is a nation in which inconsistency and "contrary views" are the rule rather than the exception. Among the most visible and significant examples of this fact during at least the past decade is the conflict between the "melting pot" or "one nation indivisible" themes and the bicultural,

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**. . . In some ways, the civil rights movement and its many aftermaths have divided this nation and its people to a much greater extent than did even the Civil War/War Between the States.**

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bilingual, ethnic heritage, special-interest group themes. One cannot really describe himself as "an American" in today's world, but must, instead, be a "white, English-speaking, Protestant, male, consumer, environmentalist, Anglo-Saxon, Middle-Westerner, who favors nuclear energy and gun control and who has mixed emotions about E.R.A., saccharin, and no-smoking sections in cafeterias." Back in the early days of inflation, some of us were poverty stricken while others of us were at middle incomes; today most of us seem to fit both groups, but we can cast a suspicious eye at "oil barons" and "rip-off people" in transportation, utilities, or what have you. In some ways, the civil rights movement and its many aftermaths have divided this nation and its people to a much greater extent than did even the Civil War/War Between the States. And the schools, for better or for worse, have been forced by our society into the forefront of this divisive process.

First, however, the schools were asked to bear the primary burden of this nation's efforts to integrate our society. Schools and school districts - said to be among the last few truly local governmental units - suddenly found themselves the instruments of Federal policy and of Federal law, regulation, and court decisions on behalf of racial integration. The school - and particularly the elementary school - lost its position as the central focus of our American neighborhood and became, instead, a bus stop on behalf of integration

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which the neighborhoods would not foster. While there is always the danger of romanticizing the past, it does seem clear that the school and the church were - along with the home - the major unifying forces of the neighborhood in our society and that the neighborhood was an effective sociological unit on behalf of the values of a democratic society. With World War II came the need for women to work outside of the home which, when joined with concepts of liberation and the crushing financial burdens of inflation, led to today's society in which the home is no longer what it was. For a variety of reasons which are the subjects of other essays in other journals, the church lost its position of neighborhood centrality and the school remained as the sole institutional representative of the neighborhood.

But even here, forces were at work for many years to erode the neighborhood school. It is easy to forget that the original major move toward busing took place in rural America on behalf of educational efficiency and quality through school and school district consolidation. The one-room school - perhaps the supreme example of a neighborhood school - disappeared and the presence of a fleet of yellow buses in the parking lot of a school located between, rather than in, population centers became a common sight throughout the land. If it was appropriate to bus for educational efficiency (incidentally, it was only in the 1960s that "bus" became a verb as well as a noun), then it seemed equally as appropriate to bus on behalf of the moral and legal requirements of racial integration, and the yellow school bus came to the city. So the schools became (or remained) the vehicle on behalf of the melting pot which the United States felt itself to be.

One other aspect of the civil rights or human rights movement was the effort to develop a sense of pride in one's self and in one's heritage. Black leaders and particularly Martin Luther King, Jr., felt that blacks needed to gain a sense of pride in their race, to overcome an inferiority complex which society had imposed upon them, and to believe in their abilities and in their worthwhileness. Part of this regaining of pride

required an understanding of and pride in one's racial or ethnic heritage. In a sort of ironic way, the schools were asked to become the major vehicles for preserving ethnic heritage at precisely the same time that they were asked to lead in the integration of Americans of different ethnic backgrounds into a single, "equal," American society. If one's heritage included a language other than English, the preservation of language skills in that language was deemed important. Ultimately, it was determined judicially that one who grew up in a home where a language other than English was the primary language had a right to be taught in that language while learning English.

Soon society noticed that the best way to get attention and to seek redress of real or perceived wrongs was to become a member of a "minority group." Many individuals made a career of first defining and then representing such groups. While, for example, every American citizen is a consumer, there are hundreds of "consumer groups" designed to protect one group of consumers from another group. Because of the recognized importance of education, each such group develops materials and/or programs which it hopes, one way or another, to introduce into the curriculum. Thus, the schools became a major vehicle through which all kinds of subdivisions of American society hoped to achieve their special goals - usually somewhat limited in scope, often with little substance, and regularly in conflict with the goals of dozens of other groups attempting to gain access to the schools. Two legitimate purposes - integration on the one hand and a recognition of the worthwhileness of every human being and of his or her roots added tremendously to the burden of the schools.

Now we ask, "What can education do to achieve an appropriate balance between diversity and unity within our culture?"

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**. . . The schools have been asked to do too many things in our society without sufficient financial or moral support from society. . . .**

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My response to that question is either

conservative or reactionary depending upon one's viewpoint toward those labels. The schools have been asked to do too many things in our society without sufficient financial or moral support from society. I prefer a restricted role for schooling in the total task of educating our citizenry. I prefer schools which concentrate upon the basic things which each one of us needs to function as citizens in our society and which leave other elements of education to others. It is up to me to learn Gaelic if I wish to understand the language of my ancestors, but I do not ask that others pay for that portion of my education. My Japanese-American schoolmates in Seattle went to a special school every afternoon because their parents wanted to preserve the knowledge of an ancient culture in their children. We need to decide what our governmental institutions shall be responsible for and - even more important - what they shall not be responsible for. We are doing poorly in generating basic language, number, and economic literacy in our schools; we are doing poorly in preserving a sense of the culture of this nation - an accomplishment which appears to me to take priority over demands of other cultures; we are asking teachers and the schools to take over every educative task we can imagine, and we are assuming little responsibility ourselves for the total educative environment of our society.

Our schools need to give our children and, thus, our future the basic facts and skills necessary to permit them to function in our society, to understand the purposes of our society, and to understand their responsibilities to our society. An educated citizenry through laws and through practice must strike the balance between diversity and unity in our society. Let the schools provide the basic education necessary to create that citizenry and let us develop citizens and leaders with the fortitude to use those skills on behalf of our nation. We have wrongly defined diversity as if it meant self-interest, and we have failed to be our better selves or to seek and support leaders who act within the requirements of their better selves. Those flaws we cannot blame upon the schools and those flaws will not be corrected by the schools. We who are educators must not bow our heads and meekly accept either blame or missions which are not properly ours.



FIRST AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL 1821

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*In the conditions of modern life, the rule is absolute, the race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed. Not all your heroism, not all your social charm, not all your wit, not all your victories on land or at sea, can move back the finger of fate. To-day we maintain ourselves. To-morrow science will have moved forward yet one more step, and there will be no appeal from the judgment which will then be pronounced on the uneducated.*

—Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, 1967

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# Language Power Through Diversity or Uniformity?



by Jeanette M. Kuhn

Public concerns and opinions often place teachers in the difficult position of being expected to accomplish conflicting educational goals concurrently. This has certainly been true for the language arts teacher who has the responsibility of preparing students to be effective listeners, speakers, writers and readers of American English. Public opinion supports the administration of standardized tests which measure facility in Standard School English. Teachers are held accountable if students fail these tests. At the same time, recent public pressure has forced teachers to be aware of students' human rights to speak and write in the dialect or language of their choice. The Black Movement, The Feminist Collective on Children's Media, the American Indian and the Mexican-American, as well as other divergent speaking groups, have caused language arts teachers to reconsider the purpose, structure and significance of Standard School English in public education.

Traditionally, teachers have been required to teach Standard School English, admittedly a white-middle-class dialect with many regional and sub-dialects. Sincere, qualified teachers throughout the United States believed that students would profit by being taught a fairly consistent language which would enable them to communicate with persons throughout the United States as well as in many parts of the world.

In an attempt to deal with the problems and issues presented by concerned public groups who challenged the teaching of Standard School English, educators examined linguistic research for the purpose of gaining further insights regarding the structure and nature of human language. Also, they studied child language acquisition in order to discover implications for language arts instruction.

Linguists have made careful study of the major components of language structure: phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. They have found the surface

structure of these components quite different among languages and dialects. The surface structure makes it difficult, and at times impossible, for persons to communicate with one another. However, when the deep structure (Chomsky, 1957) is

**... there are basic commonalities which make it possible for humans to satisfy basic needs through social interaction involving language.**

analyzed, it is found that all languages express similar relationships—agent-action, location-spatial, animate-inanimate. Also, in their deep structure all languages express much the same sentence types—declarative, yes/no questions, negatives, information questions. Deep language structure indicates that in spite of the many and varied languages and dialects among the peoples of the world, there are basic commonalities which make it possible for humans to satisfy basic needs through social interaction involving language.

A most basic commonality among all languages is speech. Speech is the human process in which biologically normal persons use their vocal organs for the production of sound patterns which are structured into meaningful units. These oral units reflect the phonological and intonational patterns of groups of people who are closely associated with one another and who realize satisfaction of basic needs through social interaction. A great many non-verbal gestures, body movements and facial expressions become an important part of the groups' system of communication. On the surface, there is great phonological and intonational diversity among the languages of the world; however, when further examined, it is found there is much commonality because all humans produce sound with their vocal organs. This does not necessarily mean that it is easy for one language group to understand another, but rather points up to the fact that if necessity demands, it is possible to find a common base for communication because speech is a language universal.

Extensive research in child language acquisition (Brown, 1973; Dale, 1976;

Bloom, 1978; Lindfors, 1980) indicates that young children, without any direct, formal instruction, build a highly complex linguistic system in a few short years. In addition to acquiring the phonological patterns necessary for speech, the child acquires the underlying grammatical-rule system which is evidenced by the ability to produce meaningful thought units. The young child seems intuitively to sense how, where and when to use language in discourse. It is not known exactly how a young child masters all the complexities of language; however, research indicates that all children go through definite developmental stages in producing speech (Lenneberg, 1967; Piaget, 1959). Virtually all children master at least one language.

While linguistic research does not address the question, "Should Standard School English continue to be the basic language of the public schools?" it does provide insights which should enable teachers to improve instructional methods and continue their support for a common instructional language. From linguistic research, we have the following:

- ... No language or dialect is superior to another.
- ... All languages are based on speech and non-verbal forms.
- ... All languages express similar relationships and sentence types in their deep structure.
- ... Most children build a highly complex linguistic system without direct or formal instruction.
- ... All language, by its structure and nature, is a human phenomenon for the purpose of satisfying a multiplicity of purposes.

Linguistic research will continue to provide insights regarding language which will make it more feasible for teachers to improve instructional practices than to eliminate Standard School English as the common instructional language.

Thus far, linguistic research has affected language arts instructional practices in several meaningful ways. For example, teachers are more aware of the need to build language lessons on the speech patterns of learners. More and more consideration is

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being given to the importance of learners' oral language because of the knowledge gained from child acquisition study. If a young child, without direct instruction, is able to generalize phonological and grammatical rules when given opportunity to "self-practice" speech through discovery of speech organs and listening to others, it seems feasible to allow learners within the classroom to have many opportunities to talk and listen to others. In doing so, learners have the freedom to extract the regularities of syntax and semantics in order to improve their ability to express intention, predict and summarize. Allowing learners more opportunity to speak, requires an acceptance of a wide diversity of dialects within the classroom. Teachers have become more aware that no language or dialect is superior to another because all require a person to engage in high level cognitive skills. Permitting students to discover that the same meaning can be expressed in a variety of languages and/or dialects helps learners focus on the nature of language.

The Language-Experience Approach in reading instruction has also advocated beginning with the learners' oral language. The student's thoughts are given orally and then transcribed into written form for reading. In this procedure, the learner is able to understand the process for writing personal experiences, employing imagination and relating emotional feelings. This method motivates the learner to discover grapheme-phoneme-morpheme and syntactic-semantic relationships. When learners are provided language experiences based on their speech, it seems apparent that it would enhance their ability to interpret the oral and written language of others.

