THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS: AN ANALYSIS FROM THREE PERSPECTIVES

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In September of 1984, Community College of Philadelphia received a $250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to design and implement a new transfer curriculum. The purpose of the program was to enhance transfer opportunities for our predominantly poor, mostly minority students. The project rested on the premise that our students did not yet share the attitudes, patterns of thinking, or modes of behavior that our culture considers appropriate for membership in an intellectual community. As stated in the grant proposal, "Our primary task... is to alter [our students'] very sense of the nature of intellectual life and their conception of themselves as learners."1

To begin this task, the two directors of the program, Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear, instituted several new curriculum structures. First, they abandoned the basic three-credit course in favor of a much larger unit of instruction, a 12-credit course taught by four collaborating instructors. The central goal for the faculty, to model a vital intellectual community for their students, permeates course structure, pedagogical strategies, and even student-teacher relationships. In the program, faculty members combine lectures with seminars and whole-class discussions. The writing component, resembling many writing-across-the-curriculum models, depends upon a decentralized approach: instructors from all disciplines (including but not centering around a writing instructor) meet with small writing groups on a weekly basis, and, using a faculty-designed heuristic, help students revise or reform their essays.2 The rest of the writing program is designed by individual faculty teams. Seminars, which also meet weekly, help students develop fruitful approaches to interpreting texts. They are designed to move readers from a literal interpretation or recitation to a more sophisticated analysis of primary sources. Various styles of interpretation are modeled by faculty in the effort to take into account the author's theoretical perspective, reasoning patterns, and presuppositions.

During the term before they teach, each team, either a humanities or social science group, receives released time to plan their curriculum for the

1Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear, "Transfer Opportunities Program," proposal submitted to and granted by the Ford Foundation, September 1984, p. 12.
coming term. Although they meet frequently with other teams and administrators of the project to discuss program goals, approaches, logistics, and so on, they basically design their own course within the broad framework outlined above. In simple terms, their task is to construct an interdisciplinary program that will initiate their students into the larger intellectual community. Each team decides how it will embody and model new standards of literacy, analysis, and rational disputes for its student participants.

The context briefly outlined, I will focus on the curriculum deliberations of the program's third humanities team (hereafter called Team C). Its members are Beth, an historian who specializes in European cultural history; Barry, an historian with a Ph.D. in American Studies, Paul, an English teacher with an academic background in literature and extensive teaching experience in writing; and Suzanne, who holds a doctorate in English education, an undergraduate degree in literature, but who has taught only foreign students learning English as a second language (ESL) at Community College. I am the team's curriculum facilitator and fifth member, I do not teach within the program but help each humanities group design its course. As will be seen from the following transcripts, my role is to ask clarifying questions, articulate the broad goals of the project, and generally serve to facilitate the curriculum planning process. It is not my goal to impose my conception of an ideal curriculum on the team, but rather to help them organize themselves and gain an understanding of what they are doing.

Next term, Team C will teach their new curriculum. The term after, while still teaching in the program, they will receive released time once again (for one course), this time to reflect on the planning and teaching experiences of their first two terms. During these processing and self-evaluation sessions, they will try to characterize what they did when first planning and teaching, in order to help solve problems that have since arisen. The purpose of this paper is to capture what happened during initial deliberations in as rich and full a manner as possible, and in so doing provide a model for the reflection seminars. The program eventually will involve close to one hundred faculty members, all at one time or another in reflection seminars. This paper, then, is a tool to enable them to understand and clarify their own choices and decisions. As such, it is designed to serve as a model for the analysis of deliberations, not as a model for deliberation itself. Rather, it is based on the assumption that curriculum planners (faculty, curriculum facilitators, etc.) can benefit from looking analytically at their own values, goals, and teaching strategies, and that such reporting and analysis can enrich their future work.

Although there has been much recent work about the theory and practice of curriculum deliberation (e.g., Schwab, Reid, Westbury, Walker, Pereira),

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we need complementary studies recording and examining actual deliberations. In the sense that this study traces and characterizes how a group of teachers decide what to teach, that it looks at a particular problem in a real situation, it belongs within the deliberative tradition. But it also draws from other traditions in its attempt to apply multiple lenses to analyze these planning sessions. I contend that such multiple lenses will add texture and fullness to an understanding of how teachers actually engage in curriculum deliberation.

Only one of the three frameworks used to analyze the transcripts belongs to the literature on deliberation theory and practice. This is Pereira's interpretation of Schwab's arts of the practical, a powerful tool for understanding actual deliberations. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to make use of Pereira's complete analysis of the arts of perception, particular attention will be paid to his delineation of Schwab's four commonplaces: teachers, learners, subject matter, and milieu. In Schwab's terms, as the team moves back and forth from perception, to problemation, to prescription, and finally to commitment, the balance between these four commonplaces rapidly shifts. This paper records and examines these frequent shifts in order to make sense of how the group finally decides what to teach.

Before applying Pereira's framework to Team C's deliberations, however, I first will draw from Eisner and Vallance's delineation of five conflicting conceptions of curriculum, which is particularly valuable for characterizing the value frameworks of individuals within the deliberation team, and as such can help us understand how each person contributes to the dynamics of the discussions. To briefly review, Eisner and Vallance identify the following conceptions or approaches to curriculum:

1. The development of cognitive processes—an emphasis on the refinement of intellectual operations, focusing on the sharpening of cognitive skills
2. Curriculum as technology—a conception of curriculum dependent upon finding efficient means to a set of predefined nonproblematic ends, with a concern for packaging and presenting material.
3. Social reconstruction/relevance—an emphasis on societal needs, on developing curriculums to bring about social reform or responsibility
4. Self-actualization—an approach centering around personal purpose and the need for personal integration, valuing personally satisfying, consummatory experiences for each learner.


Elliot Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance, Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum (Berkeley McCutchan Publishing Co, 1974)
5. Academic rationalism—a concern for enabling students to acquire the tools needed to share in Western cultural tradition, thereby providing access to great ideas and cultural products.

After reading selected portions of the deliberations, I will look at each team member’s contribution in terms of his or her fundamental conception of curriculum. With a sense of each individual’s curricular position in mind, I will then trace the deliberations using Schwab and Pereira’s framework. The third and final perspective to be applied to the deliberation transcripts is Huebner’s five ways of valuing educational realities.3 Huebner’s work enables us to look at the product of the deliberations, and come to an understanding of the values that are embraced not only by individuals but by the team as a whole. I will examine the transcripts in terms of the following value frameworks and language systems:

1. Technical—looking to see if and how the team employs a means/end rationality, stating end products or objectives in behavioral terms, and mobilizing material and human resources to produce these stated ends.

2. Political—examining how and if political valuing plays a role in the deliberation, looking for ways that support from peers, community, and administrators is taken into consideration in perceiving and solving problems.

3. Scientific—trying to ascertain how scientific valuing is taken into consideration in the deliberation process, how plans for finding out more about the teaching/learning process are incorporated into the conversations.

4. Aesthetic—examining if and how a search for beauty, integrity, and form, for learning for learning’s sake, pervades deliberation sessions.

5. Ethical—looking at how the relationship between persons is valued, how students and teachers influence each other, how curriculum decisions take into account concepts such as responsibility, conversation, and promise.

As I now turn to the transcripts, I invite readers to apply the three frameworks as they follow the evolving curriculum deliberations. (My own analysis appears immediately after the transcripts.) I chose the four consecutive deliberation sessions that follow because they were typical of the tone and character of the team’s dialogues, and because they were important in shaping the rest of their planning sessions. Sessions three and five are given the fullest coverage because they set the stage for all the other meetings Schwab’s four commonplaces—teachers, students, subject matter, and milieux—provide the headings for each segment of dialogue. Often more than one commonplace appears simultaneously in the discussion; the headings merely reflect the main focus for a particular segment. It is interesting to note how the commonplaces actually interweave throughout the dialogues.

