

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S OBLIGATION TO DEMOCRACY

Amy Elizabeth Pokross

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APPROVED:

Eugene C. Hargrove, Major Professor  
Dale Wilkerson, Committee Member  
Stan Ingman, Committee Member  
Robert Frodeman, Chair of the  
Department of Philosophy and  
Religion Studies

Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.  
Toulouse School of Graduate  
Studies

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In this thesis, I address the dichotomy between liberal arts education and terminal vocational training in the American community college. The need is for reform in the community college in relation to philosophical instruction in order to empower citizens, support justice and create more sustainable communities. My call for reform involves a multicultural integration of philosophy into terminal/vocational programs as well as evolving the traditional liberal arts course to exist in a multicultural setting. Special attention is focused on liberating the oppressed, social and economic justice and philosophy of education.

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Amy Elizabeth Pokross

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

An educated person benefits from his or her studies in terms of a change in income level, hopefully an understanding of the world, and a greater ability to take part in current debates. Empowering persons who may not have traditionally had power through participation in higher education is not only commendable, but also helps their communities and the world. The community college system in the United States is in the most advantageous position to liberate and empower citizens. This special position provides the basis for a special moral obligation for community colleges in this country to provide this benefit.

In chapter 2 I briefly consider the history of education as related to the United States, and its ability to both oppress and liberate. I examine purposes of education that have been defended by politicians and policy makers, as well as common intuitions about education, and the impact of education on actual social mobility in this country. The community college has the potential to raise social mobility for all Americans.

Philosophers such as John Dewey have argued against a curriculum that ignores the student in favor of rote memorization. Their philosophies of education inform the investigation of the vocational nature of the community college.

Because my call for reform involves multicultural curriculum both in vocational and liberal arts courses, there are obvious political implications,

especially with the current political climate. Therefore, both sides of the multicultural debate need to be addressed. Some argue that multiculturalism is in conflict with patriotism and that diversity lowers standards. In chapter three I argue that the addition of diverse curriculum will increase intellectual rigor and improve citizenship.

Chapter 4 gives specific curriculum that can be added to any traditional transfer philosophy or ethics class. The material is as valuable as other, more traveled texts, and will give students more material to critically analyze.

In chapter 5 I explore the unique experience of persons living in poor or urban communities and what is referred to as environmental racism. The differences between the activists in African-American communities and the traditional environmental activist are important to reconcile for the benefit of the environment and the persons living in it. The community college grants an opportunity for local citizens to learn their political power and therefore improve the environment in their communities. Higher education can also spur choices for sustainable living. I present a brief account of the issues surrounding the environmental ethics field. Moral pluralism is explored as a result of the differing justifications between different ethicists and activists.

Chapter 6 addresses the community college's dichotomy between vocational training and liberal arts education for transfer students on an academic track. Furthermore, I explain the specific reform in vocational training with a philosophical/ethical curriculum added and the reform in traditional transfer courses with the integration of multicultural education.

I critically analyze the role of the community college in the United States. Finally, I explore coursework in applied philosophy as well as the service learning movement. I provide some curriculum ideas specifically for philosophy courses that will promote the ideals of an education for citizenship. Lastly, my conclusion briefly restates my argument.



## CHAPTER 2

### PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

#### Social Justice

A December 2004 article in *The Economist*, “Meritocracy in America” examines the goals of education in the United States and the state of education today.

From the outset, Americans believed that equality of opportunity gave them an edge over the Old World, freeing them from the debilitating snobberies and at the same time enabling everyone to benefit from the abilities of the entire population.<sup>1</sup>

The author asserts that the United States is straying from meritocracy and towards a “European-style class-based society.” This claim is based on two major indicators—the social mobility of society’s members and the income changes within different earners. The Economic Policy Institute found that between 1979 and 2000 the real income of households in the bottom twenty percent of earners grew by 6.4 percent, while in the top twenty percent income grew by 70 percent. In 2001 the top 1% of households earned 20% of all income and had 33.4% of net worth.

The Economic Policy Institute also studied social mobility, since most Americans are not bothered by differences in pay when coupled with equal opportunity. The study found that in the 1990s thirty-six percent of the lowest twenty percent stayed in the lowest fifth, while in the 1970s, twenty-eight percent stayed there and in the 1980s thirty-two percent remained in the lowest fifth. The article claims that while income disparities have risen, there

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<sup>1</sup> “Meritocracy in America,” *The Economist*, 29 December 2004.

has also been a decrease in social mobility, or at least there has not been an increase in social mobility with the increase in income disparity. Higher education, including community colleges, has the ability to either degrade or advance meritocracy in America.

### Social Mobility and Vocational Training

According to Sebastian de Assis, the Industrial Revolution affected purposes of education and applications of vocational training. Before the Industrial Revolution most people worked on small independent farms. When the Industrial Revolution occurred, large urban cities developed and the people were drawn to the cities. In these cities, they worked for barely living wages and had no opportunities for education or social mobility. “Social stagnation became a life sentence, for upward mobility was virtually impossible without education, and education was an unattainable luxury for the children of a factory worker.”<sup>2</sup>

As a result of changes in production methods by Henry Ford and other innovators, mass education became necessary to teach the technical skills required for specialized work in such a specialized manner. As de Assis notes, “the school became a pragmatic institution that determined what the individual must learn, as well as a profitable industry in which several subsidiary enterprises yielded handsome rewards.”<sup>3</sup> Although there have been many advances in social equality since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the ill

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<sup>2</sup> Sebastian de Assis, *Revolution in Education* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

effects of this era can be seen in the workplace and in the geographical location of cities.

Tim Wright in *Education for Development* investigates the oppressive potential of education. In colonial Kenya the education “offered a technical training which consisted of carpentry, masonry work, agriculture, saddlery, coach and wagon building, brick and tile works, general building, telegraphy, hospital dressers, tailoring, printing, gardening, and road construction.”<sup>4</sup> For the student, these schools served only to prepare them for menial, low paying jobs with virtually no opportunity to rise in class status. Perhaps a vocational program in a community college has similar limitations to schools in colonial Kenya?

Wright continues with a statement that some of his critics object to: “Surely, this could be seen as an attempt to match education to the needs of students? Not all students would be suited (so runs to the argument) to an academic career. Why not teach useful crafts and trades, a technical education?”<sup>5</sup> Vocational education focuses on an occupation that will help students pay for needs of their lives and their families.

The economic benefits to the student that has completed vocational training make the training attractive to both the work-force economy and the student. However, Wright argues that it “could also be interpreted as a way of subjugating others by denying them access to knowledge which was in any way linked to power, and that schools might thus merely ‘reproduce’ the structures

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<sup>4</sup> Wright, “Education for Development,” p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

and hierarchies of society.”<sup>6</sup> This subjugation makes upward mobility almost impossible.

A useful comparison can be made between the American contemporary institution of education in the United States and Western colonial education in underdeveloped nations. The vocational nature of technical schools in colonial Kenya is similar to the features of the American community college, simply because of the socioeconomic status of a large percentage of community college students. Low-income minority groups make up the largest percentage of students in vocational programs, while white, non-Hispanic students are more likely to attend four-year universities.<sup>7</sup>

Education has the potential to create freedom; intellectual freedom, economic freedom, and more employment choices. Through the study of philosophy the oppressed may use their newfound knowledge for freedom, including social mobility.

Although perhaps originally intended to have a training sufficient only to enter the colonial civil service (e.g., as clerks, teachers, medical assistants) in order to support the efficient running of empire, these former pupils, aided by acquiring literacy in Western languages to a level beyond what was intended by their teachers, were able to take Western knowledge and principles and use them in argument against colonial power.<sup>8</sup>

Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire has critiqued education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire began his work in poverty-stricken northeastern

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Horn et al., “Minority Undergraduate Participation in Post Secondary Education,” *National Center for Education for Education Statistics*, April 1995. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:2000)

<sup>8</sup> Wright, “Education for Development,” p. 225.

Brazil.<sup>9</sup> His philosophy “rejected the traditional educational approach in which the teacher is the almighty knower (depositor) and the student is the receptacle empty of knowledge and other dominant social values.”<sup>10</sup> Freire calls this approach “banking education.” This colonial tradition of education is problematic for both the teacher and the students, according to Freire, and it protects unequal power structures.

The ideal type of education that Freire develops is “problem posing education.”<sup>11</sup> This type of learning does not have the teacher lecturing and the students memorizing, or banking education. It is a dynamic process in which the students and the teachers are united for the purpose of learning. The students have intrinsic value as well as instrumental value. There is a reciprocal exchange of knowledge between the students, their peers, and the instructor. As Freire explains, “it is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors-teachers on one hand and students on the other.”<sup>12</sup>

In this way, teachers are not superior possessors of knowledge and absolute authority that the students merely listen to.<sup>13</sup> The students learn critical thinking through interaction with the teacher. While banking education resists Socratic dialogue, problem posing education “regards

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<sup>9</sup> de Assis, *Revolution in Education*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 80.

dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality.”<sup>14</sup> Critical thinking proves invaluable in a community college, especially in comparison to specialized training which will eventually become out-dated and most likely useless.