Standard School English has been positively affected because of the concerns of diverse language groups. Not only has instructional practice changed, Standard

**... If we are to remain a unified nation, we must accept the power of a standard instructional language. . . .**

School English has changed. Linguistic study has suggested that Standard School English, like any other language or dialect, is a human phenomenon which allows for the introduction of new forms, information, beliefs and attitudes as well as permitting uniformity for common understandings. Few persons would deny that regardless of the name applied, there is and will emerge a standard instructional language in the United States. If we are to remain a unified nation, we must accept the power of a standard instructional language. Thus far Standard School English has provided the diversity which permits individual differences as well as the uniformity which allows groups to realize common purposes. Standard School English, as the common

instructional language, will continue to meet the needs of our society.

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A HORNBOOK

***Each of us thinks his own thoughts; our concepts we share with our fellow-men.***  
 —Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding*, 1972

# Society, Education, and Values

by Terry L. Eidell and Edward E. Gotts

Several questions about American society, and the appropriate roles of education in this society, were posed to provide focus for this issue of *Thresholds*. The first, and most fundamental, question was: "As a people, have we Americans lost our sense of common purpose and become too diverse?"

While this question may appear almost rhetorical, we find that viewing it from differing perspectives produces dramatically different responses. From one perspective, the question of lost common purpose may be answered with an unequivocal "no." Such response seems justified in terms of what appear to be broadly shared goals of Americans vis-a-vis their rights to material wealth (or well-being) and personal freedom. The importance imputed to such rights is longstanding; the Preamble and Bill of Rights of our Constitution explicate these as salient goals of our Republic. If behavioral indicators are valid measures of Americans' common adherence to such purposes, we have strong evidence that material prosperity and personal freedom are both generally valued and successfully achieved in our current society. Our industrial and agricultural productivity provide a material standard of living second to none, and America's legislative, judicial, and executive actions assure personal freedom almost unheard of elsewhere in the world. Certainly, these outstanding achievements must be the product of commonly held purpose.

A second perspective, however, suggests strong affirmation that Americans have lost their sense of common purpose. Values held and successes achieved in attaining material prosperity and personal freedom notwithstanding—distrust, dissatisfaction, and disaffection seem to increasingly characterize the people of our society and to

pose challenges for education (Bailey, 1976). Leaders from every facet of American life—political, religious, scientific—project a questionable future at best. The media regularly report a most pessimistic picture of social disintegration, crime, and violence. Our current fascination with the past, as reflected in unprecedented excursions into nostalgia, seems to suggest that Americans lack a viable sense of common purpose; that they look to the past, rather than the future, for potential satisfaction.

The question of whether or not American society has lost its sense of common purpose would, thus, appear to produce contradictory responses. The nature of the response seems to depend upon which indicators of "common purpose" are chosen—namely, from what perspective the question is considered. This apparent paradox seems to parallel closely one in

**American society today seems to suffer from a malaise . . . resulting from consensual pursuit of inappropriate and/or fundamentally unsatisfying social goals. . . .**

America's international experience; that is, that as American democracy has demonstrated its superiority in achieving material productivity and personal freedom, the developing nations of the world are turning in greater numbers to communism.

The idea we have tried to establish here is that a shared sense of common purpose is not a sufficient basis for achieving satisfaction within even a highly favored society. The question of "What kinds of common purpose?" must also be addressed. Students of American education have, of course, explicated before the deeper kinds of common purpose needed in order to achieve social integration or cohesiveness in a democracy (see, for example, Stanley, 1953). Current conditions cause us, nevertheless, to examine the issue afresh.

American society today seems to suffer from a malaise not rooted in a total lack of

common purpose, but one resulting from consensual pursuit of inappropriate and/or fundamentally unsatisfying social goals. Americans' nearly unanimous quest for and achievement of material wealth and personal freedom have led to feelings of individual alienation and group balkanization. The problem, we believe, is that only when a society chooses such transcendent goals as truth, goodness, and dedication to others is the criterion of appropriateness in common purpose achieved. One clear message of history is that societies best achieve genuine satisfaction when transcendent goals direct them as individuals and corporately. In other words, societies thrive when values are shared and when the shared values are worthwhile from a transcending or moral perspective.

Almost 20 years ago, Philip Phenix presented a perspective similar to this. A philosopher-educator, he stated straightforwardly his view of the importance of what a society values and the implications of this for education:

. . . a distinction must be drawn between values based on interest or desire and values based on objective worth. There is a decisive difference between wanting something and affirming its worth . . . People disagree on good and evil, not mainly out of ignorance nor because of changefulness of the world, nor because perfection is beyond reach, but primarily because they are self-centered . . . If this chief cause of moral failure and confusion is to be remedied, the central aim of education should be the transformation of people so that they will serve good instead of pleasing themselves . . . the cardinal goal of instruction in whatever field, from physics to etiquette to race relations, should be the development of loyalty to what is excellent, instead of success in satisfying desires (Phenix, 1961, pp. 5-7).

These positions on what is worth valuing

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and on the appropriate role of education in society vis-a-vis what is to be valued have not been overwhelmingly supported in the popular literature of education or the social sciences for the past several decades. However, direct observation of America's current social condition seems to provide sufficient cause for us at least to explore this perspective.

While it would be stimulating to consider further Phenix's assertions about social values, the intended focus of this paper is the education enterprise in America. Therefore, we would posit here as assumptions: (a) that, hypothetically, values can be established on the basis of their objective worth, (b) that values so established will reflect transcendent purposes, and (c) that such values can provide a society's common purpose. Given these assumptions, what then are their implications for education?

The first question that must be raised with regard to American education's possible role in attempting to define and establish transcendent values in our society seems to be, "Can our schools make a difference?" Certainly, many educators have thought that schools could, and should, take leadership in social reform. This was the position of the progressive education movement spawned by John Dewey (1916) and it was firmly held by those in education known as reconstructionists (Mayer, 1966). The achievement of desirable social goals through education is also firmly held by leaders of many developing nations. While we have little concrete evidence of education's positive impact on society, we seem to have a better grasp of how modern American schools and society have impacted our youth. In anticipation of the report of the President's Science Advisory Committee, Youth: Transition to Adulthood, Coleman (1972) addressed the topic, "How do the young become adults?" In this review, Coleman cites the historical confusion between education and schooling and analyzes the historical changes whereby our society has isolated youth from meaningful experiences by denying them social contact with the world of adults and work. This isolation, it is contended, has led to the alienation of American youth in that we have taught them to be "... irresponsible . . . dependent . . . and unproductive" (Coleman, 1972). The revisionist historians of American education concur in these essential conclusions (Karier, Violas, and Spring, 1973). In other words, we have developed a system for socialization of youth which prevents their achieving commitment to values of excellence and objective worth. Since schools have been party to this socialization system, it seems reasonable to conclude that they may be in a position to effect changes therein. Therefore, we conclude that schools are not powerless to assist Americans in achieving a sense of common social purpose.

To pursue identification of and reasonable consensus on those values of

objective worth held by Americans would pose great challenge for the educational system. However, any number of appropriate techniques for producing group input and consensus are well established in the social science literature. We believe that the greatest deterrent to identifying such values is, therefore, the lack of a vision and the will to do so, not the lack of appropriate means. The task of identifying values of objective worth which could serve as an appropriate basis for the common purpose of American society can be accomplished if the desire to do so is cultivated and given focus.

Assuming, therefore, that education can have a positive impact on American society and that appropriate values of objective worth held by Americans can be identified, we are now confronted with the question of what are the implications for change in instruction. Phenix not only asserts that loyalty to what is excellent is the cardinal good of education, but he avows that commitment to "the right" is also the key to understanding democracy (Phenix, 1961). We believe that the implications of this

**... In our quest for assuring individual freedom, we Americans have lost sight of the difference between what is worth valuing and the value of individual, personal desires. . . .**

position require for education more than simply exposing students to the values identified, to inquiry into values, and to clarification of values in the curriculum. Instead, it implies that the educational system should inculcate in students (a) a belief in the objective qualities of goodness—what is worth valuing, and (b) a commitment to pursuing values of objective worth in one's own life.

The idea of overtly acknowledging not only the right but the responsibility of the educational system to inculcate, we believe, is all but lost in American education. In our quest for assuring individual freedom, we Americans have lost sight of the difference between what is worth valuing and the value of individual, personal desires. Through concern for individual rights as these impinge on issues of church and state, we have all but forgotten that standards of worth or excellence can be non-sectarian. Indifference to all values except personal satisfaction is, in fact, a highly sectarian position which was known in antiquity as hedonism. Moreover, we Americans have failed to distinguish between inculcation and indoctrination. There is, we believe, an appropriate role for the school in inculcating as well as providing for exploration. Inculcation is the active, possibly even insistent, exposure of students to non-sectarian values of worth. Inculcation must be, therefore, contrasted with indoctrination—a term which implies that only the partial truth of a particular sectarian bias is taught.

While we advocate that the educational system provide inculcation of values of

objective worth—the belief in such values and the commitment to excellence in one's own life—we also acknowledge the appropriate role of exploration in education. John Milton, in his prose piece "Of Education," for example, advocated that childhood should be filled with the study of excellent literature—excellent in terms of sentiment, esthetics, etc.—and that young children should not be exposed to "wrong ideas" which they are not mature enough to test and prove for themselves. In contrast, Milton advocated that the instruction of adolescents provide freedom to explore all knowledge (Milton, 1951). Thus, Milton believed that the regimen of "right ideas" provided young children would prepare them for an adolescence in which they are capable of exercising discrimination over a wide range of intellectual matters. With Milton, we believe that young children's heads should be filled with the world's abundance of worthy ideas—inculcated through concrete examples afforded by noble acts, noble lives, and noble sentiments of people. With this appropriate background, children will mature into an adolescence wherein they are capable of learning to decide what position they will hold with regard to new ideas they encounter.

A similar perspective on the appropriate use of inculcation and exploration may be inferred from the taxonomy of the affective domain explicated by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964), if it is organized in terms of known developmental levels of children. In such an adaptation and expansion of the taxonomy to include the perspective of developmental levels, Gotts (1968) has reasoned that only when children reach adolescence do they typically possess sufficient developmental maturity to deal conceptually with issues of value. The same analysis indicates, however, that if they have not as children acquired a rich repertoire of affective perceptions, behaviors, and valuing habits, they will reach adolescence unprepared to move on to conceptualizing and organizing values. Therefore, the assertions of Milton with regard to appropriate instruction are supported by our more scientific understanding of human emotional development and mental maturation.

Returning now to the question of what instructional changes seem necessary if the educational system is to actively support values of objective worth as the common purpose of American society, we can suggest some directions. Educational programs for young children would provide for the systematic inculcation of values through experience with concrete examples of the value positions to be taught. The contributions of home and religion would be acknowledged and treated respectfully. As children mature toward adolescence, the importance of belief in values of objective worth and of personal commitment to excellence would not be diminished; however, experience with other perspectives would

be provided through ever broadening exploration of recorded human thought. As students mature during their high school years, emphasis would be placed upon learning to deal with questions of values from abstract and conceptual perspectives as well. Students would now be expected to develop and test their skills in perceiving with accuracy what they observe, read, and hear in the context of an already internalized values system.