THE DELIBERATION SESSIONS

During the first two meetings, Team C chatted about themselves in an effort to get to know each other better and to find out a bit about each other's backgrounds, academic philosophies, favorite restaurants, trips abroad, and so on. (There are over 100 English teachers alone at the college.) They also discussed the Transfer Opportunities Program (T O.P) its goals, constraints, demands, and expectations. The four wanted to know what role the two directors (McGrath and Spear) would play in their curriculum deliberations, and they wanted to make sure that they understood what a curriculum facilitator was doing at their meetings. I assured them that I would serve as a resource person, would ask clarifying and focusing questions, and would answer any concerns they had about the project as a whole. I also obtained their permission to tape all sessions. By the third session, team members were ready, even anxious, to begin the process of deciding what they would do the following semester.

Session Three. At the beginning of this session, the group finalizes meeting times and asks a series of questions about what the program administrators and curriculum facilitators do during their planning sessions. Soon the talk moves to Richard Richardson's well-known book, *Critical Literacy*.

THE MILIEU

*Barry.* I guess what this book did, it made me start thinking about something we had been discussing, what we want students to be able to do when they get out of a semester of this program, what kinds of skills you want them to have. I sure as hell would like to avoid some of the pitfalls he [Richardson] talks about. And what I heard the other group running into [the humanities team before them, who are at present teaching], I mean they walked in and no students were taking notes. Students were stunned. "What do you mean taking notes? What d'ya mean notes?" 6

*Beth.* I haven't read the book, but I'm more and more conscious of that problem, the teaching of them mechanistically, to teach them to do something that really requires a little more passion than you get when you say, "Here's the topic sentence, these are the supporting details ..."

*Barry.* He [Richardson] talks about changes in the institutional sense. In other words, these are the things that colleges have to do if they want to be able to deal with problems of critical literacy.

*Beth.* For example, anything that we could do as a group? I mean we can't change the whole college ... There are a lot of things we can do.

*Barry.* Yeah, there are a lot of things you can do. But in effect, he's saying you can't be all things to all people. Community colleges deal in quantity as opposed to quality ... He makes a lot of valid points, but I guess what he's saying is that skills without knowing what to do with them is one of the big problems.

The discussion moves to industry's educational programs.

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6One line of three ellipsis marks indicates a deletion from one person's statement. Two lines of three marks indicates a deletion of more than one person's comments.
THE TEACHER

Barry: Beyond basics, more and more companies are teaching critical thinking skills and analytic thinking.

Beth: Well, in my mind there's something not right about the way I am teaching, I call it writing across the curriculum. As I said, it's mechanistic. You can teach anybody; you can't get the grammar problems, but you can teach almost anybody to do a paragraph, or even a five hundred-word essay, you can do that. You just say, this is the way you're going to do that. And the thing turns out so dead, you know what I mean?

Paul. It can.

Beth: How do you get it so that it's not dead?

Paul: ... I don't like to stick to the five hundred words. I say to the students, "I'd like to see a multiparagraph response to something. It can be four or five paragraphs. I don't count words ... and you and I by the end of the semester hopefully will know when you have a well-developed paragraph. And that's determined by whomever you're working with ... how few questions they have to ask about what do you mean by this ... that's not clear." So I get them to the point where they ... ask the right questions ... and make connections. And that's what I challenge them to do, right from the beginning ... to make connections and ask the right questions, either of the team they're working with, if they're doing something collaborative, or of themselves. And if they can ask themselves the right things, they'll come up with something that's not dead.

Beth: Do you have sort of a list that can change, questions that are likely to be asked ...

Paul: No, because they come up according to the topic, and according to the position or point of view.

Beth: So that underneath it, is there a kind of pattern to the questions you find yourself asking?

Paul: That's a good question. It's a process and I try to keep it to balance off the mechanistic pattern of the basic 101 essay, which almost everyone now seems to subscribe to ... in terms of having a good clear introduction, main idea, and support of the essay. I try to keep the rest of it fairly organic ... [pause] O.K. here you go. Have I been complete, have I been clear? ... especially when I'm thinking about an audience that the writer is trying to persuade.

Beth: All right, O.K., so that's one thing.

Elaine: ... I think we're jumping ahead ... Let me just for the moment clarify the structure of what we're doing here. And that is ... you'll all be teaching writing. And the curriculum that you'll develop will include lots of writing. But in addition, as an integral part of the program, you'll have writing groups, and all four of you will be working with specific assignments that you all will design. Now the ways in which you decide to structure these writing groups ... we can talk in terms of how, specifically, we want to teach writing ...

The group now discusses the T.O.P. heuristic, a set of questions for revision that were designed by colleagues in the administration and faculty members on earlier teams.

Beth: I thought they [previous group's heuristic] were excellent questions.

Elaine: ... that [the heuristic] was done in these kinds of meetings with that group. What you're doing will be generated ... in your own ...

Paul: We're going to come up with our own approaches.

Beth: No, I understand that, but on the other hand, I thought they were so good; are we going to reinvent the wheel?

Elaine: Well, it's not reinventing the wheel. It's not context free what they're doing.
Barry. They’re basing it on the materials they’re having the students read, you see.

Beth. I thought they were good enough so that with some adjustments, they could be used, in history anyway.

Barry You’ll probably come up with something very similar but generated out of the classes.

Paul I’d like us to come up with our own. I like what they did, but I still feel, maybe I’m kind of cantankerous in that sense, I know what they’ve done and I can appreciate it, but I think we’re going to be able to come up with our own.

SUBJECT MATTER

Paul. I’m still thinking I haven’t done a whole lot of this. Things just float in, ideas come... I’m still thinking of goals for our group, and because of that, goals for our students... and ideas for selection keep coming into my head.

Beth: Selection for what—topics?

Paul. Things to read. Things to do in class, but they’re. I don’t know, they just come and go. But mainly right now, I’m thinking of goals...

Beth. You put the goals first and then once the goals are set what would you do? My mind works the other way. I can think of topics and then think of these great goals we could achieve with them. But I have more trouble going the other way.

Paul. Well, a couple of things we came up with last week. You [Beth] came up with a very nice synthesis at the end of the discussion we had. We all talked about our own backgrounds and expertise, and our travels, as it turned out. And you came up with the idea, the possibility of using cultural pluralism as one of our themes. I was really excited about that.

Suzanne: That’s a goal in itself.

Paul. That’s got me thinking. I brought up something myself about heroes.

Beth. Heroes?

Paul. H-e-r-o-e-s [spells it out].

Beth. Well that’s interesting, because I was thinking today about Greek mythology... and all the great things we could do with that...

TEACHERS

Paul. We have the luxury of time and that’s what I really like. The idea of entertaining any idea and playing around with it seems really valuable because it’s something I haven’t had a chance to do yet... I feel that developing the rapport amongst ourselves and goals for ourselves, I don’t know, I’d kind of like to do a little bit of each all the time. But this seems to me to be primary because basically we’re going to be models for the students, come fall.

Suzanne: Models in the way we work together.

Paul. Models in the way we deal with things in an academic, intellectual way and our interaction will be very important, as much as how we come across to them...

SUBJECT MATTER

Elaine... in response to what everybody is saying about how to plan a curriculum, as you become more familiar with each other and how each person works, try to keep in mind as many dimensions as possible, what we want students to experience,
to do, to have access to ... I suggest we begin to design curriculum really soon, in a flexible way, based around very central themes. These could be used as a handle for developing materials ... for resource units, for content, for topics, for books—we keep in mind what kinds of experiences we want to design. I think we should begin fairly soon designing experiences for students. So that we can have something in our hands that we can work with instead of talking in the abstract.

Beth: As for me, I’m much more comfortable about that. I just couldn’t go from the whadya-call-it—behavioral objectives—could we just call them goals, we all know what we mean—from goals, I don’t want to say content, we’re not using that word, let’s say...

Elaine: We can use content. It’s not a dirty word.

Suzanne: But not information, let’s say.

