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## ARTICLE

**Lessons from the Periphery: The Role of Dispositions in Montessori Teacher Training**

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*“The first thing required of a teacher is that he be rightly disposed for his task.”*Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*<sup>[1]</sup>**Introduction: The Disposition Controversy**

In 2002 the term “dispositions” entered the vocabulary of teacher education with a vengeance when the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) added the concept to its inventory of required standards.<sup>[2]</sup> Teacher education programs across the country developed lists of professional dispositions that their graduates should attain based on NCATE provided guidelines. Caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice were values included in NCATE suggestions; these values were emphasized and, subsequently, assessed in teacher education programs.<sup>[3]</sup> Students who were found lacking in these traits were counseled out of education programs or given unsatisfactory grades, at least at some institutions. A few of the affected students objected to their treatment, and local administrators heard their complaints.<sup>[4]</sup> Controversy at the local level quickly accelerated to national stories as conservative-leaning newspapers like the *New York Post*, and conservative commentators like George Will, brought to the attention of the American public what they viewed as the latest round in American culture wars.<sup>[5]</sup>

In an attempt to quiet the criticism, Arthur Wise, the president of NCATE, appeared before the Education Department’s National Advisory Council in June 2006 and denied the assertion “that NCATE has a mandatory social justice standard.” Wise then agreed to remove social justice from its glossary because the term is “susceptible to a wide variety of definitions.”<sup>[6]</sup> As a result of this preemptive withdrawal by Wise, critics from both the left and the right were mollified, at least temporarily.<sup>[7]</sup>

Today, the term ‘dispositions’ in teacher education has become a code for attitudes, values, and even political leanings. This has rendered the concept controversial within the teacher education world. To many on the right, it means an attempt by a liberal and politically correct professoriate to indoctrinate the country’s future teachers into misguided social beliefs. To many on the left, it is a common-sense term that highlights the necessity of teachers to be more than mere repositories of skills and techniques.<sup>[8]</sup>

While conventional teacher educators and policymakers continue to wrangle over the proper meaning and uses of professional dispositions, for one alternative approach to professional preparation, the concept is anything but controversial. For nearly a century, the pedagogical approach known as the Montessori method has placed the cultivation of teachers’ attitudes and values at the center of the process of becoming a teacher. In Montessori teacher training, ‘preparing the adult’ emotionally and spiritually is fundamental to the education of future teachers.<sup>[9]</sup> In this paper we highlight the values and attitudes that Montessori teachers are expected to attain and describe why these qualities are so central to the pedagogy. In doing so, we offer what we hope will be useful lessons related to the utility

and meaning of dispositions for mainstream teacher educators.

### *Montessori: A Traditional Approach to Education*

2007 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the first Montessori school. Maria Montessori started with one small school of fifty students in the poverty-stricken San Lorenzo ward of Rome on January 6, 1907. Today there are over 22,000 Montessori schools in at least 110 countries.<sup>[10]</sup> In its century of development, Montessori education has experienced ebbs and flows of interest among mainstream educators. More recently, Montessori has come to be seen as a time-tested, successful approach to educational reform. Public as well as private Montessori schools consistently win the support of parents who praise both the high levels of academic achievement attained by students and the humane, child-centered approach to human development characterizing the approach. Educational policy researchers who study Montessori point to the coherence of the program, a coherence that is distinctly at odds with that found in most public schools in the United States.<sup>[11]</sup> The success of Montessori education is due to three key elements: a comprehensive and stable method of pedagogy; the construction of classrooms as developmentally prepared environments; and a system of teacher training that places equal emphasis on the acquisition of highly complex technical expertise and the cultivation of a teaching disposition aimed emphatically toward “following the child.”<sup>[12]</sup>

Maria Montessori held her first training course for teachers in 1909 at Villa Montesca, the Umbrian estate of Barone Leopoldo Franchetti and his American-born wife Alice Hallgarten Franchetti. Just two years after the opening of the first *Casa dei Bambini*, Maria Montessori was deep into her revolutionary pedagogical “experiment” and had already attracted international attention brought on by the “miracle children” of San Lorenzo, whose reading, writing, and self-care looked more like that of well-behaved adults than the young, impoverished residents of Rome’s tenements.<sup>[13]</sup> For the next fifty years, Montessori, together with a small but loyal cadre of followers, continued to experiment with what she came to call “scientific pedagogy.”