The instruction of young children might be undertaken through a curricular approach based upon Richard Jones' (1968) ideas. Jones' book, **Fantasy and Feeling in Education**, presents methods of instruction which are especially relevant to the suggestions here for the content and purpose of elementary school education. This approach employs children's fantasies and feelings for instruction in the essential content of social and behavioral sciences. Jones demonstrates with classroom process recordings exactly how his approach operates to involve children deeply in the subject matter and, at the same time, provide them emotional benefits. It appears that this same approach to instruction could be adapted easily to the teaching of language arts and fine arts as a means of providing meaningful involvement with concrete examples of the values to be inculcated. Through such processes, children would internalize the selected values of objective worth as a necessary foundation for their later conceptual exploration in adolescence.

Secondary school instruction would proceed to build upon the firm foundation of explicit values provided in elementary schools. Progressively broader areas of human thought and ideas would be explored by adolescent students. Their teachers would assist them to become more adept at testing what they find in terms of their values foundation. This appears to call for more intensive adult-adolescent instructional interaction than now characterizes our secondary schools. As full maturity is achieved, students will have the intellectual wherewithal to explore new ideas on their own and to make reasoned decisions about modifying and organizing into a personally coherent whole the initial value perspectives they have received.

We have attempted here to sketch an alternate perspective of the common purpose undergirding American society. From this perspective, implications are derived for changes in both the content and process of American education. Many difficult problems—ranging from questions about achieving agreement on what values might prove objectively worthy as the focal point of American common purpose to questions about specific instructional content and process—are left unanswered. However, the ideas presented do provide a basic framework from which operational definitions might be developed. The commitment of America's educational system to these principles and purposes

would have a salutary impact, we believe, on American society and on its individual members. It would lead us toward achieving a more vital and socially integrating sense of common purpose as a people.

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*... what is mostly wrong with the public schools is ... mindlessness ... the failure to think seriously about educational purpose. . . . We must find ways of stimulating educators—public school teachers, principals, and superintendents; college professors, deans, and presidents; radio, television, and film directors and producers; newspaper, magazine, and TV journalists and executives—to think about what they are doing, and why they are doing it. And we must persuade the general public to do the same.*

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—Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom*, 1971

# Toward Life-Centered Education

by Walter Wernick

Whoever sees education as a thrust into the forming unknown knows that an educator has to be a free spirit. Limited to a

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**. . . Educators have to be free to be responsible. . . .**

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narrow personal or social focus, an educator's imagination might miss the grand dimensions within which life values are infused into personal and social activities. Educators have to be free to be responsible. Their images cannot be limited to nuts and bolts, or to the milieu in which these are to be utilized. Educators have to draw images from a developing life-time-space. An evolutionary character to our thinking and feeling is mandatory.

Human experience transcends individual and/or group concerns. As educators, we must be concerned with life characteristics of experience, the transcendental as well as the sensory and the technical. Our work has been imagined in open-ended, evolving terms.

In our imaginations, our planning, and our daily work as educators, the phenomenon of life has to be kept alive, to grow and to develop. A simple statement, but of tremendous organic power if actually applied. The experiences of life, especially educational ones, have to be seen in life terms.

Unfortunately, much traditional educational planning usually short-circuits our own imaginative field, cuts off our own evocative power, and demeans a human activity of the highest order. Many plans and their products come across to learners, teachers, and the public as inauthentic, incomplete, and not imbued with life significance. Educational planners (and many practitioners) often run back and forth from Me to Us and Us to Me—and go nowhere.

When educational imaginations do not start with life forces, plans and processes which follow from such a base cannot be much more than half-alive. To be more blunt and brutal, many of our plans and products are nothing more than half-baked!

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From life to life is the truest maxim we know. Yet, educational considerations of the life force are often missing, possibly because the life force is not subject to quantitative description. The diffusion of our values into a materialistic void, our increased dependence on specialized bureaucracies and other technical devices, have reduced the scope of our imaginations.

The result is clear. Our work is not contributing to life. We are inhibiting rather than enhancing the development of wisdom, caring, and the love of life. Oh yes, even with increased subsidies, standardized scores on achievement tests are declining!

Habits of thought excluding the evocation of the evolving life force encourage half-baked ideational plans. Rushing from one extreme of the personal-social continuum to the other in the hope that somehow all the pieces will be picked up in between can't work. Such piecemeal flip-flop activity only causes disarray. People presently engaged in educational pursuits are being mis-directed, forced to manage and audit separate items along a thin, strained line of behavioral objectives. They are not encouraged to nurture the wholistic nature of human beings involved in the educational enterprise.

We need to step away and sideways from hollow tunnel visions to view the whole human experience with our creative imaginative powers at their fullest. A powerful motivational instrument, the life force, lies within a free field of vision, even though the field be somewhat screened by humility and awe. Yet, even through the screens which humble our human efforts to understand it all, wonders of life that we did not see head on because our soulful energies were bound up within mountains of curricular minutia can be revealed. We can do it if we try. The vision and substance we would gain would be worth it.

What educator dares to deny the firming and motivating influences of the life force? We've felt it and used it in our personal and social experiences. Life force has been, and still is, with us. We know it because the truth of being alive is within us. Nobody needs to prove life force to us with statistics!

This fantastic life force of experience can work for us, but we have to go at utilizing it

by building a grand picture of education—one befitting the splendor of the human experience. We have to think big, dare the unknown, depend on energies we believe are inherent in the future—and then, if we work at securing the essence of the whole, a life-centered focus can be initiated.

We can work with the life force, but only when we include it in our imagination and plans. Wishing won't make it so. Therefore, to stimulate movement toward life-centered educational planning, the rest of this piece suggests practical ways to work out activities. More extensive discussion of the life-centered concept, staff development, teaching ideas, and methods of evaluation can be found in the references included at the end of this article.

## PROGRAMS FOR A LIFE-CENTERED EDUCATION

The call for a refocusing of programs of instruction leading toward a life-centered education must come from within. Life-centered education cannot be used as an external construct to be added on as an

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### Teachers must move closer to the lives of their students. . . .

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overlay, or as a pruning knife to cut away overgrowth. Life-centered education must emerge and reform the situation from within. Life forces have to evolve and transform. They can, if encouraged to act through their transcendental qualities. They can't act through the force of numbers or authority.

The suggestions below sketch out guidelines for programs of instruction leading toward a life-centered education. These ideas should be enough to warm and color the souls of educational planners. That is, those who bring educational experiences to their reading will be able to feel the warmth and the coloring. Those who have only studied about schooling may not understand the feelings and thoughts from within.

1. Teachers must move closer to the lives of their students. Personal time-space-value continuums, relating to individual needs and interests, should be utilized



as prime educational frames of reference.

2. Students should be helped to learn what happens to their parents in the workplace and other community areas of endeavor. Focus on adult activities will encourage more meaningful family relationships and more inquiry into causes and consequences. The person-in-the occupation should become an organizing idea for studies.
3. Person-to-person exchanges between students and a wide variety of adults in the community will help to counter stereotypical role models, especially with respect to sex, age, ethnic, and racial background. Inquiry and social skills should help students search for self-images and career development in the lives of real people as well as give them motivation to research the values of characters portrayed in print, film, video, and musical forms.
4. Instructional plans should center on the management of life skills, rather than on monitoring the manufacture of standardized subject products. Individual students should be encouraged to plan, and to prepare themselves for coping with change in society. Focusing on changes which might occur within themselves, the personalized future will become an active arena for imaginative thought and feeling.
5. Focus on the developmental processes of learners and adult activities should bring about new correlations of traditional subject matter. New integrations of content will emerge as old boundary lines dissolve. Qualitative areas of living such as wisdom, caring, and love of life will be recognized as worthwhile centers of interest.
6. Teachers must introduce personal, social, political, economic, and philosophical issues into regular lessons of the traditional curriculum. The "What does this mean for me?" dimension will motivate latent student curiosity and involvement in subject matter previously treated as inert matter to be acquired through memory alone. Historical as well as contemporary issues need illumination.
7. Personal significance and meaning must replace the sequential ordering of abstract knowledge as an instructional standard. Readiness for learning should be judged as much on the basis of personal motivation as it is on how an individual's mastery of content would fit into the taxonomy of a discipline of knowledge.
8. The idea of a workplace should become a dynamic concept to be shaped as teachers, students, and parents examine how work, productivity, and creativity could be satisfying, self-fulfilling, and full of risks. The moving ideas of change and future should become

intertwined with areas of living traditionally covered by static idealized content. In that way, authentic hopes and dreams will be recognized as value-laden content.

9. Teachers must use human relations and management skills in wider arenas. The community-classroom concept makes the work of the teacher more visible so students (and parents) can see and participate in the work of teaching. Intent and effort become more open to observation, analysis, and criticism when the concept of work becomes personal, relevant, and associated with a wide variety of fundamental human activities. "Whole" situations should be presented as often as possible. Motivations and human relation strategies are necessary ingredients for an understanding of a personal-social mix.
10. Families, governmental agencies, business, labor and other groups and institutions need to enter into active relationships with the educational endeavors of the schools. The responsibilities of preparing the young to enter society must move non-professionals to more active roles as citizens. Education has to be at the epicenter of the life of the community. Members of the community should look for total educational benefits such as character, willingness to work with and for others, and a desire to enhance life for all. Otherwise, evaluations of education will be weak and ineffective.
11. Those who do not evidence a love for life need special educational programs as much as any person with a physical handicap. The total resources of the community should be used to effect educational change for these people in need because the lives of the total community will be affected by those who are not working with or for the life force. We can never forget our expectations and vision of what we might become. Our vigilance must be constant.
12. Educational leadership should be selected from amongst those who manifest the most desirable attributes of the life force. The movement toward technical perfection should be turned toward those who show evidence of human excellence. Planet earth needs educators with a universal view—and a demonstrated respect for the energies and existence of all living things. We need educators who are immanent with life.

Unity comes from attending to the unitary character of life. The life force has built-in

*... when man is satiated with restless seeking for the remote which yields no enduring satisfaction, the human spirit will return to seek calm and order within itself. This ... can be found only in the vital, steady, and deep relationships which are present only in an immediate community.*

—John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927

convergent energy. Life-centered education, when tried, unleashes constructive latent energies within individuals as well as within the society at large. The personal and the social prosper, but so does the larger life-time-space in which Me and Us reside.

The power to unite, to grow, to develop, to enhance life—it's all within the educational imagination. In fact, it is one with the educational imagination. For humans, you can't have one without the other.

Life-centered education is not new. It just hasn't been valued as highly as a nuclear aircraft carrier ... or a multiple warhead ... or a new dam ...

Am I pessimistic? Hell, no! I've got life, haven't I? ... and, you better believe it, so do you!

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# Democracy and Education Revisited

By Arthur Brown

## I

Notwithstanding the influence of the school, the mass media, the automobile, and Coca Cola, America has not become culturally homogenized. Nor is there evidence to suggest that it soon will be. It is just as well. Diversity is, after all, a defining feature of an open, democratic society. It is a source of personal and social enrichment. Without it, the future holds no promise.

But diversity can also lead to dead ends. There are limits to what a society can tolerate by way of differences. Unless there is a common core of values to which all are committed, an open society is simply a collection of disparate groups or individuals who happen to live within some political unit. Unless there is an ethical center to social life, a society sooner or later breaks apart.

The ethical center of a democratic society consists of two primary values: freedom and equality. The democratic process and education are the means for their realization. As long as both freedom and equality are given ample expression, cultural, ideational, political, or religious pluralism will not be significantly divisive and will serve both the private good and the public good.