Beth: Well, topics. Let’s say topics, going from topics to broad goals. I find it easier to think about ... it would be perfect if there were a mix, or maybe everybody thinks the same way. Do you think that way, from topics to goals?

Suzanne: What do you mean by topics? Give an example.

Beth: Well, the really broad one would be cultural pluralism—let’s see, we could take a hero from a Moslem culture, and a hero from ... a Christian culture.

Elaine: That would be your organizing way. You’re saying a lot. You took the concept of cultural pluralism and you made assumptions that you’re going to do it.

Barry: ... the only apprehension that I have about that, is that once you fix on that and you begin planning around that, you preclude any other consideration of any other approach. You see what I’m saying. You almost become locked in and then you start thinking of material that you could use to do that. All I’m saying is I’d like to explore a little more about what each of our own interests happens to be in the subject matter, areas of expertise ... we started on that last week ... and I think out of that by the next time we meet, maybe some other ideas can be generated. Do you see what I’m saying? If you start talking about heroes, you’re suddenly going to become locked in...

Beth: Oh no, I don’t want to do that ... except now that I’m thinking about it, I was just talking it through from the idea to the goals. ... And then I was thinking what important goals could we achieve using this ... I’m not sure about that. So what we’re going to have to do is we’re going to have to play at both ends at once.

Elaine: Yes.

Paul: I can see the walls of this room being papered with all of the things we’re going to say ... But anyway, I just see putting these ideas up and then not really making a decision beyond a certain point of having entertained a broader topic.

... 

Barry: See, I know the way Beth thinks. If there’s an idea that’s generated, she’s going to take it, and immediately she’s going to carry it right through to the end. You do that. She evolves it and then she starts thinking, if you do this and this and you can do this, this, and—

Beth: And I take music, and art over here ...

Barry: Yeah, because I know exactly the way she works. She’s an organizer of ideas.

Elaine: And that will come in handy. That’ll be extremely helpful.

Barry: Yeah, at a certain point.
Elaine: ... what we need to do is clarify why we're doing things. The kind of curriculum we want should really derive from our reasons for wanting certain experiences to occur.

Beth: Yeah, but on the other hand, if we throw around topics, then that will trigger...

Suzanne: What's the reason for a topic? There has to be a reason it's worth teaching.

Beth: Somehow I can't sit here and think about goals in a vacuum.

Barry: We're not going to. Let's talk about subject matter.

Elaine: Maybe themes, maybe broad themes that would be valid in themselves, that we could use as a handle ... do we all agree that we want a multiplicity of resources, of experiences—a wide variety of things happening in the classroom? We all share that idea.

Paul returns to the point about making different kinds of connections. Beth asks for more background information about Paul and Suzanne [Beth missed the second meeting, which was Suzanne's first. So this actually is the first time all four participants are together. Also, Barry and Beth do not know Suzanne.] After approximately ten minutes, the talk shifts back to students.

STUDENTS

Elaine: What kind of students would you like to have?

Suzanne: In the best of all possible worlds?

Elaine: In the best of all possible worlds. Give a profile of what these students would be like after a year.

Suzanne: Oh, you mean what I would like them to be able to do?

Elaine: Not necessarily what you would want them to be able to do, but what would you like them to be like? What kind of people would they be intellectually?

Suzanne: I would say curious would be very important. Open-minded.

Paul: I agree with curiosity for my first choice. Inquisitive. I’d like someone to be a little questioning ... skeptical.

Elaine: You want them skeptical?

Paul: That’s my Jesuit background.

Beth: I’d rather have them excited than skeptical.

Paul: TV is American culture. And I think with TV there’s a passivity going on that I find scary. Skepticism is the active engagement which is 180 degrees away from passivity ... I find that that kind of healthy skepticism was the bread on which my education was buttered by the Jesuits, and I think it’s the kind of thing I learned at the dinner table too ... I’d like my students to be actively skeptical about things, and just continue to ask questions.

Barry: [Our students] should be knowledge seekers, they should be interested in learning.

Paul: ... analytical ...
Barry: They should be able to evaluate things.
Paul: To gather and select data.
Beth: ... we have to be careful. I've noticed this, with me anyway. I don't know about the rest of you; I keep getting mixed up between myself at 18 and myself today ... and when I was 18—that's an awful lot to ask for.
Paul: I ask it of my 102 [second term, research-based writing] students.
Barry: Beth, a lot of those things that are there were things that you had but we didn't have to think about it, we came through an educational process in which you were already there, you know.
Beth: That's the problem. How can we do that to kids who aren't already there?

In response, Paul describes an assignment he has designed to enable students to think critically and skeptically about a particular problem: who should be given a particular job—a returning veteran or a woman reentering the job market after years of unemployment?

Elaine: What are you talking about here, about an organizing principle? I'm almost picking it up ... an organizing device ... one of the things that you find successful is to engage emotionally at first, and to move from the emotional engagement to the cognitive ... 

Barry describes an exercise forcing students to make a more objective analysis of materials they're dealing with.

Elaine: How do you help them?
Barry: How do I help them develop an argument? Well in history, particularly at that level, you can look at factual data ... write an argument in support of the revolution ... then pretend you're a loyalist and write an argument supporting the opposite. Well, they have a collection of material, and they can argue both sides. You just have to be selective about how you pick out the information.

Suzanne: What you're getting at is getting them to look at the same problem in different ways.
Barry: Well, yeah ... when they come out of a course with me ... they know there was a debate, and they evaluate the issues that were involved, and so they write an article supporting or opposing the Constitution. And I mean they have the material, and it forces them to make some judgments; it forces them to organize.

Elaine: What forces them?

TEACHERS AND SUBJECT MATTER
Barry: The assignment, the nature of the assignment ... If you are asked to defend a position or try to encourage others to support a position you are taking, you've got to have some facts that ... that they will find convincing. So the student has to make a judgment. What was going on at that time? What are the strong points here that I can argue? ... [to Elaine] I'm not sure what you're asking. Are you asking where they get the information from?
Elaine: I'm trying to think of ways to reflect back to you the way you're all looking at organizing material. I think I hear you talking about induction.
Barry: OK, what I do with the students ... how they gather information so that they could make a judicious decision and form an argument. OK, they get a series of written questions with every assignment ... I have learned that it is the way you ask
a question that determines what the student is able to absorb. So they must write a written response to every question, for every assignment.

A brief discussion follows about developing critical thinking through the organization of reading materials and assignments. The team talks about the importance of arousing student interest.

_Barry._ . . . if the material, if the subject matter is interesting—if the material they are asked to read is interesting and stimulating, then I think they will get more out of the writing assignment and learn more.

_Beth._ OK, let me throw this out as an idea I have been thinking about actually for some time, which would be to take Robinson Crusoe and Lord of the Flies. Now I know Lord of the Flies has been overworked . . .

_Elaine._ Well, I was thinking of different world views, pluralities.

_Elaine._ . . . are we interested in . . . different world views and how different world views are formulated? . . . We’re looking at . . . the ways through which you look at the world, how you visualize yourself in relation to nature in relation to God, to society, what you think a human being is, is he an actor, recipient, a response mechanism . . .

_Barry_ [to Elaine] What do you think we’ve been saying? I want to hear

_Elaine._ I thought I heard you say, you wanted to develop a provocative atmosphere, in which students are constantly learning how to question, evaluate, gather materials, make judgments, and sort out controversy. I thought you wanted to make them into inquirers. And if that’s the focal point—

_Beth._ . . . that’s exactly what I was thinking of those two books for . . . they would first of all have to clearly see that there are different assumptions about human nature in those two books.

**THE MILIEU**

_Barry._ . . . what it seems to me we are doing . . . is in effect saying that, uh, that this is the kind of environment—and we’ve been talking about environment in the past, you know, this is the kind of environment we want for students, and if we’re talking about this, then we can come up with any number of potential exercises that are directed toward doing just that, if you have that as the objective of the course.