### Democracy and Critical Thinking

The purposes of education and the definition of democracy need to be evaluated. John Dewey, the American pragmatist, wrote the book, *Democracy and Education* in the early 1900s. As an educator, he argued that children ought to be taught both thinking skills and skills for action:

[E]ducation is subordinate to no end beyond itself, that the aim of education is not merely to make parents, or citizens, or workers, or indeed to surpass the Russians or Japanese, but ultimately to *make human beings who will live life to the fullest*, who will continually add to the quality and meaning of their experience and to their ability to direct that experience, and who will *participate actively with their fellow human beings in the building of a good society*.<sup>15</sup>

According to Dewey, pragmatism in education is supposed to address and meliorate society’s ills.<sup>16</sup> Dewey’s philosophy of education allowed students to learn both from experience and textbooks—to learn academics as well as life skills.

In *Democracy and Education* Dewey critiques a strictly vocational education. In this type of program, “there may be training but there is no

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Alan R. Sadovnik et al., *Exploring Education: An Introduction to the Foundations of Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), p. 191.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.190.

education.”<sup>17</sup> Dewey argues that the training is comparable to a reflex. In a reflex, for example, a noise that startles us makes us jump. During our jump we are not thinking, there is no mental intention or meaning behind our action. We are acting, “blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently.”<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Dewey argues that we are controlled by our habits or reflexes. We are oblivious to our habits because “they were formed without our knowing what we were about.” The result is that our freedom is lost—our habits “possess us, rather than we them. They move us; they control us.” To remain free we must, “become aware of what they accomplish, and pass judgment upon the worth of the result.”<sup>19</sup>

A community college should be a place that has the opportunity of freedom. One of the freedoms that education can grant you is the freedom to judge the actions of a government (which you might be reluctant to do if you immigrated), and the ability to express oneself through argumentative writing and speaking. Education also gives citizens the confidence to confront an exploitative or polluting corporation.

Social efficiency includes industrial competency. Obviously one is not free without their physical needs met. “Persons cannot live without means of subsistence. ... If he [a person] is not trained in the right use of the products of industry, there is grave danger that he may deprave himself and injure others

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<sup>17</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1944), p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

in his possession of wealth.”<sup>20</sup> Basic needs must be met before a person can use other freedoms such as religion and speech.

Democratic principles are broken when people are directed to certain occupations and education tracks “selected not on the basis of trained original capacities, but on that of the wealth or social status of parents.”<sup>21</sup> In the context of education this sorting or prejudging is called tracking. When tracking is applied it violates individual freedom and also allows persons who are less qualified to obtain higher paying jobs based on an irrelevancy, for example, race or family social status.

The division between vocational and traditional study is clear in many ways. Most can characterize various subjects as either vocational or traditional. Dewey argues that the division stems from societal relationships involving value. The two “labor and leisure” classes have been given values of inferior and superior. The “leisure” class studies art and literature, which is seen as “intrinsically higher than the servile training.” This inequality “reflected the fact that one class was free and the other servile in its social status.”<sup>22</sup> Dewey uses Aristotle in his analysis of the servile class, the unfree class. Because reason constitutes an end in itself, the servile class becomes a means, not an ends.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 251.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 252.



To fulfill the ideals of democracy both labor and leisure must be available for all humans.<sup>24</sup> Put simply:

The problem of education in a democratic society is to do away with the dualism and to construct a course of studies which makes thought a guide of free practice for all and which makes leisure a reward of accepting responsibility for service, rather than a state of exemption from it.<sup>25</sup>

It must be acknowledged that most educational programs are a kind of vocational training. Dewey theorizes that the opposite of vocation is aimlessness and laziness.<sup>26</sup> This opposite becomes negative when it is not involved in activity, in doing. Human beings have the vocation “at all times, of living-intellectual and moral growth.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the optimum way to learn is less specialized, constantly growing. Persons do not finish with their learning at specific dates in their lives, after specific degrees are conferred, for example. The student learns while doing, and has an intellectual life while doing and contemplating a more general construction of his or her place in society.

Dynamic and meaningful social constructions and identities must be included in this analysis.

An education which acknowledges the full intellectual and social meaning of a vocation would include instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production; and study of economics, civics, and politics, to bring the future worker in to touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement. Above all, it would train power of readaptation to

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>27</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 310.

changing conditions so that future workers would not become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them.<sup>28</sup>

In today's changing world, technology is often replaced. When a student receives training in reason and evaluation those skills last a lifetime and can be applied to any occupation. Teaching specialized programs will be useful only in the short term. Therefore, a vocational program in a community college focusing only on step by step memorization is unjust to the student.

Another consequence Dewey's view of education is that it "would increase sympathy for labor, create a disposition of mind which can discover the culturing elements in useful activity, and increase a sense of social responsibility."<sup>29</sup>

### The Purpose of Education

Sebastian de Assis outlines the main areas of reform for education, as well as proposed solutions. He begins with the epistemological question "What is knowledge?" and then what should education ultimately serve?<sup>30</sup> De Assis concludes that "understanding general human characteristics and the necessary developmental needs of each individual" is the most important part of knowledge.<sup>31</sup>

This approach is vastly different from the Western traditional paradigm of education. De Assis adds that "self-knowledge is crucial because knowledge

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 318-319.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>30</sup> de Assis, *Revolution in Education*, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

itself is the cardinal element that entitles humanity to change the world-for better or for worse.”<sup>32</sup> Innovators rehearsed in rationality will encourage the evolution of the humans in this world that is becoming increasingly more difficult to share together harmoniously.

The areas of philosophy that de Assis believes are helpful for a pursuit of a better-rounded education are logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.<sup>33</sup> The most important one for a broad-based education, according to de Assis, is ethics. “Initially, students should be invited to explore these precepts, the systematic study of the nature of value concepts (good, bad, right, wrong, etc.)” He adds, “and the general principles that justify the application of such values, in relation to what are determined by the dominant culture.”<sup>34</sup> This thorough study of ethics and policy by the majority of the population will create an atmosphere in which participatory democracy is not merely based on the televised opinions of others. To have a populace that has been enriched with the ideas of philosophical contemplation will also protect the all citizens from governmental or corporate exploitation. These concepts should be taught at the community college, accessible for everyone.

De Assis adds to his argument that “the political, economic, and social organization of society must be questioned, not as sheer philosophical reasoning but taking into account the advantages, injuries, and consequences

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

of the policies established by these institutions.”<sup>35</sup> If the purpose of higher education is to produce a climate for social mobility, knowledge, and freedom, then active philosophical dialogue needs to be a part of every student’s educational training.

Dean Garratt, in his essay *Education for Citizenship*, immediately recognizes the problems with today’s educational system, which “may easily be construed as a deliberate and systematic attempt to engineer passive citizenship; of grooming young people for their role as passive subjects in a society perceived as stable and typified by consensus.”<sup>36</sup> Such reform requires us to examine the definition of a “good citizen.” Currently in the United States many as a response to the world situation are heralding the idea of patriotism. For a democratic society, all citizens must have the tools of addressing their concerns with the government and other institutions. All should be empowered to get involved in civic processes and have economic opportunity. Postsecondary students should absolutely receive these tools in a philosophical setting, whatever degree they are seeking.

De Assis names teachers as the facilitators of this reform. He asserts that teachers have only two choices, “if they are going to teach for freedom and liberation or for domestication.”<sup>37</sup> Educators have great responsibility to both their students and the global community. Students that attend the community

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-116.

<sup>36</sup> Dean Garratt, “Education for Citizenship,” in *Educational Studies*, ed. Steve Bartlett and Diana Burton (London: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> de Assis, *Revolution in Education*, p. 55.

college deserve empowering education for themselves and because their decisions impact the world.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE QUESTION OF MULTICULTURALISM

This paper argues for curriculum reform in both vocational and academic courses in the community college. For the sake of global citizenship, academic rigor, truth and critical analysis of viewpoints, a multicultural study of philosophy and ethics is a large part of this reform.

The words “diversity” and “multiculturalism,” however, are value-laden with political and moral ideals. Therefore this chapter attempts to show both sides in the multiculturalism debate. Some argue that multiculturalism is in conflict with patriotism, and that diversity lowers standards. This chapter is meant to examine the issue of multicultural education that is politically polarized.

In the essay *Textbooks Favoring Multiculturalism Distort History* Alvin Schmidt not only asserts what the title implies but also uses some statistics to argue that history is already “distorted.” Most of all, “the promoters of multiculturalism primarily illustrate the negative cultural practices of the Euro American culture.” Schmidt asserts textbooks highlight slavery in America while neglecting to mention non-Western society’s instances of slavery. Schmidt also argues that “only rarely is it mentioned that native Africans sold their own people to the Europeans.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Alvin J. Schmidt, “Textbooks Favoring Multiculturalism Distort History,” *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*, Thomson Gale, 19 November 2005, <http://galenet.galenetgourp.com.servlet/OVRC>

Schmidt argues that the motives of the multiculturalists are comparable to Plato's noble lies. "The multiculturalists' role is to make non-Western minority groups feel good about themselves, and they try to do this in two ways. ... one method is to slight the Euro American culture. If members of minority cultures read about the sins and shortcomings of the Euro American, they will conclude that the cultural practices of their ancestors were free of such sins, and thus they will feel good about themselves and their ancestors."<sup>39</sup>

First, Schmidt argues that "Euro-American" history is being replaced by multiculturalism, or other cultures' stories. Second, this is taking place because the multiculturalists want to make feel-good curriculum for minority groups in the United States. Schmidt concludes that multicultural education will make minorities feel good. Well, do minority groups feel good about themselves and their ancestors? Schmidt argues that his premises necessarily lead to his conclusion. He has no evidence to support this view, which frankly seems untrue. Therefore, either textbooks are not slighting Euro-American history or doing so does not increase the self-esteem of minorities.