At the heart of Montessori’s approach lay a radically reconfigured vision of childhood, one in which children are viewed as deeply invested in their own development, and able to achieve the fulfillment of their human potential through self-construction. Within this system, the role of the teacher is also radically reconfigured. Education is understood as an aid to life, and the teacher’s primary responsibility is to eliminate impediments to the natural course of human development.<sup>[14]</sup> To be a Montessori educator, in other words, is to replace the disposition toward filling the child with information with faith in the child’s developmental instincts and a commitment to directing that development based on cues provided by the child.<sup>[15]</sup>

Throughout her career, Maria Montessori gave somewhere close to a hundred training courses aimed specifically at cultivating this disposition in the adult.<sup>[16]</sup> The “preparation of the adult,” as she called it, rested almost entirely in a deliberate re-casting of the adult’s relationship to the child. In her voluminous writings about the method, a large portion is devoted to both justifying and explicating that re-casting. While the theme of the prepared adult runs throughout nearly all of Montessori’s published writings, here we rely primarily on the ideas expressed in her book, *The Absorbent Mind*. Regarded by many Montessorians as one of the more mature and accessible statements of her views of childhood and pedagogy, *The Absorbent Mind* was published originally in English in 1949. The book is based on a series of lectures given by Dr. Montessori near the end of her life during a training course offered at Ahmedabad, India.<sup>[17]</sup>

### **The Prepared Adult**

Maria Montessori thought it essential to create a new type of teacher for her method. She even gave the position a new name—directress—accentuating the notion that the adult is to guide, but not control, the natural energy of children. The term is still used by many Montessori teachers today. If the term seems odd sounding to twenty-first century Americans, the expectations for the teacher are odder still, especially to mainstream teacher educators.

In a training lecture captured by her friend and sometime collaborator, E. M. Standing, Maria Montessori noted that a teacher “must be filled with wonder; and when you have acquired that you are prepared.”<sup>[18]</sup> To be filled with wonder requires the teacher to connect to both an inner spirituality and to the cosmos. These are grand themes and grand connections, and they emphasize the deep transformation that Maria Montessori deemed essential.

We identify three interconnected dispositions that lie at the heart of the Montessori approach:

**flexibility, restraint, and love.**<sup>[19]</sup> Flexibility requires both skill in observation and a well-developed knowledge of Montessori pedagogy. The ultimate goal of flexibility is to “follow the child,” a catch phrase of Montessori education. Following the child, of course, requires that the teacher be willing to go where the child leads, a concept that stands in stark contrast to prevailing notions of the teacher as transmitter, motivator, and monitor of student results. Related to flexibility is restraint, a higher-level disposition that presumes both flexibility and a level of self-control. Montessori wrote that this trait “comes with practice, like everything else, but it never comes very easily” (Montessori, 1949, 256). Love, in turn, flows from restraint. It stems from a deep respect for the powers of development and the child’s work—what Montessori referred to as “great work.”<sup>[20]</sup> Embedded in all three of these dispositions, but especially in love, is the idea of serving the child. In serving the child (in the great work of development), as Montessori put it, “one serves life” (261).

These dispositions represented radical characteristics for a teacher when first proposed by Maria Montessori. They suggested a profoundly different way for teachers to interact with both children and the learning environment. Based on an assumption that children are invested in their own development—that minds are not blank slates to be filled by adults—they call the teacher to careful observation of children and a willingness to allow a child to proceed at her own pace. Montessori used the metaphor of a valet to get the point across.