_Suzanne._ . . . everything’s falling into place . . .

_Beth._ Tell me again what we’re talking about, over and above the curiosity and whatever.

_Elaine._ I think you’re talking about . . . a community of scholars working together to understand ideas, not to be mystified by materials, to know how to operate materials, to know how to evaluate sources, to know how to go out and find answers. I mean, I thought that the metaphor of detective, of people as detectives, was a very satisfying one for us to begin . . .

_Suzanne._ They would probably like that, too. More than the community of scholars . . .

There is now a discussion of Eastern, nonlinear ways of thinking as opposed to what the group categorizes as the American, linear mode of problem solving. The group then moves on to the issue of main ideas and thesis statements, agreeing that isolated hunts for these elements are not what
they are after. They return to the student as problem solver and begin discussing suitable learning activities.

**SUBJECT MATTER AND STUDENTS**

*Barry.* You know, just this thing about creating a utopia. That's an intriguing idea... because our students have their own concept... of what it represents, and what it would mean to them... You could do something historical, I'm sure you could do something literary... utopian movements in the 1930s and '40s in this country. European models... so you could... send them off in search of coming up with their own conception... I guess it's necessary for them to have some concrete learning and deal with lots of interesting primary materials.

*...*

*Beth.* They have to have a foundation. That's what's holding them up. They have no foundations so they have nothing to build on. So even if they hear something on the news or read something, they can't retain it because it doesn't stick anywhere.

*Barry.* One of the problems that the students have is that they really don't have an historical perspective...

*Barry.* When you talk about history, something to them that is old is Ronald Reagan's reelection. Their knowledge of the world is exactly what they observe on a day-to-day basis, for most—not all... Their news is obtained through television... I think we have a general idea of the kind of environment that we want to create... maybe we're jumping too far ahead in terms of the materials that we would use to create that, rather than the structure that we would use to create it.

*Paul.* Maybe; it's becoming a little clearer now... using the 20th century as a launching point... we'll be developing... certain ideas, perhaps taking a trip back... The idea that popped into my mind is the idea of childhood... as basically a 20th-century thing.

An extended discussion about using "childhood" theme follows.

*Beth.* But we're caught again in the same thing... That's [children] an interesting topic, OK; they'll like it and be curious... OK, so you've got that covered. But on the other hand, we have this whole other thing about, I don't want to say skills... OK, I've got it. Are we in agreement? We could take any topic if it's innately interesting, and you can make it do anything you want.

*Elaine.* We have to keep on thinking of all these different things, as we plan a curriculum... of the continuums for knowledge... how you become a more sophisticated thinker; you need to think of what knowledge bases are really crucial; kinds of experiences you're going to design... broad goals, what kind of goals are now emerging.

*Paul.* The structure: I keep thinking of a Chinese Checker board or an arabesque. We start from one point and we go out and come back, go out and come back.

*Barry.* Yeah, each time we play around with it, other things come out which—

*Paul.* It's a nice dynamic.

The group turns to topic of team teaching.

*Beth.* You will win if you have two teachers against a class. With one teacher, it's a draw... what I'm saying is you can raise the intellectual level of a class so much higher if you have two people in there. It's like you have two armies in there.
The third session ends with a discussion of what to think about for the next meeting.

Session Four. This session begins with a brief conversation about race relations at the college and country at large, moves to the importance of choosing good materials, and returns to possible course themes brought up in previous sessions. The child, marriage, heroes, and so on. For the next few minutes, the team considers different ways to slice the materials (historical and literary, chronological and cross-cultural) The conversation ranges near and far, but keeps returning to cross-cultural experiences Beth and Paul begin chatting about their lives in the Peace Corps and compare the values and customs of the people in the countries in which they lived. They talk about childhood and the role of women in various cultures, and then turn to early American life.

SUBJECT MATTER

Beth... the Puritans... there's so much power there back in the family. You see, the family's powerful. And you have a lot of primary documents and it also puts the child back in.

Suzanne: Yeah, women would come into it a lot.

Elaine. How about this thing on power? Power of the child, women, and power of the elderly?

Beth. Why don't I like the elderly? [Presents argument that topic is depressing and too politicized]

The group decides to think of other topics for next meeting.

Session Five The fifth session opens with a discussion of the nature of seminars. Barry has taped a seminar conducted by a member of another team. Team C wants to know what happened in great detail. By the end of this segment of the discussion, they decide to follow administrative structures: weekly seminars based on close textual analysis of selected materials. They note the fact that in the second year of the program, students will be studying mostly in seminars. They remark on the "specialness" of the T O P program and teacher/student relationships.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Barry. I don't want them calling me Barry I want them to create a community of scholars amongst themselves.

Beth: You don't want to be part of it...

Barry. No, I am part of it in a very important sense, but I don't want them to look at me as they would look at other students. I want them to know that there are distinctions.

Suzanne: Of authority?

Barry. It's not a question of authority. [Speaks about being called Mr. for the first time when he was a college freshman.] It made me realize that I wasn't a kid anymore and that professional relationships in a classroom are different. I don't call my students by the first name; I think that's patronizing...

Beth. [Referring to fact that she doesn't want to be called Beth, and that she was called Miss in college, but that she usually calls students by first name] Well, for one
thing, I have so much trouble remembering names so that just to get the first name down is a major victory. I always say, if you want me to call you by your second name, I'll be happy to do that. It's not a democracy quite, a classroom. On the other hand, I don't want it to be so distant.

*Barry.* It's not an authority relationship that I'm interested in; it's knowing that they don't know as much as I do, because they haven't studied as long. I really don't want to be their pal. I want to be their instructor.

*Elaine:* I think that what we're talking about here is more crucial than just what you call people. We're talking really about the kind of relationship that you want to set up between the students and yourself. And the goals of the program are very distinctly to initiate them into an intellectual community.

*Barry:* I don't see where that is a problem. If, OK, you are introducing them into an intellectual community that is stimulating, productive, then I think that is determined by the way in which you deal with the students, the kinds of materials you give them, the kind of environment or atmosphere you set up, in the classroom. And I don't think it's crucial to be on a first-name basis with instructors to do that. That's all I'm saying.

*Suzanne:* I like to be on a first-name basis because nobody in my whole life calls me Mrs. [also explains that her hyphenated last name might be confusing]

*Paul:* I ask students to tell me what they prefer to be called. If they feel comfortable calling me Paul, that's fine with me. I've had no problem regarding the tenor or atmosphere of the class. But it does make an extra level of contact, which for me enriches the classroom.

The group decides that each instructor will do what is personally most comfortable regarding names. The talk turns to faculty collaboration.

*Barry:* Let me ask this, and this came out of the experience of observing Ralph's seminar. How would you feel about doing joint seminars and go in almost with script and the two instructors know what role they're playing?

*Beth:* After two semesters of team teaching, it's one of the finest experiences for students and teachers.

*Barry:* I think you then create a model for dialogue that students then take on. I see part of the program as creating lots of models. Elaine talks about creating an intellectual community, and so on. Well, you create models for students when you involve them in dialogue. You know that's new for many of them. A lot of these kids have never engaged in dialogue. Except the sports page or something else.

*Suzanne:* When I think about being a freshman in college, I remember that [dialogue] as being one of the most exciting things, that I didn't have that experience that much in high school. To see people really get that head up about something and argue about it.

Commitment is now voiced for a wide variety of experiences—library research, summarizing, exciting dialogues, arguments, and so on. Conversation moves to controlling one's fate. The team stresses our students' sense of powerlessness over their own destinies.

**THE MILIEU**

*Barry:* Don't you think we should leave our students with a sense that while
the environment affects things, it does not determine individual worth. It does not take away your own individual responsibility for your own actions, for your own achievements.

Suzanne: I don't know the answer to that. I mean, I happen to believe what you are saying, but I don’t know for sure that we’re right about that.

Barry: I’m convinced I’m right.

Beth: You haven’t read a newspaper lately.