But freedom and equality are potentially competing values (Note 1). If freedom is to be regarded as simply freedom to do whatever is personally desired and remains uninformed by considerations of fraternity or respect for persons, it is a threat to equality and the fabric of society. On the other hand, if equality, especially equality of condition, becomes an overriding social concern and is, as a consequence, imposed upon the members of society, it will undermine freedom. The principal task of a democratic society, then, and consequently an educational system associated with it, is to ensure that freedom and equality are **both** enjoyed to a high degree. Later in this

essay I shall offer some suggestions toward that end, but first something must be said about democracy and education.

When Dewey wrote his exhaustive work on education, he titled it, **Democracy and Education**—for a reason. Democracy and education as values cannot be separated. A democratic social life is impossible without a **particular** kind of nurturing designed to support and extend it. And a system of nurturing must embody democratic principles, else not only will it be ineffective in sustaining a democratic social life, but it will be, by definition, not educational. Democracy and education, then, are not simply interrelated or interdependent; they are identical.

To say that democracy and education are interdependent or interrelated is to suggest that though there is some connection between them, they are distinctly separate activities. To say that democracy and education are identical is to suggest that their constitutive elements, the essential activities which characterize each, is the same and that the ends toward which these activities are directed are also the same.

As a social system, democracy is designed to enable its members to solve personal and social problems through the use of their intelligence. In the course of contending with such problems, their intelligence is further developed and their moral sensibilities refined—a never ending process. What is significant about democracy is that, as opposed to a system which requires that conduct conform to pre-established rules, where no demands are made on the use of intelligence, democracy requires the use of the collective intellectual resources of all its members in determining what the rules **shall** be. As a consequence, a democratic society is necessarily a learning society, a growing society, an **educational community**, and not, as radical pluralists would maintain, some kind of Babel where a thousand voices are heard—and none

listened to or understood.

Just as democracy is a method of living which calls upon the collective intellectual resources of its members in determining the character of their conduct, so education as a nurturing process is also such a method. If education is to be regarded as merely a process whereby the young are to collect information, acquire mechanical skills, conform to pre-established rules, learn the “cultural heritage,” etc., in a word, if education is to be regarded as merely a matter of students serving as passive recipients of that which is handed to them or demanded of them, whatever intellectual potential they may possess will not be realized. Only insofar as the nurturing process is one which offers the young an opportunity to actively participate in the process and to assume responsibility for their action, can it be said that education goes on. All else is some form of training or indoctrination or conditioning, not the development of intelligence.

In brief, what I have argued is: (1) diversity is an essential feature of democracy; (2) without an ethical center, democracy, like any social system, cannot be sustained; (3) freedom and equality constitute the ethical center, the unifying values, of a democratic society; (4) unity in a democracy devolves from a common commitment to the resolution of social problems through the use of intelligence, dimensions of which are a respect for persons and a sense of fraternity; (5) by virtue of its commitment to the use of intelligence, a democratic society is necessarily a learning society, an educational community; and (6) democracy and education are methodologically identical.

## II

What, it may be asked, then, can a society such as ours which aspires to be democratic do to ensure the establishment of freedom and equality? And what can the schools do

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to ensure that students are educated (rather than schooled or trained) and, hence, committed to the democratic process. I begin with a reference to John Dewey, our most noteworthy philosopher of democracy:

The conflict [of the moral Old and New Worlds] as it concerns the democracy to which our history commits us is **within** our own institutions and attitudes. It can be won only by extending the application of democratic methods of consultation, persuasion, negotiation, communication, cooperative intelligence, in the task of making our own politics, industry, education, our culture generally, a servant and an evolving manifestation of democratic ideas. . .

If there is one conclusion to which human experience unmistakably points it is that democratic ends demand democratic methods for their realization. . . . Our first defense is to realize that democracy can be served only by the slow day by day adoption and contagious diffusion in every phase of our common life of methods that are identical with the ends to be reached (Dewey, 1963, pp. 175-176).

Democracy, as Dewey described it, is little practiced in this country. The stratified, hierarchical model of governance prevails in almost all of our institutions. It is characterized more by adversariness than by the spirit of cooperation. If there is "consultation," it exists usually with respect to relatively trivial matters. If there is "persuasion," it is seldom admitted. If there is "negotiation," it is often characterized by ploys designed to take advantage of the opposing party and to emerge victorious. And if there is "communication," much of it is in the form of slogans and factual distortion. Major decisions are made primarily on the basis of power, not "co-operative intelligence."

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**"The problem in American society is not excessive diversity but, rather, deviation from the ideals of democracy, deviation from a commitment to create community through the democratic process."**

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What Dewey called for is what I have termed elsewhere, "institutional democracy (Brown, 1979, pp. 75-85)." Institutional democracy is an extension of the idea of political democracy, of the idea that a democratic society is an educational community characterized by the application of "methods of consultation, persuasion, negotiation, communication, cooperative

intelligence. . . ." The problem in American society is not excessive diversity but, rather, deviation from the ideals of democracy, deviation from a commitment to create community through the democratic process.

What institutional democracy proposes is that democratic structures and processes be put in place in **all** of our institutions, not just in the larger political community. The work place, the school, the union, the family, the university—all must be democratized if freedom and equality are to be given genuine expression. It is life in these institutions which teaches us the valuing process. It is life in these institutions which is largely responsible for the development in us of certain attitudes, dispositions, skills, and understandings, which inevitably have an impact on the character of the larger political community. If freedom and equality are to serve as unifying values for the larger political community and if the democratic process is to be the means by which these values are incorporated into the individual psyche as well as into the social system at large, they must be given expression, as Dewey says, "in every phase of our common life."

A number of arguments are offered against institutional democracy as an idea on both theoretical and practical grounds. For example, claims are made that only a few are sufficiently capable of exercising legitimate authority; that most people do not want to accept responsibility; that institutions are too complex to be run democratically; or that institutional democracy "requires too many evenings," as Oscar Wilde once said in arguing against socialism. (Such objections are also made against political democracy which Churchill called the worst system—except for all the others.)

But we need no longer speculate about such matters. Ample evidence is now available to support the claims of organizational theorists like Schumacher, McGregor, Hertzberg, and Argyris that democratic management procedures can be highly effective (Note 2). Numerous studies show that giving workers a voice in decision making can result in increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and superior quality of product. Although efficiency is not my major concern here, of particular interest is the apparent compatibility (if not synergism) that can exist even in large corporations between efficiency, on the one hand, and freedom and equality, on the other. Consider, for example, the following description by Zwerdling of International Group Plans, an insurance company based in Washington, D.C., half of which is owned by workers in the company:

The system does work—better

than any other self-managed enterprise in the country, and, I would argue, better than any corporate system in America. Despite the problems and tensions at IGP, 340 rank and file workers and managers are operating a \$60 million corporation—and making a profit—with a degree of freedom, democracy, and equality never before achieved by a major corporation in the United States (Zwerdling, 1977, p. 81).

In the area of education, one of my favorite illustrations is that described in the **New York Times** a few years ago. For one reason or another the three schools in a small school district in Westchester County were left without principals. The district decided to allow the teachers, functioning in teams, to take on supervisory responsibilities. The experiment was so successful that the district formally asked the New York State Department of Education for permission to eliminate the position of principal and for the transfer of the duties of principal to the teachers (Vidal, 1976, p. 24).

### III

We come, finally, to the question of what the concept of institutional democracy implies for the school in terms of its relationship to society; its organizational structure; and pedagogy. What I have to say is not new, but the times are such that there is great urgency that it be said again.

**First**, the school must be "depoliticized" as much as possible and as soon as possible. Political pressures are forcing school people into behavioral patterns antithetic to the development of democratic attitudes. These pressures are the cause of heightened antagonisms between the public and the schools, between administrators and teachers, between teachers and students, and between student and student. Except in matters concerned with fundamental human rights (e.g., education for the impaired, and discrimination), the courts, legislators, and state departments of education should not mandate educational policies and curricula. Educational policy and the curriculum are essentially local community affairs. Mandates from a distant source tend to destroy the cooperative spirit.

**Second**, the base of financial support for education must be stabilized and made equitable. Together with political pressures, economic pressures are causing the public to judge education primarily in terms of its extrinsic value ("a dollar's worth of education for a dollar spent"). This attitude is responsible in large part for the current obsessions with performance objectives, "back to basics," vocationalism, achieve-

ment scores, and accountability—all of which portend serious damage to education for democratic life.

**Third**, school systems must be decentralized significantly. By significant decentralization, I do not mean something akin to the eight regions into which the Detroit system has been split, which has resulted in **more** bureaucracy rather than less. By significant decentralization, I mean the establishment of administratively autonomous units sufficiently small to allow for the range of participation which democracy demands. I quote anthropologist Levi-Strauss on the matter:

In short, if the anthropologist were to make so bold as to play the reformer and say: 'This is how our experience of thousands of societies can be of use to you, the men of today!' he would no doubt advocate decentralization in all fields so that the greatest number of social and economic activities could be carried out on the level of authenticity at which the members of a given group have a concrete knowledge of each other (Note 3).

Decentralization would not only make possible authentic relationships and effective participation in decision making, it would also go far in breaking up the hierarchical arrangements which characterize large social systems, including the educational system. These hierarchical arrangements make for imperialism, rigidity, cynicism, alienation, and, not least of all, high administrative costs. Administrative costs in education, in both public school systems and universities, constitute a national scandal. They exacerbate the current economic crisis in education and the serious damage that crisis is afflicting on education. The Westchester County school district administered by teachers, which I described above, could well serve as a model for reform in the organizational structure of schools.

**Fourth**, the participatory process must necessarily include parents and students. When I say this, I do not mean that parents and students should be full partners in determining what goes on in schools. If there is to be a partnership, or an "ecosystem" as John Goodlad would call it (Goodlad, 1975), among all groups concerned with the school, teachers should be recognized as "first among equals." Equality does not preclude a recognition of differences in expertise.

Parents, of course, have a stake in the education of their children—both as parents and citizens. Somehow they must get involved. (I have often thought that, if all else fails, parents might be called to "school

duty" just as they are subject to being called for jury duty). The involvement of parents in schools is not only a vital part of the democratic process, but would have a number of practical benefits. Among other benefits, parents would acquire greater insight into the complexities of education; they would comprehend more clearly the limitations of the school in its ability to help resolve social problems; and they would become more sensitive to their own responsibility for whatever is learned in school by their children.

**Finally**, the students—the neglected if not forgotten class. How some of them maintain their equilibrium is almost beyond my comprehension. Surely this is one of the worst times in American history to grow up. Single parents . . . Divorced parents . . . Both parents working . . . The loss of the extended family . . . Drugs . . . Burned out teachers . . . Inflation . . . Unemployment . . . Sexual revolution . . . Violence . . . Crime . . . Hostages . . . Wars . . . Threats of war . . . Rampant cynicism . . . Irrationality of one kind or another.