... a good valet looks after his master. He keeps his master’s dressing table tidy, puts the brushes in place, but he does not tell his master when to use the brushes; he serves his meals, but does not oblige his master to eat; having served everything nicely, without a word, he discreetly disappears (256).

The good teacher, like the good valet, must serve the child’s spirit. When the spirit’s needs are shown, the teacher must rush to find out what is needed and serve the child accordingly.

Like the whole of the Montessori Method, the preparation of the adult entails a fully integrated conception of the adult as guide. In addition to cultivating the teacher as a particular kind of person, Montessori teacher training also features highly technical instruction in observation, lesson presentation, and material making. Learning to follow the child is an intensive process, blending technique with disposition. Moreover, the process is assumed to extend throughout the teacher’s entire lifespan and infuse the whole of her outlook: intellectual, moral, and spiritual. Achieving this outlook means one has become not just a teacher, but a Montessorian. In the following sections, we take up each of the dispositions that we have identified and describe in greater detail their meaning in Montessori teacher training.

## Flexibility

The disposition toward flexibility is, perhaps, most familiar to mainstream educators. The ability to respond to variability within the classroom and diversity among students is prized among educators of all persuasions. For Montessorians, however, flexibility is a signal disposition, the absence of which renders ‘following the child’ impossible. The need for flexibility on the part of the Montessori teacher is most evident in two ways. First, in her role as ‘keeper and custodian’ of the classroom, the teacher must be able to adjust the environment based on the children’s needs. Second, the teacher must possess a supple repertoire of interactions with children.

Interestingly, in *The Absorbent Mind*, Montessori places the element of keeper and custodian of the environment above all others. The teacher must make the classroom a place of “comfort and peace, with full and varied interests.” Montessori describes it this way,

The essential charm of a house (classroom) is its cleanliness and order, with everything in its place, dusted, bright and cheerful . . . The teacher in the school must not do otherwise. All the apparatus is to be kept meticulously in order, beautiful and shining, in perfect condition. Nothing may be missing, so that to the child it always seems new, complete and ready for use. This means that the teacher also must be attractive, pleasing in appearance, tidy and clean, calm and dignified (253).

At first glance, here is a professional disposition that is quite explicit on the need for a professional dress and demeanor on the part of the teacher and for the classroom to exhibit order and beauty. On a deeper level, however, Montessori’s exhortation to “watch over the environment” (253) is an acknowledgement of the limits of the teacher’s power. The environment, rather than the child, is the locus of control. In order to follow the child, the teacher must sublimate her urge to control the child, and seek, instead, to cultivate with meticulous care the physical and emotional space in which children develop.

Just as important is the need for a teacher to know how and when to “give the children sensorial and cultural apparatus” (255). That is, the teacher must be able to know what materials are needed based on a child’s interest and readiness. A Montessori teacher must be flexible enough to have at the ready, and on the shelves, varied materials, each suiting the differing needs of the children in the class. In the mixed-age world of a typical Montessori environment, each child is working at his or her own pace according to his or her own interest. In order to direct this work, the teacher must be alert to the individual needs and desires of each child. One child will be engaged in practical life learning while another may be working on a cultural activity such as science or history. One of the central skills fostered in Montessori teacher training is the ability to observe the needs and aptitude of a child and to develop a flexible plan that allows a child to find appropriate work.

This means she must present the material regularly, showing its exact use. General surveillance and individual teaching, given with precision, are two ways in which the teacher can help the child’s development . . . These lessons, exact and fascinating, given in an intimate way to each child separately, are the teacher’s offering to the depths of the child’s soul (Montessori, 247).