Suzanne: Latin culture is very fatalistic, and I don’t know that they know less about what reality is than I do.

Barry: Black culture is very fatalistic, isn’t it?

Everyone starts talking at once about fatalism.

Beth: This is the most heated argument we’ve ever had.

Paul: We’re not going to have any answers.

Suzanne: It has to do with economic class too, I think. [She now talks about her father-in-law, a man of working class, Hispanic background who gambles because that is his only hope in life.] He doesn’t feel that he can do anything to advance himself economically.

Barry: But there are other personalities; there are other individuals who might react differently in that very same situation. What I’m saying is that students should not feel that they cannot . . . that they have to [feel] victimized.

Paul: I have an idea. It changes things a little bit. It get backs to what I hear coming up a lot, what some problems are. And the topic you might want to look at—we’re talking about the child . . . and I was thinking about the discussion we had about good and evil. We could present something about the gap between potency and act . . . we’re born with the potential for anything. And it’s just how we’re raised.

Elaine: You don’t believe that, do you?

Paul: I think so, yeah.

Elaine: Yeah?

Paul: Yeah, if I had been raised in Marseilles, on the docks, I’d be a very different person.

Beth: The theory of pure evil out there—I believe that there is pure evil. I believe that you could be born in Marseilles or Philly, and, I mean, some people are born evil.

Suzanne: I don’t believe that.

Beth: I didn’t use to. I used to think everyone was a product of their environment . . . something happened, the crimes that occurred, I could no longer attribute to upbringing, to any environment . . . I think they’re evil, I mean in the religious sense of the word. These people should go to hell. That’s the only way I could deal with it [laughs] . . . they should be punished . . .

Suzanne: I’m not saying they shouldn’t be punished, but I’m not sure what evil is. What does it look like?

Beth: When I see it I know.
Suzanne: This whole theme about can you determine your life, how much can you determine and control—I think that’s really a very basic thing that people really need to know—how they’re operating on the basis of that.

Elaine: So what are we talking about? The nature of evil, the nature of good?

SUBJECT MATTER

Beth: Evil, I want a section on evil [laughs]. I think evil has gone out of style. We should bring it back in again.

Suzanne: That’s pretty different from what I was thinking.

Beth: I’m only kidding.

Suzanne: I thought we were talking about control of your life. I guess that’s related.

Beth: Well, you do relate it in that one possible explanation of behavior is that there is such a thing as evil.

Beth discusses Catholic notion of free will, how we’re responsible for what we do; if we were not, we would be crazy, not evil. She believes that people have evil tendencies that they can control. Barry contrasts this to Calvinist idea of predestination and lack of any control.

Elaine: Let me ask you a question. The favorites coming today—the strong horses were: the child, women, the elderly. It sounds like nobody is talking any more about women. . . . everything you say here fits with the child beautifully—is he born with evil? What kind of destiny is he born with?

Paul: Around the child, we can discuss women and the family—the family is the dynamic.

Barry: I’m looking for some unifying thread.

Elaine: I was very interested when you said power—the power of the child, women, the elderly.

The group returns to the child—especially its nature as seen through different lenses (e.g., Rousseau).

Beth: I think especially if you look at this historically, more than sociologically, that there’s . . . more good source material if you talk about what people have thought or are thinking today about the basic nature of the child. You certainly could bring in most anything. You could bring in the Puritans.

Elaine: We can’t bring everything in. We’re going to cut?

Suzanne: Would this be a whole semester’s worth?

Beth: Would they get tired of talking about the child?

Elaine: That’s a problem.

Barry: If you had a unifying thread, you could come up with a series of topics and you don’t have to change every week or every two weeks, you could come up with two or three units that would incorporate what you wanted to do. But you would
look at it from different points of view. For instance, the nature of work for women, for children.

Beth. . . He [Barry] and I are talking from one point of view, and you two [Paul and Suzanne] are talking from another point of view. Because we two talk historically, and you two don’t . . .

Barry. I would like us to do a unit on the impact of colonialism on culture and tradition. I think that’s damn important . . .

Elaine. Do you know what I’m hearing now? You’re taking the crucial concepts that you want your students to understand. Is that correct?

Barry: Yeah . . . and I’m trying to figure out how to put them together

Elaine: Yeah, but why? . . .

Barry. Because I’m very content oriented, and I guess I think there are certain things that students should get out of a course.

Paul. If these students who are going to be with us in the fall are in the beginning of a four-semester sequence, I’d like to see them get something less specific. I see what you’re doing as really vital and interesting, and I see it being really exciting in a pro-seminar [second year format for program] Rather than the individual in the community, I’d rather see—I’m going to stick with my idea of the child. We could look at the child at work, war, play, what the child is like.

Suzanne. The content has to be teaching the ability to evaluate materials . . .

Beth. Isn’t there something a little more?

Suzanne: Power. We were talking about power before . . .


Elaine. How about doing that? Do you want to do a term on power? Nobody’s going to fall asleep on that.

Beth. Oh, power would work. That would be children, work . . .

Suzanne. Family differences

Beth: Anything you wanted.

Paul: Power in the family, power in the schools.

Barry. . . I could still play around with my content. When you’re talking about power, you’re also talking about imperialism, you see: the imposition of the culture . . . on the people

Paul: Barry wants to “impose” on us [laughs]

Barry. Power has unlimited possibilities.

Elaine: Could we come back next week with some ideas about how to break this down?

Beth: Do you have an idea how you want this broken down? I mean, just give us some guidelines.
Session Six. During this meeting, the group comes in with many suggestions for sources on power, the theme of the proposed 12-credit course. They talk about course goals, cognitive development, and then ways to organize the rest of the term. The old debate about whether to begin with sources, topics, experiences, or goals occurs again. Finally, the team decides to begin the course with the most extreme example of power possible—the Holocaust—in order to engage students’ interest immediately. They return to theme of power in general.

STUDENTS AND SUBJECT MATTER

Elaine: What would be the purpose of doing power?
Beth: ... these students, we’ve decided, don’t feel as though they have control over their lives ... you’ve just got to engage their interest before you can get anywhere.
Paul: It’s a terribly concrete issue that is so provocative.
Elaine: Can we go back next time to the kind of experiences we want to provide ... ?
Barry: Good idea. We need to go back to what it is we want them to do, how we want them to function ... exercises, activities.

The discussion returns to books, essay, films, and other sources. Possible units are roughly sketched out (e.g., power structure in the prisons). During the seventh session, the group plans the following scheme for the entire term:

Course theme: Power
1. The Holocaust: an extreme example.
2. The child
   a. Within the family
   b. Within society
3. Personal power relationships of adults
   a. Marriage and/or love
   b. Friendship
4. Institutional powers
   a. Colonial governments
   b. Military
   c. Prisons

For the rest of the planning sessions, they design units, with special emphasis on the writing and seminar components of the program.

CONFLICTING CONCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM

When I first began working with Team C, it became clear that the four teachers held very different ideas about schooling. In fact, Eisner and Vallance’s taxonomy of conflicting conceptions of curriculum came immediately to mind. It was almost as if they too had read the introduction to the book and after unanimously rejecting the technological perspective had divided up the
remaining four. Paul grabbed self-actualization, Beth, academic rationalism; Barry, cognitive processes, and Suzanne, at least implicitly, social change.

Beth

Beth is clearly the most tradition-bound of the four team members. An historian with a special interest in European civilization, she is also the most consistent of her colleagues in maintaining a conception of curriculum that guides almost all her decisions. As an academic rationalist, she wants to provide her students with the tools that they will need to participate in Western cultural tradition. Her language is filled with metaphors of inculcation.

