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ARTICLE

Our Children Need . . . “Education for Resistance”

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Children and youth in the United States are bombarded and besieged with numerous demands, temptations, and enticements on their time, energy, attention, and allegiance. The magnitude and complexity of these are unprecedented. Whether positive or negative, they create a chaotic and confusing society that often sends conflicting and contradictory messages. The severity and complexity of human problems demand from children, youth, and adults “inclinations, dispositions, and knowledge quite different from those that have shaped, and continue to shape, our social identities and ideological outlooks, moral preferences, and attitudinal priorities” (Shapiro, 2009, p. 1). They also require an education different from many of the programmatic emphases that are currently in vogue. What are the salient features of the socio-economic, moral, and demographic character of U. S. society, and the kind of education students need to live more effectively in it, or to transform it? These are the questions of interest in the subsequent discussions.

Societal Context

U. S. idealized values convey to youth that their behaviors should be governed by the rule of law; a moral code of honesty and respectability for their own and others’ civic rights and human dignity; that rationality should prevail over impulsivity; and that individual rights are accompanied by societal responsibilities. In other words, while the U. S. proclaims commitment to ethics of individuality, meritocracy, and democracy (as a style of living as well as governance), it also recognizes the necessity of community, collaboration, and interdependence. Yet contradictions of these values abound in all levels of society.

For example, many high-level governmental officials and business leaders are caught in compromising situations and illegal activities from blatant cronyism, to embezzlement of funds, to disrespecting the public’s trust, to lying, to violating the laws and sacraments of marriage. These criminal acts and immoral behaviors have become so frequent among high-level, high-status leaders that they have lost much of their shock value. When yet another incident is revealed, the general public’s reaction is more likely to be, “What did you expect,” or “So what,” instead of, “That can’t be true.” These local and national climates are exacerbated further by the U. S. stance in international relations. The country still tries to be the moral police for the rest of the world as it simultaneously violates codes of conduct at home that it demands others worldwide must follow. A fundamental feature of democracy is the right to choose, but the U. S. insists that other countries create democracies that replicate its own; it claims that everyone is legally obligated to respect the boundaries of countries, yet it routinely intrudes in the internal affairs of other nations; it insists that the human rights of people around the world must be protected, while the same rights are denied to certain groups within its own boundaries; it perceives itself as a peaceful country committed to promoting global peace, yet it frequently engages in wars in other parts of the world in the name of peace, and violence rages at home.

Mass media and popular culture add their own convoluting contributions to the mix of chaos and confusion that is rampant in U. S. society. There seems to be an embedded message in all programming that everything and anything has to be “entertaining.” It is challenging for even discerning viewers to distinguish among what are serious information items, human interest pieces, and entertainment stories in newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and Internet reporting. Even weather forecasts are not presented straightforwardly, but anecdotes are added that have nothing to do with weather per se. It is mystifying why the latest, often amoral, immoral, illegal, and/or insensible escapades of movie actresses and actors receive top billing in newspaper headlines and TV news reporting. Television prime-time and daytime programming blitz viewers with shows in which individuals are verbally cruel, disrespectful, crude, and abusive toward each other. Law and order programs depicting physically, emotionally, and psychologically violent crimes are prolific, and their warnings about the graphic nature of what is shown is not sufficient to discourage viewing, if even genuinely registered in the minds of the audience. Sexually explicit language and images, profanity, and other forms of verbal assaults are prominent in all forms of programming, even cartoons and animations that supposedly cater to young, impressionable children.

These genres of entertainment are troubling indicators of the moral and dignity barometers of a society where people being verbally abusive to each other is considered entertainment. Even a few of these that might be dismissed as the exception to the norm would raised some disturbing questions about how they slipped through the cracks of decency, but when they are widespread and are cast as reality, the questions become, “What happened to decency,” and “When did human cruelty, crudeness, and meanness become normative reality?” Societal conditions, such as these depicted in mass media and

symbolized in popular culture, are desensitizing children and youth to insult, immorality, indecency, dishonesty, impoliteness, and indignity. They see nothing wrong with and feel entitled to be routinely rude, unkind, uncaring, and disrespectful toward others, regardless of who the others are, and without any provocation that merits such attitudes and behaviors. Some youth may not even know any other way to function! Warren Nord (1995) notes that

There is something fundamentally wrong with our culture. . . . This is evident in our manners and our morale; in our entertainment and our politics; in our preoccupation with sex and violence; in the way we do our jobs and in the failure of our relationships; in our boredom and unhappiness . . . (p. 380)

Peter Breggin (2000) contends that the ills of U. S. society neglects, abuses, traumatizes, and abandons its children. Some evidence of these is the loss of childhood, lack of meaningful relationships with significant and secure adults, the level of violence that surrounds children, and isolation caused by technology. Undoubtedly, iconic media images, individuals, symbols, and events are major influences on children and youth if they add nothing more than confusion, which is not a minor or insignificant factor to be easily dismissed. Youth need educational interventions that go beyond high academic performance, career readiness, and standardized test scores to deal effectively with these challenges.