Precision, as Montessori describes it, is the partner of flexibility. Like a jazz musician, the ability to improvise is grounded in profound mastery of a large and varied repertoire of lessons. A Montessori teacher can fulfill the requirement to be flexible only if she or he is completely knowledgeable of the hundreds of Montessori materials available for the classroom and their appropriate use.<sup>[21]</sup> Flexibility requires deep understanding not only of Montessori theory, but also of Montessori lessons. This deep understanding is attained, in part, through the development of substantial teacher manuals, known as

albums, which provide the theoretical context as well as procedural details of materials and lessons.<sup>[22]</sup>

A second component of flexibility is the ability to be supple in behavior toward the children. While on the one hand, a teacher must show restraint to students immersed in their work or on the verge of concentration (discussed in detail in the following section), on the other hand, the teacher must also be able to “break the flow of disturbing activity” (Montessori, 254). If a child is disrupting the cycle of activity and interfering with his or her own work and that of others, the teacher must be flexible enough to engage the student in alternative behavior. “The interruption may take the form of any kind of exclamation, or in showing a special and affectionate interest in the troublesome child.” Montessori gives specific examples of how this interruption may take place, even suggesting several possible questions or prompts: “How are you, Johnny? Come with me, I have something for you to do.” If the child does not respond to the first prompt, a teacher might add, “All right, it doesn’t matter. Let’s go to the garden” (254) and take the child away from where others are working.

### *Restraint*

Restraint is not easy for adults when they are dealing with younger humans who do not share their experience or knowledge. A natural response of an adult teacher when seeing a child trying to learn new material—whether it is learning how to read, acquiring the mechanics needed to throw a baseball, or learning the intricacies of playing a musical instrument—is to intervene by inserting him or herself in the learning process. Maria Montessori, however, cautioned:

. . . the teacher must learn to control herself so that the child’s spirit shall be free to expand and show its powers; the essence of her duty is not to interrupt the child in his efforts. This is a moment in which the delicacy of the teacher’s moral sensitiveness, acquired during her training, comes into play. She must learn that it is not easy to help, nor even, perhaps, to stand still and watch (248).

The restraint needed, in other words, is so complete that a child in a Montessori classroom must not even be aware that his or her actions are being observed.

Dr. Montessori, trained as a physical anthropologist, scientist, and physician, went on to note that restraint is necessary even while observing because an observation of an event changes an event. The idea is similar to the popular notion of Heisenberg’s famous Uncertainty Principle.<sup>[23]</sup> In other words, the very act of observation can change how a child acts in the classroom. For Maria Montessori it was important that the observation conducted by the teacher not be undertaken with either the aim of making the teacher’s presence felt, or “of helping the weaker ones” by the teacher’s own strength. Instead, it is the obligation of the teacher to observe with restraint so that the teacher can “recognize the child who has attained the power to concentrate and to admire the glorious rebirth of his spirit” (249).

Restraint on the part of the teacher enables concentration, a key Montessori aim. Children absorbed in their work, undergoing deep concentration, are happy, according to Dr. Montessori. More importantly, while concentrating, the child is able to shut out the others in the classroom and perceive the world anew.<sup>[24]</sup> In other words, it is through concentration that the “great work” of self-construction takes place. Eventually, the child’s concentration results in an “awakening of the social sense.” At that time the child may turn to the teacher and “discover” the teacher in the same way that one notices “the hardly perceptible scent of flowers hidden in the grass” (249). The “great principle” that fosters success for the teacher is to “act as if the child does not exist” once concentration has begun. Any interference can break the spell because concentration for the very young is as fragile as a “soap bubble” (255).

The ultimate goal for a Montessori teacher exhibiting restraint is to nurture self-directed learning in her students and to facilitate “education for life.” Dr. Montessori devoted an entire chapter of *The Absorbent Mind* to the concept. In her usage, education for life means not only that lifelong learning is possible and desirable, but also that education should be connected to both biological and social life.