Schmidt does cite these cases to support his first premise:

- [I]n one textbook for instance, Crispus Attucks (one of several Americans killed in the Boston Massacre in 1770) receives more extensive coverage than Paul Revere.
- W.E.B. Du Bois, a black writer is more prominently covered than Booker T. Washington, whose reputation has suffered among minorities for his conservative views.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who exposed the evils of slavery to millions of Americans, is now often cited less frequently in texts than is Harriet Tubman, the black woman who helped about 300 black slaves escape by way of the Underground Railroad. That she was assisted by white abolitionists is totally ignored.<sup>40</sup>

David Warren Saxe, a professor at the Pennsylvania State University presents similar views in his essay, *Valuing Diversity is Not Patriotic*. Saxe argues that now it is imperative to instill his brand of patriotism into the student, “given our perennial obligation to defend the nation from all enemies—foreign and domestic—the task of educators in time of war is the same as that of educators in times of peace. Public schoolteachers have one basic obligation: in promoting the state, they must take up the mantle of embracing a love of nation-love of the land and our liberties-while they work to instill that same love within their students.”<sup>41</sup>

Saxe defines multiculturalism or diversity as featuring “the study of many cultures and even subcultures under the dictum that all cultures are equal, are worthy, and should be respected, and finally, in keeping with this logic, no one culture is superior to any other.”<sup>42</sup> According to Saxe, this view cannot be tolerated because it divides the United States and neglects to teach the values that Saxe believes are the foundation of patriotism.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> David Warren Saxe, “Valuing Diversity Is Not Patriotic,” Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center, Thomson Gale, 19 November 2005, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/OVRC>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



Like Schmidt, Thomas Sowell also has issues with the way slavery is presented in American classrooms. Sowell uses the case of slavery to support his claim that multiculturalists condemn Western society and its “sins.”

The widespread revulsion which this hideous institution [slavery] inspires today was largely confined to Western civilization a century ago, and a century before that was largely confined to a portion of British society. No one seems interested in the epic story of how this curse that covered the globe and endured for thousands of years was finally gotten rid of. It was gotten rid of by the West—not only in Western societies but in other societies conquered, controlled, or pressured by the West.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to Sowell’s statements, diversity in education will include the past of other nations, in addition to the West and slavery. Slavery is an important part of United States’ history and there should be no controversy including the context and precursors as well as those who fought to end it in a curriculum.

In the bestselling book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom argues against multiculturalism in education. Like Saxe, Bloom’s definition of *multiculturalism* requires ethical relativism. Bloom observes that students often have the belief that information from teachers and textbooks is absolute. Bloom claims this belief is the consequence of “new” education:

Openness—and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings—is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that the entire world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is to not think you are right at all.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Sowell, “Multicultural Instruction,” *The American Spectator* 26, no. 4 (April 1993): 47.

<sup>44</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 26.

The ideas of absolutism and relativism appear necessary for the debate between diversity and tradition. However, these ideas are not needed, nor are they desirable. First, what is ethical relativism? Second, is it necessary to learn about the diverse world? Lastly, how can students learn about other cultures without the consequence of teaching the student to memorize without judgment?

*Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach* addresses multicultural education and ethical relativism. Ethicist Lawrence Blum defines *multiculturalism* as follows:

Multiculturalism involves an understanding, appreciation, and valuing of one's own culture, and an informed respect and curiosity about the ethnic cultures of others. It involves a valuing of other cultures, not in the sense of approving of all aspects of those cultures, but of attempting to see how a given culture can express value to its own members.<sup>45</sup>

This same textbook includes in its introductory chapter an essay by Martha Nussbaum on female genital mutilation as an exercise in judging other cultures—thereby, discounting the need for ethical relativism in the study of different cultures. The point that ethical relativism is not a necessity for diverse curricula is further proven by the diversity that exists in Western culture already. In a traditional study of ethical theory, for example, the diversity between Kantianism and utilitarianism contrasts just as greatly as Buddhism and Confucianism.

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<sup>45</sup> Lawrence A. Blum, "Antiracism, Multiculturalism, and Interracial Community," in *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, ed. Larry May, Shari Collins-Chobanian, and Kai Wong (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education 2006), p. 11.

Saxe's definition of *multiculturalism* is synonymous with ethical relativism, which therefore requires a person to commit to the idea that one society's norms are no more or less valuable than another's—for example, that the *settee*, which is the burning of widows in India that used to be legal, is just as honorable as taking care of the sick. The Nazis would have been right, and Dr. Martin Luther King would have necessarily been morally wrong in his fight against segregation and oppression, which were a part of his society's norms.

Ethical relativism's supporters argue that its value lies in its conduciveness for tolerance. Critics of ethical relativism argue that one may commit to a metaphysical claim that morality exists objectively without presuming to be the keeper of it. An alternative to ethical relativism is cultural relativism,<sup>46</sup> which is simply the sociological claim that different societies have different norms. Any value judgment is made with relevant information and reciprocal communication.

Often whole societies do not all agree. One example is the movement against female genital mutilation in various countries where it has been practiced. Defining one culture is impossible to do. One can learn about cultures without saying that all cultures are morally right. Education has done so by teaching the conflicts and changes in the history of our own nation. We learn about our historical past while being proud of the noble acts and by criticizing the atrocious ones. To argue that by studying other cultures and

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<sup>46</sup> Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation," in *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, ed. Larry May, Shari Collins-Chobanian, and Kai Wong (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education 2006), pp. 15-25.

subcultures we commit to ethical relativism is the equivalent of supposing the same about traditional American studies. In her essay “Judging Other Cultures,” Martha Nussbaum makes these arguments in relation to the issue of female genital information.

Bloom shares the same complaints as Schmidt and Saxe—the “new” multicultural education undermines patriotism and identity as an “American.” Bloom directly attacks Dewey’s pragmatism: “pragmatism—the method of science as the method of democracy, individual growth without limits, especially natural limits—saw the past as radically imperfect and regarded our history as irrelevant or as a hindrance to rational analysis of our present.”<sup>47</sup> Bloom is arguing that by having a curriculum that puts reason and criticism above respect for tradition, the student loses reverence for his or her country.

Bloom concludes that another change in education brought about by the “new” curricula concerns respect for religion. “As the respect for the Sacred—the latest fad—has soared, real religion and knowledge of the Bible have diminished to the vanishing point.”<sup>48</sup> It seems that some critics of multiculturalism are not critics of teaching about their religion—Christianity in this case, or their history (more accurately their perspective of history), but are critical of others, the so-called “latest fads.” The consequences are far-reaching, Bloom argues, and affect everything from the educational experience and just as important, the family.

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<sup>47</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 56.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

Bloom says that the family is dependent on traditional ways of education. He explains that “attending church or synagogue, praying at the table, were a way of life, inseparable from the moral education that was supposed to be the family’s special responsibility in this democracy.”<sup>49</sup> In Bloom’s perspective, this tradition has changed drastically as “the delicate fabric of the civilization into which the successive generations are woven has unraveled, and children are raised, not educated.”<sup>50</sup> Bloom gives an emotionally charged critique of what he describes as “today’s liberal” culture:

And then comes the longing for the classless, prejudice-free, conflictless, universal society that necessarily results from liberated consciousness ...the fulfillment of which has been inhibited by the political equivalents of Mom and Dad.

In the *Disuniting of America* Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. describes changing American identity and what he calls the “ethnic upsurge,” the opposite of the melting-pot view of the United States. Schlesinger explains that “the ethnic upsurge began as a gesture of protest against the Anglocentric culture.” He further warns that “it became a cult, and today it threatens to become a counterrevolution against the original theory of America as ‘one people,’ a common culture, a single nation.”<sup>51</sup>

In his chapter, “History as a Weapon,” Schlesinger begins to dissect history as it relates to the student. History is subjective; even witnesses of the same event give different accounts. Schlesinger laments about “how dismally

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1992), p. 43.

we fall short of our ideals, how sadly our interpretations are dominated and distorted by subconscious preconceptions, how obsessions of race and nation blind us to our own bias.”<sup>52</sup> Schlesinger, like Schmidt, evokes Plato’s noble lies when examining multicultural education: “People live by their myths, and some may argue that the facts can be justifiably embroidered if embodiment serves a higher good, such as the nurture of a nation or the elevation of a race.”<sup>53</sup> While Schlesinger does not declare that multicultural education is a type of this myth, we can safely assume that the elevation of a race he is referring to is one or more of the minority groups (and women) in the United States.