David Hamburg and Beatrix Hamburg (2004) provide another compelling assessment of the social climate of the world in which our children live that requires approaches to education radically different from those currently in vogue. They focus on institutional violence (a welcomed shift from tendencies to concentrate on individuals), violence beyond the physical, and the preoccupation with self that are pervasive in U. S. society. The Hamburgs explain that

In a contemporary world full of hatred and violence . . . there is a powerful and growing need to develop effective education that gives our children a solid basis of knowledge about conflict resolution, violence prevention, peace with justice, and mutual accommodation—in short, decent human relationships from family to community to humanity on a worldwide basis. . . . [W]e humans have thrust ourselves headlong into a world of enormous complexity, characterized not only by unprecedented rates of change, technical and social transformation, urbanization, and brilliant new scientific horizons, but also by sophisticated weaponry of destructive power beyond any of our ancestors' imaginations. . . . Of great importance is the need to recognize the ubiquitous human tendency toward egocentrism and ethnocentrism. We find it easy to put ourselves at the center of the universe, attaching a strong positive value to ourselves and our group while attaching a negative value to many other people and their groups. (Hamburg & Hamburg 2004, pp. 4-5)

From the little attention given to peace, relationships, and racial and ethnic diversity in school programs and practices, *as necessities instead of exceptionalities and special occurrences*, many educators seem to have missed the obvious social conditions that Hamburg and Hamburg outline, and the mandates they present for educating children.

Compromising Climate of Schooling

Unfortunately, schools frequently are not much better for many students than societal conditions. Horror stories are told repeatedly about the poor-quality attention and learning opportunities provided, where race and class are determinants of who receives high status and substandard education. In too many schools throughout the nation, urban and rural students of color and poverty receive inadequate financial support to meet their educational needs; teachers are inappropriately prepared to work with these students; instructional materials and resources are outdated, insufficient, or inadequate; and the physical plants of schools barely meet safety code and in some cases are even condemned.

These conditions are reprehensible, but the human factors are even more problematic. People complain about urban schools as being out of control, with low levels of student attendance and high attrition rates, youth violence, and low academic achievement. Teachers complain about students and their families being uncooperative with them, signalling their lack of interest in and value for education, and that they are afraid of or intimidated by these individuals. Others indict teachers in these environments for having low intellectual and behavioral expectations for and attitudes toward their students; not providing assistance and guidance to develop the untapped potential of students; and failing to use instructional techniques that are culturally relevant for students who are often different from themselves ethnically, racially, culturally, economically, and linguistically. In the midst of these complicated and confounding circumstances, school policy makers and program designers are searching for certainty and simplicity. They are promoting rather dubious solutions to very complex challenges, embodied as low-level common learning standards and performance indicators, identical standardized testing for very diverse students, highly restrictive curricula, and numerical, data-based decision-making to the exclusion of other forms of valuable information.

At the level of school practice, these premises often translate into scripted curriculum texts, efforts to identify best practices that transcend audience and context, and emphases on cognitive learning that virtually exclude all other non-testable content such as values education, aesthetics as conveyed through the fine arts, civic engagement, personal development, and interpersonal relationships. Other troubling issues such as racism, sexism, and cultural hegemony are overlooked or restricted to footnotes and sidebars in curriculum and instruction under the illusion that these are things of the past, have been resolved, or are best forgotten. bell hooks (1992) calls these habits fanciful notions of *racial erasure*.

Yet in schools and society, there are continuing graphic occurrences that attest to the contrary. Racial, social, and cultural differences matter profoundly in U. S. society and schools. Profiling (the current euphemism for ethnic, racial, gender, and class discrimination), inequities, and disparities in opportunities and resources are widespread. Even if children are too young to recognize them (a questionable claim many make about elementary and middle school students), or do not fully comprehend their meaning and consequence for personal lives, the effects of inequities are nonetheless profound and pervasive, individually and collectively. Everyone is affected, although differently, whether they are members of mainstream or marginalized groups, middle, upper or lower class; long-term citizens or recent immigrants; old or young; privileged or disadvantaged; high or low educational achievers. Denial is not a viable strategy for coping with these horrific realities. Not teaching students about the causes, manifestations, and effects of these problems, as well as how to fight against them, is an indictment of schools for failing to provide an education that is equitable, relevant, and realistic. As Jonathan Kozol (1991) suggests in *Savage Inequalities*, the United States can offer a fulfilling and rewarding life to all of its residents. The tragedy is it chooses not to do so, and children suffer the most from this abdication of responsibility.