### Love

The concept of love is rarely addressed in conventional teacher preparation programs. In part, this is due to our lack of comfort in thinking of the relationship between teachers and students in this way. The discussion also may be neglected because love is too personal to be addressed in the group setting of a teacher preparation classroom, even though the airwaves are filled with pop songs dwelling on romantic love. The closest we get to the concept of love in conventional teacher education programs is when we talk about an ethic of care in the manner of Nel Noddings or when there is a discussion of teaching from the heart in the manner of Parker Palmer.<sup>[25]</sup> For Maria Montessori, however, love was elemental to following the child.<sup>[26]</sup>

In *The Absorbent Mind* Maria Montessori speaks of two levels of love. The first is more common and centers on the care of and affection for children. In Montessori’s formulation, this first level of love is akin to the maternal love exhibited by a mother for her child. Mothers nurture and clothe their children due to a bond created at birth. It is deep and unequivocal, but the love is based on personal and material relationships and the child’s dependency on the mother to provide basic needs. Moreover, this level of love has a spiritual dimension. Grounded in her own life as a Catholic, Montessori wrote about teaching the catechism to children and teaching children how to say their prayers as a form of love.<sup>[27]</sup>

It is a second, transcendent and compassionate level of love, that occupies a larger place in the life of a Montessori trained teacher. This transcendent love moves beyond the “personal and material” (258). “To serve the children is to feel one is serving the spirit of man, a spirit which has to free itself.” Montessori teachers experiencing this level of love feel “lifted to a height” (258) never known before. This supreme love can be attained only through the child in the classroom. The following lengthy passage should make this clear.

Before this, she [the Montessori teacher] used to feel that her task was a noble one, but she was glad when the holidays came and hoped, like all human beings who work for others, that her working hours would be reduced and her salary raised. Her satisfactions were, perhaps, to exert authority and to have the feeling of being an ideal to which the children looked up and tried to emulate. It would make her happy to become a headmistress, or even an inspectress. But to go from this level to the higher one is to understand that true happiness does not lie in these things. One who has drunk at the fountain of spiritual happiness says good-bye of his own accord to the satisfactions that come from a higher professional status, and this is shown by the many heads of schools and inspectors who have abandoned their careers to dedicate themselves to small children, and to become what others call contemptuously “infant teachers” (258).

This level of love is transformational for the adult as well as for the child. As described by Montessori, an adult experiencing this love is able to say, “The children are now working as if I did not exist.” Prior to the transformation, the teacher believed that “it was she who had taught the children, she who had raised them from a low level to a higher one.” Afterward, however, the teacher ascribes her own contributions by stating, “I have helped this life to fulfil the tasks set for it by creation” (259).

With love, then, the disposition for Montessori teaching has circled back to and connected with the need for restraint. The self has become less dominant in the classroom and there is complete

acceptance in following the child. Montessori teacher training seeks nothing less than an emotional and spiritual transformation of the adult. This is disposition acquisition with vigor and intensity, and it stands in stark contrast to the approach currently pursued in mainstream teacher education.

### **Educational Outcomes: A Contemporary Conundrum**

Nearly one hundred years ago, when information about Montessori pedagogy first came to the United States, the American media highlighted Montessori classrooms as places where miracle children excelled. “A Frenzy of Writing Takes Possession of the School” and “Children of Four Learn to Write in Six Weeks” were representative of the ardent claims made in the print media. Publishing stories emphasizing the high levels of academic achievement that seemed possible for children were the aims of newspapers and magazines as the publications sought to capture a middle-class readership.<sup>[28]</sup> Today, the writing may not be quite as florid or hyperbolic, but the emphasis of the mainstream media remains primarily focused on the academic gains possible in Montessori classrooms.<sup>[29]</sup>

A concentration on the achievement of children in Montessori education, while important and noteworthy, fails to capture what Maria Montessori considered the essential outcome of her pedagogy: the fulfillment of the child’s potential. In classrooms directed by prepared adults, children’s souls and psychic lives develop in ways that can transform not just the child’s life, but the whole of society.<sup>[30]</sup> As Montessori experimented with the pedagogy, observing the behavior of children at work in prepared environments, her aims for the method expanded to include, even emphasize, peace and social justice. In a series of lectures in the 1930s, Maria Montessori articulated an argument that her approach to education could even lead to the end of conflict and war.<sup>[31]</sup> For contemporary Montessorians, the link between healthy human development and social progress continues to shape the teacher’s identity. In other words, Montessori education does not shrink from social justice as a core aim; rather, it places it center stage.