Schlesinger refers directly to the increase of curricula deemed multicultural or Afrocentric. His criticism is that “in seeking to impose Afrocentric curricula on public schools, they go further than their white counterparts.”<sup>54</sup> The white counterparts that Schlesinger is mentioning are European ethnic groups such as Irish American. Schlesinger further argues that because African Americans endured harsher exclusion than their European counterparts, there is a greater opportunity for what he calls, “black exploitation.” This opportunity arises from “the phenomenon of white guilt,” for the historical oppression of African Americans.<sup>55</sup>

One of Schlesinger’s specific criticisms of multiculturalism is that it has come to refer to the minority, or non-white cultures.<sup>56</sup> He then proceeds to use

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

Afrocentrism or Africancentrism as the ideology which he is against. Quoting Gore Vidal, Schlesinger calls in emotional arguments: “‘What I hate,’ Gore Vidal has well said, ‘is good citizenship history. That has wrecked every history book. Now we’re getting, ‘the Hispanics are warm and joyous and have brought such wisdom into our lives,’ you know and before them the Jews, and before them the blacks. And the women. I mean cut it out!’”<sup>57</sup> Schlesinger quotes these words not because they are eloquent and unique but so he can use them in the book without inviting personal blame.

After condemning ethnocentric history books and courses Schlesinger diplomatically adds:

Let us by all means teach black history, African history, women’s history, Hispanic history, Asian history. But let us teach them as history, not as filiopietistic commemoration. The purpose of history is to promote not group self-esteem, but understanding of the world and the past, dispassionate analysis, judgment and perspective, respect for divergent cultures and traditions, and unflinching protection for those unifying ideas of tolerance, democracy, and human rights that make free historical inquiry possible.<sup>58</sup>

It is interesting that he added this disclaimer, for it appears that most of his contentions originate in the extreme and radical practices of those who claim multiculturalism in defense. Schlesinger’s arguments lose their applicability to honest multicultural education.

Specific responses to critics such as Saxe, Sowell, Schmidt, Schlesinger, and particularly Bloom are tied to the politically volatile culture wars. Gerald Graff in *Beyond the Culture Wars; How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize*

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

*American Education* responds to Bloom's theories. Graff identifies the culture war in relation to education:

The history of modern American education has pitted the liberal pluralist solution (everyone does his or her own thing) against the conservative solution (everyone does the conservatives' thing). What is happening today, I believe, is that both the liberal pluralist and the conservative solutions have outlived their usefulness. Everyone doing his or her own thing has made a mess of the curriculum, but cleaning up the mess by reverting to a narrowly defined traditional curriculum can only make a far worse mess.<sup>59</sup>

Graff counters the allegation that "the classics" have been sacrificed by the multicultural movement in academia. He cites two MLA surveys of texts in literature classes<sup>60</sup> and concludes that while literature studies have been changing, they have done so "by accretion at the margins, not by dumping the classics."<sup>61</sup>

Graff also responds to the Afrocentric curricula that Schlesinger associates with multiculturalism: "... it is unfair to judge any trend by its least admirable versions."<sup>62</sup> A further response to critics of multiculturalism is that "they have no strategy for dealing with cultural and educational conflict except to deny its legitimacy."<sup>63</sup>

With regard to Schlesinger's arguments, Graff holds that Schlesinger argues with militant ethnic separatism yet neglects to address the real need for diversity in education. Graff also directly scrutinizes Schlesinger's argument that the multiculturalist creates division—"to tell those who have been forcibly

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<sup>59</sup> Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars; How Teaching the Conflicts can Revitalize American Education* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.



excluded from the benefits of the melting pot that their complaints are too divisive is a good way to drive them into permanent opposition.”<sup>64</sup> While permanent opposition is probably an extreme, there is legitimacy in Graff’s acknowledgement that the criticisms of a traditional view of education are not the cause of division.

Furthermore, Graff caricatures the “West-is-besters” as acting like the persons they are arguing against: “... reveling in self-pity, presenting themselves as helpless victims, and using the curriculum to prop up a flagging self-esteem.”<sup>65</sup> Graff is so enthusiastically for multiculturalism in education that he uses conflicts in culture as critical points for examination by students. This “war” actually promotes thought for students, thereby adding to the educational process, not detracting from national unity. As Graff illustrates, “‘theory’ is a name for the kind of self-consciousness that results when a community ceases to agree on these heretofore seemingly obvious, ‘normal’ assumptions-like the assumption that women are domestic by nature ... or that a slave narrative has no literary qualities that might make it worth teaching, or that politics and literature do not mix.”<sup>66</sup>

Nussbaum, cited earlier for her essay on female genital mutilation, supports diversity in her essay “Valuing Diversity Is Patriotic.” Nussbaum uses current events in the United States to argue the importance of diversity. Specifically, diversity is important because of the world’s increasing

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>65</sup> Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars*, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

interdependence and connectedness. Nussbaum specifically targets patriotism because of what she perceives as an increasingly prevalent (especially after September 11, 2001) “us versus them” mentality. Her argument is that

just as parents’ compassion for their own children can all too easily slide into an attitude that promotes the defeat of other people’s children, so too with patriotism: Compassion for our fellow Americans can all too easily slide over into an attitude that wants America to come out on top, defeating or subordinating other peoples or nations.<sup>67</sup>

Nussbaum uses an example of a baseball game she attended in which the audience chanted “USA!” in a way that seemed to “express a wish for America to defeat, abase, and humiliate its enemies.”<sup>68</sup>

Humans’ immediate tendencies are usually to care for persons nearest and most similar to themselves. With an education including non-Western cultures, those other persons will be easier to empathize with. Nussbaum uses examples such as the United States’ delayed action during the Nazi Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda. Global citizenship, therefore, requires a diverse education.

Our educational system needs to “expand our moral imagination” to include the entire world.

At this time of national crisis we can renew our commitment to the equal worth of humanity, demanding media, and schools, that nourish and expand our imaginations by presenting non-American lives as deep, rich, and compassion-worthy.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Valuing Diversity Is Patriotic,” Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center, Thomson Gale, 19 November 2005, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/OVRC>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### A RESPONSIBLE CURRICULUM

There are a number of realities that have affected vocational training. Many people are attracted to vocational and technical training for the speed of the programs; most lead to immediate job placement. These students are frequently parents and according to the American Association of Community College, for those students, the importance of “postsecondary credentials is the difference between family self-sufficiency and not being able to make ends meet.”<sup>70</sup>

The unique need that these students have restricts their ability to have both the time and the resources to take courses that do not directly help them reach their important goal of being able to support their families.

Another hurdle might be apprehension about the task of learning the history of Western intellectual thought. My solution is both to underemphasize memorization of the obscure classics and to add a more diverse curriculum. Philosophy should be not only accessible, but the curriculum itself should respect diversity and the knowledge that these members of society can contribute from their own cultures.

#### Diversity in Education

Like other academic fields, one of the main flaws that the field of

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<sup>70</sup> Natalie C. Holmes, “Coalition Aims to Help Working Poor Advance NCWE Report Examines Community College Program,” *Community College Times* (9 November 2004), <http://www.aacc.edu/PrinterTemplate.cfm?Section=EconomicDevelopment&template>

philosophy has is a history of focusing on writings of a select few European and American men. The ethnocentrism that is characteristic of what we call the Western world has shaped what is supposed to be objective thought. Thinking critically about insights from around the world will enrich the field of philosophy and will provide a more exciting study.

Areas all over the world have had knowledge and philosophy before they came into contact with the Western culture. For instance, although many people are unaware, “autochthonous cultures, particularly the Aztecs, Mayas, Incas and Tupi Guarani, produced sophisticated thought systems centuries before the arrival of Europeans in America.”<sup>71</sup> It is regrettable that rulers of the dominant cultures of colonialism dismissed these philosophies. Western culture’s ethnocentrism has been so severe that when philosophy is taught, other cultures are added as an afterthought, if they are mentioned at all. No individual culture has a monopoly on contemplation, belief, and knowledge.

Earlier I mentioned Paulo Freire’s insightful and revolutionary philosophy of education. His work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* would be an exceptional addition to any philosophy curriculum. The introductory ethics text, *World Ethics*, by Wanda Torres Gregory and Donna Giancola explores philosophical theories across the world and through different time periods. It contains a reading from Freire’s book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, with study questions. Students practice critical thinking by discussing philosophical theories both in classroom discussion and writing. For the technical programs

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<sup>71</sup> Amy A. Oliver, “Philosophy in Latin America,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/ZA009>

we should remember that the purpose of providing them with a humanities class is for their intellectual and emotional benefit. It should be as accessible as possible. The study (or discussion) questions that Gregory and Giancola ask are:

1. In what sense is Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed a theory of moral education? What moral claims are involved in his ideas of humanization, dehumanization, and oppression in his critique of systematic education?
2. Why do the oppressed have an historic and humanist task? Does Freire suggest this is the moral responsibility of the oppressed? Does he suggest it is solely theirs? Does he assign any moral responsibilities to the oppressor?
3. Why must the oppressed also liberate the oppressor? What moral standards must this process follow? Why?
4. What moral imperatives are there in the role of the educator? What possible moral conflicts and dilemmas could the educator face in this role?<sup>72</sup>

The questions and information can be presented in different ways depending on the ability of the learner.