Schools and society are supposed to protect children and youth and teach them how to live in community as it currently is, as well as help them envision a different, better future for themselves and the various worlds they inhabit. In other words, education is supposed to help students *be and become better beings*. The complexity of contemporary society, not to mention the one that will evolve in the future, demands much more than most students are receiving in their educational experiences. Modern versions of the old three “Rs,” reading, writing, and arithmetic, simply will not suffice, even for young children in elementary grades. The current mantra in policy and leadership circles of promoting *rigor, relevance, and relationships* also is falling short in providing the kind of education students need for this complex, chaotic, and rapidly changing society. This shortfall is due more to how or if these new three Rs are actualized in practice than to their ideological strength and conceptual promise. Nor are the almost exclusive emphases on discipline-based cognitive learning and standards-based testing in secondary schools enough to prepare students to deal with the complexities of life. Extreme career-focused and specialized education in college also is not adequate for living fully and constructively in U. S. society and the world. Those students are as susceptible to societal conditions as the ones in K-12 schools.

Too many children and youth are left to their own devices to try to make sense of and bring some order to the socio-emotional and political chaos that surrounds them. Often their parents and guardians are as confused and overwhelmed as their children are, and they are not providing the anchors and guidance these children need so desperately. Yet, most are doing the best they know how at being decent human beings at the time and under the circumstances in which they are presently functioning (Bullough, Jr., 2001). If children and youth act irrationally and are highly emotional when stressed, anxious, or frustrated, this may be the only techniques they have learned thus far for self-expression and conflict resolution. Furthermore, freely and unedited emotional expressiveness is not always negative; it can be a very informative and insightful foundation for improving learning opportunities and personal development.

Schools are facing their own dilemmas, so much so that managing the institutional routines, budgetary problems, reform efforts, and other bureaucratic demands, are all-consuming. Educators waste time trying to find simple, quick-fix solutions to complex, long-standing challenges; search for best practices and panaceas that are appropriate for all settings and circumstances; use punitive strategies to transform schools; or, even worse, concede defeat, claiming that certain students are so out-of-control that nothing can be done to redeem them or direct their destructive energies toward more constructive courses of action. With these attitudes and related behaviors, everybody loses—students, schools, and society.

Kirsten Olson (2009) suggests that much of the current climate, structure, processes, and priorities of U. S. schools wound, shame, and hurt students. By this she does not mean physical attacks, but the minimalistic and restrictive ways learning is defined, organized, facilitated and evaluated. These figurative wounds are acts and attitudes that limit or ignore the human capacity of students, and create emotional, spiritual, and intellectual experiences of disconnection, isolation, misunderstanding, alienation, and rejection. They include losing the pleasure in learning; educators not having faith in students’ intellectual ability and competence in learning; emphasizing students’ inadequacies to the exclusion of their capabilities and potentialities; assuming that ability is fixed and the same across all areas of functioning; discouraging risk-taking, curiosity, and creativity; and demeaning, devaluing, and disrespecting the fundamental humanity of students. Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009, pp. 107-108) call these negative beliefs, attitudes, and associated behaviors

“norming the negative.” Parker Palmer (2009) argues that the worst and most widespread wounds inflicted on children by schools is diminishing or destroying the eagerness to learn that they bring into the world as infants.

Although specific school wounds suffered by children are contextual and vary widely, there are some commonalities among them. According to Olson (2009),

They are produced in educational environments that are intolerant of cognitive, emotional, or identity differences where feelings about being different provoke disapproval and shame . . . where there is pressure to comply to relatively narrow standards of performance, and where there is little choice for the learner in the educational task. . . where schools are more focused on labelling and tracking students, and driving down differences between learners, rather than celebrating and acknowledging variation. School wounds induce alienation from ourselves as learners, reduce pleasure in our experiences of learning, and create internal opposition or underperformance that many spend lifetimes trying to heal. (pp. 55-56)

From what often is reported about learning conditions in urban schools attended by high percentages of children of color and poverty, and the heavy emphasis they place on control, conformity, and regimentation, these students are wounded more seriously than their middle-class, European American counterpart in suburban schools. They, and others as well, are in need of an education for healing, with the focus being as much on protection from societal ills, personal development, and cultivating critical intelligence, as on the organizational structures and cognitive content of schooling.

Educating for Resistance

Radically different approaches to educating today’s children are required to prepare and position them to better navigate their societal and personal worlds. Unquestionably, more and broader-based cognitive knowledge acquisition has to continue to keep pace with the tremendous information explosions that are occurring. But students also need to develop skills and dispositions to confront, counter, and conquer the societal temptations, enticements, and chaos that bombard them on a daily basis. The proposal offered here is *education for resistance*. It has multiple dimensions and manifestations.