A recent article in the *Boston Globe*, a story that is the exception to the usual piece focusing on academic achievement, brings to the fore the possible impact on a child and his mother of a Montessori teacher’s dispositional configuration and curricular approach. The mother, Deborah Gardner Walker, wrote that her son thrived in the Montessori environment academically. “Cam has learned how to think, to be curious, to go as far as his mind and imagination can take him, and this has resulted in academic excellence,” she wrote. Then she added,

But knowledge for the sake of knowledge has never been the point. Dr. Montessori was a person of deep faith and she sought to nurture the spirit of children, to create peacemakers - helping even 3-year-olds learn how to resolve conflicts.

Dr. Montessori had a vision of ending the horrors of the great wars forever and she saw children as our best hope for peace.<sup>[32]</sup>

### **Lessons from the Periphery**

The expectation that adults will undergo a transformation in their understanding, not only of child development and pedagogy, but also of their emotional and spiritual lives, has always been central to Montessori teacher training. Maria Montessori ran her teacher training institutes with the goal of preparing the adult to demonstrate flexibility, restraint, and love in both the classroom and in life. Through empirical observation, she concluded that by developing new ways of experiencing the classroom, new ways of interacting with the world came into being. She celebrated this discovery and sought to make transformation of the adult a hallmark of teacher training.

A century later, these notions are no longer new, but they remain revolutionary. Today Montessori teacher preparation programs continue to strive for transformation. The Canadian Montessori Academy, for example, describes the teacher training that they offer as a “transformative experience” that allows the teacher to “view and understand children in new ways.” Through our ongoing conversations with teachers who have either undergone teacher training or are in the midst of teacher training, we know that a transformation of the self occurs for future teachers and remains a goal of Montessori trainers.<sup>[33]</sup>

Conventional teacher education and Montessori teacher training rarely intersect in the United States. None of the North American Montessori training centers are NCATE approved, nor have any sought NCATE accreditation. Only a handful of Montessori training centers are affiliated with an American college or university. And only one training center, the Montessori Training Center of New England, affiliated with the University of Hartford, provides its graduates with a state approved teaching license.

Undeniably, the process of becoming a Montessori teacher is deeply different from that found in more conventional teacher education programs. Nevertheless, we argue that Montessori’s concept of the prepared adult offers useful insight into the controversy surrounding the meaning and utility of professional dispositions. The example of Montessori teacher formation highlights the importance of dispositions in becoming a teacher, of any persuasion. It also highlights the challenge of both identifying and cultivating those dispositions and, more importantly, linking those dispositions to the purpose of schooling itself.

For Montessori, the prepared adult was a central means of revolutionizing education. The teacher is meant to serve as the embodiment of a “new” vision of education as an aid to life. To achieve this goal, Montessori teacher preparation aims directly toward reshaping the adult’s attitudes toward learning and human relationships. This effort is so intense that Montessorians frequently talk about their transformational experience. Moreover, the transformation is deliberately constructed to link the technical details of practice to the larger, social aims of the method. A prominent Montessori trainer recently offered the following account of the significance of those details: “After the tedious work of analyzing our movements for days on end and realizing there are some thirty-five steps to folding a napkin, a student raised her hand and asked, ‘What does folding napkins have to do with world peace?’ At that moment in time, I knew the best response was ‘*Everything, you shall see.*’”<sup>[34]</sup>

The most significant lesson mainstream educators can learn from the example of Montessori teacher preparation is the profound coherence that exists within the system. While Montessorians can and do disagree about the details of practice, the fact that they can map a relationship between folding a napkin and world peace is what distinguishes the method from nearly all other educational approaches. In its exquisite focus on the how’s as well as why’s of human development, Montessori practice demands vigorous attention to the details of learning and teaching. Such a focus remains lacking in mainstream teacher preparation, and until it is located, concepts like dispositions will do little to improve teacher quality or eliminate the achievement gap.