From the very beginning of the third session, Beth makes clear that the focal point of deliberations should be content: "I can think of topics and then think of these great goals we could achieve with them, but I have more trouble going the other way." She is most comfortable discussing particular sources, moving very quickly from broad topics to specific ideas: "Well, the really broad one would be cultural pluralism . . . Let's see, we could take a hero from a Moslem culture, and a hero from a Christian culture . . . " When Barry suggests that it's too early to get "locked in," she replies, "Oh no, I don't want to do that . . . except now that I'm thinking about it. I was just taking it through from the idea to the goal." As she herself notes, "Somehow, I just can't sit here and think about goals in a vacuum." At the beginning of the fourth session, she starts with sources: "Let's take Robinson Crusoe . . . " But the rest of the group is not ready to fit in materials at that point.

Beth perceives the central problem in terms of students' lack of a cultural foundation: "They have no foundations so they have nothing to build on—so even if they hear something on the news or read something, they can't retain it because it doesn't stick anywhere." Her use of the inculcation metaphor is particularly striking when she asks about helping students with poor educational backgrounds, "How can we do that to kids who aren't already there?"

At one point, she even perceives of the educational environment as a battleground between knowledge and ignorance. Talking about team teaching, she says, "You will win if you have two teachers against a class. With one teacher, it's a draw . . . what I'm saying is you can raise the intellectual level of a class so much higher if you have two people in there . . . " Later, "You know that after years of teaching, if they start arguing with each other, you're winning" [laughs].

When the discussion revolves around possible themes, Beth's chief criterion is usually availability of interesting materials: " . . . the Puritans . . . there's so much power there back in the family . . . and you have lots of primary documents." About the child, " . . . I think especially if you look at this historically, more than sociologically, that there is more good source material . . . "

As a result of Suzanne's unfamiliarity with the rest of the team members, she says very little during early sessions, I will, therefore, not belabor an interpretation of her point of view.
if you talk about what people thought or are thinking today about the basic nature of ... the child ..."

As a traditionalist, Beth often refers to precedence and authority. During the third session, she wants to borrow another team’s writing heuristic. When Paul says that he wants to come up with "our own approaches," she replies, "No, I understand that, but on the other hand, I thought they were so good; are we going to reinvent the wheel?" During the fourth session when the conversation turns to what teachers should be called by students in the program, she notes that she would like to be called "Mrs." "It’s not a democracy quite, a classroom ... On the other hand, I don’t want it to be so distant ..."

Beth often serves as a catalyst for filling in concrete ideas (learning activities, assignments, reading sources) and helps add substance to her colleagues’ more general ideas. She has read widely and eclectically, and is more than willing to read anything recommended by her colleagues as a possible subject matter choice.

**Barry**

Even a superficial analysis of Barry’s words reveals his commitment to cognitive development. His primary concern is for enabling his students to perform increasingly complex intellectual operations. Yet he is also very interested in content, demonstrating an almost equal respect for substance as for process.

Barry begins curriculum deliberations just the way that Eisner and Vallance characterize cognitive processors. He tries to identify "the most salient and efficient processes through which learning occurs and to provide the setting and structure for their development." During the third session, he discusses Richardson’s book, *Critical Literacy* and notes that it made him start thinking about what "we want students to be able to do." A little later, "Beyond basics, more and more companies are teaching critical thinking skills and analytic thinking." Barry frames much of what he says in terms of students as inquirers: "Our students should be knowledge seekers; they should be interested in learning ... they should be able to evaluate things." When asked how he helps students develop an argument, he replies, "Well, in history you can look at factual data ... write an argument in support of the revolution ... then pretend you’re a loyalist and write an argument supporting the opposite ..."

In the beginning, Barry talks as if content, although crucial, is secondary to cognitive processing. When people leave his course, Barry wants them to know "there was a debate, and they evaluate the issues that were involved I mean, they have the material and it forces them to make some judgments; it forces them to organize." As the deliberations progress, however, Barry begins to stress content as well as cognitive processes. Talking about an activity based

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*Elliott Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance, Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum (Berkeley McCutchan Publishing Co, 1974), p 6*
on the idea of a utopia, he argues. "I guess it's necessary for them to have some concrete learning in the process ... and deal with lots of interested primary materials." Still later, "One of the problems that the students have is that they really don't have an historical perspective."

Barry, however, is using content somewhat differently than Beth is. He still wants the materials to work in the service of cognitive development, rather than have them shape what students learn.

Of course, the materials you use are going to be skewed, because no matter what you select in a primary document, it obviously represents a choice that you're making students are going to get different things out of the same piece of material. And that's what you want to happen. I want students to engage each other in a debate and begin to see different sides, and bring that out in them. I want to be a catalyst for them.

The metaphor of Barry as a catalyst is a powerful one, his talk centers around the processes he is going to trigger. In the conversation cited earlier about what the faculty should be called by students, Barry agrees with Beth, and says he doesn't want them to refer to him by first name. "I don't want them calling me Barry. I want them to create a community of scholars amongst themselves." And, "... it's not a question of authority. Professional relationships in a classroom are different. I don't call my students by the first name; I think that's patronizing." Barry sees his role as a professional one; he is apart from his students in the sense that he is there to guide and stimulate their intellectual growth.

OK, if you are introducing them into an intellectual community that is stimulating, productive, then I think that is determined by the way in which you deal with the students, the kinds of materials you give them, and I don't think it is crucial to be on a first-name basis with instructors to do that.

Barry also sees himself as a model, and wants the dialogue that he creates with the teaching team to serve as an exemplar. "I see part of the program as creating lots of models... Well, you create models for students when you involve them in dialogue." In many ways, his conception of curriculum is closest to that of the program's directors. He is the team member who speaks most explicitly about a community of scholars, of close reading of texts, and of using primary sources to enable students to understand, interpret, and evaluate ideas. All through the early sessions, he attempts to focus discussions on learning experiences and activities.

Paul

Several times during curriculum deliberations, Paul mentions how enjoyable the process is. On occasion, he tries to prevent the group from reaching what he considers premature closure. He wants to take advantage of the time to consider a wide range of options. His role, especially at the beginning, is to keep ideas flowing, to serve as a catalyst (a favorite word for him, as well as for Barry). His approach reflects a distinct curriculum orientation: his language is filled with the terms of self-actualization, of personally satisfying
consummatory experiences, for himself, for his colleagues, and for his students. His metaphors are fluid. He, like Barry—but for a different reason—sees education as a liberating force, as a means of helping the individual make his or her own discoveries.

When Beth asks Paul if he offers students a list or set of questions to use as they write papers, he replies, “No, because they come up according to the topic, and according to the position or point of view. And when she asks if there is a pattern to the questions he finds himself asking, he replies, “it’s a process, and I try to keep it to balance off the mechanistic pattern of the basic 101 essay—I try to keep it . . . fairly organic.” “Organic” is an important word for Paul.

He also likes to do things for himself, and have his students do things for themselves too. When Beth wants to use another team’s heuristic, he argues, “I’d like us to come up with our own. I like what they did . . . I appreciate it . . . but I think that we’re going to be able to come up with our own.” And in the same conversation, at the suggestion that the group begin thinking of specific content, he says, “I’m still thinking . . . things just float in, ideas come . . .” The metaphor of floating reflects Paul’s fluid style of curriculum development. He likes to ruminate at times without a specific goal in mind.

We have the luxury of time and that’s what I really like The idea of entertaining any idea and playing around with it seems really valuable because it’s something I haven’t had a chance to do yet . . . I feel that developing the rapport amongst ourselves and goals for ourselves . . . I’d like to do a little of each all the time, but this seems to me to be primary because basically we’re going to be models for the students come fall.

Like Barry, Paul is interested in serving as a model, but he accentuates the interpersonal aspect of the educational experience while Barry emphasizes the intellectual. His metaphors capture the spirit of his experimental, playful nature. “I see the wall of this room being papered with all of the things we’re going to say . . . I just see putting these ideas up and then not really making a decision beyond a certain point of having entertained a broader topic.” In a similar vein, he describes the group’s deliberation process as a “Chinese Checker board or an arabesque. We start from one point and we go out and come back, go out and come back . . .”