In some ways, education for *resistance* is complementary to education for *resilience*. Both emphasize building the broad-based human capacities of students, not just their intellectual abilities, but their centers of focus are somewhat different: Whereas resilience concentrates on enhancing the strengths and potentials students have to bounce back and recover from challenging and traumatizing experiences (i. e. empowerment), resistance focuses on preventing and protecting one’s personhood and learning from being minimized, neglected, distorted, or assaulted. Education for resistance is a form of intellectual protest against societal conditions and school programming that over-simplify learning for living life fully, and are too restrictive in the options endorsed for social and civic participation. Brown, D’Emidio-Caston, and Benard (2001) explain further that

Taking a resilience approach [to education] means meeting a young person’s needs for belonging, respect, autonomy, and mastery of relevant and meaningful knowledge. It emphasizes well-being by acknowledging competencies and building upon unique talents, interests, and goals. . . [It] uses learners’ strengths as entry points to achievement of required curriculum standards. . . . Fostering resilience prepares young people to work on weaker areas of their development while supporting a positive sense of self. (pp. viii-ix)

Resilience and resistance education are highly personal and place more emphases on psycho-emotional, social, and humane aspects of learning, but not to the exclusion of technical and intellectual ones. Brown, et al. justify these priorities with the explanation that

young people need to make connections with others as well as to step back. They need to make connections with others so that they feel like they belong. They need to develop their sense of self so that their imaginations can soar. By connecting with others and furthering their own development intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, they can then lead us to possibilities that we cannot even imagine right now. (p. 92)

Education for resistance makes a case for intellectual autonomy within social contexts, and for students learning to make their own decisions without being led by the whims of others or their powers of persuasion, yet without living in isolation. Six specific dimensions of education for resistance are described to amplify its meaning. Since it is a proposal for countering existing societal and educational trends, some of these are included, as well as contextual factors to facilitate explanatory clarity.

Resistance to Concession, Conformity, and Clonism

Students need to learn to maintain a healthy balance between individuality, self-assertion, autonomy, and demands to join the crowd. Pressures to conform, to be like everyone else range from the apparently insignificant, such as following the latest fashion trends, to serious destructive behaviors, such as bullying and illegal activities, to abiding by the normal regulations of membership in various formal institutions, such as families, religions, and legal systems. Many of these demands are delivered in such indirect ways that children and youth are not even conscious that they are being pressured to conform to certain patterns and trends. A case in point is the enticements that come through advertising and programming in mass media and popular culture for everyone to use the same services and products, to make the same choices, and do the same things. It takes personal strength, self-knowledge, self-confidence, courage, and critical thinking skills to assess the merits of these offerings, to go against the tide, to make unpopular decisions, and to act in ways that are contrary to the prevailing norms, whether they are real or only presumed. Thus, education for resistance is strength-based teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, many youth today have uncontestable faith in the validity of anything that is publicized through mediated imagery and technology, or they don't give it a second thought. They don't even think to question unspoken motivations embedded in commercial and social advertising, or the various contenders for their allegiance. Consequently, they are very vulnerable to mind manipulation and the power of persuasion. It seems easier to just *go with the flow*, to use a popular expression, to do what every else is doing, and to find comfort, identity, and/or affiliation in the crowd. All humans need the companionship of other humans, but this healthy desire can be destructive when carried to the extreme, or when good common sense is not used in pursuing group membership and interpersonal relationships. Common sense is never just intuitive; it is based on knowledge, analytical thought, and deliberate action, although not necessarily at levels of heightened consciousness. Skills embedded in the process of exercising common sense can be taught. They involve understanding one's own strengths and weakness; establishing friendships and feelings of belonging; processing temptation, rejection, and acceptance; and determining the validity and viability of different knowledge sources and behavioral options. Education for resisting unreasonable demands for conformity and concession thus involves children and youth understanding themselves as both independent and interdependent actors in various contexts and relationships.

Students in all age groups need these knowledge and skills, but they are especially imperative for those in vulnerable groups, such as adolescents in general and members of ethnic, racial, and social groups who are underprivileged, marginalized, and oppressed by mainstream society. For example, many African American adolescent females are highly susceptible to mass-media images of beauty that are based on distortions of European American genotypes. It is impossible for them to ever meet these conceptions, yet they often judge themselves against this standard. When they do not measure up, they do bizarre things to their physical appearance, and/or develop very negative perceptions of themselves. They may then join others with similar negative self-perceptions, and the group engages in anti-social behaviors to compensate for what they consider their ugliness. Rather than a corrective compensation, these behaviors produce the opposite. Consequently, teen African American girls who may be very attractive according to their own racial criteria become ugly-acting human beings, and in the process demean their human dignity. Some education about various ethnic aesthetics, body types, and standards of beauty and beautification could circumvent this self-denigration.

Resistance to Extremism

Teaching students how to resist extremism will require going against the grain of the larger society in which they live, because the U. S. is a world of extremes. We don't seem to be able to do anything in moderation. As a society we produce too much, consume too much, and waste too much. Some societal analysts call this *materialism* and *conspicuous consumption*. Others suggest that it is an indication of the material well-being of an advanced civilization. However, this extremism is not limited to material possessions. It is evident in other facets of life as well, such as personal conflict resolution. Differences of opinion often escalate into violent confrontations, such as the use of weapons, almost immediately, when once these were sparsely employed, last resorts. Youth now don't fight by pushing and shoving but with weapons of violence. Other forms of extremism are eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia, and over-eating, and body art in which tattoos are inscribed prolifically and boldly on various parts of the body.