In an era of high stakes accountability, the notion that education should aim for more than adequate yearly progress can seem like a lofty, even unattainable, goal. Yet, the example of Montessori teacher training suggests that it is precisely those larger aims that inspire quality. It is important to remember the words of the mother of a Montessori educated child who proclaimed, “knowledge for the sake of knowledge has never been the point.”

A final lesson is that the work of preparing future teachers is “great work” in its own right. To do it correctly, those involved in teacher preparation must be willing to articulate a persuasive position and

not back down from possible confrontations with policy-makers or the press. Maria Montessori wrote numerous books, gave countless lectures, and sought to maintain control over teacher preparation to ensure that her approach remained pure in intent and spirit. Those in conventional education should do no less.

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- [8] Examples of both points of view can be found in the online comments section at the conclusion of

Powers, "A Spirited Disposition Debate."

[9] Research on contemporary Montessori teacher training is virtually nonexistent. One of this paper's authors is in the midst of a study of Montessori teacher training. See Jacqueline Cossentino and Jennifer Whitcomb, "Culture, Coherence, and Craft-Oriented Teacher Education: The Case of Montessori Teacher Training" (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, April 2003).

[10] Statistics on Montessori schools, unfortunately, are imprecise. Difficulties in determining numbers of schools or students in attendance arise from two primary factors: 1) Montessori is not a registered trademark. Any organization, or any individual, can start a school and advertise it as using the Montessori method. There is no requirement to affiliate with a Montessori organizing body. 2) There are dozens of Montessori organizations around the world. Each is independent with its own standards for membership and methodology in reporting members. Our figures come from the Centenary of the Montessori Movement website, "Media Briefing: Montessori Around the World," December, 2006, <http://montessoricentenary.org/> (accessed February 21, 2007); and from email correspondence with Joke Verheul in the office of the Secretariat, Association Montessori Internationale, Amsterdam.

[12] Angeline Stoll Lillard, *Montessori: The Story Behind the Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Jacqueline Cossentino, "Ritualizing Expertise: A Non-Montessori View of the Montessori Method," *American Journal of Education* 111 (2005): 211-244.

[13] Tales of the "miracle children" first came to the attention of the American public through a series of articles in the popular magazine *McClure's*. See Josephine Tozier, "An Educational Wonder-Worker: The Methods of Maria Montessori." *McClure's Magazine*, 37, May, 1911.

[14] Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, the Clio Montessori Series, Volume 1. Translated by Claude A. Claremont (Oxford: Clio Press, 1988), 11.

[15] The standard biography of Maria Montessori remains Rita Kramer, *Maria Montessori: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

[16] Several American students in the first international training courses offered by Maria Montessori wrote about their training experience, including the centrality of concern about the habits of mind and the emotional characteristics that Montessori teachers should exhibit. See, for example, Clara E. Craig, *The Montessori System of Child Culture: A Report of Clara E. Craig Presented to the State Board of Education*, Department of Education, State of Rhode Island, September 2, 1913, Rhode Island Education Circulars; and Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, *Montessori Children* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915).

[17] *The Absorbent Mind* was first published in 1949 (Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House). This is not the only source for understanding Maria Montessori's views on teacher training, of course. She did write this book near the end of her long career, however, and she brought forth many of the key elements of Montessori teacher training. The book focused primarily on early childhood and infant education, but the ideas about the role of teachers were applicable to Montessori teachers of older children as well.

[18] E. M. Standing, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* (New York: Plume, 1984 [1957]), 309.

[19] Maria Montessori never listed an essential list of traits. We have culled these as elemental dispositions from our own reading of the writings of Dr. Montessori.

[20] Maria Montessori, *Education for a New World* (Adyar, India: Kalakshetra Publications, 1946).