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**"Perhaps the first and most important function schools can perform today is to relieve the pressures on children and young adults that come from so many different directions."**

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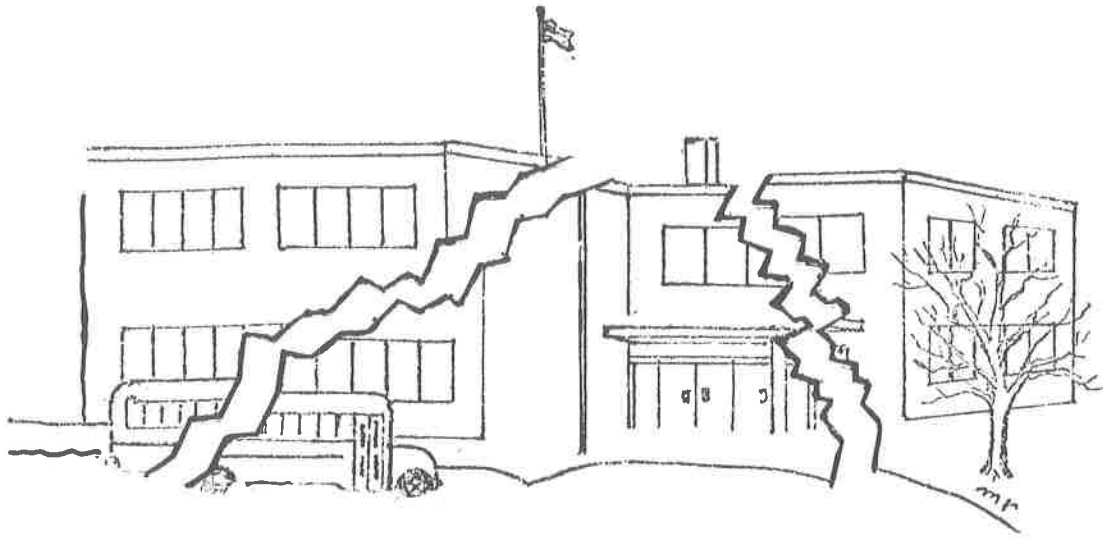
Why so many children turn away from school or rebel against it or suffer from deep psychological problems should not be difficult to understand. It is not surprising that Sidney Hook, Dewey's last doctoral student, would claim, as he did a few years ago in his John Dewey Lecture, that Dewey's educational theory may not be applicable in today's world.

Perhaps the first and most important function schools can perform today is to relieve the pressures on children and young adults that come from so many different directions. Structural changes within schools of the kind I have mentioned might help. Parental involvement might help. Giving students an opportunity to help devise the rules of the school might help. Mobilizing against the mindlessness of the current standardized testing movement might help. Building curricula around the personal interests or perceived problems of students would help. Any number of possibilities exist. But most crucial, I believe, is the expression of personal regard, respect, and human understanding which young people—all of us for that matter—require not only as a fundamental human need, but also as a condition for the development of those human qualities essential for democratic life.

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- Note 1. A case could be made, I suppose, for the idea that neither freedom nor equality is possible without the other. Consider Lincoln's statement that no nation can survive half free and half slave. The slave in a fashion enslaves the slaveholder. (Skinner makes a point of this in his *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* in responding to the question as to who would control the controller in his proposed social scheme.) The slaveholder must be constantly on the alert to maintain his control over a never fully submissive slave. His freedom is thereby restricted. Eventually, of course, the slave must break loose. Just so, various other forms of inequality (money, power, etc.) more or less restrict the freedom of all parties concerned.
- Note 2. See, for example, Douglas McGregor, *Leadership and Motivation*; Frederick Herzberg, *Work and the Nature of Man*; E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*.
- Note 3. Cited in *Footnotes to the Future* (Futuremics, Inc.): Vol. 6, No. 11.





# Fragmented Schools in a Fragmented Society

by Joan L. Peterson

From their inception—and at least until recently—the American public schools have had as a principal objective the building of a strong sense of national unity and pride. This has been true from our beginnings as a nation, with Jefferson's insistence that a truly democratic society could only be served by a population well-schooled in civic education and responsibility. One of the reasons for the popularity of Noah Webster's speller, for example, was the dissemination of distinctly "American" English, with its own standardized pronunciations and simplified spelling that rid the language of Latin forms. The McGuffey readers, too, served the national interest; their stories encouraged the cultivation of

characteristics needed by the expanding new republic—patriotism, thrift, hard work.

Our leaders very early saw the importance of building a national system of standardized education. Throughout the nineteenth century, the schools assumed the enormous task of "Americanizing" an immigrant population. It was taken for granted that the needs of building a strong new nation would supersede those of the individual, and new citizens were expected to take on, as early as possible, the values and standards of a society already established. This served the national interest well at the time, and was not seriously questioned. Recently, the revisionist critics of American educational

history have denounced practices that forced the new population to abandon the ethnicity they had brought with them, but most historians have pointed out that this sacrifice was probably necessary in the interests of national unity at this time in our history.

Today, I do not see much activity in the service of national unity. Politically, the traditional two-party system is threatened by single-issue politics, where well-organized proponents of highly-charged issues have the power to vote their particular favorites in or out, doing away with the western democratic tradition of compromise in the interest of overall national consensus. Economically,



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"Proposition 13" type legislation weakens community services for all and strengthens special-interest groups. Sun Belt and Snow Belt vie for government funding, while oil-rich states cash in on a huge bonanza, unwilling to share their largesse with recession-plagued sister states. Homosexuals, the aged, women's groups, blacks, Hispanics, the handicapped—all whose interests have been neglected in the past—must have their "rights," even when their immediate granting might put unbearable strains on the national budget and social fabric.

This was recently brought home to the writer, an instructor of a graduate class in the social foundations of education. During a discussion of the fair distribution of diminishing educational funds, almost all members of the class favored much-needed expenditures for building access for the handicapped by doing away with music, foreign language and honors programs. The instructor pointed out that students of some ability might be short-changed by that allotment, and asked if society had any rights. Should not our future leaders have certain rights, too, to the best education we can give them? Does not this benefit all of us? This viewpoint was virtually incomprehensible to almost everyone in the class; "society" has no rights! Succeeding classes have reinforced the instructor's belief that for large numbers of young adults in the teaching ranks today, nothing must interfere with individual rights. For those brought up with at least a passing acquaintance with the social contract, this is sobering indeed.

William Glasser has labeled the children born after the second world war "the identity society," citing general affluence, the "rights" revolution and television as the chief influences of a generation that values "role" over "goal." It is probably the first generation in history to be fairly confident that most lives will be cushioned from catastrophes that plagued earlier generations. At least until recently, our prosperity has enabled most of us to be fairly free of worry about meeting basic needs for food and shelter, and to be able to turn increasing attention to ourselves and our own self-fulfillment.

Certainly important too, in the movement toward concern with self, is the disillusionment that followed the fate of most

**... Previous successes in "the American experiment" in the past prepared us for nothing but success, and failure was hard to accept . . .**

of the ambitious social programs of the 1960's. Their failure seems to have caused many of us to despair of improving the lot of the impoverished in our society—or at least

to be leery of large-scale government efforts to do it. It does not matter that so many of the programs were ambitious beyond belief—rebuilding the cities and doing away with illiteracy in just a few years, for example. Previous successes in "the American experiment" in the past prepared us for nothing but success, and failure was hard to accept. The country seems full of disenchanting liberals who have entered the ranks of neoconservatism, the most powerful political movement in the country today. Perhaps this is to be expected when one accepts the collective national guilt over Viet Nam, Watergate, our support of tyranny in various places in the world—and other national misadventures that have weakened our national posture, our concept of ourselves, our confidence on the world scene.

In a fragmented society, we would expect to find fragmented schools—and we do. Certainly they are less homogeneous than they were in 1945. The postwar population increase and rapid suburbanization made sure that more and more youngsters went to school with children rather like them—

**... there is no common core of learning experiences to build a sense of unity and national feeling. . . .**

selves, at least socially and economically. Recently, well-intentioned federal and state mandates have saddled the public schools with some very difficult tasks, and it would not be hard to establish a case that many of these directives have been counter-productive, and potentially destructive to a cohesive society. One does not have to look beyond Canada and Belgium to see examples of the divisiveness of a bilingual nation. When high schools and universities have virtually abandoned most general education, there is no common core of learning experiences to build a sense of unity and national feeling. Attempts at school integration through busing have sent even more of the middle class to private schools or the suburbs. In many cities, the parochial schools that the white middle class left behind have been taken over by the black middle class who, believe that

these schools are offering their children a better education than that provided by the public school. This has left the public school system in many of our largest cities one for the poor—"welfare kids"—hardly the strong democratic system where all kinds of children would learn to learn and live together.

Are there any examples in our educational history of adults in society caring very much about schools not attended by their own children?

It seems unrealistic to expect that many of those who have deserted the public schools will be coming back in any significant numbers. We will probably continue to see a proliferation of private and special-purpose schools that will further fragment the school-going population. Whether different kinds of schools can inculcate lost feelings of unity and shared destiny is uncertain. Some will feel no need to do so. For those of us in education concerned about the schools' role in what we see as a national decline—or at least a profound disillusion with the future mission of "the last best hope on earth"—there may be some things that can be done in virtually any kind of school.

We could encourage nationwide exchange programs not only for student teachers, but for high school students, too. We could make some curriculum changes, going back to a required core of courses, making sure that "the basics" in reading include examples from all parts of the national experience, not just New England and the Mississippi River. And we could take seriously Urie Bronfenbrenner's proposals for a "curriculum of caring," with schools encouraging voluntary service to those in our society who need it so much—the lonely, the sick, the aged. Movements like this one are in the American tradition, and dovetail with current distrust of bureaucratic programs that have made it possible for most of us to avoid responsibility for the well-being of our fellow human beings.



# Education: Foundation for Unity

by Wilson Riles

It is all too easy, in a time of grave differences of opinion as to which course to take toward economic stability, national security and domestic tranquility, to fear that the United States has grown to be simply a geographic designation for a land of disparate and disaffected people.

Some of us look back to those years when history tells us we were united in our loyalty to a common cause: the development of the greatest of all nations. We have tended to forget those years when diversity of purpose and principles threatened to destroy the nation. Even though we may have forgotten the stresses which tore at the fabric of nationhood, they did exist. Yet, in spite of those traumas, we have prevailed as a people with an underlying sense of common unity and common moral purpose. Our problem is not that we have lost that sense of common unity and moral purpose but that, in the minds of some, we have overlaid it with zealous efforts to right old wrongs and to regain faith in ourselves as a nation without guilt.

To understand how this perception has come about, we must look back over time to the founding of this nation; because, above all else, history has contributed to our present dilemma. We have, over two centuries of nationhood, attempted two unprecedented tasks. First, we set out to establish a self-governing republic based upon the principles of freedom, equality and justice for all. Second, we attempted to accomplish that goal while becoming the last, best hope of mankind—while welcoming all those from other lands who yearned to be free; who yearned for an opportunity to develop, free of constraints of class, to the full extent of their talents;

who yearned for a land where their children might know a tomorrow brighter than yesterday. Sometimes, some of the things we did to ensure that an untried form of government based upon the consent of the governed would survive were unintentionally cruel. With people coming to this new nation from all parts of the globe, we needed to ensure loyalty. We had no patience with preserving old habits and old loyalties. Immigrants had to clean up and shape up. They had to learn English and forget mother tongues. They had to find jobs in sweatshops and factories and forget the handcrafts of the old countries. Schools, day and night, taught citizenship, new language and new values in a pressure cooker of determination to convert raw material into Americans. The process may have had high social costs, but it didn't fail in its objective.

This country maintains an extremely high level of upward mobility and economic and social opportunity; it utilizes and develops talents from all segments of society. Education remains the driving force powering this political and social revolution. Fourteen percent of the people in the top financial and occupational leadership positions come from the lowest socioeconomic groups, substantially higher than other countries around the world where rates hover around three-to-four percent. About half of working males are in jobs with a higher occupational status than their parents. Andrew Greeley, writing in the Fall, 1976 issue of **Public Interest** points out that the occupation and income levels of previously low-income white ethnic minorities such as Jewish, Irish, German, Italian, Polish and Slavic minorities are now equal to or above white protestants of native parentage. Over one half of Black families are now middle class and growing numbers of Latino families enter the middle class

each year.