In addition, it is important to add other philosophers to the curriculum at the introductory philosophy level. In the section on Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi in *World Ethics* there is a two-page reading on non-violence by Gandhi and some discussion questions for the class. Here are some that I find the most useful and stimulating for addition to a class designed for non-philosophy majors.

1. What does nonviolence require? Why? When is violence preferable over nonviolence? What is the difference between true and false nonviolence? What results can each form of nonviolence bring about?

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<sup>72</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in Wanda Torres Gregory and Donna Giancola, *World Ethics* (Toronto: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), p. 288.

2. How are Gandhi's principles of nonviolence related to his conception of human nature? How do they serve as a basis for his ideas of social and political liberation?
3. Is nonviolence an effective means of overcoming social, political, and personal oppression? Why?<sup>73</sup>

Confucius is a Chinese sage who lived from 551 to 479 B.C.<sup>74</sup> The part of Confucius' philosophy that this textbook focuses on is his postulations regarding humaneness, the gentleman, propriety, the Golden Rule and the Way. His ideas bring a lively discussion to an ethics class. A few selected questions for discussion after reading excerpts from his sayings entitled, *The Analects* are:

1. What does Confucius mean by "humaneness"? How does it translate into the individual's moral conduct? In what sense does the individual have the duty to be humane? What other duties are involved?
2. How does Confucius conceive the individual, society, and the state? How are the values of the self and the community related?<sup>75</sup>

Black Elk, a Native American who lived from 1863 to 1950, was a member of the Sioux tribe.<sup>76</sup> His teachings were documented by the poet John G. Neihardt. One of these writings, "The Offering of the Pipe," tells a story using symbolism to reveal some of the values that were important in the Sioux tribes. One question relevant to our discussion is, "How do Black Elk's conceptions of the earth and humanity contrast with those in dominating Western cultures today? How do they differ in terms of moral values and

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<sup>73</sup> Gregory and Giancola, *World Ethics*, p. 224.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

principles?”<sup>77</sup> Comparing Western culture with other cultures will give students more choices in developing their own value system. To be given intellectual alternatives in creating a worldview will assist humankind to evolve as a species collectively.

Sometimes referred to as “the Gandhi of Africa,” Kwame Nkrumah is one of Africa’s most influential political leaders.<sup>78</sup> In 1957 he became the first president of Ghana, and has written a number of books including *I Speak of Freedom; Africa Must Unite; and Consciencism*.<sup>79</sup>

Nkrumah postulates an idea he calls, “philosophical consciencism,” which “interconnects thought and practice in the effort to attain the social liberation of Africa.” Nkrumah also argues that “philosophy must find its roots in the traditional African conscience, plant itself firmly in the realities of the African society, and become actively involved in its revolutionary transformation.”<sup>80</sup> To apply his arguments to this specific discussion, “practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty.”<sup>81</sup>

There is an immense array of cultures and world views to learn through respectful and diverse study.

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<sup>77</sup> Gregory and Giancola, *World Ethics*, p. 297. Chapter one of *Black Elk Speaks* by John G. Neihardt, <http://blackelkspeaks.unl.edu/chapter1.html>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.233.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology of Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: Praeger, 1963). And Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

## CHAPTER 5

### EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

The environmentalist movement in the United States was begun primarily by middle and upper-class Caucasians.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, “blacks, lower-income groups, and working-class persons are subjected to a disproportionately large amount of pollution and other environmental stressors in their neighborhoods as well as their workplaces.”<sup>83</sup> The disproportion of minority groups in the United States living in bad environments is called “environmental racism.” Although the disparity in living conditions appears greatly to be along racial lines, it is clear that income is a large factor as well.

Traditional environmental activists and local activists differ in their reasoning behind environmental consideration. Environmentalists will usually use intrinsic value as an argument for protecting the environment, not economic reasons. Arne Naess’ distinction between deep ecology and shallow ecology shows how diverse environmentalists can be, even this framework. In the 1970s Naess wrote an essay explaining the distinction;

Shallow ecological thinking was limited to the traditional moral framework; those who thought in this way were anxious to avoid pollution to our water supply so that we could have safe water to drink, and they sought to preserve wilderness so that people could continue to enjoy walking through it. Deep ecologists, on the other hand, wanted to preserve the integrity of the biosphere for its own sake, irrespective of the possible benefits to humans.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement,” *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100, quoted in Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 280.



These two types of ecologists mirror many schools of thought in the field of environmental ethics. There are those that argue that the Earth has intrinsic value irrespective of human beings. They are at odds with others that have employment and health considerations when making environmental decisions. What “environment” means can also be an issue. Social activists in communities that are urban or otherwise polluted consider the environment in terms of air quality and safety as related to human beings. These activists are dealing mostly with social injustices that are dealt to those communities that have toxic waste landfills and polluting industries because of their lack of political power.

According to Robert Bullard, author of *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*, the differences between the traditional environmentalists described above and activists in the African American community are vast. When environmental activists began bringing their efforts to the urban poor, they were met with “resistance and suspicion. Poor and minority residents saw environmentalism as a disguise for oppression and as another ‘elitist’ movement.”<sup>85</sup>

According to Bullard, environmental elitism involves three categories: *compositional elitism*, which “implies that environmentalists come from privileged class strata,” *ideological elitism*, which implies that environmental reforms are meant to give benefits to environmentalists (perhaps those that can afford ecotourism, leisure activities) and at the cost of nonenvironmentalists,

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<sup>85</sup> Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie*, p. 9.

and lastly “*impact elitism*, which implies that environmental reforms have regressive distributional impacts.”<sup>86</sup> This impact elitism is the conflict between environmentalists and social activists. Local activists may argue that the environmentalists’ causes impact employment opportunities. For example, a local group may argue that by enforcing stricter rules on a company, the company might decide to establish itself in another community with fewer restrictions.

Bullard discusses three groups that are often in opposition to one another. He lists the environmentalists, the social justice advocates, and the economic boosters. Much of the conflict stems from the “jobs-versus-environment” argument, which some social activists and economic boosters have used against environmentalists. This jobs-versus-environment idea could just as easily be labeled job-versus-health, and, according to Bullard, African Americans have often been told by pro-growth activists that they must choose between gainful employment and a healthy and safe environment.<sup>87</sup>

Environmental activism has been done through the same types of African-American groups that work for civil rights and social justice. For example, The Congressional Black Caucus often votes pro-environment. Unfortunately, the communities that have the greatest costs to the environment “still do not have the organization, financial resources, or personnel to mount and sustain effective long-term challenges to such unpopular facilities as municipal and hazardous-waste landfills, toxic waste

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

dumps, incinerators, and industrial plants that may post a threat to their health and safety.”<sup>88</sup>

Another problem is their community’s lack of experts needed for reform, for example lawyers and ecological experts. The most effective way to deal with this problem, according to Bullard, is for the persons who live in these communities to be active in the political and social issues of that specific community. In accordance with this approach, unlike the model of outside traditional environmental groups, those who live in the community become active.

The credit for mobilizing black residents around toxics issues rests with indigenous black community leaders, not outside elites. The resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of outside elites (e.g., governmental leaders, courts, liberals, and philanthropic foundations) in organizing and sustaining social movements in minority communities.

In minority communities “outside elites” usually become involved after the fact, usually after the dispute or problem is in the media.<sup>89</sup> The local people that are affected are the first to become aware of an issue, obviously.

Peter Wenz, a philosopher who focuses on environmental justice, creates a system that distributes environmental costs equally between different communities. In “Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism,” Wenz formulates this argument based on distributive justice, particularly addressing the racial disparities in environmental quality.

First, Wenz explores environmental racism and its implications in the United States. Those against considering environmental racism use a

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

“Doctrine of Double Effect” to assert “that racial effects are blameless because they are sought neither as ends-in-themselves nor as a means to reach a desired goal.”<sup>90</sup> Doing so takes racial issues out of the disparity, is relieving since racial injustices have legal implications. Although studies show that racism affects housing and therefore is relevant to this discussion, Wenz argues from the basis of justice for poor and rich persons, not solely along racial lines. Wenz asserts that this approach is more effective in the long term because of the increasing numbers of middle and upper-class African Americans and our changing societal makeup.

Wenz gives other instances in the United States that provide for the idea of distributive justice in lieu of market driven approaches. A quick example is the use of tax money “to protect the public from hazards associated with private property.” This use of public funds to “protect the public from dangerous public property is justified on the grounds that private industry and commerce, are supposed to increase public wealth.”<sup>91</sup> These examples show public funds being used to balance burdens and benefits, furthermore they show that our intuitions lead us to fair distribution of benefits and costs. Wenz concludes that “in the absence of countervailing considerations, the burdens of ill health associated with toxic hazards should be related to benefits derived from processes and products that create these hazards.”<sup>92</sup> In a distributive justice based view, with consideration of the extremely real health costs the

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<sup>90</sup> Peter S. Wenz, “Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism,” in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Louis P. Pojman (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2005), p. 597.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 599.

production of goods has made Wenz clearly proves the need for reform in government regulation.