[21] Online catalogs of Montessori materials are accessible through the website of Association Montessori Internationale, <http://www.montessori-ami.org/> (accessed February 15, 2007). One of the best catalogs is the one by the Dutch firm, Nienhuis Montessori, [http://montessori.nienhuis.com/html/01\\_products\\_introduction.php?fluxmenu=m3](http://montessori.nienhuis.com/html/01_products_introduction.php?fluxmenu=m3) (accessed March 4, 2007).

[22] The most rigorous training programs require teachers in training to create their own albums based on transcriptions of lectures and practice with the materials. Other programs provide lesson write-ups and require students to illustrate the lay-outs.

[23] “Whatever you study, you also change” is a recent example of how The Uncertainty Principle is understood within popular culture. This line is from the film *The Lost World: Jurassic Park 2* (1997). David Koep, “The Lost World Script – Screenplay,” [http://www.script-orama.com/movie\\_scripts/l/lost-world-script-screenplay.html](http://www.script-orama.com/movie_scripts/l/lost-world-script-screenplay.html) (accessed March 5, 2007).

[24] Developmental psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls concentration leading to optimal experience “flow.” Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990). See also, Kevin Rathunde, “Montessori Education and Optimal Experience: A Framework for New Research,” *The NAMTA Journal*, 26 (2001): 11-43.

[25] Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, Second Edition (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005); Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

[26] See Cossentino, “Ritualizing Expertise: A Non-Montessori View of the Montessori Method,” for a fuller discussion of the role of love in Montessori teaching practice. See also Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, eds. *Teaching, Learning and Loving: Reclaiming Passion in Educational Practice* (New York, London: Routledge Falmer, 2004) for a recent examination of love in mainstream education.

[27] Maria Montessori, *Mass Explained to Children* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932) was a longer spiritual work. Subsequent work has been completed by Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992). Rich Barlow, “Developing Faith Through Montessori,” *The Boston Globe*, February 3, 2007 highlights contemporary connections between spirituality and the Montessori method, [http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/02/03/developing\\_faith\\_through\\_montessori/?rss\\_id=Boston+Globe+--+Spiritual+Life](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/02/03/developing_faith_through_montessori/?rss_id=Boston+Globe+--+Spiritual+Life) (accessed March 5, 2007).

[28] Josephine Tozier, “An Educational Wonder-Worker”; “A School Without Desks, or Classes, or Recitations,” *New York Times*, December 24, 1911, SM7; and Anne E. George, “The First Montessori School in America.” *McClure’s Magazine*, June, 1912.

[29] Erin Richards, "A Bright Spot For City's Schools; Montessori Students Outperform Traditionally Taught Students Academically and Socially, Report Finds," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 29, 2006, 1; and Jay Mathews, "Montessori, Now 100, Goes Mainstream; Once Considered Radical and Elitist, Method Creeping Into Public Schools," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 2007, Metro section, B01.

[30] Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972 [1966]), 109-118.

[31] Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1972); Jacqueline Cossentino and Jennifer A. Whitcomb, "Peace as a Premise for Learning: Maria Montessori," in *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice*, ed. David T. Hansen (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007).

[32] Deborah Gardner Walker, "A Milestone for Montessori Evokes a Mother's Appreciation," *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2007, Globe North section, 4,  
[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/01/07/a\\_milestone\\_for\\_montessori\\_evokes\\_a\\_mothers\\_appreciation/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/01/07/a_milestone_for_montessori_evokes_a_mothers_appreciation/) (accessed March 7, 2007).

[33] Canadian Montessori Academy, "Elementary Teacher Training," [http://www.montessori-academy.com/tt/tt\\_el.htm](http://www.montessori-academy.com/tt/tt_el.htm) (accessed March 5, 2007).

[34] [Molly O'Shaughnessy](#) "A Vision of the Montessori Movement for the Next Century" Paper delivered at the 25<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the Association Montessori Internationale, Sydney, Australia, July 14-17, 2005, <http://www.montessori-ami.org/congress/2005Sydney/papermo.htm> (accessed July 31, 2007).