Yet, in spite of these successes, some elements of society have been excluded from the economic life of this country and have complained of lack of access to the political power structure. They are disaffected because they feel that they have no voice in decisions affecting their lives. Those groups are the reason for the great civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Those who had not achieved equality of opportunity demanded that old injustices be corrected. This country assumed, finally, responsibility to make good on promises of equality and justice for all—not just for those who had taken the road to upward mobility, but, also, for those who had not yet found the path which led from poverty.

We realized that not every American, native or foreign born, was afforded equality of opportunity in education, jobs, housing, or access to the power structure. We recognized that the pressure cooker of Americanization combined with the explosion of computer technology was destroying the very elements which had given this country strength. Not only were we destroying diversity, but we were inexorably dehumanizing society by reducing our concern for the individual. We were, we discovered, developing a society of rootless, faceless masses—masses who were being force-fit into patterns of behavior acceptable to society and into aggregations of data amenable to computer processing.

We hoped in the decades of the 50s and 60s that our institutions were at last secure enough to tolerate differences. We reversed the old patterns of forcing ethnic groups to become "hyphenated" Americans. We accepted, after a time, the imperatives of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs Board of Education*. We accepted, after a time, the mandates of the Civil Rights Acts

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of the 1960s. We saw the need of integration, equal opportunity in employment and we took steps to expiate our sin of neglect of the principles fundamental to a self-governing society.

We did more than that. We accepted, reluctantly, our responsibility to hear the voices of dissent and criticism of government. We designed programs to encourage ethnic groups to value heritages different from their own. We changed the patterns of education so that attention was focused on the individual child and his needs. All of these changes were undertaken with a zealous fervor.

Sometimes, in our determination to give each individual maximum freedom to be different in language, in dress, in cultural values and in loyalty, we emphasized differences and de-emphasized the

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**... I see no sign of balkanization taking place. ...**

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common thread of humanity which holds mankind together and the common thread of patriotism which holds a nation together.

In spite of the fact that, to some, it seems as if we have created a maelstrom of disparate and disaffected peoples, swirling about, unable to come to agreement on common moral purpose or to find a sense of common unity, we are making progress toward those goals. As I travel across the United States into large states and small, I see no sign of balkanization taking place. I see no indication that blocks of ethnic minorities are ready to defect from the United States. I see no evidence that any part of the country is developing a separatist movement such as that of French-speaking Quebec in Canada.

I see, underneath the shocking exceptions reported on the evening news, an increasing number of individuals, native and foreign born, living, working and playing together, unconcerned about differences of color, creed, or ethnic background. We don't need expensive statistical studies to prove this point. We have only to examine our personal experiences to sense the change. We have only to look about us in our jobs and our neighborhoods to see that many old barriers have fallen. The things that bind us together have become much more significant than the old fears which kept us apart. In my opinion, that progress toward common purpose is due in large part to the changes which have taken place in education.

Our schools, particularly those in California which I know best, are working to bring a new generation to an appreciation of the independence of humanity. They are concentrating on providing equitable

educational opportunities for all youngsters so that they may function and live together with respect for each other. Our schools, for the most part, are now able to concentrate, not on the mechanics of integration, but on the quality of education each child receives at the end of the bus ride. Our schools are now able to focus on bringing all children to functional literacy—literacy not only in their mother tongue, but English as well. Our schools are not only teaching each child to understand and value his own ethnic culture, but also to understand and value the diverse cultures of the world. No child, majority or minority, should grow up culturally deprived by ignorance of the contributions of all parts of the world to the progress of mankind. Our schools can now foster and bring to fruition the opportunity to ensure that each child leaves school secure in his individual uniqueness and aware of his personal responsibility first, to preserve this nation, his nation, as one nation, indivisible; and second, to preserve this world, his world, as one world, indivisible.

These changes have come about because public school systems have changed. Schools are now better equipped to further a sense of community within our culture. Schools are now focused on mechanisms to further an appropriate balance between diversity and unity. In California, we call this change simply, "school improvement."

Basic to school improvement is the concept that the changes we desire—to improve basic, civic and social skills to bring diversity and unity into equilibrium—can best take place where the child is taught, at the school site level. There, where we have the nation in microcosm, where parents,

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**... The school site council, made up of disparate peoples joined by a common purpose, is truly the laboratory where common moral purpose and unity are tested and developed. ...**

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teachers and students come together, can be cooperative efforts to create a learning environment where each child's unique needs will be met and where all children will learn to work together to achieve common purpose. The school site council, made up of disparate peoples joined by a common purpose, is truly the laboratory where common moral purpose and unity are tested and developed. Parents, representing a variety of cultural backgrounds and economic classes, working together on equal footing with teachers and administrators to plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of school programs, soon develop a sense of community. They soon know that they have a voice and a choice in decisions affecting their children. By

precept and example, the school site council teaches children the meaning of working together to achieve a common purpose. By precept and example, the school site council teaches the community the value of pooling the strengths of diversity to achieve a common purpose.

What better way is there to enhance unity within our society than to return public schools to the public, to permit communities to come together in a meaningful effort to train the young to value common moral purposes, to value cooperative effort to solve common problems, to realize that they will, indeed, have a voice in decisions affecting their community and their nation?

As schools change, children are taught not just to read, but to reason, as well. They are taught, not just to reckon, but to solve problems. They are taught, not just to write, but to communicate with others. Changes such as these which occur in the new environment of cooperation between school and community are basic to a new unity in this nation. We won't soon agree on all issues; nor should we; but, we will have the capability to use diverse viewpoints, to sort out alternatives, to discover possibilities and to reach consensus supportable by all.

That's what the founding fathers had in mind when they urged the establishment of public schools as a foundation for a free and self-governing society.





# Sterilizing the Golden Goose

by Joseph R. Ellis

It is my thesis that there is a serious, deepening and growing malaise within the institutions of the United States and among its people, and since the latter half of the 1960's, this condition has gained momentum and become more and more pervasive, amplified and repeated. There is no consensus as to the exact nature, full extent, specific cause or effective treatment of the nation's ills. The explanation that the seriousness of America's troubles is more a product of modern journalism than an accurate description of reality loses acceptance by a growing number of people as the effects of these ills begin to have an increasing and direct impact on our lives. Why, still in the midst of plenty, does the nation now languish? Is our decline imminent? Are we inexorably caught by Parkinson's Law and the Peter Principle or are we becoming the victims of our own complacency? Indeed, has the United State reached a national menopause?

Any attempt to provide a complete list of the current critical problems facing the nation would but provoke debate over what

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**... intelligence is behavior that prevents or solves problems while not causing or contributing to equally serious problems. . . .**

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to include and exclude. Similarly, any attempt to indicate the relative significance of our troubles would give rise to arguments as to which are problems and which are symptoms of a discrepancy between our perceptions of "what is" and our ideation of "what ought to be." However, even a cursory examination of our social institutions gives me serious concerns that can no longer be passed off as the inevitable workings of change. If intelligence is behavior that prevents or solves problems while not causing or contributing to equally or more serious problems, then the citizens of the United States appear to be acting unintelligently regarding their common problems. They are not now controlling change to achieve ends that satisfy basic human needs. Correspondingly, a cursory examination of areas of human needs, with symptoms ranging from obesity to indifferent and destructive human relationships, gives cause for similar and serious concerns

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for the physical, social, moral, intellectual and psychological condition of Americans.

It seems to me that the evidence pointing to the direction of change in the form and function of the American family is statistically well documented. The results of the 1980 census, not available as this is written, are expected to substantiate further a direction and degree of change char-

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**... I regard the American family, in particular, as an institution of systematic production of mental illness for each of its members. . . .**

**- Ashley Montagu -**

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acterized by: a divorce rate that reached alarming proportions a generation ago and continues to rise; living together without being married as a widespread practice; and a growing number of single and unwed parents representing a circumstance now common throughout America.

Reports from both the professional literature and the media indicate increases in spouse and child abuse, incest and runaway children, while teenage pregnancies abound. In many large cities, the number of illegitimate births far exceeds that of legitimate births. Drug abuse, violence, vandalism and self-destructive behavior by children and youth are manifestations of poor mental health conditions in our families. These conditions led Montagu (Pourchot, 1976) to state, "I regard the American family, in particular, as an institution of systematic production of mental illness for each of its members." Clearly, a large proportion of American families do not serve the needs of their members or of the society. Paradoxically, at this time our government imposes an income tax structure which penalizes married couples and provides a welfare system that includes an incentive for many women to have illegitimate children. A major national movement tends, wittingly or unwittingly, to diminish the importance of the role of homemaker—all in the name of liberation.

From my point of view, never have so few squandered so much in so short a period as

have we Americans! From generally industrious, productive, efficient and thrifty forebearers, we have evolved into prosperous but lazy producers and wasteful consumers. A successful labor movement no longer gives emphasis to the quality of work and the greed for profit has, in many instances, dangerously diminished our resources and threatened the quality of life by fouling our environment. Our government, too frequently, discourages productive efforts with excessive regulations, rewards the wrong behaviors, and reduces the value of our currency by recklessly printing and distributing money to please pressure groups. Even though we now face the consequences of the folly of our economic evolution, government and academic leaders either fail to see or refuse to inform the people of the very positive relationship between world wide rising inflation and the rapidly increasing human population. Given present conditions, there simply are not enough resources to serve an infinite number of people.

My observations lead me to believe that during the past three decades, formal religious experience has had less and less of an impact on more and more Americans. Increasingly, Americans appear to be withdrawn from active involvement with churches; thus, despite efforts to attract and to compete with entertainers by providing personally and socially relevant activities, organized religion would appear to be a declining force in the lives of many individuals and in the society.

Media technology has made vicarious (watching and listening) experience the principal means used by Americans in their quest for renewal. The Nielsen ratings and the cost of advertising on television attest to its attraction and power. While being rewarded enormously and worshipped adoringly as stars, entertainers of all kinds rob most Americans of their chances for active, direct and cooperative involvement in fulfilling and recreative activities.

The proposition that people get the government they deserve is attributed to Winston Churchill. The intense desire and the prolonged hardships of the 18th century

North American colonists earned for them the government they struggled for and deserved. The efforts and sacrifices of succeeding generations of Americans developed and preserved a union of states which, in the 20th century, became the world's most democratic nation. Its people have become protected by the most civil rights and enjoy the greatest equality of opportunity and the highest degree of freedom and prosperity anywhere. Now, four years into the third century of its existence as an independent nation, democracy, civil rights, equality of opportunity, freedom and prosperity in the United States appear threatened more from forces within than from forces abroad. Today civil rights and equality of opportunity are placed in jeopardy by a perversion of affirmative action and the use of deceptive euphemisms which often sanction a purposeful, systematic and comprehensive reverse discrimination unequalled in earlier times.

The "let George do it" principle poses a constant threat to a democratic society. In our apathy, have we forgotten John Curran's admonition of 1790, "The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance . . ." (Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 1955, p. 167)."