Our society is based on consumerism and the production of goods and services. Manufacturing these goods requires factories that cause a large amount of environmental distress. Paint, plastic, solvents, and petroleum-based materials exist in almost all homes. In his essay Wenz characterizes this society as “worry based;” he is referring to constant advertisements and societal pressures that motivate consumption

The well-known concept of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) refers to the desire to keep the dangerous costs of living in this society away from one’s community. Wenz considers this desire to be “integral to the cultural value system required for great volumes of toxic waste to be generated in the first place.”<sup>93</sup>

How can toxic waste and pollution be decreased as well as be more justly distributed? Wenz surveys other instances of distributive justice in the United States that defy pure capitalism. The free-market approach, Wenz remarks, would result in wealthy children getting excellent educations and poor children getting none. Health care and welfare systems are adjusted to protect the vital necessities irrespective of income level.<sup>94</sup> Such adjustment is based on the precedent that “justice requires equal consideration of interests, and that such

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 600.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 602.

equal consideration requires rejecting purely free market approaches where basic or vital needs are concerned.”<sup>95</sup>

The proximity to NIMBY locations quantifiably impacts the health of ecosystems as well as individual human animals. Pollutants and toxins cause higher rates of various types of cancers, leukemia, and lymphoma. “In general, cancer rates are higher in the United States near industries that use toxic wastes and discard them nearby.”<sup>96</sup> Using the argument that people have a basic right to vital necessities, environmental burdens should be justly distributed.

Wenz’s solution is a somewhat quantifiable system of Locally Undesirable Land Uses or LULU points, to distribute the negative effects of the consumer society. The definition of LULU includes land fills as well as “prisons, half-way houses, municipal waste sites, low-income housing, and power plants.”<sup>97</sup> The LULU points will be equally allocated for each community, town or city. When there is a poor section of a city and a wealthier part the “community” will be defined separately so the wealthy areas receive the same costs of production as poor areas.

As well as being morally just, the equitable distribution of LULU points will make environmental issues weightier in deciding what to buy, what to invest in, and what kinds of things are necessary in our lives. The externalities

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. from L. W. Pickle et al., *Atlas of Cancer Morality among Whites: 1950-1980*, HHS publication #(NIH) 87-2900 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Government Printing Office: 1987).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 603.

will be costs to everyone, not abstract ideas. The persons that have the most opportunity to enact change are those that have the most money and political influence. Now those persons are not as affected by LULU as much as poorer and/or minority populations. Through this system of distributive justice those people in power, politically and monetarily, will become an integral part of the environmental movement.<sup>98</sup>

The people geographically closest to an environmental problem have great reasons to act, and many groups have their own way of enacting change, whether through church groups or civil rights groups or otherwise. Environmental activists will be the most effective when they communicate and work together. However, technical lingo and stated purposes—economic and anthropocentric versus biocentric—appear to necessarily isolate them from each other. The variation in ethical theories seems to hinder dialogue and united action.

J. Baird Callicott critiques moral pluralism as relevant to different environmental ethical theories. He divides ethical theories into three groups: (1) the “neo-Kantian family of environmental ethics,” (2) the land ethic which originated from Aldo Leopold and (3) “Self-realization,” as supported by deep ecologists.<sup>99</sup>

Callicott explores the possibility of an ethic that incorporates more than one ethical precept, in spite of inconsistencies. He quotes Eugene Hargrove’s

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 604.

<sup>99</sup> J. Baird Callicott, “The Case against Moral Pluralism,” *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 99-125.

framework of a possible moral pluralism in which moral precepts are compared to the rules of chess:

The body of rules has no ultimate unifying principle, the principles themselves are not logically related to one another (the omission of one or the addition of another in no way affects the group as whole), they are not organized in any meaningful hierarchy...and there are innumerable cases which can be brought forward with regard to each of them in which following the proper rule leads to disaster in a board (or, analogously, in a real-life) situation.<sup>100</sup>

The debate between various environmental ethicists is analogous to the differences between environmentalists and local activists. Wenz connects the practice of environmental justice issues with competing philosophical theories:

We found ... that none of the above theories of justice was flexible enough to accommodate all of our considered views about how particular matters of environmental justice should be decided...But because each theory and many of the principles contained in each theory seem reasonable when applied to certain kinds of cases, they should not be abandoned entirely. They should be modified and blended to form an all embracing pluralistic theory. A theory is pluralistic when it contains a variety of principles that cannot be reduced to or derive from a single master principle.<sup>101</sup>

While moral pluralism appears to solve these issues, Hargrove notes a concern about moral pluralism, which lies in the naiveté of such a theory. To clarify, it is “the fear that the open form in which decisions naturally and normally take place will allow unscrupulous or weak moral agents to waver and [choose] principles to their own immoral advantage.”<sup>102</sup> This concern is especially compelling in the competing arguments for specific land uses. The

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<sup>100</sup> Eugene C. Hargrove, “The Role of Rules in Ethical Decision Making,” *Inquiry* 28 (1985): 30; quoted in Callicott, “The Case against Moral Pluralism,” p. 105.

<sup>101</sup> Peter S. Wenz, *Environmental Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 310, quoted in Callicott, “The Case against Moral Pluralism,” p. 106.

<sup>102</sup> Hargrove, “The Role of Rules in Ethical Decision Making,” p. 26; quoted in Callicott, “The Case against Moral Pluralism,” p. 111.



pro-growth leaders may argue that the rights of the people to support themselves and their families justify land use, while the environmentalists may argue against that land use in spite of the jobs it will create. With these types of competing philosophies, the possibility of corruption is worrisome. In sum, moral pluralism assumes persons of good will.

Thorough communication between all groups is imperative, especially because the language of environmental philosophers differs from the language of local activists. In addition to simply defining each other's lingo there are the residual effects of academia's elitist past and the apprehension between nonacademics and outside academics. If environmental ethicists are to be truly effective in joining local activists and civic groups, they must appreciate and respect views of the activists as well. Doing so involves a kind of relativism, but it need not be problematic since all parties are presumably working for moral causes that respect humans, the land, and nonhuman animals.

The possibility for immoral persons to adopt environmental rhetoric to manipulate people will be decreased through true philosophical dialogue and empowerment of all people.

The community college is an accessible forum for all persons to learn civic literacy and tools to wade through rhetorical and manipulative arguments. Moreover, the community college allows those who need factory jobs to become qualified. More opportunities for employment will lessen desperation for jobs, increase leverage and will therefore prevent degradation of the land.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE OPPORTUNITIES SPECIFIC TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

One dichotomy at the community college level is between the technical or vocational students and those preparing to transfer to a four-year school. The students who are transferring have a curriculum of liberal arts, sciences, and math. General education attempts to reach the ideal of what an educated person should learn—not just the area that will train them for employment. Why are other subjects important for a fuller life? What intuitions do humans have about education that includes a broad array of subjects?

The institution of community colleges in the United States strives to make higher education possible for all persons, especially low-income and minority groups. With access to the education of this population, the community college has a special obligation to educate for citizenship and empowerment.

In Texas, 75 percent of minority students entering college for the first time enroll in two-year colleges. Minority students now account for more than 40 percent of the state's public community college enrollment. In addition, more minority students attend community colleges than all other higher education institutions combined.<sup>103</sup>

The vocational aspect of the community college is isolated because it exists separately from all “academic” classes. It does so because “the idea of vocational education reflects a belief that separate curricular tracks” are superior for both the types of students in the programs, and the goals of which

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<sup>103</sup> “Strategic Plan for Texas Public Community Colleges 1999-2003”  
<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/0049.PDF>

are usually employment immediately after training.<sup>104</sup> Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer identify these issues in the text *The American Community College*. The agendas for separate vocational programs are evident in the history of the community college.<sup>105</sup> Commentators have theorized that a “hidden agenda” exists which uses the vocational areas of the community college as a way to “channel low-income and minority students away from academic studies and the upward social mobility attendant thereon.”<sup>106</sup> Conversely, Cohen and Brawer argue that this is not the case in the actual application of vocational programs. Most importantly they argue that this viewpoint “perpetuates the myth” that vocational programs are only utilized by minority and low-income students.<sup>107</sup>

Cohen and Brawer note that there have been many calls for bridging the gap between vocational and liberal studies. The reasoning involves both the dynamic nature of the workplace and the expectations of both students and employers. Since the workplace is constantly changing through either technology or globalization, an education with a narrow skills-based emphasis is doomed to become outdated. On the other hand, an education that gives the student broad (i.e., general) education including critical thinking and humanities courses will be useful to the student for a long time. However,

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<sup>104</sup> Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, *The American Community College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. 243.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

these courses are the least instructive for specific occupations, and therefore may hurt graduates looking for employment to support their family.<sup>108</sup>

Furthermore, studies show that graduates of all programs have begun to wish they had “more preparation in English, psychology, and ways of understanding personal relations.”<sup>109</sup> Employers as well “expect higher levels of competency, especially in writing, mathematics, thinking, computer literacy, leadership abilities, and interpersonal or team relationships.”<sup>110</sup> It appears that the economic argument for purely vocational training fails when taking into consideration the stated expectations of employers. Whether these employers are actively willing to support their future and current employees in becoming educated in these areas remains to be seen.