These societal proclivities make teaching students how to avoid extremism very challenging, yet imperative. It might begin with constructing character profiles of U. S. society as it actually is instead of how it is supposed to be, and then doing thorough analyses of how the various aspects of this profile are manifested in practice. For example, students could examine why so many body designs and color options for cars are so similar despite the fact that the manufacturers are quite different; why the products of many fashion designers are more alike than different; why headline items in

newspapers and television news reporting always highlight extreme events or situations; and what kinds of effects these tendencies have on people in different age categories, racial and ethnic groups, social classes, careers, and residential locations. Students also could do self-analyses of their own inclinations toward extremist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. These analyses should be followed with explorations of alternative beliefs and actions to extremes that veer more in the direction of moderation. For example, students could study consumer purchasing practices of commercial enterprises that offer two-for-one deals and those that promise super sizes for small additional costs, and develop resistance campaigns based on the data revealed from their research. They could make *resistance contracts* with themselves to avoid engaging in extremist behaviors. Careful studies in conflict resolution and non-violence will be helpful for students in learning how to recognize extremism in the attitudes and actions of other individuals, institutions, and nations, and to offer alternative solutions. Understanding the various forms that violence takes (e.g., verbal abuse; psychological manipulation; racial, religious, and gender insults; intellectual neglect; and, of course, physical attack), and learning how to avoid, prevent, and resist them also are imperative.

Resistance to Singularity

Many of the things that once anchored people and gave them feelings of security are no longer dependable. One of these is looking for *the one right answer, the absolutely right way, or the unquestionably correct knowledge* that transcends time, location, circumstance, and audience. Despite the fact that there are no universal knowledge or uncontested truths, some educators still proceed as if there were, thereby operating on fallacious foundations and creating unrealistic expectations in students. They ignore the consensus that exists among scholars from many disciplines that knowledge is socially constructed, and that reality is contextually bounded. What is perceived as traumatic for some people may be stimulating for others; what is profound for some is insignificant for others; what is at the center of attention for some is not even worthy of minimum note by others. Computers and other tools of electronic communication are graphic illustrations of this variable significance that is often overlooked, misunderstood, or not considered at all. Unquestionably, computers are incredible sources of information that expand users' worlds and minds phenomenally. But the knowledge they provide is still finite and contestable, and their prolific use is compromising the human touch in interpersonal interactions, even as they increase connections among people across time, location, and circumstance. Too many people in the U. S. don't understand or fully appreciate the fact that computers can do only what human beings program into them and demand of them. They seem to forget that humans create technology and determine what it will do; that people are always in front of and behind computers and other technological screens; that however good technology is, it is never perfect or infallible.

Different perceptions and forms of reality, knowledge, and truth are expanding as society becomes more complex. In order to deal with this complexity, students should be taught to accept *plurality and multiple perspectives* as normative standards for acquiring knowledge, demonstrating competence, and engaging in interpersonal relationships. No topic of study should be approached from one viewpoint, regardless of the status of the disciplinary knowledge and procedures that are employed. No one discipline can explain adequately all conceivable human behavior. Furthermore, subjects taught in schools still depend too heavily on European American contributions and too little on those of other ethnic groups that comprise the United States, such as the various groups from African, Asian, Latino, and Native or Indigenous ancestry.

Claiming that one discipline or one group holds a monopoly over the answer to questions of inquiry, and looking for universal, permanent truths are not viable approaches to learning. Instead, students should be taught to interrogate the strengths and limitations of all funds of knowledge and units of analysis; to habitually bring many different types of information and perspectives to bear upon situations, topics, and events that are the subject of study; and to embrace the ambiguity that is inherent in this multiplicity. These *multiple perspectives, sources of information, and ways of knowing* should teach children and youth to consider all knowledge as tentative and incomplete, and to always be receptive to its recurrent reconstruction as new information and experiences occur. Thus, a study of what it means to be an American *vis-à-vis* the United States might include perspectives derived from the historical and cotemporary; gender and social class; ethnic and cultural diversity; political and social standing; citizen and immigrant; insider and outsider; and domestic and foreign analyses. From studies such as these students will learn that since issues, events, experiences, problems, and opportunities do not mean the same thing to everyone, it is important to incorporate variability in all efforts to make sense of human motivations, actions, and interactions. They also need to know that uncertainty, ambiguity, and tentativeness in acquiring knowledge are not incapacitating; rather, they can generate reflection, introspection, ingenuity, and creativity. With these insights and related cognitive abilities, children and youth will be better prepared to engage in higher quality relationships with other individuals and society at large; acquire deeper understanding of complex and diverse conceptions of the United States; develop more rigorous and comprehensive funds of knowledge; and understand that different perspectives on issues are enriching and expansive instead of invalidating and delimiting.