If Churchill's contention is an accurate explanation for the relationship between people and their government, then I conclude that it certainly must encompass the community-school relationship. In a democratic society the school "mirrors" the community it serves. When the school does not serve the community or when there is no community to be served or when the community lacks unifying values and is in conflict and frustration, the images reflected appear as unclear, distorted, contradictory and confusing. The major problems and symptoms of problems in American schools today—disruptive behavior, violence, vandalism, drug and sex abuse, declining achievement, low motivation, meaningless experiences, student withdrawal and teacher "burn-out"—mostly have their genesis outside of the school. Their appearance in the school should occur as no surprise to persons knowledgeable of conditions and trends in contemporary American culture. Schools seem to lack the ability to lessen, let alone to reverse, the magnitude of these problems. Generally, unable to find community within the society it serves, the school cannot find a common purpose. Thus, a major current movement in education, back to the basics, places emphasis on means while the Federal government mandates educational priorities and establishes ends as a re-

sponse to special interest groups. Both fail to deal effectively with the underlying problem—the absence of a sense of community and common purpose.

As indicated in the preceding interpretation of conditions in American society, the writer believes that the country is losing or has in many places lost the values and communication capacity necessary to foster unity and thereby community. While many forces are contributing to this loss, it is hypothesized here that the development and work of specialists and special interest groups are primary causes of this trend; a trend that has gone beyond diversity and now approaches social fragmentation. Nearly thirty years ago Will Durant saw clearly and described well the impact of intellectual specialization.

. . . knowledge had become unmanageably vast; every science had begotten a dozen more, each subtler than the rest . . . history proved all history false . . . theology crumbled, and political theory cracked . . . philosophy itself . . . ran away from all these battlefronts of truth, and hid itself in recondite and narrow lanes . . .

All that remained was the scientific specialist, who knew "more and more about less and less," and the philosophical speculator, who knew less and less about more and more. The specialist put on blinders . . . Perspective was lost . . . The gap between life and knowledge grew wider and wider . . . In the midst of unprecedented learning popular ignorance flourished (Durant, 1953, pp. v-vi).

Nowhere is the situation which Durant describes more evident than in American higher education.

The rich and well-born formed an aristocracy which constituted the nation's earliest powerful special interest groups. Then came the religious, political, military, business, industrial, financial, labor, ethnic and professional groups to organize and to seek special benefits. Supposedly, they sought benefits for the society they served, but, mostly, benefits were primarily for narrow self interests. A coalition of groups joined together shortly after World War II to give momentum to the movement to expand and apply civil rights equally to all citizens. The success of this movement and the special interest groups that were associated with it provided a model easily adapted by other citizens who rallied around an identity of oppression, minority status, discrimination or a needy condition. Many such groups now seek to bend, mold and shape the system to the immediate benefit

of their members. The development and proliferation of special interest groups, often accountable only to their cause, has created a fourth arm of government that functions, in many ways, with more power than do the constituted executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Indeed, lawmakers and government executives often curry their favor and do their bidding at the expense of the common good.

Wendell Berry recently provided the following insights as an explanation for the loss of community in much of the United States today.

. . . the corruption of community has its source in the corruption of character . . .

The disease of the modern character is specialization . . . We . . . see an idea of community wholeness that divorces itself from any idea of personal wholeness.

. . . What happens under the rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more and more intricate, it has less and less structure. It becomes more and more organized, but less and less orderly. The community disintegrates because it loses the necessary understanding . . . just as the individual character loses the sense of a responsible involvement . . .

. . . Because by definition they lack any such sense of mutuality or wholeness, our specializations subsist on conflict with one another. The rule is never to cooperate, but rather to follow one's own interest as far as possible . . . The good of the whole . . . is never a consideration because it is never thought of; our culture now simply lacks the means for thinking of it (Berry, 1977, pp. 19-22).

Evidence of the fragmentation of contemporary American society, and a cause of additional fragmentation, is accentuated by the use of self-referencing labels ("my people," "our people") and special interest group labels ("Black Americans," "gay Americans," "native Americans," "Hispanic Americans," "handicapped Americans," etc.). These labels connote a feeling that each group's concern is primarily for "their people," and only incidentally, if at all, for Americans as a whole. An examination of government programs and the bureaucracy which administers them indicates the power, nature and extent of the "benefits and privileges" which the special interest groups have gained for "their people."

To foster a society that maximizes both freedom and equality of opportunity for all of its members is a goal apparently ad-

vocated by most Americans. To achieve this goal without denying individuals their rights or providing them with unearned privileges on the basis of their race, sex, age or ethnic background poses a difficult issue. The awarding of privileges and the denial of rights by such discrimination would appear to reverse the progress made toward having a more democratic society in the United States. The following announcement appeared in an official publication of a large midwestern university and is presented here as an example of the results of the power and divisiveness of special interest groups and of the dilemma they have brought to American society.

Changes have recently been made in the definitions of government-wide standard racial and ethnic categories. Persons with origins on the Indian subcontinent are no longer classified as white but rather as Asian. Also, American Indians and Alaskan Natives are included in the category so named if they maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

These definitions are relevant to university concerns because all categories except white are "protected" minority groups and therefore subjects of affirmative action programs.

Following are the current government-wide standard racial and ethnic categories.

- 1) White (not of Hispanic origin): Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.
- 2) Black (not of Hispanic origin): Persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- 3) Hispanic: Persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South America or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- 4) American Indian or Alaskan Native: Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintain cultural identification through affiliation or community recognition.
- 5) Asian or Pacific Islander: Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands (Note 1).

Does this mean that a Cuban criminal or an Asian who served as a member of the Viet Cong in 1970 and killed or tried to kill Americans in Vietnam can enter the United States in 1980, automatically become a protected person, and receive preferential treatment over those white Americans whom he tried to kill? Will the Mexican "invasion," the wave of Cubans

welcomed to the United States under humanitarian motives, and countless numbers of non-whites who come to share in the "American Dream" be privileged over those who did so much to make that dream possible? It may be that the kind of programs that discriminate against citizens in such a manner will change the character of those who live in the society. I do not believe that such discrimination holds promise of fostering unity.

Higher education in the United States has been, since colonial times, a citadel of freedom—freedom to think, learn, teach and express. The special interest groups, wittingly or unwittingly, may at times pose a threat to this core value. In many situations, to question programs and practices especially designed for women, minorities or the handicapped may earn the questioner the reputation of racist, bigot, sexist or non-humanist. The following announcement appeared in an official publication of a large midwestern university and is an example of how special interests can at times threaten the common interest.

**NOTIFICATION OF TITLE IX POLICY**  
(slide shows, films and other related media)

In accordance with the Title IX Program at \_\_\_\_\_, slide shows, films and other related media produced on campus should conform to the university guidelines for Title IX. President \_\_\_\_\_, has appointed Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Director of Academic Publications, to be responsible for monitoring compliance in this area. All slide shows, films, etc., should be reviewed and approved by Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ before classroom or public use. [Names deleted by the author] (Note 2).

It should be noted that the censorship implicit in this announcement was objected to by some faculty of that institution. The policy was not fully implemented.

**Can the field of education lead in providing a balance between diversity and unity and thereby foster community?** The position taken here is a qualified yes. It must be remembered that the field of education is itself comprised of persons who are both specialists and members of special interest groups. Like those they would educate, they are part of a society fraught with many of the troubles so pessimistically described in this article.

Perhaps another agency of government or some extraordinary event will provide the unity required to achieve community. The fact that people live in close proximity, eat a common diet of fast foods, are standardized by Madison Avenue and share a common media experience does not produce community. Indeed, can we expect a society

to maintain community when its members average moving their residences once every five years, change their jobs and spouses almost as frequently, and so many of them experience near epidemic drug abuse or fear to venture out of their homes at night?

**Should education take the lead in attaining and maintaining a balance between diversity and unity thereby fostering community?** The position taken here is yes, it most certainly should for reasons which include:

1. education should serve the society and an essential and persistent need of a society is to achieve community. Diversity is an essential characteristic of a democratic society and should be encouraged;
2. while education may take place without a school, a school is needed to facilitate unity within a community; therefore, much "educational soundness" requires a close relationship between the school and the community;
3. the school itself must become a focal point which manifests a balance of unity and diversity within a community; and
4. failure to achieve success in this area will lead to the collapse of the public school as we have known it during most of this century. Some form of private and/or special interest educational institution will then emerge as a successor to the public school. Such a trend may now be well underway.

**How can the school facilitate a balance between unity and diversity in a democratic society?** In my opinion, schools can reduce the imbalance between unity and diversity by providing experiences which contribute to the following seven areas.

- **Improving human relationships.** We have become too indifferent and too impersonal in relating to each other. The need to love and to be loved is the center of human needs; the failure to satisfy this need underlies most of our difficulties in intra-personal, interpersonal and group relationships. Prevailing distrust, conflict, hate and hostility attest to this failure.
- **Making democracy work to its full potential.** We do not appear to use the values, concepts and skills of democracy well enough to make it work effectively. We have exhibited too much "getting" and not enough "giving" as we have been more concerned with freedoms than with responsibilities. Often the self-interest and the special interest have subordinated the common good.
- **Developing and using our problem solving abilities.** We tend to let others "think" for us, rely on habits and pre-conceived generalizations, and avoid

thinking about problems. In some areas our freedom to question and pursue inquiry has been blunted by our thought processes and by special interest group controls. Our sense of self esteem may thwart imagination and inhibit risking venturesome inquiry.

- **Using our resources wisely.** We have acted as a plague of "wasteards" squandering resources and fouling the environment. We have proceeded as if resources were infinite and science would make right our abuse. The energy shortage of the 1970's and 1980's may portend shortages of water and food for our children and their children. Our productive capacities have decreased.
- **Using evaluation processes effectively.** While we are continually in the process of determining worth, the process is often implemented with incomplete and faulty procedures and evidence. Failure to obtain and use relevant and valid data as feedback and guidance leads to poor control of activities, a dominance of unintended outcomes, poor judgments and a lack of accountability.
- **Perceiving and caring for the whole.** Perhaps because of innate limitations, the lack of opportunity or the functions of self and special interest, we tend to see only parts rather than the larger wholes with concerns mostly for "what's in it for me." While specialization in training, occupations and industry has made mass produced goods and services readily available to most Americans, it has also narrowed our real experiences and concerns while developing generally helpless consumers highly dependent on other specialists. Technicians rule both philosophers and kings, as efforts to reduce economic inflation, achieve energy conservation and encourage world peace are threatened by failure to view and care for the whole. The needs of the "whole person" and of "society" go unmet by schools who, instead of educators, have only math educators, English educators, special educators, bilingual educators, and an endless array of specialists.
- **Controlling the quantity of human population.** Obtaining a balance between numbers of people and resources to support them is the number one problem of the entire world. Without a solution to this problem in the very near future, all other major problems of the world cannot be dealt with effectively. The evidence of an increasing imbalance of excessive people over insufficient resources is clear and the time table for chaos is predictable; however, the warning goes unheeded (Coale, 1974 and Freeman, 1974). Leaders avoid the problem. President Jimmy Carter admonishes the nation to conserve fuel as part of his "moral equivallance of war" while

at the same time welcoming an almost unchecked and unlimited invasion of the nation by fuel consuming immigrants from already over populated lands. Monetary inflation rages in most places throughout the world as people in growing numbers seek an insufficient supply of goods. Failure to attain a birth rate and to regulate immigration in a manner consistent with current and long range availability of resources will promote competition that results in conflict between groups for limited resources as their standard of living predictably declines. The question of a balance between unity and diversity in a society will then become moot and be replaced by survival of the fittest values and strategies.

Providing definitive answers to these questions should be the continuing task of the faculty, students and public served by each school in the United States. The professional literature is replete with principles and practices that would facilitate their efforts. Obviously there are programs and practices that must be stopped if a democratic community is to be achieved. While on the other hand new initiatives must be undertaken in school-community relationships and staff and curriculum development. The book, **Action Research to Improve School Practices** would be of value to those engaged in this kind of work (Corey, 1953). Central to the task of answering this and the other two questions raised above is the commitment, understanding and creative capacity of American educators.