Integrating a general education curriculum in all programs, including technical and vocational, has been advised by the American Association of Junior Colleges on numerous occasions throughout the last century. A few of the challenges are the amount of time needed to add to a vocational program, the need for qualified staff, and finding community college leadership who agree with the changes.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the industries that support specific training programs need to be considered, as they support the programs that address their training needs by both monetary and equipment donations.

Some of the differences between vocational and academic studies are less politically charged. The classrooms, for instance, differ greatly between general

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<sup>108</sup> Cohen and Brawer, *The American Community College*, p. 248.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

education and vocational education. Classrooms for English, mathematics, philosophy, history and similar studies are usually rooms with a chalkboard and desks. Vocational courses require laboratories, machines that the students will utilize on the job, and other types of specific equipment. Historically, vocational training was learned while working in apprenticeships. Liberal arts education, on the other hand, belonged to an exclusive group of individuals who engaged in contemplation and discussion.<sup>112</sup>

In vocational programs the pressure for efficiency leads programs to “appeal to immediate relevance and focus excessively on what learners want, to the detriment of making intellectual demands.”<sup>113</sup> The problem is that the community college aims to address specific needs in the community, and if the community needs fast vocational training perhaps a broader curriculum is not possible.

But does the community college do a disservice to its students? One disservice they might facilitate is that by giving low-income students an easier way to attend college, they may choose to go into vocational or associate degree programs in lieu of attending a university for a bachelor’s degree.

The number of all persons attending postsecondary schools causes a type of educational inflation.<sup>114</sup> Because of this educational inflation, although the number of persons attending postsecondary institutions is growing, social class structures have not changed. There is basically a higher level of

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<sup>112</sup> Cohen and Brawer, *The American Community College*, p. 339.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 376.

education required for survival in this economy. The community college, like other educational institutions, “reproduces the race, class and gender inequalities that are part of the larger society.”<sup>115</sup>

The community college may “assist in channeling young people to essentially the same relative positions in the social structure that their parents already occupy.”<sup>116</sup> Some theorists have even asserted that the purpose of community colleges should be workforce training only, instead of “training students to become culturally aware and prepared for various life activities.”<sup>117</sup>

Cohen and Braver respond to the criticism that the community college is in some way responsible for perpetuating social inequities. First, they note that schools at all levels can be blamed for not correcting the social class system.<sup>118</sup> Then, they argue that these criticisms against the community college are synonymous with movements that “tie social welfare to race rather than class.” Consequently, proponents of these criticisms attempt to show that “college culture is antagonistic to students (read ‘minorities’) from outside a tradition of rationality and literacy.”<sup>119</sup> Cohen and Braver compare this line of argument to that of the labor movement in the South, where industry leaders used racial tension to keep African Americans from trusting white union organizers. A problem with this analogy is that the arguments against the contemporary community college are not economically motivated; in fact, the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

opposite is true. Also, the racial backgrounds of those involved in this discussion are racially diverse, where as in the South the African Americans had reservations trusting the white union organizers.

Another error that critics of community colleges have made, Cohen and Brawer conclude, is “they have attempted to shift the meaning of educational equality from individual to group mobility.” Although there is not an equal representation in educational programs, it is not because the individuals are not treated equally by the community college institution. Group mobility, they argue, is beyond what the community college can accomplish.<sup>120</sup>

However, there has been a strong sorting function in community colleges, called “cooling out.” Cooling out refers to “shunting the lower-ability students to remedial classes and eventually nudging them out of the transfer track into a terminal curriculum.”<sup>121</sup>

Terminal curriculum refers to vocational training. By definition, cooling out seems inherently unjust. Yet, numerous theorists have supported this function because of the diverse abilities of the students that come to a community college. Because the community college has very few requirements for entry, unlike universities, the choice seems to be “either you keep some aspirants out by selection or you admit everyone and then take your choice between seeing them all through, or flunking out some, or cooling out some.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 391.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

Cooling out appears for some to be the solution to dealing with students' diverse abilities.

Cohen and Brawer have several responses. They remind readers that while group mobility is impossible for the community college, individual mobility is possible. Moreover, there is no better alternative. The community college "helps individuals learn what they need to know to be effective, responsible members of their society."<sup>123</sup>

*Community Colleges as Cultural Texts: Qualitative Explorations of Organizational and Student Culture*, edited by Kathleen Shaw, James Valadez, and Robert Rhoads, focuses more on different issues in community colleges and specific programs that have been implemented for solutions. Among these issues, Armando Trujillo and Eusebio Diaz study Palo Alto College (PAC), in the Alamo Community College District. This community college is outside of the city limits and borders rural, industrial, and residential areas. Unlike other community colleges, PAC was founded by a minority (Hispanic) group, Communities Organized for Public Service. Also, unlike other community colleges, PAC boasts a relatively high transfer rate.<sup>124</sup>

The demographic of the student population has mostly working-class backgrounds and is the first generation in their families to go to college. Sixty percent are Mexican American or of Hispanic backgrounds.<sup>125</sup> Equal access is

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<sup>123</sup> Cohen and Brawer, *The American Community College*, p. 393.

<sup>124</sup> Armando Trujillo and Eusebio Diaz, "Be a Name, Not a Number": The Role of Cultural and Social Capital in the Transfer Process," in *Community Colleges as Cultural Texts*, ed. Kathleen M. Shaw, James R. Valadez, and Robert A. Rhoads (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 126.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.



cited as the main purpose of the community leaders in building PAC. PAC emphasizes liberal arts over vocational education, mainly since the “reaction against vocational education is a significant one in the Mexican American community, whose members have traditionally been tracked away from college and toward blue-collar occupations.”<sup>126</sup> One student describes his experience in being tracked, “In high school, ... I went in one day and told the counselor, ‘I’m thinking of going to college.’ She pulled out my record and said, ‘You’re not really college material, you ought to think about getting a vocational job.’” When tracking to vocational programs occurs because of racial or ethnic reasons, it is the most obvious display of racism in the educational system. Of course, when tracking is the result of careful and impartial discussion between counselors, teachers and others with regard to the student’s desires for education, then this type of tracking is not racist oppression.

As well as resisting vocational programs, PAC has also been a model of “informal curriculum and cultural accommodation.”<sup>127</sup> PAC recognizes Hispanic-heritage month, women’s history week, black-awareness week, PAC Fest, job fairs, and student services fairs. They also have offices that help students, “the Transfer Center, the Returning Adult Center, and the Student Health Center.” The purpose of these activities and special occasions is to facilitate an active campus life among students, faculty, and the community. They are especially important given the frequently nonresidential aspect of the community college. In a traditional university the student gains knowledge

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

from both coursework and from college life. PAC also argues that these efforts “disseminate integral knowledge (cultural capital) as well as norms, values and dispositions (social capital).” Far from being vague, the “capital” which they are referring to “cultivates linkages with the community and validates working-class cultural capital, thereby providing a bridge to middle-class academic culture.”<sup>128</sup>

James R. Valadez, an editor and contributor to this text, argues that vocational programs have the possibility of empowering students. Vocational programs, according to Valadez, can achieve a “democratic workplace.”<sup>129</sup> In the democratic workplace, the workers are able to “engage in dignified work because they have a voice in the organization.” The people speak out against abuses and exploitation which protects them. Valadez quotes another theorist, Joe L. Kincheloe, who concludes that “vocational classrooms will need to be reshaped to prepare workers to become active participants in the democratic workplaces.”<sup>130</sup> The philosophical questioning and inquiry can be integrated into the curriculum of a vocational course by the work on the part of the teacher and the students. Materials on bioethics, for example, can be utilized in nursing courses, or other related fields.

“Toward a New Vision of the Multicultural Community College for the Next Century” by Laura Rendón concludes this text. The author highlights the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>129</sup> James R. Valadez, “Preparing for Work in a Post-Industrial World: Resistance and Compliance to the Ideological Messages of a Community College,” in Shaw et al., *Community Colleges as Cultural Texts*, p. 85.

<sup>130</sup> Joe L. Kincheloe, *Toil and Trouble* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), quoted in James R. Valadez, “Preparing for Work in a Post-Industrial World,” in Shaw et al., *Community Colleges as Cultural Texts*, p. 85.

distinction between the traditional student and the nontraditional student, and reminds us that in the community college setting, students usually fit under the latter. By reiterating where these students are coming from, Rendón places a stronger obligation on educators and administrators in community college. Under this obligation is the issue of multiculturalism, discussed at length earlier in this thesis. Traditional students come from a background largely middle class. Their parents and other family members attended college, and the university is seen as simply the next step after high school.