Resistance to Complacency

The United States seems to have lost its sense of community. People are not concerned about or care for each other as they once did, especially if there are no physical kinship bonds among them. They live in closer proximity to each other than ever before, yet have fewer interpersonal connections, friendships, and reciprocal engagements. This situation seems to be at its worst as living in multiplex accommodations, such as apartments, condominiums, and townhouses, increases. People are isolated, insulated, and sometimes alienated in the midst of crowds. They justify these positions by statements to the effect that they are minding their own business and respecting others’ space by staying out of their lives. Incidents have been reported in the media where people stand by and refuse to get involved or give assistance even when individuals’ lives are jeopardized, their human dignity is assaulted, and their civic rights are violated. It is easy to understand why youth observing these interactions or being participants in them might conclude that the best thing to do is not get involved with other people, and to look the other way when compromising situations occur.

Although this complacency and disaffiliation are understandable, they are not desirable in a complex, highly interactive society and world. Students need to understand that their well-being is a function of interdependence and mutuality; that human lives are closely interconnected; and that they are obligated to help preserve the safety and sanctity of others if they expect others to do likewise for them. In other words, they need to learn that being in community with and caring for other people is a social necessity, a human right, and a personal responsibility; that they get what they give; and that their *human* potential is facilitated through relationships with others. It is impossible for humans to live alone; they must depend on each other. This interdependence carries with it obligations to honor, respect, and protect the human dignity, rights, and integrity of others and of self. Learning to do so is needed on personal, institutional, and societal levels. However, it is not enough to merely lecture students about the importance of caring, personal involvement, and reciprocity. They need to develop skills for caring for and relating respectfully to others without violating privacy or being intrusive in the lives of those whom they are giving and receiving assistance.. As Tony Monchinski (2010) explains,

From the perspective of an ethic of care, relationships between human beings are not optional, they are primary. . . . Caring recognizes that *who* we are, our ways of feeling about ourselves, our being and existence . . . depend on our relationships with others. . . . [Even individual] autonomy is not possible without the nurturance of the self by others and is maintained in our relationships with others (pp. 56-58).

Students can learn to care, as they learn other skills, but it must be taught intentionally, and under the tutelage of teachers in and out of classrooms who also are competent in caring.

Breggin (2000) considers students’ learning to care for and treasure all human beings as unique individuals an essential value that demands utmost respect. He also equates this important education goal with creating learning havens and sanctuaries in which students’ needs take precedence over all else, their humanity is highly respected and never compromised under any circumstances, and they are taught how to treat others with care, compassion, respect, and dignity. Therefore, a critical feature of education to resist complacency is treasuring other individuals and creating bonds of community with them.

Children and youth also need guided practice in participating in civic affairs in different ways and at different levels of occurrence, such as local and national events, school activities, and community affairs. Sometimes this participation and assistance will be delivered overtly to those in need, and other times it will be more subtle and indirect. Students need to be taught how to recognize and respond to different kinds of needs, including the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual, at local, regional, and national levels of engagement. These learning arrangements might be considered *apprenticeships in interpersonal and civic reciprocal caring* (Monchinski, 2010).

The practice of community service that many schools are now requiring for high school graduation has some potential for educating against complacency and for caring, but it needs to be refined to deal more directly with personal apathy and disengagement, and genuine communal relationships. Hamburg and Hamburg identify some salient features of community service that can counteract complacency. These include the following:

Service learning enhances a sense of competency, promotes active engagement in improving the conditions of life; . . . the growth of prosocial behavior; enhancement of empathy; learning in cooperative settings; resolving conflict without violence; reaching beyond the self in ways that overcome selfish, greedy orientations and creating a sense of belonging in a valued group that is characterized by. . . fairness and mutual aid. . . . At the same time, students usually enjoy the community service, find it rewarding, and are eager participants. (p. 352)

Certainly, students need more joy in learning, and higher levels of healthy group identity, affiliation, and engagement.

Resistance to *the Quick Fix*

Today's youth in the United States live in a society that is preoccupied with always being right and the best in all circumstances. Maintaining this illusion means solving problems quickly and efficiently, which also often means underestimating their complexity, and having to revisit the same issues repeatedly. Nor does the United States like for its failures and faults to be publicly displayed. It tends to compensate by pretending that the problems are not as serious as they are; that they are exceptions rather than normative; that complex, deeply entrenched social issues can be resolved with relative ease; and by rushing to accomplish hasty solutions. A case in point is the legal system where imposing harsh punishments is not a disincentive for violating laws or repeated offenses. Another is how the U. S. deals with racism and other forms of oppression. The relatively quick response is to enact zero tolerance policies and regulations against discrimination of all kinds, or to dismiss the actions as the rare occurrences by one or a few individuals rather than being institutional and widespread. While laws against hate crimes are positive steps forward, problems occur with their enforcement and attempts at changing deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs. Too many political and social leaders either ignore or fail to recognize the limitations of the law and assume that the problem has been corrected. For example, many people seem to think that insults to others' human dignity and violation of their rights can be rectified by apologizing, claiming good intentions, or evoking innocence and incompetence. They expect exemption from accountability for racism by claiming no personal involvement in historical atrocities, and that victims of racial and ethnic insults committed by them should forgive and forget because the perpetrators "meant no harm, didn't know what was said was inappropriate, or the victims are over-sensitive and over-reacting.