Talking about his distaste for American passivity, he says, “Skepticism is the engagement which is 180 degrees away from passivity . . . I’d like my students to be actively skeptical about things, and just continue to ask questions.” Paul is interested in autonomous, independent human beings; he sees his role as an enabling one, encouraging students to think for themselves, to become the people they want to be. This does, of course, include a significant cognitive component, he speaks about gathering and selecting data, about choosing assignments designed to help students think critically and skeptically about a particular problem. He is not as concerned with the outcome as he is with the process of learning. In his view, the most successful students are the ones who are “self-initiating, and can find their way around, and are curious”
The transcripts of Paul’s comments do not reveal the urgency of Beth or Barry. Interested primarily in personal growth, he sees the group’s work as gradual and cumulative. “The first year’s seminars should lead [students] into the process that will culminate in the second year.”

It is not surprising that, when discussing what he prefers to be called by students, he begins with the students themselves and their preferences.

... I ask students to tell me what they prefer to be called. If they feel comfortable calling me Paul, that’s fine with me. I’ve had no problem regarding the tenor or atmosphere of the class but it does make an extra level of contact, which for me enriches the classroom.

Paul is reluctant to discard any good topic. A voracious reader, he opts for broad themes that could head off in many possible directions. “The role of the child is incredible... It would be a great inter-cultural thing... it brings a lot together.” It is he who returns to the idea of using power, the final choice of the group, as the embracing topic or theme for the course.

Suzanne

Suzanne says very little during the first weeks. As she grows increasingly comfortable, she contributes more fully. From the transcripts of sessions three to six, it is possible to discern an underlying concern for social values. An English as a second language teacher, she often focuses on cross-cultural themes, on ways to help students become more tolerant of others and more cognizant of their own cultural heritage. She makes the point, however subtly, that there are many different kinds of rationality, noting for example that “problem solving is a very American approach.” Like Paul, she is especially concerned with students’ sense of autonomy and control. When asked for her idea of the ideal students, she replies, “I would say curious would be important... open-minded.” She likes the metaphor of students as detectives and thinks that they would probably like it too, more than the idea of a community of scholars, a term she finds pretentious and remote.

Suzanne shares Paul’s desire to be on a first-name basis with students. Her reasons are, I think, revealing and speak for themselves. “I like to be on a first-name basis because nobody in my whole life calls me Mrs.” She also explains that her hyphenated last name might be confusing.

Speaking fondly of her freshman days at Brown University, she remembers the dialogues she participated in as “one of the most exciting things to see people really get head up about something and argue about it.” It is clear that she places great emphasis and value on intellectual involvement and excitement.

Sometimes her role in the group is to point out the complexity of a seemingly simple idea. She eschews easy answers. When Barry states that he would like to leave their students with a sense that the environment can’t determine individual worth, Suzanne replies, “I don’t know the answer to that. I mean, I happen to believe what you are saying, but I don’t know for
sure that we’re right about that.” A little later, she comments, “Latin culture... is very fatalistic, and I don’t know that they know less about what reality is than I do.” Suzanne probably would be reluctant to furnish answers to philosophical or ethical questions, but would gladly raise any issue with her students.

It follows that she would like her students to make their own decisions about themselves and their role in society. “This whole theme about can you determine your life, how much can you determine and control—I think that’s really a very basic thing that people really need to know—how they’re operating on the basis of that.” Later, “so many decisions you make in your life are based on assumptions that you make, not even consciously it seems very important to discuss these.” Suzanne, in short, shares Paul’s concern for self-knowledge, but she stresses the broader social context in which it occurs.

PERCEPTION AND PROBLEMATION. SOME ARTS OF THE PRACTICAL

With so many different, even conflicting conceptions of curriculum, how does the group manage to design one curriculum? The transcripts, of course, tell the story. By focusing on a broad theme, and by allowing each individual great latitude, the team is able to build a value-rich environment. Using Pereira’s interpretation of Schwab’s arts of the practical, we can trace and describe the steps that they collectively took to perceive and formulate their problem.

As is readily evident from looking at the transcripts, the team is quite articulate about discussing symptoms and mapping the situation they perceive. They use all four of the commonplaces that Schwab and Pereira talk about: students, teachers, subject matter, and milieux. As can be seen from the frequent changes of the transcript subheadings, the threads of each commonplace keep interweaving with the others, often it is difficult to pinpoint the exact spot where one ended and another began. Although very little is neglected as the group describes their concern with a multitude of symptoms and situational constraints, they clearly spend the least time discussing milieux, either the immediate environment at the college or larger cultural, social, and economic factors. More often their concern for environmental considerations bubbles up spontaneously and abruptly shifts to subject matter or students. There is a lot of talk about how various cultural factors have affected students’ lives and intellectual performance, but little talk about how these factors influence and limit the way they, as teachers, make pedagogical decisions. In the brief analysis that follows of sessions three and four, the team’s use of each commonplace is highlighted.

Sessions Three and Four—Toward Perceiving the Problem

Teachers: No one in the group admires mechanistic teaching; they are eager to find more vital approaches to teaching that would engage students in real tasks. When Paul talks about how he tries to balance off the mechanistic
pattern of the basic 101 essay, they all listen carefully and agree that static, boring instruction has been a problem in the past. They want their new course to be engaging and challenging. As a result, they commit themselves to selecting especially high-interest materials and powerful teaching strategies.

**Students.** During these early sessions, the talk also focuses on students' lack of skills and foundational knowledge. Paul is particularly concerned about their passivity, their lack of a questioning stance. All four want to inspire their students to become knowledge-seekers and active learners. During these two meetings, they link past problems in education to students' lack of knowledge: "Even if they hear something on the news or read something, they can't retain it because it doesn't stick anywhere." They lack cultural and historical perspective. "When you talk about history, something to them that is old is Ronald Reagan's reelection... Their knowledge of the world is... obtained through television." As Paul suggests, whatever curriculum develops, it will have "to take a trip back."

When the talk moves to Richardson's book, *Critical Literacy*, Barry recalls an experience the previous team had at the beginning of the term. One faculty member looked around his class and realized that nobody was taking notes. When the teacher berated the students, they were stunned. Quoting his friend, Barry recalls that all they could say was, "What do you mean taking notes? What d'ya mean notes?" It is clear to the team that they will have to address the issue of developing those academic skills necessary for survival in college. Put simply, their students do not yet look like students at most four-year colleges.

**Subject Matter.** Unlike conversation about students, talk about subject matter is still sketchy and, when specific, brief. There is little mention of past problems with specific content, other than on the most global level (e.g., students' lack of historical perspective, already mentioned above). By the end of the fourth session, the problem is still located with student background and past mechanistic teaching practices.

**Milieu:** Similarly, discussions about the milieu (other than questions about administrative mandates—e.g., How many times are the writing groups supposed to meet? What are the seminars supposed to do? How many students are in them?) are scant and brief. The group wants to know as much as possible about the program, but they are not ready to look for problems in the institution itself, at least not in terms of how such problems might affect decisions about choosing subject matter and teaching activities. Put differently, most talk about milieu centers around its effects on students, not on how the institution copes with these effects.

**Sessions Five and Six—Toward Prescription**

In these two deliberations, the team moves toward prescription for the term. Although they still talk about symptoms (the progression from perception to problemation to prescription to commitment is not, as Pereira notes,
a strictly linear one\textsuperscript{9}, they are, for the most part, interested in deciding what they are going to do.

At first they discuss the immediate environment. The T O P program offers students many privileges. First, they frequently meet in small, faculty-led groups; there are never more than ten students in a seminar or writing group. There is even a special room set aside where they can grab a cup of coffee, make phone calls, and chat. Barry is particularly concerned about this "specialness." His remark, quoted earlier, about remaining on a professional basis with students, is a partial solution to this problem. He, in concurrence with his colleagues, wants to create a serious, intellectually challenging, non-authoritarian environment. Beth and Barry are particularly concerned about not becoming merely pals of the students, they want to encourage a strong, but professional student-teacher relationship.