Ideally, the results of a study of the current major common problems and issues facing the nation should permit members of society to make a judgment about the proper balance between unity and diversity within the society. These results and their interpretation should also provide direction for education and the schools. Educators could then develop a problem/issue need—centered curriculum including goals, objectives, content, resources, activities, and evaluation procedures. In my opinion, the seven suggestions commented upon above should form the base of a mandate for educational priorities. Realizing that we—lay people and professional educators—are to some degree the victims of many of the failures indicated, I am not sure that this ideal can be implemented. Do we care enough about the common good? Can we see it? Can we work together and solve the problems inherent in the undertaking? Do we want a quest for truth or indoctrination to be the basis of our school programs?

In summary, this article has expressed a point of view which holds that the emphasis on cultural plurality and a multicultural

society is breaking the needed balance between unity and diversity in the United States. Further, it is held that our society is in serious trouble and that the cause of its problems now lie, unfortunately, more with the character of its people than with the nature of its systems. I have tried to communicate the belief that this is a unique condition in the history of the United States and that the major threats to the continuation of our democratic way of life and to our standard of living lie within the nation and are more advanced than most Americans realize. The focus on what is wrong is designed to give emphasis to the pervasiveness and seriousness of these threats and to the unintelligent way they are being met. Lastly, attention was drawn to the field of education as an instrument for furthering a balance between unity and diversity in our society. Here, three specific questions were posed and responses provided.

A continuation of the trend in America toward disunity and fragmentation among its people bodes ill for the existence of public schools and for the future of democracy. While democracy as a way of life in the United States has yet to achieve its full potential, "never have so many had it so good." Failure on the part of our schools, and education in general, to serve and give priority to the common good of this society would be tantamount to rendering sterile, if not killing, "the golden goose."

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- Note 1. This information appeared in the **Gazette**, the official employee-student publication of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois, October, 1977, p. 3.
- Note 2. From the **Northern Illinois University Faculty Bulletin**, DeKalb, Illinois, November, 1976, p. 24.



# Restoring A Balance Between Unity and Diversity in a Democratic Community: A Summary

by Byron F. Radebaugh and Joseph R. Ellis

As indicated in the editorial, the editors asked the contributors to address three basic questions. This concluding essay summarizes the answers given to them.

## **Question #1: As a people, have we Americans lost our sense of common purpose and become too diverse?**

**Answer:** Four contributors (Radebaugh, Corbally, Peterson, Ellis) answer this question with an explicit "yes". Two contributors (Kuhn and Wernick) answer it with an implicit "yes". One contributor (Eidell and Gotts) answers by saying "yes" and "no". They think a shared sense of common purpose is not enough. We must also ask, "What kind of common purpose?" They suggest that perhaps we have pursued inappropriate or unsatisfying goals and that we should choose transcendent goals such as truth, goodness, and dedication to others. One contributor (Brown) answers the question by saying there are limits to diversity. If we have both freedom and equality in adequate amounts, diversity will not be significantly divisive. One contributor (Riles) answers by saying "no". Our problem, he thinks, is that we have overlaid our sense of common purpose with zealous efforts to right old wrongs and regain faith in ourselves as a nation without guilt. He believes we are making significant progress toward the goals of common unity, sees no sign of balkanization taking place, and is convinced that the things that bind us together have become much more significant than the old fears that kept us apart. He believes schools are now better equipped to further a sense of community within our culture. We conclude, therefore, that most of the contributors would answer question #1 in the affirmative. We also conclude that the negative or in-between-responses to this question provide us with valuable insights into the question itself.

## **Question #2: Should education try to further a sense of community in our culture?**

**Answer:** Seven contributors (Radebaugh, Eidell and Gotts, Wernick, Brown, Peterson, Riles, and Ellis) answer this question with an explicit "yes". Two contributors (Corbally and Kuhn) answer it with an implicit "yes". We conclude, therefore, that all would answer question #2 in the affirmative.

## **Question #3: What can be done by the schools and others to achieve an appropriate balance between diversity and unity within our culture?**

**Answer:**

### **Radebaugh:**

- Recognize the problem—an excessive emphasis on diversity has resulted in a loss of consensus which has made it more difficult to solve crucial common problems.
- Develop an awareness that diversity can be a positive good only when there is agreement on a common method for resolving differences.
- Make sure that equal rights for all are found in the fundamental arrangements of society.
- Deliberately nurture those basic moral attitudes which recognize the dignity of human beings as human beings.
- Create and support centers for studying the problem and trying out new ways of making democracy work better.

### **Corbally**

- Restrict the role of schooling to those basic things each one of us needs to function as citizens.
- Do not ask teachers to take over every educative task we can imagine.
- Assume greater responsibility ourselves for the total educative environment of society.

### **Kuhn**

- Accept the power of a standard instructional language.

### **Eidell and Gotts**

- Choose transcendent goals such as truth, goodness, and dedication to others in order to achieve appropriateness in common purpose.
- Establish values on the basis of their objective worth so that such values can provide common purpose in society.
- Use inculcation and exploration to help students deal with values.

### **Wernick**

- Improve personal relationships—teacher-student, student-parent-in-workplace, student-adult.
- Make the workplace important in education.
- Develop inquiry, social, human relations, and management skills in students.

- Create closer relationships between schools and other groups.
- Search for leaders who have a respect for all living things.

#### **Brown**

- Depoliticize the schools as much as possible as soon as possible.
- Stabilize and make more equitable the financial base for education.
- Decentralize school systems.
- Extend the educational participatory process to include parents and students and try to relieve the pressures on students and young adults that come from so many directions.

#### **Peterson**

- Establish a nationwide student exchange program.
- Adopt a required core of courses designed to build unity.
- Provide opportunities for voluntary service to those in need—the lonely, sick, and aged.

#### **Riles**

- Utilize the local school site council as a means for developing and testing common moral purpose and unity.

#### **Ellis**

- Improve human relationships.
- Make democracy work to its full potential.

- Develop and use our problem solving abilities.
- Use our resources wisely.
- Use the evaluation process effectively.
- Perceive and care for the whole.
- Control the quantity of human population.

We think that implementing the suggestions found in this issue of **Thresholds**, and others that might emerge as the result of an informed public debate, would help restore an appropriate balance between unity and diversity in our democratic community. We hope you will join with us in attempting to achieve this vital goal, and that it will become one of **your** educational commitments for the decade of the 1980's.



## An Invitation To Our Readers

The editors of this issue of **Thresholds** are convinced that one of the important things that can be done to make democracy and education work better is to devise new and better ways of involving citizens in a more informed and critical dialogue about crucial social and educational concerns.

One of the missions of the Thresholds in Education Foundation is to promote this kind of dialogue through **Thresholds** magazine and other means. In order to better achieve this end, we extend an invitation to our readers to enter into this dialogue by responding to the ideas, issues, questions, problems, and proposals found in this and future issues of **Thresholds** by way of letters to the editor. What do **you** think of these ideas? Do **you** agree or disagree with them? Why? What can **you** do that would help build unity in a diverse community? Do **you** think it is important to try to do so?

We would like to include a "Letters to the Editor" section in future issues of **Thresholds**. Your responses to our invitation will make this possible.

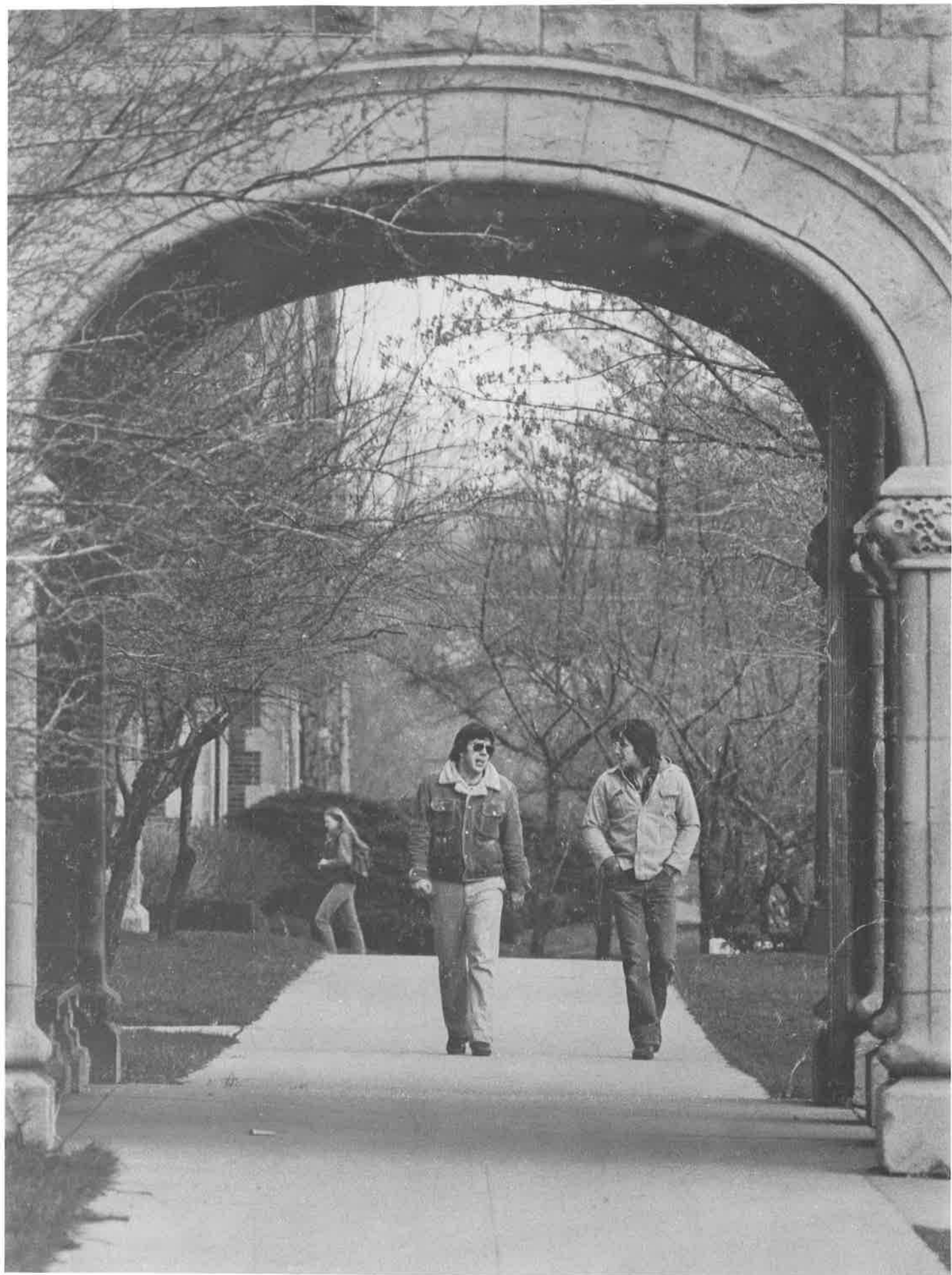
We are also considering the desirability of continuing the dialogue on the unity-diversity phenomenon begun in this issue. We invite your comments in this regard.

Address your letters to:

Editor  
**Thresholds in Education**  
 P. O. Box 771  
 DeKalb, Illinois 60115

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*"Democracy begins in conversation."  
 —John Dewey, a remark made on his 90th birthday, 1949*



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