The problem with these declarations is they do not include any indications about how the behaviors of the offenders will change. An apology and removing the factor of intentionality seem to be considered adequate solutions for institutional inequities and individual prejudices. It is still a rather common occurrence in U. S. mainstream society that the victimized in race relations are expected to bear the burden of forgiveness, behavioral change, and emotional recovery, while the victimizers' *status quo* remains intact and protected by their entitlements of power and privilege.

Students need to understand that there are complex, deeply entrenched problems in U. S. society that are not easily or quickly corrected with superficial remedies. Rushing to find a quick and simplistic solution to them makes things worse than better because they give people false hope and confidence about social progress. Prominent among these complicated problems are social, political, economic, and educational inequities among ethnically and racially diverse groups and individuals. While laws are necessary and individuals must be held accountable for obeying them, these, as well as many other social and personal problems, cannot be solved by the mere passage of rules or policy regulations. Corresponding changes in individual and institutional attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors must accompany policy modifications. Typically, these changes are much more challenging and time-consuming than policy regulations. If youth are to become skilled social change agents, they must understand the differential natures and complexities of societal, individual, and institutional reform. They also must learn to face their struggles with conviction, compassion, passion, ingenuity, creativity, and collaboration.

Pursuing these changes requires skills, patience, persistence, and endurance that are often at odds with quick-fix orientations. Despite the fact that many social problems are at a crisis level, and it is understandable why people don't want to wait indefinitely for solutions, quick and poorly planned interventions can cause more damage than good and, in the long run, can delay rather than facilitate resolution. Some of our experiments with desegregation and attempts to close the school achievement gaps attest to this fact.

Simply stated, there are no genuine simple and quick fix solutions to long-standing, complex problems. Therefore, students need to be taught this reality, and the ideological motivations behind quick-fix orientations; how to analyze samples of these practices for their fallacies; and how to strategize for identifying solutions that parallel, in kind and complexity, the nature of the problems targeted for resolution. This approach to learning involves thoroughly understanding the nature of the problems to be addressed; developing habits of mind and ways of behaving that concentrate on comprehensive structural analyses of complex problems instead of superficial, fragmented, and partial ones; acquiring skills in problem-solving on multiple levels; learning how to be persistent and resilient in problem-solving; building partnerships and coalitions to facilitate social transformation; and knowing how to scale or phase these skills to match the various aspects of the targeted problems. These developments can begin with students' participation in collaborative and cooperative learning arrangements that involve peers from different ethnic, racial, economic, linguistic, and ability backgrounds, and address issues of inequities and discrimination in schools and classrooms. Many opportunities are readily available for them to create and participate in communities of practice in deep structural,

comprehensive, and authentic problem-solving instead of the facades and superficialities that are so often part and parcel of quick-fix solutions.

Resistance to the *Tyranny of the New*

Children today are accustomed to instant gratification of their personal desires. The habits are modelled by a society that places high value on progress and innovations. Hardware and software technologies become obsolete before they are completely understood, and are replaced with newer iterations and variations. Something is always being torn down and replaced with something newer. Two compelling examples of this preoccupation with newness are computers and cell phones. A year-old computer or iPhone® is considered antiquated because more advanced models are being produced constantly. Relationships are replaced with newer versions as easily as artifacts. The short duration of marriages and high divorce rates in the U. S. attest to this fascination with *the new*.

The rapidity with which people abandon things that are barely used and move on to something else represents a kind of emotional and physical migrancy that causes instability and lack of consistency among people. They are constantly in motion both literally and figuratively. Moving so quickly and frequently from one thing and place to another means that many people are not grounded in any specific place or ideology. Undoubtedly, this preoccupation with novelty results, at least in part, from advertising ingenuity and planned obsolescence by industries that produce toys, cars, and electronic gadgets practice. They persuade us that we must upgrade at regular intervals, and our toys and tools reinforce this need by losing the quality of their performance to coincide with these renewal schedules.

There is nothing inherently wrong with progress and change, with innovation or trying something new. The problems occur when people abandon the old entirely for the new simply because it is new, without carefully assessing its merits and fallacies, and when the newest technology totally eliminates its predecessor. Everyone is never in the same identical stage of readiness to receive the newest innovations, so it is inevitable that the exclusive use of innovations will produce inequities. The widespread use of computers in U. S. society illustrates this point. They quickly annihilated typewriters, and now that the so-called *green revolution* is under way, educational institutions, governments, and businesses are moving rapidly toward being entirely paperless. Texting is replacing talking, and the once importance of writing is seriously endangered. The question is why must an innovation totally destroy its predecessors, and what dangers are inherent in such a precedent.