It is Barry who formulates, or at least verbalizes, the central problem perceived by the team. He sees the task as one of introducing students into an "intellectual community that is stimulating and productive." Everything that the group subsequently plans is framed by this goal. The course theme, power, is a vehicle for creating such an environment. It enables the team to plan a varied set of experiences to embrace different goals and values: Barry's concern for cognitive development, Beth's for substantial, engaging content, Paul's for personal curiosity and self-actualization, and Suzanne's for cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. The common ground is the value of curiosity and self-initiation. All four teachers see the task or problem as one of getting students involved in finding solutions to real, intellectually challenging questions. They are all committed to creating an environment where students are actors, not reactors, questioners, not rote memorizers. All four team members perceive the same challenge: to engage frequently passive, sometimes disengaged and poorly prepared students in provocative and stimulating dialogues about crucial, universal ideas.

**FIVE WAYS OF VALUING EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS**

As they worked together, individual members of Team C held on to their own values and ways of looking at educational realities. But they also made subtle shifts and developed a common, or at least unified, vision of what they wanted. For the rest of this paper, I would like to apply Huebner’s framework to analyze that common vision. To briefly review, Huebner identifies five value frameworks and language systems that operate within educational environments: the technical, political, scientific, aesthetic, and ethical. Like Huebner, I will dwell on the last two lenses.

Although Huebner contends that current curricular ideology reflects, almost completely, a technical value system, this is certainly not true for

\textsuperscript{9}Peter Pereira, "Deliberation and the Arts of Perception," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 16 (October–December 1984): 350
Humanities Team C. They begin with the mutual understanding that they do not want to construct a mechanistically delivered curriculum, and they remain true to their words. Beth doesn't even like to use the words "behavioral objectives". "Could we just call them goals?" Very early in the deliberations, she says, "I'm more and more conscious of... the teaching of them mechanistically to do something that requires a little more passion." Technical rationality functions only in a broad, loose sense. The team wants to enable students to become independent thinkers. As a consequence, they want to design lessons, activities, and assignments that will help them realize this very global objective.

Political valuing is not a high priority either, at least not in early sessions. They have not yet reached the point where they want to influence other teachers. The only type of political valuing they do is when they try to figure out what the administration of the T.O.P. programs requires of them; they want to make sure that they understand the structure and demands of the project. Their concern in the beginning is to work smoothly and well within the T.O.P. system.

Scientific valuing is explicitly built into the T.O.P. project. Next term, the team will teach what they have planned this spring, but the term after that, they will receive released time to engage in reflection seminar. As mentioned earlier, during this seminar, they will analyze what they have learned, reformulate their task, and make changes in their curriculum. There is also ample opportunity to share insights with other T.O.P. faculty. The program's administrators are very concerned with developing a model for curriculum and staff development. After the grant runs out, they would like the structures to remain. Hence there is a great deal of emphasis on producing new knowledge. This paper, which is an effort to record and interpret what happens, is but one example of the kind of scientific valuing going on within the program. Administrators are observing classes, teams are watching other teams teach, and the two curriculum facilitators (a social science teacher with a doctorate in group processes, and I, an English teacher with a doctorate in curriculum) are talking to each other frequently about the problems we are encountering at different stages of deliberation and teaching. In fact, everyone is talking to everyone else. There are seminars and workshops scheduled for the faculty (about 25 people so far) throughout the term, as well as during inservice week at the beginning of each semester.

For Team C itself, aesthetic valuing is even more important than scientific rationality. Running throughout the transcripts is the idea that knowledge is wonderful, that the excitement generated by the proposed curriculum is valuable in itself. Sometimes the team talks as if it is creating a sculpture instead of a changing curriculum; they shape units carefully, looking for balance, variety, excitement, and structure. Imbued with a love of learning for its own sake, they want their students to be curious and questioning because they feel that such an attitude is a good in itself, not only a vehicle for transferring to a four-year school. The faculty members think of themselves
as inquirers and are always exchanging reading lists for recreational as well as professional purposes.

I think Beth's commitment to content, to sources as the focal point of curriculum planning, derives in large part from aesthetic priorities. She sees ideas, books, topics, and primary sources as important in themselves. When Barry says that they could do a lot with the topic of "the child," she replies, "It depends on how you do it, some of them [subtopics] can be the most crushingly boring things. Could you cut the marriage one out?" Beth has no intention of boring her students or herself. She is tired of the topic of marriage, and that is reason enough to eliminate it.

During the course of the deliberations, the environment becomes an aesthetic object. As one team member said, "... I think we have a general idea of what kind of environment we want to create, and I like what we've come up with, because I think it would be very exciting, not only for the students, but for teaching ..." Sometimes, the group even looks at the curriculum planning process itself as an aesthetic enterprise. They dwell on the pleasure of talk, on the playfulness of their conversation. Paul puts it best when he compares the group's activities to a Chinese Checker board or an arabesque. He stands back and watches his colleagues and himself start "from one point and go out and come back, go out and come back ..."

As already discussed, each member of the team sees the world very differently; their ethical perspectives and values vary radically. Beth thinks some people are just evil, "I mean in the religious sense of the word. These people should go to hell." Suzanne isn't even sure she knows what evil is. Barry wants his students to create their own community of scholars. He wants to help and inspire them, but he knows that he is not their "pal." Paul wants to call his students whatever they want to be called, and if they want to call him Paul, that's fine with him. Yet in spite of these very real differences, the group manages to design an integrated curriculum. It is tempting to speculate upon the reasons they work so well together. For one, they all share a real concern for students. As can be seen from the transcripts, their students are always on their minds. Even when talk moves, say, to an exciting primary source, the conversation soon turns back to how their classes will handle it, whether they will like it, what it will enable them to do.

Second, they share an appreciation for their considerable personal differences. When it becomes clear that Barry wants to call his students by their family names, Beth by their first names, and that Paul and Suzanne will be on a mutual first-name basis with them, they all quickly decide that each will do what is personally most comfortable. In fact, they note that this diversity will be interesting, and will give students a better sense of the individual differences among their teachers.

This tolerance for human differences goes well beyond the conventions of greeting people by name. It is reflected in the mutual interest in cross-cultural and historical differences as well. The curriculum centers around how people in different times and cultures look at power, how values and
Institutions change from society to society. There are no searches for definitive answers to how people should live. Rather, built into the curriculum are attempts to help students raise and answer their own questions about the good and just life.

Perhaps the most important activity for the group is dialogue. I wrote earlier about Suzanne's remark that "being head up about something" and arguing about it was the most exciting experience for her in college. Team C is determined to create the atmosphere of an exciting intellectual community. In Barry's words, "You create models for students when you involve them in dialogue." Team C's whole program is designed to model engagement in inquiry and conversation. In this sense, their deliberations are the precursors to their curriculum, in style as well as substance.

CONCLUSION

In Huebner's terms, Team C values above all the ethical concept of a community of student scholars bonded together by respect for themselves and their teachers, and for sharing ideas and interpretations of what they read. In Eisner and Vallance's language, they each embrace a different concept of the central focus of education. Yet they all, to different degrees, share Barry's desire to help their students think more effectively and independently, and Beth's commitment to creating an environment that would enable them to partake in our cultural heritage. In Schwab and Pereira's terms, although the deliberations involve the intricate interweaving of the four commonplaces, the student is clearly the central, key concept. Choice of subject matter and teaching methods and approaches are predominantly a function of the environment the faculty want to create for their students.

Although all three frameworks disclose different aspects of the same complex reality, all three serve to expose and underscore the crucial idea that guides the deliberations of Team C: the difficult, challenging task of creating an interpretive community. This is the problem the group attempted to solve during their deliberations. As they move into reflection seminar, after one term of teaching together, they can speculate about the truthfulness or disclosure power of this paper, using it as a tool for understanding what happened, and as a springboard for future deliberations about needed changes.

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