Postsecondary education is much harder for the nontraditional student, who is most likely “low-income, working-class, academically underprepared, first-generation students, many who are ethnic or racial minorities.”<sup>131</sup> Nontraditional students face a myriad of problems, which are aggravated by the perceptions of educators. Unfortunately, “educators tend to stereotype students who lack the ‘right’ cultural capital as underachievers who are not interested in social and class mobility.”<sup>132</sup> Rendón argues that it is not a lack of ambition but rather that “these students have not received the socialization, encouragement, or mentoring to take full advantage of higher education.”<sup>133</sup>

The students have cultural capital, but not of the dominate culture. It is “their prior learning experience, their music, their art, and literature, their diverse ways of knowing.”<sup>134</sup> Therefore, by teaching in a multicultural

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<sup>131</sup> Laura I. Rendón, “Toward a New Vision of the Multicultural Community College for the Next Century,” in Shaw et al., *Community Colleges as Cultural Texts*, p. 196.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

atmosphere students are validated in their special knowledge and, according to Rendón, are convinced “that it is possible to attain an education that goes beyond performing menial tasks, obeying authority, and getting a low-paying job.”<sup>135</sup> This approach could also be applied in Third-World countries becoming “developed” by Western powers, including the Western education model. Folk knowledge and lore, while might not even be in writing, is a valuable resource for information and culture.

The community college should be working for the needs of its students first, rather than the industries that need laborers.<sup>136</sup> Doing so includes broadening curriculum in vocational training programs to cover democratic participation and critical thinking in general. The possibilities for liberation are great when disadvantaged students are able to question their place in society, as well as the practices of their employers. They will be “transformed into powerful thinkers, knowers, and contributors to society.”<sup>137</sup>

A liberal or general education is defined by proponents as obtaining knowledge from diverse sources and of “learning to think critically, develop values, understand traditions, respect diverse cultures and opinions, and, most important, put that knowledge to use.”<sup>138</sup> Putting that knowledge to use is the most important reason for educating citizens. Being empowered by critical reasoning skills is a very important part of becoming an active citizen. Specifically, the “informed citizen” achieves freedom from being able to weigh

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

arguments of the spokespersons and experts in our society. For example, “these experts may be discussing issues of the environment, whether to put power plants or oil docks in or near cities, ... advising on governmental questions, ... deciding who may be born, who has a right to live, what it means to be healthy, and how, where, and when one should die.”<sup>139</sup> Along with critical thinking, the citizen needs civic literacy and the “competence to participate in the broader community.”<sup>140</sup>

The confidence in their abilities will aid them in protecting the environment in their communities, and in being active in other causes that are important to them. Through this democratic education, the students will develop the tools to be the local activists that poorer communities desperately need.

### Teaching Applied Ethics

There are a number of fields in applied ethics that would enrich any curriculum. Sometimes called applied philosophy, applied ethics, as an academic subject, is a response to the inaction and mere speculation that can sometimes accompany the study of philosophy. In this context, applied ethics creates an environment in which action and learning are intertwined.

Throughout its history, the study of philosophy has been criticized on the grounds that it has not improved the human condition. Likewise, there have been claims that environmental ethics has not actually made changes to the

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

way humans treat the world. Environmental ethicists Andrew Light and Eric Katz propose:

As environmental ethics approaches its third decade it is faced with a curious problem. On the one hand, the discipline has made significant progress in the analysis of the moral relationship between humanity and the non-human natural world. The field has produced a wide variety of positions and theories in an attempt to derive morally justifiable and adequate environmental policies. On the other hand, it is difficult to see what practical effect the field of environmental ethics has had on the formation of environmental policy. The intramural debates of environmental philosophers, although interesting, provocative and complex, seems to have no real impact on the deliberations of environmental scientists, activists, and policy-makers.<sup>141</sup>

Eugene Hargrove responds to this argument by noting that in the field of biology, environmental ethics has had a large impact. However, he admits that in the area of policy there has been little meaningful interaction. Hargrove argues that the field of environmental ethics is not to blame, but that “policy is actively trying not to hear of us—it wants to continue to do business as usual.” To make environmental ethics affect environmental policy, Hargrove proposes that graduate students in the field of policy take courses in environmental ethics.<sup>142</sup>

Responding to Hargrove’s article, David Johns advances a different solution:

[T]hey are going to have to do more than talk to themselves, biologists, and grad students. Policy makers go to law school or business school, or sometimes just skip it altogether. Few activists or policy makers are Ph.D.s. Ethicists must focus on questions of importance to conservation

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<sup>141</sup> Andrew Light and Eric Katz, *Environmental Pragmatism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); quoted in Eugene Hargrove, “Who’s Wrong? Who’s to Blame?” *Environmental Ethics* 25 (2003): 3.

<sup>142</sup> Hargrove, “Who’s Wrong? Who’s to Blame?” pp. 3-4.

practice, learn the language of the groups to whom they wish to speak, and be much more interesting in their presentation.<sup>143</sup>

Introductory courses in philosophy and ethics in the community college setting is a vital way to include a large number of people in both the dialogue in ethics and the practical applications. Beyond teaching ethics and philosophy to all community college students, having those students become active in their communities and apply what they have learned and what they have concluded for their own value system. This approach takes ethics out of pure academia and utilizes interdisciplinary action.

The movement in education, service learning, is a valuable way to get students in any discipline both thinking critically about the world, and responding with action. Karla Gottlieb and Gail Robinson in *A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum* explain the idea of citizenship training and provide helpful and applicable curriculum for any developmental or classroom status. In this guidebook they outline the “essential civic competencies and skills” inherent to service learning. These competencies are mirrored well in the objectives of philosophy. The skills are intellectual skills, participatory skills, research skills, and persuasion skills.<sup>144</sup>

Gottlieb and Robinson include ways to “create a culture of civic responsibility” at a campus, for example, by offering a day of service for different causes, hosting an environmental fair, planning specific issue wide

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<sup>143</sup> David Johns, “Comment: The Ir/Relevance of Environmental Ethics,” *Environmental Ethics* 25 (2003): 223-224.

<sup>144</sup> Karla Gottlieb and Gail Robinson, eds., *A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum* (Washington, D.C.: Community College Press, 2002), p. 22.

forums, and more.<sup>145</sup> These are all conceivable activities on a college campus, and will encourage all students to become involved in their community in some way.

Another practical list that Gottlieb and Robinson give in their guide is service learning activities. They list various activities and the classes, both transfer and vocational, related to each activity. For example:

1. Build Habitat for Humanity house or repair Christmas in April property.
  - a. Related courses: drafting, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, architecture, heating/ventilation, sociology, political science, psychology
  - b. Reflection components: Produce a video documenting the construction process while students talk with residents of the house.
  - c. Activities that foster civic responsibility skills: Research and discuss low income housing shortage; show reflection video at city council meeting; meet with homeless shelter residents and explain Habitat for Humanity program.
2. Provide dental health or nutrition screenings at local schools or family shelters.
  - a. Related courses: Dentistry, dental hygiene, nursing, nutrition, and culinary arts.
  - b. Reflection components: Keep journals to be read at town hall meetings, in other classes, at College Board of trustees meeting.
  - c. Activities that foster civic responsibility skills: Share with local decision makers the need for dental and health care at a young age, and statistics of low income children who do not receive adequate care.
3. Become writing partners with residents at local homeless shelters or with recent immigrants.
  - a. Related courses: Composition, ESL, communications, foreign languages

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.



- b. Reflection components: Keep journals on the personal impact of one-on-one partnering.
  - c. Activities that foster civic responsibility skills: Produce oral histories about homelessness or immigration; share with community leaders to improve relevant city policies.
4. Design and build community playgrounds.
- a. Related courses: Carpentry, welding, child development, architecture, art, engineering.
  - b. Reflection components: Develop photo essays documenting the design/build process and critique design aspects.
  - c. Activities that foster civic responsibility skills: Present photo essays at school board meetings to encourage more playground development.<sup>146</sup>

Because these activities are relevant for both transfer and vocational students these students will have the opportunity to learn from one another.

In conjunction with discussion and readings, these activities will bring to life an ethics class. When the students work with the homeless or build Habitat for Humanity houses the moral issues that arise are:

1. Obligations to others, neighbors, strangers.
2. Equitable distribution of goods, social justice.

When the students provide dental and health screenings for impoverished families, these future health care workers can ask themselves about:

1. Should people have a right to medical care? Children? Adults?
2. If so, who has the obligation to provide these services?

These questions relate to traditional Western moral theories and also non-Western views of economic rights and community values. Another benefit

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

from these actions and introspection is that many of these questions can directly affect the way a person votes.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

I have shown the potential dangers of terminal vocational education, and the dangers of a nondiverse study of philosophy. I have also concluded that these reforms will help the environment and our global relationships.

The integration of philosophical curriculum into terminal/vocational courses liberates the student to experience a higher level of citizenship. The special access to traditionally underserved students creates the obligation to liberate. The student comes to the community college for postsecondary education, and philosophical instruction is integral to what it means to be an educated person.

In this thesis I have addressed changing the curriculum to allow for more access to liberal education. I have also addressed broadening the definition of vocational training to include studies in philosophy and ethics. The arguments for and against multiculturalism are integral to my proposed changes. Both students and society will benefit from the broadening of academic courses. The study of philosophy has frequently led to questioning the status quo. The study of diverse world views is important to compare and ask questions about your own beliefs that are often taken for granted.

There are many other resources for ideas relating to teaching democracy and civic responsibility, as well as actual curriculum. There are resources on the internet that specialize in unique ways to learn about medical ethics, political science, environmental ethics and other humanities. Everyone should

have the opportunity to live an examined life. Our actions have worldwide consequences and we should have the freedom to make informed decisions.

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