It simply does not make good common sense for people to forget all their history by destroying precedents that laid the foundations for their latest inventions, if for no other reason than that all individuals are not in a position to consume innovations instantaneously. If they have no other means to address their needs, then they are excluded from access to resources and opportunities. This can lead to oppression, exploitation, and marginalization. For example, if teachers insist on delivering all of their instruction electronically, then the learning opportunities of students without computers will not be comparable to those with computers.

Students need to be taught to be much more judicious and critical in their use of innovations. Examining the quality of products and services, doing more critical comparative shopping, and conducting cost effective analyses, especially when the costs are not limited to the financial, can be useful in helping them to understand that the new is not always better. It can also help them delay, if not resist, the rush to obtain the new. Once the novelty pales and the hype diminishes, both youth and adults may realize that they can live very comfortable and gratifying lives without always possessing the latest and greatest inventions. Other worthwhile compensations can result from these realizations as well as from minimizing competition, lowering stress and anxiety about being in style, gaining freedom from the slavish devotion to upgrading, and cultivating access to a wider range of individuality and self-expression.

Conclusion

There is too much manipulation and exploitation of children and youth in U. S. society. Education that occurs within the walls of schools account for only a small portion of this. Society at large is the biggest perpetrator through mass media and popular culture. Not nearly enough attention is given to these conditions and how they distort the human potential of students. Yet tremendous amounts of energy are devoted to debating what kind of education is most appropriate for students today and in the future. Most of this discourse is market-driven and focuses on students as future workers and consumers. Unquestionably, these are important needs that must be met, but there are others of equal importance. Students also need to learn to be healthy human beings who protect themselves from some of the undesirable facets of the society

and world in which they live.

The intention of this discussion has been to identify some of these compromising challenges and to suggest the beginnings of an education for resistance and self-protection. This agenda is designed to help children and youth learn to be more ethical and respectable human beings; resist and counteract some of the conditions in society that are counterproductive to respecting their human dignity; be more well-informed, conscientious, and autonomous decision-makers; be more judicious social producers and consumers; and be more constructively engaged, caring, and contributing members of multiple communities. Education in the 21st century that merits note should do no less, especially for the most vulnerable student populations in U. S. schools, students of color and poverty. The ultimate goal of education for resistance is the reclamation and re-centering of our children as society's top priority, and, in so doing, developing their honesty and courage; innate thirst for and joy in learning; dignity and respect; comfort and security; curiosity and creativity; community membership and individuality; social civility and critical intellectual competence. Embedded in these visions of education for resistance are some compelling mandates for educators who are the architects and directors of children's schooling experiences. They are summarized cogently by Peter Breggin (2000) in *Reclaiming Our Children*. He warns that

To offer our children what they need, we will have to change our attitudes and priorities. We will need to shift our viewpoint from one that is adult-centered to one that is child-centered. Instead of focusing on how to 'fix' our children, *we will have to transform ourselves* [emphasis in original].

The changes must take place simultaneously on a national policy and at a personal level. For the sake of our children, we must find new solutions to society-wide crises involving poverty, racism, sexism, violence, as well as pedism itself—prejudice against children. . . . We must begin immediately as individuals to transform our personal relationships with the children in our lives by making them a higher priority and especially by creating meaningful relationships with them. (p. 16)

Instructional Resources

Numerous programs and techniques are available that can assist teachers in implementing an education for resistance. While they are not necessarily designed for this specific purpose, and no single one will meet all of its requirements, ideas can be selected from them to compose the necessary interventions. A few of these selected resources are the following:

- *CARE for Kids*. CARE stands for Community, Autonomy, Relationships, Empowerment, and Creating a Respectful Environment for building a connected community that includes social, emotional, ethical, intellectual, and personal development for students. Principles, visions, frameworks, and practices of CARE can be obtained from the website, www.eudtopia.org.
- Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2010). Critical thinking development: A stage theory. This article and others that provide easy reference tips for teaching critical thinking skills can be obtained at www.criticalthinking.org.
- *Gallavan Cultural Competence Compass*. It is explained in detail in Gallavan, N. P., (2011). *Navigating cultural competence in grades 6-12: A compass for teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Lovat, T., Toomey, R., & Clement, N. (Eds.). (2010). *International research on values education and student wellbeing*. New York, NY: Springer. This volume includes reviews of research, curriculum designs, and instructional strategies on values and moral education in many different societal and school settings.
- *Resiliency Education Program* includes instructional approaches for promoting protective factors that reduce the impact of risk; at www.resiliencyinc.com
- *Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully* is a toolkit of 12 conflict resolution skills based on building trust, friendships, intimacy, and the psychology of effective social communication; at www.crnbcq.org
- *Second Step: Skills for Academic and Social Success* is an instructional program for the social, emotional, and academic development of students, created by the Committee for Children; at www.cfchildren.org.
- *Teaching Tolerance* offers a wide variety of media materials and instructional programs on many different topics

dealing with various dimensions of and issues related to diversity. Some samples of these are *Family Colors*, *Different Colors of Beauty*, *A Healthy Way to Show Feelings*, *Developing Empathy*, and *Standing up Against Racism*; at www.teachingtolerance.org

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